A narrative of one educational psychologist's search for young men's stories on school exclusion

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Abstract

Permanent exclusion from school is associated with negative outcomes for young people, and young men are overrepresented in exclusion figures. This study aims to discuss the context of school exclusion and to interpret my experiences, as an educational psychologist (EP), of seeking the stories of young men who have experienced school exclusion in its varying forms, without being permanently excluded. A stance underpinned by critical realism is adopted and the study draws upon the narrative of a young man on the verge of leaving school, having experienced exclusion in the form of a 'managed move'. It aims to adopt a solution-based approach to questions around working with young people and preventing exclusion from school, whilst simultaneously applying the resulting evaluation and interpretation to considerations of eclecticism and values in everyday educational psychology practice. Implications for such practice are discussed at a number of levels, ranging from interactions with individuals to considerations of language and systems.

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INTRODUCTION

A. Research Questions and Background

This study aims to describe and evaluate the process of seeking the views of young men on the subject of exclusion from school, and the manner in which this process intersects with my everyday practice as an educational psychologist (EP).

The approach taken within this qualitative study to addressing issues of school exclusion and EP practice is intended to demonstrate the reflexive process with which I have engaged throughout the three years from its inception to the point presented herewithin. This focus on reflexivity in research is influenced by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), whose work is discussed further in section 2.3. My approach to this research also reflects the views of Yardley (2000), who emphasises the value of embarking upon a journey during research; adopting a "pluralistic ethos". I did not wish to commence the study constrained by alignment with a specific paradigm (Tracy, 2010) and therefore aim to represent my reflexive journey in the resulting text.

The adoption of a reflexive and therefore constantly shifting approach

inevitably resulted in ongoing changes to the structure of the study, as my focus developed from the posing of one research question - 'How can we prevent permanent exclusion from school?' - to the identification of the three research questions below:

1. In what ways can I develop my thoughts around what helps prevent permanent exclusion from school and how can I apply these understandings to my educational psychology practice?

2. What can I understand about seeking the views of young people and how can I apply these understandings to my educational psychology practice?

3. How can I develop my thoughts around the principles and practices which underlie and guide my work as an educational psychologist and how will the meanings developed influence my EP practice?

As is apparent in these questions, my focus shifted considerably towards EP practice, and away in some senses from my original motivating concerns, which had focussed clearly upon developing my understandings around school exclusion, especially with regard to boys and young men.

Thinking and writing in a reflexive manner presents challenges, especially

with regard to presenting a coherent text, where later considerations may not always link in a linear fashion back to those discussed earlier in the text. I have attempted to maintain a strong sense of integrity around the telling of the story; the maintenance of the communication of a 'journey', where shifting priorities are necessary, positive and represent development, as opposed to being conceptualised as a problem. Indeed, it is this 'development' aspect which has resulted in my broadening the scope of this study to encompass further considerations around EP practice. To maintain the original tighter focus upon school exclusion would have felt like a significant opportunity missed.

B.   Structure

Given my desire to maintain a sense of fluid narrative, I had initially been attracted by the idea of employing Labov's (1972) narrative structures as the organisers of my research story, the notion of using more traditional structural headings such as 'literature review' and 'methodology' feeling inappropriate. As someone who generally experiences discomfort with the application of narrative frameworks (see Walker, 1991), I was also keen to employ this as an opportunity to reflect upon the specific application of Labov's framework.

I did find Labov's structures helpful until the latter stages of the writing of this

text, where my story no longer seemed to map onto the framework, and I found myself inadvertently attempting to shape my narrative to fit Labov's headings, the very process which fuelled my preceding discomfort with the application of narrative frameworks.

B (i) Introduction to Section 1

As a result, I abandoned the use of Labov's structures as headings, but on reflection, I felt that his notion of 'orientation' (establishing the context of the story) continued to feel helpful, and allowed me to describe my personal context and motivations, and subsequently follow an outward trajectory via local and national contexts contributing to concerns around exclusion, to national and international research into school exclusion and wider social and psychological issues.   Section 1 of the study therefore retains Labov's notion of 'orientation' and considers the following contexts and research, with a strong focus upon my original question around preventing exclusion from school:

- My personal position, concerns and motivations;

- The local context regarding school exclusion;

- The national context regarding school exclusion;

- Definitions and implications of school exclusion, focussing upon research on outcomes for excluded young people;

- Factors important in preventing permanent exclusion, focusing upon research considering work at a number of levels, including individual, group and systemic, along with the views of young people on this issue;

- Wider social and psychological considerations contributing to school exclusion, especially in relation to boys and young men, and including consideration of research into:
    - 'Underachievement' among boys;
    - Single sex education;
    - Male role models;
    - Young men's identity and values, including the importance of peer relationships;
    - The impact of behavioural attributions;

As discussed above, Section 1 maintains a strong focus upon issues of gender and school exclusion, as, at this point in the journey, this is where my priorities rested.

B (ii) Introduction to Section 2

Section 2 may be considered as representing a continuation of 'orientation', as I discuss the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the study. When writing this section, I continued to maintain an approach characterised by transparency and integrity (again influenced by Hollway (2006, 2008, 2009) and developed an increasing sense of this study's valuable role as an opportunity to 'step back' from everyday EP practice and to consider and develop meaning around those epistemological and methodological approaches which influence my everyday practice. In my 'journey', the shift towards an increased focus upon EP practice had begun.

Section 2 discusses the following areas:

- Critical realism:

  - I discuss my developing understandings around the epistemological basis of my work as an EP and as a researcher, via consideration of the work of Bhaskar (1975), Archer (1995) and Burr (1998), defining these authors' conceptualisations of critical realism and discussing the concept of a dichotomy between realist and relativist views;

- Qualitative research methods:

  - I justify my choice of qualitative research methods and critically consider the evaluation of such methods, turning to the work of Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle (1991), Yardley (2000) and Tracy (2010) for key guidance;

- Psychoanalytic theory and the psychosocial subject;

  - In wishing to maintain a transparent approach, I discuss the influence of the work of Hollway (op. cit.) and Emerson & Frosh (2009) upon both this study and my EP practice. The key aspect of Hollway's research that encompasses all my work in a methodological sense is her notion of the 'Gestalt'; considering the 'whole', meaning all influences upon any given experience and resulting interpretations or representations of that experience;

- Narratives;

  - I ground my interest in narratives in my wish to address

the space I perceive, in a critical realist sense, between experience and the resulting representations of that experience. Referencing the works of, among others, Bruner (1984) and Emerson & Frosh (op. cit.), I consider how narratives come to be and are interpreted, and later link these understandings to a specific story of school told by one young man;

- Positioning theory and discourse;

  - Within narratives, self and other are positioned, and I again seek to apply a critical realist approach and address the space between what people can do and what people do do. Harre's (1998) work has much to offer in terms of positioning theory, and I also draw on the work of other researchers who consider specific positioning issues within educational settings.

- Solution-oriented approaches:

  - I employ this narrative as an opportunity to engage in evaluation of solution-oriented approaches, given my recognition of their significant influence upon my EP work

and upon my desire to seek ways forward via the process of this study. I turn heavily to the work of Rees (2006a/b) and consider the dearth of research specifically related to solution-oriented approaches, much evaluation seeming to focus upon 'solution-focused' approaches, which I argue must be differentiated from 'solution-oriented'.

B (iii) Introduction to Section 3

My interest in solution-oriented practice (Rees, op. cit.), which is discussed in section 2.6, caused me to retain a strong sense of wishing to focus upon a notion of 'success', which I chose to define as 'maintaining school placement whilst having experienced fixed-term exclusions', and I therefore sought to access the stories of young men who met this criterion.

The challenges I faced in attempting to access young men's stories are described in section 3, and on reflection, I believe that my experiences during this process exerted a strong influence upon my subsequent shift towards an increased focus within this study upon EP practice, with particular regard to interactions with young people, and to the identification of two further research questions, as listed above.

Once again with the aims of maintaining senses of integrity and transparency, I aim to tell what I see as a key part of my narrative in some detail. It feels important, especially in relation to my consideration of the 'Gestalt' (Hollway, op. cit.), that my interpretations of my experiences and the resulting emotions are communicated, as I become increasingly able to reflect upon the manner in which my experiences have influenced my interpretations of the young man's story with which I eventually engaged. I had a sense that to remove this detail from you as reader would be to deprive you of an enormous amount of context, and to fail in my aim to act and write reflexively.

B (iv) Introduction to Section 4

With the aim of clearly responding to my research questions, section 4 seeks to consider my interpretations of one young man's story of school within the context of existing research, and to specifically develop my understandings around seeking the views of young people and applying the resulting considerations to my EP practice (addressing Research Question 1). Referring to the work of Hartas (2011), I discuss the right of young people not to engage, and the need to reframe what this choice may be communicating to others, before moving on to reflect, with reference to positioning theory, upon my own attempts to engage young men and my interaction with one specific young man. I conclude by considering the resulting implications for practice.

B (v) Introduction to Section 5

Drawing on one young man's story of school, I seek, in section 5, to develop my thoughts around what helps prevent permanent exclusion from school (addressing Research Question 2).   Mindful of the Gestalt, I describe those themes which arose during my repeated engagements with the transcript and audio recording of my meeting with the young man and offer my interpretations of his story, organised around the themes I perceived as arising.   These themes are:

- Do we need to prevent permanent exclusion?

- Peer relationships and belonging;

- Relationships between young people and adults in schools;

- The potential of aspiration;

- Attribution and power and how their links to outcomes for young people;

- Systemic issues, including working together, the power of shared language, and the importance of hierarchical structures.

I offer suggestions for future practice in each of these thematic areas.

B (vi) Introduction to Section 6

Section 6 aims to focus more specifically upon the intersections between this study and EP practice (addressing Research Question 3); I consider the similarities and differences between study and practice, and seek to extrapolate, from the process of the study, how EP practice can pay greater heed to issues of interpretation and representation. In writing this section, I began to develop an understanding that one of the key drivers in this study was my sense of 'unease' with the role I might play as EP in the exclusion of some young people and with the eclectic nature of my EP practice; it was only at this point that I was able to label this feeling, which is why section 6 also seeks to consider eclecticism in educational psychology and to identify a set of values which allow me to experience greater comfort with my own practice.

It would have been possible, upon developing these understandings around 'unease' to shift the focus of sections 1 and 2 in order to address this and allow greater scope for consideration of research into values in EP practice; however, my continued sense of wishing to preserve the fluid narrative and 'journey' approach, led me instead to consider Prilleltensky & Nelson's (2002) work on values at this later, reflective point.

B (v) Introduction to Sections 7 and 8

Owing to the fluid nature of this study, it felt inevitable that this would result in greater challenges with regard to establishing linear links between the motivations, concerns and existing research discussed in the 'orientation' of section 1, and the resulting understandings and conclusions. For example, to me, 'gender' felt hugely salient in issues of exclusion before commencing this study; it seemed less so by its conclusion.

At a pragmatic level, it was necessary to identify a cut-off point at which I had to accept that the narrative of this study would exist in its chosen form. It would be possible to continue applying changes in pursuit of a more linear text, but I believe that owing to the reflexive nature of this study, that would be a task without end.

Therefore, I hope you can find your way, as reader, through this narrative, and develop a positive acceptance that some of the places in which you find yourself at the end may be tangential to where you began, as was the case for me as researcher and writer. Indeed, this study seeks not to be prescriptive, but dynamic, stimulating unique interpretations with each reading, and leading its reader to a different place, the nature of that place being unpredictable to me as writer.

1. MOTIVATION, CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

INTRODUCTION

Section 1 aims to present the background to my current position as poser of Questions 1-3, considering the cultural, social, political, professional and personal. I aim to acknowledge, outline, or explore and critically evaluate pertinent factors as feels appropriate to the focus and scope of this study, with the aim of addressing my three questions.

I take an outward trajectory, beginning with personal and professional context, moving through local issues to national issues and research regarding exclusion, concluding with wider cultural considerations, before summarising the rationale for this study.

1.1 Personal/Professional Orientation

This section aims to outline the motivations and concerns underlying this study, along with offering a recognition of my own positions and experiences

and their influence upon my focii.

1.1(i) Background and Motivation

My interest in exclusion from school and its prevention has developed as a result of an increasing interest in issues surrounding boys and young men in education.   For many years, I have harboured concerns regarding labelling and the increasing medicalisation of children's behaviour (e.g. - Conrad, 2006; Timimi 2004; Francis 2012; Conrad & Slodden 2013), and found that in researching and writing about such issues (Oakley, 2008), the focus tended to be upon boys.

Working as an educational psychologist, mainly in an area of significant deprivation,   over the last nine years, I began to notice that a disproportionate amount of my time is spent discussing 'problems' centred around boys (Oakley, op. cit.).   I was also interested to note that I very rarely meet a male professional or parent, therefore meaning that a very significant proportion of my time is spent discussing boys with women; a study of my diary in June 2008, and looking back over the previous six months, highlighted for me that I had been involved with 21 cases during this time period; 19 were related to boys or young men and only 2 to girls or young women (Oakley, op. cit.).
My previous employment experiences (Employment and Training Adviser in

the Careers Service; Key Stage 2 Teacher; Research Assistant carrying out University-based research in primary schools) have also contributed to my current perception that, in these roles, which have all shared common themes of 'public sector', 'education' and 'areas of deprivation' with my current role, the 'boys' issue has always been present.

I have also harboured a sense of 'unease' with regard to my perception that my approaches to EP work are borne of a broad theoretical base and are perhaps overly pragmatic. This unease is compounded by a sense that I may, as an EP, be contributing to outcomes for young people that I consider undesirable – in particular, exclusion from school.

1.1(ii) Personal Position

Writing in 2008 (op. cit.), I noted my personal position as the mother of a girl. Since then, I have also become the mother of a boy, and recognise the influence of this upon my perceptions, approaches, interactions, expectations, reflections, and investment.

I feel confident that my perception of 'boys' has shifted as a result of this additional relationship with a boy that I now experience. I also reflect upon the sense that I have now become a member of another group - 'Mothers of

boys' - which seems to bestow upon me the opportunities to be involved in conversations where mothers make negative comments regarding their sons' boisterous behaviours. As my son (currently aged 5) does not generally act in a particularly boisterous manner himself, I find it interesting that other mothers often make positive comments about this, seeming to suggest I am 'lucky'.

These experiences support the concerns I raised about mainly female staff discussing 'problem' boys, and lead me now to consider whether in fact the pathologisation of boys' behaviour starts well before they even enter education, with mothers who feel pressured into being apologetic for their young boys' very 'normal' behaviours.

Alongside my position and continuing experiences as 'mother of a girl' and 'mother of a boy', I occupy many other positions including white, female, middle-class and nearly middle-aged, all of which will influence every aspect of this narrative.

1.1(iii) Educational Psychology and a Solution-Oriented Approach

My concerns regarding perceptions of boys and young men and the apparent negativity I perceive has dovetailed neatly with a more general approach that I

employ across my work as an EP, whereby I try to work with others to facilitate a shift towards more positive understandings and an eventual focus on the more positive aspects of a situation, in order that these can be used a building blocks to a way forward.

I am generally guided by an attempt to work in a solution-oriented (S-O) manner (Rees 2006a, 2006b) and recognise that this manner of working was being heavily invested in in the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) where I gained employment upon first entering the profession, and continue to work today, therefore significantly influencing my use of this approach as my career has progressed. There is now much less emphasis upon this locally, but I continue to find many aspects of the approach helpful in generating ways forward and so felt a strong desire to maintain a S-O element to this study.

I wished to focus on a 'successful' story of boys and young men, and, at the same time, the level of concern regarding permanent exclusions in the locality in which I work as an EP was steadily increasing. I saw an opportunity to marry my desire to investigate 'success' with a chance to add a useful contribution to the increasing focus on exclusions.

Anecdotally, among my EP colleagues, we experience a feeling that permanent exclusion is almost a "fait accompli" in some of the cases in which we become involved. We feel that we are asked to become involved when a

young person has had a significant number of fixed term exclusions, and so often at this point, we find that just as we become involved, the young person is permanently excluded anyway.

After much consideration, I concluded that it felt appropriate to talk with young men who had experienced exclusion but whose school placement had been maintained. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, this was the identified marker of 'success'.

1.1(iv) Educational Psychology Practice and This Research

Originally, I sought to answer only a question about preventing permanent exclusion; my questions regarding EP practice developed during the process of engaging with this study; it became apparent that to separate EP practice and the meaning-making that was occurring represented a missed opportunity. The issues highlighted by this study are highly pertinent and similar to those which arise in the majority of EP work with which I am involved, which may of course be a function of the fact that I am the author. The points at which I feel able to predict the intersections of the research and EP practice are shown in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 – Predicted Intersections Between this Study and EP Practice:

• Attempting to gain the views of young people;
• Working with young people who have experience of things being difficult in school;
• An emancipatory approach;
• A solution-oriented (S-O) approach;
• Belief in the importance of the voices of young people;
• The principles/beliefs/assumptions/ontologies underlying both research and practice.

In relation to the last point above, it could be argued that, within research, it is more appropriate to select one methodology and explore and employ that in great detail. However, given my aim of considering my current and future EP practice it feels appropriate to acknowledge, evaluate and reflect upon the major principles underlying that practice.

I recognise that my position within this research may be considered different from my usual position as 'EP'; however, I believe that it is not possible for me to simply assume the role of 'researcher', select one methodology, and 'switch off' all those other influences. Whilst I accept that some depth is sacrificed in embracing breadth, transparency and integrity feel more important.

1.1(v) Transparency and Reflexivity

'Reflexivity' will not become a heading at the end of this study, but instead be a constant and implicit thread throughout all considerations and interpretations. It is my intention that reflexivity will be evident but not necessarily labelled 'reflexivity'; it may be more difficult for you as the reader to identify quickly, but I hope, more meaningful as a result.

In aiming to be 'transparent', I intend to provide clarity with regard to my assumptions and the understandings underlying my actions and choices. Again, I aim for this to be implicit throughout this text, whilst recognising that you as reader can never gain full insight into my interpretations and will develop unique meaning of your own.

Summary of Section 1.1

Significant experience of working with young people, usually young men, has led me to concerns about how schools and those systems surrounding schools meet the needs of such young men. I recognise the influence of my experiences and my positions, including those labelled mother, educational psychologist and woman upon the manner in which I view this issue. I explain my aim of reflecting upon my own practice as an EP and how this

intersects with the current study, recognising in particular my desire to take a solution-oriented (S-O) approach.

1.2 Local Context

Having alluded briefly to the concerns surrounding exclusion in the area in which I work as an EP, this section seeks to make more explicit the context from which my perceptions have arisen, provides figures which demonstrate the nature of the issue and outlines current local plans to address the concerning exclusion rates.

1.2(i) Features of the Geographical Area

The locality is one characterised by areas of high deprivation, but also contains areas of affluence and areas which may be considered to fall in between these two descriptors. My main experience is in working in the areas of high deprivation. The more affluent areas are predominantly inhabited by white British families; the areas of deprivation are inhabited by a more diverse ethnic mix, including many white British families and families of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin. There are also a small number of Polish families and families of Afro-Caribbean origin. I live within the locality

myself, in an area which is predominantly white British and affluent. My perception of the locality is that different ethnic groups appear to live quite harmoniously, although there are definitely areas which are known locally as being "white" or "Asian".

The area where the young man in this study lives is, in my perception, an area where most families are white British and could be considered an area of relative deprivation. The area in which his school is located may be considered a little more affluent and I perceive it to be manly inhabited by white working or middle class families.

1.2(ii) Exclusion within the Geographical Area

1.2(ii)a) A Disparity Between Areas

There are other localities within the same local authority (LA) with similar socioeconomic profiles, where the exclusion rate is vastly lower (see Figure 2) but it would seem that this is not seen as a source of knowledge and/or good practice; the culturally accepted explanation within my locality seems to be that headteachers in the other localities are employing 'underhand' tactics

such as 'grey exclusions' (i.e. – sending a child home without formally excluding them) or repeated managed moves (i.e. – transferring a child to a different school) in order to reduce the exclusion statistics. This may indeed be the case; data on managed moves does not seem to be available and of course, by their nature, 'grey exclusions' are not recorded. What I am attempting to illustrate is the nature of the culture in which these exclusions are taking place. My perception of this is that the locality with the problem is currently struggling to see a way forward as the focus remains on what is going wrong.

Fig. 2 - Secondary school permanent exclusions in 3 localities of one local authority: 2010/11 and 2011/12:

Locality	No of secondary school permanent exclusions in 2010/11 (+ academies in brackets)			No of secondary school permanent exclusions in 2011/12 (+ academies in brackets)		
1	49	(+4)	= 53	18	(+3)	= 21
2	58	(+29)	= 87	37	(+12)	= 49
3	41		= 41	50		= 50

Fig. 3: Primary school permanent exclusions in 3 localities of one local authority: 2010/11 and 2011/12:

Locality	No of primary school permanent exclusions in 2010/11	No of primary school permanent exclusions in 2011/12
1	10	6
2	23	16
3	2	2

The locality in which I work is number 2; the large number of permanent exclusions can clearly be seen.

1.2(ii)b) Reasons for Exclusion in this Local Authority

The total number in Figure 2 differs from that in Figure 4 below: the data in Figure 2 is directly from the LA; that in Figure 4 is from the Department for Education (DfE) (2012b), where reasons with a number less than 5 are not recorded, which may be where the missing 41 young people fall. It is interesting to note that by far the largest group of young people experiencing permanent exclusion are those considered to have demonstrated 'persistent

Fig. 4 - Reasons for secondary school permanent exclusions 2010/11 in one local authority:

Reason for permanent exclusion	Number
Physical assault against a pupil	20
Physical assault against an adult	5
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	10
Drug and alcohol related	16
Persistent disruptive behaviour	54
Other	22
TOTAL	140

disruptive behaviour' (this is the same nationally). The same is noted by Osler, Watling & Busher (2001), suggesting that this pattern is not only a more recent one:

> *Although schools provide a reason for the permanent exclusion of an individual child, this immediate 'trigger' leading to exclusion is usually matched by a long case history. The cause for concern might be a child's behaviour, his or her academic achievements, social circumstances or a combination of these factors. Headteachers were generally agreed that the reason they provided at the time of the exclusion was simply one event in a long build-up of events (p.66).*

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This focus on 'persistent disruptive behaviour' could be reframed as a useful 'early intervention' focus for EP meetings with school staffs, when seeking to identify young people whom staffs may wish to discuss, given the observation that EPs in my team feel they are often asked for involvement at a point which can feel 'too late'. I am sure however, that I could and would employ more positive language, avoiding the term 'persistent disruptive behaviour'.

1.2(ii)c) Percentages of Excludees in this Local Authority

When examining the DfE data for 2010/11 (DfE, 2012b, op. cit.), I was surprised to note the figure relating to the percentage of the school population in my LA who have been in receipt of fixed-term or permanent exclusions.

Fig. 5 - Percentages of school population in receipt of exclusions 2010/11:

Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Fixed-term	Permanent	Fixed-term	Permanent
0.64%	0.03%	6.83%	0.2%

My perception of the prevalence of exclusion would certainly have yielded

higher percentages than these and I imagine I need to recognise that my view of the school population will be skewed, as the nature of my work always focuses on those situations where the situation is not considered to be optimal by at least some of those involved. I feel it remains important to recognise however, that those small percentages still relate to 168 children and young people who have been permanently excluded and/or in receipt of 5258 fixed-period exclusions.

Of particular relevance to this study is the difference between the percentages for fixed-period exclusions and permanent exclusions. Of course, from these data I have no way of being certain that those young people in the permanent exclusions category also appear in the fixed-period category; however, the fact that by far the most common reason for both types of exclusion is 'persistent disruptive behaviour' would suggest to me that the same young people will likely be represented in both groups.

This demonstrates the group of young people who are receiving fixed term exclusions but are not subsequently permanently excluded, and this is the group in whom I am interested; where I believe some interesting information may lie with regard to how the school placement has been maintained despite the fact that it seems things have not always been positive in school.

1.2(ii)d) Gender Issues in My Caseload

A perception of gender imbalance in my EP casework is one of the influences that has led me to engage in this study, this narrative. Available figures support this (see Figure 6).

Fig. 6 – Gender differences apparent in my caseload 2011-2012:

Total number of cases	53
Number of boys	41/53
Number of girls	12/53
Number of these boys who were permanently excluded	13/41
Number of these girls who were permanently excluded	0/12
Number of these boys where behaviour issues were raised as a concern	32/41

I carried out a similar exercise in 2008 (Oakley, ibid.); at this time, I also interrogated the local EPS database and discovered that across the LA, out of 296 requests for EP involvement, 224 were related to boys and 72 to girls, meaning that around three-quarters of requests were for EP input regarding boys. As I write now, in 2013, I see a similar pattern; I am involved with 15 cases at this point in time - 13 boys and 2 girls.

Summary of Section 1.2

Figures demonstrating the overrepresentation of boys and young men in EP casework, along with those showing the number of exclusions locally have contributed to my concerns and questions regarding exclusion and EP practices. I have noted with interest how small a percentage of the school population are actually permanently excluded, demonstrating that the vast majority of young people may be considered "successful" at some level, and am interested in the group of young people represented by the difference between the percentage of fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions.

1.3 National Context

Having outlined the local context above, I now seek to consider the national picture of exclusion rates and patterns, considering demographics and changes over time, along with critical evaluations of these data and their use. I also outline and comment upon the current guidance on exclusion and the national school exclusion trial. I have chosen to interrogate this data in order to understand how local patterns in exclusion compare with national patterns and to investigate my perception that boys are more likely to be excluded.

1.3(i) Statistical Exclusion Data: Changes Over Time

Exclusion of young people from school has become an issue of increasing concern for those involved in education over the last two decades. Lown (2005) describes how, between the establishment of the 1944 Education Act and the early 1990s, little attention was paid to the right of headteachers to exclude children and young people from schools.

It was only in the early 1990s that the first national monitoring of exclusion data was implemented. Parsons (1999) reports permanent exclusion figures in England between 1990 and 1998, documenting a rise from just under 3,000 to just under 14,000. Lown (op. cit.) suggests permanent exclusions receding to around 9,000 by the start of the new millennium.

Of course, if these sets of data are taken from two different sources, we cannot be sure that the same criteria have been used to assess the data; therefore, the apparent drop between the mid 1990s and the end of the 1990s may be a misrepresentation.

Also, as mentioned, prior to the early 1990s, exclusions data was not collected (which, in the current climate, feels like an unthinkable position, perhaps demonstrating the differences in focus and expectation, especially

with relation to accountability), so there are no figures with which to make a comparison.

It could also be the case that, in the 1990s, as headteachers became increasingly aware that accountability regarding exclusions was increasing, they ensured that they were following the correct procedures with regard to removing young people from their school, rather than working at a more informal level, which may have been more prevalent when data was not collected.   If this was indeed the case, this may go some way to explaining the rise in exclusion figures in the 1990s.

The DfE (2012b, op.cit.) reports the following figures relating to exclusions in state-funded schools during 2010-11:

- 5,080 permanent exclusions across all schools;

- 271,980 fixed period exclusions from secondary schools;

- 37,790 fixed period exclusions from primary schools;

- 14,340 fixed period exclusions from special schools;

- Permanent and fixed-period exclusion rates were 3 times higher for

boys than girls;

- Those with statements of special educational need (SEN) were 9 times more likely to be permanently excluded than those without statements of SEN;

- Those eligible for free school meals were nearly 4 times as likely to receive a fixed period exclusion and 3 times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those not eligible for free school meals.

Similar data are available for the academic years 2005 to 2010 (DfE, 2012b, op.cit), and on charting the data, I can observe that generally, there appears to have been a downward trend in both fixed-period and permanent exclusions over this five year period. The most up to date statistical information available from the DfE (DfE, 2013) suggests that during 2011-2012, permanent exclusions have risen very slightly in the secondary sector, by 0.07 percent (5080 to 5170); in the primary sector, there has been a more significant rise of 13.9 percent (610 rising to 690).

1.3(ii) Statistical Exclusion Data: Demographics and Evaluation

Despite overall falls in exclusion figures, boys consistently remain between 3

and 4 times more likely to be excluded than girls, with a typical representation being that in any one year, boys make up about 75-80% of all permanent exclusions. Also consistent is the increased likelihood of being excluded if you are a young person labelled as having SEN (DfE, 2012b, op.cit.).

Another fairly consistent finding seems to be that the age at which young people are most likely to be permanently excluded is 13-14. In 06/07, 54% of permanent exclusions were given to young people of this age (DfE, 2012b, op.cit.).

When perusing this data, I found it interesting to note how the types of data presented by the DfE (and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in between) have changed over the last decade. My perception was that more of the 'story' was present in the headline data in earlier years, whereas the headline data is now reduced to those figures bulleted above only.

In earlier data –e.g. – 05/06, 06/07 – information was provided with regard to numbers of young people who had just received one fixed period exclusion as opposed to those who had received subsequent exclusions. The ages of excludees were discussed and some interactions in the data identified and highlighted – e.g. – 05/06 – "boys are more likely to be excluded at a younger age than girls, with very few girls being excluded during the primary years.

The most common point for both boys and girls to be excluded is at ages 13 and 14" (DfE, 2012c).

This slightly richer data seems to have been omitted from the headline statistical presentations in the last three years, leading me to question the priorities of those gathering, interpreting and presenting this data.

A further element of 'rich' data which seems to be missing is a discussion of the reasons children and young people are excluded from school. I was hopeful that this information may be presented separately by the DfE when I located a document published in February 2012 (DfE Feb 2012) and entitled 'A profile of pupil exclusions in England' however, I was disappointed to find 88 pages, the great majority of the focus of which was identifying the individual pupil characteristics associated with exclusion.

I was unsurprised to note that the factors placing a young person at least risk of being permanently excluded are being: female; white British; not having a special educational need; not being eligible for free school meals.

There *is* a section addressing school characteristics; from this I learned that the greatest number of fixed-term exclusions in 2009/10 were in special schools, and the greatest number of permanent exclusions in the same period were in academies (which echoes my locality and does represents an

interesting discussion alone), but there is no attempt in this document to begin to explain, interpret, use or understand these findings.

I was pleased to note that in a short section at the end of the report, where further work is suggested, the following is identified:

> *…aim to identify the relative impact of the characteristics of the school that a pupil attends on a pupil's odds of being excluded* (p.59).

I am glad that there seems to be a recognition that the total causality in exclusion does not lie with the young person, but wonder if the resulting data may only inform us of the interactional aspects at a statistical level, in the same way that the current report identifies interactions between gender, free school meal eligibility etc. I am unsure where the way forward lies in the continued gathering of this purely quantitative data.

1.3(iii) Exclusion Guidance

1.3(iii)a) Statutory Guidance

It does not feel necessary within this study to examine statutory guidance in detail, but it should be recognised that head teachers are guided by the

Government with regard to the processes of exclusion (DfE, 2012d) and that updated guidance increases the power of head teachers in decision making around exclusion, suggesting that the manner in which individual head teachers engage with individual young people and their families is ever more important in determining outcomes.

1.3(iii)b) School Exclusion Trial

The three-year school exclusion trial (2011-2014) being undertaken in eleven LAs, mine being one, merits some discussion as it has begun to produce some feedback.

The major change proposed by the trial is that excluding schools will continue to maintain statutory responsibility for excluded pupils, rather than this passing to the LA on the 6th day. It will be the responsibility of the school to place the excluded young person in an "appropriate alternative setting", a discussion where EPs may have much to contribute.

Current feedback from the trial addresses changes in the schools involved (DfE, 2013b):

- Changes to processes in school, including new policies, more specialist posts and specific budgets for alternative provision;

- Increased training for current staff;

- The provision of different interventions in order to provide greater support to those young people at risk of permanent exclusion, including in-school and external provision.

Two key issues for the continuing trial were also highlighted:

- Ensuring schools' capacity and expertise in the commissioning and monitoring of alternative provision;

- Increasing early intervention in order to address the first signs of difficulty.

This final point echoes my observation above regarding the need to identify at an earlier point those young people who are communicating that their needs are not being met in school.

Summary of Section 1.3

In outlining the data and guidance pertaining to exclusion as well as discussing the current trial taking place in which the focus of meeting young

people's needs is placed with the school, it is pleasing to see that the overall trend since the beginning of the new millennium is a fall in exclusions, but concerning to note that over 5,000 young people were still permanently excluded from school in the academic year 2010/11.   Of particular relevance to this study is the observation that boys continue to make up around 75% of excludees.   At a local level, the apparent perception that EPs do not have pivotal role to play in the exclusion trial is interesting and concerning.   I hope that engaging with this study may enable me to consider means of addressing this.

1.4 Exclusion Research Context

Having considered the number of children and young people experiencing exclusion, I now intend to discuss what 'exclusion' actually means, and why exclusion matters; what are the implications of being excluded?

With the aim of maintaining a S-O approach, and addressing Question 1 (In what ways can I develop my thoughts around what helps prevent permanent exclusion from school?) I will present a literature review regarding what current research suggests does help, before considering what the voices of children and young people offer on this subject.

This final section regarding children and young people's voices will also seek to contribute specifically to Question 2 (What can I understand about seeking the views of young people?).

1.4(i) Defining Exclusion

The word 'exclude' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'to shut or keep out (a person or thing) from a place, group, privilege etc.' When we apply that definition to children and young people and their entitlement to education in this modern, Western society, the reason for concern is apparent. Lown (ibid.) points out that there are other countries within Europe where the notion of school exclusion does not exist; it is not recognised as a possible solution to a problem. However, she states, "in the UK we continue to accept this as a way to treat children and families in difficulty" (p.47). Exclusion of 'problem children' is seen as a socially acceptable response to behaviour which is difficult; I often find myself wondering when working with excluded children and the adults around them who benefits from the exclusion. The answer usually feels as though it is the school staff, as the 'problem' no longer affects them.

'Exclusion' can of course be conceptualised at a number of different levels

within the school context alone; the young person who spends a large proportion of the school day working outside the classroom with a Teaching Assistant; the young person who struggles to read; the young person who doesn't have the right trainers; the young person who struggles to maintain peer relationships; the young person who has to remain inside during lunch break; the young person who is sent home for the afternoon; the young person who is only accessing a part-time timetable;   the young person whose parents are asked to move him/her to another school to avoid permanent exclusion.

All of these examples will likely be familiar to practising EPs, and none of these examples would appear in the statistics which purport to represent the picture of exclusions across the country, which again leads me to question the purpose and usefulness of the raft of exclusion data produced each year.   A large number of 'unofficial' exclusions take place in our schools every academic year (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Brodie, 1999), and Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous & Tarling (2001) describe the need to extend the definition of exclusion to take into account the many different forms it can take:

> *Extending the definition of exclusion is clearly awkward in terms of measuring the scale and nature of the problem. However, it is valuable in highlighting the fact that students experience exclusion other than through official procedures, and that 'exclusion' does not only refer to a*

decision which takes place at a single point in time, but is the outcome of a sometimes lengthy process. It is also helpful in conceptualising other ways in which children are prevented from participating in school – for example through truancy or membership of a marginalised social group. (p. 2)

A practice of which I have become increasingly aware in my time as an EP, especially in secondary schools, is that of 'internal exclusion' (Bourne et al, 1994; Cohen at al, 1994), where a pupil remains in the school but is prevented from mixing with peers or accessing the usual curriculum.   In my experience, secondary schools often have an 'inclusion unit' which is employed for this purpose; the massive juxtaposition of the words 'inclusion' and 'unit' never fails to strike me, and yet this phrase now seems to be part of everyday life within the school context, with no consideration given to the words and their meanings, let alone the fact that the '*in*clusion unit' is employed in the practice of *ex*clusion.

Within this study, I purposefully did not set out very specific criteria regarding the potential participants' experiences of exclusion for 4 reasons:

- The potential pool of participants was already small;

- Definitions and perceptions of 'exclusion' are broad and varied;

- I wanted to hear about 'exclusion' from the young men's viewpoints and therefore wished to begin with a broad definition;

- As an EP, I am involved with situations where 'exclusion' occurs at a variety of levels and by a range of means.

The young man whose story contributes to this study had not actually experienced official permanent exclusion, but he had been very strongly encouraged to move secondary schools, and had done so.

1.4(ii) Why Does Exclusion Matter?

Excluding children from school matters; the implications of this experience and label for young people's future opportunities can be highly significant; Wright, Weekes & McGlaughlin (2000) suggest that such implications extend far beyond the formal education years, reaching into adult life and influencing an individual's capacity to access those aspects of society and those opportunities which may be considered easily available to others. Such a process may be described as 'social exclusion'. It does not feel particularly surprising that a child or young person who is removed from their established relationships, possibly accessing part time education (National Audit

Commission, 1999) and officially labelled as a problem may experience the ramifications of this in later life.

A retrospective path can be traced from the current situation of 'disaffected' young people back to educational, social or emotional issues which it is perceived were not fully addressed during school years (Macrae et al, 1997), and exclusion from school has also been linked with behaviour deemed criminal (Social Exclusion Unit, ibid.), with feelings of hopelessness and stress (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000), and with young people feeling rejected, labelled and stigmatised (De Pear & Garner, 1996; Kinder, Wilkin & Wakefield, 1997; Pomeroy, 2000). Links have been identified between exclusion and anti-social behaviour and drug use (McCrystal, Higgins & Percy, 2007) and unemployment (Kaplan & McArdle, 2004).

Parsons & Castle (1998) discuss the societal, financial implications of exclusion from school, with regard to the need for increased involvement from a number of agencies. Children excluded from school are also among those at greatest risk of educational underachievement, linked with lack of employment, an increased probability of engagement in criminal behaviour, and even "the productivity gap between the UK and its competitors" (McNally & Telhaj, 2007, p.60).

What strikes me when summarising this research is the profound negativity

associated with young people who have experienced exclusion. The following researchers also describe the negative associations of exclusion, but do note some positive aspects too.

Spooner (2010) employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Nieuwenhuys, 2004) with young people who had been excluded from school, who then in turn worked with young people attending a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), reporting that:

The young people were left with feelings of being different and disappointed; isolated and lonely; jealous, angry, and sad. There was also recognition that their exclusion had had a negative impact on their parents/carers (p. 10).

More positively, he also notes that:

Despite their difficult past experiences and the harmful effects of exclusion on their self-identity and interpersonal relationships, the majority of participants retained traditional ambitions and aspirations for the future (p.10).

Interestingly, Spooner also comments on the "modesty" (p.11) of the young people's aspirations, giving examples such as "getting pets; going pin

bowling, go-karting or paint-balling; a chocolate birthday cake; or a really good Christmas" (p.11). I do feel that this comment may demonstrate as much about the expectations and experiences of the author as the young people, and wonder if young people face similar reactions from education professionals.

When carrying out a longitudinal study of young people who had been excluded, Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser, & Bedward (2003) found that at the two year point, they had retained 73% of their original participant group, which of course affects the resulting information, as maybe the most positive or negative experiences may have been had by those no longer involved. From the remaining sample, they make the observations noted in Figure 7.

Daniels' and colleagues' observations with regard to whether the young people perceived their permanent exclusion as positive or negative is of interest, particularly their finding that 19% of their participants viewed their exclusion as a positive event:

> *A few young people believed that exclusion helped them to escape from anti-social behaviour, peer groups and school systems that would have limited their career options* (p.129).

When positioned as the reader of this 'fact', it highlights the limitation that this position imposes upon my understanding and interpretation of this information. Had I been present in person to witness this element of the story telling, might I have perceived bravado, positivity, or a sense of escape from an unhappy environment? A simple statement that 19% of participants perceived their exclusion as positive illuminates none of this. This indeed can be one of the limitations of working with a large number of individuals; the subtleties, and therefore, I would argue, the meaning, of the resulting narratives can be lost.

Thavarajah (2010) points out, importantly, that the establishment of a clear link between exclusion and all of the 'outcomes' discussed above can be problematic, as young people experiencing exclusion often have a number of other challenging factors in their lives. I might therefore suggest that it becomes even more important to focus on how we can work together to maintain school placements.

Fig. 7 – Outcomes for young people who have been excluded from school (Daniels et al, op. cit., p. 94):

• About half were judged to be engaged in education, training or employment;
• Engagement in all types of educational provision fell away as young people neared school leaving age;
• Half saw their exclusion as damaging but 19% saw it as a positive event;
• Young people who had received more fixed-term exclusions prior to exclusion were more likely to be disengaged;
• Those who offended prior to exclusion usually continued to offend post-exclusion and others started to offend;
• There was a trend towards higher offending rates amongst white young people compared to black Caribbean young people;
• White young people were more likely to be disengaged and to under-achieve than black young people;
• Few of the young people sat a wide range of GCSEs and only 1 out of 10 looked after children;
• The young people in employment had often used family contacts/networks to obtain their job;

- Some help had been received by most of the young people from careers officers, education welfare officers and re-integration teachers but rarely mental health workers, social workers, or workers for 'new services' (Connexions, Youth Offending Teams);
- Many of the young people had very limited ambitions for the future.

1.4 (iii) What Helps Prevent Permanent Exclusion?

Permanent and fixed-term exclusions have fallen over the last decade (DfE, Feb 2012, ibid.), but quantitative data is not enough, and it is key to future planning to understand what helps to maintain school placements.

1.4(iii)a) What is Happening Locally?

Whilst gathering the local statistical information presented in Section 1.2(ii), I noticed that the document ended with a section considering support for schools. I found this to be a rather 'missed opportunity', initially stating that "schools receive a range of support from a variety of teams with in the directorate", and then proceeding to report information provided only by behaviour and attendance consultants and relating to individual 'problem' schools. This document could have provided an excellent opportunity to inform a wide range of LA colleagues about the nature of the different types of

support available to schools and/or to provide feedback with regard to what seems to be working in terms of supporting schools with regard to exclusion.

