

2019

How do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school?

Gosling, Paul James

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/15135>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/1202>

University of Plymouth

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Copyright Statement

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior consent.



UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH

***How do children's personal narratives influence
their choices at school?***

By

Paul James Gosling

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Professional Doctorate in Education

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Plymouth Institute of Education

March 2019

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all the children that participated in this study and their teachers who helped me to choose and organise the research participants. I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Peter Kelly and Dr Clare Dowdall, for their time in encouraging the development of my ideas and in giving me excellent feedback and creative support. I would like to thank my mum and dad for always encouraging me to study and pursue qualifications. Finally, I want to thank my family, my wife Siân and my children Sophie and Joseph for their support and patience when I have been reading and writing.

Author's Signed Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Education has the author been registered for any other University award without the prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included modules in Policy and Professional Practice; Professional Learning; Communities, Cultures and Change; Social Research; and the Professional Doctorate in Education Thesis Proposal.

Word count of the main body of thesis: **52,734**

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

Paul James Gosling

How do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school?

The main empirical research question of this thesis is: how do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? This question is supported by supplementary research questions which are concerned with exploring the development of children's personal narratives and how they influence the choices that children make at primary school. The current scope of research in this field is limited.

This study explores children's personal narratives in relation to their lived experience of success using two main theories, Ricoeur's *prefiguration, configuration* and *refiguration* model (Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 2002) and Bourdieu's 'field theory' (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990b). These theories are then combined with Priestley, Biesta and Robinson's (2015) 'ecological model' of agency to examine how personal narratives influence practice or the choices that young children make at school.

The empirical research component of this study took place in four English primary schools in the South-west of England. Ten semi-structured interviews, informed by a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, were conducted with pairs of twenty 10 or 11-year-old children. An interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explore the narratives produced by the interviews.

The findings of this thesis provide some evidence to demonstrate how personal narratives, the stories that children tell about themselves, are important in influencing the choices that they make at school. The findings also point to how the good work that could be done in English state primary schools to promote the development of useful personal narratives in children has been overshadowed by issues of neoliberal performativity (Ball, 2006; Keddie, 2016).

List of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Author’s Signed Declaration.....	3
Abstract.....	5
List of Contents.....	7
List of Tables.....	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
Thesis overview	15
Research questions and my contribution	16
Social mobility	18
Pupil Premium policy.....	22
Pupil Premium children	23
My interest in social mobility	25
Initial ideas for lines of research enquiry	28
Theoretical perspectives	30
Chapter 2: Literature review	33
Introduction.....	33
Bourdieu – Reproduction in Education	35
The structure/agency debate.....	37
Habitus and Capital	39
A reflection on Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ in relation to my research questions	46

Agency	47
Identity	52
Personal narratives.....	54
Discussion of the term success	57
Neoliberal discourses of success	59
What contribution does existing empirical research make to understanding the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?	65
Gender.....	72
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods	73
Introduction.....	73
A phenomenological approach	74
Developing an approach informed by hermeneutic phenomenology.....	77
Research with children.....	80
Study design	83
Ethical considerations	84
Participant selection.....	86
Setting and general approach	88
Overview of fieldwork	90
The interviews	91
Reflections on the interviews.....	94
Some comments about how the interviews proceeded.....	96

Research validity.....	100
Sensitivity to context.....	100
Commitment to rigour	101
Transparency and coherence	101
Impact and importance	102
The method used to construct the data	102
Interview transcription.....	103
Initial analysis of data.....	105
Categories of data	111
Thematic analysis of findings	113
The themes.....	114
Chapter 4: Findings	117
Introduction.....	117
Responses to research questions.....	118
Personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way	119
Personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves ...	127
Personal narratives about how they are valued by others	131
Personal narratives about who they will be in the future	136
Are there any patterns of gender difference in personal narratives?	142
Missing personal narratives	146

Focus on two children	149
Ruby.....	149
Owen	156
Summary.....	161
Chapter 5: Discussion	163
Introduction.....	163
Belief narratives	165
Neoliberal narratives.....	168
Influencing personal narratives.....	171
The role of school curricula	175
Self-knowledge	177
Exploring the choices that primary children can make.....	180
Personal narrative and its relationship to habitus and cultural capital.....	186
Answers to the empirical research questions	189
What personal narratives do the children express when they describe their lived experience of success?	189
What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?	189
How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?	190
Chapter 6: Conclusions	193
Introduction.....	193
Research validity and quality	194
Eight criteria of quality in qualitative research	194

Worthy topic	195
Rich rigour	195
Sincerity	196
Credibility	196
Resonance	197
Significant contribution	198
Ethical.....	198
Meaningful coherence	199
What are the implications of this research for teachers and schools?.....	200
Implications for policymakers	203
Implications for future research.....	204
How do this study’s conclusions contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?.....	206
Final comments	207
Appendices.....	209
Appendix 1 – Some context of the English state-funded primary school system pertinent to this thesis	209
Appendix 2 – Application for Institute Ethical Approval	213
Appendix 3 – University of Plymouth Education Research Ethics Sub-committee approval letter	233
Appendix 4 – Text of the letter of consent that was given to the parents of all interview subjects.....	235
Appendix 5 – The transcription of the interview of Joel & George	241
Appendix 6 – An example of the selection of text from an interview that was marked and categorised as narrative	305

Appendix 7 – Lists produced by interview participants of things they are good at .309

Appendix 8 – Prompts and extensions to interview questions315

Appendix 9 – Examples of direct questions asked across the interviews in the study:
.....316

References 317

List of Tables

Table 1: Pattern of fieldwork	90
Table 2: Gender distribution of personal narrative	143

Chapter 1: Introduction

Thesis overview

This thesis explores the idea that personal narratives influence the choices that children make at school. My work is an attempt to understand better how children's personal narratives develop and how those working in schools could have a more positive impact on this development. In this introduction to my thesis, I will state why I consider personal narratives important, particularly in relation to issues of 'social mobility' and describe where my research questions came from. For those readers not familiar with the English state school system in the appendices (Appendix 1) there is a brief overview of the context of the parts of the English state-funded primary school system which are pertinent to this thesis.

Chapter 2 explores some of the theoretical literature that I have drawn upon in the development of my ideas and reviews some relevant empirical research. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology behind my own original empirical research study. Chapter 4 contains my research findings and Chapter 5 discusses my findings and provides some answers to my research questions. Chapter 6 evaluates my empirical research study, makes some recommendations for teachers in primary schools and education policymakers and concludes my arguments.

Research questions and my contribution

The main research question explored in my thesis is; how do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? My research interest is in exploring how the stories children tell of themselves and the world around them, their personal narratives, influence the everyday choices they make at school and more broadly. By choices I mean, for example, how much effort children choose put into a learning task or how much attention they choose to pay to their teacher's instructions and feedback. My aim is to make a contribution to the understanding of the process of the development of children's personal narratives and position this understanding in relation to some widely understood theoretical models. By the end of my thesis, I arrive at some recommendations for primary school teachers and education policymakers to make the school system in England better equipped to help children navigate and engage with the educational choices and opportunities that present themselves throughout their lives. I will explore and critique some of the initiatives of the last decade that have been introduced by policymakers in the UK to address aspects of 'social mobility' and I will link through argument why an understanding of the process of the development of children's personal narratives could open up possibilities for children, and especially children from socio-economically disadvantaged families, to 'transcend' their social position.

My main research question is supported by supplementary research questions, which are:

- What contribution does existing empirical research make to understanding the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?

- For the children participating in my empirical research:
 - I. What personal narratives do the children express when they describe their lived experience of success?
 - II. What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?
 - III. How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?
- What are the implications of this research for teachers and schools?
- How do this study's conclusions contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?

Throughout this thesis, my contribution to knowledge is made by demonstrating a link between children's personal narratives and the choices that they go on to make. To achieve this, I explore notions of identity and Bourdieu's (1990b) conception of 'habitus' and show how personal narratives are a part of the identity building process and are produced in a similar way to how Bourdieu describes the production of habitus through the embodiment of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). My contribution to my profession of school leadership is in suggesting how teachers can engage with children's personal narratives, how they might be able to inform this process, widening the knowledge of the possible choices that children can make. I see this as particularly important for the choices that children from families who are socio-economically disadvantaged make at school and more broadly.

Social mobility

The term 'social mobility' is a contested term which I will explore here. Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups between different socio-economic positions. Movement up or down socio-economic positions within a person's lifetime is termed *intra-generational* mobility, but mobility can also occur for children relative to their parents known as *inter-generational* mobility (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). It is a contested term because and 'a lot depends on how it is measured' (Savage, 2015: 190) and 'the barriers to relative social mobility are so poorly understood' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 5). The reasons for poor levels of 'social mobility' for children in the UK from socio-economically disadvantaged families are complex (Major and Machin, 2018).

The Social Mobility Commission's report (2017) on social mobility in the UK concluded that the UK has a deep social mobility problem, whereby the divide between high income and low-income families is increasing, and it is becoming more difficult for people from low-income families to move up through the social strata. The Commission's report highlights the priority given to social mobility reform by the government, with a focus on education as a means of increasing social mobility for young people (Social Mobility Commission, 2017).

In *Social Mobility and Its Enemies* (2018) Major and Machin argue, using the latest relevant data, that it is the 'stickiness' of the positions at the top and the bottom of the income spectrum that is the issue with social mobility in the UK:

Children born into the highest-earning families are most likely themselves in later in life to be among the highest earners; at the other end of the scale children from the lowest-earning families are likely to mirror their forebears as low-earning adults. (Major and Machin, 2018: 4-5)

While society is structured such that not all individuals can sit in the highest-earning stratum of social hierarchy, a certain amount of social mobility is generally seen as positive. Research suggests that countries with higher levels of social mobility have lower levels of inequality (Corak, 2006; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Major and Machin, 2018) but the relationship between the two is difficult to prove; has inequality reduced as a result of an increase in social mobility or is the reverse true? There is, however, no clear or accepted benchmark that defines what a 'good' amount of social mobility is (Causa and Johansson, 2010). In the UK, there continues to be a strong link between a child's family background and their later economic and social status. An individual's income and status are strongly related to their parent's income and status, and this pattern has remained relatively stable for much of the 20th Century and persists into the 21st (Blanden and Machin, 2007; Major and Machin, 2018).

Some politicians say that they are most concerned about is the 'truly shocking' underrepresentation of poor or working-class people in the upper levels of British society (Major and Machin, 2018: 136). For example, their underrepresentation in the British parliamentary system; in the British judiciary; and in industry and the commercial world (Kirby, 2016). A great proportion of these 'top' positions in private industry and public services are occupied by white men who were privately educated from privileged backgrounds. It is argued that this power imbalance has huge implications for the way

society operates (Perry and Francis, 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Major and Machin, 2018) as, particularly with regard to public services, these top positions do not reflect the population that they serve. Perhaps then, what the term 'social mobility' is really connected to is ideas of 'social justice' however, as this term has 'leftist' overtones (Apple, 2006), the phrase 'social mobility' is preferred by policy-makers as it is much more in line with the discourses of Western neoliberal politics. As a definition of discourse in this thesis, I use an interpretation of Foucault's ideas, by Weedon (1987), that discourses are:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Weedon, 1987: 108)

The influence of neoliberal discourse and politics on education will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

There are those in politics that maintain that the UK is more meritocratic than 'left-wing' academics believe. For example, here is Saunders – an academic who in the opening sentence positions himself – supporting this 'meritocracy thesis':

Left-wing academics like to believe that Britain is a class-ridden, unfair society in which children born into modest circumstances have the odds massively stacked against them. I call this belief the 'SAD thesis', for it assumes that 'social advantage and disadvantage' conferred at birth is what shapes people's destinies. The SAD thesis is directly opposed to the meritocracy thesis, which suggests that even children born into the humblest of circumstances can succeed if they are bright and they work hard. The left-wing sociological establishment regards any suggestion that occupational selection in Britain might be taking place on broadly meritocratic principles as literally incredible. The SAD thesis is

their 'dominant paradigm' through which all evidence gets filtered, and against which all arguments are evaluated. (Saunders, 2010: 3)

Saunders idea that it is 'social advantage and disadvantage conferred at birth are what shapes people's destinies' is, perhaps, a deliberately misleading summary of the starting point for the 'dominant paradigm'. It is argued here, that it is what happens to children *after their birth*, their childhood experiences and their experiences in education, that 'stack the odds' against children born into disadvantage. However, neoliberal political discourses prefers to avoid 'structural' arguments about social mobility and focus instead on 'individualistic' interpretations (Apple, 2006; Biesta, 2015).