More positively, a recent small piece of research was carried out by the arm of the LA with current responsibility for provision of alternative education placements. This research was conducted in response to concerns regarding the high number of permanent exclusions from primary schools in one small area of the LA. As well as investigating the characteristics of the high-excluding schools, this research also identified a matching number of low excluding schools, in similar areas, and considered what factors characterised these establishments. Factors found to be present more often in the low-excluding schools are presented in Figure 8 (some specific team titles have been changed to safeguard confidentiality).

It is not yet clear how those who conducted this research intend to use these findings to work with other schools in the area, and I feel EPs could be key in helping to unpick further some of the arising factors. The 'agreed local protocol' (it does have a name but I have removed it) has been in place for a few months now and involves a group of local head teachers in an area of high deprivation and significant social issues meeting regularly to discuss children about whom they have concerns; the purpose is to reduce the number of permanent exclusions. An EP manager also attends. There does seem to be a useful element of peer pressure among the head teachers and it seems

Fig. 8 - Factors present in low-excluding schools in one LA:

• Clear and effective positive behaviour policy, which is understood and consistently implemented by all staff and includes restorative approaches;
• Inclusive practices across the school, led by the headteacher;
• Good communication with parents and carers and with external agencies (including EPs);
• Good local support network - i.e. - Sure Start (all resources made available to school), Best Start,   SEN Team, counselling services, Pupil Referral Unit Early Intervention Team;
• Experienced SENCOs with minimal teaching commitment – aware of needs of pupils and appropriate interventions;
• Lead on Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for pupils;
• Started to complete managed moves through the agreed local protocol;
• If fixed term exclusion is deemed necessary , then a reintegration meeting takes place prior to the pupil's return to school;
• Effective use of Pupil Premium;
• Nurture Group provision;

that there is a push for permanent exclusions to be viewed as culturally unacceptable.   I am aware however, that one head teacher's response to this pressure has been to leave the group on rather negative terms.

I also have some questions with regard to the focus of the group's solutions, which I perceive to be a preference for managed moves.   I see how this will reduce the number of permanent exclusions, but am less clear about how it will address issues of school systems, developing staff confidence and skills and significantly improving outcomes for the children and young people involved.

1.4(iii)b) Research Considering Prevention of Exclusion at a Systemic Level

A similar question regarding features of low-excluding schools is posed at a national level by The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2013) in a report considering the issues around higher rates of exclusion among boys, those of ethnic origin, those from low-income families and those considered to have a SEN.   The factors seen to exemplify schools demonstrating 'good practice' are seen in Figure 9.

I interpret an emphasis on responsibility on the part of the adult members of the school community and on the importance of relationships, which I find to be a positive contribution to guiding schools in their work to avoid exclusion.

It is my intention to enquire, during my regular contacts with local schools, if they have accessed this document, and I have recently found the notion of 'supporting young people to meet the school's high expectations' to be helpful in a discussion around a young person currently in receipt of a fixed-term exclusion.

Also working at a systemic level, Hallam and Castle (2000) evaluated a variety of different projects taking place with the aim of reducing exclusion rates. These included multidisciplinary behaviour support teams; in-school centres and the secondment of teachers to PRUs:

> *The findings suggest that setting up projects alone does not guarantee change. Success depended on the projects being implemented with the full commitment of school management; involving the whole school; including parents; and placing the responsibility for their behaviour on pupils. Where these conditions were met the projects had cost benefits; promoted a more positive school ethos; and generated change. These findings have implications for interventions worldwide aiming to improve behaviour in school* (para.1, web page).

Fig. 9 - Factors linked with 'good practice' around exclusion (The Office of the Children's Commissioner, op. cit.):

- Clear expectations of behaviour and academic achievement;

- A view that behaviour and academic achievement are inextricably linked;

- An awareness that some young people will need more support than others to meet the school's expectations;

- A willingness to do whatever it takes to provide this support;

- A message that all young people are valued members of the school community;

- A sense, among teachers, of personal responsibility for the young people in their school;

- Exclusions being seen as a sign that the school system has failed and that a review of approaches is needed;

- A genuine desire to listen to young people's views and to train young people in methods of expressing their views;

- Strong leaders, who are not afraid to recognise the need for changes to be made;

- Teachers knowing the young people in school; being aware of issues outside school which may be affecting a young person's behaviours and learning within school, and being prepared to act in respect of this

awareness;
• The most effective teachers working with the most 'challenging classes';
• Working with, and maintaining good relationships with, families, who become involved at an early stage should any concerns begin to arise;
• Involving the relevant external support agencies;
• Encouraging joint working;
• Working with other local schools;
• Ensuring quality assurance standards are met when employing alternative provision.

Hallam and Castle's work was presented at the end of a period in which exclusions had been increasing rather than declining. I was struck when reading it by the language choices made by the authors, including such words as 'indiscipline', 'disobedience' and 'insolence' to describe the behaviours shown by those young people who were excluded. I wonder whether this represents a difference in acceptable discourse around exclusion and young people's behaviours at a time when exclusion was maybe viewed as an 'answer' to such problems? The authors appear to be arguing that all young people should be maintained in mainstream education, which I imagine is why the language choices strike me as lying at somewhat of a juxtaposition to this.

Hallam and Castle go on to identify a number of factors which they feel are helpful in reducing exclusion rates. They employ the term 'successful', but as a reader, I remain unclear with regard to how they are defining 'success'; I presume by exclusion rates, but feel interested in the individual stories underlying the numbers. They considered projects to be 'successful' when they included those factors outlined in Figure 10.

A strong emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their actions is apparent; is it possible that a further contributor to successful projects may be class teachers also beginning to feel a greater sense of responsibility for, and empowerment within, their own classrooms, linking with the need for a clear hierarchical response? Munn & Lloyd (2005) extend the sense of responsibility for school exclusion outward further, as they suggest that:

> *A focus only on school practices and responses to exclusion distracts attention from broader social and economic questions, which contribute to the context in which schools are increasingly seen as the answer to more fundamental problems of modem society* (p. 206).

Fig. 10 – Features of 'successful' projects aimed at avoiding exclusion (Hallam & Castle, op. cit.):

• Intervening at three levels - whole school, class and individual, with differing combinations of these offered as felt appropriate to the setting;
• Improving the knowledge and skills of all in the school community in differing ways - e.g. - increasing parents' understanding and role, working with pupils to increase their ability to take responsibility for their actions;
• Evolving in response to need over the life of the projects - being able to adapt the next steps according to evidence of what was needed;
• Consulting with the stakeholders from the start and continuing to do this throughout (it is not clear who these may have been however, and whether pupils were included in this);
• Changing practice and embedding these changes within the school in order that they became the norm;
• Changing understanding about and attitudes to, pupils at risk of exclusion;
• Working with the whole school staff, with committed leadership from the head teacher;
• Increasing teachers' confidence in working with difficult situations;

> - Developing a shared language across the school community.
>
> - Encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and to self- monitor.

They examine young people's views with regard to three different educational projects, all linked to exclusion, and conclude three areas for action:

- Schools should examine critically their own exclusion patterns in order to identify any discrimination and to understand why things are as they are. They recommend approaches such as the merging of behaviour

- and learner support systems and pupil shadowing, whereby a specific pupil's experiences in one day are shadowed by a member of staff, who then acts a critical friend for other colleagues;

- Increased levels of engagement with young people's views and contributions, characterised by messages of value;

- School policy needs to increase its focus upon the role schools play in meeting social/welfare goals, rather than only cognitive/academic goals. This would then enable schools to feel legitimised in directing more attention and value towards such goals.

The notion of the pupil shadowing is one I found interesting; I was caused to ponder the idea of pupils shadowing each other and reporting back on what experiences they perceived for their peer.

Maguire et al (2003) also took a systemic approach to researching the prevention of permanent exclusion, and described and recorded multi-disciplinary team approaches with regard to young children deemed to be at risk of exclusion, considering how such a team had interpreted and applied national policies, when working with schools categorised as 'high excluders' (although how this was defined is not clear).   Their work leads me to the following considerations:

- The importance of all those involved in working with a situation involving a child at risk of exclusion to perceive themselves as equal and effective partners, working towards a shared goal.   Maguire et al discuss two sources of resistance that the multi-disciplinary team encountered: head teachers, where the method of communicating the intended involvement of the team and the purpose of the involvement was initially unclear, and parents, where they felt that their child was being blamed or labelled, or felt that they were being judged because of the difficulties their child was experiencing in school.   I feel that the notion of a shared goal is key, and that explicit recognition is needed that partners in a situation may be entering the partnership from very

different places, with very different perceptions of the 'problem'.

- The importance of clear and joined-up planning of the interventions which will be put in place, in order to avoid contradiction and repetition, which can result in confusion and frustration for the young person and their family, and in wasted resources for the agencies involved. I would like to see parents as a partner in the plan, with 'interventions' discussed, agreed and planned for them to undertake in just the same way as the other professionals involved. Maguire et al describe the different work planned by the clinical psychologist, the educational psychologist and the social worker in the team they studied, with each professional playing to their strengths and experience. This caused me to think of a meeting I attended recently in a primary school, around a child 'at risk of permanent exclusion'. Various professionals were already involved with this child, not all of whom were present at the meeting, I was just commencing my involvement, and there was talk of referrals to other agencies. I questioned the appropriateness of making further referrals as I was concerned that too many different messages were being sent the way of the child and his family. Maguire's article gives me cause the think that the question being posed for this child was the reverse of what would be desirable: 'What interventions can we access for this child?' rather than the more helpful 'What does this situation need?' only then followed by 'Which

agencies can we approach to try and access this?'

- The need to consider interventions which involve peer groups, at whatever level feels appropriate to the child and the situation. Maguire et al describe one school where it was felt that any intervention work needed to involve the whole class "because so many behavioural and attainment problems were associated with poor peer relationships and 'interacting elements' (Docking, 1996)" (p.52). Thinking back to my recent experience once more, there was much description of the boy's negative behaviours in class and how different his behaviours were when working on a 1:1 basis with an adult. I tried to work with the staff to help them use these observations to recognise that the difficult behaviours were located within a social situation, as opposed to residing within the child.

- The need to work in different ways with different schools, according to their needs, their perceptions of the current issues for their school, the resources available and the nature of the difficulties being described and the needs of any individual children involved. Maguire et al describe how the team worked at a number of different levels within the schools, dependent upon the starting point for that particular school.

1.4(iii)c) Research Considering Prevention of Exclusion at a Group and Individual Level

The discussion above highlights systemic factors important in reducing and preventing exclusion.   Other researchers have discussed interventions which focus on young people as individuals and as group members.

Bagley & Pritchard (1998) report on the introduction of specialist social workers into two schools, working alongside 'project teachers'.   They report reductions in school exclusion, accompanied by reduced involvement in crime and drug use.   The focus of the adults' work was to react to children's difficult behaviours very quickly and by involving and supporting the whole family, addressing such issues as family breakdown, unemployment and child protection.

Whilst I welcome a recognition among school staff that such family issues are likely to influence a young person's interactions in school, I do feel concern that the project appeared to locate the entirety of the problem within the family, therefore not acknowledging the power of relationships in that school to change situations.   On her Twitter feed, Bomber (2012), the author of a number of books about attachment and relationships in schools, states "every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge all that has gone before", a statement I have referred to during meetings when encouraging school staff to

acknowledge the power they hold to make things different for a child.

Turner & Waterhouse (2003) also highlight the importance of relationships when examining how two schools employed strategies aimed at including young people. They observe that "relating to pupils as individuals rather than as general categories" and "viewing problems collectively with a shared sense of ownership" (p. 24) proved key. They note the following as strategies which proved useful in both schools, although one was characterised by a more systemic, and one by a more individualised approach:

- *Identifying 'at-risk' pupils early;*

- *Recognizing individual pupil needs;*

- *Tailoring support for each case;*

- *Providing support at the right time;*

- *Monitoring and reviewing support.* (p.24)

My interpretation of the above strategies is that they could be applied successfully to any human relationship; they are about *knowing* someone.

Hardman (2001) describes a more prescribed and targeted approach when discussing her use, as an EP, of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) to reduce the risk of exclusion for one Year 10 pupil. She describes an 8-week intervention, involving staff, parents and the pupil. I am interested to note the date of this article - 2001 - as I feel that the types of work many EPs were able to offer at the beginning of the millennium was probably quite different to what is able to be provided now, in a climate of austerity and cuts in services. Certainly, the team of EPs of which I am a member would have no opportunity to offer an 8-week intervention.

However, despite this criticism of the ability of PCP used in this way to offer a realistic method for EPs to intervene in situations where there is a risk of exclusion, I feel that some of the important principles of PCP could be, and probably are, applied to difficult situations in alternative ways by EPs. For example, the idea of considering the 'meanings' of behaviours, and thinking about the child's point of view; "Kelly (1955) suggests that, if you want to know what's wrong with a child, ask them; they might just tell you!" (Hardman, p.50).

Fifty-seven years after Kelly wrote this, I still find myself making this suggestion to adults regularly, and this returns us to the idea of *knowing and being known*. One of the important contributions that PCP has made when working with, and around, young people at risk of exclusion has been to

address the issues of what is important to them in terms of their own identity and self/social image - e.g. - that for Jack, being seen as 'rebellious' by John and Joe is of far greater importance than any opinion he perceives the teacher may be forming of him.

Burton (2006) describes group work with secondary school pupils at risk of exclusion, where the focus was upon promoting "individual responsibility for behaviour" (p.215). She cites Squires (2002), who identifies some of the advantages of group work as aiding in normalising behaviours and feelings, providing a wider range of alternative viewpoints and possible ways of being and providing peer support outside the group sessions. This positively addresses the importance of relationships and 'fitting in' when working with young people at risk of exclusion.

However, Burton then goes on to consider the internal and external factors which may influence behaviour, and identifies, in the context of the school, the 'internal' as self-control and the 'external' as teacher control, which then does not seem to take account of the influence of peer relationships. I was pleased to note that during her discussion, Burton then does identify the ability of such group work to engage peer influence in a positive manner. She discusses the notion of group members giving each other "permission to change" (p.225), where strongly-established reputations may be at stake. Titheridge and Turpin (2001) report similar findings.

Burton's groupwork was assessed for effectiveness by pre and post-intervention rating scales and claimed an improvement in self ratings and teacher ratings for all participants. Burton describes the limitations of such methods and backs up her findings with qualitative information. Interestingly, one of the main factors Burton identifies as important in determining the success of the group was the relationship established between the young people and the 'co-worker' - e.g. - "…taking a personal interest in each of them." (p.224), which makes me wonder how much of the positive effect was due to the establishment of a supportive, available relationship in school, as opposed to a more within-child view that the young person had chosen to change their behaviour.

It was also of interest to note that the 'co-worker' was the Deputy Headteacher of the school, which fits with a conclusion at which I have arrived via experience; that it is important to have a senior member of staff involved in such work. As Burton points out, a senior member of staff tends to have less teaching commitments and can therefore be more available to young people. I also feel that the message regarding the value and importance of the group and the resulting relationships can be enhanced when these are facilitated by a senior member of staff. It may also be the case that the perception of the young people involved and of the group work itself amongst other staff is enhanced by the leadership of a senior staff member (Sharp & Herrick, 2000).

Burton comments that the Deputy Headteacher intended to cascade the facilitation of the group work to other members of staff; in one sense this can be viewed positively, but in another, I wonder if this suggests that the possible reasons for success that I have described above have not been considered.

Interestingly, this group work was not aimed at those pupils "…on the verge of permanent exclusion" (p.224); in a similar vein to Squires (2001), the co-worker selected pupils around whom there were concerns, but where crisis-point had not been reached. It would be interesting to see if, over a period of time, and with different groups accessing the group work, whether the number of young people reaching crisis-point decreased.

In summary, I take from Burton's article the possible positive influence of group work upon harnessing the power of peer influence, the importance of the inclusion of senior staff members in group work with young people at risk of exclusion, and the vital nature of the establishment of genuine, warm, available relationships between the adult and the young people (after Rogers, 1961).

1.4(iv) The Voices of Young People

All of the above has focussed upon adults' views regarding what helps

prevent permanent exclusion. Other voices also need to be heard; those of the children and young people in our schools, some of whom will have experienced exclusion and some of whom will not. The discussion below seeks to consider the need for children and young people's voices to be heard, respected and acted upon in relation to all aspects of their education (and indeed their lives). I have adopted a particular focus upon the voices of young people labelled 'disaffected' and those who have experience of exclusion, as these voices feel very relevant to the current study and to my practice as an EP.

A salient element of my role as an EP is to advocate for, and listen and respond appropriately to the views of, children and young people. When I reflect upon the choice I made in this study to seek the views of young people, I believe that it was almost an instinctive choice; I do not recall deliberating over whose views on exclusion I would prefer to seek.

Considering my interactions with adults around children and young people who are part of situations labelled problematic, I am aware that I often invest much effort in attempting to facilitate a shift to seeing the world from the child or young person's point of view. Within this writing process, I am led to consider how this sits with my desire to locate the problem outside of the child? In trying to justify why a child may perceive things as they do, am I in fact supporting a within-child view? I would like to think that I attempt to

locate the problem in the space between people and that this is why I consider also seeing things from the child's side to be important, but feel this is an issue regarding which I will aim to be more attentive.

1.4(iv)a   Policies on Children and Young People's Voices

> *Children, who are capable of forming views, have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion and to have their opinion taken into account in all matters affecting them.   The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child (Articles 12 & 13 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)* (In James, 2004).

In Britain, the above UN Convention article guided the Children Act (1989) with respect to LAs' duty to establish the views of children in public care and to facilitate such children's participation in the processes of planning and review in their lives.

More specifically within education, the Special Educational Needs (SEN) code of Practice (DfEE, 1994) suggested that the effectiveness of SEN provision would be enhanced when professionals ascertained the wishes of the child. This very unprescriptive approach was strengthened in the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 2002), where it is stated that the views of the child should

be sought and taken into account (where 'should' legally means 'must').   At the time of writing, the most significant overhaul of SEN and disability (SEND) planning and provision since the publication of the Warnock Report (1978) is underway, with LAs currently tasked with implementing many significant changes by September 2014.

A small number of LAs are currently acting as 'pathfinders' and reporting back on their implementation of some of the processes and practices of the 'Support and Aspiration' (DfE, 2012e) framework.   It is pleasing to note that many pathfinders appear to be focusing upon ascertaining the views of young people, as these examples demonstrate:

In Manchester, the Young People's Forum has been commissioned to seek the views of young people within and outside of the pathfinder cohort. At least thirty young people in the Manchester pathfinder are regularly consulted about their views on the EHCP and local offer and their views are feeding into the pathfinder governance structure.

Southampton has commissioned five of its Special Schools to undertake consultation projects with children and young people, concentrating on the coordinated assessment and EHCP and on personal budgets. Each of the consultations is approached in a bespoke way to meet the needs of the

respective schools' pupils. Approaches range from 'Big Brother' style filming to family consultation or whole-school interview.

In Darlington, a Young Leaders Group from the Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) is providing ideas and suggestions for the development of the local offer and EHCP, looking particularly at ways of making the process more attractive to young people. The Young Leaders Group is made up of disabled young people aged fourteen to twenty-five and has been involved throughout the pathfinder process. Most recently they have commented on Darlington's emerging EHCP – the 'One Plan'.

So far, the sample Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which took the place of the existing statements of SEN in September 2014, appear much more child-centred than the statements of SEN, with children and young people's views and aspirations presented more explicitly.

1.4(iv)b) Children and Young People's Voices on Consultation

However, this does not necessarily mean that the young person's views will be acted upon in a meaningful way.

Various researchers have discussed consultation with children and young people (sometimes labelled 'participation') as 'problematic', and have sought the views of young people with regard to their experiences of how their views are usually ascertained, especially with regard to education. Turner (2004) sought the views of pupils with regard to school improvement, finding their contributions salient and valuable; James (2004) discusses children's views on what characterises effective consultation and the resulting implications for professionals; Woolfson, Harker, Lowe, Shields, Banks, Campbell & Ferguson (2006) conclude that young people value an individually tailored approach to consultation with them; Harding & Atkinson (2009) examine the methods employed by EPs to access children's views; Aston & Lambert (2010) point out the importance of culture and ethos in terms of determining how able young people feel to express their views.

All of the above researchers allude to the issue of 'tokenism', whereby adults may appear to be seeking young people's views, but that the opportunity for these views to have meaningful impact is actually very small. I have often witnessed school staffs' tendency to bring in a child at the end of an Annual Review meeting, to be faced by a room full of adults, some unfamiliar, and then asked if s/he would like to contribute. Can this really be viewed as an honest attempt to ascertain and act upon a child's thoughts and ideas?

Chamberlain, Golden & Bergeron (2011) expose an interesting difference between pupils' prioritisation of firstly, their relationships with teachers and secondly, their school asking for and listening to pupils' views: 'Having a good teacher' was seen as important by 49% of pupils; 'Schools asking and listening to what pupils think' was rated as important by only 16% of young people. This causes me to wonder if the notion of formalising 'asking and listening' results in the asking and listening being viewed more 'tokenistically' and therefore seen as less valuable by young people.

I view an important part of my role as an EP as advocating for young people and helping them to consider and present their views, either in person, through me, or via another familiar adult. I do experience frustration however, with the extent to which these views usually result in action and hope that the process of engaging with this issue in the current study may increase my confidence and skills in working to facilitate increased action.

I was attracted to the title of Burke & Grosvenor's 2003 book: The School I'd Like - Children and Young People's Reflections on an Education for the 21st Century, as this fits with a request I sometimes choose to make of young people - "Tell me about your dream school". Burke & Grosvenor asked this very same question in a newspaper competition and were rewarded with the views of thousands of children; this book presents those views of children and young people aged between 5 and 18. At then end of the book, the authors

comment:

> *If we consult, we must listen, whatever solutions are given and however much it is contrary to what we hoped to hear.* (p. 162)

My motivation in seeking the views of young people in this study was to be able to illuminate some of the possible factors which may be interpreted as important to a young person in maintaining their school placement.

1.4(iv)c) Children and Young People's Voices on Schools and Exclusion

It therefore feels appropriate to explore what other researchers have found when talking with such young people.

Munn & Lloyd (ibid.) state the importance of listening to the views of young people who have been excluded:

> *The perceptions of excluded pupils are important because they can illuminate the taken-for-granted about the way the school system operates. More critically they 'can be used in a dynamic way, helping to illustrate the short-comings of schools in particular and of society as a whole. This may, of course, be one reason why we do not wish to listen to them' (de Pear & Garner, 1996, pp. 154-155)* (p. 205).

Turner (ibid.) does seek the views of pupils "close to or at the margins" (p.127); some but not all of the pupils consulted were at risk of exclusion. Turner elicited the views of these young people with regard to, not exclusion itself, but school improvement, an area which is described as lacking in pupil input (Ruddock, Chaplain & Wallace (1996). Turner's aim was "illuminating the priorities of these groups and eliciting their own language, whilst [remaining] unbounded by our own professional, adult constructs about either behaviour or school improvement". (p.131)

I would view my own aim as similar - illumination of priorities via the young person's language - but I am less comfortable with the notion of being 'unbounded by my professional, adult constructs'. I *am* a professional adult, therefore, I feel it more appropriate to acknowledge these positions (and others) and reflect upon their role in the story constructed and the understandings developed, rather than trying to 'rise above' them.

Turner discusses how the "overwhelming weight of discussion was on sanctions" (p.134) but with little reference made to exclusions, the focus instead being on detentions and being 'on report'. Interestingly, when exclusion was referred to, Turner reports her perception that it was seen by the young people as teachers 'giving up' on them; not being committed to them.

Maintaining a solution-oriented stance, I was interested to note that Ruddock and colleagues'(op. cit.) work with young people offers six principles which they suggest underpin positive school structures and relationships:

- Respect;

- Fairness;

- Autonomy;

- Challenge;

- Security;

- Support;

They also state that, in order to be "effective" (Turner, p.138), pupils need:

- Sense of self as a learner;

- Status in school;

- Overall purpose in learning;

- Control over their own lives;

- Sense of future.

A common theme in research seeking the views of young people who have experienced exclusion is 'relationships', mainly focussing upon teacher-pupil relationships. Lown (ibid.) researches successful reintegration following

exclusion and reports that pupils find most important in their relationships with teachers:

- Feeling liked;

- Feeling supported;

- Someone being there for them;

- A sense of belonging resulting from relationships;

- A sense of comfort resulting from relationships

She also addresses peer relationships and discusses the powerful influence of these suggesting that planning around peer relations does not routinely take place during reintegration.   This certainly reflects my own experiences. Pomeroy (2000), in her book 'Experiencing Exclusion', presents the views of young people about exclusion from school.   Similarly to Lown (op. cit.), she states that

> *Of all the topics students discussed during interviews, relationships with teachers dominated - taking up the most interview time, eliciting the greatest detail and the strongest emotions* (p.35).

Pomeroy records her interpretations of the 'teacher qualities' most liked by pupils:

- Talking to and listening to students;

- Having a laugh;

- Showing concern;

- Teaching well/being skilled;

- Explaining/offering help;

- Keeping control of class.

Again, this supports my own experiences of talking with young people about school and teachers. The list causes me to consider how the first three 'qualities' may be considered desirable in any relationship and seem to relate to Rogers' (ibid.) notions of empathy, warmth and genuineness.

I recall in my own teacher training (in 1996) being given a piece of advice - 'Don't smile for the first week'; as a young, newly qualified teacher, I was ready to accept any advice given, and duly followed the suggestion. Now, as an EP and with the benefit of 17 years' hindsight, I regret this, and the whole manner in which I now believe I attempted to keep myself distant from the children in my class, in terms of how much I was willing to allow them to know about me. Looking back, I did not have the confidence to allow myself to be 'known'; I wore the mask of the 'teacher' in order to maintain the control I felt I needed, and I know I would do things very differently were I ever to return to that role.

As Turner (ibid.) acknowledges, adults' perceptions of what characterises a

'good teacher' may be very different from those of young people. Chamberlain et al (ibid.) present findings regarding what makes a 'good teacher'; quantitative data results from young people selecting level of importance on a rating scale, qualitative data is gained from focus groups. This means that the former consists of statements devised by adults; the latter is led to greater extent by the young people.

I was interested to note that the focus of the adults' perceptions with regard to what makes a 'good teacher' lies very heavily with teachers' *actions* regarding work/lessons/dealing with negative behaviour.   The young people concentrated in their focus groups on teacher-pupil communication, support, respect and fairness, a very different set of priorities, and one much more firmly rooted in positive *relationships*.   This conflict does not appear to have been acknowledged by the authors.

More directly related to exclusions, Chamberlain et al (ibid.) report that 34% of young people (n=1957) felt that the number of exclusions in their school was about right, 24% felt there were too many and 12% felt there were too few. The 'too many' response was more likely among secondary-age pupils, where 52% also thought permanent exclusion was fair (at least sometimes).   In primary-age pupils, 39% perceived permanent exclusion as fair.   Overall, 87% of pupils felt that school staff should try to 'help pupils with problems' rather than excluding them.   Those who had been excluded were, perhaps

unsurprisingly, more negative with regard to exclusion. Given the significant differences between the quantitative and the qualitative data on the subject of teacher qualities, it would have been interesting to also seek the views of focus groups with regard to exclusion.

Willis (2004) considers the views of children who have been placed in Nurture Groups (NGs). I have chosen to include this study as, in my experience, NGs seem to be used, in some schools, as a form of exclusion; it also considers some of the issues in seeking the views of young children (4-5 years old). Willis points out the paradox of NGs:

> *Intervening with early behaviour difficulties by separating pupils from their peers so they can make gains with social and emotional skills is at the heart of the inclusion debate* (p.75).

Willis used a circle time setting and posed questions addressing the children's likes and dislikes about the NG and their mainstream class. He describes the need to repeat the questions and employ simple language, and how, despite this, "several pupils still had great problems understanding the questions" (p.82-3). He questions the age at which it is 'realistic' to obtain views at all, and explains how, when asked how they would feel if the NG ended, most children said 'sad' but one said 'happy'. The 'sad' responses are accepted without question, but the 'happy' response is interpreted as the

child having not understood the question.   For me, all of the above highlights some of the major issues in how some adults conceive the idea of children's views. In response to the 'problems' highlighted by Willis, I offer the following:

- One could argue that a very young baby is able to express his/her likes and dislikes quite adequately; therefore we can extrapolate that all children and young people, no matter how young, or what challenges they face, will have ways of expressing their views;

- Questioning may indeed not be the most appropriate method of developing an understanding of a child's views, but that is not the problem of the child; it is our responsibility as adults to offer opportunities for expression by a variety of means;

- If we want to hear a child's views, we must also accept, value and act upon those views, even if they do not represent what was expected or desired by the adults.

1.4(iv)d) The Right Not to 'Have a Voice'

Willis' study demonstrates the potential of 'participation' to result in children being labelled as the source of any difficulties arising during the seeking of their views. Hartas (ibid.) addresses the problematic nature of participation,

discussing how it can be viewed as an "individual responsibility" (p.104), thus meaning that "those who choose not to participate may be seen as disaffected" (p.104).

Hartas points out that young people's participation is most often viewed from a 'benefit' perspective (e.g. - Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Kirby & Bryson, 2002), and argues against this:

> *These perspectives offer a view that participation enhances a person's personal responsibility, learning and community involvement, and sets the base for a society to function.   Implicitly, participation is presented as being unproblematic, especially the view that through participation, power is shifted towards children. However, participation does not always shift power, nor does it automatically support the sharing of power (Fergusson, 2004): this raises the need to take a nuanced approach to participation and voice* (p.103).

Hartas established focus groups with young people labelled as 'disaffected', and discusses their initial scepticism about the purpose of their involvement in the groups; for example one young person commented that it was "so that the head can produce a piece of paper that says that the college includes everyone" (p.106).   The young people involved did not consider existing methods of promoting pupil voice in their school to be effective, and, of greater

concern, they felt that the systems (e.g. - school council, student bulletin) devised to encourage participation actually excluded them further; for example, school councils were seen as for the 'clever students'.

Hartas suggests 'disaffection' as a means of having a voice, a powerful proposal, but one which seems to me a useful way to conceptualise the withdrawal of some young people from the 'socially acceptable' expectations of their educational establishments and also, sometimes, of wider society.

If, as Hartas' study suggests, young people feel that they have little control over very important aspects of their lives, and that there exists a mismatch between their aspirations and what is offered to them by the available educational opportunities, then surely dissatisfaction will result.

It is easier to label this 'disaffection' (located within the person) as opposed to 'dissatisfaction', as the latter implies that there is *something* (external to the individual) about which they have reason to be dissatisfied. That 'something' may be the source of challenging questions for the adults and systems surrounding the young person.

In Section 3 below, I discuss the challenges I faced in trying to access young men who had left school, having experienced exclusion during their educational career. The issues Hartas raises feel particularly relevant to my

Fig. 11 – Summary of factors identified in research as important in the prevention of permanent exclusion:

• Young people having a sense of control over their own lives and a sense of themselves as purposeful learners;
• Young people having clear aspirations that are valued by the school community;
• Young people being appropriately challenged and partners in respectful and supportive relationships;
• Including peers in intervention;
• Joined-up working between partners, including parents and the young person, to ensure the avoidance of repetition by professionals;
• Asking and answering the question "What does this situation need?" and then moving on to consider "How do we meet this need?";
• The involvement of senior staff members in the group of partners;
• A clear, consistent and hierarchical approach to establishing expectations around how people within a school community behave towards each other;
• Recognition of the importance of warm, genuine relationships and the willingness to facilitate these in school;
• Working to empower staff and develop skills;
• Responding to each situation in a flexible, individualised way

> | appropriate to the specific context of the school, family etc.;

- Ensuring the views of the young person are valued and responded to in a genuine and meaningful manner, especially that the opportunity exists to express and discuss satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the school context and the opportunities available within;

experiences and the strong sense of the 'right not to engage' that I developed during the process of trying to access and engage school leavers.

Summary of Section 1.4

This section has sought to consider available research on exclusion from school, from both adults' and young people's perspectives, and to address some of the issues arising around participation.

Exclusion can be defined in a variety of ways, and is officially and unofficially employed as a means to addressing situations which feel difficult for those in schools. Exclusion matters; it is linked with decreased opportunities, both educationally and socially, and labels children and young people as the source of the problem. Most (but not all) young people who have experienced exclusion view this as a negative event in their lives, and some young people view it as teachers 'giving up' on them.

I have discussed factors identified in existing research as important in the prevention of permanent exclusion and in the establishment of positive school structures, both locally and nationally.   These are summarised in Figure 11.

Also apparent in the research is the difference between the priorities of adults and young people, and I interpret this as a space which may be filled with useful meanings and lessons for all members of the educational community.

1.5 Psychosocial/Cultural Context

As discussed above, the majority of exclusions involve boys and young men. This section seeks to attend to some of the wider contexts in which sit issues of boys, education, exclusions and understandings of behaviours through discussion of:

- Boys in education;

- 'Masculinity' and male role models;

- The importance of values and identity;

- The importance of attributions, particularly pertaining to relationships in schools.

The purpose of considering these issues is to acknowledge the importance of wider social and cultural contexts in defining the expectations, opportunities and limitations which surround any attempt to understand, and to facilitate change in, a given situation. This may be at the level of working with an individual young person, with a group, with a team of partners around and with a family, with a whole school staff or with a LA.

1.5(i) Boys and the Culture of Education

1.5(i)a) The 'Underachievers'

Gender concerns in education are not a new phenomenon, and have tended over the last few decades to focus upon either males or females as 'underachievers' (Lindsay and Mujis, 2006). Demonstrating how data and discussion tends to concentrate upon attainment in national examinations as *the* definitive measure of 'achievement', Lindsay and Mujis provide a useful discussion of how concerns relating to 'underachievement' have shifted over recent decades, from being a class-based issue, with working-class children showing lower performance levels than middle class (e.g. Essen and Wedge,

1982), to a stronger focus on gender and ethnicity.

The authors then describe how educational concerns have shifted from girls to boys, with a particular emphasis upon exam performances. Since the early 1990s, concern has focused upon the relative underachievement of boys (Mortimore et al, 1988), hitting the headlines with stories regarding boys' struggles with reading (Turner, 1990). For ten years, from 1992/3 to 2002/3, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) reported a consistent rise in girls' performances in examinations, with an apparent widening gap between the genders.

One must question the reason for such shifts. Is it that previous concerns regarding girls' performances in education have driven such a change in pedagogy that current trends in educational approaches are now less suited to male learners? Is it related to wider societal issues regarding family breakdown and a reduction in male role models?

Of concern to me is that I have become aware over recent years of increasingly negative portrayals of males in the media; an advertisement which sticks in the mind involves a man being dragged on a lead by a woman - I can only imagine the furore were the roles reversed – and the media is laden with reports of the antisocial behaviour of 'disaffected' young men and their academic underachievements (e.g. - Daily Mail, 2009, 2011; The Sun,

2013; The Guardian, 2012, all online, see references).

Of course, I am of an age where I imagine I have benefited from the changes brought about by the feminist movement without really being aware of how life was different for females before these changes infiltrated society. However, I still cannot believe that images such as that described above are useful or acceptable. How can we, as a society, label boys as underachieving, pathologise their behaviour and present them at times in the media as 'useless' or to be feared, and then expect them to show drive, ambition, motivation and positive social behaviour?

Boys' 'underachievement' is often "conceptualised as a problem of disaffection" (Lindsay & Mujis, op cit, p.315), linked with issues of social disadvantage, a variable shown to correlate with lower achievement (Lindsay, Pather & Strand, 2006). Of course, studies linking such variables are plagued with difficulties regarding the definition of phrases such as 'underachievement' or 'social disadvantage'. In whose view are boys underachieving? In whose view are families 'socially disadvantaged'?

Despite difficulties with defining 'underachievement', the notion of the 'underachieving boy' is one which seems to have developed a life of its own, in schools, in education in the wider sense, and in the media.

1.5(i)b) Young People's Views Regarding Gender Issues in School

Lown (ibid.) emphasises the importance of relationships in schools, and the question of whether young people perceive gender differences in relationships is of interest in considering the positioning of young men in schools. Myhill and Jones (2006) interviewed children about teachers' perceptions of boys and girls in the classroom; they report that children as young as Year 1 perceived gender inequalities in their teachers' treatment of their classmates, with boys being seen as more easily identified and chastised for minor incidents.

Myhill and Jones suggest that "teachers are more likely to see the good behaviour in girls and the bad behaviour in boys" (p.111); could this explain why I receive more requests for involvement regarding boys? Do girls 'misbehave' as much as boys but because teachers feel less threatened or anxious in the face of a defiant girl than in the face of a boy, they notice less?

Myhill and Jones consider whether teachers' gendered expectations can result in girls' needs becoming 'invisible', whilst at the same time, negative expectations and anxiety about the behaviour, attitudes and achievements of boys are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of 'the underachieving boy'. I do wonder whether, if presented with gender-based data regarding problems in schools, there would be a strong tendency among staff for the blame to be

attributed to the males rather than to the system, a notion supported by research into attribution (e.g. – Ross, 1977) which finds that people are more likely to make external attributions for negative behaviours; it is less challenging to the self to blame boys rather than the system of which you are a member.

1.5(i)c) Single-sex Education

If it is indeed the case that the education system has shifted to increasingly suit the needs of females, the arena of single-sex teaching may be of interest. Martino et al (2005) researched single-sex classes in a co-educational school and report concerns regarding the danger of seeing all boys as the same and "reinforcing particular understandings about being a boy and how boys learn" (p.242).   They noted that in the all-male classes, there was a preponderance of practical, connected learning, but felt that this was at the expense of the higher order thinking which seemed to be in evidence in the female classes, and stated that there was a need for boys to be "able to consider the effects of narrow definitions of masculinity on their learning and relationships" (p.251), therefore engaging the boys at a more theoretical level rather than assuming that, stereotypically, boys simply need more practical work.

Martino et al report that the relationship between the teacher (male) and the pupils in the all-male class seemed very positive and that the boys seemed

more at ease expressing their feelings in this situation than in the co-educational group. They suggest that in a mixed gender group boys have to assert their masculinity in the face of being confronted with a lack of knowledge and power – i.e. – the feminised expectations of the curriculum. This may well be one aspect of some of the 'bravado' which can be observed in classrooms, but having been, in the past, the EP in an all-male school, I would assert that this cannot be the only factor.

It feels that there is a real tension between saying that the system is failing to serve the needs of some young men and running the risk that by discussing a gender problem, one is actually perpetuated or even manufactured.

Of course, the education system will also be failing to meet the needs of some girls and young women (I have met some of them) and serving some boys and young men very well, but this is not highlighted. I wonder if it is frustrating to be a young man who achieves socially and academically whilst recognising the perceptions of society that young men 'underachieve'? Or are 'successful' young men living unaware of society's negative viewpoints, perhaps perceiving such comments as belonging to an outgroup and unrelated to them?

Young men need to be empowered to believe that they are worthy, valuable, successful and able. The question is whether the education system as it

stands fosters these positive beliefs.

1.5 (ii) Male Role Models and Masculinity

1.5(ii)a) Young Men and Fathers

The socioeconomic profile of the area in which my schools are located means that I meet many children living in homes without fathers, therefore meeting with a father to discuss their child is a rare occurrence. In my experience, many boys and young men whose behaviour has been identified as problematic seem to have a lack of male role models in their lives, and this is often proffered as at least a partial explanation for the perceived increasing negativity of the behaviour of young men (Glynn, 2011).

On those rare occasions when I do meet a father, I have been struck similarly each time by the fact that those fathers seem to speak differently of their sons. Perhaps the most overt example of this was, I recall, a boy in a nursery whose behaviours the staff were finding extremely difficult to cope with. At one point in the meeting, nursery staff (all female) were referring to the boy roaring like a lion during quiet times of the day, and there was lots of general nodding that this was unacceptable. That was apart from the boy's father, who burst forth that he wanted his son to roar like a lion; he wanted him to be loud and

boisterous; to climb trees; to run around; to be a boy.   It caused me to wonder how this father perceived the conversation in the room occurring between myself, his wife and the nursery staff.   In general, I would say I have noted that when a father is present in a meeting, the discourse around the child is less negative and pathologising.   I have interpreted a need from fathers to 'stick up' for their sons and to fight against what they perhaps see as normal behaviours being labelled abnormal.

Glynn (op.cit.) produced a report in conjunction with Addaction, entitled 'Dad and Me', which seeks to highlight the issues associated with absent fathers. He links absent fathers with a range of key issues for young people, including:

- An increased likelihood of taking part in negative and antisocial behaviours;

- A poor self-image and "'lack of identity'"(p.8);

- Young men being affected more greatly than young women;

- Greater difficulty in dealing with emotions, resulting in self-harm, eating disorders or drug and/or alcohol use;

- A decreased sense of security, confidence and happiness.

One must of course be mindful that all participants were service users of Addaction, which exists to work with "young people who have become involved in risky, anti-social and even criminal behaviour"(p.3); therefore, the report does not serve to present the views of those young people whose fathers may be absent but are not service users of Addaction.

I find it a little depressing that the author has felt the need to adopt the phrase "subjected to 'father deficit'" (p.5 and throughout); I wonder if this may be the label I begin to hear applied to young people in the future? Would a description such as 'have grown up without their father' or similar, not have sufficed?

I do find the whole emphasis of the report to be very negative; for example, in the quantitative aspect of the research, 11 out of 13 items are worded negatively in answer to the question 'How is a young person affected if their father is absent from their life?' -e.g. - 'They are more violent'; 'They are more likely to use drugs'; 'They are less secure'. The thought of young people completing this for whom the absence of their father is a real issue caused me to feel rather uncomfortable.

Taking a more positive slant, Lindsay & Mujis (ibid), in seeking to identify factors associated with boys' success in schools, found that one feature of

'successful' schools was that parents were closely involved in the life of the school.   In particular, they noted the positive effect of involving male relatives of pupils, including fathers, brothers and uncles; these adults took on roles such as sports coaching.   I wonder what Martino et al's (ibid) interpretation of this would be; would they like to see male role models working in wider roles, encouraging greater challenge to pupils' views of 'masculinity'?

Santrock (1972) investigates the effect of having an absent father upon boys' cognitive development and concludes that "father-absent boys consistently performed more poorly than father-absent girls and father-present boys" (p.455). Santrock also notes that boys in their first five years of life seem to benefit from their mothers' remarriage, and therefore, one presumes he is surmising, from the presence of a male role model.   I suggest it is difficult to separate the influence of a male role model from other factors such as the changes in the family dynamic or differences in the mother's relationship with her son.

Lamb (2010) discusses the role of fathers in children's lives, as opposed to focusing upon children for whom fathers are absent.   He considers how the father's stereotypical role has changed over time from powerful patriarch, through breadwinner to masculine role model and, in the 1970s, to nurturant. Lamb suggests that the most modern view of fatherhood is characterised by a multitude of roles (perhaps again aligning males more with females?), but with

a, he suggests, overemphasised portrayal of father as 'playmate'. He feels that this role is salient to children's development because of the type of play fathers tend to engage in (physical, boisterous) and this is perhaps the reason that it has become overemphasised.

I wonder if this gives us a way to think about why fathers are important to children; children benefit from a broad base of experience; if fathers fulfil roles differently than do mothers, does this expand children's experience? Also, it would seem logical to suggest that access to two loving attentive adults who play major roles in their child's life will be beneficial, and that for any child, the loss or absence of a parent for any reason is very difficult to make sense of, and is therefore very likely to influence emotional development.

As research also seems to suggest that the absence of a father has a greater effect upon boys than upon girls, this may indeed support the notion of an important role in children's identity development, which would of course pertain more greatly to boys and young men. On a personal level, we often comment within our family about how much our four-year old son models himself on his father.

So if this role model is indeed absent, can other male adults meet some of the needs of boys and young men?

1.5(ii)b) A Need for Male Teachers?

The issue of the over-representation of women in education is nothing new, but increasing concern regarding young men, as discussed above, adds fuel to the debate over whether the drive to recruit more male teachers is effective or even necessary.

A BBC news report (2006) cites Sewell, claiming that "boys are being failed by schools because lessons have become too 'feminised' in recent years"; he calls for increased excitement in lessons (would Martino et al (ibid.) criticise this as more evidence of stereotyped thinking regarding boys' needs for concrete learning?) and increased recruitment of male teachers, and suggests that needing an outlet for "frustrated masculinity" is contributing to negative social behaviours. Lindsay & Mujis (ibid.) noted that, in those schools considered 'successful' in terms of adding value for male pupils, there was a "presence of successful male teachers from the relevant communities" (p.325).

Conversely, Carrington, Tymms and Merrell (2008) report that male teachers have no influence upon young males' academic attainments and that in fact, on measures of attitudes to school, those young males with female teachers scored more positively. Martino et al (ibid.) adopt a more central stance, and seem to suggest that the intricacies of the relationships between individual

pupils and teachers are of greater importance than issues of gender. They call for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision for teachers to pay greater attention to the effects of teachers' beliefs and gendered pedagogies. In my own experience of asking children (usually boys, for obvious reasons) about those teachers with whom they feel they get on well, I feel, anecdotally, that a mixture of male and female teachers are mentioned, and the children and young people concerned tend to give reasons such as "she smiles a lot" or "you can have a laugh with him" as the justification for their liking of that teacher. I cannot recall the gender of the teacher ever being mentioned overtly; in agreement with Martino et al, it feels that it is the subtle interactions that I argue we all value that are mentioned by children and young people.

The research therefore seems to offer a mixed picture with regard to the importance of male teachers. Maybe it is actually more important for all teachers to recognise that boys benefit from positive relationships with adults too and that educational establishments recognise this need and place greater emphasis upon interaction and relationship building during initial teacher training, recruitment and through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities in schools.

1.5(ii)c) Gender Discrepancies within Educational Psychology Services(EPS)

The gender discrepancy issue is also one which resonates within EPSs themselves.   Murphy & Monsen (2008) sought to illuminate possible reasons for the decreasing number of male EPs and to question why gender imbalance is seldom discussed amongst members of the profession.   They report that in 1972, 63% of EPs were male; by 1985, this had fallen to 49%; by 2006, the proportion of male EPs was 25%.   A similar drop in numbers of males has been seen in Psychology undergraduates, falling from 50% in 1970 (Radford & Holdstock, 1995) to 19% in 2002 (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2003).   Considering the EPS of which I am a member, in our team of 8 EPs, 7 are female and 1 (a trainee EP) is male.

Murphy & Monsen suggest that EPs *should* be concerned about the gender imbalance in their profession, highlighting three possible areas of interest: firstly, implications arising from female EPs serving a male client population (Oakley, 2008, ibid.); secondly, possible workplace culture-changes leading to males believing they may be unfulfilled by work of an EPS nature, and thirdly, the enhancement of work on inclusion through the provision of a more representative and diverse population of EPs.

Murphy & Monsen suggest that maybe EPs unwittingly attribute greater value to specific interactional styles during meetings.   This links with my existing

concerns regarding my own practice and to my question whether, as the majority of the meetings of which I am part are exclusively female, such value-laden attributions are reinforced and increasingly camouflaged, only revealing themselves in the presence of males, who notice, and seek to question and challenge. This may explain the differences I have perceived during those meetings involving fathers.

Within the focus of this study, it will be important for me to recognise the contribution of the opposite gender statuses of myself and the young man involved and to consider any implications arising from this which may be helpful in my everyday work as an EP. I will also be interested to note whether I perceive gender issues to be important in the young man's story of school, whilst recognising the influence of the contextual issues highlighted throughout the discussion above.

1.5(iii) Identity and Values

Of course, I enter any situation laden with my own expectations, values and self-identity, as do all other participants, and it is for this reason that a discussion of these factors feels necessary within this study. Relationships emerge as a key factor in exclusion research; indeed, exclusion is about the breakdown of relationships; about mismatches between people's values and

identities. How we see ourselves and others, and believe others see us is key to the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships and to the manner in which we perceive, understand and respond to situations.

1.5(iii)a) Peer Groups

As children grow older, the acceptance of the peer group is of increasing importance to them, as their attachments slowly shift from parents/carers to friends and the influence of the peer group becomes paramount in the development of self-identity and self esteem (Harris, 1998).

As this study focuses upon the secondary sector and on a young man who is aged sixteen, consideration of peer relationships feels particularly salient. Behaviours labelled as 'difficult' (such as those 'persistent disruptive behaviours' which are linked to the vast majority of exclusions) occur not within a vacuum, but within social situations; by far the largest social group in school is constituted of peers.

In my own experience, I have certainly felt for some time that friendships are the *most* important element of school for many of the young people I meet, but that this aspect is simultaneously paid the *least* attention by adults when discussing and planning interventions and transitions into new schools.

This is supported by Lawrence (2011), who in her consideration of factors contributing to successful school reintegration, describes the outcomes of focus groups consisting of mainstream school and PRU staff. I noted that peers and friendships were not considered important by the focus groups; indeed these factors do not feature when 'successful' reintegration is described. Instead, the 'child factors' identified relate to how much the child 'tries' to make the reintegration work and how much the child 'wants' to return to mainstream education. 'Parent factors' and 'systemic factors' are also identified, with no mention of 'teacher factors'. I imagine the response would be interesting were it to be suggested that the extent to which the teachers 'try' and 'want' the child is equally important.

Interestingly, Lawrence then goes on to report that during consideration of 'barriers to successful reintegration', the following was interpreted from the focus groups' discussions:

> *Reintegration is less successful when the PRU student has no relationships with peers in the mainstream school or if new peers do not accept them into their social groups upon entering the mainstream provision.* (p.221)

However, despite this, in her conclusions and discussion of implications, Lawrence makes no further reference to this need, which, in my opinion,

constitutes a significant omission.

Because of my belief in the importance of peer issues, I always attempt to ensure that consideration is given to peer relationships and friendships during discussion around young people, particularly at points of transition, and will be interested to hear how friendships feature in the story of school constructed by the young man involved in this study.

Supporting those assertions above, Keddie (2003) discusses how behaviours often described as 'masculine' are the product of peer groups, but are then individualised and used to label individual boys as problematic, and Harris (ibid.) describes how behaviours are situational and tend to conform to the accepted norms of the peer group within which they occur.   Browne (1995b) states that peer expectations often support, value and reinforce those very behaviours which are sanctioned by teachers.

The use of peer-based interventions to work with children and young people experiencing challenges with emotion, social issues or behaviours over recent years (e.g. - Burton, (ibid.); Denham, Hatfield, Smethurst, Tan & Tribe (2006); Bokhorst, Goosens & DeRutjer (1995)) suggests that the importance of these relationships and their influence is being recognised, but I feel this needs to extend further beyond specific interventions and into the overall ethos of a school; into its understanding of the needs and priorities of the young people

in its community.

If, it seems, peers and adults are likely to perceive and value the same behaviours differently, is it possible for a young man to conform to the values of his peer group and to the values of his teachers? The anecdotally obvious answer would seem to be 'yes', as we must not forget that there are many 'successful' boys and young men, who skilfully manage the potentially very different demands and expectations of their family, teachers and peers.

Keddie's (op.cit.) discussion also raises interesting points about the manner in which boys' problematic behaviours are addressed in the school environment. She describes the individualised, systematic and rational approaches taken to deal with behaviours occurring in group situations laden with irrationality and emotion and discusses an approach characterised by 'emotional neutrality', where boys' feelings and emotions are not accounted for in the application of interventions or sanctions.

This leads me to wonder whether 'masculinity' *is* acknowledged in relation to behaviours in school, and in fact influences interventions used with boys to such a point that the interventions themselves perpetuate the behaviours. Are boys and young men denied the opportunities to express their feelings and emotions about a problem which has arisen in a group situation because teachers believe that 'boys don't talk about their feelings'? Are boys'

language skills being compared unfavourably with those of their female counterparts, or are gendered expectations resulting in a belief that boys cannot discuss a difficult situation? My concern is that such expectations in turn may devalue the boys' opinions and emotions, leading to feelings of resentment towards adults and creating a further desire to enhance belonging to and status within the peer group.

1.5(iii)b) Being and Belonging

Inextricably linked with relationships are the senses of belonging, identity and allegiance.

Maslow's (1943) well-known Hierarchy of Needs ranks the need to belong and feel accepted only after physiological needs and the need to be secure and safe, demonstrating its salience in all our lives. The Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) (2007) describe how belonging is a dynamic and salient process for us all:

> *The relative importance we place on our membership within particular groups - family, say, in comparison with belonging to the local gym - says a lot about the kinds of identities that we create for ourselves. In addition, the importance of belonging to particular groups changes over time. As we join and leave different social networks, we reposition*

ourselves in relation to others, developing new connections and discarding others in a continuous process of social interaction and integration. (p7-8)

The SIRC report also describes a shift from almost pre-defined 'traditional' categories of belonging, to a modern situation where we are "increasingly obliged to *choose* (report author's emphasis) the groups, values and beliefs with which we want to identify ourselves" (p. 8).

Interesting questions arise for me with regard to *how* boys belong, and indeed how professionals working with young people support them in developing ways *to* belong.   It will be of interest to interpret from the young man's story within this study the means by which he seems to define himself and others in order to understand social positions, and also to consider in what contexts, by what means and via the construction of what types of identities he may be affiliating himself with others?

Whilst discussing such issues with two EP colleagues (both female) they posited an interesting theory; that maybe girls have at their disposal a greater repertoire of socially acceptable ways to understand and describe themselves within their culture and subculture; e.g. - dependent upon the subculture to which a girl perceives she belongs, she may fulfil a role as 'the pretty one', 'the caring one', 'the clever one', 'the one who is attractive to boys', 'the one who is

good at sport' etc. I cannot profess that, in my own opinion, the modern focus I perceive upon girls belonging via their appearance is necessarily a positive one in the long term; however, I do believe that it fulfils its purpose as a means of affiliation when I consider the social context of a high school.

Consideration of all of the above issues relating to boys within the education system, to masculinity and to identity, leads me to wonder what kinds of messages boys and young men are receiving about themselves, whether they feel a sense of belonging and acceptance within their schools (and indeed their homes and communities), and from whom and where their sense of belonging comes.

1.5(iv) Attributions and the Understanding of Behaviour

1.5(iv)a) The Importance of Attributions

Inextricably linked with identity and belonging is attribution; how we understand, explain and describe our own and others' behaviours. This is key in any discussion of exclusion as attribution is at the heart of how those who are doing the excluding are explaining, locating and responding to the behaviour labelled 'unacceptable'.

The importance of recognising the role of attribution in understanding behaviour has long been recognised (e.g. - Kelley, 1971). Jones et al (1971) define attribution theory as follows:

> *Attribution theory examines the layman's analysis of behavioural causation for the purpose of understanding how his analysis affects his own behaviour (and) treats the actor as a constructive thinker searching for causes of the events confronting him and acting upon his imperfect knowledge of causal structure in ways that he considers appropriate. (p. x)*

This definition identifies the importance of the individual's perceptions of causal relationships and the manner in which such beliefs regarding causality influence all social interactions; indeed I would suggest that a discussion of the role of attribution would be key to consideration of any issues concerning the interaction of human beings.

In relation to exclusion, the attributions made with regard to young people's actions determine the decisions taken by those who hold positions of greater power, and I do wonder whether an increased understanding and acknowledgement of attributions and their power would be of benefit in schools. I would like to think that in my role as EP, I seek to challenge some of the attributions I feel are being made; maybe I need to be more transparent

during the interaction with regard to my reasons for challenging the descriptions, to attempt to raise understanding of the power and influence of attributions on the outcomes for young people.

Indeed, research has highlighted the impact of attributions regarding self and other upon children's motivation and their subsequent behaviour and thought (Dodge, 1993; Crick & Ladd, 1993), the focus of this research has tended towards the importance of the meanings applied to the attributions made and the cognitive processes which underlie the application of such meanings.

Rotter (1966) describes how the causes we ascribe to our own and others' behaviours can be internally or externally located - i.e. - attributed to the person's internal characteristics or attributed to external characteristics of the situation in which that person is found. Attributions can also be described along two further axes - global/specific (extent to which the attribution applies to all situations) and stable/unstable (extent to which the attribution applies over time). If a head teacher is making attributions about a young person's actions which are internal, global and stable, I imagine this would significantly increase the likelihood of that young person being excluded. The meanings that the head teacher is applying to his/her understanding of that young person, the way in which they are known, will be driven by these attributions.

1.5(iv)b) Research into Attribution in Schools

There have been numerous studies of attributions in educational contexts, with an initial tendency for these to focus upon academic achievement; fewer studies have concentrated on attributions regarding behaviour. Among those which do seek to highlight behavioural attributions, a wide range of approaches to the topic have been applied including examination of:

- Attributions made by teachers about pupils (Cooper, Maras, Norwich, Lovey, Rollock & Szpakowski, 1999);

- Attributions made by pupils about themselves (Elliot, 1996);

- Attributions made by pupils about other pupils (Miller, Ferguson and Byrne, 2000);

- Attributions made by pupils about teachers (Lapointe & Legault, 2004);

- Attributions made by teachers about parents and parents about teachers (Miller, 1994).

All of the above could be viewed as relevant to this current study; maybe Elliot's focus on pupil's attributions about themselves is most closely related,

as I will be asking the young man involved to talk about himself and how his school placement has been maintained. I feel sure however that all other aspects of attribution will also have their part to play.

Elliot focuses on locus of control (Rotter, ibid.) - that is, the extent to which an individual perceives that they have control over events; do they attribute the control internally or externally? Elliot questions the large number of studies suggesting that interventions aimed at 'improving' behaviour should focus on developing internal locus of control.   His conclusion is that the link between measurements of locus of control and the nature and severity of behavioural difficulties is so tenuous that it cannot be used as a justification for "…the argument that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties require individual assessment or individual/group interventions geared to encouraging internality (p.55).   It will be of interest to note my interpretations of how the young man in this study seems to develop meaning around his 'success' and 'difficulties'.

Also pertinent to exclusion is research considering attributions made by school staffs about pupils. Teachers can be seen as salient social agents (Blackman, 1984):

> *Teachers form a prominent part of the social environment of their pupils*
> *and can therefore be expected to influence their pupils' behaviours*

through their own behaviour. (p.8)

The challenge faced by teachers is that if they are able to accept their role as a highly significant agent of social change (Smokowski, Reynolds & Bezruczko, 1999), this must relate equally to both the positive and negative behaviours within their classroom. Miller (2003) points out how teachers' attributions about pupils' behaviours are constructed to protect the self, therefore locating the causation externally - i.e. - with the pupils rather than with themselves. This tendency may have negative implications for all involved; along with the potential negative effects of 'within-child' explanations (Oakley, 2004, ibid.), evidence has suggested that teachers who have a low sense of control are more likely to experience burnout (Hastings & Bham, 2003). The school excludes the child because the problem is perceived as residing within the child. Maguire et al (2003) describe this eloquently:

> *At this point it is useful to consider an assumption which characterises much of the work on exclusion from school. Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in much of the literature, is the view that if the child can change or be changed, then the difficult behaviour can be stopped or even 'cured'. Simultaneously, some children cannot be changed because they are highly disturbed and cannot help 'acting out' their anxieties. In both cases, there is a 'problem' within the child. The implication is that interventions must focus on the 'deficit' child.*

However, the reality is that some schools manage challenging behaviours better than others… (p.48)

In my experience, such contradictory explanations often exist around young people placed in PRUs. It is my perception that, whilst the child attends the mainstream school, the 'problem' is explained and described as located within the child. The PRU is expected to 'fix' the child. Unsurprisingly, when in a class of 6 rather than 30, and in a calm, highly structured environment where close attachments are often formed, the 'problem behaviours' do tend to reduce significantly over time. It seems to be at this point that attributions can shift, and the importance of the environment begins to be acknowledged; unfortunately this can tend then to be within the context of providing evidence and argument that the mainstream school is not the right place for that particular child. Overall, there is a concerning sense that whilst the problem is at its height, the locus of control is placed within the child; when things improve, the locus of control shifts to the power of the environment and its influence upon the child. I wonder what the implications for exclusion and its effects on young people's futures would be if the attributions were reversed?

I have stated my intention that the underlying nature of this study be guided by solution-oriented principles, and I believe S-O has an enormous part to play in helping to shift attributions in schools. By viewing the problem as the property of the person who perceives it, rather than as located within the child,

S-O approaches have the potential to act as supportive facilitator of a shift in power and control to the individual 'holding' the problem. Surely this shift could have major implications for the manner in which 'difficult behaviours' are understood and responded to in schools - the initial key question would seem to be 'difficult for whom?'

Summary of Section 1.5

This section has sought to explore some of the salient social and cultural considerations surrounding boys in today's society, particularly in relation to educational contexts. I have highlighted a number of areas which I will aim to understand as part of the story constructed with the young man in this study. These include;

- Attributions made with regard to success and difficulty in school; where were the 'problem' and the 'solution' perceived to be located?

- Discussion of relationships with teachers and any gender dimensions apparent in these relationships;

- The importance and influence of peer relationships and friendships;

- Sources of values and identity;

SUMMARY OF SECTION 1: THE RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Section 1 has sought to establish the context underlying my narrative about reaching a point where I feel able to address my research questions.

I have outlined the context from which my questions have arisen, at a number of different levels, including:

- Personal;

- Experiential;

- Research-based;

- In response to local and national concerns.

I have considered why exclusion matters and some of the factors which may have a part to play in this process and its prevention.

My experience as an EP working with a significant number of boys and young men, often around behavioural issues led me to ask questions about boys' experience of the education system, particularly when employed in an area with a high exclusion rate (again, mainly boys). These concerns led me to interrogate the pertinent local and national data and to consider the evidence regarding why exclusion matters and 'what works' to maintain school placements; being a practitioner preferring S-O approaches led me to wish to adopt a 'successful' slant to the issue of permanent exclusion. Viewing a very important part of my role as an EP as advocate for children and young people, I also considered the existing research with regard to the voice of the child/young person, as well as considering the contribution of attribution theory and peer relationships to the issue of exclusion.

2. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

My third research question relates to engaging in consideration and evaluation of those principles and practices which underlie my work as EP, at a level which is not usually attainable within everyday EP practice. Ingram (2013) discusses how "EP work encompasses approaches derived from an eclectic range of (often implicit) theories" (p. 336) and describes how this can be seen as problematic, especially in relation to transparency and accountability (Kelly, 2006). I recognise that my work as an EP is indeed underpinned by an eclectic base, and welcome the fact that this study provides the luxury of 'stepping back' and questioning my own practice and assumptions. I recognise an unease within my own practice with regard to perceived eclecticism and a sense that my practice may be overly-pragmatic. Through consideration of those principles and practices discussed below, I hope to develop a greater sense of integration and to understand the core values which underlie my EP practice; reflections upon this are discussed in Section 6.2.

With this aim in mind, Section 2 therefore seeks to make explicit the epistemologies, methodologies, assumptions and practices which inform my

work as an EP and underlie this study, its aims, process, interpretations and meaning-making.   To this end, this section will outline, discuss and evaluate the following areas, which I have aimed to arrange in such a way that the philosophical wends its way to the pragmatic:

- Critical realism;

- Qualitative research methods;

- Psychoanalytic theory and the psychosocial subject;

- Narrative;

- Positioning theory and discourse;

- Solution-oriented approaches.

2.1 Critical Realism

2.1(i) Definitions

Throughout the process of engagement with this study, and especially in its latter stages, I have developed and maintained a focus upon increasing my insight into those 'ways of knowing' which I believe underlie my practice as an EP and as a researcher.   Through a process of repeated considerations of a variety of epistemologies, from scientific realism to social constructionism, I have concluded that the 'way of knowing' with which I am most comfortable is best conceptualised as critical realism.

Although Roy Bhaskar (1975) is the key philosopher associated with critical realism, he only arrived at acceptance of this term via the work of others (e.g. - Archer, 1995), beginning instead with his concept of 'transcendental realism' as a philosophy of science in 1975.   The marriage of this philosophy of science to his philosophy of social science ('critical naturalism') resulted in others suggesting the label 'critical realism', which Bhaskar eventually accepted.

Bhaskar aims, with his theory of both science and social science to maintain the reality and knowability of objects to be studied, but simultaneously to recognise and indeed emphasise the highly influential historical and social

contexts in which any knowledge is situated. Bhaskar argues for a depth of reality, where one can reach into that reality to greater or lesser extents, without ever actually reaching the bottom of that depth.

This philosophy feels attractive, as I perceive its potential to recognise, emphasise and even celebrate the social situations of knowledge. I find it helpful to conceptualise critical realism as 'there is a reality to be known, but we can only ever know it imperfectly'. This is not however to suggest that 'imperfection' is in any way negative; it is simply an aim to encapsulate those very many historical and social influences upon any knowledge developed.

A further key feature of critical realism is emancipation; that by recognising knowledge as socially situated but not socially determined, the potential for change exists.

Bhaskar's views on social activity have invited criticism from others (Archer, op. cit.; Khaidesoja, 2007), who point out incompatibilities in Bhaskar's theory. Bhaskar presents social structures as objects which exist in their own right and are available for empirical research, whilst also stating that firstly, the actions of individuals and groups can transform such structures and secondly, the causal effects of such structures are necessarily mediated through the actions of individuals and groups.

Khaidesoja (op. cit.) argues that these conceptualisations are not valid, and Archer (op. cit.) points out that structures and agents cannot be seen as separate when such dependency between structures and agents in relation to causality and mediation is suggested to exist.

Archer offers a solution to this incompatibility, suggesting that the causal powers of social structures may be dependent upon the actions of agents that are no longer in existence (i.e. – individuals or groups who are now deceased). She emphasises the potential for endurance and causal power in previous actions, which can continue to influence society.

Burr (1998) also considers critical realism, through her focus upon the notion of a dichotomous relationship between positivist notions of realism (which are seen as describing a 'real world', pre-dated by our experiences of it and not *constituted* by, but *described* by language (Collier, 1998)) and notions of relativist social constructionism (which she defines as "the idea that there exists a potentially infinite number of alternative constructions of events" (Burr, 1998, p.13)).

Burr describes how the advent of social constructionism challenged positivist elements of psychology and seemed to offer liberation from realist views of a 'real world', and discusses the initial attraction of social constructionism as "liberatory" (p.13), apparently allowing for any possible construction, and

therefore highly emancipatory. However, she then goes on to explain how she and others (e.g. Willig, 1998) have experienced disillusionment with the apparent limitations of social constructionism in identifying opportunities for change, discussing the tendency of constructionist approaches to 'describe' rather than 'suggest'.

Burr moves on to question the necessity of a dichotomy between realist and relativist views and discusses a "continuum of acceptance of social constructionist and relativist ideas" (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995, in Burr, 1998, p. 15), suggesting that it is of greater use to transcend the dichotomy and accept that things can be both socially constructed and real.

Burr's conclusion would seem to sit more comfortably with Archer's (op. cit.) notion of 'critical realism', and the sense that it is acceptable to conceptualise a 'bottom' to the depths, whilst recognising the reciprocal causal powers of this 'reality' and the social activities that are constructed in the space between social agents and social structures.

2.1(ii) The Stance of the Current Study

Burr's 'continuum' notion sits comfortably with me, and I state a position that accepts the existence of realities without seeking to identify these,

recognising that the world can only be known imperfectly through human representations and via the causal influence of social structures. I therefore seek to focus upon interpretations of the perceptions, identities, experiences, expectations and meanings which lie between the individual and the 'truth'.

I state my assumption that there is a reality, but simultaneously recognise that I am not invested in seeking that reality, but in developing meanings within the space between the imperfectly known reality and human representations of it. Within this space, I can happily accept that situations and positions can be socially constructed. I am reaching down into Bhaskar's depth of reality, in the understanding and positive acceptance that I will never reach the bottom.

2.2 Qualitative Research

2.2(i) What is Qualitative Research?

Adopting a critical realist stance sits comfortably with qualitative research methods, where interpretation and representation (in this case of the 'real world') are celebrated and viewed as integral to good practice. Whereas

quantitative methods seek to "explain phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods" (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000) access generalizable 'realities', associated with positivist understandings (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2000), qualitative methods seek to recognise and embrace interactional aspects, which I conceptualise as residing within the space between an experience and an individual's representation of that experience, therefore sitting comfortably with the critical realist notion of imperfect, representative 'knowing'.

Yardley (2000) defines qualitative methods as those "typically involv[ing] detailed exploration of the interwoven aspects of the topics or processes studied" and "explicitly concerned with the particular situations and experiences of the individuals participating in the study" (p. 215).

The 'qualitative methods' label is applied to a broad range of approaches, borne of a variety of paradigms, and some scholars choose to affiliate themselves strongly with one paradigm. Creswell (2007) suggests five discrete areas in qualitative research; narrative, phenomenological, ethnographic research, case study research and grounded theory. Tracy (2010) argues that choosing not to align oneself with a specific paradigm is equally valid. Yardley (2000) highlights the potential challenges of "immense diversity" (p.216) within qualitative methods when issues of definition, understanding and political influence are considered.

This study shares Tracy's (op. cit.) view that "many… engage [in] qualitative projects without knowing which theories will eventually situate their research" (p. 839), aiming to reflect upon a number of approaches, consider the resulting understandings regarding exclusion and EP practice and remain open to alternative understandings.

2.2(ii) Evaluating Qualitative Research

I greatly value a fluid and 'journey-like' approach to research, a "pluralistic ethos" (Yardley, op. cit. p. 217), and it can be argued that applying quality criteria to qualitative research is fruitless or inappropriate (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1996). Bochner (2000) states that "we should never insist on reaching agreement beforehand on the criteria to which all arguments, reasoning and conclusions must appeal" (p.269).

Tracy (op.cit.) argues for the need to differentiate between the evaluation of 'means' and 'ends' when considering the appropriateness of applying quality criteria; she describes how a criterion (an 'end') can be agreed upon by all as important, without the need for the methods of achieving or representing that criterion (the 'means') demanding prescription.

Tracy identifies eight criteria for good research, further broken down into sub-criteria. She is however careful to emphasise the need for balance between researchers' prioritisation of different criteria, and recognises that "although best practices serve as goals to strive for, researchers can and will fall short, deviate and improvise" (p. 849). This does seem to strike a rather negative note, suggesting that not meeting all of her criteria is to be less than perfect, but how could 'perfect' ever be defined?

Tracy's eight criteria for good qualitative research are found in Figure 12 and are described in much greater detail in her 2010 article (op. cit.).

Fig. 12 – Eight criteria for good qualitative research – Tracy (2010):

Worthy topic
Rich rigor
Sincerity
Credibility
Resonance
Significant contribution
Ethical
Meaningful coherence

Yardley (op. cit) presents her four suggested criteria as non-prescriptive and "open to flexible interpretation" (p. 219); these can be found in Figure 13.

Fig. 13 – Characteristics of good qualitative research – Yardley (2000):

Criteria	Detail
Sensitivity to context	Theoretical and socio-cultural
Commitment and rigour	Senses of prolonged engagement and of completeness
Transparency and coherence	Senses of persuasiveness and cogence between questions and interpretations, demonstrating reflexivity and openness
Impact and Importance	Senses of being interesting, having the power to influence, being useful

Yardley argues that:

> *If qualitative methods are to have any practical use, claims that a piece of research is high quality need to be legitimated by criteria which are meaningful to those people for whose benefit the research was*

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intended. (p. 219)

Creswell (op. cit) takes an alternative approach, suggesting that each of the five methodological approaches he identifies be subject to their own discrete criteria. This would, however, imply that there is never overlap between approaches such as 'narrative' and 'case study', which seems to represent an unrealistic view of qualitative research (Tracy, op. cit.).

Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle (1991) suggest a continuum as opposed to a dichotomy with regard to quantitative and qualitative approaches, and suggest a middle ground, where the world can be known, imperfectly, BUT any account of the world is as good as any other account. This view has resulted in methodological approaches such as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); Moon et al (op. cit.) suggest that such approaches may in fact represent the worst of both, and identify their own criteria for 'good research' (Figure 14).

Moon and colleagues' last criterion seems to support the notion that a true reality exists; I am less sure whether it accepts that we cannot access this in a critical realist sense.

Fig. 14 – Criteria for good qualitative research – Moon et al (1991):

The acknowledgement of biases and assumptions;
The engagement of the researcher with a process of reflection;
The recognition that interpretation is key;
The inclusion of reflexive notes in order to act as a bridge between reality and the interpretation of reality.

Sherrard (1997) discusses how some researchers have attempted to 'safeguard' against 'unchecked subjectivity' through a process of removing interview statements from their context. She highlights how this threatens validity, (seen as an accurate representation of social perception) by ignoring context.

Yin (1994) suggests that 'good research' must involve careful recording of all steps of data collection and analysis and of the grounds on which certain interpretations are made.

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen (1993) highlight the need for the reader being able to 'confirm' how interpretations were arrived at by a researcher, and suggest that the inclusion of interview transcripts can contribute to meeting this criterion.   I would question whether the reader having access to

interview transcripts would fulfil this criterion (and indeed if this criterion is actually necessary), as it could be argued that this process will actually result in a new and unique set of interpretations on the part of the new reader (a very interesting and informative process in itself), as opposed to somehow allowing the reader to 'see' how the researcher reached their interpretations.

If research is to be seen as a process of learning and moving forward, would it be positive to follow White & Epston (1990) and to view each new reading (whether by a new individual or the same individual repeatedly) and its subsequent interpretations as an opportunity to build and develop the research text and to contribute to an ever-dynamic field of thought, as opposed to continually searching for the 'truth'?   What do you, as the reader of this text, bring to it and take away from it that is unique?

2.2(iii) The Stance of the Current Study

I maintain a sense that the application of prescribed criteria to qualitative research feels philosophically challenging, but at a more pragmatic level, can appreciate Yardley (op. cit.) and Tracy's (op. cit) arguments that criteria may have a role as:

A parsimonious pedagogical tool, promot[ing] respect from power

keepers who often misunderstand and misevaluate qualitative work, develop[ing] a platform from which qualitative scholars can join together in unified voice when desired, and encourag[ing] dialogue and learning amongst qualitative methodologists from various paradigms.
(Tracy, p. 839)

When reading the proffered lists of potential criteria for 'good' qualitative research, I find that they map reasonably comfortably on to my own priorities and desires for this study, which I had initially developed without knowledge of Moon and colleagues', Tracy's or Yardley's criteria, and it is for this reason (which may be interpreted as somewhat inverse) that I am comfortable to reflect upon the extent to which Tracy and Yardley's criteria may be met; this reflection is discussed in Section 8.1.

Having discussed my stance as a valuer of qualitative research methods, the following sections, 2.3 to 2.7, now aim to consider the more specific qualitative understandings and methodologies which underlie both my EP practice and this study, highlighting the critical realism thread throughout and aiming to develop my own thoughts and practice, whilst hopefully also influencing yours as reader.

2.3 Psychoanalytic Theory and the Psychosocial Subject

A critical realist stance is adopted by Hollway (2006) who describes a "combination of psychoanalytic and post-structuralist concepts" (p.544) and states that "social scientists writing about social change need to use psychoanalysis to save them from social determinism" (p.544). In psychoanalytic approaches (Freud, 1901), the epistemology is one of knowing as understood in terms of relationships and affect, and can therefore sit in the space between perception and 'truth'.

Hollway & Jefferson (2000) consider the specific application of psychoanalytic theory to qualitative research, conceptualising critical realism as "the relationship between people's ambiguous representations and their experiences" (p.3). They emphasise the need for an interpretative approach to engaging with others, pointing out how we do not, in everyday, real-life interactions, take at face value the things that others communicate to us, so why should the research context be any different? They celebrate human complexity and suggest that:

If we wish to do justice to the complexity of our subjects an interpretative approach is unavoidable. It can also be fair, democratic and not patronising as long as this approach to knowing people through their accounts is applied to the researcher as well as the researched.

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(p.3)

The interpretative process is viewed as "far from transparent" (p.3) and the nature of the critical realist relationship between experience and representation is seen as reliant upon a view of people as "psychosocial subjects" (p.3); that is, individuals who represent a complex relationship between their 'inner' and 'outer' worlds, and one which is not mediated via rational cognitive processes.

A storyteller is not seen as a totally rational individual sharing a coherent logical narrative, and the need to consider power, reflexivity, defence and transference in the narrative and interpretative process is emphasised. With equal focus upon the 'researcher' and the 'researched', the concept of the 'Gestalt', or the 'whole', becomes key; a focus purely on content is simplistic and incomplete.

Emerson and Frosh (2009) also focus heavily on the "psychosocial subject" (p.2). They discuss the tensions that exist in Psychology with regard to how we conceptualise 'psychological' and 'social' and argue that such tensions must be seen as "indicative of the actual problem of Psychology, rather than as a technical nuisance because the best methods have not yet been worked out" (p.4-5). The concept of the psychosocial subject is an attempt to acknowledge the inevitably intertwined nature of the social and the

psychological and to ask 'Why try to separate them?'

Although generally comfortable with Holllway's philosophy of qualitative research, there does remain one focus which I continue to find challenging; Hollway discusses her attempts to increase the objectivity of the information gained via interviews and/or observation methods - e.g. –

> *We need to ensure that this use of subjectivity safeguards both research ethics and what was conventionally called 'objectivity', which I prefer to characterise as treatment that is accurate, fair, disinterested and impartial, but needs also to preserve meaningfulness (Hollway, 2008)* (in Hollway, 2009, p.467)

I feel unsure how 'disinterested' and 'impartial' fits with an approach which generally seems to celebrate subjectivity and indeed views this, and intersubjectivity, as key to the meanings developed during research.

There are however, key elements of the work of Hollway (op. cit.) and Emerson & Frosh (op. cit.) that resonate within this study and within my EP practice:

- The sense that all interactions are laden with interpretation;

- The sense that there is a relationship between an individual's experiences and their representation of those experiences;

- The sense of multiple narrative sources within any story;

- Owing to all of the above, the need to attend to the Gestalt of any situation and the manner in which it is interpreted.

2.4 Narratives

If I accept that there is a relationship between individuals' experiences and their representations of those experiences, then I must consider how those individuals then make those representations to others, who will in turn be engaging with the interaction and subsequently making their own sense of the resulting experience.

Throughout the history of human interaction, storying of events has been seen as universal and ever-present (Riessman, 2008); creating narrative is an essential tool in the development of meaning and sense around one's own experiences (Hiles & Cermak, 2008):

Through constructing narratives about their lives, people make connections between events and interpret them. Telling a story about what has happened to us allows us to give coherence and meaning to what may otherwise feel like a confusing and disorganized sequence of events. (Murray 2003, p.113: In Willig, 2008, p. 133)

Echoing Hollway's (op. cit.) 'Gestalt', Manning and Cullum-Swann (1994) describe how the process of "storying" (p.465) occurs within a firmly interactional context and is linked to social discourses, and highlight the context bound nature of stories. Riessman and Quinney (2005) suggest that we should consider "how and why events are storied" (p.394). Similarly, Emerson and Frosh (op. cit.) describe how narrative analysis seeks to ask specific questions about specific lives and pay attention to questions of how the story teller, in the given context, arrives at the account given, how the account is made, what it does and what psychological processes are perceived to be at work. They view specificity as a key element of narrative analysis as opposed to a potential limitation or problem and suggest that the psychosocial approach "…means attending to the very specific location of any particular subject at the junction of personal investments and concerns" (p.18).

Similarly, Bruner (1984) distinguishes between the 'life-as-lived' (what actually happened), 'life-as-experienced' (the meanings developed by that

individual) and 'life-as-told' (the narrative) and emphasises the dynamic nature of the narrative act; its role in constructing lives with each telling and re-telling.

The adoption of narrative approaches can be seen as allowing the maintenance of attention to social processes influencing stories, and celebrates the existence of multiple possibilities, contradictions and alternative interpretations (White & Epston, ibid.).

I am suggesting that 'narrative' can sit comfortably with Hollway's version of psychoanalytic theory; others may disagree:

> *Some have argued that the introduction of psychoanalytic theory into narrative analysis (and discourse analysis more generally) results in the kinds of individualistic psychopathologised reasons for explaining why people say (or do not say) the things that they do that prompted the turn to discourse in the first place (Hepburn, 2003)."* (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 149)

2.4(i) The Roots of Narrative Psychology

Narrative approaches to psychology and the understanding of ourselves and

others can be seen, as suggested by Benwell & Stokoe above, as borne of a desire to escape from the perceived constraints of the 'traditional' psychology of the 1960s, stereotypically characterised by experimental laboratory studies, with people viewed as 'subjects', to be controlled and depersonalised as much as possible in the pursuit of scientific 'objectivity'. Parker (2005) suggests the emergence of the term 'narrative psychology' as an attempt to "capture the spirit of humanist alternatives to this demeaning image of human beings, and to find a way of representing the stories people tell about themselves" (p.71). Narrative psychology can be seen as:

- A recognition and celebration of human agency;

- A desire to access the sense that people give to their own lives;

- A wish to study the meanings and identities carried within the stories people author in order to develop that 'sense' of meaning.

The methodologies employed by those considering themselves 'narrative researchers' can vary widely.

Langdridge (2007) and Hiles & Cermak (2008) offer guidelines for narrative analysis, suggesting that the researcher ask differing questions upon repeated engagements with the story; these questions focus upon: content,

tone, rhetorical functions, themes, identities, positions, agency and power. Elsbree (1982) offers five 'narrative plots' and Parker (op. cit.) describes five key ideas in narrative analysis: agency, temporality, event, context and format.

Others have ventured further down the route of applying highly prescriptive formats to narratives (e.g. - Labov, 1972; Mishler, 1986) prompting concerns regarding the application of frameworks to narratives; Schwab (1960) describes narrative enquiry as fluid and not clearly governed by specific methodologies; similarly, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) discuss how a phenomenon which is too sharply defined at the outset of the enquiry is likely to become swamped by the complexity of the situation in which the narrative exists.

In another paper, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) state:

> *It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research.* (p.7)

I suggest this can be extended further, to state that 'it is important not to squeeze the language of the individual's narrative into a language restricted by a set of 'narrative criteria'. Clandinin and Connelly's methodological description advocates the need to return repeatedly to heard narratives and to

engage in repeated questioning of resulting texts and recordings with regard to interpretations of meanings and messages of perceived significance, but allows for recognition that other readers will bring alternate interpretations and understandings to the same story.

Walker (1991) chooses a salient title for his book chapter; 'Making Sense and Losing Meaning'.   As the title suggests, Walker discusses how attempting to impose too clear a sense of structure and clarity upon a story can result in a loss of meaning:

> *Some of the best scenes end up on the cutting room floor in the interest of the story line.* (p.111)

In my attempts to present this study as a story and a process, whilst also developing sufficient structure and clarity to guide you as the reader, and to meet my perceptions of the expectations of an academic study, I have certainly encountered this tension.