It could be argued that politicians have seen education as a solution to the 'social mobility' problem or, at least, a social policy lever that they have the power to pull on. Recent British Governments have used the term 'social mobility' when conceiving policies with the aim of breaking the link between a person's family background and their later economic and social status. For example, in documents like *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A strategy for Social Mobility* (H. M. Government, 2011), Government policy actions were presented for the school years, which focused on raising standards in schools, narrowing gaps in attainment between groups of pupils and raising children's aspirations with the explicit goal of improving social mobility. In the context of education, the term 'social mobility' has been used by policy-makers to describe the broadened horizons of children and young people who have access to a good education. As a result, 'policy-makers are passionately committed to an individualist, emancipatory conception of education' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 1). It is the argument in this thesis,

explored further later, that this type of policy response alone will not improve the social mobility of the most socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.

Pupil Premium policy

The Pupil Premium policy was conceived with the explicit aim of improving the 'social mobility' of 'disadvantaged' pupils (Freedman and Horner, 2008; Chowdry et al., 2010). Before the General Election of May 2010, Conservative and Liberal Democrat thinking on this issue was influenced, though indirectly (Freedman and Horner, 2008), by the concept of 'market socialism' (Grand and Estrin, 1989). After the 2010 election and the formation of the Coalition Government, one of the ideas emanating from 'market socialism' that both Liberal Democrat and Conservative party members of the coalition were keen to bring into being was the idea of a 'positively discriminating voucher' (Freedman and Horner, 2008: 11) or 'Pupil Premium'. Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, made it clear that social mobility was the principal goal of the Coalition Government's social policy agenda of which a Pupil Premium policy was an essential part (H. M. Government, 2011).

A fair society is an open society, one in which every individual is free to succeed. That is why improving social mobility is the principal goal of the Government's social policy. No one should be prevented from fulfilling their potential by the circumstances of their birth. What ought to count is how hard you work and the skills and talents you possess, not the school you went to or the jobs your parents did. (H. M. Government, 2011: 5)

The original aim of the Pupil Premium policy was to 'narrow the gap' in achievement between rich and poor pupils by attaching greater levels of school funding to pupils from

'disadvantaged' backgrounds (Chowdry et al., 2010). However, the Pupil Premium had some other broader aims:

- to increase social mobility;
- to enable more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to get to the top Universities;
- to reduce the attainment gap between the highest and lowest achieving pupils nationally.

(Higgins et al., 2011: 2)

At the time of introduction, Government ministers intended that the Pupil Premium policy would achieve the aims stated above as schools used the extra funding that they received for poorer pupils to target them with resources and programmes that would raise their attainment (Chowdry et al., 2010). Also, by making poorer pupils 'more valuable' to schools, it was intended that school leaders would deliberately try to attract 'poor' pupils to their school so that extra money could be accessed. It was believed that this would have the effect of spreading children from disadvantaged children more evenly across the school system (Chowdry et al., 2010). It was also envisioned that new schools (Free Schools) would be established in areas with high levels of 'deprivation' to take advantage of the additional resources available. The latter two points are concrete examples of the concept of 'market socialism' those being: user choice, independent providers and quasi-markets (Grand and Estrin, 1989: 32).

Pupil Premium children

The educational underachievement of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged families, as measured by Government standardised tests (for those readers not familiar

with these see Appendix 1), is a problem that successive British Governments have tried and mostly failed to address (Perry and Francis, 2010). The Department for Education states that there is a huge amount of evidence which demonstrates that, after prior attainment, 'poverty' is the single most important factor in predicting a child's future life chances (DfE, 2011). Some of the evidence of the negative effects of poverty on the behaviour and academic performance of children are summarised in *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* (Jensen, 2009).

If parents and families are eligible for specific Government benefits, then their children are eligible for Free School Meals, and it is this designation that is currently used by schools to identify pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged families. 'The Government believes that the Pupil Premium, which is additional to main school funding, is the best way to address the current underlying inequalities between children eligible for Free School Meals and their wealthier peers by ensuring that funding to tackle disadvantage reaches the pupils who need it most.' (DfE, 2011).

The accountability systems for English primary schools, through Ofsted inspections, league tables of standardised student test scores and Regional School Commissioners, is focused on how well individual schools are raising the attainment of their 'Pupil Premium pupils' in national statutory tests in reading, grammar, spelling and maths. Ofsted's 'Analyse School Performance' is an online document created for all schools and contains performance data for all pupils and groups, including those eligible for the pupil premium. This document, in conjunction with the Ofsted framework, is used to make

judgements on schools during an inspection. Here is an extract from the current Ofsted inspection handbook (Ofsted, 2018):

Inspectors will gather evidence about the use of the pupil premium in relation to the following key issues:

- the level of pupil premium funding received by the school in the current academic year and levels of funding received in previous academic years
- how leaders and governors have spent the pupil premium, their rationale for this spending and its intended impact
- any differences made to the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils as shown by outcomes data and inspection evidence.

The last bullet point above refers to the progress and attainment data produced by the end of 'Key Stage 2' national tests (SATs) and assessments in reading, writing and maths undertaken in English state primary schools. For me, as an education professional who has worked with many children from socio-economically disadvantaged families, this raises some questions: For instance, is it enough of a contribution to improving 'social mobility' to raise the attainment in English and maths of pupils from social-economically disadvantaged families? Is there a broader perspective that we need to take to ensure that pupils can move 'upwardly' from the socio-economic status into which they were born? If so, what should we be aiming to achieve in the education system, particularly by the end of the primary phase? These questions are explored in the discussion and conclusion chapters of my thesis (Chapters 5 and 6).

My interest in social mobility

'Social mobility' has always been a subject that has interested me. Perhaps this is because I come from a family where there has been significant social mobility in my lifetime. My father, who was from a poor working-class family, left school at fifteen with

no formal qualification but ended his working life as an Anglican Vicar. I was the first person on my father's side of the family to graduate from a university. My uncle, my mother's brother, was the first person to graduate from a university on her side of the family after 'winning' a place at a grammar school in the 1950s. Social mobility is also important to me because I have been an educator working with children in communities with a high percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged families.

During my career, I have lived and worked in the London Borough of Newham, which remains one of the most deprived areas of the UK. In 2010, twenty out of twenty Newham wards were ranked in the 20% most deprived in the country and eight were ranked in the 5% most deprived (H. M. Government, 2015). I have more recently worked in schools in the South-West of England, schools which serve communities with high social deprivation indicators, as measured by, the percentage of families in receipt of benefits; the level of poor-quality housing stock; and the percentage of adults with higher qualifications.

Currently, as the Headteacher of a primary school with double the national average percentage of disadvantaged pupils (as indicated by the percentage of pupils in a school who have ever been in receipt of Free School Meals) the staff, Governors and I must justify how our school is spending the resources that the Government has targeted at these pupils; the Pupil Premium. However, without a better understanding of the issues around the educational underachievement of children from socio-economically disadvantaged families, attempting to meet the Government's policies may result in

‘unintended policy outcomes’ (Ball and Bowe, 1992). For example, by only directing a focus on the academic success of ‘pupil premium children’ might we overlook some other important conceptions of success that these children hold? What personal narratives do children express when they describe their lived experiences of success?

Successive Government policy has been employed with the intention of improving ‘social mobility’ by raising the attainment of pupils in the school system. I take the view in this thesis that the reasons for poor levels of ‘social mobility’ for children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are more complicated than the assertion that ‘better attainment equals improved social mobility’ suggests. Raising the attainment of children does not in itself improve social mobility. The more complex reasons behind the barriers to social mobility will be explored in the next chapter with reference to some key theorists in the field. There is also some emerging evidence that, for a number of reasons, the pupil premium is not working (Allen, 2018; Major and Machin, 2018). Therefore, a better understanding of this complex area through research evidence is a professional concern for me.

My professional experience of twenty-seven years, working mainly in primary school education, leads me to believe that there is a more significant contribution to improving the future ‘life chances’ of children that primary schools can make than just by raising the attainment, as measured by the national tests (SATs), of socio-economically disadvantaged children. From my professional perspective, it seems that over the past decade, the majority of the resources for school accountability and improvement

systems have been solely focused on doing only this. The tests taken by English state school pupils at the end of their primary education are in reading, grammar, spelling and maths, and, important though these subjects are, I would argue that doing well at them does not automatically lead to future success. 'My experience' is telling me that primary schools might be able to do more to help children become successful later in life. However, 'my experience' may be leading me to make false assumptions which is why I am exploring these issues with academic rigour in my research and writing.

Initial ideas for lines of research enquiry

I would briefly like to relate two anecdotes from my recent professional experience that have given me ideas into some lines of enquiry that I would like to explore in this thesis, and which helped with the formulation of my research questions.

In July 2012, I spent some time in conversation with a Year 6 pupil at my school whom I will call Katie. We were talking about her move to secondary school and her future. I was interested in speaking with Katie because she had made 'well above expected' progress while at school - as measured by government attainment measures - and achieved highly in the Key Stage 2 SATs. Katie achieved results that were amongst the best in the school. Katie came from a low-income family; was in receipt of free school meals – a 'Pupil Premium pupil' – and the eldest of five daughters from a single-parent family. During the conversation, I asked her why she thought she had done so well at school. In her response she articulated that it was because she wanted to do well, she did not want to be in the position that her mum was in when she was older, she did not

want to be poor. Katie mentioned things such as having to move between rented houses several times and not being able to afford to go on holidays. She said that she wanted to do well at school and go to university to become a teacher. Some questions this conversation raised for me at the time were: how had Katie developed this story of herself, this personal narrative? Do all children of her age have a narrative of themselves, a sense of self-identity, which may influence the choices they make at school? If so, are there some personal narratives that are more likely to produce actions and choices which lead to success than others? What are children's perspectives on school success? Is there a link between a child's personal narratives and 'structures' that influence its formation?

The second anecdote I will relate concerns an e-mail that I recently received 'out of the blue' via social media from the parents of a pupil that I taught over ten years ago. Here is the text of that e-mail:

Mr Gosling, Jeff [David's father] and I were just talking about you this evening, and I felt compelled to write. We wanted to tell you about David and his chosen career. We wondered if you remembered his timeline in Year 5? He and Brad B. did a project about what they wanted to do as their chosen careers etc. and what they needed to achieve. Well, so far so good, as David is still on track to achieve his plan. David is now a Private in the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment on his first posting with his Battalion in Cyprus in A company infantry; he will be there until 2017, then he should be posted back to this country. He is very happy he is doing what he has always wanted to do. We are all so proud of him. Sometimes in life, we forget to talk about the positives and don't get the credit for anything we have done to help somebody along the way. This is our way of telling you about the positive effect you had on David's life and how you have helped him on his way.

Regards, Tracey R.

I remember David well as I had taught him and his two older brothers. I also remember that with David's class I was interested in doing some work where I asked the children to imagine what they would like to be doing in the future and to research and map out what they might have to do to achieve their goals. Again, this experience has raised some questions that may be pertinent to my research interests. Did that fact that David had a 'plan', a projective personal narrative, influence the myriad of actions and choices that he took from when he was ten years old to where he is now? Did what I encouraged David to do as his teacher enable him to be 'successful' or has it served to limit what else he might have been able to do? Did the ideas we worked on develop within him as he progressed through education and life beyond and lead to the outcome that he has now achieved?