Walker also agrees with Clandinin and Connelly's concerns re commencing narrative enquiry with too clear an idea of where one is aiming to arrive:

> *Genuine discovery in the sense of something that shakes the conceptual base of your working assumptions, can only wreck the*

design as originally conceived and disrupt the story. (p.113)

2.4(ii) Engaging with Stories

Working with stories is a significant part of my work as an EP. Providing the space for a parent, teacher or young person to tell their story has often felt key, and I feel that this sits well with the solution-oriented approach discussed below, whereby the 'pain' story is heard and there is a recognition that sometimes we as practitioners simply need to 'be with' the story and recognise the power of its telling in helping the author to move to another story, which may shift significantly or subtly from other tellings.

Indeed, I have noticed that people who have experienced an intense, upsetting, exciting or traumatic event sometimes want to tell the story of the event repeatedly. In my own experience of sudden bereavement, I certainly found that with each telling of the story (which I imagine was subtly different to its previous incarnations), I moved to a slightly different place and experienced an increased feeling of acceptance of the events of the story. The process of telling and retelling was key, demonstrating the power of storying as a *process*, as opposed to only the story as a *product.*

Along with recognising the potential power of telling one's story in shifting a

situation, it is also important to address the idea of the stories which exist around individual children and young people.   Through my engagement with this study, I have become increasingly aware of this in EP practice and have begun to challenge some of the prevailing stories more overtly, and to actually employ the language of 'the story', the response to has felt positive.

2.5 Positioning

2.5(i) Positioning Theory

Within narratives, individuals position themselves and others, and this process can be considered through Positioning Theory (Davis & Harre, 1990), which seeks to interpret the space between what an individual *can* do and what they *do* do.   This notion of the 'space' again relates back to my critical realist sense of seeking to interpret the space between experience and representation.

Harre (1998) explains:

The scope of what people actually do is very much narrower than what they can do. "May" is a tighter concept than "can" in the world of human action. Intervening between the domain of the possible and the impossible is the domain of the permissible and the impermissible… What are the processes by which the domain of the permissible is extracted from the domain of the possible?

(<onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470672532.wbepp211>)

This could also be conceptualised as the notion that there are many (infinite?) positions we *could* adopt in given contexts, but in actuality we *do* adopt a particular position, probably one from a repertoire of more familiar positions, influenced by a myriad of factors.

2.5(ii) Positioning and Discourse

One of the factors considered salient in positioning is discourse (Pomerantz, 2007). 'Discourse' is defined differently by different researchers, but definitions tend to focus around the notion that discourse is talk or text, and relates to the meanings of words and the manner in which those meanings are constructed, therefore linking it inextricably with narrative, where meaning is key.

Discourse is strongly linked with some views of social constructionism, where the world may be viewed as constituted by language (Merttens, 1998). The critical realist thread in this current study does not accept that all is constructed through language, but recognises the importance and power of language in constructing situations within an imperfectly known reality, resisting dichotomous definitions (Burr, ibid.).

Research examining the role of discourse in positioning young people (e.g. - Edley, 2006) is salient in the consideration of exclusion. The discourse employed in interactions between a young person and school staff, and that used to speak and write of a young person can contribute significantly to the manner in which that young person is understood, known and positioned, and therefore to the outcomes for that young person. Pomerantz (2005) studied the discourses of a young man considered to be 'at risk of permanent exclusion' and his teachers; an interesting discussion regarding the issues of power within the discourses ensues.

2.5(iii) The Relevance of Positioning and Discourse in the Current Study

What individuals could do and what they do do, contributes to every interaction in a classroom, and, circularly, the interactions can also be seen as creating the individuals; as defining their position (Collins, 2011).

The issue of positioning in schools has been considered in a number of ways: Ringrose & Renold (2010) examine discourses around the positions of 'bully' and 'victim'; Dutro, Selland & Bien (2013) examine the positioning of children in relation to writing skills; Collins (2011, op.cit.) studies how a Year 5 boy's position is constructed over the course of one lesson via the interactions in the classroom.

Of all of the above, perhaps Collins' study is the most directly relevant to exclusion, especially as the boy in question is, by the end of the lesson, removed from the main area of the classroom.

Collins' focus on interactions in the classroom and the way in which these serve to position the boy (eventually as a "bad, bad boy" (p.780)) is striking in terms of a way of understanding how the difficult situation is reached.   My interpretation of the text presented by Collins was that the relationship between the teacher and the teaching assistant (TA) had a significant role to play in the construction of the situation resulting in the boy's exclusion from the group.

Collins describes 'multiple-layer classroom discourse' (Bloome & Theodorou, 1988), meaning that differing but simultaneous messages are communicated - e.g. -the teacher says to a pupil who interrupts "go to your seat"; she is simultaneously communicating to the rest of the class that interruption will not

be tolerated and maintaining the "traditional, one-at-a-time floor" (Edelsky, 1993, p.189, in Collins, op. cit., p.746) which, in my experience, characterises many classrooms.

Collins describes how the TA (inadvertently?) challenges the teacher's power, resulting in a situation where the teacher has to employ discourse to regain her position:

> *At this point the teacher has to make a choice.   The choice the teacher makes will decide whether Larnell continues as a member of the classroom community or whether he "dies" on the altar of discipline, so that she can regain control of the classroom.* (p. 780)

Suffice to say that Larnell's position shifts from keen, focussed contributor to the topic at hand, to "bad, bad boy" (p. 780) (the words of a classmate as Larnell is removed from the main class); he is indeed sacrificed. I wonder how many times a similar situation is played out in classrooms every day?

Collins' study is interesting and thought-provoking, but did also reinforce my sense of the limitations of prescribed and detailed methods of discourse analysis.   Despite her focus on interactions, the fact that she is present in the classroom, and is filming, Collins' presence is never discussed; her influence on the construction of that situation and the resulting interpretations are

omitted.   I also felt that in employing only the written transcript of the lesson as her vehicle for understanding the construction of Larnell's exclusion, she may be missing a wealth of valuable interpretations which may have been evident had she used the video of the lesson and reflexive notes regarding her own presence and contribution, therefore addressing the 'Gestalt'.

Edley (ibid.) shares my concerns about the limitations of discourse analysis and it is because of this sense of limitation and constraint that I do not subscribe to discourse analysis methodologies, whilst still recognising the importance of discourse itself in the positioning of young people. Consideration of meanings inherent in discourse will occur during my engagement with the young man's story of school, but these will not be located within a prescribed framework.

Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman (2003) link back to my starting point of psychodynamic theory and consider what it has to offer to the limitations of discourse analysis that they perceive, concluding that its usefulness and applicability will be strengthened by researchers aiming to increase their knowledge with regard to how discourse is structured at a 'personal' level, suggesting that:

> *While culture makes available the subject positions we can inhabit, the*
> *'investment' that people have in these subject positions is not*

necessarily captured by the articulation of the discourses themselves; rather it may hinge on unspoken….events, experiences and processes… (p.42)

I interpret that Frosh and colleagues' view almost seems to draw together all those elements discussed above: psychodynamic theory; narrative; discourse and positioning.

2.6 Solution-Oriented Approaches

I have claimed a critical realist stance, and it could be argued that solution-based approaches are in conflict with the notion of a 'truth'; Ingram (ibid.) considers this and points out that "people express different views on different occasions depending upon their communication partners" (p.337). I do not refute this, but retain a sense that said views are linked to the individual's experiences, and if interpreted within the context of the 'Gestalt', with equal reflection upon the 'researcher' and the 'researched', as Hollway (ibid.) espouses, meaning and sense can be ascribed to each of these 'different occasions', within a context, on their own merit and as part of the narrative tapestry of a life.

I outlined briefly in Section 1.1 the background to my desire to adopt a solution-oriented (S-O) focus during this study. At this point, it feels appropriate to explore S-O principles in greater detail and to discuss their junction with narrative approaches. In order to achieve this, it feels key to emphasise the separate identities of solution-oriented (S-O) and solution-focussed (S-F) approaches as the terms are, in my experience, often used interchangeably, even by those practitioners who subscribe to the approaches the terms describe. There are however, a number of important differences between the two approaches and as a practitioner I have found the distinction to be important.

2.6(i) The Roots of Solution-Oriented Approaches

Both S-F and S-O approaches grew out of the work of Erickson (1954), who described the principle of utilisation – using clients' existing resources to help them improve their lives. Steve de Shazer and Bill O'Hanlon were studying under Erickson in the 1970s and each sought to develop Erickson's work into therapeutic approaches, aimed at working with individuals or groups to address issues which felt problematic to their stakeholders and about which the stakeholders wished to see change occur.

De Shazer (1985), generally considered to be the architect of S-F

approaches, began to offer S-F Brief Therapy at the Brief Therapy Family Centre in Milwaukee, along with his wife, Insoo Kim Berg and S-F Brief Therapy continues to be a popular and widely used approach today, nearly thirty years later.

O'Hanlon (1988) developed Erickson's work into S-O approaches to working with clients. He experienced discomfort with S-F approaches, feeling that they failed to hear, acknowledge and validate the client's problematic experiences. Driven by his knowledge of the work of Rogers (ibid.), who emphasised the need for warmth, genuineness and empathy in the client-therapist relationship, O'Hanlon developed S-O therapies as opposed to De Shazer's S-F therapies.

Writing in July 2007, O'Hanlon states his beliefs that S-F approaches also fail to acknowledge political, historical and gender influences upon the presenting problem (again emphasising the salience of issues such as context, discourse and positioning). In addition, he expresses concern about the formulaic approach of S-F approaches, describing how they are characterised by the use of standardised questions and flow charts. These criticisms closely mirror those aimed at highly structured approaches to discourse and narrative, as discussed above.

2.6(ii) My Experience with S-O

I first came into contact with S-F and S-O approaches as an educational psychologist in training (EPiT), ten years ago. I distinctly recall observing a qualified EP colleague employing S-F techniques in a discussion with parents regarding their son, and feeling extremely uncomfortable. I later realised that, unbeknown to me at the time, I was sharing Bill O'Hanlon's concerns about the limitations of S-F approaches to hear, acknowledge and validate the pain and the experience of the problem from the problem-holder's point of view.

I subsequently gained employment as an EP with the same authority in which I had been placed as an EPiT and found that solution-based approaches were being encouraged through the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities offered. Upon attending training provided by Ioan G. Rees of Sycol, I found that I felt much more comfortable with the approach he was championing, and realised that there was a distinction to be made between S-O and S-F approaches.

At www.sycol.co.uk, Rees describes how he reached his conclusion that for him, S-O represented a more acceptable and effective method of working.

2.6(iii) Solution-Oriented Principles

Rees identifies the differences between S-F and S-O as twofold. Firstly, S-O gives space for pain, shame and blame; it recognises a need for patience and acknowledgement of where the problem-holder currently stands. This is as much a part of the change process as are the notions of better possible futures; "the pain narrative is an integral part of the change process" (2006b, ibid.). Secondly, it is an inclusive approach, encouraging and seeking ideas from other similar areas of practice such as narrative work, possibility therapies, collaborative and competency work.

Through my attendance at the S-O training sessions, I became enthused, and could see the possibilities that S-O thinking could offer in all arenas of EP work. I now feel that the vast majority of my working (and many personal) interactions are driven by an S-O framework, which is why it feels important to me to look at the approach more critically at this time.

Rees (2006a, ibid.) identifies ten principles of S-O approaches:

1. If it works, do more of it; if it doesn't, so something different.

2. A small change can lead to a big difference.

3. People have the resources to make changes.

4. Focus on future possibilities.

5. No sign up means no change.

6. Cooperation enhances change.

7. The problem is the problem, not the person.

8. Possibilities are infinite.

9. People have unique ways of solving their unique problems.

10. Keep one foot in pain and one foot in possibility.

The final principle is that which may be seen as that which represents the fundamental difference between S-O and S-F.

Principle 8 regarding the infinity of possibilities does cause me to consider how this fits with positioning theory, where a limited number of positions are seen as available as a result of a myriad of factors. I conclude that maybe

this principle demonstrates the very positive and aspirational nature of S-O approaches and therefore could be seen as an opportunity for emancipation in the lives of young people for whom the possibilities and available positions may feel (and/or be interpreted by others as) quite restricted. This interpretation then highlights the need for careful, subtle and skilled application of the S-O principles, as inappropriate, untimely or overly-explicit application of principle 8 risks having a very negative effect upon the crafting of positive relationships with young people and families.

2.6(iv) Research Evaluating S-O Approaches

When considering research regarding the effectiveness of S-O approaches, the definition issue again rears its head. There is an apparent dearth of literature addressing the effectiveness of S-O approaches, with searches returning studies of the effectiveness of Solution–*Focused* approaches, in particular the use of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) (De Shazer, 1986) as a specific tool. Do researchers investigating the efficacy of S-F approaches, believe that their findings are equally applicable to S-O approaches?

If so, this would seem unfair, as many of the criticisms levelled at S-F approaches centre around the lack of opportunity for problem talk, an issue

addressed by S-O approaches.

There is a small amount of research available which reports on the applications of S-F approaches in a wider sense than just the use of SFBT. Ajmal (2001) states how "ideas first encompassed in a therapeutic setting have been developed into a way of thinking that can fit well into any situation" (p.10).

Kay (2001) describes her use of solution-based approaches with a group of girls, but does emphasise the importance of integrating solution-based approaches with the strategies and techniques borne of other therapeutic bases. This supports Rees' (op. cit.) view of S-O as an inclusive approach.

Rhodes (1993) describes his use of S-F approaches with the classteacher of a five-year old pupil with whom she was experiencing difficulties; teacher feedback was used as evaluation.

Lloyd, Bruce & Mackintosh (2012) evaluated the employment of 'Working on What Works' (Berg & Shilts, 2004) which they describe as a "solution-oriented classroom management intervention" (p.241). They conclude that it is effective, increasing teachers' confidence and linked to "improvements in the way children work and behave" (p.241) and children's perceptions of their teacher.

Perfectly demonstrating my point regarding the failure to differentiate between S-O and S-F, Brown, Powell & Clark (2012) also report on 'Working on What Works', but describe it as "based upon Solution-Focused Brief Therapy" (p.19). Similarly to Lloyd et al (op.cit.), Brown et al report a positive impact from the intervention, which aimed to improve classroom relationships.

S-O and S-F certainly appear to be applied interchangeably in Brown and colleagues' article, which in my opinion contributes to the continuing need to emphasise the need for a clear distinction between SFBT as a technique and S-O approaches as a set of principles which guide interactions and writings, whilst remaining highly flexible and adaptive to a myriad of situations. Until this distinction is made, criticisms regarding S-F will be levelled at S-O and the expectations of those whom we may wish to engage in S-O thinking may be inaccurate.

2.6(v) S-O and This Study

My own belief in the effectiveness of S-O approaches, backed up by a more detailed consideration of S-O methods and evidence of effectiveness in practice (Oakley, 2009) has led me to retain confidence in using S-O as my

guide. Indeed to *not* acknowledge S-O would feel inappropriate as I recognise the extent to which it guides my interactions and interpretations; it *will* play a part in this study and so should be explicitly discussed.

I can acknowledge the influence of S-O at a variety of levels within this study:

- My recognition that these principles are heavily embedded in my perceptions and practice, both as an EP and as a researcher;

- Aims with a S-O focus, considering concerns and problems, what works, preferred futures and ways forward;

- Recognition of the influence of S-O on the story constructed by the young man when I am partner in that construction;

- The influence of S-O on my interpretations.

SUMMARY OF SECTION 2 - THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STANCE OF THIS STUDY AND OF MY EP PRACTICE

Adopting a critical realist stance, I declare an assumption that there exists a relationship between an individual's experiences and their "ambiguous representations" (Hollway & Jefferson, ibid., p. 3) of those experiences.

Maintaining simultaneous focii upon both this study and my role as EP, I also recognise the importance that the developing of understandings via narratives be applied to both the 'researched'/''client' and the 'researcher'/'EP', and that the 'Gestalt' of any interactional experience be considered.

I have chosen in my role as researcher to attempt to be led by a young man's story of school, as opposed to commencing the process with a prescribed methodological approach in place; to follow Clandinin and Connelly (2000, op. cit.) in their suggestion that a phenomenon which is too sharply defined at the outset of the enquiry is likely to become swamped by the complexity of the situation in which the narrative exists, a point which was supported by my experience of story-seeking as described in Section 3 below.

Instead of subscribing to a specific methodology, I have attempted instead to

behave in a transparent manner and to acknowledge and consider those principles that I believe underlie my practice as an EP and my role within this study, with the aims that:

- You as reader can develop meaning and context around the interpretations I report;

- I as writer can employ this as an opportunity to step back from everyday practice and consider in greater detail the underpinnings of my work;

I can reflect that I have set a complex task, maybe, it could be argued, one with too broad an approach, inevitably at the expense of some depth, but the maintenance of my integrity within this study and within my work as an EP remains paramount, and I intend this text to be as much about representing my experience of engaging with the process of this study and reflecting upon everyday practice as it is about contributing to the issue of exclusion from school.   In essence, I too am positioned as a 'psychosocial subject'.

3. THE PROCESS OF SEEKING YOUNG MEN'S VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

The following outlines my experience of attempting to access young men's stories about their experiences of education and exclusion. As will be evidenced, I encountered many barriers and eventually was unable to arrive in the position I had originally been aiming to achieve. Although this felt very difficult at times, I continued to think and act reflexively throughout, and can now reflect on the additional opportunities afforded to me by this experience and that a very tight initial question would indeed have been 'swamped by the complexity' of my experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, op. cit).

Initially, my intention was to engage with the stories of young men who had left compulsory education in the preceding two years, having experienced fixed term exclusions and also having maintained their school placement until the end of Year 11. Sandelowski (1991) suggests that life events are best narrated once they are over, and my purpose in defining this group was that I believed they would be the holders of valuable views and insights with regard to how their school placement had been maintained. One of the principles of S-O approaches is 'If it works, do more of it; if it doesn't, do something different'. I hoped that one of the elements the young men's stories may

illuminate was 'what worked' for them.

By requesting stories about past experiences (i.e. - school experiences in school leavers), the potential of this request to act as 'intervention' and to influence the school situation was removed. I of course recognise that any story in its construction and telling *is* intervention and results in a shift of some nature; my ethical concern was focussed upon attempting to reduce the opportunity for participation in the study to have the potential to negatively influence the young men's relationships.

One year after commencing my attempts to engage with young men from this group, I finally met individually with one young man on the verge of leaving compulsory education. What follow below are my interpretations and reflections on the intervening year, representing developing of meanings, none of which I had predicted at the outset.

3.1 Contact by Letter

Looking back over the year's attempts to access school leavers, I am, with the benefit of hindsight, surprised and challenged by my own naïvete with regard to assuming I would easily be able to access and engage these young men.   I

consider myself to have significant experience in working with young people and therefore question my initial assumption that I would be able to access school leavers via an unsolicited letter contact.

I made two attempts to contact young men, via letter, whom I knew fit my criteria (via exclusions information available to me as an EP employed by a LA). I also sent copies of the letters with a further covering letter to the young men's parent, as they were all under the age of eighteen. Each time, I wrote to three young men selected from a list of six to eight young men who met the criteria with regard to exclusion experience - that is *'left school in the last two years,; had experienced a significant number of fixed term exclusions but had never been permanently excluded'.*

I purposefully chose not to define 'significant' for two reasons; firstly I was aware that the pool of potential participants was already reasonably small, and secondly, it did not feel necessary or maybe even appropriate to define the number of fixed term exclusions, as that would be to ignore all the issues discussed above with regard to 'grey' exclusion and the notion of exclusion in the wider sense. I felt it important only that the young men had experienced 'exclusion' and also achieved the maintenance of their school placement.

I made follow up telephone calls approximately three weeks after sending the letters, but all numbers except one were no longer in existence (four of the six

were mobile telephone numbers), meaning that the records held by the LA were out of date. The final number was not answered. I did experience some discomfort with regard to making these telephone calls, and I interpreted this on two levels: firstly, I wished to respect the right of the young men not to engage, and secondly, I felt concern regarding the response I may receive from whoever answered the telephone; I interpreted this as my expectation that there would be a difference in the positions held by me and the young man or their family members in respect of taking part in an academic study. I was unable to test out this assumption as I was unable to contact anyone via telephone.

3.2 The Need for Face-to Face Introductions

I concluded that there was a need for initial face-to-face contact whereby I could introduce myself and the idea of the research to a group of young men, whilst inviting them to discuss taking part if they felt they met the criteria. I subsequently spent a number of weeks following a variety of leads in an attempt to establish a face-to-face meeting with a group of potential participants.

My attempts included contacting the Young People's Service (YPS) where I

was pleased to be able to make contact with a previous colleague; unfortunately his managers felt unable to offer any involvement and suggested I approach the arm of the LA responsible for the education of children and young people who have been excluded. Other colleagues also made this suggestion; I experienced frustration at this point as I felt that the S-O slant I was attempting to apply to the study was being lost; the young people I could have accessed in this way had all been permanently excluded. I was very tempted at this point to let go of my original question regarding 'What works to maintain school placement?' and to approach the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). However, as I described above, S-O thinking has become such a guiding principle in my every day EP practice, that I found 'letting go' of this a very difficult notion with which to engage, and so decided to continue my quest (I note my use of 'quest' with interest; I feel it communicates a lot about my feelings regarding this process over the last year) to access those who had not been permanently excluded.

To this end, I then contacted two local youth organisations. I was only able to leave a telephone message followed up by an email at one organisation, and heard nothing in return. At the second, I was able to set up a face-to-face meeting with one of the youth leaders. He seemed interested and motivated, but during further discussion, he began to feel that I would experience difficulty in accessing the target group as he described how they "don't turn up for things"; he felt that the likelihood of them coming to a meeting would be

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minimal and offered me a contact at the local college; I believed it may be easier to access young people who were attending college but was mindful that those young men in college may represent a very different group to those that the youth leader had described as 'not turning up for things'. Taking a S-O stance however, this felt as though it may contribute to the 'what works' element.

I had three telephone conversations with the contact at the college and sent information for him to share with his manager. I was very hopeful at first, but during the third telephone conversation he expressed concerns from the college's point of view about permission issues regarding giving me access to the young men and said he now felt unable to help.

By this point my sense of desperation was strong and I reached the decision that I would have to accept a shift in my focus in order to be able to continue. Trying to keep my key question in mind, I concluded that a large part of the issue with accessing young people was the fact that the organisations I was approaching had no perceived investment in the research and I had no existing relationship with them. I therefore decided to attempt to engage with an organisation with whom I had an established and positive relationship and for whom the resulting information would feel explicitly relevant.

3.3 Young Men in Year 11

I approached the Behaviour Support Manager (BSM) in a high school for which I am the allocated EP, in order to enquire about the possibility of hearing the stories of some Year 11 pupils.

When I consider my reasons for making this decision, I am primarily aware of my initial impression of the BSM upon meeting her in a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting regarding a younger boy in the school, called David (name has been changed).   I recall feeling that she *liked* (I note my need to emphasise 'liked', suggesting to me that this is not something I often perceive during meetings) David and that she seemed to take a very positive and friendly approach to working with a group of young men across the school. She seemed keen to discuss strengths and what was working, alongside being honest about how she felt about certain situations.   She did not engage in blaming and I recall feeling 'I can work well with this lady'.   I felt confident in approaching her regarding the study, and, indeed, was met with a positive and enthusiastic response.

The school concerned is a secondary school with around 900 pupils on roll and with a religious ethos.   During a recent Ofsted inspection, the school was judged to be 'outstanding' in all areas, an improvement from their previous inspection.   The school has had a particular focus on 'behaviour' between the

two inspections and very positive comments were made by the inspectors with regard to overall behaviour in school. The school has chosen to adopt a very transparent behaviour system, characterised by a clear hierarchy and a significant number of levels and stages, each with explicit and consistent associated rewards and consequences.

I have been the EP linked to this school for the last academic year and feel that I have established positive relationships with some key members of staff. I noticed that, during my attendance at meetings regarding David, there seemed to be a strong sense of valuing him as a member of the school. I perceived this via factors such as:

- The attendance of three senior members of staff at the meetings (whose seniority meant they therefore had the power to change things in school);

- The fact that every single agreed action was followed up between meetings;

- That David was a partner in every meeting;

- That the explicitly spoken message to David was "you are one of us; you belong in this school". In my experience, this message is not

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often the one communicated to young people experiencing difficulties in school.

I felt that this school may have much to contribute to a solution-oriented approach to considering exclusion.

Throughout the many months during which I engaged with the transcript of the young man's narrative within this study, my perception of the school and the staffs' willingness to continue supporting David began to change.   The same staff member who had emphasised that David was a member of the school opened a meeting with the phrase "I now feel that I don't think we can meet his needs", at which I recall feeling quite surprised.   Subsequently, David has come perilously close to permanent exclusion; I encouraged the staff to consider how this would only create an even more difficult situation for him and was pleased when the headteacher decided to maintain him on their roll, whilst placing him in a smaller, more supportive environment in the short term. This of course still represents exclusion, but I feel that the potential outcomes for David are much more positive than had the school proceeded with the permanent exclusion.   The current plan is that David will make a gradual return to the mainstream high school.

In contrast to David, I had very little previous knowledge of Mark before our meeting in school.   I knew that he was in Year 11 and therefore about to

leave school, that he had had some experience of exclusion, that he was known to the Behaviour Support Manager (BSM) and that he had agreed to meet with me, with his parents' permission.   I knew nothing of his circumstances, of his previous educational experiences or of his academic achievements.   This lack of information was purposeful, as I wished to meet Mark without having been party to other people's versions of him beforehand.

The BSM identified a group of nine young men who were approaching the end of Year 11 and who had all experienced exclusion in some form.   For reasons already discussed, I was not specific about what 'exclusion' included, and left this to her interpretation.

3.4 The Final(ish) Plan

The BSM approached the young men to enquire if they would be willing to attend an initial ten-minute meeting with me, in school, where I could explain the study and provide more detailed written information and consent forms for the young men to take home to share with their parents.

As all the young men were under the age of 18, parental permission was sought for attendance at the initial meeting, This was done by letter, written by

me and sent out by the BSM; a copy of this letter is in Appendix II.

The plan was then that any young men who were interested in meeting with me individually would return the signed consent form to the BSM, who would in turn contact me and pass the completed form to me. At this point I would arrange a time to meet with the young man concerned individually, in school.

The discussion would be recorded (audio only) with the young man's permission to do this being reconfirmed verbally before commencing the recording.

3.5 Consent and Confidentiality

I attempted to address the major issues of informed consent and confidentiality via the written information sheet sent home with all those young men who attended the initial session (see Appendix III) and all paperwork was approved by the University of Sheffield's ethics committee. I aimed to make it clear to the young men, both verbally and in writing, that it was not possible to maintain complete confidentiality with regard to all school staff as the BSM had organised the meeting, and I was aware that she had consulted her line manager and the Head of Year 11 before agreeing to take part. All these

staff members were named on the information sheet, and I requested via email and telephone discussion that they not share the identities of those attending the initial or subsequent meetings with other individuals.

Of course, I am aware that I cannot have ultimate control over whether this request is adhered to; I could only be clear with the young men and hope that the positive relationship I have with the school would prompt the staff concerned to take heed of my request.

A consent form (see Appendix V) was included with the information pack, with space for signatures from the young men and from their parents as they were under 18. I provided an envelope with the BSM's name on the front in each information pack, in order that the consent forms could be returned to her confidentially. I also planned that at the beginning of any individual interviews, consent would be reconfirmed verbally and the young men would be reminded that could withdraw from the study at any time.

Documents related to ethical considerations appear in the Appendix.

3.6 An Interview is Arranged

The end of the 'story-searching' process rather mirrored the beginning and the middle, finally resulting in an individual meeting with one young man, Mark (name has been changed) who, at the time of the meeting was to sit his final exam the following day, so was about as close to leaving school as it was possible to be.

Nine young men had attended the initial meeting in school; I have to admit to being surprised that they all arrived (perhaps as a result of my experiences so far?), and interpreted this as a positive indicator with regard to their relationship with the BSM, as it was at her request that they had come. All young men took away an information pack and I perceived that the session was good natured and reasonably relaxed, lasting about ten minutes. All the young men were attentive and I felt hopeful that some of them would return the consent forms, but after three weeks had passed I had heard nothing, so contacted the BSM, who said she would "chase them up". I did experience some discomfort regarding this, given my belief in the right not to engage; the perceived positive relationship I perceived between the young men and the BSM ameliorated my discomfort somewhat.

A further two weeks later, the BSM informed me that she had spoken to the parents of two of the young men by telephone and obtained their permission.

This again caused me some discomfort as I did not wish to feel that the young men were being pressured into taking part. She had received one consent form and was expecting a second.

It was arranged that I would meet briefly with the two young men to check consent forms and obtain further verbal consent. If this was in place, I would meet immediately with one young man and arrange a meeting time with the other.

Both young men arrived but only one had the consent form, and he agreed to stay and speak with me immediately. The other young man requested a further copy of the form, provided an email address and we arranged an appointment in the following week. Unfortunately, I received a return email from a lady informing me that I had an incorrect email address. My immediate reaction was disappointment, as I felt that he had been interested and therefore found it hard to reconcile this with my assumption that he had purposefully given me an incorrect email address. My belief that he had chosen not to engage at this point led me to feel that this should be the end of my attempts to meet with him.

Discussion with the BSM suggested however that he may have made a genuine mistake, and this caused me to feel quite differently. I then felt anxious that he would believe that I had failed to contact him as agreed, and

so asked the BSM to attempt to make contact via other means with the aim of obtaining the correct email address.

Four days later, and then again two weeks later, she informed me that she had tried to make contact with the young man and his parents on a number of occasions but to no avail (the young man had now completed his final exam and was no longer in school). At this point, I then said to her that I felt it important that we respect his right not to take part and not to pursue contacting him any further.

Therefore, at the end of my year's battle (purposeful word choice) to access the stories of young men who had experienced exclusion, I have Mark's story, as constructed with me the day before his final exam.

SUMMARY OF SECTION 3

I have described and begun to develop meaning around the process with which I was engaged over a period of one year whilst trying to access and engage with the stories of young men. This experience has much to offer in terms of considering positioning, the 'right not to engage' and the seeking of young people's views. I have attempted to communicate to you, as reader,

some of the emotion associated with my attempts to access stories in order to inform your interpretations of the manner in which I contributed to the construction of Mark's story; to address the Gestalt of the narrative situation.

4. WHAT CAN I UNDERSTAND ABOUT SEEKING THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOW CAN I APPLY THESE UNDERSTANDINGS TO MY EP PRACTICE?

INTRODUCTION

Explicit learning with regard to seeking the views of young people did not form part of the original focus of this study, but as the process described in Section 3 developed, I recognised that *not* to use the challenges as an opportunity for reflection would represent a missed opportunity. I recall a sense, maybe partially protective, that even if I never managed to speak with any young men, I would still have much to consider, interpret and discuss.

Section 4 therefore seeks to evaluate and learn from my journey, and reflection upon process and interpretation is followed by application of these reflections to my future EP practice.

With the aim of maintaining the Gestalt, the 'whole' (Hollway & Jefferson, ibid.) my evaluation and reflection focuses upon many aspects of my experience and my meeting with Mark, and seeks to maintain a strong focus upon the interactional nature of the process of seeking stories, the resulting emotions and positions, and the constructed story of Mark's school experiences.

Methods which remove the researcher from the transcript (e.g. - Gee, 1999) to focus upon the words of the participant alone seem to be missing this interactional nature of conversation and narrative construction. Mishler (1994) argues that researchers' questions are "not represented as parts of the stories themselves" but are "essential to interpretation of how the stories develop" (p.3); again, there feels to be something missing here - how does this view take account of shared meaning making? Mishler seems to be highlighting the importance of the researchers' questions in terms of guiding story content, but seems to be missing all the other elements of an interaction which have the power to contribute to the construction of a story. My intention is to maintain a sense that my contribution to Mark's story is as salient as his. Indeed, it could be argued that my insight into my contributions to the story is much greater than my insight into Mark's. Whilst recognising this, for ease of reference, I refer to the transcription and the constructed story as 'Mark's story'; it can be found in Appendix I.

4.1 Reflecting on My Attempts to Access Stories

This section aims to consider how my experiences as described in Section 3 above can be evaluated in order to contribute to my understandings around

engaging with young people, especially in relation to how some young people are positioned and described.

4.1(i) The Right Not to Engage

When I look back over the year's efforts to access stories, my initial and overriding interpretation is that I selected means of attempting to engage with the young men which were, with hindsight, unlikely to succeed, and which did not take sufficient account of the possible difference in priorities between me and the young men in question.

Increasingly, I believed that I had adopted an approach which was too focussed upon my question and concerns, arising from my position and experiences, and subsequently, those whom I was approaching to participate (both young people and other professionals) perceived very limited, if any, personal investment in the research. Were I to recommence research in the area of exclusion, I would begin with a question borne of others, who would then play a natural and key part in the research. Hartas (ibid.) suggests that young people find formal methods of 'participation' to be less effective than informal opportunities for being "genuinely listened to" (p.103); I would imagine that my letter contact was perceived very 'formally' by those receiving it.

I also feel that, ironically, given my S-O goal, I presented my question in a negative manner by asking about exclusion. With hindsight, it may have been more appropriate and may have resulted in greater participation had I approached the young men on the basis of wishing to consider issues for school improvement, as opposed to issues around exclusion. I feel this alternative approach may have been particularly helpful when meeting with the group of young men in Year 11; the message that their views may make a difference could have been more powerful had I focussed on school improvement. I am not as sure that this change would have made sufficient difference to have elicited any response from those school leavers I initially contacted by letter, as I perceive that the face-to-face approach was important.

Throughout the process, I maintained a strong sense of the young men's right not to engage, despite others' challenging of this. I recall telling an EP colleague that I felt uncomfortable making follow-up telephone calls to the young men to whom I had written; he felt that I needed to overcome this feeling and make the contacts. The BSM in the school said she would continue trying to contact a young man, but I felt the need to tell her to cease her attempts. When I query this within myself, I conclude that it relates to respect for others' privacy and choices; the right *not* to engage.

4.1(ii) 'Disaffection' or Dissatisfaction?

I have made an internal attribution regarding the challenges I faced in accessing stories; I can see, however, that it could be easy for others to instead attribute my difficulties to the young men's 'disaffection'. Bragg (2007) suggested that "those who choose not to participate may be seen as disaffected or deviant" (In Hartas, ibid., p. 104). Hartas herself (ibid.) states:

> *Young people's limited participation in learning and training is often seen through the prism of disaffection as a within-the-person factor without accounting for the systemic and social/cultural factors that shape the interface between participation and disaffection* (p. 104).

I would argue that everyone is likely to be 'disaffected' at some time in their lives; it is how we attribute the source of the 'disaffection' that makes the difference. Throughout the process of undertaking this study, I have come to believe that the term 'disaffection' should be substituted with 'dissatisfaction', as discussed above. The resulting attribution is very different and the scope of opportunity for change feels so much greater. The strength of 'dissatisfaction' as an attribution is that it does not seek to *blame* individuals or systems, but to recognise that mismatches are occurring. 'Dissatisfaction' resides in the *space between* individuals and/or systems rather than *within* those individuals or systems.

Within 'dissatisfaction' exists the opportunity to address:

- Mismatches in priorities;

- Mismatches between aspirations and available opportunities;

- Aspects of relationships that feel problematic;

Also, importantly, 'dissatisfaction' has a useful opposite - satisfaction. By bringing satisfaction into the equation, we can consider:

- Aspects of a young person's experience, no matter how small, that support their aspirations and priorities, and seek to build on these;

- Relationships in school and elsewhere that feel positive.

'Satisfaction' provides the building blocks for addressing dissatisfaction, and offers a way forward. This could be considered a S-O approach, and, being S-O rather than S-F, the opportunity for the 'pain' of the 'dissatisfaction' to be heard is maintained.

Having developed these understandings around 'dissatisfaction' and 'mismatch' during the course of this study, I recently found myself in a

situation as an EP where such means of conceptualising a difficult situation seemed highly appropriate and useful. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) with whom I was discussing the issue seemed to find the concept of a mismatch between the young man's possible priorities at that time and those of the school staff to be a powerful motivator for her to identify changes she could make within her interactions with the young man concerned, therefore resulting, as I had hoped, in the problem being located within the space between the young man and the adults, as opposed as to within the young man.

4.1(iii) The Influence of Positioning

Reflecting upon the challenge of accessing stories, positioning theory can offer a further means of conceptualising the construction of this challenge. The questions I am led to consider include:

- How did the young men perceive the position I was asking them to adopt as a participant in an academic study?

- How did they perceive my position and the space between my position and theirs?

- Was the position I was asking them to adopt part of their practised repertoire of positions or not?

- If not, was the position (contributor to an academic study, contributor to the enhancement of educational knowledge, helper, talker etc. etc.) I was asking them to adopt simply so far from their repertoire (their perceived domain of possibility) that it appeared to lie in the domain of impossibility?

If the answer to the latter question was yes, which I suspect it may be for the vast majority of the young men I approached, are there implications for professionals working with young people to give consideration to how we work to help expand their domain of possibilities to include a greater repertoire of positions?

As I write this, I see the potential for its interpretation as a 'within child' approach; working with individual young people to try and convince them that they have greater potential. I would rather see greater systemic and social consideration of the manner in which individuals and groups are positioned via language, attributions, policies and opportunities.

Identifying the above questions is a rather frustrating exercise, as by definition, I have no way of answering them for the vast majority of young men

I approached. To maintain a S-O approach, maybe insight can be found in consideration of why Mark *did* agree to meet with me; how he was able to adopt a position (seemingly comfortably) which perhaps was perceived as in the realms of impossibility for others? Potential contributions to this question are considered during Section 5.

4.2 Reflections on the Meeting with Mark

Following the lengthy process described and considered above, I was eventually able to meet with Mark, a young man in Year 11. He came to talk with me immediately after his second-to-last examination; his last was the following day. By this point in his school career, he was coming into school only to complete his exams and to meet with me; he was therefore extremely close to indeed being a school leaver, the original group I had tried to access.

Interpretation of Mark's story constitutes an ever-evolving process of illumination for me as writer; interpretations, the process of making those interpretations and the resulting discussions aimed at addressing my three questions will inevitably be interwoven; "analysis happens during transcription" (Riessman, 1993, p.60). Whilst recognising and celebrating this intertwined nature, discussion below attempts to focus reflection upon the

experience of the interaction itself, as this influences interpretation around all that follows in Sections 5 and 6, where there is an increased focus upon the *content of the interaction*. This skew in presentation seems related to my questions - Question 2 seeks to learn about interaction per se, whilst Question 1 seeks to develop understandings around a concept.

4.2(i) Reflections on the Meeting Prompts

As a result of my considerations of the approaches to 'good qualitative research' (Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, ibid.), narrative enquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, ibid.), psychoanalytically-informed approaches (Hollway, ibid.) and solution-oriented thinking (Rees, ibid.), I wished to engage with Mark and his story as openly as possible; to be a partner in his meaning-making, whilst recognising and considering the contribution of a myriad of factors to the interaction and its continued construction, and to my interpretation of it.

Therefore, I did not have a specific plan for the meeting, but I did feel the need to jot down a number of possible questions and question/comment starters, which are detailed in Figures 15- 18 below:

Fig. 15 - My key questions and interests (written when I expected to meet with more than one young man):

1. How do these boys believe they have stayed in school until the end of Year 11?
2. What features of the school systems, relationship, home-school communication supported this?
3. How do they feel about fixed-term and permanent exclusions?
4. Do they believe they ever came close to permanent exclusion?
5. How do they think permanent exclusion affects lives?
6. Do they think exclusion is fair?
7. Do they think exclusion 'works'?
8. Do they have any ideas for how things may be done differently?

Fig. 16 - Procedural questions:

1. How did you find the interview?
2. Was this what you expected?
3. Did you feel you had chance to talk about things in your own way?

Fig. 17 - General prompts for me:

Reflecting
Wondering
Curiosity
Recycle core question - how are you still here?
Floating possibilities
Refine core question in relation to emerging themes
Investigate - you mentioned…tell me more…

Fig. 18 - Starters:

How do you make sense of…
How do you make a choice…
Can you tell me…
What do you think about…
How do you explain…

I felt that I wished to have this page of notes available to me during the

meeting, but purposefully did not hold the notebook containing my prompts,

placing it instead on the table.

With hindsight, I question my need for the presence of the prompts at all, for two reasons:

- The nature of the discussion, the type of questions I may be asking and the manner of responses I may be making were all highly similar to situations in which I regularly find myself during my work as an EP, which leads me to question why I did not feel confident enough to have no written notes;

- I feel that the presence of the prompts contributed negatively to my ability to engage at a truly genuine level with Mark and the story we were constructing. I feel that my awareness of the notes caused me to be too focussed on particular aspects of Mark's story and to pursue these overly-vigorously.

I have also reflected upon further issues regarding the prompts:

- Having transcribed the discussion, I feel that I pursued my key questions with some vigour during the meeting, and wonder what influenced this? Was it a result of the 'battle' I had perceived in terms of being able to access a young man's views and story; was there a

feeling that 'I finally am hearing someone; I must make sure I get the information I 'need''?   I of course recognise that this does not easily sit with a narrative approach, demonstrating how emotions have the power to hijack plans and intentions;

- I did employ the procedural questions at the end of the meeting; I was interested to note that I had written 'interview' in my notes; I am glad to note that I did not employ this term verbally when making this enquiry of Mark.   My use of this term, along with my previous observation above, causes me to wonder to what extent I was finding it difficult to 'shake off' some of the more traditional expectations with regard to qualitative research methods, rather than fully embracing a narrative approach.   I do feel I could have embraced this more fully without the presence of the prompts, but conversely, I also feel that Mark's expectations of the meeting would probably have included 'she will ask me questions', and therefore, I wonder if the comfortable dynamic that seemed to be present during our interaction may have been challenged if I had failed to meet this perceived expectation?