Theoretical perspectives

In the anecdotes above both children appear to have a view of themselves and an idea of where they want their lives to go in the future, as well as ideas on how they might achieve their goals. Both anecdotes seem to contain elements of 'identity' (Holland et al., 2001; Lawler, 2014) and 'agency' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Holland et al., 2001) and so might be explored in terms of the 'agency-structure debate' (Bourdieu, 1977a; Giddens, 1986; Bunzel, 2008). An exploration of the agency-structure debate and 'identity' will form essential aspects of the theoretical perspectives on which my research methodology is based and are explored in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3. In preparation for the thesis stage of my academic work, my reading and thinking have initially been influenced by the work of Bourdieu (1977a; 1977b; 1986; 1990b). Bourdieu's 'field theory' (Bourdieu, 1977a) and its associated 'thinking tools' of practice,

habitus, field and cultural capital give a way of conceptualising, what he regarded as the 'false dualism', of agency and structure (Bunzel, 2008). These 'thinking tools' will be explored and critiqued in Chapter 2, where I outline the theoretical perspectives that underpin my research.

Conceptions of 'agency', which in the context of this thesis are taken to be the ability for children in a school context to make meaningful choices, are also explored in Chapter 2 with the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) being particularly important to the ideas contained in it. The work of Priestly, Biesta and Robinson and their 'ecological approach' to agency (Priestley et al., 2015) is outlined in Chapter 2 as it provides a way of conceptualising the part the individual plays in issues of agency-structure. Priestly, Biesta and Robinson's (2015) ideas have been useful in devising my research questions concerned with understanding the relationship between personal narratives and life choices.

Equally important in the formulation of the research questions for my work have been ideas about how 'identity' can be described and conceived. In Chapter 2, there will be an exploration of theories about identity from a constructionist perspective. The work of Holland et al. (2001) has been key to my initial thinking. However, the theories of Ricoeur (1988; 2002) and the more recent work of Bansel (2013) on 'narrative identity' are explored more fully in Chapter 2 as they have been important to my own thinking and in the devising of my empirical research questions concerned with 'personal narrative'.

In the next chapter, I will appraise the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977b) who have contributed to the research and theorisation of why success in education may be more difficult for children from socio-economically disadvantaged families. In Chapter 2, I will focus on the 'field theory' of Bourdieu, particularly his notions of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' and how they relate to my ideas of personal narrative. I will also spend some time exploring other theories of 'agency' before considering the role that identity plays in the structure-agency debate and how this might provide a clue as to how education in primary schools could have an impact the choices that children make. As it is a key idea in this thesis, the idea of what 'success' means will also be discussed in Chapter 2. Finally, in Chapter 2, I will review some of the recent empirical research that has been carried out in schools which have influenced the empirical research undertaken for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

The UK is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; OECD, 2015; Major and Machin, 2018). This study aims to explore what teachers in primary schools might do to engage with the developing personal narratives that children express. I will argue that children's personal narratives influence the choices that they make in the education system and have an impact on their immediate lives and their lives beyond school. I will argue here that if teachers can engage with the development of children's personal narratives, it may be possible for schools to disrupt the strong correlation between the social-economic status that a child is born into and their future success.

In this chapter, I will briefly review some key ideas in the theorisation of the reasons why children from low socio-economic status families find barriers to success. Bourdieu's work on how human and social experiences reproduce society and how this relates to educational inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b) are engaged with in more depth. The chapter then explores some aspects of the agency-structure debate before focusing on the theories developed by Bourdieu over a number of works (1973; 1977a; 1977b; 1990b) when he was trying to address whether 'organization derives from agency exercised by its members or results from structures enabling and/or constraining such agency' (Bunzel, 2008: 46). I will outline the main ideas from Bourdieu's 'field theory' in

his attempt to reconceive the concepts of agency and structure (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1990b).

The epistemological perspective I take in this thesis is that the material world exists outside of the consciousness of people, shaping their activities, but it is given meaning by people in their social interactions with it and with each other. The work I do takes the perspective that the social world is constructed and given meaning by people interacting within the material constraints in which they live (Burr, 2003). In this thesis, I take a broadly constructivist/constructionist perspective as the foundation of my epistemological view. There is a subtle difference between a perspective based on constructivism versus constructionism; the two definitions of these perspectives, one given by Crotty (1998) and the other by Burr (2003), help clarify this:

It would appear useful ... to reserve the term constructivism for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the 'meaning-making activity of the individual mind' and to use constructionism where the focus includes 'the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning'. (Crotty, 1998: 58)

The essential difference between such constructivisms and social constructionism are twofold: in the extent to which the individual is seen as an agent who is in control of this construction process, and in the extent to which our constructions are the product of social forces, either structural or interactional. (Burr, 2003: 20)

Burr also makes that point that, as there are many points of agreement between constructivism and social constructionism, they can be brought together 'in a synthesis' (Burr, 2003: 20). However, meaning making and social and material circumstances are in constant iteration with and inseparable from each other so the epistemology I use is inevitably messy. In taking a broadly constructionist perspective as the foundation of

the epistemological view in this work, I have rejected theoretical frameworks and methodologies that are congruent with objectivism and subjectivism (Crotty, 1998).

Bourdieu – Reproduction in Education

In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977b) Bourdieu and Passeron demonstrate how, from a range of data, the education system in France in the 1960s tended to reproduce pre-existing class positions (Webb et al., 2002). Similar to Bernstein (1971), and Heath (1983), Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977b) research began by looking at linguistics factors or 'linguistic capital' (1977b: 93) to analyse the underperformance or underrepresentation at university of working-class students.

However, during their work Bourdieu and Passeron also focused on the symbolic power of what they term 'cultural capital' and its role in reproducing class positions.

Part of Bourdieu's reflections on the role of cultural capital arises from his interest in how inheritance takes place in modern societies. For much of human history, inheritance has involved the passing over of economic capital to one's kin: property, savings, tools, heirlooms. But Bourdieu argues that it is supplemented by another kind of inheritance, one associated with cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications. Well-educated parents pass on to their children - knowingly or not - the capacity for them to succeed at school and university, and thereby get the sort of qualifications which help them to move into the best jobs. (Savage, 2015: 49)

In terms of my thesis, I am interested in considering to what extent children's personal narratives could be seen as a form of 'cultural capital'. Do some types of narrative passed down from parents to children allow advantages in success at school? In my empirical research, I am exploring what factors might be influencing children's developing

personal narratives and how personal narratives may broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have. I will return to discuss to what extent personal narratives can be considered as a form of cultural capital in Chapter 5, the discussion chapter of this thesis.

Bourdieu's ideas on how education systems reproduce the inequalities of the wider society of which they are part is summarised here by Jenkins:

Those factors which make pupils/students 'at home' in an educational institution, which are the product of family education, create or reproduce class inequalities in achievement. The subtlety of the reproduction of privilege is one of the main themes. Bourdieu argues that the system consecrates privilege by ignoring it, by treating everybody as if they were equal when, in fact, the competitors all begin with different handicaps based on cultural endowment. Privilege becomes translated into 'merit'. (Jenkins, 2002: 111)

The research outcomes of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977b) are that education is responsible for reproducing the inequalities that exist in society as a whole and the development of the sociological concepts of 'practice', 'habitus', 'field' and 'cultural and social capital' (Grenfell, 2010). Bourdieu and Passeron's research outcomes are often more complicated than some writers give them credit for (Webb et al., 2002). One could interpret Bourdieu's theories as suggesting that an education system merely reproduces the inequalities that already exist in wider society and, as a result, would, therefore, have little impact on the issues of concern to this thesis. However, some have interpreted Bourdieu's position to be more complex than that.

On the one hand, as a politically committed thinker he would like to see education transform social relations by providing opportunities for everyone; but on the other hand, his various research projects have found that schools tend to have the function of reproducing social inequalities. This should not, however, lead to pessimism among those groups committed to using education as a

vehicle for social change. Rather, Bourdieu's research helps us to see why education tends to reproduce social divisions, and therefore challenges all interested parties – educational bureaucrats, politicians, teachers, and of course students themselves – to make moves within the field that might bring about change. (Webb et al., 2002: 107)

Rather than just describing what education systems in unequal societies like the UK do to reproduce the inequalities that exist between classes or between rich and poor, I argue that the 'thinking tools' contained in Bourdieu's work, the concepts of 'practice', 'habitus', 'field' and 'cultural and social capital', may provide clues to ways in which this seeming '*fait accompli*' could be disrupted. It is the concern of my work for this thesis as to what children might be able to achieve through the choices they make to disrupt the reproducing nature of the education system, in order to do that I will engage with Bourdieu's tools (1977a; 1977b; 1986).

The structure/agency debate

In sociology, there has been much debate as to whether the objective structures of the society, culture or community where an individual lives or spends time, for example, a school, or human agency determine an individual's behaviour (Bourdieu, 1977a; Giddens, 1986; Bunzel, 2008). In an attempt to avoid both objectivism and subjectivism in social theory, Bourdieu focused his attention on 'practice' (Bourdieu, 1990b) when considering how human and social experiences reproduce society. Practice being what individuals do, the actions they take and the choices they make, in response to a social situation. Bourdieu focused on the relationship that exists between social experiences in the world and the practices that are developed by individuals to engage appropriately with it. Part of Bourdieu's work was an attempt to understand how agency connects

with structure, structure being the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to people (Barker, 2005). For example, the organisation of primary school children into classes based on their age and the patterns of the school day. In order to bring structures and practices together, Bourdieu imagined a 'field of forces' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b: 203) which later became his 'field theory'.

Bourdieu used the analogy of the football field when he talked about the space where the game of social life is played (Thomson, 2008). Bourdieu saw the social field as the space where the competitive struggle of human activity occurs.

A field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them. ... Each field, by virtue of its defining content, has a different logic and taken-for-granted structure of necessity and relevance which is both the product and the producer of the habitus which is specific and appropriate to the field. (Jenkins, 2002: 84)

Bourdieu's field theory brought together a number of concepts which he had developed over several works (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990b) into a set of 'thinking tools', with which he used to explore the workings of contemporary society. Bourdieu's fuller set of thinking tools are practice, doxa, habitus, field, and cultural and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1990b). I will now explore Bourdieu's notions of habitus and cultural and social capitals in more detail, particularly in relation to how they are produced as I want to establish if there is a link between them and my ideas and research into 'personal narratives'. The idea of *doxa* was

developed at an early stage of Bourdieu's work (Deer, 2008), and it refers to the taken-for-granted rules of a social environment or field (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Habitus and Capital

Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital provide powerful thinking tools for conceptualising the experience of pupils in schools and so are pertinent to use in this study. Here is Bourdieu in *The Logic of Practice* (1990b) outlining his conception of habitus:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53)

In *Forms of Capital* (1986) Bourdieu defines his conception of cultural and social capital. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, and so forth, that a person acquires through being part of a social class or group. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with other people creates a sense of collective identity and group position. But Bourdieu also points out that cultural capital is a major source of social inequality as certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others and can help or hinder a person's social mobility just as much as income or wealth (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b).

Bourdieu (1986) described cultural capital as existing in three forms.

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (Bourdieu, 1986: 243)

‘The acquisition of embodied cultural capital is identical to the formation of *habitus*, an integration of mind and body harmoniously adapted to specialized habitats (fields) and transposable beyond them’ (Moore, 2010: 110). *Habitus* is the physical embodiment of cultural capital, the deeply ingrained beliefs, habits, skills, and dispositions that people possess due to their lived experiences. Bourdieu often used sports metaphors when talking about the *habitus*, referring to it as the ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1986).

Alongside cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) also describes how individuals acquire social capital through their membership of a group and their network of relationships, such as being part of a family, a social class or a school. An individual who is recognised as the member of a group acquires social capital as being part of a group ‘provides each of its members with the backing of collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). The larger the network of connections that an individual has, the greater the volume of social capital they possess (Bourdieu, 1986).

Habitus is Bourdieu's attempt to explore 'how social structure and individual agency can be reconciled' (Maton, 2010: 50) when trying to answer the question of 'how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 65). However, habitus does not act alone to produce social activity or practice, it is the result of 'an obscure double relation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 126) between habitus and field which Bourdieu summarised as practice results from relations between habitus and capital and the current state of play of the field (Bourdieu and Nice, 1980).