- I note that I have listed an intention to 'float possibilities' and I am not sure to what extent I achieved this; I feel that exploring this further could have been of interest.   Reflecting on this, I am interested, as I believe that 'wondering if' is something I engage in regularly in my EP

role.

4.2(ii) Reflecting on Emotions and Positioning

Reflexive notes made at the time of the meeting with Mark allow me to consider the influence of affect upon the context and subsequently the story. Obviously, my insight into my own affect feels much greater than that into Mark's, but it remains important to recognise the interactive nature of emotion.

4.2(ii)a) Acknowledgement of Pre-Meeting Emotions and the Influence of My New Position

I recall, and my notes support, a sense of nervousness whilst awaiting the meeting. I had purposefully arrived at the school a little early, which is unusual for me - I tend to get to meetings in school right on time. Given this context, maybe the 'waiting' period before the meeting contributed to my nervousness, as I would usually be devoid of the luxury of extra time in which to give lots of thought to the intricacies of a meeting. The fact that I had ensured I could be there a little early suggests to me that I was placing a high value upon the meeting; my investment in the meeting 'succeeding' was very high, which feels unsurprising given the effort I had invested to arrive at the point of finally having a meeting arranged.

Over the next 45 minutes, my frustration, anxiety and disappointment were to be steadily heightened and then finally ameliorated, as I waited for the two young men I was expecting to arrive. I had been told they would arrive at 10 o' clock, following their examination. By 10.15am, my notes demonstrate my worry increasing as I start to feel that they have forgotten, or that they are not interested in meeting with me. I see that this increased waiting period caused me to question my presentation - 'how to be' - in the meeting, and I note with interest my apparent increasing frustration with myself and my feelings of anxiety - having noted 'worrying about where to be etc. - stop! Just be myself!'

Reflecting upon this, I see how my position in this meeting was quite different than in my everyday work as an EP. There was in fact almost a role reversal; usually, I am asked to become part of a team working with a child or young person to try and affect circumstances for that child or young person (a discussion regarding how individuals prioritise/judge what should be changed on behalf of other individuals would be of great interest, but the scope for this does not exist within the current study). In this situation, I had been the one to approach the school and the young men to request their involvement.

Effectively, I had changed position from 'helper' to 'helped' and I believe this had affected my confidence to a much greater degree than I realised at the

time. When transcribing the meeting, I could hear myself using language (such as "fantastic") which I considered to represent my being 'overenthusiastic' in an attempt to be friendly and interested. I was also aware of what I perceived to be my sometimes dogmatic persual of answers to my question "what helped?" During transcription of the discussion, I hear my own lack of confidence in the manner in which I am being too guided by my key questions and not being genuinely responsive to some of Mark's comments. I felt some discomfort in realising, with the benefit of transcription, that I seemed to be asking him questions which I now believe he had already answered.

At 10.25am, with no young men having yet arrived, I admit to feeling rather upset; my reflexive notes record 'Is it worth it? Is all this worth it?' I assume by 'all this' I was referring to the last year's efforts in trying to access young men's stories, and perhaps to the wealth of negative feelings I was experiencing in that moment.

At 10.35am, I noted 'Shock, they arrived!' and I recall indeed feeling very shocked, as I had given up hoping they were going to appear and was preparing to leave. It was then quite challenging to swiftly move from feeling disappointed, anxious and upset to appearing welcoming, confident and friendly, but that was what I tried to do.

I feel that this emotional challenge may have contributed significantly to my over-reliance upon the key questions in my notebook and my use of repetition and over-enthusiasm, as I tried to mask the very negative feelings I had been experiencing only seconds before the young men entered the room.

4.2(ii)b) Reflecting on the Pre-Meeting Emotions and Positioning

Reflecting on the emotions described above, I find it interesting to consider:

- The impact of a change of position upon my confidence, emotions and subsequently my ability to engage at a genuine and highly responsive level with another person. I interpret this as demonstrating to me the overall consistency in the position I occupy in the vast majority of meetings I attend as an EP, and that, over nine years, I have become increasingly confident in fulfilling the expectations commensurate with this position. I can not recall any other meetings in the past few years where I have experienced the emotions described above during preparation;

- The influence of personal investment upon my emotional response to a situation. My personal investment in the 'success' of the meeting was very high, and I feel that this intensified the emotions I was experiencing as I increasingly believed that my attempts were about to

fail… again.   If I consider this in the context of my altered position, maybe this has been a useful experience in terms of increasing empathy with parents, school staff and young people for whom, meeting with me in my role as EP may similarly represent a stage in a perceived 'battle'.   I would like to think I always do my best for the children and families I work with, but, usually, my personal investment in attending a meeting as an EP is a great deal less than in the situation described in the study.   This observation gives me cause to consider how the 'helped' may feel when I occupy my more familiar position as 'helper'?   Can I use this experience to help me increase my understanding of the intensity of emotion that others present in a meeting may be experiencing and, like me, possibly trying to mask?

- The manner in which I was processing the characteristics of the situation; Smith & Ellsworth (1985; 1987) considered individuals' cognitive appraisal of situations as a means of explaining the sources of emotional responses and identified dimensions influencing the intensity of emotional responses, including:

    1. The desirability of the situation;

    2. The effort that one anticipates spending on the situation;

3. The certainty of the situation;

4. The attention that one wants to devote to the situation;

5. The control that one feels over the situation;

6. The control that one attributes to non-human forces in the situation.

If I reflect upon my potential responses to these dimensions should they have been posed to me as questions whilst awaiting the arrival of the young men, I can see an interesting means of describing sources of my negative emotional responses. The situation felt:

1. Undesirable;

2. As though a great deal more effort was about to be required;

3. Increasingly certain;

4. As though a great deal more unwanted attention to the situation was about to be required;

5. Increasingly out of my control.

When reading my interpretation of the situation above, it strikes me that there may be some similarity between this appraisal and the manner in which a young person may appraise some of his/her interactions with adults.   This is of course just a consideration borne of my anecdotal experience, but I sense that an awareness of these dimensions may be a useful tool in addressing issues around difficult interactions.

- The influence of my mood upon the subsequent meeting with Mark and therefore upon the story constructed.   Mood influences the information to which we attend and therefore learn, and there is a relationship between mood and the linking of new experiences with existing memories (Bower, 1981; Isen, 1985).   Did my mood during the discussion lead me to, without intention, focus upon those aspects of Mark's story which correlated with my mood and subsequently shape the construction of the story accordingly?   Is this why, upon reflection, I can identify a more negative element to the focii of my questions then perhaps I would have intended given my belief in a S-O approach?   Or does this interpretation in turn represent a defensive description of my realisation that I have not adhered to the S-O principles?

Having considered the emotions associated with my experience of the meeting, it does surprise me that during reflection immediately following the meeting, I have noted that I feel that it went well and that Mark 'Seemed relaxed most of the time and talked well'. It seems that I have interpreted Mark's mood much more positively than my own and I wonder if positioning has an explanation to offer.

My experience of finding myself in a different position to that with which I am familiar felt quite challenging. When I consider my interpretation of Mark's position, I would suggest that his position was perhaps taken from more more-practised repertoire than mine, as he remained in the position of 'pupil', having been asked by a member of staff to attend a certain room and take part in a reasonably prescribed activity (talking), all factors which I imagine would be well within his usual school experience.

In terms of positioning in relation to age, gender, socioeconomic status and race, again, I would imagine that meeting in school with a white, middle-class, almost middle-aged female placed Mark in a position with which he was quite familiar and able to draw upon well rehearsed skills.

Meeting in school with a white teenaged boy from an area of some deprivation is not a situation that is alien to me by any means either, and I am able to reflect that I suspect that the issues of a reversal in positioning from my point

of view were perhaps imperceptible to anyone else, whilst simultaneously exerting a powerful influence upon my emotional response to the situation and therefore shaping that situation itself.

4.2(ii)c) Language choices

I had to make a decision during transcription whether to include representations of accent and shortened language forms (e.g. - 'lotta' for 'lot of'; 'summat' for 'something'). Initially, I had a sense that I was almost stereotyping Mark by transcribing his language in this way, but as I continued, I was interested to note that my own language choices changed with respect to their formality and informality during different sections of the discussion. I was not aware of these choices during the meeting; subsequent listening and transcription brought them to my attention.

I interpreted that I was employing more formal language during those times when I was taking the lead a little more and fitting into my role as 'adult questioner'; when I was trying to communicate empathy and understanding to Mark, I made less formal language choices and employed more colloquiallisms, accompanied by a stronger accent. I should note that Mark and I have similar accents and share a dialect to a degree. Within the context of this meeting, I was not aware of Mark employing any language which I had not previously encountered. We were also able to discuss local

places as we live within a few miles of each other.   I felt that these features facilitated an easier connection between Mark and I and helped to provide a fairly comfortable context in which Mark's story could be constructed.

Overall, I interpreted Mark's language choices as more consistent than my own, perhaps linked to my perception that he was actually more comfortable and relaxed then was I.

I have already noted my tendency to be overenthusiastic in response to Mark's story - e.g. - "fantastic"; "excellent".   On reflection I feel that I over-used these and similar words and interpret this as another indicator of my own reduced confidence (I noted 'I am trying too hard to be enthusiastic!'); I feel I was falling back on these word choices in order to try and be positive and friendly but with hindsight, I wonder if I instead inadvertently communicated insincerity.

Consideration of all of the above causes me to return to Rogers' (ibid.) notions of warmth, genuineness and empathy and emphasises for me the importance of these in my work with young people and families.   I can reflect however, that in this context, my ability to provide these was compromised by my own emotional context, arising to a significant degree from the challenges I had faced in accessing the stories of young men.

SUMMARY OF SECTION 4 - INFLUENCING PRACTICE: WHAT CAN I UNDERSTAND ABOUT SEEKING THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOW CAN I APPLY THESE UNDERSTANDINGS TO MY EP PRACTICE?

Having found a somewhat unexpected opportunity for substantial reflection upon the manner in which I attempted to engage with young people, and the research of others into this area, it seems prudent to apply the resulting reflections to EP work (please see Section 6.1 for further discussion of how this study intersects with EP practice), and the list below aims to summarise the discussion above via translation of experience and engagement with others' research into practice:

Positioning:

- I have developed an increased awareness of the positions I may be asking young people to adopt, the extent to which this may match their perceptions of 'permissible' positions and the influence of this upon their engagement and the story constructed at different times in different contexts;

- Also of importance is the manner in which the language I employy

communicates my perceptions of the young person's position, especially in relation to power and 'knowledge'; I would aim for the kind of equality I experienced when working with Mark, but have recognised differences between this and other interactions with young people;

- Associated with this is the need to work with wider systems, groups and individuals to increase the domain of possible positions available to young people. Language choices have much to offer here; challenging descriptors and stories which exist around young people and questioning and considering the language young people use to describe themselves, along with critical evaluation of my own contributions to the positioning of young people via my verbalisations and my writing;

- I have learned from my experience of adopting an unfamiliar position how this can influence subsequent emotion, behaviour and the focus of information attended to; this demonstrates the importance of considering the positions I am asking young people to adopt and taking account of this when interpreting and writing/speaking of the interaction;

- Similarly, I will seek to develop an increased awareness of my own language choices and the insight these provide me into my current

position and my associated levels of comfort/discomfort;

- Consider the appropriateness of, at times, briefly sharing my own discomfort or emotion with others present in meetings, with the goal of increasing genuineness and transparency in order that the intention behind communications may be less likely to be interpreted as insincerity;

- Identify opportunities where I may be able to extend my repertoire of positions in order that I do not continue to be very comfortable with a particular type of position at the expense of being able to contribute as effectively when and if this is challenged.

Engaging with young people; creativity and chances:

- It feels important to acknowledge the responsibility I hold to be creative in the means I employ when aiming to access young people's stories. Working eclectically can be seen as problematic by some, as discussed by Ingram (ibid.); however, it could also be argued that a broad approach allows greater opportunity for finding 'what works' with a particular young person. My considerations around 'disaffection' and 'dissatisfaction' have caused me to recognise the need, at times, to give young people more than one option or chance to communicate

their views, and for professionals to acknowledge their own responsibility in providing appropriate opportunities for young people to meaningfully communicate their views;

- Similarly, there is a need to allow young people more than one chance to express their views, whilst respecting their right not to engage and giving careful and open consideration to how this is interpreted. This should also involve critical reflection of the methods used or the manner in which potential position may have been communicated;

- I sense a role in communicating to school staffs that 'informal' methods for young people to communicate their views seem to be more highly valued than more 'formal' ones;

- I feel I would find an awareness of Ruddock et al's (ibid.) framework helpful when engaging with young people, as it offers a person-centred and positive focus which may contribute to a message of value. Ruddock et al's priorities may also act as useful focii when working with the key adults around a young person, allowing for recognition that a particular young person's basic needs are the same as every other young person's;

- Relationships always feel key to me as an EP, and the ability to

establish a relationship with young people over time feels as though it has become increasingly unattainable, as services are cut and opportunities for therapeutic work of any longevity evaporate. Therefore, being very clear about the nature and probable length of my involvement when meeting any young people feels key, and should include a clear beginning and a clear end. When evaluating my current practice, I feel that I do achieve the clear beginnings, but intend to aim for greater clarity around establishing clear endings.

5. IN WHAT WAYS CAN I DEVELOP MY THOUGHTS AROUND WHAT HELPS PREVENT PERMANENT EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL?

INTRODUCTION

Section 5 seeks to develop meanings from Mark's story which may contribute to developing my thoughts around the prevention of permanent exclusion from school. Adopting a S-O stance, I have viewed Mark as 'successful', defined by the fact that he has maintained his school placement to the end of Year 11, avoiding permanent exclusion, whilst experiencing some difficulties in meeting two high schools' expectations.

Aspects of Mark's story are linked to those areas discussed in Section 1, but I also aim not to be bound by my existing interests and expectations whilst recognising the factors which inevitably do influence and constrain the interpretations I make.

At this point, it may be helpful to provide a reminder of the epistemological and methodological lenses through which I believe I am interpreting the story:

- Critical Realism;

- Psychoanalytic theory;

- Discourse theory (in its least constrained sense);

- Positioning theory;

- Narrative methodology;

- Solution Oriented (S-O) principles.

In the interests of transparency, I have chosen to firstly identify my initial reactions to the perceived themes of Mark's story, followed by the factors which stood out to me during initial transcription, before addressing some of these issues in greater detail.

5.1 Immediate Interpretations of Mark's Story

Immediately that the meeting had ended, I noted my initial interpretations of the key elements of Mark's story. I report these exactly as I recorded them at that time:

- Key adult - 'on your side';
- Punishment;

- Strict approach;

- Parental backup;

- 'Taking it on the chin and moving on';

- Having an aim in mind;

- Motivation;

- Friends important in a positive way.

I perceive that the majority of the above interpretations support my own expectations and values around 'what works' in school. The two features which I interpreted as featuring heavily in Mark's story but which were more surprising to me were 'punishment' and 'taking it on the chin and moving on'.

5.2 Developing Meaning During Transcription

The discussion with Mark lasted for 45 minutes and I began my initial transcription of it eleven days after the meeting. I completed this first transcription sixteen days later, having worked on it on nine separate occasions, each of which is indicated in the transcription by a noting of the time in minutes and seconds (in bold type and with brackets and unnumbered lines).

As certain features of the interaction and thoughts about meaning developed for me during transcription, I included these at the relevant points, mainly as the most practical means of establishing an aide memoire at the time. However, with the aim of maintaining transparency and providing context for the discussion below, I subsequently decided to leave these in (indicated by italic type, brackets and unnumbered lines), and it is these interpretations developed during initial transcription that are introduced in this section and contribute to the more in-depth discussions below.

I see, perhaps unsurprisingly, that there is a tendency for these observations of 'salient' points to be focussed upon my areas of interest:

- Aspirations;

- The importance of friendships;

- Locus of control;

- Relationships with staff;

- Parents' involvement in Mark's education;

- Punishment;

- Attachment.

This highlights the constructed nature of both the story and of the interpretation of that story, and my role in both processes. I interpret that the

story contains much of interest in relation to those areas outlined above; it would be unsurprising if it did not, given that I was partner in the construction of that story. Had Mark discussed his educational experiences with another individual, the resulting story would have contained differing emphases. Similarly, were I to request that you, as reader, interpret the key features from the transcript as it stands, I am sure you would identify differing factors.

5.3 Repeated Engagements with the Story

During repeated engagements with the story (audio recording and written transcript) over a period of 8 months, and from the process of researching and experiencing this study, I have subsequently interpreted five main areas which I feel contribute to the issue of preventing permanent exclusion from school.

Following a consideration of whether my sense of wishing to prevent permanent exclusion has been sustained, these five areas are discussed below, under the following headings:

- Peer relationships and belonging;
- Relationships between young people and adults;

- Aspiration;

- Attributions and power;

- Systemic issues;

I have chosen not to place 'positioning' in a discrete section, as this seems to contribute to all five areas, and is therefore addressed during discussions of these areas.

Interpretations made from Mark's story form the major body of most subsections. A concluding list identifies the main issues arising with regard to addressing Question 1 (In what ways can I develop my thoughts around what helps prevent permanent exclusion?). These conclusions are a result of:

- My interpretation of Mark's story;

- My engagement with others' research, as discussed in Section 1;

- My experience of undertaking this study as discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

5.4 Do We Need to Try and Prevent Permanent Exclusion from School?

After all of the above considerations, do I still maintain a stance that we should seek to prevent permanent exclusion from school? In Section 1.4(ii), I discussed why permanent exclusion matters; issues included links between exclusion from school and feelings of hopelessness (Munn et al, ibid), a sense of rejection and stigmatisation (Pomeroy, ibid.) and anti-social behaviour and drug use (McCrystal et al, ibid.). Ball et al (ibid.) and Macrae et al (ibid.) retrospectively linked the current situations of young people considered 'disaffected' to unaddressed educational, social or emotional issues during the school years, demonstrating the importance of meeting young people's needs at a holistic level during their time in school. A more positive view was suggested by Spooner (ibid.). The discussion below considers how Mark's story contributes to my initial perception that exclusion is undesirable.

5.4(i) Does Permanent Exclusion 'Work'?

Mark's thoughts around whether permanent exclusions *"work"* (his word choice) are interesting; he has not experienced permanent exclusion but knows others who have. He reports that he has been in receipt of fixed term

exclusions and a managed move (although I believe this was not an 'official' managed move as the first school he attended was an independent school). This is however, the language Mark uses to describe the process he has experienced.

In lines 548-554 of the transcription, Mark seems to employ language choices which locate him outside the group of people for whom he feels fixed term exclusions are ineffective, describing how:

> *…some parents, I know it sounds bad, but some parents may not, at home feel, the need to punishment, punish them again, might think oh they're punished (1 sec) anyway so (1 sec) so they just sit at home 'n' they, do any fin' they would do if they was at school but they're not,*
>
> > *S: Right, hmm hmm*
>
> *they're just getting off school (S: Right) so, it's a way of getting off school for some, but, I fink, the permanent exclusions, work (S: Yeah)* (Lines 548-554)

When I enquire of Mark what he means by 'work', he explains that he thinks that permanent exclusions help people *"reform 'n' change how (2 sec) they was before".* He then goes on to discuss some other young men he is acquainted with (again he seems to view them as the outgroup) who have been permanently excluded and subsequently attend the local PRU:

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*…there's a few lads on there that got permanently excluded from ********* [neighbouring high school], but, they don't seem to care, they're just hemmed up at ++++++++ [local pupil referral unit] (S: Hmm hmm, yeah) They don't seem to go anywhere from there, they just get their Maths and English 'n' then, they think right I've got it now then, that's it, 'n' thi don't seem to be bovvered that thi bin (1 sec) but*

     S: Right

people who, get permanently excluded from, different schools 'n' go onto another school, I fink that seems to do change 'em, not just seems to turn ' em round   (Lines 576-586)

Mark continues to discuss the greater opportunities he perceives resulting from moving to a different mainstream school than from attending the PRU (his use of the phrase 'hemmed up' perhaps demonstrates his perception of the PRU), which of course reflects his own experience, which he seems to present as having a positive outcome.

His use of the word 'reform' when describing the effects of exclusion upon individuals is of note; my perception of this word is that it is one associated with the penal system rather than with young people in schools. I interpreted a clear message from Mark about his belief in the effectiveness of 'punishment' throughout our discussion, and these meanings would appear to be linked. Mark's discussion of punishment is considered further below.

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Mark's views on permanent exclusion seem a little contradictory as he describes how it 'works' but then goes on to give further examples suggesting that his perceptions of those young men attending the PRU support similar notions to the 'hopelessness' described by Munn et al (ibid.). He does not forecast positive futures for those attending the PRU and talks about how attendance at the PRU is sometimes seen by others as desirable as it is common knowledge that trips to McDonalds etc. can result from PRU attendance. Given his previous references to having an 'aim', I reflect this back to him and he again stresses the importance of having a longer term aim in place:

> *…once you've got an aim, a lot o' people will feel like yer, it's a*
>
> *challenge to get it n' (3 sec) honestly I like (2 sec) feelin' like I've got*
>
> *S: Aaahh*
>
> *some fin' to work for, 'n' not just, feelin' to myself, right I'm doin' this,*
>
> *S: Hmm hmm*
>
> *what am I gonna do next (S: Yeah) I like to know what I'm, doin' it for*
>
> (Lines 623-629)

Mark's apparent perceptions of the 'outgroup' who attend the PRU lead me to consider the influence of Mark's beliefs about my expectations, upon his description of permanent exclusion as 'working'; it could be interpreted that he feels that I am a person involved in that process (I have already explained my

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interest and involvement at the earlier group meeting) and that therefore he is not at liberty to express his belief that permanent exclusion is ineffective?

My overall interpretation of Mark's view on permanent exclusion is supportive of the majority of the research, viewing it as linked to demotivation and focus upon immediate or short term reward and pleasure, at the expense of longer term goals.

5.4(ii) Managed Moves

However, challenging my assumptions and beliefs are Mark's suggestions that moving to a different mainstream school (as opposed to a PRU) can lead to a positive outcome.   Indeed, he is the embodiment of success arising from this situation, which I feel may be from where his belief in the potential of 'managed moves' is borne.

My experience of working with young people who have participated in managed moves is that the move often fails, and that this failure is then attributed to the 'problematic behaviour residing within the young person', rather than being viewed as a failure by the system as a whole to meet the needs of that young person.   I am always struck by the apparent juxtaposition of attempting to meet the needs of a young person for whom the

establishment of positive relationships in school is challenging by moving them into an entirely new social situation where they once again are unknown and unknowing, therefore increasing the social challenge. I profess to having often asked the question 'Why would that be expected to work?'

It seems that for Mark, a move has indeed worked, so it is of interest to develop meanings around how and why. I have interpreted throughout Mark's story a strong focus on affiliation with peers, and it is within this arena that I have developed the strongest sense of influence around Mark's successful school move, and discuss this below as I turn the focus to the meanings I have interpreted around the role of relationships and belonging in the prevention of permanent exclusion.

5.4(iii) Key Points Arising About Whether We Should Seek to Prevent Permanent Exclusion

Mark's view of permanent exclusion seems at times contradictory, but overall feels skewed more positively than my own. He seems to position himself as successful, when compared to those attending the PRU, and indeed I too have defined him as successful, having avoided permanent exclusion. Managed moves can be considered a method of exclusion, and I have been challenged in meeting with a young person for whom this type of approach

has 'worked', both in his view and in my definition of 'success'.   I have made sense of this by highlighting the perceived importance of affiliations and friendships in Mark's situation, and conclude that in my work as EP, I may need to be increasingly open-minded with regard to the positive potential of changes of placement, whilst ensuring that issues of peer relationships and belonging are paid sufficient attention, issues discussed further below.

5.5 Peer Relationships and Belonging

5.5(i) The Importance of Peers and Affiliation in the Success of Mark's School Placements

Mark challenges my experience and beliefs and causes me to shift my question from the negative 'Why would a managed move work?' to the positive 'How has this managed move worked?'   In co-constructing and interpreting Mark's story, I perceive that a salient factor in Mark's success upon entering and establishing his position within a new school was the presence of existing peer relationships and the associated sense of affiliation.

Mark refers to his friends on eight occasions during our discussion, and indeed, friends was the first topic he chose to speak about as our discussion commenced:

S: ………. Erm, so, er, how are you feeling now that you are nearly at the end?

M: Well, yeah, it is good in a sense (2 secs) but (1 sec) I reckon that only fing that I'm worried about is like leaving friends 'n' stuff (S: Right) and yer, yer know like, people hardly ever keep in touch wi' the friends that they made at school

S: Right, mm mm

M: Yeah, I'm looking forward to just getting out and working really but, um (S: have you got) leaving all my friends (Lines 21-27)

Given Emerson and Frosh's (ibid.) suggestion that meaning is interpreted from narrative position, the fact that Mark chooses to respond to what I consider to be my very open first question with a comment about his friends, suggests that peers are of significant importance in Mark's story of school.

I am aware that my own belief in the importance of friendships (and the sense that this is often overlooked by adults in school) will have contributed to the manner in which friendships were discussed and constructed. I recall a sense of pleasure when the first thing Mark referred to was his friends, as this

supported my existing beliefs and concerns. When engaging with the transcript, I am keen to note whether the repeated discussions regarding friendships seem to be encouraged by me or to be introduced to a greater degree by Mark, and conclude that the references to friends are tending to arise in response to questions regarding other aspects of school, or to more general enquiries from me, such as *"So what was it like, starting in Year 9?"*. Of course, Mark may well be picking up on my interest in his discussion regarding friendships, therefore leading him elaborate further during discussions around other aspects of school.

Overall, I interpret that for Mark, a key (perhaps *the* key) aspect of his successful entry into his new high school during a managed move was the fact that he was a member of an already- established friendship group involving other young people in his year group:

> *S: Ah, right, ok. So what was it like starting, in Year 9?*
>
> *M: It was alright, because, as I went to primary school, I went to xxxxxxxxxx [primary school] so*
>
> *S: Right, mm mm*
>
> *M: I had like, a lot of people from my year went to the same school as me and they were all coming 'ere. I was the only one in Year, when I left primary school, to go, to xxxxxxxxxxx [other high school], so I basically left them all behind*

S: Right

M: And (2 sec) I di'n't get on well there, so, ended up coming out and coming back to this school, but I chose this school just cause all my friends were 'ere, it's been good like getting back with all my friends (S: Yeah) that I met from primary school (Lines 93-104)

In seeking to make sense of why this managed move may have worked for Mark, I am led to consider the issues Mark mentions regarding transition from primary to high school.

Mark's description of how he 'left all his friends behind' *("…so I basically left them all behind")* perhaps provides insight into the emotional impact of being the only Year Six pupil to move to a particular school, in the apparent knowledge that the majority of your peers and friends will remain co-located in a school much nearer home.   His use of the word 'back' in the excerpt above ("…*coming out and coming back to this school*) seems laden with meaning and supports my interpretation that his sense of affiliation and belonging remained with his primary school friends whilst he was in fact separated from them.   He states that he came 'back' to this school, when in actuality he had never been 'at' this school, therefore rendering it impossible to 'come back' in the most common sense of the phrase.   What this word choice actually communicates would seem to be an entirely different meaning; did Mark actually feel as though he was 'returning' in body to the place that he had

remained emotionally all along?   When he says he came 'back' to the school, does he actually mean he came 'back' to his friends and to the social situation from which he felt (unfairly?) removed; to the place where he had felt he should rightfully be in the first place?

If so, does this provide insight into why the initial school placement was unsuccessful and the managed move resulted in success?   Mark explains that it was difficult to make friends at his first school because the pupils came from a very wide area and therefore he was unable to meet with any of them outside of school:

> *M: No I, I came in wiv a lot o' confidence, that's probably, half o' the*
>
> *fact, because, obviously I knew most people here because I I'd go out*
>
> > *S: Right, mm mm*
>
> *wiv 'em cause I di'n't live round, cause yer get people from*
>
> > *S: Yeah*
>
> *Xxxxxxxxxx [old high school] coming from everywhere, all over, like*
>
> > *S: Yes of course*
>
> *from xxxxxxxxx [town name], [town name 2] wherever, 'n' cause I'm in*
>
> > *S: Yeah, mm mm*
>
> *xxxxxxxxx [town name 3] it's 'arder to see everyone else (S: Mmmm)*
>
> *so, I used to 'ang round wiv everyone from primary school anyway,*
>
> > *S: Yeah*

different, play football wi' different people from this school (S: Hmm

hmm) so (1 sec) I'd already met 'arf of 'em, so I just came into an

   S: Right

environment where it were like, I knew everyone anyway (1 sec)

slightly different lessons 'n' different kinda, stuff like 'at

   S: Right, oh ok, so less (Lines 410-425)

It would seem that Mark was able to maintain his affiliation to his primary school friends via football games at home., which may explain some sense that he was maybe 'missing out' by attending a different high school.

5.5(ii) Similarities Between Mark's Position and That of the PRU 'Outgroup'

I note an interesting parallel between the situation Mark describes at his first school, where the pupils come from *'"all over"* and the position in which those attending the PRU also find themselves. Young people attending the PRU also tend to live in a much wider area than would be usual for most mainstream schools; do Mark's observations about the difficulties this presents in establishing and maintaining friendships also apply to those young men he talks about in the outgroup?

It seems Mark did have a strong affiliation, but not to the school which he was

expected to attend.   I wonder to what extent his desire to attend the second school influenced his actions and interactions at the first school?   I am also caused to ponder where the affiliations of the young men attending the PRU lie?   Is 'belonging' an area which I should be considering in greater detail when working with young people at risk of exclusion?

In Section 1.5(iii)b) above, I posed questions regarding how boys belong and wondered how the young man whose story I was to engage with may define himself and others and develop associated affiliations.   It seems that in this telling, Mark has positioned himself as 'successful', where those attending the PRU are seen as 'unsuccessful'.   His sense of belonging in Years 7 and 8 seemed to be almost fiercely located with his friends from primary school, despite the fact that he was now attending a different school and separated from them.   His affiliation was with his primary school friends, rather than with the new group to which he was perhaps simply expected to belong.

5.5(iii) The Power Potential of Peer Relationships

Mark's position is interesting as his story suggests on the one hand, the overriding power and importance of the established peer relationships, and yet simultaneously he describes how, upon arriving at the second school, he found that people he knew *were totally different, not in a bad way like"* and he

shifted into friendships with others. He presents this in a thoughtful, philosophical way, not seeming to communicate either positivity or negativity.

Later in the story, Mark makes numerous references to friends in different contexts. I am particularly interested by his discussion around asking teachers if he can move away from his friends in class as he feels this will help him listen to the teacher more easily. My reaction to this is to consider if he may be concerned about what his friends think; whether he is under pressure to stay sitting with them, and I therefore ask this of him:

> *S: Right, good (2 sec) ok, 'n' then do (2 secs) in terms of what do you think yer friends were thinking then, when you were, sittin' on yer own (1 sec) did they know that was something you'd, said you wanted to do or, would you rather they, thought the teacher'd made you, do it*
>
> *M: No, like, I don't know, they just (3 sec) I just (1 sec) left 'em to what, think whatever they want to really I just, nobody ever said any fin', so I just,*
>
> *S: Right, yeah   S: Right*
>
> *carried on the way I normally*
>
> *S: Yeah, good, ok* (Lines 489-497)

Mark seems to suggest that he is not bothered what his friends might think, that he has positioned himself as *"turning things round"* (a phrase that

appears numerous times).   He earlier explains that he *"di'nt really wanna do it to be honest wiv yer"* (referring to moving away from his friends in lessons) but I interpreted that the reason he would have preferred to stay with his friends was that it was more fun for him; the only time during our discussion that issues of peer pressure were referred to was when I introduced the notion, and even then it was quickly dismissed, as shown in the excerpt above.

It seems Mark was positioning himself as 'decision maker' and 'indifferent' to his friends' opinions in this telling.   I wonder if there was an element of defence in this positioning, in order to protect himself from the potential disapproval of some peers?   Or does this interpretation actually more strongly represent my own belief in the power of peer pressure?   As the reader, you will similarly make your own interpretation.

Alternatively, it may be the case that Mark, upon finally having the opportunity to join the system and group with which it seems his affiliation had remained, and subsequently discovering that the people in that group had changed, was corralled by this context into viewing this affiliation as less important that it had maybe felt when it was unattainable owing to reasons beyond his control.   It could be theorised that in this situation, he was forced into adopting a new position; was this his opportunity to begin to 'turn it round'?

When trying to link the 'friendship' elements of Mark's story back to the research on preventing permanent exclusion, I am reminded that much less attention than seems appropriate in my experience is paid to issues of peer relationships and friendships in planning for young people's success in school.   Ruddock et al (ibid.) do refer to pupils' need for 'status' in school, but there is a sense for me that this refers to the status of the pupil body as a whole in relation to the school system, as opposed to the need for individual pupils to occupy positions of status among their peers.   It would be of interest to investigate what might be seen as representing 'status' among young people, and in whose eyes 'status' is felt to count.

Maguire et al (ibid.) do describe work in one school where it was felt important to involve the whole class in order to address the peer interactions which it was felt were influencing problems with behaviour and attainment.   It does feel however, that this is to take a very narrow view of the role of peer relationships and friendships in the lives of young people.

In my anecdotal experience, there seems to be a tendency for adults in schools to view peer relationships as only a source of negativity for young people, especially when discussing teenaged pupils.   I was interested to note that Mark never referred to friends and/or peers as contributing negatively to the lives of young people, either when considering his own relationships or those among others.

This causes me to consider that perhaps a contradiction is in existence in some schools - friendships are viewed as problematic and a source of difficulty by adults in school, but, simultaneously, these adults are, for various reasons, maybe failing to provide the connections and affiliations that some young people are seeking, therefore resulting in said young people seeking increasingly strong affiliations with peers. If, as is suggested by Browne (ibid.) and Harris (ibid.), behaviours tend to conform to peer group expectations, which can often value and reinforce those behaviours sanctioned by teachers, it is easy to see how a young person seeking to belong and develop connections with others can find themselves in a difficult situation in the school context. Therefore, it feels prudent to consider the potential within relationships between adults and young people in schools to meet social, emotional and affiliation needs.

5.5(iv) Key Points Arising About Peer Relationships and Belonging, in the Context of the Prevention of Permanent Exclusion from School

- Affiliation is a key need and should be given greater consideration in the discussion and planning of educational placements; the location of a young person's affiliations should be considered in order that those affiliations can be maintained if the young person so wishes and support can be provided to build further affiliations; consideration

should also be given to the potential implications of situations which can result in a break in affiliations;

- Adults should aim to recognise what needs young people are seeking to meet via peer affiliations and that the resulting list of needs may reflect some of the gaps in the opportunities adults and systems are offering (whilst recognising that peers of course offer the appropriate context for the meeting of some needs);

- Peer relationships have the potential to facilitate positive change and can make the difference between a 'successful' and an 'unsuccessful' school experience;

- Friendship and acceptance into a peer group should be considered, planned for and supported if necessary.

5.6 Relationships Between Adults and Young People in Schools

5.6(i) The Broadening Range of Adult Roles in Schools

Much of the research into relationships between adults and young people in schools has focussed upon the 'teacher-pupil' relationship, as, traditionally, this was seen as the key relationship in school, and most adults in school were indeed teachers.

In more recent times, the number of non-teaching staff in schools has increased, with the advent of new roles including Learning Mentors, Behaviour Support Managers, Family Liaison Workers and Higher Level Teaching Assistants. Indeed, within this study, I chose to approach the Behaviour Support Manager to discuss meeting with the Year 11 boys.

This has the benefit of broadening the opportunities for young people to make connections with adults in school, where those adults are maybe seen as separate to or different from teachers. However, in my experience this can also sometimes lead to a situation whereby teachers begin to believe that some young people are the 'responsibility' of other members of staff and subsequently do not view the establishment of a positive relationship with

those young people as part of their role.

It may also be the case that, in perceiving a difference between teaching and non-teaching staff, some young people develop a more negative view of teachers' potential to meet their needs. It was very interesting to note, in Chamberlain and colleagues' study (ibid.), the difference between adults' and young people's perceptions of what makes a 'good teacher', with the former group focussing upon actions and the latter upon relationships.

In support of these findings, Mark seems to attach great value to talking to teachers and other adults, and describes how being able to talk to his teacher establishes trust and places him in a more equal position:

> *M: There was certain ones like (1sec) my, I have an Art teacher (2 sec) I fink, what makes me get along with her is she's more, she comes, she's like, she's more talkative, like down, talking to us, rather than all, higher-classed 'n'*
>
> *S: Right, mmm mmm*
>
> *M: Like (1 sec) but (1 sec) like I could talk to 'er about anyfing, I could, ask her to like, help me 'n' stuff 'n' (1 sec) everyfing'd be sorted, like that, like there's certain ones that, I fink when they get along better like wiv the student , then you can get along better wiv them, which makes*
>
> > *S: Yeah*

you be able to trust them, 'n' (S: mmm) actually ask them about (1 sec)

getting, so you do, find a lot of teachers in different classes, which you

S: Mmm

can talk to more than others   (Lines 251-261)

During the story, he also talks about the BSM (non-teaching staff member) and how she has helped him in school; I 'check out' with him whether he has a sense of someone being *"on your side"* and he agrees with this, stating that they are *"willing to actually (1 sec) give the time to help you".*   His use of the words 'willing' and 'actually' interest me, suggesting that maybe he is, as discussed above, positioning this adult differently in relation to other teachers, whom he perceives as unwilling to make the required effort to help.   I wonder if, from his position, Mark takes account of her prescribed role in school and how this enables her to offer the sustained and frequent support that subject teachers could not, or whether he views her support simply as a function of her personality and her choices?   The use of the word 'willing' leads me towards the latter interpretation.   Is it therefore important when working with young people to investigate their perceptions of the actions of others, especially staff, and to facilitate consideration of staffs' positions and therefore the choices available to them in a given situation?

I am aware that the introduction of the idea of 'sides' into the story feels led by me, although at the time I would not say that the idea of teaching and

non-teaching staff being seen as on different 'sides' was one which I had overtly considered.   I do however have the sense that the notion of 'sides' does feel meaningful to Mark as he explicitly repeats the phrase toward the end of our meeting *("…like yer said before, like, like yer feel like they're on your side").*

In working with the transcript, I was struck how Mark's comments about his relationships in school fit with Ruddock and colleagues' (ibid.) suggested list of six needs of young people in schools:

- Respect;
- Fairness;
- Autonomy;
- Challenge;
- Security;
- Support.

The overall tone of Mark's story would seem to support these notions as important to him and, having encountered this list for the first time in the context of this study, I feel that it also constitutes a useful framework for use in my EP work.

I was also interested to note that Mark makes no reference to the gender of

specific adults in school, instead focussing upon the personal characteristics of individuals instead.   Those adults that he chooses to talk about in more detail are, however, female.   The fact that he is constructing his story with a female may lead him to focus more upon the positive relationships he perceives with females; he may assume I am less interested in or less able to understand any positive aspects of his relationships with male members of staff, which may possibly offer different types of support and affiliations from those relationships with female staff.

5.6(ii) The Power of Relationships and Attachment

"Every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge all that has gone before" (Bomber, ibid); a powerful quote to employ when working with school staff, attempting to facilitate thinking around the power of interactions and relationships, usually between themselves and an individual young person. The importance of teacher-pupil relationships is not a new focus; Leavitt (1959) states:

> *Most teachers know intuitively that they have an important mental health role to play in setting the classroom climate.   Johnson (23) indicated that acceptance of the pupil by the teacher is fundamental. He pointed out that the effective teacher likes children, wants to help*

them and feels that they can be helped. The wise teacher sets limits

on behaviour and maintains these limits. (p. 209)

Upon reading this fifty-five year old quote, I am struck by how relevant its recommendations still feel. Some of the language choices may feel a little outdated (e.g. - 'wise') but I feel that the sentiments remain highly applicable to education in 2014. Quality, trusting relationships with key adults have been shown to influence positive outcomes for young people (Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky & Bontempo, 2000) and a caring school environment, where young people are known by adults, has been linked with academic performance (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Louise Bomber's (ibid.) powerful quote above is taken from her work focussing upon supporting children and young people who have experienced loss, separation, trauma or chaos in their lives, and aims to facilitate an understanding in adults of how these experiences may be influencing young people's actions and understandings. I became aware during transcription that I was making assumptions about Mark's experience of relationships and his subsequent understanding of further relationships, based upon his comments about his parents and their views on school. I interpreted that Mark's parents place a high value upon education and were very supportive of school staffs' work with Mark. I interpreted that Mark views both his teachers and his parents as adopting quite strict approaches with him and that he has

found this helpful. My assumptions were further enhanced by Mark informing me that the first high school he had attended was an independent school, suggesting to me that his parents may have been investing a lot (in a number of senses) in Mark's education and success. The BSM had also informed me that Mark's mother had bought her flowers to thank her for her work with Mark.