In the agency-structure debate of the 1970s, Bourdieu renounced the conception of agency and structure separately as a 'false dualism' (Bunzel, 2008). For Bourdieu 'it is through the workings of habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure)' (Reay, 2004: 432). Habitus is a property of social agents, something that is possessed by individuals, or groups of individuals (Bourdieu, 1990b). Where Bernstein (1971) and Heath (1983) focused on the impact of the social world on a child's language, Bourdieu's conception of habitus extends beyond linguistics and the mind to incorporate the whole being, body and mind. 'Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus to demonstrate the ways in which not only is the body in the social world, but also the ways in which the social world is in the body' (Reay, 2004: 432).

Bourdieu describes habitus as being comprised of the dispositions – capacities, tendencies, propensities or inclinations – that 'are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation; making the habitus a complex amalgam of past and present' (Mills, 2008:

80). It can be viewed as a 'complex, internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate' (Reay, 2004: 435).

Habitus is also an unconscious formation. The various characteristics of the habitus are enacted unthinkingly; that is partly what defines them as habitual. The ticks and traits of our established habitus are the result of an experiential schooling stretching back to childhood. The sense of ease in our surroundings – 'le sens pratique' (the feel for the game) as Bourdieu refers to it – thus develops as an unconscious competence: the habitus becomes 'a *modus operandi*' of which he or she is not the producer and has no conscious mastery' (Adams, 2016: 514).

However, especially in Bourdieu's early work, 'it is not clear how dispositions produce practices' (Jenkins, 2002: 79). Jenkins' critique of this is expressed here as:

the habitus is the sources of 'objective' practices but is a set of 'subjective' generative principles produced by the 'objective' patterns of social life. Such a model is either another version of determinism in the last instance, or a sophisticated form of functionalism. It is difficult to imagine a place in Bourdieu's scheme of things for his own emphasis upon the meaningful practices of social actors in their cultural context. One can only speculate how 'objective structures' are constituted or changed by that practice. Objective structures ... are somehow given as 'cultural arbitraries', which the actions of embodied agents then reproduce. (Jenkins, 2002: 82)

In my empirical research study and in answering my main research question; how do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? I believe that I might be able to contribute to ideas of how dispositions produce practices. I will argue later that personal narratives can be viewed as cultural capital that becomes part of a child's habitus and produces practice or the choices that children make when interacting in a specific social field, and in the context of this thesis, that field is a primary school.

Bourdieu conceptualises the interaction between a person's habitus, the capital that they possess and various social fields. Bourdieu (1977b) used the term 'field' to examine the social space where 'interactions, transactions and events' occur (Thomson in Grenfell, 2010: 67). 'A field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them' (Jenkins, 2002: 84). 'A cultural field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities' (Webb et al., 2002: 21-22). The specific position, which is occupied by an agent in a field, is dependent on the agent's capital, either, economic, cultural or social, and their habitus.

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy. (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989: 44)

Bourdieu (1984) views social relations as the result of interactions between habitus and forms of capital within and across different fields and it as a result of these interactions that reproduction occurs:

From such a perspective, the re/reproduction of educational inequalities can be read as a product of the uneven distribution and deployment of forms of capital between different social groups and unequal encounters between working-class and middle-class habituses. Educational inequalities are produced and maintained when more powerful groups are able to secure access to valorized resources (Archer and Francis, 2006a).

An example of how this works is that middle-class families can benefit from access to the 'right sort' of economic, social and cultural capital (Brooker, 2002), enabling them to maximise their options and choices in education and secure the most desirable and privileged educational pathways for their children. Social class positions afford differential access to cultural capital (e.g. market knowledge, 'ways of knowing and being', interactional styles), creating different patterns of educational privilege and inequality (Ball, 2003a).

Critiques of Bourdieu's conception of habitus and his theories have centred on them demonstrating latent determinism (Reay, 2004), circularity and on them being structurally frozen (Mills, 2008). From this perspective, by the time a child enters school, much of what will happen to them is pre-determined, so schooling will have little effect. The view can be that habitus, once acquired, is underlining of all subsequent learning and social experience because it is formed early in the life of individuals, is unreflexive in nature, and is inscribed into *bodily hexis* where the body is the site of incorporated history (Bourdieu, 1984). This is not the position I take, I view habitus as relational, co-formed by and with field and capitals. It is therefore situated and subject to constant change. I will argue later that personal narratives are cultural capital and that with lived experiences, struggles on the field, become embodied into habitus and so influence practice and the choices that children make.

Indeed, in later work, Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Reynaud, 1974) actually claimed that habitus *influences* rather than *determines* a child's future actions (Brooker, 2002).

Bourdieu's response to the accusation of determinism is threefold. First, he argues that the habitus only operates in relation to a social field. The same habitus can produce very different practices depending upon what is going on in the field. Second, the habitus can be transformed by changed circumstances, and expectations or aspirations will change with it. Third, the habitus can be controlled – and it is not clear what he means by this – as a result of the ‘awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis’. (Jenkins, 2002: 82, 83)

So, in relation to my thesis, if ‘primary school’ is the social field, can what is going on in the field be changed to benefit children from socio-economically disadvantaged families? Could the engagement with a child’s ‘personal narrative’ by a teacher help to change expectations and aspirations and perhaps even ‘awaken consciousness’ by giving them a perspective on who they are and what they believe about the world? Aspects of these ideas will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Bourdieu’s field theory tools were devised by him to help theorise and transcend the objectivist/subjectivist divide ‘in the hope of constructing a sociology which adequately ‘bridges the gap’ between individual agency and social structure’ (Jenkins, 2002: 91). An exploration of Bourdieu’s work is key to this study and ‘the struggle to work with Bourdieu’s concepts ... is worthwhile, just because to do so forces one to think’ (Nash, 1999: 185). Bourdieu’s tools allow us to *think* about the interaction between agents and external structures which is key to this thesis. Below, I’ll briefly reflect on Bourdieu’s ideas and how they relate to my research questions.

A reflection on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' in relation to my research questions

Bourdieu's ideas enable me to think about what this means for the choices that children at primary school are able to make, the practice they produce. From the discussion about Bourdieu's notions of cultural capital and habitus above I draw the conclusion that we can see that a child's habitus is not only formed by their previous lived experiences, but it also influences their present everyday lived experiences in a recursive loop. A child in primary school is exposed to many experiences each day, some shaped (structured) by 'the school' and some as part of their social interactions with their family, teachers and their peers. While a child is involved in a lived experience, how they respond, their practice and the choices they make 'in the moment', are influenced by their habitus. The results of their lived experiences then go on to influence the further development of their habitus and their practice and, therefore, the choices they make when confronted with future experiences. However, there are issues of temporality and permanence here, as habitus is relational and subject to constant change through the interaction and co-construction of capital and field. The exploration of personal narratives may give some insight into this process as, if seen as cultural capital, personal narratives might be something 'tangible' that teachers can engage with.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus encompasses not only beliefs and attitudes – capacities, tendencies, propensities or inclinations – but also 'a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 70). I will argue later that the stories children tell about themselves, their 'personal narratives', are cultural capital which may become part of a child's habitus. Personal narratives could also be considered

as cultural capital as they may be passed down through the family as 'capital' giving some children an elevated capacity for them to succeed at school because of the beliefs and attitudes that some narratives might promote. I will argue that 'personal narratives' are an indicator of the beliefs and attitudes that children have at that particular time. I will develop this idea further when discussing identity and personal narratives. Unpicking my thoughts on this after conducting some empirical research will form part of my discussion chapter.

I will now turn to consider some other conceptions of agency or in Bourdieuan terms, 'practice' – an individual's ability to make choices – and how this might relate to a pupil at their primary school.

Agency

There has been much debate in sociology about whether individuals can attain agency (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). In social thought, the concept of agency has 'maintained an elusive, albeit resonant, vagueness' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 962). However, for my argument, I will begin from the view, as outlined above by Bourdieu (1990b), that people have some ability to make choices that influence their lives and the field while they are also shaped by social and individual factors.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) try to reconceptualise agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, a perspective they termed 'relational pragmatics':

Actors are always living simultaneously in the past, future, and present and adjusting the various temporalities of their empirical existence to one another

(and to their empirical circumstances) in more or less imaginative or reflective ways. They continuously engage patterns and repertoires from the past, project hypothetical pathways forward in time, and adjust their actions to the exigencies of emerging situations.’ (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 1012)

In their conception agents ‘reflexively transform’ their orientations of action between past, present and future in and in so doing change their ‘degrees of flexible, inventive and critical response towards structuring contexts’ (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 1012). It is a view of human agency, that stresses the ‘reconstructive, (self-) transformative potentialities of human agency, when faced with contradictory or otherwise problematic situations’ (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 1012) and therefore overcomes some of the deterministic criticisms of Bourdieu’s ideas. Emirbayer and Mische speak of a ‘chordal triad’ (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 972) of agency, comprising of the iterational (past histories), the projective (future aspirations) and the practical-evaluative (cultural, structural and material).

In relation to my research study, Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) ideas are interesting particularly as they conceptualise agency as informed by the past, in a habitual aspect, but oriented towards the future and, simultaneously, the present. Children in the dynamic field of a primary school are agents who are continually having to deal with change and reconstruction, they meet new experiences regularly, such as changing a year group or having a new teacher or thinking about the transition to secondary education.

Sue Lasky (2005) takes a slightly different approach to agency, one that is informed by Vygotskian perspectives of that which is psychological, is first social (Vygotsky, 1962). This sociocultural model is concerned with 'people doing things together in social settings with the cultural tools available to them' (Lasky, 2005: 900).

In this model, individual agency to change a context is possible in the ways people act to affect their immediate settings through using resources that are culturally, socially, and historically developed. Seen in this way agency is always mediated by interactions between individual (attributes and inclinations), and the tools and structures of a social setting. (Lasky, 2005: 900)

Lasky's model also gives some focus for this research project; is there evidence, for example, that children in primary school can act to affect their immediate settings? Lasky also argues that in this sociocultural approach, structure and agency need to be foregrounded or put to one side, as neither can be separated out for the purposes of analysis.

Developing on from the ideas of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) argue that, because of the 'chordal triad', agency may be theorised using an 'ecological' approach. In their view agency can be characterised as an 'emergent phenomenon' (Priestley et al., 2015: 25) that occurs in 'shifting contexts over time with orientations towards past, future and present, which differ within each and every instance of agency achieved' (Priestley et al., 2015: 25). In their theory, capacity and context interact to form agency and agency is not something that people have or possess but 'it is rather to be understood as something that people do or achieve' (Priestley et al., 2015: 22). Therefore, the ecological model of agency allows us to consider how people can be reflexive and creative and are able to resist the constraints

of their social environment. To understand agency using this model a full consideration needs to be given to the interplay between individual capacity and contextual factors (Priestley et al., 2015). These might be aligned with Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, capital and field.

The models of agency outlined above; those of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Lasky (2005) and Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2015), all contain the potential for people to influence the context within which they find themselves, and they take agency as situated. 'Situated' is based in Heidegger's concept of 'situation', which implies that our choices are the basis of our freedom and the source of our limitations (Jiménez, 2018: 7). The situated nature of agency will, therefore, mean that agency will be comprised of different things at different ages and in different contexts.

For children in the 'field' of a primary school setting, the choices they can make, the degree of freedom that they have, will be limited by several factors, many of which are set by the 'situation' of the school's physical environment and its practical systems for organising groups of children. Each school will have its own '*doxa*' (Bourdieu, 1990b) rules for how 'the game' is played there. For example, children in most English primary schools are not free to choose where they physically are at any given time. School systems will require children to be in a classroom at prescribed times, in the lunch hall at others and in the playground for break times and each school will vary depending on the number of children, the nature of outdoor spaces, and so on. However, a child will have the ability to choose if and how they engage with any learning experience that the

school are providing for them and this, as discussed earlier, will be influenced by their beliefs and attitudes, their habitus.

Therefore, in this study I am referring to the choices that children make at school in respect of, for example; whom they associate and play with during break times; how much effort they put into a learning task; how much attention they pay to their teacher's instructions and feedback; how they respond to their teacher's instructions and feedback; how they respond to tasks set outside of school times (reading and homework); if they engage with extracurricular activities (clubs and sports); and how they conduct themselves generally whilst at school. It may be that some of these choices, such as engagement in extra-curricula activities and effort with homework, are choices that parents are involved with or even, in some instances, drive. But I would argue that although the choices children are able to make at primary school appear limited, the ones they do have, like how much effort they put into a learning task set by their teacher, are potentially important for that child's development and success.

If 'the individual' has some influence over their agency, the choices they make, their practice, then some (Giddens, 1991; Biesta and Tedder, 2007; Lawler, 2014) regard the ways people make sense of themselves in the world as significant. It is, therefore, worth exploring 'the individual' and the part they play in the agency-structure debate through the notion of 'identity'. Bourdieu tried to account for identity factors using his 'socialized subjectivity of habitus' (Bottero, 2010: 4).

Identity

Holland et al. (2001) defines identity as 'the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations – a perception of self that can be fairly constantly achieved' (2001: 68). Western notions of identity rely on two modes of understanding; what we share with others (gender, race, nationality, etc.) and what makes us unique, so 'people are understood as being simultaneously the same and different' (Lawler, 2014: 10).

From a constructionist perspective, identity is understood as not within a person but produced between persons and within social relationships. For example, Wenger (1998) views identity as a manifestation of social processes, and he sees the individual and the social as mutually constitutive:

The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other. It avoids a simplistic individual-social dichotomy without doing away with the distinction. The resulting perspective is neither individualistic nor abstractly institutional or societal. It does justice to the lived experience of identity while recognizing its social character - it is the social, the cultural, the historical with a human face. (Wenger, 1998: 145)

Building on the work and theories of Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Bourdieu, Holland et al. (2001) conceive of people being composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities. They 'focus on the development of identities and agency-specific to practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed "worlds": recognized fields or frames of social life' (Holland et al., 2001: 5). These multiple identities are always forming within culturally constructed

worlds, within the structural inscriptions of gender, race, nationality, religion, etc. With ideas building on those of Bourdieu, Holland et al. (2001) describe how 'people develop different relational identities in different figured worlds because they are afforded different positions in those worlds' (Holland et al., 2001: 136).

Figured worlds provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. They also provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self - that is, develop identities. (Holland et al., 2001: 60)

Holland et al. (2001) articulate an alternative formulation for identity, one grounded in practice and activity theories, their 'practiced identities'. Holland et al. (2001) use the term 'figured worlds' when they talk about the 'contexts of meaning for actions, cultural productions, performances, disputes, for the understandings that people come to make of themselves, and for the capabilities that people develop to direct their own behaviour in these worlds' (Holland et al., 2001: 60). They also describe 'positionality' as a context of identity, which is linked to power, status, and rank. Positionality or social position 'has to do with entitlement to social and material resources and so to the higher deference, respect, and legitimacy accorded to those genders, races, ethnic groups, castes, and sexualities privileged by society' (Holland et al., 2001: 271).

Holland et al. describe two other contexts of activity for identity, namely 'space of authoring' and, 'making worlds'. Authorship by an individual (or collective) is the 'nearly automatic' (Holland et al., 2001: 272) response or answer that is given to the world:

authorship is a matter of orchestration: of arranging the identifiable social discourses/practices that are one's resources ... in order to craft a response in a

time and space defined by others' standpoints in activity, that is, in a social field conceived as the ground of responsiveness. (Holland et al., 2001: 272)

'Making worlds' is for Holland et al. (2001) a context of identity where 'serious play' (Holland et al., 2001: 272) and rehearsal with a structure of dispositions (*habitus*) by individuals develop new social competencies in newly imagined communities which, may eventually, form a new figured world. In their research work, Holland et al. (2001) describe how the envisioning of a novel world through play can lead to agents bringing about this new world and reshaping themselves in the process.

Whatever the process of construction, one way in which identities can be understood is as being made through narratives. 'One device in particular that helps one identify oneself in this world is the telling of a particular sort of personal story' (Holland et al., 2001: 66). For Lawler (2014) 'the very constitution of an identity is configured over time and through narrative' (Lawler, 2014: 30). Identity is produced through the narratives people use to explain and understand their lives, through the stories that people constantly tell and retell, which produce the self as something continuing through time. I will argue that the personal narratives that children express can indicate what their beliefs and attitudes (*habitus*) towards the world are and that primary school is a field where these narratives can be played with by the children and engaged with by teachers.

Personal narratives

In *Time and Narrative* (1988) Ricoeur was trying to integrate the concept of historical narrative with fictional narrative. He 'formed the hypothesis that the constitution of

narrative identity, whether it be that of an individual or of a historical community, was the sought-after site of this fusion between narrative and fiction' (Ricoeur, 2002: 188). He formed his subsequent theory of narrative identity; 'narrative constructs the durable properties of a character, what one could call the narrative identity, by constructing the kind of dynamic identity found in the plot which creates the character's identity' (Ricoeur, 2002: 195). 'The plots or scripts in discourses of 'identity' provide the elements for the figuration and the refiguration of experience, so that every named subject is not only a figured self but also one who is constantly refigured in the light of the narratives that each of us applies to ourselves in the process of questioning ourselves in relation to acts and deeds' (Venn in Walkerdine, 2002: 58). For Ricoeur (2002), narrative identity is the embodied life that emerges from the refiguration of narrative:

The refiguration by narrative confirms this aspect of self-knowledge which goes far beyond the narrative domain, namely, that the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly by the detour of the cultural signs of all sorts which are articulated on the symbolic mediations which always already articulate action and, among them, the narratives of everyday life. Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable characteristic of self-knowledge - that it is self-interpretation. (Ricoeur, 2002: 198)

Bansel (2013), drawing on Ricoeur's (1988) concepts of 'narrative identity', describes identity as being unstable, resulting from the 'refiguration of temporal experience' as narrative (Bansel, 2013: 4). Bansel (2013) explains how 'refiguration involves a relationship between *narrative*, *action* and *life*, and this relationship is shaped by three interrelated and interacting process: *prefiguration*, *configuration* and *refiguration*' (Bansel, 2013: 5).

Prefiguration refers to the understanding we have of those everyday practices through which identities are constructed in and by narratives of what is normal, permissible and acceptable (and what is not). Configuration

refers to the emplotment or ordering of events memories and experiences, and the ways in which relations between and among them are coordinated into intelligible and coherent narratives. Refiguration refers to the practices through which narratives become embodied as the life of the human subject. (Bansel, 2013: 5)

The theories above provide some tools for exploring the formation of a person's 'narrative identity'. Narrative identity is a well-used idea in the field of psychology (McAdams and McLean, 2013) and as such, goes beyond what I am trying to achieve in this study. Loseke (2007) argues that a person's 'identity' or 'narrative identity' could be viewed as being comprised of a number of sub-narratives, those being; cultural, institutional, organisational and personal. 'Personal narratives' being those narratives that make sense of 'the buzzing confusion of practical experience' (Loseke, 2007: 672) requiring construction into connections among life events: 'personal narratives allow the creation of coherence' (Loseke, 2007: 672).

For the purposes of this study, I would like to explore, using Ricoeur's (1988) ideas, the process of the formation of the stories that children tell of themselves, their 'personal narratives', which may go on to form what psychologists might describe as a 'narrative identity'. I view the process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration, as similar to how Bourdieu (1990b) describes the production of habitus as a result of the history of 'past experiences' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 54). I argue that personal narrative is a form of cultural capital that can become embodied cultural capital or habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). Through the relationship between cultural capital (personal narrative), habitus and field practice is produced. In the context of this thesis, practice or social activity may lead to the choices, unconscious or conscious, that children make every day at school.

Therefore, there is a theoretical link between children's personal narratives and the choices that they make at school. My interest is in how teachers might engage with the process of the formation of personal narratives, and if this will impact on children's practice in the field of their primary school by influencing the choices they make there and more widely.

I will argue later that if children are able to navigate better the choices presented by educational fields by 'informed' personal narratives they may find routes to 'transcend' their social position (if they choose to do so) engaging in what Gergen calls 'identity activism' (Gergen, 1999) allowing children to become more 'socially mobile'. My ideas about how this could work will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

It is now worth considering the term 'success' as this contested term but forms an important idea contained in my research questions.

Discussion of the term success

My thesis takes a starting assumption that 'success is socially constructed and mediated through complex social networks: school, family, friendship groups, peer groups and communities of different kinds' (Bradford and Hey, 2007: 610). Success is constructed by the discourses that circulate in the society where the individual is located.

For example, there is a popular discourse that success in life is to be happy. In 2010 British Prime Minister David Cameron attempted to capitalise on this discourse by making 'happiness' or national 'well-being' the new GDP (Stratton, 2010). No doubt he borrowed this idea from the 2009 report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz et al., 2009) 'which concluded that government population surveys should be oriented toward measuring people's well-being, including the subjective dimension, as a way of assessing societal progress' (Stone and Mackie, 2014: 2). As a result, from 2012, the Office for National Statistics has attempted to measure national 'well-being' in its Annual Population Survey. However, 'happiness' is difficult to define and therefore, difficult to measure (Stone and Mackie, 2014). In her book, *Happiness and Education* Noddings says that 'happiness ... is often identified with the satisfaction of needs and wants and, especially, with the desire to be free of suffering' (Noddings, 2003: 38).

However, in education in the UK, the dominant discourse relating to success is not primarily about happiness or well-being.

[T]he dominant discourse is clearly derived from the premise that a successful life necessarily involves participation in the 'knowledge economy', for which qualifications are a prerequisite. It is a forward-looking discourse, through which students are encouraged to work purposefully in the present towards material success in the future. (Benjamin, 2003: 115)

This discourse of success seems to have its roots in 'neoliberal' discourses. Several researchers (Walkerdine, 2003; Renold and Allan, 2006; Bradford and Hey, 2007; Spohrer, 2016) have identified the effect of 'neoliberal' discourses on the definition of 'success' in UK society, influencing social networks of all types. Davies and Bansel (2007)

argue that the effect of neoliberal discourses in education over the last forty years can now be commonly encountered in qualitative studies in schools and other educational institutions in Western societies. It is, therefore, worth exploring 'neoliberal discourses' in respect of education and success in more detail.

Neoliberal discourses of success

Although being around since the 1930s, modern definitions of 'neoliberalism' tend to indicate a *laissez-faire* set of capitalist ideas.

Neo-liberalism is ... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the State is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for such practices.... State intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum. (Harvey, 2007: 2)

It is only in the last two decades that neoliberalism has 'become the focus of much discussion within the Foundations of Education' (Lakes and Carter, 2011: 107).

[W]hile competition in British schooling has existed since the 1970s (see Lacey, 1970), neoliberalism as a framing for guiding and shaping competition can be considered unique in that it attaches importance to entrepreneurially relevant skill development and entrepreneurial literacies that seek to close the gap between requisite learning skills and the demands of the labour market. (Wilkins, 2012: 201)

'The fact that the neoliberal mentality is both ever-present and hegemonic means that what may at first seem to be a mosaic of different discourses is now starting to form a complete and coherent whole that seeks common aims' (Kaščák and Pupala, 2011: 150).

For education, there are perhaps five main discourses that may be regarded as coming

from a neoliberal position that forms this 'mosaic'. These are marketisation, managerialism, performativity, individual responsabilisation (Ball, 2003b; Keddie, 2016) and ideas that the modern world is 'meritocratic' (Wiederkehr et al., 2015).

Since the 1980s successive UK Government policies have been attempting to construct public services into 'quasi-markets' with 'user choice' of services seen as a driver of improved delivery and provision.