I met with Mark, purposefully in possession of significantly less information about his background than would usually be the case in EP work, and this has enabled me to be more aware of the manner in which assumptions may be made on a small amount of information. I have formed a picture of Mark as a young man probably with an experience of secure attachments and with parents who have the resources and experiences to lead them to place a high value on Mark's education and be able to support him effectively. These assumptions could be completely inaccurate, depending upon whose point of view is taken, but I feel I must state them in the interests of transparency and because they influence the manner in which I have interpreted Mark's success.

Bomber (2011) discusses the mismatch between the secure attachment 'lens' upon which school systems are based (and through which the vast majority of individuals within a school community will view it) and the 'lens' of insecure attachment through which a smaller number of children will be viewing the world. When interpreting Mark's story, I was struck by a sense that I had met

with a young man who was able to view the school system as Bomber suggests it is planned - through the lens of secure attachment - which feels somewhat different to the majority of young people with whom I find myself involved as an EP, many of whom have experienced what most people may consider to be less than optimal childhood circumstances.

This notion of the 'mismatch' is one which has grown in importance throughout the process of this study and its potential for locating difficulties within the interactional space feels very helpful.

5.6(iii) Key Points Arising About Relationships Between Adults and Young People, in the Context of the Prevention of Permanent Exclusion from School

- Relationships have the power to change lives;

- Teachers should be encouraged to take responsibility for developing relationships with all young people with whom they work;

- It is important to recognise that for some young people, the interactional expectations of school may be mismatched with their previous and/or current experiences of interactions outside the school context;

- Following Ruddock et al (ibid.) it may be helpful for EPs to encourage discussion in schools of the means by which the following needs can be addressed, at systemic and individual levels: Respect, fairness, autonomy, challenge, security, and support;

- Knowing and being known are important aspects of developing positive relationships; it may be helpful to consider the establishment of systems for sharing important and positive information about teachers and young people with each other;

- Shadowing others' roles in schools may allow people to gain greater insight into the nature of individuals' opportunities to occupy different positions or offer alternative contributions to a relationship and into the experiences, pressures and successes encountered by others. This could cover all types of relationships: pupils shadowing pupils; pupils shadowing teachers and vice versa; learning mentors shadowing the head teacher etc.

5.7 Aspiration

5.7(i) Positioning and Aspiration

I have discussed above Mark's apparent positioning of himself as different from those young people who attend the PRU. A key element of this difference appears to relate to the identification of and response to, aims and goals. Throughout his story, Mark refers to his own ability to look forward and consider the effect of his actions upon his future opportunities; this link seems to be made particularly strongly with reference to negative actions resulting in reduced opportunities; what *could have* happened had he responded differently.

He also demonstrates his ability to look ahead with regard to more positive aspects of his future, which he seems to present as what he expects *will* happen. He associates having an aim with *"motivation", with "challenge"* and with *"pull[ing] yer frough all the bad fings".*

I am interested in some of Mark's language choices around making changes in school and moving forward to a more positive place, having developed a sense that some of the language is reflective of work possibly carried out with

him by the BSM, meaning that I could interpret this in different ways. It may be that the support the BSM gives to Mark has a significant effect, resulting in the language of the support entering his own talk around himself. Additionally, maybe he views me as someone who may appreciate similar approaches to the BSM, and so chooses to talk of himself within this context using such terms.

Mark identifies his next step (a forge work course) and his preferred future career (a farrier). Mark describes his experience with horses via a family member, linking this to his desire to be a farrier. He does not appear to make any link between this aspiration and his school experience, instead seeming to view school as *"sitting down 'n' like, academic"*, juxtaposed with his aspiration to *"actually get hands on"*. I wonder if I was to ask his teachers what Mark hoped to do once leaving school, how many of them would know that he wants to be a farrier?

My overall impression of Mark, when reflecting upon the entirety of my experience with him, is that he views himself as successful, as some one who has 'turned things round', leading to his view of himself as separate to the young men attending the PRU. This causes me to ponder if Mark's position as 'successful' contributes to the reason that he felt willing to meet with me, where some of his peers did not. As someone who is 'successful', was the position I was asking him to adopt, in meeting with me and contributing to

research, closer and therefore more comfortable for him than it may have been for others who might position themselves differently?

Mark's 'success' seems to be defined by his improving relationships with teachers and his increasing ability to *"take it on the chin"* and move on from difficult situations. He does not seem to position himself as successful in academic terms:

> *S: Is there anything else that you think you'll, miss about it, or will you be quite glad*
>
> *M: I'll be quite glad to leave*
>
> *S: Yeah, mm mm*
>
> *M: Yeah*
>
> *S: So, tell me a bit more about that then, what what will you be glad that you don't have to, do, anymore, or*
>
> *M: It's just (2 sec) I, I don't really enjoy, like, kind of (1 sec) not being as practical, just sitting down 'n' like, academic, I don't really enjoy it (2 sec) I struggle keeping concentration on things*
>
> *S: Right, mm mm*
>
> *M: Once I'm outta (1 sec) I don't know really, I just (2sec) I'll just be happy to get actually, hands on 'n' (S: Hmmm) not be like sat down in a classroom*
>
> *S: Right, yes   (Lines 61-74)*

I observe my voiced assumption that Mark might be glad to leave school, a phrase which he then echoes.

Ruddock et al (ibid.) suggest that young people need a sense of future and an overall purpose in learning, which sits with the notion of an 'aim' to which he refers numerous times during our discussion.   S-O approaches also emphasise the importance of the identification of a 'preferred future', which may be a goal which feels very distant or something that seems achievable in a shorter time frame.   What is important is that an aim is identified, towards which initial steps can be identified and planned (known as 'goaling'; Rees (ibid.)).

Once again, this returns us to the notion of a 'space'; this time a space between the position currently occupied and the potential or preferred position.   It also feels key to recognise that there may be a mismatch between the preferred future or position that an adult may identify for a young person and that which the young person my identify for themselves.

5.7(ii) Key Points Arising About Aspiration, in the Context of the Prevention of Permanent Exclusion from School

- Identified aspirations can enable an individual to consider an alternative to their current position;

- The aspirations identified *for* and *by* young people may be vastly different; both should be acknowledged and valued, which then provides an opportunity to address any mismatch;

5.8 Attributions and Power

5.8(i) Locating Problems and Solutions

The attributions individuals make with regard to their own and others' actions influence how they then respond to those actions.   Of particular interest when adopting a S-O approach is the manner in which 'problems' and 'solutions' are located.

Throughout Mark's story, he refers to what I have interpreted to be the 'problems' for him in school, which include:

- *I struggle keeping concentration;*

- *I got into a bit o' trouble;*

- *I just, didn't settle down well;*

- *I've gone and ruined it;*

- *You've gotta've done somefing in the first place to be able to get sent out...;*

- *Like if I did somefing wrong;*

- *I'd a just, not listened, just, carried on talking...*

Such comments suggest a very internal focus upon the problems, viewing them as arising from within himself. He adopts a similar stance when discussing other young people, describing "*the people who are bad".* Mark also reports internal feedback from others:

…they just said to me that if I carried on like this then I'm gonna end up getting (1sec) permanently excluded, but ma mum, ma mum talked about it, and she said well you can carry on or you can change the, and I went I'd like to move to this school. (Lines 131-134)

It seems that Mark does perceive some power in the situation he describes however, as indeed he did 'move to this school'. This could present a rather negative picture of Mark's locus of control, which does not seem to fit with my overall impression of the young man with whom I talked.

Similarly, when examining the transcript I observe that during our discussion I engage in much less problem talk than Mark, which surprises me in one sense as my initial response following the transcription process was that I had been more negative than I would have intended. This demonstrates the importance of the Gestalt, of not simply considering small excerpts of text and extrapolating from these.

When I *do* refer to a problem, I locate it externally: *"…things weren't going so well there"*. When discussing what I have interpreted as 'solutions', Mark seems to adopt a more balanced attribution style, locating solutions both internally and externally. Examples include:

External attributions:

- *It [the school system] comes down on yer, they come down on yer hard like;*

- *…got put on a contract;*

- *I found out that I was struggling;*

- *It's it [the school system] has holded back a lot, it's that's whats controlled (1 sec) how far I do take.*

Internal attributions:

- *I managed to meet new people;*

- *…how I 'ave changed, and how, I've come out on top of all this;*

- *…so I just built confidence;*

- *And that's what I did, I came out o' that school (1 sec) and then, Year 9, I started here.*

In other places, Mark's uses of the words 'hopefully' and 'luckily' suggest that he questions his ability to control the situations he is describing. For example, when discussing the 'levels' which constitute the school behaviour system, he states:

So at the end of the term you can work to move down a level, luckily I moved down a level and I turned it round" (Lines 211-212)

In one sense he seems to be attributing internally with regard to 'turning it round', yet simultaneously communicating a sense that he had little control over whether he moved down a level or not, attributing it to 'luck'. A further interpretation may be that Mark's confidence in the school behaviour system and its consistency is not steadfast. Overall, he does seem to value the system and have found it helpful, but he is critical about a lack of pupil power in a situation whereby a teacher may be perceived to have acted unfairly. Interestingly, at this point, he for the only time refers to himself and his peers as *"a child"*, having previously preferred to focus upon a sense of equality.

Towards the end of our meeting, I am aware that I question Mark with regard to what aspects of the school he has found most helpful. With hindsight I see that I rather doggedly pursue this issue, pressuring Mark into identifying 'punishment' and 'teachers he can talk to' as the two things he finds most helpful about the school. This demonstrates to me my own priorities around

an S-O approach, and a preference for external attributions.

5.8(ii) Issues of Power

5.8(ii)a) Power Dynamic Between Mark and I

I strive to be mindful of issues of power in my EP work, and attempt to communicate a sense of partnership with young people, parents and teachers. When reflecting upon the discussion with Mark, I interpreted a sense of equality representing that which I seek.

During discussion, I choose to be explicit with regard to Mark's choices regarding how much or little he wishes to share and the content of this, along with being clear when I am expressing my own point of view, hoping to communicate the equal value of our possibly differing understandings. More subtly, I observe with interest my own use of accent and colloquialism at particular points in the discussion, which I interpret as my attempts (albeit without conscious intent at the time) to connect with Mark and to establish equality. I also aim to position Mark as in possession of experience and views that are of interest to me.

It is of course also important to recognise that perceived differences in

gender, race, socioeconomic status, age and 'knowledge' have much to contribute to the power dynamic. I perceive differences in all of these aspects except race, as we are both white British. In relation to perceived 'knowledge', I feel that the shift in position to Mark as 'knowledge holder' may have contributed to a reduction in any power differential, maybe ameliorating some of the power that may be interpreted from my being 22 years older than Mark. I have also discussed above, in Section 4.2(ii), the sense I developed around my change in position and the influence of this upon my interaction with Mark; I interpret that this position shift and its resulting emotions probably also served to contribute to the equalisation of power that I perceive.

Within the transcript, I observe a number of occasions where I suggest an interpretation of events and Mark confidently, comfortably and in a socially appropriate manner, disagrees with me, and presents an alternative viewpoint, for example:

> *S: Yeah (1 sec) an' I think, I mean it's, yer know it's great to hear that yer know you've come, to another school and you've made it work, cause I always think that's a really hard thing for people to do, to go to a new school, when you've had a bad experience at one and then, you've gotta go and it's almost har, my point of view is I think that's really hard, to do that, do you, did you find it hard or*
> *M: No I, I came in wiv a lot o' confidence, that's probably, half o' the*

fact because, obviously I knew most people here because I I'd go out

S: Right, mm mm

wiv 'em cause I di'n't live round, cause yer get people from

xxxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] coming from everywhere (Lines 404-415)

This occurs more towards the end of the discussion, with him tending to agree with me more during the earlier parts, which might suggest that his sense of equality and value is increasing as the interaction progresses.

Overall, my sense of the location of power in the interaction is that it lies less with me than might be more usual in a meeting with a young person, that it begins with a skew towards me as I introduce the session and slowly shifts more towards Mark as the discussion progresses. I interpret that Mark is positioned in such a way that he is able to make genuine choices with regard to the information and meanings he chooses to share, and feel I could encourage this further through even more open questioning and reflection.

5.8(ii)b) Making Sense of Power in School

My overriding interpretation regarding Mark's sense of power in school is that it lies with the system. The school has what I consider to be a very clear, hierarchical behaviour system, from which there is very little, if any deviation.

Mark refers on many occasions to the 'punishment' in school and how this has helped him. Interestingly, he does not ever mention 'rewards'. Mark's repeated use of the term 'punishment' is quite challenging to me, as it is not a term I would ever choose to employ. Mark does not mention any specific members of staff in relation to punishment or addressing negative behaviours; he only refers to particular people when mentioning those members of staff with whom he has established positive relationships - those people he feels able to talk to. I interpret that his sense of the 'power' these staff have relates to their personal characteristics as opposed to being related to the school system.

Therefore, it seems that Mark associates the 'sanction' element of school with the system and the 'supportive' element of school with individual staff members.

5.8(iii) Key Points Arising About Attributions and Power, in the Context of the Prevention of Permanent Exclusion from School

- An awareness of potential influences upon the power dynamic in any interaction is important; this should also be considered within the context of young people benefiting from senses of respect, fairness, autonomy, challenge, security, support, of themselves as purposeful

learners, as having status in school, as having control over their own lives and as having future aspirations. It may be helpful to consider how interactions and relationships contribute to these goals;

- It may be helpful to facilitate young people's understandings around how individual staff members' positions in the school system influence their ability to provide support of differing types;

- Smith & Ellsworth's (ibid.) framework for considering cognitive appraisal of situations may have something to offer in terms of 'unpicking' own and others' responses to situations, and could be used with both adults and young people.   This framework interrogates:

    1. The desirability of the situation;

    2. The effort that one anticipates spending on the situation;

    3. The certainty of the situation;

    4. The attention that one wants to devote to the situation;

    5. The control that one feels over the situation;

6. The control that one attributes to non-human forces in the situation.

- The mismatch between internal attributions made when a young person is experiencing difficulties in school and external attributions made when the environment is changed (e.g. - upon moving to a PRU) should be more explicitly addressed and challenged, within the context of understanding the defences of self which may contribute to these attributions.

5.9 Systemic Issues

5.9(i) The System and the Individual

Mark is very clear that the consistent, graded and hierarchical 'behaviour for learning' system in his school helps him, although it is interesting to note that he focuses solely upon the sanction element of the system, never discussing reward.

Mark compares his two high school experiences following an enquiry from me, and describes the lack of clarity in the system at his previous high school:

S: Do you think (1 sec) is there, sort of, the system, the behaviour for

learning thing, is that, is that clearer (1 sec) than how they dealt with

M: That's a lot

things at xxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school]

M: Yer, at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] yer never knew (1 sec)

what yer punishment was gonna be

S: Right

M: You you'd get up to the teacher and the teacher'd say it out of anger

towards yer like (1 sec) do, so much, you'd have detention whatever

S: Right

M: 'N'

S: But it wasn't clear

M: We didn't 'ave any like punishment saying if yer do this you're gonna

'ave like this, its (1 sec) if yer do that then you find out what 'appens on

S: Yeah   (Lines 384-397)

Mark comments that the teacher *"would say it out of anger"* at his previous school, seeming to attribute teachers' negative comments to emotion rather than to their need to fulfil a role within a prescribed system. It seems likely that the former attribution may be more likely to result in a young person

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experiencing negative emotions in response to this perception, perhaps resulting in difficulties in the subsequent relationship.

Alternatively, it could be interpreted that a reaction considered to be borne of emotion as opposed to being a product of a system may result in a sense of genuineness in the relationship. Mark's descriptions of those individuals with whom he gets on well focus upon personal characteristics, not roles. It may be helpful to attempt to develop understanding around roles in school and the pressures and factors associated with these through shadowing opportunities or through greater involvement of young people in planning school policy and practice? Such opportunities may provide evidence which causes both adults and young people to challenge their accepted perceptions of why others act in the way they do, leading to a change in response to those others. I perceive that Mark seems to associate 'sanctions' with 'system' and 'support' with 'people'. The opportunity to develop understandings about how the system is supportive via the opportunities it affords to the individuals within it may be positive.

Mark's views support the findings discussed in Section 1.4 regarding features of low-excluding schools. These features include a 'clear and effective behaviour policy' where young people are supported to differing degrees as appropriate to help them to meet the expectations of the policy. I find this notion of supporting individuals to meet expectations a helpful one, as, again,

it locates the focus within a space - the space between the current observed actions of a young person and the expectations of a school system.   Within the space reside the support systems of a school - usually known as Learner Support, Behaviour Support, or similar.   This support can feel particularly relevant for those young people whose experiences of interactions outside the school context are mismatched with the expectations of the school system.

Having discussed the locations of problems and solutions above, I suspect that when employing this notion of 'space', the tendency might be for the problem to be located within the young person and the solution viewed as residing within the support systems, which obviously presents a quandary.   I would be keen to see a shift in emphasis away from the young person and towards the 'space' when locating the problem, resulting in the problem and the solution being much easier to reconcile.   If the 'space' is conceptualised as the interaction between the actions of a young person and the actions of the 'system' rather than the actions of individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. - teachers), would this be less threatening to the defences of adults, and result in an increased ability to shift the problem from the young person to the 'system'?

If issues are to be located within the system, it is therefore important that all members of the school community are able to contribute to the development, evaluation and maintenance of that system, and indeed, recognise that they

constitute the system. Evidence considered in Section 1.4 suggests that formal means of establishing and responding to young people's views are often seen as 'tokenistic' and without the potential for real impact, so the challenge for schools is how to include a wide range of young people in the planning and application of policy and practice from the start. Maybe asking young people for their views on what *do* constitute effective means of establishing and acting upon the ideas of young people would be a good starting point?

5.9(ii) Taking Responsibility

In Section 1.3, the School Exclusion Trial was discussed, the main focus of which, for me, is the notion that schools maintain responsibility for excluded pupils. This notion of responsibility has emerged as a theme throughout my reading around exclusion, in a number of different guises, including teachers taking greater responsibility for the pupils within their own classrooms, as opposed to quickly involving year heads or members of the leadership team. I see this as positive, as it focuses on the 'coalface' relationships, and prevents young people moving too quickly through a school's behaviour system. It is important however, that teachers taking responsibility in classrooms feel they are supported, and this is where a clear, hierarchical, consistent and well-communicated system is key.

I have had experience of working with a school which had the highest exclusion rates in the locality in which I am employed as an EP, and the key difficulty from my point of view was that the system for addressing difficult issues in school was inconsistent, unclear and often consisted of the young person being sent immediately to the head teacher; there were no established procedural steps in place, meaning that exclusion was an option very speedily reached.   It may be helpful for schools (including young people) to examine their own exclusion patterns and the level of hierarchy present in their responses to difficult issues, as well as sharing this information between schools, in order that optimal policy and practice can be identified and shared.

5.9(iii) Working Together

Schools in the locality where I work are encouraged to identify an appropriate member of staff to act as lead professional in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Family (TAF) processes, again linked to the idea of responsibility for young people.   I am often a member of TAF meetings during my EP work and have found the TAF to be a generally positive approach to working with young people and families.   Most of the young people and families with whom I have an involvement are experiencing a variety of complex issues in their lives and the sense of a 'joined-up'

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approach feels helpful, with the goals of avoiding contradiction and repetition, ensuring the efficient and effective use of stretched resources and reducing the sense of chaos which can sometimes exist around a situation. In my experience, most young people who are at risk of exclusion tend to be experiencing a wide variety of challenging factors in their lives. This seems to be supported by the data discussed in Section 1.3, where 'persistent disruptive behaviour' is identified as by far the most significant description applied to permanent exclusions. The existence of 'persistent disruptive behaviour' would suggest a mismatch between the individual and the expectations of school/society; in my experience the TAF has the ability to work within the space created by that mismatch. I have also developed a sense of the need for school policy to recognise the very important role schools play in the holistic development of children and young people, rather than viewing this as 'another thing' they are expected to do, which is perceived as outside of their core role, and feel that the TAF process does encourage this via a 'bottom up' approach.

One of Rees' (ibid.) S-O principles is 'If it works, do more of it; if it doesn't, do something different', and this feels particularly appropriate when planning for a young person's return to school following a fixed-term exclusion. In my experience, there can be a tendency for an expectation that somehow things will improve following a fixed-term exclusion, despite the fact that no changes to the support system around the young person have been identified.

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Schools should be encouraged to view the period of a fixed-term exclusion as an opportunity for working together and planning how to 'do something different' upon the young person's return to school. This might also be a useful message to communicate to parents and a young person during reintegration discussions, as in "We all need to do something different", which focuses upon partnership working and the sharing of responsibility for a difficult situation.

5.9(iv) Key Points Arising About Systemic Issues, in the Context of the Prevention of Permanent Exclusion from School

- All members of a school community should work together to establish, evaluate and maintain a behaviour system which is very clear, consistently applied, effectively communicated to all members of the community and characterised by a staged hierarchy of responses to both positive and negative actions. A very clear system can help class teachers to feel sufficiently supported in taking increased responsibility for the ethos within their own classrooms;

- Within this system, it is important to recognise that some young people will require appropriate support in order to meet the expectations of the behaviour system, and that this support can take many different forms;

- Opportunities to develop understandings around roles in school should be identified, and may include shadowing, interviewing and involvement in planning;

- Involving young people in all of the above must be genuine as opposed to tokenistic. A good starting point may be to enquire of young people by what means they like to get involved. For many young people, concrete evidence of the impact of their views upon school life is likely to be helpful;

- Adopting the phrase 'school communities' as opposed to 'school staff' may help, over time, to engender a greater sense of partnership working and shared responsibility;

- School communities should interrogate their own exclusion data with regard to process, and evaluate their own responses to situations, then share this with other schools;

- School communities should plan policy which recognises a school's key role in the holistic development of all its members, as opposed to viewing this as an 'extra';

- Partnership working among school community members should be encouraged, especially in the context of planning how to 'do things differently' following a fixed-term exclusion.

SUMMARY OF SECTION 5 - CONCLUSIONS REGARDING MY UNDERSTANDINGS AROUND WHAT HELPS PREVENT PERMANENT EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

Section 5 has sought to identify the understandings developed around what is important in working with school communities towards a 'preferred future' where school placements are maintained for all, and represents my interpretation of the salient factors to which school communities should attend in seeking to include all.

Based upon the S-O principle of "If it works, do more of it; if it doesn't, do something different'. The points below seek to highlight those factors which those in education may wish to acknowledge and 'do more of'.

Maintaining a focus upon EP practice, in a climate where the work of some EPs has had to become more focussed upon casework, the factors

highlighted below are those which may be available for discussion and potential change via the medium of EP casework, as opposed to demanding large-scale intervention at a whole-school level. That is not however, to say that the potential effects of addressing such issues will be limited to the individual; subtle shifts in thinking have the ability to affect much wider change, as espoused by a further S-O principle; 'A small change can lead to a big difference'.

Affiliation:

- Young people need to belong;

- Affiliations should be investigated and given greater consideration in planning educational placements, including the potential effects of affiliations being forcibly broken - e.g. - via a move of school. A sense of planning to support young people in moving towards affiliations as opposed to away from them may be helpful;

- Affiliations are important and may have a significant impact upon whether an educational placement succeeds or fails; Mark's story demonstrates this;

- Affiliation needs should be considered across the school community -

some of these needs are appropriately met by peers; some are not. The community should consider whether expectations or stereotypes may be contributing to constraint around the opportunities offered to young people by adults, meaning that needs remain unmet and young people rely more heavily upon peers for acceptance, approval and status.

Attribution:

- The manner in which individuals make attributions about the actions of others influences their responses to those actions;

- Within the context of school communities, opportunities should be identified to challenge the attribution patterns which may be established. Developing understandings among all members of the community about the manner in which the shared system may prescribe and constrain their own and others' possible positions and actions might have the power to change the attributions from internal to external and vice versa. Opportunities for such challenge can include shadowing across the community - e.g. - pupils shadowing pupils, pupils shadowing teachers, learning mentors shadowing the head teacher, teaching assistants shadowing pupils etc. - along with ensuring representatives of all members of the community are included

in such activities as provision mapping.

Systems:

- Behaviour systems should be:

    - Clear;

    - Consistently applied;

    - Hierarchical, with clear stages, and the majority of sanctions and rewards being the responsibility of the adults in the classroom on a day-to-day basis;

    - Devised with the involvement of, and open to evaluation by, all members of the school community;

- Behaviour systems should include plans to address the mismatch that may exist between some young people's actions and the expectations of the behaviour system and include plans to support such young people, whilst recognising that all situations will differ in terms of what types of support are needed and from whom;

- Locating 'problems' and 'solutions' within the 'system' offers increased freedom for change to occur and for 'doing things differently'. This is less pathologising and threatening to individuals then locating problems, and indeed solutions, within specific people. Locating

solutions with specific people has the potential to suggest that perhaps other people in the community are not perhaps willing/capable etc. to be part of a solution. That is not however, to conceptualise the 'system' at the expense of relationships but providing a safe and containing context for them - freeing people to be more open and genuine;

- The notion of the 'system' as problem and solution holder is not to disempower the individuals within that system - employing the words 'school community' to describe the system emphasises the people within it and encourages full and meaningful membership of the community by all members. Locating problems and solutions within the school community offers partnership working, increased equality and follows the S-O principle that 'People have the resources to make changes" (Rees, ibid.);

- If the school community has the resources to make changes, it is important that those resources are identified and known, and include elements already within the core of the community and support from the extended community, of which EPs would be a part;

- Questions for the community when a difficult situation arises might include:

- How is this problem affecting the community at the moment?

- How would the community like this situation to be different?

- How has the community worked together around a similar situation in the past?

- What is the first step towards reaching the different situation we are aiming for?

- How will the community know when things are improving?

The factors highlighted are not intended to be 'groundbreaking', but to recognise the potential of 'small changes'; I imagine the potential impact of a head teacher developing his/her understandings around attribution and its effects, establishing a shadowing system in school, or employing the language of the 'school community'.

None of these are so 'big' as to feel overly-challenging, and EPs will likely have the experience and skills to challenge existing thinking and encourage change in a subtle manner, yet all have the possibility of effecting change within a school community with the hope that eventually the communities are

able to notice what is 'working' and 'do more of it'.

6. LINKING THIS STUDY WITH EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

The following seeks to reflect upon the experience of engaging with this study, considering intersections with current and future EP practice and implications for such practice, both generally and more particularly when working around issues of exclusion.

6.1 The Intersection of EP Practice and This Study

6.1(i) Similarities and Differences

Upon commencing this study, I considered the junction at which it may meet my everyday EP practice and can reflect both upon the extent to which these expectations were met and upon additional unforeseen intersections. The majority of the issues highlighted below have been discussed in greater detail during previous sections; the following seeks to summarise.

Predicted intersections are presented in Figure 19 below, followed by those intersections identified through reflection in Figure 20 and, finally, perceived differences between study and practice are identified in Figure 21.

Fig. 19 - Predicted intersections between the study and EP practice:

• Attempting to gain the views of young people;
• Working with young people who have experience of others perceiving their actions as 'difficult' in school;
• An emancipatory approach;
• A solution-oriented (S-O) approach;
• Belief in the importance of the voices of young people;
• Underlying principles/beliefs/assumptions/epistemologies.

Fig. 20 – Intersections between this study and EP practice identified upon reflection:

• The meeting situation - in a school - myself and one young person;
• The need to engage with, respond to and interpret stories;
• The need to recognise my own role as co-constructer of those stories;
• The types of issues discussed - e.g. - exclusion, friendships,

relationships with teachers, what works;
• The goal of eliciting the views of a young person, with a genuine desire to be influenced by those views.

Fig. 21 – Differences between this study and EP practice identified upon reflection:

• The purpose of the meeting between Mark and I - i.e. - to contribute to understandings around school exclusion, as opposed to having a purpose around effecting change in Mark's personal situation;
• The positions Mark and I were able to adopt during our meeting; I perceived a power shift towards Mark, with him as 'helper' and me as 'helped;
• The location of 'knowledge' and power within the meeting; this had shifted towards Mark;
• The influence of these positions upon language choices, confidence and emotion;
• The starting position for my interaction with Mark; as an EP I am usually party to significant layers of representation constructed by others about a young person before I meet them. I knew very little about Mark;

> - The opportunity for repeated engagement with the story and consideration of the issues therein, at a level far beyond what could be applied to everyday EP practice.

6.1(ii) Reflecting Further on Interpretations

The final two differences highlighted in Figure 8 above demand further reflection, having not been discussed in previous sections.

6.1(ii)a) Starting Points and Layers of Interpretation

When reflecting upon my starting point with Mark, I believe I held the following understandings:

- He was a young man in Year 11;

- He had experience of exclusion in some form;

- He was willing to speak with me;

- His 'willingness' may have been influenced by his apparent positive relationship with the BSM (she spoke positively of him) and the apparent positivity between his Mum and the BSM (I was aware that

his Mum had given the BSM flowers to thank her for her work with Mark).

This is in stark contrast this with my EP role, where I am faced with a set of interpretations, usually authored by school staff and/or parents, before meeting a young person. As a team of EPs, we very much encourage Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCos) to engage in discussion with us around young people as a first step, and no longer accept 'referrals' - i.e. - a paper document submitted without prior discussion. This feels positive as it enables us to begin to co-construct, and if necessary challenge, the story from the very outset of our involvement.

Often, as a next step, we may offer to join the Team Around the Family (TAF) and attend a TAF meeting, before identifying possible further appropriate contributions. I have viewed this positively, seeing the TAF as an opportunity to interpret and contribute to the story around the young person, again offering challenge if appropriate, within the context of partnership working. I have also seen an opportunity to identify any questions arising around a situation, to which I may be able to contribute via another activity.

Reflecting upon the very different starting point during my meeting with Mark gives me cause to consider whether the significant shift towards working within the TAF model, whilst providing opportunity for a more interactional and

less within-child approach, has simultaneously resulted in the young person's story becoming the property of others, and their contribution to its construction being minimalised.

This causes me to consider whether, as EPs, we should seek methods which decrease, rather than increase the number of layers through which our interpretations are formed, whilst also maintaining the goal of supporting an interactionist view of 'problem'-solving. Alternatively, we could choose to view those layers of interpretation and representation as just that, ensuring that we engage with the meaning making within, give ample recognition to the manner in which others' stories, priorities and understandings contribute to the story around the young person and harness these processes as potential vehicles for change.

6.1(ii)b) Opportunities for Engagement

A major difference between study and practice is the opportunity available to repeatedly engage with, interpret, re-interpret and develop sense around Mark's story. As an EP, much time is spent engaging with the stories of others, developing interpretations around those stories, listening, contributing to, constructing, considering, speaking of and writing of them. However, opportunities to invest time in explicit repeated engagements with those stories are more limited.

In most EP work, I contribute to a number of different meetings or activities around a particular young person or family; 'one-off' involvements are rare, but this feels different from the luxury this study has provided to think in much greater depth about the issues surrounding the process and content of a story of school experience.

6.1(ii)c) Interpretation and EP Practice

Therefore, I have aimed to extrapolate, from the opportunities for luxurious re-engagement which this study has allowed, any salient points regarding issues of interpretation which, as EPs, we may be able to consider when working with young people and with key adults in everyday practice:

- Developing an awareness of our own emotions and expectations prior to and after any meeting and briefly noting these as part of our personal note-taking activity during the meeting, in order that the subsequent notes and decisions can be contextualised when re-read at a later point - i.e. - when writing a report or preparing for a subsequent related meeting;

- Considering explicitly the initial sources of our expectations and understandings about a young person and a situation - e.g. - from

discussion with a SENCo, from a paediatrician's report etc. - and acknowledging to ourselves (again perhaps noting this down) how the source of the information influences our interpretations of it;

- Questioning our own and others' interpretations and focii; I will often work through information received about a young person with a highlighter and mark what I consider to be salient points, maybe in terms of developing meaning around context, or for further discussion. This will often result in a list of questions, 'answers' to which I am usually looking to locate within discussion with adults in a TAF meeting. Instead of questions about the young person, should we be identifying questions about the manner in which the young person has been presented on paper, which can hold much meaning with regard to the existing story around, and positioning of, the young person?

- Attempting to consider alternative interpretations to the ones we have made and being explicit about this - e.g. - when writing a report, ensuring that language choices reflect the interpretative nature of our work (e.g. - writing 'this might suggest' as opposed to 'this is') and offering overt consideration of possible alternative understandings of a situation. Ingram (ibid.), discussing the work of Armstrong, Galloway & Tomlinson (1993), describes the need for EPs to consider alternative interpretations of young people's actions:

…if a child's behaviour or attitude appears to be symptomatic of a disorder, the alternative possibility that the same behaviour is also consistent with the child being distressed or frustrated with a situation or the assessment should also be explored. (p.338)

- Maybe all of the above can be summarised within the notion of asking the question of others and ourselves: 'How and why are events storied as they are?' (after Riessman and Quinney (ibid.))

6.2 Reflecting Upon Underlying Principles and Practices

In the same manner in which this study has allowed the luxury of repeated engagement with a young person's story, it has also provided the opportunity to evaluate the integrated application of those assumptions, epistemologies and associated practices which underlie my work as an EP.

6.2(i) Reflecting Upon Critical Realism

In considering those approaches underlying my EP practice, I have identified a common thread, which I have conceptualised as the adoption of a critical realist stance. Critical realism states that the world can be known, albeit imperfectly, and implies the notion of a 'truth', without seeking to attain the status of 'knowing' this truth, and I have argued, after Burr (ibid.) that it is possible to view realism and constructionism as occupying positions along a continuum, as opposed to being dichotomous.

During this study, I have demonstrated a sense of the constructed nature of both Mark's story and the interpretations made, whilst maintaining a sense of the relationship between an individual's experiences and their representations of those experiences, and including both Mark and myself in those understandings.

Returning to Bruner's (ibid.) conceptualisation of 'narrative', I am able to reflect that my desire to explore the space between experience and representation may represent a wish to engage with the 'life-as-told', with the hope of developing understandings around the 'life-as-experienced', but without seeking to gather 'knowledge' regarding the 'life-as-lived'.

6.2(ii) Space

The notion of 'space' that critical realism expounds has developed in a number of different senses throughout this study, and I begin to conclude this work with a sense that the concept of space has much to offer in respect of working as an EP and contributing to meaning making around school exclusion.   Characteristics I have attributed to space as a result of this study are outlined in Figure 22; Figure 23 goes on to demonstrate those constructs between which space has been identified, and Figure 24 suggests concepts which may be usefully located within such spaces.

Fig. 22 – Conceptualisations of space apparent in this study:

• Blame free;
• Rich;
• Full of potential;
• A 'meeting' place;
• Shared;
• Available;
• 'In-between' rather than 'within'.

Fig. 23 – Constructs between which 'space' may be considered to exist:

• Perception and truth;
• Experience and representation of experience;
• 'Psychological' and 'social';
• Story as constructed and story as interpreted;
• What individuals *can* do and what individuals *do* do;
• The priorities of a young person and the priorities of a community;
• The interactional experiences of a young person and the interactional expectations of a community.

It could be argued that to locate such factors within 'space' is to absolve individuals of responsibility and therefore to disempower them. However, I would argue that the opposite can be conceptualised. When 'space' is recognised and employed, individuals are freed from blame and pathologisation. Context, culture and systems are called to account, as are the *interactions between* individuals which fill some of the 'space'. Therefore, it could instead be argued that to locate within space is to encourage individuals to recognise their own interactional and representational contributions to a situation, but within the context of social and cultural expectations which again seems to echo the notion that things can be both 'real' and 'constructed'. S-O principle number 7 supports the location of the problem within space – 'The problem is the problem, not the

person'.   The application of 'space' to practice is discussed further in Section 6.3.

Fig. 24 – Concepts which can be usefully located within spaces:

• Problems;
• Solutions;
• Ways forward;
• Interpretations;
• Understandings;
• Interactions (positive and negative);
• Meanings;
• Mismatches;
• Satisfaction and dissatisfaction;
• Opportunities;
• Representations of experience;
• A 'psychosocial' approach.

6.2(iii) Reflecting on Eclecticism and Values

Increasingly throughout this study, my desire to develop understandings

around those principles, assumptions and beliefs underlying my EP practice has increased, and over time I have developed an understanding that this desire is borne of a sense of unease regarding my employment of a broad range of approaches, coupled with an apprehension that I may, as an EP, be contributing to some of those practices around exclusion from school which I consider to be problematic and undesirable.

During this study, I have been able to reframe this unease (a 'problem' in S-O approaches) as a desire to establish a set of principles and values to which I feel my practice adheres (a 'preferred future' in S-O approaches), and the discussion below reflects the extent to which I feel I have achieved this.

6.2(iii)a) Eclecticism and Educational Psychology

I have come to understand the need to distinguish between 'eclectic' practice and 'integrative' practice, where I may choose to define 'eclectic' as 'pragmatic – doing whatever works' and 'integrative' as 'approaches which cohere around a set of principles'. I have always considered myself pragmatic, yet I maintain this sense of unease with the, by definition, weaker theoretical base of 'eclectic' practice. I see the value in pragmatic eclecticism's ability to offer a broader range of ways forward, which is represented in the S-O principle of 'If it works, do more of it; if it doesn't, do something different' (a caveat is always needed here, as some solutions may of course be unethical or

harmful).

I have encountered research suggesting I am not alone in drawing upon a broad theoretical base. Woods and Farrell (2006) report psychological assessment arising from broad and eclectic theoretical bases among EPs, Ingram (ibid.) discusses eclecticism in the context of EPs working with young people, Berliner & Calfee (1996) comment that "educational psychology is remarkably eclectic and diverse" (p.7) and Harding & Atkinson (2009) indicate a "wide variety of practice" (p. 125) among EPs' work in recording the voices of young people.

In the context of this research, I can reflect that 'eclectic' practice is perhaps a defining feature of applied psychology, and begin to feel more comfortable with my own practice. If my need for a sense of an 'integrative' approach remains, I can reflect that perhaps my underpinning assumptions and principles are not actually as eclectic as I first perceived them to be, having sensed a thread of critical realism throughout my approaches and interpretations and highlighting that the notion of 'space' also links all those approaches upon which my meaning making is based.

In addition to those elements of space discussed in Section 6.2(ii), maybe some of the apparent contradictions between approaches such as 'narrative' and 'psychoanalysis' can be ameliorated by once again, locating them within

the *space between*, as opposed to *within* the individual approaches themselves.

Emerson and Frosh's (ibid.) discussion of the tensions between 'psychological' and 'social' demonstrates the potential to consider the understandings that can be developed in the space between two concepts if there is a willingness to view the space as an important part *of* psychology, as opposed to "a technical nuisance because the best methods have not yet been worked out" (p.4-5).

6.2(iii)b) A Set of Values

Having ameliorated my 'unease' to some extent, a sense of wishing to reflect upon a possible set of values to underpin my EP practice remains and a broad set of values is proposed in Figure 25.

Fig. 25 – Broad Principles and Values Underlying My EP Practice:

Critical realism – I believe that a reality exists, but seek to focus upon representations of that reality, not upon 'truth';
Young people at the core – my role is to maintain the needs of the young

person at the heart of all work, whilst recognising that others' needs may also require focus in order to meet this goal;
Language matters – the way in which children and young people are described, spoken with and of, written to and of and labelled makes a difference;
Stories and positions within those stories matter – I can and should shape, contribute to and if necessary challenge stories that exist around young people, and facilitate understandings among others of the power of stories and positioning;
Relationships matter – a focus on relationships has something to offer every situation;
Emancipation and empowerment – aiming to work in partnership with others with the goal of reducing restrictions and increasing opportunities, whilst being aware of and respecting differing priorities and viewpoints;
'Information' is interpretation and representation – implicitly and explicitly acknowledging the interpretative and representative nature of 'information' about young people, and the social/cultural factors contributing to the content and manner of representations made by self and other;
'Space' is a useful location – locating problems and solutions within interactional space has much to offer.

Addressing similar considerations, Prilleltensky & Nelson (2002) consider the manner in which psychologists can incorporate insights into values, inequality

and power into their work, and propose a set of values aimed at promoting wellbeing in individuals, during interactions and at a collective level:

- Self-determination;

- Caring and compassion;

- Health;

- Respect for diversity;

- Participation;

- Community support;

- Social justice.

I can reflect that these values are perhaps broader than those I have identified, but can see how my values would sit within those identified by Prilleltensky & Nelson; for example, I state the importance of 'emancipation and empowerment' and Prillentensky & Nelson identify a value of 'social justice'. My reflection upon the power of relationships may be considered to sit alongside a number of Prillentensky & Nelson's values, such as 'caring and compassion', 'respect for diversity' and 'community support'.

Adherence to a set of values and standards within EP practice has become an increasingly explicit issue over recent years with the requirement for any individual wishing to use the title 'psychologist' to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), with standards for all psychologists

identified, alongside those listed as applicable only to different branches of the discipline, including educational psychology. Key themes I have identified in the HCPC's expectations around EP practice include:

- Knowledge;
- Communication;
- Record-keeping;
- Consent;
- Reflection and review;
- Awareness of power issues;
- Appropriate use of assessments and interventions.

Immediately apparent is a difference in emphasis, away from some of the more nuanced yet hugely important aspects of relationships and emancipation, and towards EP as powerful knowledge holder. As an HCPC registered EP, I have no choice about meeting their criteria for my practice, but equally recognise the limitations of such 'standards' and suggest that we need to also turn to others such as Prilleltensky, and to ourselves, as reflexive practitioners, for further guidance.