[M]arketization most often refers to the development of "quasi-markets" in state funded and/or state provided services. Most commentators see quasi-markets in education as involving a combination of parental choice and school autonomy, together with a greater or lesser degree of public accountability and government regulation. (Whitty and Power, 2000: 94)

Neoliberal discourse treats individuals as rational and self-interested actors, and the market, a neutral mechanism by which they can compete for various goods, such as education. Education is thus articulated as a commodity and markets offer individuals the freedom to choose from a range of providers. Of course, as states hold a monopoly over the public provision of education, neoliberal discourse, in practice, has tended to involve the creation of market mechanisms to create choice and diversity in the provision of state education. (Wright, 2012: 281)

However, who the 'service users' are in the English state primary school 'education market' is not clear. Are they the children? The parents of the children? The teachers in the school system? Alternatively, perhaps, particularly with the introduction in England of Academy and Free Schools, is the 'service user' the state itself?

Stephen J. Ball (2006) outlines how the marketisation of education has influenced the values that some school systems may have developed in recent times as a result of

Government policies influenced by neoliberally informed policy. Ball (2006: 125) lists these values as:

- Individual performance (schools and students);
- Setting/streaming/selection/differentiation/hierarchy/exclusion;
- Attracts 'clients';
- Emphasis on resource allocation to the more able;
- Competition (between schools and students);
- Narrow assessments of worth based on the contributions to performativity (see below);
- The education of children is valued in relation to costs and outcomes.

Managerialism was born in industrial companies and corporations in the United States in the mid-twentieth century (Clegg, 2014). Locke and Spender (2011) have defined it as 'what occurs when a special group, called management, ensconces itself systematically in an organization and deprives owners and employees of their decision-making power (including the distribution of emoluments) — and justifies that takeover on the grounds of the managing group's education and exclusive possession of the codified bodies of knowledge and know-how necessary to the efficient running of the organization' (Locke and Spender, 2011: 28). In an English school system context, managerialism is encountered in 'the language and processes of performance indicators, rankings and quality assurance processes' (Kalfa and Taksa, 2016: 2). Managerialism may be seen in the systems of teacher appraisal, the existence of league tables and the 'standards agenda' which is driven by testing, exam results and external accountability systems (currently in England these would be Ofsted and Regional School Commissioners).

Keddie argues that 'neoliberal discourses of performativity and individual responsabilisation permeate' children's experiences at school, particularly regarding success (Keddie, 2016: 110).

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement. (Ball, 2003b: 216)

One of the central themes of neoliberalism is 'the portrayal of personal choice and autonomy as the means through which responsibility is enacted' (Trnka and Trundle, 2014: 138). Neoliberal responsabilisation can be seen as 'positioning students' (Keddie, 2016: 110) as:

autonomous, self-determined and self-sustaining subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts. As the choice of options for action is, or so the neo-liberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them. (Lemke in Shamir, 2008: 7-8)

'The belief in meritocratic ideology is the belief that, in a given system, success is an indicator of personal deservingness – namely, that the system rewards individual ability and efforts' (Wiederkehr et al., 2015: 1). Michael Young, in his 1958 satirical essay *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (Young, 1958), envisioned a dystopian future in which the ruling elite are constituted by a simple formula: $IQ + Effort = Merit$.

Young also pointed to the fact that this intense 'race to the top' generated a mechanical and narrow view of what 'merit' might mean – based on the skills in passing educational tests. In this process, other skills and capacities ... get stripped out and [become] redundant. (Savage, 2015: 188-189)

Despite the original satirical origins of the term 'meritocracy', the use of it and the ideas around it – that a social system in which people have power because of their abilities, not because of their money or social position – has grown in popular use, particularly in the years of the New Labour Government of Tony Blair (Young, 2001). However, perhaps,

there is no single, value-free definition of meritocracy, but only preference orderings about equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes. Meritocracy, therefore, must be placed between the one extreme of aristocracy, where opportunities and outcomes are structured only by decent, and the other extreme of egalitarianism, where opportunities and outcomes are entirely equally distributed among the members of a society. Obviously, modern societies have abandoned aristocratic structures and float somewhere between meritocracy and egalitarianism. (Heise, 2005: 8-9)

Neoliberal discourses may be dominant because they seem to connect to peoples' understanding or even desire for how the world works, 'Western societies focus efforts on maintaining the belief that we live 'in a just world where everyone gets what he deserves - or deserves what he gets'' (Lerner, 1980: 18). Neoliberal discourse also connects with the idea that hard work brings success: 'the belief that hard work leads to success is a particularly important norm in the school environment' (Wiederkehr et al., 2015: 2). Perhaps these ideas, those that form the foundations of modern capitalism, have their roots in older discourses, such as religious ones from the 16th century. Weber's famous study, first published in 1904, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* focuses on religious values and ideas as sources of social change that some

have seen as providing an explanation for the rise of modern capitalism, and even for the origin of our secular, urban, and industrial world today (Weber, 2002):

For sure, even with the best will, the modern person seems generally unable to imagine how large a significance those components of our consciousness rooted in religious beliefs have actually had upon culture . . . and the organization of life. (Weber, 2002: 125)

Another aspect of success with links to neoliberal discourses and common understandings are the way that ideas of 'freedom' and 'choice' are constructed. Proponents of neoliberalism argue that competitive forces allow growth and development for the benefit of all and that this leads to enhanced choice, and therefore greater freedoms (Ball, 2006). In common understandings of 'the way the world works', the richer you are, the more freedoms and choices you have in what you eat, where you live, where your children are educated, and so forth. Therefore, ideas of success may be bound up with the concepts of freedom, choice and money. When exploring the lived experience of success, it will be interesting to see if personal narratives relating to these ideas are told by the research participants.

Whatever their roots, modern ideas of how the world works may have been taken over in Western societies by neoliberal discourses. 'Discourse works in a variety of ways creating space for action, excluding alternatives, legitimating new voices (like those of the private sector), attributing causes and effects and making some things seem natural and others inevitable; that is to construct events into sequences – narratives – thus rewriting history' (Ball, 2013: 21).

However powerful and all-pervasive some writers believe neoliberal discourse may have become in Western societies at large and in education systems, in particular, this thesis takes the view that people are never 'fully captured' by any discourse (Trowler, 2001). This study will, therefore, not only examine the influences of neoliberal discourse on the research participants but will also look for other conceptions of 'success' that children might express in their personal narratives. 'However, success ... is a relational and dynamic concept and can only be understood as coming from the shadow of its 'other': *failure*' (Bradford and Hey, 2007: 598). It will, therefore, be interesting when exploring children's lived experience of success if personal narratives of failure are also evident in the data.

Success is a difficult term to define, especially outside of definitions that are part of Western neoliberal discourse. Part of this research will be to see if other conceptions or ideas about success are raised or hinted at by the participants. These findings will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

What contribution does existing empirical research make to understanding the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?

In preparation for my own empirical research, I undertook a search for books and articles written in the last twenty years that were pertinent to my field of study or that used similar methodological tools with young children. I conducted a search using Google Scholar and the University of Plymouth's library search tools. The key words and terms that I searched under were: school success; children's success at school; lived experience

of success; personal narratives; children's choices; identity development; and children's agency at school. As a result of my review of the literature, I found that there is little recent empirical research whose participants were in an English primary school setting and which had research aims that align with the aims of my research questions.

However, there are a few pieces of research carried out in the last 20 years that have been influential in my thinking about my own empirical research study. I will briefly review these in chronological order below. The research studies I review below have several aspects which align with either the context in which I am planning to carry out my research, or they have theoretical perspectives or research interests aligned to mine.

Reay and Wiliam's article *'I'll be a nothing': structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment* (1999) was based on a piece of empirical research that used focus group interviews, individual interviews and observations with twenty Year 6 (10 and 11-year olds) who were attending a London primary school. The data collection took place as the children approached their Year 6 SATs tests and explored their perceptions of the upcoming tests and how this contributed towards their understandings of themselves as learners. In the article, the tension between agency and structure is explored as well as pupil (and teacher) identities and practices. The article concludes that the SATs tests may have the effect on pupils of inscribing them into school practices 'entirely in terms of their ability to contribute to the school's target for the proportion of students achieving specified levels in the national curriculum assessments' (Reay and Wiliam, 1999: 353). The article uses some of the early work of Ball and his criticisms of

the effects of national curriculum testing on learners and the marketisation effects on schools of the 1988 Education Reform Act (Ball, 1994).

Brooker's book, *Starting School – Young children learning cultures* (2002), provides a portrait of sixteen four-year-old children and their families, half of them from a Bangladeshi community, as the children enter their reception year into a primary school. In her essentially ethnographic study, Brooker uses a range of methods to create data on the home and school experiences of the children involved. Brooker uses many of Bourdieu's thinking tools to analyse her data, particularly his conception of 'habitus' and his thinking on symbolic, cultural and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). Of interest to my research is Brooker's exploration of the development of children's habitus as they enter school and how the varying capitals in each family are of varying use in promoting a successful transition. Brooker's conclusions suggest ways of working with children from working-class and multicultural families which may help both children and parents to gain a better understanding of school learning.

Benjamin, in her paper, *What counts as 'Success'? Hierarchical discourses in a girls' comprehensive school* (2003), examines the tensions between school performance – the 'standards agenda' (Benjamin, 2003: 105) and the inclusion of pupils into a school who would have been educated separately in a special school in earlier times. Benjamin carried out an ethnographic study in an all-girls' comprehensive secondary school, and her analysis examines the discourses of 'success' that she encountered in her study. Her conclusions are critical of the 'standards agenda' that is a dominating discourse (Keddie,

2016) in UK schools, and she accuses this discourse of 'changing the distribution of inequalities, and not ... challenging their continued reproduction' (Benjamin, 2003: 115). Her work is pertinent to mine as it explores a variety of conceptions of success from the pupils' perspectives, something that I am interested to explore in my research.

Renold and Allen's paper *Bright and Beautiful: High achieving girls, ambivalent femininities, and the feminization of success in the primary school* (2006) explores girls' experiences of school achievement and the construction of schoolgirl femininities. It is based on an ethnographic approach using observation, interview and pupil diaries with forty-eight boys and girls in Year 5 (9 and 10-year olds) who were attending two contrasting English primary schools. However, the paper focuses on three narrative case studies, all girls, to explore the feminisation of success and uses a narrative approach for its analysis (Thomson et al., 2003). The paper explores ideas of identity and success from the perspective of some high achieving Year 5 girls and develops Walkerdine et al.'s (2001) thesis of 'how embodying excellence and achieving femininity involves a precarious balancing act that can be both self-productive ... and destructive' (Renold and Allan, 2006: 469). This paper has given me confidence that carrying out research with young participants will produce some interesting data to analyse, examine and discuss.

Archer and Francis produced an interesting article titled *Challenging Classes? Exploring the Role of Social Class within the Identities and Achievement of British Chinese Pupils* (2006a) where they explore the phenomenon of Chinese educational 'success', which is interesting due to the 'working class' positionings of many British Chinese families.

Archer and Francis conducted a large study interviewing eighty British Chinese 14 to 16-year olds drawn from schools across London. They used semi-structured individual interviews, mostly in the children's home language of Cantonese. Bourdieuan-influenced theories of social class were used by Archer and Francis to examine the identities, educational experiences and achievement of the pupils. From their work, Archer and Francis (2006a) conclude that British Chinese success is as a result of the creation and maintenance of a diasporic habitus that fosters high aspirations and achievement that 'undoubtedly constitute a strategic negotiation of routes to 'success'' (Archer and Francis, 2006a: 45).

Building upon the work of Archer and Francis described above, and on their other work (see Archer and Francis, 2006b), Mendick, Allen and Harvey conducted some qualitative empirical research described in *'We can get everything we want if we try hard'; Young people, celebrity, hard work* (Mendick et al., 2015). In their research Mendick, Allen and Harvey drew on data produced by twenty-four group interviews with 148 English secondary school students aged 14-17. Their work used an analysis of the data for discourses found in the work of Archer and Francis (2006b: 66). The conclusions of Mendick, Allen and Harvey's research was that the young people they interviewed demonstrated a strong investment in 'the ethics and ideals of working hard as crucial to achieving and enjoying success' (Mendick et al., 2015: 174). However, they 'problematized this investment in hard work, showing how it operates within broader neoliberal practices, which celebrate entrepreneurialism and individualism, whilst obscuring inequalities that limit who can go where in education and the labour market' (Mendick et al., 2015: 175). Although the empirical research that I am planning will be

with younger children, it will be interesting to examine if younger children make a link between hard work and success and if there is any evidence of from where such ideas emanate.