6.3 Influencing Future Practice

6.3(i) Influencing EP Practice

With the values discussed above in mind, I consider how my practice has shifted in response to this study and am able to identify a number of areas of change:

- I have begun to place even greater emphasis upon the views of the young person during future planning. This has felt apparent in both meetings with other adults, and during my report-writing, where I have tried to ensure that the views of the young person explicitly influence any action plan;

- I have increasingly tried to ensure that I offer young people more than one chance to offer their views if necessary, and to be more creative with regard to the opportunities offered. I have reflected upon my own responsibility to communicate in a manner which is hopefully meaningful to the young person concerned;

- Linked with this, I have also taken account of individuals' right not to engage, and have had to make a recent judgement regarding when to

desist from offering alternative chances to engage (I refrained following two offers);

- I have continued to emphasise the importance of peer relationships and friendships in young people's lives, and feel I have been granted greater confidence in doing so, in response to Mark's story;

- I have started to move away from the strong bias I had developed towards attending TAF meetings as a first step, and am seeking to spend more time in the school environment, in order to reduce layers of interpretation;

- I have overtly employed the phrases 'school community', 'space', 'dissatisfaction', 'mismatch' and 'story' during discussion with adults, and have referred more frequently to a 'situation'. These may present as small changes, but I have experienced the power of some of these words to facilitate adults' reconceptualisation of a situation; to locate within an interactive space as opposed to within a young person. I now recognise the need to extend my use of these words into my work with young people themselves.

There are further areas in which I feel my general EP practice can be developed in response to this study, and these include:

- Encouraging school contacts to discuss difficult situations with me at an earlier point;

- Increasing my focus upon 'the problem as the problem'; employing more language of 'situation' and emphasising the notion of the interactive space and its potential; maintaining a goal of empowering those involved in a situation;

- Questioning the systems within the school community more explicitly; examining the structure and potential for empowerment;

- Emphasising the holistic role of the school community in young people's lives;

- Developing further the use of language, when writing of young people and of situations, which emphasises the interpretative nature of the meanings developed, and presents the problem as located within the community.

6.3(ii) Influencing Practice Around Exclusion from School

My first research question was borne of my concern regarding the high

numbers of young people being permanently excluded from school in the locality in which I am employed as an EP. Therefore, it feels key that I apply the meanings developed during this process to this local issue, which continues to prevail (as I conclude, the local PRU has had to open a further class owing to the continuing permanent exclusions).

6.3(ii)a) Contributing to the Local Exclusions Protocol

Whilst constructing these latter sections, I am pleased to find myself invited to contribute to the establishment of an 'exclusions protocol' in the local area. The purpose of the protocol is to identify areas to which a variety of professionals working around exclusion might wish to attend, with a goal of reducing the number of permanent exclusions. This invitation provides the first of what I hope will be a number of opportunities to share some of the interpretations made from this study, with regard to factors which may be salient in the maintenance of school placements (as discussed in Section 5) and in working with young people, schools and families more generally.

To this end, I have thus far discussed the following interpretations with EP colleagues, and as a result have been asked to construct an 'aide memoire' or visual representation for those working with school communities to address issues of exclusion, with the goal of broadening the range of situational and social factors being considered. The following summarises the main points

made in my initial email communication with a variety of colleagues within education, highlighting initial thoughts around transference of philosophical and aspirational into practical:

- Would it be helpful to share with school staff the information that the most frequent reason cited for permanent exclusion is 'persistent disruptive behaviour'; would this encourage discussion at an earlier stage? Can schools interrogate their own patterns of addressing persistent difficult situations?

- Could we increase the focus on peer relationships, friendships and belonging, including specific questions about how the school are supporting/plan to support the development of peer relationships and a sense of belonging to the school/class/group etc.?

- Can we promote recognition of possible significant mismatches between the relationships and interactions young people may have experienced and learned from outside school and the manner in which they are expected to interact within school, maybe in the context of a visual 'framework'?

- Can we challenge attributions more? Can we ask school staff

how they are understanding a situation and make explicit the implications for a situation of alternative explanations?

- What do we know about the nature of the behavioural systems within the schools, especially in relation to hierarchical approaches?

6.3(ii)b) Further Reflections

Having had chance to reflect upon my communication with colleagues, I also intend to highlight the following:

- The importance of narratives, or stories, within a difficult situation, including: stories constructed around a difficult situation, positions offered and adopted and hearing the 'pain' story of those most closely involved with the difficult situation;

- The need to identify the aims, priorities and goals of all involved in a situation and recognise where there are mismatches between these, subsequently planning to acknowledge and/or address these differences;

- The importance of joined-up planning, in order that repetition is

avoided, roles are clear, time and resources are used efficiently.   The question 'what does this situation need?' may be helpful;

- The notion of 'dissatisfaction' replacing 'disaffection' and the much broader scope for change this offers;

- The need to consider alternative explanations for situations, during both verbal and written communications;

- The benefits of utilising the notion of 'space'.

6.3(ii)c) Next Steps

Currently, I intend to attempt to weave the above issues into a framework, which visually demonstrates the notion of 'space'.   The actual physical space in the framework will represent the interactional, experiential and conceptual spaces between aspects of those issues discussed above, with the goal of supporting the location of the 'problem' and possible solutions within this space.

The intention would be for this framework to support the work of a number of different colleagues within education, not only EPs, therefore, it feels key to

identify means by which philosophical and psychological principles can be communicated in an accessible, practical and helpful manner. As has been the intention throughout this study, it may be the case that the ideas communicated also result in unforeseen changes in practice for those engaging with them, an outcome over which I have little power, but one which I would consider very positive.

SUMMARY OF SECTION 6 - INFLUENCING FUTURE EP PRACTICE

In attempting to represent the manner in which the experience of undertaking this study already has, and will continue to, influence my practice as an EP, I have identified a number of key areas of influence:

- The importance of establishing a broad set of guiding principles and values, by which I can evaluate and reflect upon my own practice;

- The importance of working as a reflexive practitioner;

- The power of language, during verbal interaction and in writing;

- The manner in which word choices can influence how a problem is located, attributed and conceptualised;

- The introduction of the notion of 'space' at a number of different levels;

- The importance of recognising layers of interpretation and representing this as such during interaction and writing;

- Paying greater attention to 'starting points'; acknowledging and considering the influence of how a story is presented to us in our own representations of it;

- The application of such considerations to situations where exclusion from school has been identified as a possibility;

- Facilitating consideration, by those involved in 'difficult situations', of those factors which may warrant consideration in the attempt to maintain school placements (i.e. - those areas discussed in Section 5: The importance of working to maintain school placements; peer relationships and belonging; relationships between young people and adults; aspiration; attributions and power, and systemic issues).

- It feels important to acknowledge that these are *my* interpretations, pertinent to *my* experiences of EP practice and based upon *my* interaction with Mark. It may be the case that some of these resonate with your own experiences; it may be that you as reader perceive alternative priorities and areas to which you may wish to attend within the context of your own practice.

7. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

7.1 A Return to the Beginning?

There is a sense that a conclusion should return you as reader to the initial context of the story here presented, which may be seen as residing within Section 1.

However, as discussed earlier, to attempt to simply link, in a linear fashion, the understandings developed during this study directly back to the initial background context would seem to contradict the major assumptions upon which this study is based.

Almost two years have passed since I began writing this text; the context has therefore changed by definition. I have been an EP for two years longer and have continued to have new experiences within that role, engaging with this study has influenced my practice and my practice has influenced my writing, I have an additional two years' experience as a parent, I have met people I had not met two years ago, I have read and responded to others' research, LA

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budget cuts have become more severe, and approximately ten thousand more young people nationally have been permanently excluded from school.

Whilst recognising the complexity of the space between the initial context of this study and your current experience as reader, I feel I can reflect upon the extent to which the three stated aims of this study have been achieved; whether I can feel more empowered to contribute to issues I find problematic.

7.2 Reflecting Upon Research Question 1

In what ways can I develop my thoughts around what helps prevent permanent exclusion from school and how can I apply these understandings to my educational psychology practice?

Guided by Hollway's (ibid.) notion of the Gestalt, I have aimed to develop my understandings around the prevention of permanent exclusion via adopting a transparent approach to my experiences of:

- Hearing the story of one young man's experiences of school and the process leading to this experience;
- Engaging with the current research considering means of preventing

school exclusion at a number of levels, including individual, group and systemic approaches;

- Considering the contributions of relevant psychological theory to understandings around exclusion, including positioning theory (Harre, ibid.), attribution theory and work on identity and belonging;

- The process of writing reflexively the narrative of this study and the resulting shifts in focus.

In adopting a critical realist stance, I have not sought to access the 'reality' of school exclusion, or the 'answers' about how to prevent it. I have reached, I perceive, a short distance in to Bhaskar's (ibid.) depth of reality, and have explored this experience within the social contexts discussed in Sections 1 and 2. I can reflect that my unease in adopting an eclectic approach to this research and to my EP practice could be reconceptualised as conducting a *broad* as opposed to *deep* investigation of the space in Bhaskar's depth of reality.

My original hope was, that via engagement with this study, I may be able to contribute to alternative means of meaning-making and practice around exclusion, especially in the local area, and to feel more confident in this practice. The current opportunities to make this contribution are both bottom-up and top-down. In discussing bottom-up effects, I have outlined how my own practice has changed and the influences I intend to develop

further, as well as highlighting the 'ripple' effect of any changes in my own practice. A top-down opportunity has recently arisen, and I am currently contributing to a new local protocol which aims to address the very question of preventing permanent exclusion from school. Over the two years with which I have been engaged with this study, the local concern regarding exclusion has slowly increased, among a variety of education professionals, which seems to provide an opportune temporal context for the concluding of this study.

I can reflect that the conclusions I have reached with regard to what helps prevent permanent exclusion (as discussed at the end of section 5) seem to have a strong bias towards a focus upon systemic and interactional considerations, reflecting the work of researchers such as Hallam & Castle (ibid.) and Maguire et al (ibid.). This may reflect my desire to place greater emphasis upon changes in interactional spaces, as opposed to focussing within individuals.

The challenge that this presents to me in my EP practice is that with the advent of the new Code of Practice (CoP) for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Department for Education (DFE), 2014), the opportunities that I currently have to work overtly systemically with schools have disappeared, with the entirety of my work constituted by individual casework. My challenge will be to consider how I ensure that I maintain and

develop the systemic messages within the individual casework.

7.3 Reflecting Upon Research Question 2

What can I understand about seeking the views of young people and how can I apply these understandings to my educational psychology practice?

The understandings I developed around interacting with young people, and the importance that this focus gained within this study was a result of my determination to maintain reflexivity and integrity. The experiences I describe in Section 3 provided a catalyst for my recognition of the opportunity provided by this study to give further consideration to the manner in which, as an EP, I interact with young people, and the extent to which their voices are truly heard and responded to by those who are ostensibly in positions of increased power.

The Gestalt, and particularly the emotional aspects, of my interaction with Mark provided valuable insight into the role of positioning in narratives, as on reflection I felt that my position was one which was very unfamiliar, and could consider the impact of this upon the manner in which I contributed to and interpreted the narrative constructed by Mark and I, demonstrating the importance of working as a reflexive and reflective practitioner.

When considering implications for practice, another key understanding developed is the need for increased creativity on the part of professionals seeking the views of young people; that is, recognising their own interactional role in the outcome of an attempt to seek young people's views, reflecting upon the method chosen and the interaction itself and being prepared to offer alternative means of facilitating the communication of views.   Linked to this is the importance of recognising the communication which may be embedded within a young person's choice not to engage, especially with regard to the notion of 'dissatisfaction', a concept so usefully introduced to me via the work of Hartas (ibid.).

In the context of Harre's (ibid.) work, consideration of the possible positions being offered to a young person, the likelihood of such positions being in their familiar repertoire, and the influence of this upon the outcomes of interactions may also allow us to attribute actions and consequences differently, therefore resulting in alternative outcomes for young people.

7.4 Reflecting Upon Research Question 3

How can I develop my thoughts around the principles and practices which

underlie and guide my work as an educational psychologist and how will the meanings developed influence my EP practice?

In the process of engaging with this study, I perceived an increasing sense of unease with regard to the manner in which, as an EP, I may be working overly-pragmatically and perhaps contributing to outcomes for young people which I consider negative.

Engaging with this study has allowed me to interrogate and reflect upon those principles that I recognise influence my EP practice, and to identify a coherent set of underlying principles which link those theoretical bases which I value and in relation to which I can evaluate my own future practice.

I have been drawn to consider the work of Prilleltensky (ibid.) and the standards prescribed by the HCPC in relation to establishing values around EP practice.

My discomfort with the eclecticism I perceive in my own practice has been ameliorated to some degree, as I have encountered the work of Ingram (ibid.) and Woods & Farrell (ibid.), among others, who suggest that eclecticism is indeed a defining feature of applied psychology. Simultaneously, I have been able to identify a thread of critical realism throughout the approaches I employ as an EP.   These two factors result in my viewing my practice as less eclectic

than I at first presumed it to be, whilst also accepting that EP practice is by its nature eclectic.

I have been able to identify examples of the manner in which developing this text has influenced my practice over the last two years, and vice versa, and to outline my intended next steps in relation to working with colleagues in order to contribute to a protocol aimed at reducing permanent exclusions in the local area. Additionally, I have considered more general implications for EP practice, identifying interactional and conceptual factors which extend far beyond school exclusion. Perhaps the key concept to arise is that of 'space'; I have recognised the wealth of potential within this notion and suggested possible applications of this concept to a range of dilemmas, from philosophical to situational and relational.

I am interested to reflect upon how the conclusions I have drawn with regard to interactional space sit with my desire to work in a S-O manner, guided by Rees (ibid.). The notion of the problem-holder is key in S-O practice, but I have developed an increasing sense of wishing to locate problems within interactional space as opposed to with individuals. The relevant S-O principle does state that 'the problem is the problem, not the person' (Rees, ibid.), which I could choose to interpret as related to locating of problems outside of the individual, therefore allowing me to accept both conceptualisations. I will need to give consideration, during practice, to how

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this notion of location of problems in space is reflected in my language, whilst maintaining the presentation of alternative opportunities (in relation to Harre's work on positioning) and appropriate loci of control.

Upon concluding this study, I can reflect that a key driver for the manner in which I have chosen to represent my experiences has been my wish to maintain integrity and transparency. There were many times when I felt that I was setting myself an enormous challenge in attempting to present a narrative of my experiences and the subsequent understandings I had developed along the journey. It would have seemed simpler (perhaps both for me as writer and you as reader) to take a more traditional approach, employing the accepted headings of 'literature review', 'methodology', 'results' and 'discussion', but I could not overcome the sense that to adopt this arguably more straightforward procedure would have resulted in a loss of the integrity and sense of 'journey' I was so determined to maintain.

8. REFLECTIONS UPON THIS STUDY: DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY?

8.1 Is This 'Good' Research?

Adopting a critical realist stance, and employing qualitative methodologies, this study does not seek to establish or access a 'truth', but to represent, reflect upon and develop meanings around my experiences as one educational psychologist seeking to access the stories of young men with experience of exclusion from school. The meanings derived are mine as author, and, if I return to this study in the future, I am sure my experiences and the alternative context of my engagement will lead me to develop further interpretations. Similarly, I hope that you, as reader, will develop your own unique interpretations (as in Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, ibid.) which may influence your subsequent thoughts and/or actions, and therefore in turn influence the thoughts/actions of others, resulting in a 'ripple' effect, which by its very nature will be unpredictable and may indeed result in the "genuine discovery" to which Walker (ibid.) refers.

The process of this study has been fluid, as was always my intention; I can reflect upon my shifts in focus via Walker's (ibid.) comment that over-imposition of structure in a story can mean that "some of the best scenes end up on the cutting room floor in the interest of the story line" (p.111); the meanings I have developed around seeking young people's views, the right of young people not to engage and challenging the notion of 'disaffection' could well have been potential candidates for the 'cutting room floor' had I chosen to maintain only my initial focus.

It feels challenging to evidence, within a written presentation of this size, the process of repeated engagement with the story constructed with Mark. I have engaged with it many times over ten months, via memory, reflexive notes, listening, reading, thinking, reflecting and relating it to the research of others and to my everyday practice, during which my interpretations have been influenced by the 'Gestalt' of the context in which I have been accessing it. It feels that it will be possible to continue to interpret additional meaning from the story for as long as I choose to continue to engage with it, and I argue that indeed, some of the power of the story now follows an outward trajectory; as it influences my practice, so it contributes to interactions, subsequently entering the fabric of others' experience, and the 'ripple' effect moves its influence away from me and from Mark.

I believe I have met the criteria for 'good' narrative research identified by

Moon et al (ibid.), whilst being aware that others may feel discomfort with the manner in which I have chosen to define 'good' (e.g. Yin, ibid.).   I do not seek to provide evidence for 'confirmation' (Erlandson et al, ibid.) of how I developed interpretations and meanings, but reflect a sense that I have met Yardley's criteria of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, impact and importance.   As Yardley expects, the manner in which I have met her criteria will vary from the work of others who also feel they have achieved this; I may go further, to state that the manner in which I have the criteria is unique, as my understanding is that it could not be anything else.

Tracy's (ibid.) criteria for good research are very detailed, but can be summarised under the eight headings shown in Section 2.3.   Again, I am mindful that, as reader, your views with regard to the extent to which this study meets Tracy's criteria will differ from mine, which in itself demonstrates a major challenge for describing 'good' research.

My interpretation is that Tracy's criteria are generally met; of particular interest is one element of the 'credibility' criterion – "member reflections" (p. 844), which Tracy defines as "occasions that… allow for sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study's findings and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation and even collaboration" (p.844).

Mark had agreed that I could contact him at a later point in order to 'check out' my interpretations.   Having offered this, I attempted to contact him using the mobile number he had provided, but was unsuccessful.   I have to admit to feeling more comfortable with the resulting situation than I had expected, for two reasons.

Firstly,I viewed myself as a 'member' of this study in Tracy's sense, and could argue therefore that this criteria is indeed met to some extent, as I have engaged in significant 'questioning, critique, feedback and affirmation' with a 'member' (myself) which I hope is evidenced within this text, although I accept that this could be conceptualised as the giving my voice precedence over Mark's.

Secondly, I had a developing sense of Mark's story as 'a moment in time' and that the experience of co-constructing it and of my subsequent engagements with it belonged to an outward, dynamic, trajectory (the 'ripple effect' I refer to above); I could not develop a sense of meaning in trying to 'return' or 'confirm'.

8.2 Doing Things Differently?

The notion of doing things differently feels challenging, as the study was a dynamic undertaking, never intended to remain as it began.

I can reflect that my initial attempts to contact young men feel naïve and inappropriate, but had I not ventured down this route, the opportunity for the development of sense around seeking the views of young people would not have presented itself.

I see that I relied too heavily upon my prompts during my meeting with Mark, but this interpretation allowed me to consider the role of emotions and positioning.

Also in relation to positioning, I can reflect that, for an individual professing an S-O focus, I selected a rather negative question to attempt to engage the young men, choosing to position them as 'experiencers of exclusion'; maybe employing a focus upon 'young people's views on school improvement' may have been more productive, allowing for much more positive positioning. Again, however, this has allowed me to reflect upon how I contribute to the positions available to young people.

I might also consider that by employing an eclectic approach, I have sacrificed depth in order to gain breadth, but the sense I have developed with regard to the valued opportunity to evaluate what I really do, every day in my EP work, has felt very far from sacrificial.

I could have chosen to meet with Mark a second time, in order to 'check out'

some of the interpretations I have made from his story, perhaps particularly in relation to addressing the issue of what helps prevent permanent exclusion, and I did indeed initially intend to do this. However, as my engagement with the story and the study progressed, this began to feel much less important, and eventually rather contradictory. If I am arguing for a focus on stories as constructed within a specific location, interaction and temporal context, would there be any sense in then trying to 'check out' the interpretations made from that story in a different context at a different time? Surely what would result would be another story, different from the last and equally valid, but where then would the process be deemed to end?

I would prefer instead to focus upon the 'Gestalt' of this story, this telling, at this time, in this place and develop meaning and understanding from, about and around the story and the experience of its seeking and construction. When relating the experiences of the study to every day EP work, this feels more useful than repeated attempts to check that the interpretations are 'right'.

With this focus upon one sequence of experiences, you, as reader, can hopefully treat your engagement with this study and the story within it as a unique experience also, one in which your interpretations and the meanings and understandings you develop will differ from mine, hopefully allowing this intended dynamism of this work to remain.

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APPENDIX I

Transcription and Key to Transcription

Key to Transcription

S	My utterances
M	Mark's utterances
(1 sec) etc.	Length of pause in speech
(S: Right) etc.	Indicates where speech in brackets fills a pause in speech of other person
,	Very brief pause in speech flow (less than 1 second)
?	Questioning inflection in speech
!	Exclamatory inflection in speech
(Italic text in brackets)	My reflections during initial transcription
(Time in bold and brackets) time	Indicates breaks in initial transcription and elapsed in conversation
XXXXXXXXX	
+++++++++++	
*****************	
%%%%%%%	All indicate a place name has been

removed	to preserve confidentiality
[Text in square brackets] without	To identify the place being discussed reporting the actual name
Speech reported part way a line	Indicates that speech overlapped with other along person's
???????	Indechiperable speech

1 S: Ok (4 sec) right, so we'll just leave that going (2 sec) ok (2 sec) right M, so

2 erm, you'll remember the focus of what we were going to talk about really was

3 (1 sec) exclusion, just sort of your experiences in school, and your story really

4 about what school's been like for you, now you're coming to the very end of it

5 (1 sec) how many exams have you got left?

6 M: I've got just one left   tomorrow, maths, yeah   finished

7   S: Just one!   Oh, so you're last one

8 tomorrow as well, I can see why you're smiling (laughs) (2 secs) ok, so you

9 can talk as much or as little as you like, you can choose what you, what you

10 want to tell me, no, I've not got a list of like really set questions that I'm gonna

11 ask you or anything, I just wanted us to sort of have a conversation where I

12 can (1 sec) listen to what you've got to say, 'n', yer know, we can see if I do

13 make sense of what school's been like for you, now you're at the end of it, you

14 know, and you can think right back to your previous school as well, you know,

15 it doesn't just have to be (1 sec) about this school (2 sec) of course, you may

16 have ideas that are different from, other people's ideas, that's great and fine,

17 that's what we want to hear about, it's about it being in your own words, really,

18 your thoughts, 'n', er you know, how you understood things, how you make

19 sense of things, so, does that alright? Yeah? Erm, so, er, how are you feeling

20   now that you are nearly at the end?

(I am talking a lot)

21   M: Well, yeah, it is good in a sense (2 secs) but (1 sec) I reckon that only fing

22   that I'm worried about is like leaving friends 'n' stuff (S: Right) and yer, yer

23   know like, people hardly ever keep in touch wi' the friends that they made at

24   school

25   S: Right, mm mm

26   M: Yeah, I'm looking forward to just getting out and working really but, um (S:

27   have you got) leaving all my friends

28   S: Yeah yeah, and do you think that you'll keep in touch with, with some

29   people?

30   M: Well, there is a few that I think I'll definitely do because, they live round me

31   so (S: Right) it's a bit hard to (1 sec)but the ones that live further away, I don't

32   think it'd be as easy

33   S: Mmm, yeah, and I guess once people are at college 'n' work 'n' stuff, it, then

34   it becomes a bit more difficult

(Demonstrating my own position and expectations instead of reflecting Mark's)

35   M: Yeah, sometimes it can

36   S: So have you got a plan, for September?

37   M: Erm, yeah, hopefully, I'll be able to get into xxxxxxxxx College

38   S: Right

39   M: 'N' then, get onto forge work 'n' working in forges (S: Oh, right) horseshoes

40   'n' that

41   S: Fantastic, well that's great.   Is that sort of something that you, sort of, think

42   you're good at doing?   That kind of (M: Well, yeah) work?

43   S: Yeah

44   M: I enjoy working round horses so (S: Oh right) I'm just looking out to be a

45   farrier, in the end of it all

46   S: Oh right, fantastic!

47   M: Hopefully it'll be able, come out of it

48   S: Oh, right.   Is that something that you've thought about for a long time, or is

49   it quite a recent thing, idea?

50   M: Well, I used to have a few horses myself, my aunty lives on a, like, owns

51   S: Oh, I see

52   a stable, so every time I used to see, see the blacksmith come round a do the

53   S: Yeah

54   shoes used to always ask if I can help, 'n' I just enjoyed it

(M's aspirations have little to do with the school environment and learning)

55   S: Fantastic, oh well that's really nice, to follow, your interests, erm ,yeah, and

56   I think xxxxxxxx College is a great place for finding things that are hard to find

57   in other places aren't they? Yeah, sort of, courses, fantastic, right, so er, so I,

58   so I hear that the main thing that you're going to miss, you think then, about

59   school is, your friends

60   M: Yeah

61   S: Is there anything else that you think you'll, miss about it, or will you be quite

62   glad

(My assumption?)

63   M: I'll be quite glad to leave

64   S: Yeah, mm mm

65   M: Yeah

66   S: So, tell me a bit more about that then, what what will you be glad that you

67   don't have to, do, anymore, or

68   M: It's just (2 sec) I, I don't really enjoy, like, kind of (1 sec) not being as

69   practical, just sitting down 'n' like, academic, I don't really enjoy it (2 sec) I

70   struggle keeping concentration on things

71   S: Right, mm mm

72   M: Once I'm outta (1 sec) I don't know really, I just (2sec) I'll just be happy to

73   get actually, hands on 'n' (S: Hmmm) not be like sat down in a classroom

74   S: Right, yes

75   M: Enjoy being out

76 S: Yeah.   Do you think you've had opportunity to do that whilst you've been at

77 school?   Sort of, hands on stuff?

78 M: Well, there is, little things, yeah like, but, I was at a previous school before

79 this school (S: Right) so I went to xxxxxxxxx school (S: Oh, yeah) before I

80 came here, and like, for example, in Science, used to have a lotta, used to

81 have days where, like, you do, like academic work one day, 'n' then you'd go,

82 'n' do practicals for one day (S: Ah, right) but here, you'd just walk into the

83 lesson and like find out whether you're doing the practical or not, and (S:

84 Right) it just seems to be, like, summat to look forward to

85 S: Ah, I see, so kind of knowing (M: Yeah) beforehand, whether it's gonna be

86 something you will look forward to, is helpful, sort of thing

87 M: Yeah

88 S: Yeah, right (2 sec)ok (1 sec) and that was something that was different

89 about xxxxxxxxxxx school than here, yeah (M: Yeah), so, when did you some

90 to this school, what year?

91 M: Erm, Year 9, start of Year 9

92 S: Ah, right, ok. So what was it like starting, in Year 9?

93 M: It was alright, because, as I went to primary school, I went to xxxxxxxxxx

94 [primary school]so

95 S: Right, mm mm

96 M: I had like, a lot of people from my year went to the same school as me and

97 they were all coming 'ere.   I was the only one in Year, when I left primary

98 school, to go, to xxxxxxxxxxxx [other high school], so I basically left them all

352

99   behind

100   S: Right

101   M: And (2 sec) I di'n't get on well there,so, ended up coming out and coming

102   back to this school, but I chose this school just cause all my friends were 'ere,

103   it's been good like getting back with all my friends (S: Yeah) that I met from

104   primary school

(How important was the sense that all his friends were somewhere else in
determining the success of the first school placement?   He says he chose
this school- was there a sense that he had not had a choice about the first
school?   Did a sense of choice contribute to the success of this placement?
Did friendships contribute?)

105   S: Right. Did you manage to kind of, get back in there with them 'n' make

106   friends again ok?   M: To be

107   honest with yer, people that I hang round with now aren't the people from my

108   primary school

109   S: Right, mm mm

110   M: I come in and I find they're totally different, not in a bad way like (S: Yeah)

111   they're totally different people in their selves like, just seems to've sectioned

112   out in high school (S: hmm, yeah) it's like no matter what in primary school,

113   everyone used to hang round together (S: mm) and when you get to high

114   school it changes, like people get into different groups

115 S: Yeah, yeah

116 M: So, ended up wi' a different set of friends then

(I wonder how he makes sense of the effect of the original school placement

on his eventual friendships and achievements in school?   Who does he think

had control over that choice?   What would he like to say to them about it?

Friendships is a recurring theme and seems very important - this fits with my

own existing perception)

117 S: Right, yeah, I think that's what happens isn't it?   You don't quite know who

118 sometimes, you'll, you're not so sure about a person to start with, and you

119 actually end up being quite good friends with them 'n' (M: Yeah) you can kind

120 of drift away from other people can't yer, yeah (2 sec) so, you mentioned Mark

121 that, you were at xxxxxxxxx [other high school] and you felt like things weren't

122 going so well there, so can you tell me a bit about that?

(6 minutes 37 seconds)

123 M: Well, I got into a bit o' trouble and I just, didn't settle down well as soon as

124 I got there, just (1 sec) found myself (1 sec) just getting sent out o' lessons (3

125 sec) arguing wi' my teachers, like answering back, which I struggled with the

126 most

127 S: Yeah

128   M: And (2 sec) just a straight punishment, I ended up with, like one to one,

129   with one o' the head o' years, doing my work (S: Right) while they were sat

130   there (2 sec) but it were (1 sec) hard (1 sec) 'n', I just got (2 sec) I just got, they

131   just said to me that if I carried on like this then I'm gonna end up getting (1 sec)

132   permanently excluded, but ma mum, ma mum talked about it, and she said

133   well you can carry on or you can change the, and I went I'd like to move to this

134   school

135   S: Right

136   M: With all ma friends again and have a, like start a new (S: Mmm mm) and be

137   able to (1 sec) like, refresh over everything and just settle down

138   S: Yeah

139   M: And that's what I did, I came out o' that school (1 sec) and then, Year 9, I

140   started here

141   S: Mm Mm, excellent, so do you think generally then, I mean you've been here

142   then Year 9 to well we're nearly there, nearly at the very end of Year 11, so

143   have things been better here than they were, at xxxxxxxxxxx [old high

144   school]?

145   M: Yeah, a lot better but, as soon as I got 'ere I thought (1 sec), in the back o'

146   ma mind, I thought to myself, oh well, it's a grammar school, it's obviously

147   gonna be a lot stricter than (S: right, mm mm) but as soon as I got here,

148   everything, seemed to be, it seemed to be like a different world, you seem to

149   see, in strictness wise it's a lot stricter than xxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] was

150   S: Oh right

151   M: Like the punishment like, there were no isolation, like exclusion unit (S:

152   Right) at xxxxxxxxxx [old high school]

153   S: At xxxxxxxxxxxxx, yeah

154   M: You were just, you could get away wiv a lot o' things at xxxxxxxxxxx [old

155   high school] (2 sec) but here, it comes down on yer, they come down on yer

156   hard like, (S: Right), putting yer in isolation where yer can't come to lessons

157   and stuff, see yer friends all break, and yer just end up, getting the punishment

158   (S: Right), which has helped me in a way actually

(Lots of references to them, meaning school staff - what does this say about a sense of belonging or working together?   Is this not important to M?   Does the 'us' and 'them' suit him?)

159   S: Right, ok, so how, how, go on, tell me, how, how it's helped, what it's

160   M: Because, as I say, at xxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school], I don't think

161   punishment was as strong, so I (S: Right), so I thought to myself, if it's (1 sec)

162   nothing's gonna happen to us while I'm messing around I may as well carry on

163   but, you've gotta try and find your ways around it to be able to

164   S: Right, ah, I see

165   S: Yeah (1 sec) yeah, so what kind of things was it that did, that you've got in

166   place here, at this school, that you think actually really worked for you, and

167   really helped you to

168   M: Erm (2sec) well (2 sec) there's (2 sec) I'm not, I'm not too sure really, it's

169   just all (2 sec), all in general, it just seems to (1 sec) (S: Right), so

170   S: I think my, my impression of this school is that they have very clear, sort of,

171   behaviour, (M: Yeah) it's behaviour for learning it's called, (M: Yeah) with all

172   those stages, and all the (M: levels), yeah and all the levels, and yes, you

173   know Mrs H did explain it all to me, I can't quite remember (laughs) how it all,

174   all (1 sec) works, so do you understand how it works?

175   M: Yeah, it's (S: Yeah? Right) it's easy enough like, everyone seems to (2

176   sec) they'll (1 sec) on the level rise, yer get, yer get, like, five four levels, I can't

177   remember whether it's five or four (S: Right) but, I know, the last two levels,

178   are where you talk about getting moved to different schools (S: Right) like

179   having, the last level's getting permanently excluded and the second level's

180   (S: Right) talking about a managed move (S: Right) which is basically what

181   happened at xxxxxxxxxxx [previous high school]

182   S: Right

183   M: So, people seem to mess around for the first two levels (S laughs) and then

184   as soon as they hit level two, that's them dead, cause it's like a strict thing, so

185   like, any referrals (S: Yeah, mm mm), so many stage threes and you're out,

186   and they just seem to (1 sec) (S: Right), it works a lot with people

187   S: Right, so those first levels, are they kind of dealt with by the class teacher

188   then? You know the erm

189   M: Erm, you have meetings for each level, and the first meeting's with yer

190   head o' year

191   S: Right

192   M: So, you go, well you have the first meeting with yer head o' year and yer

193   mum, and then when it goes up to the second level, you 're with, the behaviour

194   manager and the exclusion unit manager

195   S: Yeah

196   M: And yer mum (3 sec) and then, I think it goes to deputy head when it's the

197   last two (S: Right) and then, er, full governor's meeting (S: Right) everything

198   with yer parents and stuff on the last one, that's about getting permanently

199   excluded, so

(Until very last stage, he only refers to Mum; at last stage it is 'parents'; is there

a sense that Mums deal with the lower level issues and Dads get involved

when things become more serious?   He also talks much more about the

higher stages -does he know more, does he see them as more important?)

200   S: Right, so how far have you ever got then, up that

201   M: I got, on to Level 3

202   S: Right, mmm

203   M: Which is second to last, but, we had words 'n', got put on a contract, it was

204   a contract, where (3 sec) they said (2sec) it set me so many (1 sec) tasks if I

205   do (S: hmm hmm) then that, well, contract failed and that'll be me, sent to a

206   different school

207   S: Oh right

208   M: The other hand was, if I do so much fings good (S: mm mm) (1 sec), then,

209   oh aft after the term, then they might consider me moving down a level

210   S: Oh right

211   M: So at the end of the term you can work to move down a level, luckily I

212   moved down a level and I turned it round

213   S: Yeah

214   S: Excellent, and did you think, how did you feel when they said right if this

215   doesn't work then you're gonna go somewhere else?

(I have turned a positive into a negative!)

(11 minutes 59 seconds)

216   M: I, I felt worried because (2 sec) my mum 'n' dad are (1 sec) very strong on

217   me wiv education 'n' that (1 sec) very (1sec) and after the xxxxxxxxxxx [old

218   high school] incident, I'd, bin in a lot of trouble wi ma mum and dad

219   S: Right

220   M: I thought, I've come 'ere to make a fresh start, 'n' then, I've gone 'n' ruined

221   it, so I were worried in that sense, I just thought (2 sec) 'n' then it just give me

222   the motivation, to be able to (1 sec) just fink to my self right I need to able to (1

223   sec) seriously do it now

224   S: Right, yeah, and you obviously did, did do it didn't yer, so, tell me a bit me

225   M: Yeah

226   about how you managed to do it

227   M: I just, I talked to the teachers a bit more an' I, I, I asked, could I be moved

228   on my own, 'cause the worst thing was, me talking to friends, like that are next

229   to me, an' then, as soon as the teacher bites, an'then that's an argument back,

230   so I thoughtI keep myself (1 sec) out the way when it's just gonna start the

231   S:Right

232   argument, I bet, so I moved on me own an' it helped me listen a lot more

233   aswell, (S: Mmm mm) so I was taking in a lot more when I was on me own (2

234   sec) so, that helped just talking to teachers and asking for, like, help

235   S: Yeah

236   M: I used to struggle for asking for help 'cause I thought if I ask for help 'n' put

237   my 'and up 'n' everyone'll look at me like (S: Mmm), in case I und, don't

238   understand it and everyone else does, so I just built confidence just to be able

239   S: Yeah

240   to put me 'and up, so I don't geddit, then yer find a lot of people in the class

241   S: Yeah

242   don't actually get it wiv yer, it's not just you on yer own

243   S: Yeah, yeah, I guess, I'm wondering there so, is it almost like you've just

244   gotta be brave 'n' (1 sec) try it, 'n' see what 'appens? 'N' then you, er, sort of,

245   got rewarded for doin' that didn't yer, 'cause then you realised (1 sec) well, yer

246   know, everyone else is probably going oh god, I'm really glad Mark put his

247   'and up and asked that, I don't geddit either (1 sec) was it that kind of feeling?

248   (M: Yeah) yeah, yeah, fantastic (2 sec) and was there, um, certain lessons

249   where you, felt, like, you could go to the teacher 'n' say, actually, can I sit over

250   there, or, was there ones that (M: Yeah) felt more

(I am trying too hard to be enthusiastic! I am using my accent to match his.)

251   M: There was certain ones like (1sec) my, I have an Art teacher (2 sec) I fink,

252   what makes me get along with her is she's more, she comes, she's like, she's

253   more talkative, like down, talking to us, rather than all, higher-classed 'n'

254   S: Right, mmm mmm

255   M: Like (1 sec) but (1 sec) like I could talk to 'er about anyfing, I could, ask her

256   to like, help me 'n' stuff 'n' (1 sec) everyfing'd be sorted, like that, like there's

257   certain ones that, I fink when they get along better like wiv the student, then

258   S: Yeah

259   you can get along better wiv them, which makes you be able to trust them, 'n'

260   (S: mmm) actually ask them about (1 sec) getting, so you do, find a lot of

261   teachers in different classes, which you can talk to more than others

262   S: Mmm

263   S: Yeah, yeah, and you think that's about them, sort of (slight sigh) seeing you

264   more as, equals, I suppose, yeah, mm mm

265   M: Yeah

266   M: Seems more, more as actually (1 sec) like, treats, treating us like adults (2

267   sec) like, people say you've gotta, actually act like one to be, which, yer do, it's

268   right, but (2 sec) I believe that it teks two, to be able to (S: mm mm) cause, like,

269   arguments, disruptions 'n' stuff (1 sec) so, I reckon (1 sec) yeah

270	S: Yeah
271	S: Mmm, you can't really have an argument on yer own can you? It doesn't
272	M: No
273	work (laughs), no, you know, you're right (1 sec) erm, so (slight sigh) that that
274	time then, when you were erm, you know, turning things around and who,who,
275	M; Yeah
276	was there particular people in school who were helpful to you with that, or do
277	M: Yeah
278	you think it all came from you, or, what helped you to be able to

(I can hear myself looking for his language to reflect back, but I have just missed his major point about it 'taking two', or was I seeing if he also applied this belief in positive situations?)

279   M: Miss B helped me a lot

(Is that why he agreed to meet with me? Because the request came from Miss B?)

280   S: Right, mm mm

281   M: Cause like, I found out that I was struggling, I struggled with controlling my

282   anger, and that's what's causing obviously the arguments, for me to argue

283   back and not be able to just take it on the chin, to, which would've helped a lot,

284   I wouldn't've bin kicked out of a lot of lessons (1 sec) so I went to Miss B and

285   she helped me (1 sec) just, taught me ways to, control it, like (S: Right), just

286   tek, breathe 'n' counting backwards 'n' (1 sec) I got proper close 'n' I could talk

287   to 'er about anyfing (2 sec) like, she'd ask me, she'd go do you want me to talk

288   to yer head o' year about somefing (S: Mm mm), so, yer head o' year can talk

289   to yer different teachers (1sec) like little fings like 'at can, did help in the end

290   S: Yeah

291   like

292   S: Is it almost like a sense of (1 sec) sort of feeling like somebody's on your

293   side?

294   M: Yeah

(16 minutes 26 seconds)

295   S: Like they're, they're actually (1 sec) yeah, with, with you, and yeah, willing

296   to sort of

297   M: Willing to actually (1 sec) give the time to help you

298   S: Right, mm mm (1 sec) yeah, yeah (1 sec) an' that's something I've always

299   thought of, felt, from my point of view, seems important for, people in schools,

300   so I'm interested to see what you, you say about that, yeah (1 sec) erm (2 sec)

301   M: Yeah

302   so (1 sec) in in in in terms of um fixed term exclusions, did you, have you had

303   any of those whilst you were (1 sec) at, this school?

304 M: (1 sec) Erm, I don't think I've 'ad, no I don't fink I've 'ad one at this school

305 (S: No, right, mm mm) I did at me other school, I 'ad a few at the other school,

306 but, at this school I've managed to (1 sec) cause (1 sec) I've managed to just

307 (2 sec) keep away from that kind of, it's bin, like yer say, what moved me up

308 the levels was getting kicked out o' lessons, it weren't for like, serious

309 incidents such as fighting 'n'

310 S: Right, mm mm

311 M: Stuff like 'at, it was (1 sec) simply for the fact of arguing 'n' (S: Right) just

312 snapping 'n'

313 S: With the teachers, or

314 M: Yeah, with the teachers, mainly

315 S: 'N' when you look back at that now Mark, and yer think about, when that

316 was happening, how do you make sense of that now in yer head, about what

317 what was going on   right

318   M: I feel a bit childish, I feel a bit, now I see, I see to myself, why di'n't I

319 just, stand 'n' tek it (1sec) whether I (1 sec) like, took my anger out when I, got

320 away, it woulda bin a different situation, it's not, that's, it's just a fact of (S:

321 Right) me feelin', like (1 sec) getting to them, like, getting angry in lessons,

322 when, getting shouted at, it's stupid, that's what were just draggin' me, just

323 that one fing, draggin' us out, and it got us, it gets you, just that one fing to pick

324 at can get you a lot (S: Mm mm)more in trouble than other fings

325 S: Yeah (1 sec) yeah (1 sec) yeah (1 sec) did did, how would yer describe,

326 erm sort of, what yer relationships were like with the teachers, at at that time

327 M: (1 sec) Well (2 sec) it was (1 sec) it wa, quite bad, I don't fink I, I di'n't get

328 along wiv quite a few (2 sec) the fact of (1 sec) found out, off our head o' year

329 (1 sec) (S: Mm mm) like, what teachers had reported stuff about yer, which is

330 this ba, well it's called PARS I fink and behaviour for learning, sumat to do wi'

331 them two (2 sec) that, once you've done something wrong (1 sec) they say

332 their views on it an' how (2 sec) you get that printed off for you when ma

333   S: Right

334 parents came in and the level rises, and you see that a lot of teachers see, to

335 you, which helps you in way cause yer know (2 sec) how to change

336 S: Oh right (1 sec) so the teachers like, put comments do thi, about kind of

337 what you've, what they think you've bin like in their lesson, right

338   M: ????????   M: But on the other

339 hand it can get you even more mad if you don't agree wiv'

340 S: And what if you don't agree with it?

341 M: Nothing changes

342 S: Right

343 M: Like, it gets passed past yer head o' year obviously but (2 sec) if (2 sec)

344 obviously the teachers are gonna take (1 sec) the over teacher's side,

345 because (S: Hmm hmm) it's coming from an adult's point of a view compared

346   S: Yeah

347 to a child's, so yeah yer gets, if it's somefing ridiculous (1 sec) like (1 sec)

348 they're(1 sec) saying summat that the tea, dun't run past one o' the   teachers,

349 the tea the head o' year can cancel it (S: Oh right) like cancel the referral, but,

365

350 they can describe it to make it look like you've done very bad but the teacher

351 ????? ???? you'll never know (S: Hmm hmm) whether she gets about sixty

352 children going in saying he di'n't do anyfing wrong it (S: Right) won't change it

353 at the end o' the day (S: Oh right) it's 'appened 'n'

354 S: Yeah, right, 'n' what do you think about that?

355 M: (2 sec) It, it dun't really bovver mi to be honest, because (1 sec) you've

356 gotta've done somefing in the first place to be able to get sent out, whether it's

357 serious or whether it were (S: Yeah) well, whoever it were not worth to get

358 sent out for, or whoever it were just, summat petty, you're still doin' somefing

359   S: Right

360 wrong (S; Yeah) so (2 sec) it's a punishment at end o' the day, for what you've

361 done wrong, so

362   S: Yeah, ok, mm mm, 'nd' I gue, I mean it's particularly interesting for

363 me to talk to you cause you've been to two different high schools, aswell, yer

364 know, so, em (1 sec) I know you mentioned that you, you feel that this school

365 was more strict and you

366   M: Yuh

367 were quite surprised by that, but yer know, having come from xxxxxxxxxxxxx

368 [old high school] which you thought would be more strict, why, how did yer

369 make sense of that aswell, how do yer think well what is it about this school

370 then that makes it more strict, do you think that's a good thing, does it work,

371 yer know it's obviously worked for you, do you think it works for everybody, or

372 M: (1 sec) Erm (1 sec) I'm (2 sec) you get some people that'll wo, won't care

373 but (1 sec) I fink what's helped me a lot is that fact of I've already bin in trouble

374 at one school (S: Right) so, I don't wanna go frough the same, as I did at the

375   S: Mm mm

376 other school here (1 sec) so that's just held us back a lot then

377 S: Yeah

378 M: I'm not sure whether if I'd've come to this school in Year 7 and behaved like

379 (1 sec) I did in xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] I don't I'm not sure whoever,

380 I'd end up in the same position, but

381 S: Right, mm mm

382 M: It's it has holded back a lot, it's thats whats controlled (1 sec) how far I do

383 take (S: Yeah) sort of yeah

384 S: Do you think (1 sec) is there, sort of, the system, the behaviour for learning

385 thing, is that, is that clearer (1 sec) than how they dealt with things

386   M: That's alot

387 at xxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school]

(Locus of control and of blame - he seems to have a strong sense of responsibility for one's actions)

(21 minutes 52 seconds)

388 M: Yer, at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] yer never knew (1 sec) what yer

389 punishment was gonna be

390   S: Right

391   M: You you'd get up to the teacher and the teacher'd say it out of anger

392   towards yer like (1 sec) do, so much, you'd have detention whatever

393   S: Right

394   M: 'N'

395   S: But it wasn't clear

396   M: We didn't 'ave any like punishment saying if yer do this you're gonna 'ave

397   like this, its (1 sec) if yer do that then you find out what 'appens on

398   S: Yeah

399   S: Mm mm

400   M: Om

401   S: Yeah (1 sec) OK, so that sounds as though that, sorta that having that

402   system in place in school's bin really (1 sec) really important

403   M: Yeah   M: It 'as

404   S: Yeah (1 sec) an' I think, I mean it's, yer know it's great to hear that yer know

405   you've come, to another school and you've made it work, cause I always think

406   that's a really hard thing for people to do, to go to a new school, when you've

407   had a bad experience at one and then, you've gotta go and it's almost har, my

408   point of view is I think that's really hard, to do that, do you, did you find it hard

409   or

410   M: No I, I came in wiv a lot o' confidence, that's probably, half o' the fact,

411   because, obviously I knew most people here because I I'd go out wiv 'em

412   S: Right, mm mm

413   cause I di'n't live round, cause yer get people from xxxxxxxxxxxxxx [old high

414   S: Yeah

415   school] coming, from everywhere all over, like from xxxxxxxxx [town name],

416   S: Yes of course

417   [town name 2] wherever, 'n' cause I'm in xxxxxxxxx [town name 3] it's

418   S: Yeah, mm mm

419   'arder to see everyone else (S: Mmmm) so, I used to 'ang round wiv everyone

420   from primary school anyway, different, play football wi' different people from

421   S: Yeah

422   this school (S: Hmm hmm) so (1 sec) I'd already met 'arf of 'em, so I just came

423   S: Right

424   into an environment where it were like, I knew everyone anyway (1 sec)

425   slightly different lessons 'n' different kinda, stuff like 'at

426   S: Right, oh ok, so less   right

427   S: I know, I'm interested that you've talked quite a bit about friends, cause

428   that's another thing I always think is really important 'n' (M: Yeah) my thought

429   about it is (1 sec) I think sometimes it doesn't get paid enough attention to in

430   schools, by, when people are planning things, thinking about things, is well,

431   how important friends are, yer know to children and young people, teenagers,

432   yer know, er, would, I don't know, that's my point of view, thinking friends are

433   really important, it sounds, from what you're saying, as though, you would

434   agree with that, is that right? Yeah, mm mm, yeah, it sounds as though that

435   M: Yes

436 was quite a key thing for you settling in

437 M: Yeah I don't think if I di'n't 'ave any friends 'ere,

438 I don't fink I'd've (1 sec) like, felt comfortable, I'd've like, come in 'n' (2 sec)

439 but, I managed alright at xxxxxxxxxxx [old high school] to start off with, like, I

440 managed to meet new people

441 S: Right

442 S: Yeah, mm mm

443 M: but, it took a lot longer than it did when I first came in 'ere so, like I say I

444 came in 'ere confident an' I come in, like, lookin'

445 S: Mm mm

446 which'd be, type o' people (1 sec) to, hang round wiv 'n', get to know

447 S: Yeah, yeah, right (1 sec) yeah

448 S: 'N' d'ya think sometimes, that can (2 sec) cu, yer know, be be difficult for

449 people when they're tryina just, tryina decide where to be, um, which group to,

450 go with, 'n' how to fit in 'n' (1 sec) things, or, is that just my, my grown-up's

451 M: I'd say

452 point (laughs) point of view

453 M: I'd say it is difficult, cause, some people might want to be something that,

454 like (1 sec) other people don't see them as (S: Mm mm) which can cause a lot

455 of arguments (2 sec) (S: Yeah) but, really it's summat that yer learn in ??????

456 it just happens

457 S: Yeah, yeah

458 S: 'N' d'ya think, I wan interested you said aswell that, you thought one of the

459 things you did, that really helped yer, to turn things around was to actually say

460 look, I need to move away from ma friends in the lessons (1 sec) how, what

461 what were the kinda thoughts in your head when you were thinking about,

462 doin' that

463 M: I di'n't really wanna do it to be honest wiv yer

464 S: Hmm hmm

465 M: It helped me enjoy lessons, because, yer think oh yeah I'm in Science, I

466 can just sit 'ere next to ?????, I can talk 'n' (1 sec) but (1 sec) like(1 sec) if, I

467 wouldn't've done that, I don't fink I'd've bin confident for my exams, I'd've

468 struggled a lot, more than I did, now like (1 sec) cause I'd a just, not listened,

469 just, carried on talking, so in the long run, yeah it's good, but when I was

470 actually doin' it I were finking, should I do it

471   S: (laughs) Huh huh, right

472 S: And what was kind of the worry, about it, less fun in lessons I'm getting, one

473 thing, out   M: That I'd be sat on,

474 sat on, my own, and that's one thing I 'ate, I just 'ate bein' on my own 'n'

475   S: Yuh

476 (S: Right) just (1 sec) like, because (2sec) when yer sat there on yer own yer

477 think there's, it's out of order an' that makes yer listen cause yer, sat there just

478   S: Right (slight laugh)

479 looking around 'n' yer fink well, there is nothing to do so yer may as well just sit

480 there 'n' (1 sec) which, as I say, it does, work out

481   S: Right, yeah, might as well listen (slight laugh), oh great, and did, did

482   you, approach the teachers yerself, about doin' that, or

483   M: Erm, that's when a, Miss B helped me 'n' stuff like, I's said to Miss B, I said,

484   S: Right

485   do, I think I need to be on my own in lessons like sat away from other people,

486   S: Mm

487   so Miss B went do yer want me to speak to yer head o' year about it, spoke to

488   mi head o' year, mi head o' year sorted it out, a lot o' lessons

489   S: Right, good (2 sec) ok, 'n' then do (2 secs) in terms of what do you think yer

490   friends were thinking then, when you were, sittin' on yer own (1 sec) did they

491   know that was something you'd, said you wanted to do or, would you rather

492   they, thought the teacher'd made you, do it

493   M: No, like, I don't know, they just (3 sec) I

494   just (1 sec) left 'em to what, think whatever they want to really

495   S: Right, yeah

496   I just, nobody ever said any fin', so I just, carried on the way I normally

497   S: Right   yeah, good, ok

(27 minutes 10 seconds)

498   S: 'N yer just still 'ave yer time to chat, 'n' mess about with them at, break

499   times 'n' stuff yeah (1sec) yeah (2sec) fantastic

500   M: Break times, lunch, yeah

501   S: So it sounds as thought yer really managed to, to turn things round, I

502 noticed at one point as well you'd said about how you, you, your Mum 'n' Dad

503 are very, like, interested in yer education, 'n' keen for yer to do well 'n' things,

504   M: Yeah

505 so, how much difference d'yer think that that's made for you aswell, in how

506 you've got on in school in the end   Hmm hmm

507   M: It's made a lot, a lot o' difference, because, at home,

508 they're very strict (1 sec) like (2 sec) I felt to myself, we got revision guides

509 which helped a lot (S: Hmm hmm) and from, from March 'til obviously now,

510 before our exams started, to help us with our GCSES's so (S: Right) I revised

511

512   S: Yeah

513 subjects that teachers set us, bits of revision to do, an' I fink, if my mum 'n' dad

514   S: Hmm hmm

515 wouldnt've bin strict, 'n' made me do it, I wouldn't a done it, cause I fink (2 sec)

516   S: Right

517 I hate feelin' like I'm missing out on somefing, wiv ma friends out a school, so

518 I feel all they're doin' summat while I'm sat 'ere, but I 'ad no choice, so I 'ad to

519 sit there an' I 'ad to do this revision (S: Yeah) 'n' like if I did somefing wrong at

520 school I'd be grounded 'n' (2 sec) yeah, it is like two types o' punishment, so

521 the stronger the punishment, the more you think not to do it again (S: Hmm

522 hmm) yeah that's worked a lot (S: Yeah)

523 S: So, do, has there bin much contact between home and school, between yer

524 parents and ?????????

525   M: Yeah, a lot o' contact, every homework missed when you was in

526 year nine ten (S: Right) straight text 'ome (S: Right) miss so many 'omeworks

527 yer get rang 'ome, 'n' yer parents (2 sec) (S: Right) get spoke to about that

528 side o' subject

529 S: 'N' again, is that quite clear, again you know, right, if ah miss one

530 'homework, this is what's gonna 'appen

531   M: Yeah, if I know I missed 'homework, I'll be on't bus on't way

532 'ome what am ah gonna say to mi mum 'n' dad (laughs) ??????? walk through

533   S: Right (Laughs) Yeah

534 door and say you've missed an 'homework again (s: Right, yeah) and it's

535 same for every 'homework I've missed, that's a night I've gotta stay in (S:

536 Right, mm mm) so, it is strong punishment at 'ome

537   S: Yeah (1 sec) yeah

538 S: So quite a strong link there then between, what's happening in school 'n'

539 what's happening at home, yeah, and you think that's made a a big

540   M: Yeah

541 difference for yer (M: Yuh) aswell, 'n' yeah, yeah, good

(I am noticing that Mark has a very strong focus on punishment and even double punishment, which is something I usually don't advocate. His description of home makes me think he has a secure attachment base from which to make his way in school - how important is this? Very I suspect! He views his parents' strict approach as positive and helpful)

542 S: So, ju just thinking more generally then muh, Mark, just thi thinking' about

543 yer yer friends in school, 'n' other things aswell 'n' anybody yer know aswell

544 whose 'ad any experiences of exclusion 'n' things, what der yer think about

545 exclusion, fixed term exclusion and permanent exclusions?

546 M: Erm, fixed term exclusions I don't (2 sec) I (1 sec) I'm not too (2 sec) like

547 because, people do take it for granted, like, people think ah, because parents,

548 some parents, I know it sounds bad, but some parents may not, at home feel,

549 the need to punishment, punish them again, might think oh they're punished

550 (1 sec) anyway so (1 sec) so they just sit at home 'n' they, do any fin' they

551   S: Right, hmm hmm

552 would do if they was at school but they're not, they're just getting' off school (

553 S: Right) so, it's a way of getting' off school for some, but, I fink, the permanent

554 exclusions, work (S: Yeah)

555 S: 'N' when yer say work, what do yer mean?

556 M: Like, it does help people reform 'n' change how (2sec) they was before,

557 they fink to themselves, if they carry on then it's gonna ruin the rest o' the life

558 cause, it just gets drilled into yer head about (S: Right) what yer do after yer've

559 finished school, if yer (S: Hmm hmm) get kicked out a school, it's gonna go

560 down on all yer references 'n'

561 S: Yeah, yeah

(30 minutes 38 seconds)

562   M: So ??????????????????????????? It does mek yer think over 'n' over

563   again

564   S: Mmmm (2 sec) and do you know anybody who's been permanently

565   excluded?

566   M: (2 sec) Em (1 sec) not (1 sec) well yeah, I do, but I (2 sec) there's a lad I

567   know got that permanently excluded in year 7 from 'ere but I wasn't 'ere (S:

568   Right, hmm hmm) he's in my year, I wasn't 'ere when he fingy, I know that, and

569   S: Yep

570   I know a few at different schools which've, a bin permanently excluded

571   S: Mmm mmm, 'n' what, what der yer see has happened to them, after they've

572   bin permanently excluded?

573   M: There's (2 sec) some, where I, hang round, it's on, an estate, well I, I a, play

574   football 'n' stuff 'n' go out round this estate called XXXXXX [name of estate]

575   S: Yeah

576   (S: Oh yeah, I know where XXXXXX [name of estate] is, yeah) 'n' there's a few

577   lads on there that got permanently excluded from ********* [neighbouring high

578   school], but, they don't seem to care, they're just hemmed up at +++++++++

579   [local pupil referral unit] (S: Hmm hmm, yeah) They don't seem to go

580   anywhere from there, they just get their Maths and English 'n' then, they think,

581   right I've got it now then , that's it, 'n' thi don't seem to be bovvered that thi bin

582   S: Right

583   (1 sec) but people who, get permanently excluded from, different schools 'n'

584   go onto another school, I fink that seems to do change 'em, not just seems to

585   turn 'em round

586   S: Right (1 sec) yeah)

587   M: So yer think there's a difference between those who kinda just, end up

588   stuck at +++++++++ [local pupil referral unit] and those who (1 sec) can get

589   M: Yeah

590   back into a high

591   M: Yer see as well, people always say like, the people who are bad,

592   always get the better, treatment, cause you 'ear, people comin' outta

593   +++++++++ [local pupil referral unit] 'n' (1 sec) ah yeah, our teacher took us to

594   MacDonalds (2 sec) like, cause they're allowed out halfway through dinner or

595   something, to go to shop 'n' stuff, so, they go to MacDonalds 'n' stuff so (1

596   S: Yeah

597   sec) it's a different treatment, different school like every Wednesday they go

598   on a trip or something' (S: Right) so, people feel jealous, in a way (S: Hmm

599   hmm) which can lead to people, feeling like, oh we've gotta be bad cause we

600   wanna end up there to (1 sec) they still get some o' the GCSEs like maths 'n'

601   S: Right (laughs)

602   english 'n', yer get to go on trips (S: Yeah, right, almost like yer can 'ave a

603   more fun time whilst, whilst yer doin' it, sort a thing) so why not be bad, but,

604   like I say, when yer get moved to a different (1 sec) school, altogether, then, it

605   actually works out better (S: Yeah, yeah)

606   (School bell rings for 9 seconds)

607 S: Oh, that was a long bell (slight laugh) so (1 sec) 'nd, erm, oh, what was I

608 gonna say now, it's put me off (2 sec) er (3 sec) 'n' der you, der you, is your

609   M: (Slight laugh)

610 thinking' about like, how it makes things better (1 sec) erm, that (2 sec) it

611 almost, is making people stop 'n' think about what they're doing, 'n' what, yer

612 know, is that, it almost sounds like that's sort of, what you did, you

613   M: Yeah

614 M: It does, it makes people think, think twice about, before thi do somefin' (S:

615 Yeah) other than just goin' straight into it, it makes 'em fink

616 S: Yeah (2 sec) 'n' it sounds to me like you're somebody who's able to look,

617 ahead, aswell, 'n' think about where you're, trying to get to, you've got quite

618   M: Yeah

619 a clear idea about this is what I want, to do (M: Yeah) yeah, 'n' der yer think

620 that is helpful to people, der yer think everybody does that or der yer think

621 some people are just like (2 sec) now, this, all they're bothered about is now (1

622 sec) this, this moment

623 M: Yeah, I fink it is very helpful, because, once you've got an aim, a lot o'

624 people will feel like yer, it's a challenge to get it 'n' (3 sec) honestly I like

625   S: Aaahh

626 (2 sec) feelin' like I've got some fin' to work for, 'n' not just, feelin' to myself,

627   S: Hmm hmm

628 right I'm doin' this, what am I gonna do next (S: Yeah) I like to know what I'm,

629 doin' it for

630 S: Yes (2 sec) yeah, so it's having that, like, a guh, a goal, that you're, got it,

631 can keep, keep in yer mind, look ahead to, yeah, ok (2 sec) so, erm (2 sec)

632   M: Yeah

633 so I guess, yer know, from all of that, that you've told me, do you (2 sec) have

634 you got any thoughts about, yer know, what might be able to be done

635 differently, even better, in this school, or other schools, yer know, I work arow,

636 I work in lots o' different schools around %%%%%% [town name], and meet,

637 er, mmm, lots of, young people, mainly boys, as I told yer, in that

638   M: Yeah

639 group, yeah? And that's, yer know, that's my sorta worry, it's not, that's not to

640 (1 sec) erm (1sec) yer know, disrespect boys, that sez to me that there's

641   M: No

642 something' not quite workin', fer, fer fer, er, boys, about high schools

643 sometimes, 'n' (2 sec) erm (2 sec) so I just wondered if you've got any

644 thoughts 'n' ideas, yer know, as, a boy in high school, about what yer think

645   M: Right

646 works 'n' what, what needs to change, what'd make it better, yer mentioned

647 one thing right at the beginning which was about the practical stuff (M: Yeah)

648 'n' the hands on, 'n' knowing about what yer gonna be doing when aswell, so,

649 is there anything else that you think

650   M: No, personally, I fink that every fin' else is, fine, yeah, I

651 fink it works, a lot o' people do come out on top after (3 sec) ?????????

652 overall I fink this is a very good school

653   S: Yeah, mm mm

654   M: 'N' like, punishment wise it helps (2 sec) make you in a better person 'n'

655   that

656   S: Yeah, yeah, ok (1 sec) 'nd, I mean, as as you're leaving now, and as you're

657   you're doing this with me, 'n' school're gonna be rally interested to know what

658   you've got ter say, yer know, so, what sort of feedback would yer want to give

659   to school, you know you can think that you could tell 'em that they could do

660   this a bit better, they've done this really well, yer know, what, what would you

661   choose

662   M: I, I'd just say, that I'm glad I picked this school, to end up, like, to come back

663   to (1 sec) 'n' I've just enjoyed my time 'ere, so (S: Yeah) it's bin a very good

664   school to come to

665   S: Yeah, and if could, if you were to pick out yer know, sort of two things that

666   you think've been, really helpful to you, ah, about the way this school works,

667   what would yer say (1 sec) they are

(I am embarrassed that I am asking the same question over and over when I already have the answers!   Did this suggest to Mark that I hadn't been listening to him?   Why did I now pick up on these answers during the talk?   I seem to be placing the LoC with the school system)

668   M: I'd say, I th like the punishment has helped me a lot obviously get frough (2

669   sec) 'n' like become, the person I am (S: Yeah) aswell, like (2 sec) like the

670 teachers 'ave, like such as me Art teacher, 'n' Miss B (S: Hmm) teachers that

671 yer can talk to that actually (S: Right) give yer the support, that yer want, I

672 mean like, like yer said before, like, like yer feel like they're on your side (S:

673 Hmm hmm) just feel like you 'ave got people on your side (S: Yeah) which is

674 good yeah

675 S:Yeah, yeah, excellent, well that's great (1 sec) erm (1 sec) I'll just check an'

676 see if there's anything' else I, really wanted to get your ideas about, you 've

677 talked brilliantly there, you've you've told allsorts, it was really interesting'

678 (slight laugh)so, I suppose er (1 sec) I I I just wanted to ask yer at the end

679 aswell, kind of, how you've found it, taw, yer know, having this conversation,

680 'n' talking about what school's been like, fer you

681 S: It's (1 sec) alright yeah

682 S: Yeah?

683 M: (3 secs) It feels good talking about, how yer feel (S: Yeah, mm mm)

684 towards it

(37 minutes 25 seconds)

685 S: Yeah (1 sec) an' has it, when you go out of here, will you, is there anything

686 that yer think oh I've never quite thought of it like that before or, because

687 you've sat 'n' talked about what, yer know, how you turned things round, 'n'

688 what things've bin like fer you, has it made you think differently about

689   M: It's, I'd say it's made me think differently (2 sec)

690 cause like (4 sec) cause like (2 sec) bein' able to talk about it all (2 sec) it's just

691 med me fink like, refresh my memory on, like all the fings added up over the

692 years I've bin 'ere (S: Hmm mm) on, how I 'ave changed, and how, I've come

693 on top out of all this

694   S: Hmm

695 S: (3 sec) Yeah, kind of, proved, that you can hear yerself, pr, yeah, giving the

696 proof of how you've done it, yeah, yeah how you've turned things round,

697   M: ?????

698 that's fantastic (1 sec) 'n'n der yer feel as though, I've given you chance to sort

699 of, talk about things in yer own way (1 sec) er (1 sec) have you 'ad chance to

700 say what you wanted to say

701 M: Yeah

702 S: Yeah? Is there anything (2 sec) anything' else, that yer think that we've not

703 talked about

704 M: (Laughs)

705 S: Is somebody bein' daft up ther

706 M: (Laughs) Yeah (laughs)

707 S: Yeah? (Slight laugh)

708 M: (Slight laugh)

709 S: (Laughs) Is he very tall, or is he standing' on something'? (laughs)

710 M: (Laughs) He's very tall

711 S: Very tall (1 sec) oo, god (laughs)

712 M: (Laughs louder)

713   S: Oh, I di'n't even know you could geddout there (laughs)

714   M: (Laughs) It's where t' bike shed is (laughs)

715   S: Oh, right, I see (laughs) he's spotted yer (laughs)

716   M: (laughs)

717   S: Is 'e one of the, year elevens aswell, yeah

718   M: Yeah (slight laugh)

719   M: (Laughs louder)

720   S: What's 'e doin', pullin' daft faces?

721   M: Yeah (laughs) rode off

722   S: (laughs) he's rode off, right, erm, yes so just do yer, d'yer

723   think I've given yer chance to say what yer want to say, anything' else that yer

724   think, actually remembering kind of what my question was, about, erm, you

725   know, getting' your views

726   M: Yeah

727   about exclusion as somebody who's had experiences of things not going so

728   well for them, but then, you've found a way ter, to turn it round (1 sec) erm (1

729   sec) yer know, is there anything' else that you think actually, I think that was

730   really important, for someone who was in your position to know, somebody,

731   things are not goin', so well for them right now (1 sec) erm (1 sec) in actual

732   fact, I'm gonna, I'm goin' to a meetin' after this, somebody lower down the

733   school, for whom things've not been goin' so great, so, what what would your,

734   kind o', top tips be for (1 sec) for him

735   M: Just try and take it on the chin really (S: Hmm

736 hmm) I know, it sounds hard like, but the best fing to do is just (1 sec) accept,

737 whether yer feel yer right or wrong (1 sec) at the end o' the day yer can't, yer

738 can't exactly (1 sec) come out on top, yer may as well just tek it, 'n' move on

739 (S: Hmm hmm) build a bridge 'n' get over it

740 S: Right, yeah, so kind of like that fresh start thing aswell (M: Yeah) sort of,

741 comin' in each morning' 'n' thinking', ok, well we 'ad yesterday was yesterday

742 M: Just givin' yerself an aim to, get to, keep yer mind off (S: Yeah?)

743 cause the motivation when yer've got somthin' in yer head that yer wanna do'll

744 just pull yer frough all the bad fings, 'n' yer fink, on sides

745 S: Yes, so really keeping' that in yer, in yer mind, where yer tryin' to go to (M:

746 Yeah) yeah, that's fantastic, ok, so d'you think, was this what you expected?

747 M:Yeah

748 S: Yeah, what we've done today (1 sec) yes, ok (2 sec) so what I'm gonna do,

749 Mark, is I will just, take away our recording, looks like it's worked fine, so, erm

750 (1 sec) right, gosh, 41 minutes there we've been talking for (laughs) erm, so,

751 and I'm gonna, listen to that again, and really listen carefully to all thee,

752 conversation that we had (M: Yeah) yeah, and I'm, and I'm gonna (1 sec) what

753 we call transcribe it, aswell, so that's write it all down (M: Yeah) basically (2

754 sec) 'n' then really pick out what I think that I've understood from what you've

755 said to me (M: Yes) as being the, yer know, the key things (1 sec) 'n' then, it

756 will be really nice for me if I could kind of feed that back to you and say, ask,

757 this is what I think you were telling me (M: Yeah) am I right, yer know, have I

758 understood you right, or were you gonna, well no, that;s not right, that's not

759   quite right, I didn't quite mean that, so that's why I ju, I've asked yer (1 sec)

760   erm, just fer yer, contact details on here, so that when I've (1 sec) done that 'n'

761   I've got something' to come back to yer with (M: Yeah) then, I'll be able ter get,

762   in touch with yer, so is that gonna be alright?

763   M: Yeah, that'll be alright

(42 minutes 11 seconds)

764   S: so. Is that your mobile number (3 sec) on there? Ok, fantastic, erm, so er, I'll

765   er, yer know, you'll hear back from mi, at some point, when I've had chance

766   M: Erm, yeah

767   ter (1 sec) erm (2 sec) listen to it (1 sec) 'n' it takes ages to tran transcribe

768   M: Yeah

769   things, cause you 've gotta listen so carefully then type a tiny bit 'n' then, yer

770   know it's er it takes a really long time to do it but, I will come back to yer as

771   soon as I can and just say, right Mark, what what do you think about this, so,

772   what what's the best way you would like to do that, would you want us to

773   M: Alright

774   (1 sec) er , meet up somewhere, would you want me to send something' to

775   you, or (1 sec) what d'you think (2 sec) what'd suit you, would suit you best (3

776   sec) cause obviously it'll prob, in all likelihood it would be, yer know, sort of

777   M: It's entirely up to you, whichever

778   either, in the, summer holidays, or, 'nd er, so we'd 'ave to find somewhere else

385

779   where we could, erm, meet up if we wanted to meet up (M: Yep) I'm just tryin'

780   to think, where, where do you live, XXXXXX [place name], which bit of XXXXX

781   [place name]

782   M: ******* Drive

783   S: Right, I don't know where that is (2 sec) are you like, is it like XXXXXXX

784   [name of estate] end, or other end, I think of XXXXX [place name] as goin' up,

785   like that, but (laughs)

786   M: Right   Right, as XXXXX [name of estate] is

787   there, it's straight down %%%%%% Road

788   S: Oh right, so like going towards ++++++ [place name] way, that way, right,

789   M: Yeah

790   ok   so one place that just comes to ma

791   M:Turnin' right before yer go up ?????????

792   mind, that, erm, night be a possibility, er (2 sec) in the summer, would be, the

793   children's centre which is next door to XXXXXXX [place name] primary school

794   (2 sec) would that be a, place yer could get to ok, if we decided we wanted to

795   M: Yeah

796   just, meet up face to face, yeah, or otherwise we can, erm, see something

797   M: Yeah

798   about, have have you got an email (1 sec) address, no, right, ok that's fine,

799   M: Erm, no   no

800   right, so yer think you'll still 'ave that mobile number over, over summer, yeah,

801   M: Yeah

802   yeah, I will

803   brilliant, d'you want me ter give you, my number aswell, then yer've goddit,

804   just, I don't know, just so you've goddit, 'n' then, yer know, like, I've given it to

805   A, haven't I, then if yer think of anything (1 sec) or (4 sec)

806   M: Oh yeah

807   I think it's on that, god, I di'n't tear that very well did I (2 sec) it's er, on that

808   information sheet that I gave yer, all ma contact details're on there, but I'll give

809   it yer again (10 sec) right, that's fine (M: Thank you) OK, brilliant, right, well

810   thank you very much, for, erm, takin' the time to come and talk, er, Mark, I'm

811   M: Thank you

812   sure it'll be really interestin' for everybody in school, and all thi, yer know, all

813   the other people I'm eventually able to share it with, yer know the

814   M: Yeah

815   people that do, my job aswell, other people who're working with (1 sec) em, er,

816   yer know, people who are, being excluded from school, 'n' 'n' tryina help, with

817   M: Yeah

818   that, with that, so, that will be great, ok (M: Thank you) fan, fantastic, thank

819   you very much, it was really nice to see you, good luck with yer, final exam

820   tomorrow, an' enjoy that feelin' of leavin school (laughs) OK, cheers, thank

821   M: Cheers   I will that

822   you

(45 minutes 10 seconds)   (Initial transcription finished on 10.7.13)

APPENDIX II

Letter from Behaviour Support Manager to Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian

Year 11 Pupils and Exclusion Research

The Educational Psychologist linked with xxxxxxxxxxx High School, Mrs

Suzanne Oakley, is carrying out a small piece of research to consider young men's

views about what helps prevent exclusion from school.

Mrs Oakley would like to gather these views through individual interviews with young

men who have had some experiences of fixed-term exclusions whilst in school. We

have been able to identify a group of Year 11 pupils who have had such experiences

and would like to offer them the chance to work with Mrs Oakley.

We have arranged for Mrs Oakley to come into school on Tuesday 16th April at 11am

(break time) to meet for about ten minutes with this whole group of pupils together,

just to introduce the idea of the research and to offer them the chance to take part.

Anyone who is interested will then be given full information and a consent form to

389

bring home for discussion with you. No individual interviews will take place without

written consent from both pupils and parents, and just because a pupil brings home

the information in no way means they are agreeing to take part.

We hope that the pupils will find this an opportunity to provide some interesting and

important feedback about their school experiences, particularly in relation to exclusion,

as they come to the end of their time here at xxxxxxxxxxx High School.

If we do not hear from you, we will assume that you are happy for your son to attend

the ten-minute meeting with Suzanne Oakley on the 16th April. If you do NOT wish

your son to attend this meeting, please return the slip below to school by Wednesday

27th March.

Thank you for your support.

Regards

xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I do NOT wish my son to attend the meeting with Suzanne Oakley on Tuesday 16th

April.

Pupil's Name:

Parent's name:

Parent's signature:

Date:

APPENDIX III

Letter to Young Men/Participant Information Sheet

EXCLUSION RESEARCH – INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDERING TAKING PART

My name is Suzanne Oakley and I am inviting you to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether you will or will not take part, it is important for you to understand why I am doing this research and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the research about?

I am trying to learn more about what helps boys who have had a number of fixed term exclusions to manage to avoid permanent exclusion and stay in school. I am hoping that the information I gather from talking to a small number of boys will help me to understand some of the things which may be useful in helping other boys avoid permanent exclusion. I want to share the ideas with other people who work to try and help young people in schools. I am carrying out this research as part of my studies at The University of Sheffield.

Why have I been chosen?

I asked Mrs XXXXX in school to find a group of boys who are approaching the end of Year 11 and who have had some experience of exclusions whilst in school. I wanted to talk to boys who are now close to leaving school as I thought it would be easier for them to talk to me about their experience of school.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, that is fine and no one will mind. If you agree to take part and then later change your mind you have the right to withdraw. If you decide you would like to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form, and as you are under 18, your parents will also be asked to sign. After you have signed the consent form, you still have the right to withdraw from the research and you do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part I would ask you to meet with me at school, where we would sit down together in a private room. In order that you are able to talk freely, it would be really helpful if you were able to speak with me on your own. However, if you wish your Mum or Dad to be present please tell me. If your Mum or Dad wish to come in to meet me when you first arrive, and then leave you and I to talk, that is fine.

I would ask you to talk to me about your time in school and what has helped you get to this point in school without being permanently excluded. I will not have a list of particular questions. I am interested in listening to your story about your time in school.

I expect our meeting to last between half an hour and an hour. The time will depend upon how much you want to tell me. If at any time you do not wish to continue talking with me, you can leave.

A few weeks after we have met, I might get in touch with you to ask you to look at what I have written down about your story, so that you can tell me if you think I have understood you. This is why I have asked for your contact details, as you may have left school by this time.

Will I be recorded and how will the recording be used?

Yes, I will make an audio (sound only) recording of our conversation. This recording will be made on a digital voice recorder and then downloaded to a computer where it will be stored as a sound file. The file will be password protected. Your full name and any other details will not be recorded on the sound file.

The sound file will be listened to by me and by an audio typist at the University of Sheffield, who will transcribe (write down) the conversation. The audio typist will not know who you are; s/he will only be aware of your first name from the conversation. I will ask the typist to change your name in the typed version; you can choose the name if you like.

No-one else will listen to the sound file. The transcription (typed record of our conversation) will appear in the appendices of the research thesis that I will write, and small sections of our conversation may be reported in any presentations or publications about the research. It will not be possible to identify you from the transcription.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I will be asking you to talk about your time in school. This might include some aspects of school which were difficult for you. However, I am interested in *your* story and what you choose to tell me and not tell me is completely up to you. I have chosen to work with boys who are close to leaving school as I felt it would be easier for you to speak openly about school than if you still had a significant time left to attend.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that the boys taking part in this research will enjoy the opportunity to tell their stories to someone who really wants to listen, and to contribute to helping to improve things for other boys in the future, both in your school and in other schools. Sometimes people can find that the opportunity to talk through events from the past helps them feel more able to move forwards; however this is not necessarily the case for everyone.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If this happens, the reasons will be explained to you.

What if I am not happy about our conversation or the research?

You can change your mind about taking part at any time. Once we have met and you have told me your story, I hope you will agree that it is reasonable that I am then able to use the recording of our conversation for my research. If you feel any need to make a complaint, you can contact Dr Tony Williams at the University of Sheffield on 0114 222 8119.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and you will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

The audio recordings of our conversation will be made available only to me and to an audio typist employed by the University of Sheffield (for transcription purposes only) the audio typist will not have any of your personal details such as your full name.

In order to identify you and the other possible boys to take part in this research, I had to speak to Mrs XXXXX, Mrs XXXXX and Mrs XXXXX at your high school. Therefore, Mrs XXXXX, Mrs XXXXX and

Mrs XXXXX are aware of possible participants I am approaching to take part in the research.   If you decide to take part, I will need to arrange a time to meet with you in school; I will need to do this through Mrs XXXXX, so she will be aware that you are meeting with me.   I will ensure that when written information is presented, your name is changed in order that school staff would not know who said what.   However, it may be the case that some of the details you mention during your story may make you identifiable by school staff.   You might see this as something you would like to happen; you may want the staff to know your thoughts.   By the time any written information is available to school staff, you will have completed Year 11 and no longer attend the school.

Sometimes people taking part in research projects want their real name to be used when the research is written about.   This can sometimes cause no problem, and sometimes be more difficult as it can give clues about the identity of other people who may not wish to be identified. If you were to feel that you wanted to use your own name, we would talk about this after I had listened to your story.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

  The results will be written up into a large document called a thesis and I will hand this in to the University of Sheffield.   A copy will be kept in the University library; I may also write about the research in shorter articles that may be published in journals. Wherever the results of this research are published, the town, the school and the people involved will not be identifiable. I may also present the findings from the research to groups including young people, teachers, headteachers, educational psychologists, parents and other professionals. Again, you will not be identifiable in the presented information.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is not sponsored or funded by any organisation.   I am carrying out this research as part of my study for my Doctor of Education qualification at the University of Sheffield.   I work as an educational psychologist in xxxxxx, employed by xxxxxx Council, but the council have not asked me to carry out this research.

Who has ethically reviewed the research?

This research has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's School of Education ethics review procedure.

If I would like to take part, what do I need to do now?

Thank you for reading all the information above.   If you would like to take part in the research, please could you read, sign and date the consent form overleaf, and also ask your parent to do the same.   Please be aware that I cannot meet with you without your parent's signed consent as you are under 18.

Please then seal the envelope and return the consent form to Mrs XXXXX in school as soon as possible.   Mrs XXXXX will pass the envelope to me.   I will then contact Mrs XXXXX to arrange a possible time and place to meet with you in school and Mrs XXXXX will check this out with you.   I have asked Mrs XXXXX, Mrs XXXXX and Mrs XXXXX to keep confidential any information about who is working with me.   You can keep hold of this information sheet in case you want to read it again or get in touch with me.

If you or your parent(s) feel unsure about anything, or have any questions, please don't hesitate to

get in touch with me; my contact details are below.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Oakley

Contact details:

Suzanne Oakley

HCPC Registered Educational Psychologist

E-mail: suzanne.oakley@xxxxx.gov.uk

Telephone: (xxxxx) xxxxx (it is likely that you would need to leave a message on this number giving

me a phone number on which I could ring you back)

Text number: xxxxx xxxxxxx

Address:

xxxxxxxxxx

APPENDIX IV

Letter to Parents

7th November 2012

Parent/Guardian of

Address

Dear Parent/Guardian

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter I have sent to xxxxxx, enquiring whether he might be interested in taking part in some research I am carrying out.   As I am aware that xxxxxx is not yet 18, I would be grateful if you could please read through all the information in the letter and discuss with xxxxxx whether he would like to take part or not and whether you are comfortable with the information I have provided about the research.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions; my contact details are at the end of the letter to xxxxxx.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Oakley

HPC Registered Educational Psychologist

APPENDIX V

Consent Form

(Originally all on one side)

CONSENT FORM

Working title of research: Preventing permanent exclusion; what helps?

Name of Researcher: Suzanne Oakley

Please put your initials in the first box for each statement, and ask your parent to put their initials in the second box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and that I have been given the contact details I need in order that I have had chance to ask any questions.

   YOU ☐   PARENT ☐

2. I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

   ☐   ☐

3. I understand that any information about me will be kept confidential and I will not be identifiable.   I give my permission for the researcher and the audio typist to listen to my recorded comments.

   ☐   ☐
   ☐   ☐

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

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of parent	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Once you and your parent have signed this, please return it to me, via Mrs XXXXX at school, in the envelope provided.   Please fill in below your contact details.   Thank you.

Address: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Email address: ……………………………. …………………………………………………………………

Preferred telephone number(s) (home and /or mobile): ……………………………………………

This information will not be shared with anyone else and I would only use it if I wanted to contact you with regard to the research once you have left school.

A copy of this form will be returned to you once I have signed it.   This copy will be stored securely. Please keep the information sheet in case you want to look at it again or need to contact me.   Thank you.

APPENDIX VI

Ethical Approval

The School Of Education.

Suzanne Oakley

EdD Educational Psychology

Head of School

Professor Jackie Marsh

Department of Educational Studies

388 Glossop Road

Sheffield

S10 2JA

08 August 2012

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222 8167

Email: EdDEdPsych@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Suzanne,

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

Narratives of young men who have experienced fixed-term exclusions and maintained their educational placement.

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

You can proceed with your research but we recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached).

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Warren

Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

cc Tony Williams

APPENDIX VII

Excerpts from Reflective Log