Keddie's *Children of the market: performativity, neoliberal responsabilisation and the construction of student identities* (2016) is based on interviews with five high achieving students in Years 5 and 6 (9-11 year-olds) of a primary school located on the edge of a class-privileged area in outer London. Keddie found that the children she interviewed were very invested in doing well in school and in life beyond but within the parameters of neoliberalism. Keddie found that 'within the 'labyrinth of performativity', these children [were] creating identities of success' (Keddie, 2016: 117). Keddie's findings explore the way that neoliberal discourses have become naturalised and taken-for-granted in what counts as being a good student. Keddie's work goes on to problematises the individualism, competitiveness and anxiety produced by these discourses and provides an argument for supporting students to identify, challenge and think beyond them. In her conclusion, Keddie views her work as evidence for 'a strong basis from which to foster students' critical thinking about the narrow vision of ideal studenthood and citizenship in which they are compelled to engage if they are to be seen as 'successful' (Keddie, 2016: 120). Keddie's research was focused on children who are at around the same age as the children in my empirical research. It will be interesting to see if the children in my study are equally influenced by neoliberal discourses as expressed through their personal narratives. Due to the similar age of the children in my study, and the focus on successful identities, Keddie's work will form an important basis for my own research.

In their paper *Aspirations and young people's constructions of their futures: Investigating social mobility and social reproduction* (2017) Hoskins and Barker used paired, semi-structured interviews from thirty-two students aged 16 and 18 at the time that they were preparing for their public examinations. Their research aimed to produce rich, detailed and descriptive co-constructed accounts of the student's aspirations, experiences and expectations of the future. Hoskins and Barker (2017) used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to examine the data for evidence of the reproduction of class inequalities and the impact of social class on prospects for intragenerational social mobility. A summary of the findings from this research would be that Hoskins and Barker (2017) found that the aspirations for the future of their study's participants were far more influenced by their family background than by their schools or teachers, thus evidencing many instances of social reproduction (Hoskins and Barker, 2017: 64).

All of the empirical research work outlined above has influenced my thinking in the design of my research study from a theoretical perspective and a practical point of view. How lived experience informs personal narratives of children and how personal narratives influence the choices that primary school-aged children make has not specifically been researched before therefore, this alone provides me with the opportunity to make a contribution to empirical research. In the next chapter, the methodology and methods of the study will be discussed in detail. This discussion includes the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology, which are congruent with the theoretical ideas discussed in this chapter.

Gender

Some of the research and writing which influenced my thinking on issues connected with identity and success drew upon a feminist perspective (Walkerdine, 1990; 2001; 2003) or contained elements where the gender of participants was a focus. For example, in two out of the eight studies summarised above gender, particularly girls experiences of success, was the focus (Benjamin, 2003; Renold and Allan, 2006). It will, therefore, be worth considering if a child's gender is a factor in the development of their personal narrative with regards to success, and so I will ensure that there is a balance of boys and girls in my research participant selection and consider this dimension in the analysis and findings of the study data in Chapter 4.

Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives in this chapter, I will explore in the next chapter, Chapter 3, a methodological approach to my empirical research which is congruent with my theoretical foundations.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The main research question that this study is trying to answer is: how do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? The research questions for this thesis evolved from an interest in exploring children's lived experience of success at school. At the start of the research project, much of the methodology was influenced by *Researching Lived Experience: Human science for action sensitive pedagogy* (van Manen, 1990). However, as the research project progressed, particularly at the stage of analysing the data, it was clear that children's lived experiences of success were being articulated through personal narrative. On reflection on this with my supervisors, the theoretical framing of my thesis shifted to look more specifically at the role of the personal narratives that children expressed when talking about success. Therefore, the lived experience of success provides the context for exploring children's personal narratives. The advantage of using lived experiences of success as a context for the research is its ethical acceptability as interviewing children about their success is less likely to do harm than talking to children about their experiences of failure, for example. I accept that by limiting the research to personal narratives in the context of lived experiences of success, I am potentially only going to achieve a partial picture of the role of children's personal narratives at school. I will, therefore, be mindful of this in any conclusions that I make.

By exploring children's lived experience of success in some empirical research, I hope to be able to answer my supplementary research questions and build an answer to my main research question. The study's supplementary research questions are:

- For the children participating in my empirical research:
 - I. What personal narratives do the children express when they describe their lived experience of success?
 - II. What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?
 - III. How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?

A phenomenological approach

A key idea in my planned empirical research study is the role of 'lived experiences of success' in shaping personal narrative. To research this 'lived experience' methods based on hermeneutic phenomenology or perhaps more accurately, on an approach *informed* by hermeneutic phenomenology was used. The research methods were informed by the field of phenomenological research and hermeneutics, the key ideas of which I will describe below, and more specifically by the work of Smith et al. (2009) as set out in *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – Theory, Method and Research* (Smith et al., 2009). This chapter will begin by briefly outlining an understanding of how phenomenological methods developed and what a method informed by hermeneutic phenomenology entails. It will then go on to connect this to how an understanding of this methodological approach influenced the design of this study.

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. Husserl, growing ideas from the roots of philosopher and psychologist Brentano, founded a method of social research called phenomenology, which focused on consciousness and the careful examination of human experience (Smith et al., 2009). 'Husserl viewed consciousness as a co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world' (Laverty, 2003: 5). Husserl developed phenomenology as a 'descriptive enterprise that would specify the structures that characterise consciousness and the world as we experience it' (Gallagher, 2012: 7).

Phenomenology is not so much a method but a methodological approach, a phenomenological attitude (Friesen et al., 2012): 'the methodology of phenomenology is more a carefully cultivated thoughtfulness than a technique' (van Manen, 1990: 131). The researcher who uses a phenomenological approach 'gives a certain epistemological primacy to consciousness' (Gallagher, 2012: 9) and directs their 'gaze towards the regions where meaning originates' (van Manen, 2007: 12). The aim of phenomenology 'is to describe things as they are, not as the participant (or the researcher) typically, and automatically, interprets things based on past experience' (Gall et al., 1996: 603). Therefore, the initial step for the researcher who adopts a phenomenological attitude is to attempt to 'bracket out' their own beliefs, judgements, opinions and theories, even the 'most basic judgement that the world exists and is real' (Gallagher, 2012: 43).

This first step of suspension of belief is referred to by Husserl as the 'epoché'. Epoché, or 'bracketing out' what Merleau-Ponty calls 'Objective Thought' (Romdenh-Romluc, 2010: 19), is far from an easy thing to do. 'It is not obvious how one can simply suspend

one's entire conceptual framework' (Romdenh-Romluc, 2010: 24). Perhaps, all a researcher can do is to put a considered awareness of their own Objective Thought or subjectivity at the heart of their research; to state their own beliefs, judgements, opinions and theories clearly and to remain constantly vigilant as to how their ideas about the world might shape their research. Alternatively, a researcher could adopt a 'hermeneutic sensibility' (Friesen et al., 2012: 24) to their research, denying that it is possible, or even desirable, to bracket out Objective Thought.

Husserl's assistant, Heidegger, further developed Husserl's ideas as he believed that 'Husserl's phenomenology was too theoretical, too abstract' (Smith et al., 2009: 16). While Husserl's focus was on understanding beings or phenomena, Heidegger focused on 'Dasein', the mode of 'being in the world' or 'the situated meaning of a human in the world' (Lavery, 2003: 7). Heidegger's version of phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, which was philosophically deployed by Gadamer in his 1960 work *Truth and Method*, is focused 'towards illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding' (Lavery, 2003: 7). Hermeneutics is a classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts (Gadamer, 2013: 164). However, 'texts are understood to include things such as written or verbal communications, visual arts and music' (Lavery, 2003: 9). Indeed, all of life in all its forms can be understood as a text to be read. Therefore, Hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of experience together with its meaning (Friesen et al., 2012).

Heidegger describes the concept of the 'hermeneutic circle' as a way of reading a text to achieve an interpretive understanding of it (Gadamer, 2013: 279). The idea is that to understand a text the interpreter needs to consider the individual parts concerning the whole and that the whole cannot be understood without reference to the parts and that the meaning of a text must be read in its historical and cultural context.

Understanding is a basically referential operation; we understand something by comparing it to something we already know. What we understand forms itself into systematic unities, or circles made up of parts. The circle as a whole defines the individual part, and the parts together form the circle. A whole sentence, for instance, is a unity. We understand the meaning of an individual word by seeing it in reference to the whole of the sentence; and reciprocally, the sentence's meaning as a whole is dependent on the meaning of individual words. By extension, an individual concept derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands; yet the horizon is made up of the very elements to which it gives meaning. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then. Because within this 'circle' the meaning comes to stand, we call this the 'hermeneutic circle.'" (Palmer, 1969: 87)

Developing an approach informed by hermeneutic phenomenology

'Hermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on historical meanings of experience and their development and cumulative effects on individual and social levels' (Laverty, 2003: 15). A 'hermeneutic sensibility' or approach to research demands that the researcher comes to an awareness of their pre-existing beliefs:

a hermeneutical approach asks the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection to a quite different end than that of phenomenology. Specifically, the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and essential to interpretive process. (Laverty, 2003: 17)

Hermeneutic researchers need to engage in 'critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how

these might impact on the research process and findings' (Finlay, 2008: 17). Therefore, the methodological approach that was adopted to address the research questions was a hermeneutic-phenomenological one with the hermeneutic interview being the method that was used to collect data.

The art of the researcher in hermeneutic interview is to keep the question (the meaning of the phenomenon) open, to keep himself or herself and the interviewee oriented to the substance of the thing being questioned... The interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study. (van Manen, 1990: 98)

In the study design section below, an outline of how an attempt was made to develop a set of interview tools to achieve this aim.

Hermeneutic phenomenology needs to take a different approach than pure phenomenology to the collection, interpretation and analysis of data. Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is considered to be interpretive, rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). In a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology, the process of gathering data is a co-constructed process with researcher and participant working together 'to bring life to the experience being explored, through the use of imagination, the hermeneutic circle and attention to language and writing' (Laverty, 2003: 21). 'A phenomenological method which purports to be "hermeneutic" needs to be able to account explicitly for the researcher's approach and how interpretations are managed' (Friesen et al., 2012: 22). Some researchers 'prefer to see description and interpretation as a continuum where specific work may be more or less interpretive' (Friesen et al., 2012: 22).

I have mentioned several times here that the approach I used was informed by hermeneutic phenomenology rather than being a pure phenomenological one. The reasons for this are mainly to do with the methods of analysis that I used on the data. A pure phenomenological research study might produce some 'thick description' of the phenomenon being explored or some other 'finely crafted piece' of reflective writing (van Manen, 1990: 132). The analysis I undertook took a different approach that I will detail below, though it is one that is still consistent with a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Smith et al., 2009).

Therefore, my research plan was to interview children of primary school age, using an interview approach informed by an understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology, to produce co-constructed data about the experience or 'phenomenon' of success. The interviews needed to be open and reasonably unstructured and, throughout the process of data gathering, I needed to be critically self-aware of what I was co-constructing with the interview participants (Flewitt, 2014). The method that I used required a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights:

It is phenomenological in attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of the participant but recognizes that this inevitably becomes an interpretative endeavour for both participant and researcher. Without the phenomenological, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen (Smith et al., 2009: 37).

Research with children

The research methodology for this study takes an approach informed by hermeneutic phenomenology, and one of the reasons for using this approach is because of the opportunities that it affords to listening to children and hearing what children have to say. This is not only important to this study's research questions but is also an important part of research with children in the twenty-first century (Mayall, 2002; Roberts, 2017). However, before detailing the design of my study, it is worth briefly exploring specific issues around conducting research interviews with children where I am the interviewer.

My primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with children, but one of the potential issues considered when planning the study was if interviews with children would produce enough data to make any subsequent analysis and any findings reliable. Flewitt (2014) suggests that interviewing children in groups can produce interview results that are richer and more relaxed than an interview where one adult is interviewing one child. However, as recording and transcribing the contributions of a group of children may produce methodological problems, such as ascribing what is said to a particular child, it was decided that interviewing children in pairs would be a useful compromise. In pairs, children should feel more relaxed, enabling them to contribute more freely, but pairs of children would only present a slightly raised level of complexity when it came to the transcription of the interviews.

Another potential issue of an adult interviewing children is the 'infusion of complex relations of power' (Flewitt, 2014: 143). In an interview, children would be drawing on their previous life experience of power relations when being asked questions by an

adult. In a school setting, this is likely to have a number of possible effects on the interviewees depending on their previous experience. For example, if previously questioned in lessons by a teacher, children may be expecting to give an answer that is 'correct' or acceptable to the adult. Thinking that I, as the interviewer, would be seeking 'right' answers to my questions could skew the participant's responses in the interviews. As it would be impossible to know the previous experience of each child in relation to being interviewed, there are some things that I could do to lessen the potential effects of power relations.

A potential starting point for addressing the asymmetry in power relations in relation to this study's methodology would be to engage the participants, the children, in the aims of the interview. Therefore, time will be given at the beginning of the interviews for me to talk more generally with the participants about the interview and its aims as well as providing the opportunity for the children to ask questions of me 'in order to build a rapport and thus help to address 'otherness'' (Bucknall, 2014: 81). It would also be made explicitly clear to children that there were no 'wrong' answers to any of my questions.

My presentation during the interview was also considered. I am a middle-aged white male headteacher and approaching my research interviews in a similar way to how I conduct my day-to-day interactions with children may cause power relation issues. Even though the interview participants will not know me in this role, they will have previous experiences of interactions with 'headteachers' which may be both positive and negative. Therefore, I decided that I would dress casually for the interviews, not wearing

my usual suit and tie, and I would use informal language and try to mirror the language used by the children. I would not conceal my identity from the children if they asked me direct questions about my job, but I would begin interviews by telling the participants that I was talking to them as a student who was interested in what they had to say. I also decided to ask the schools where I would be conducting the research to allocate me a space that was familiar to the children, such as a classroom, where the children would feel comfortable and relaxed. As a visitor to these schools, I would let the children help me organise aspects of the interview, where we would sit, for example, in order to cede some control to the children. However, I will acknowledge here that 'being a researcher' for the time I conduct the interviews would require a great deal of effort as I spend a great deal of my life in other roles, teacher, headteacher or father, for example. I have not been a researcher long enough for it to yet be an embodied way of being.

The effect of power relations also needs to be considered in the analysis of the data and the findings of the research as the effects of power relations are 'enacted beyond the immediate context of the interview, for example, in the researcher's selection of particular extracts that are written up and included in research reports, where it is lifted from its original context and could be misrepresented by a researcher and/or misinterpreted by readers' (Flewitt, 2014: 143). In order to counter this, I will try to include as much of the children's voices in the research findings as possible while never forgetting that the interviews are a co-construction (Flewitt, 2014).

There is a potential that during the interviews some children will say nothing or very little, especially as I am planning on interviewing children in pairs where one child may do all or the majority of the talking. Therefore, during the interviews, I will be actively trying to elicit responses from all the children while respecting a participant's right to say nothing. Any silence will be listened to carefully and noted in the transcript, as it may be an expression of voice (Bucknall, 2014).

There are some other issues around conducting research with children regarding ethics and participant selection which will be discussed in the sections below.

Study design

To obtain data for this study, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with pairs of children making twenty participants in total. The children attended four different primary schools all in one large town in Devon, England. I interview two pairs of children in all but one school, and in one school, four pairs of children were interviewed. All the interviews took place on afternoons in November and December 2014, when the children were in their first term of Year 6, the last year of primary school in England. My professional experience suggested that by interviewing the children at this stage and time, the children would be beginning to think about their move to secondary education and their futures beyond primary school. By working with pairs of children, it was considered that the research participants would be more confident and open to talk with another child present in the room.

Eleven girls and nine boys took part in the interviews, and all but one pairing were comprised of a single-sex. I left the organisation and selection of the children involved to the Year 6 class teachers of each school, see 'Participant Selection' below. The ten interviews lasted for an average of 29 minutes, with the longest being 45 and the shortest 16 minutes long. The interviewees were recorded with two digital sound recorders, one a digital stereo recorder which helped with separation between participants during the making of transcriptions. The other backup recording was made using an app (Voice Memos) on a smartphone.

Ethical considerations

As the research involved children, the methods were designed to meet the ethical approval standards of Plymouth University. An ethics review was conducted in line with University of Plymouth guidelines (see Appendix 2) and approval was granted for the project by the Education Research Ethics Sub-committee in October 2014 (See Appendix 3 for the letter). Below is an outline of how the main areas listed in the University Research Ethics Policy (University, 2013) were addressed:

- i. Informed Consent – written informed consent was obtained from the parents of all the children taking part in the study (see Appendix 4). The children were asked if they still wanted to take part in the interviews by their teacher just before their interview was conducted and the children knew in advance what they were doing as parents and teachers had discussed it with them. All of the children selected by the teachers and who had consent from their parents wanted to take part in the interviews, none withdrew.

- ii. Openness and honesty – in a letter to parents of participants asking for consent (see Appendix 4) I was open and honest about the nature and aims of the research.
- iii. Right to withdraw – in the letter to parents of participants, I informed participants and their parents of their right to withdraw from participation in the study (see Appendix 4).
- iv. Protection from harm – as a serving Headteacher I had an up to date, and enhanced, criminal records check and I am trained in safeguarding to a high professional level. During the research, I limited the amount of stress the children who participated felt and was highly vigilant to any psychological harm. In fact, most of the participating children said that they enjoyed the ‘chats’ they had with me.
- v. External clearance – I am experienced in working in primary schools and sought permission from the Headteachers of the schools that were part of the study.
- vi. Participant/subject involvement – I specifically sought participants for the study who had not been the subjects of any other research that academic year to the knowledge of their teachers’ and parents’.
- vii. Payment – the children who participated in the interviews received a £5 book voucher as a ‘thank you’ from me for taking part. The voucher was an acknowledgement of the time the children volunteered to be interviewed as some missed their break times.
- viii. Debriefing and dissemination – I was open and honest about the reasons for the research with the parents and the children themselves. I endeavoured to communicate this to the children in a form that they might understand. I was clear about who would have access to the interview data and in what form the

study was likely to be published. Children remain as anonymous participants; their real names do not appear in any publication.

- ix. Confidentiality – I ensured the confidentiality of the participant's identity and data throughout the conduct and reporting of the research. However, I was clear with participants and their parents that in the event of a safeguarding disclosure confidentiality could not be maintained and child protection procedures must be followed.
- x. I complied with the Data Protection Act (1998), and the research data, transcripts, audio were stored on the hard drive of an encrypted laptop, not on cloud-based storage systems. The exception to this was when audio data was sent to a professional transcriber. A secure transfer system was used to transmit the data, and an agreement was made that all the data would be deleted once the process was complete. This process took just under a month.

In the appendices are the Application for Institute Ethical Approval (Appendix 2) and the text of the letter of consent that was given to the parents of all interview subjects (Appendix 4).

Participant selection

With hermeneutic-phenomenological framed research the aim of participant selection is 'to select participants who have lived experience that is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience' (Lavery, 2003: p. 18). For the purposes of this study, I was interested in talking to 10 or 11-year-old children (Year 6) as this group

represents the eldest children in the English primary school system. In my professional experience, I believed that these children would give the most interesting data for the study, as well as being the most articulate and confident in talking about themselves and their experiences as I wanted the research for this study to hear the voices of children (Mayall, 2002).

In advance of my visit to each school, I contacted the teachers of the Year 6 class or classes by e-mail. Here is the text of part of that e-mail where I asked for the class teachers' help in selecting suitable participants:

I would like you to suggest four Year 6 children that it would be suitable for me to work with. I would like children who can talk confidently to an adult they have not met before, those who might even enjoy doing this. I would like a mixture of boys and girls and children who may represent a variety of groups in your school community. I would also like children who have not been part of any other research project so far this academic year. I will talk to two children at a time. The children's participation in this research is entirely voluntary and will only take place with their parents'/guardians' full permission and the child's willingness to do so.

I had considered alternative ways of selecting a sample of participants for this study. For example, by a random selection method or by asking for the schools involved for information about pupils in advance so that there could be a selection of participants to ensure a mix of gender, ability, and children who received free school meals. However, by selecting children in these ways, I was not guaranteed to get children who would be willing to talk in a relaxed way. I needed confident and articulate children, or there was the possibility that I would not be able to gather enough data to analyse. I am aware that this method may privilege the choice of particular children, but I defend its use for this study, and I will take account for this in my analysis and conclusions.

By utilising the knowledge of the class teachers and by making sure that those teachers had some understanding of what the research was trying to achieve (which I did in a phone conversation with each class teacher) I thought it would be more likely I would get participants who would not only talk to me but talk in a 'rich' way (Flewitt, 2014). One of the potential problems that research supervisors expressed to me at the planning stage of the study, based on their substantial experiences of conducting this type of research, was in obtaining enough data from the interviews with primary school-aged participants. Therefore, I defend the seemingly highly purposeful way of choosing participants for the study because it was likely to enable a better chance of the rich data that I required for this study. However, as I was not proposing to select research participants based on their background characteristics whether my study can address issues in the social mobility agenda will be discussed in the findings and conclusions (Chapters 5 and 6).

Setting and general approach

All the interviews took place in rooms at the schools with which the children were familiar; these were usually empty classrooms or small teaching spaces but, for one set of interviews, a Headteacher's office was used. I thought it important to use rooms with which the children were familiar so that they felt more at ease to talk more freely than if I had removed them to a place that they did not know. In the rooms were the two participants and me only. All the interviews took place in the afternoon when the children would not miss out on English or maths lessons, a consideration requested by the schools involved. The interviews were mostly uninterrupted, only twice did other

children poke their head around the door or pop in to fetch an item. These interruptions were noted in the transcripts.

One concern that I had was to remain mindful of and to try and lessen the effect of the power imbalance between myself and the participants (Flewitt, 2014). Therefore, I did not tell the children that I am the Headteacher of a school. Instead, I told the children that I was a student, like them but older, which was true. I dressed casually and asked them to call me by my first name. At the start of each interview session, I spent a few minutes engaged in 'chit-chat'. I tried to keep my language free from authoritative terms and tones, and my body language relaxed, mirroring the way the children were sitting. The interviews took place across school tables or in a small circle of chairs. I used the same size chairs as the children. I tried to match aspects of their speech patterns: I tried to use speech as informal as possible. I asked the schools if I could use rooms with which the children were familiar and comfortable, and I tried to use this to put the children in control, asking them where things were, like toilets, pencils, etc. Naturally, I was still an adult, and there was a power dynamic involved, but, I believe that I did all I could think of to minimise the difference in power relations. I do not believe that there was any deception in the way that I conducted the interviews which might compromise ethical considerations as I was attending the schools as a university student to conduct research and not visiting the schools in the capacity of a visiting Headteacher.

As hermeneutic researchers need to engage in 'critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how

these might impact on the research process and findings’ (Finlay, 2008: 17) I undertook some reflective writing before during and after the interviews with children. I wrote about a number of issues pertinent to my research such as my beliefs on success; my experience of social mobility; my memories of experiences at primary school; and a few of my own personal narratives. I used these when analysing the data to help me understand how my assumptions may have directed the course of the interviews with children. I include a sample of this writing a little later in this chapter in the section titled ‘Some comments about how the interviews proceeded’.

Overview of fieldwork

Table 1 shows the pattern of the fieldwork planned and achieved for the study.

Interview number	School number	Date	Time (approximately)	Interviewees
1	1	06/11/2014	13:00 - 14:00	George & Joel
2	1	06/11/2014	14:00 - 15:00	Kelly & Ruby
3	2	12/11/2014	13:00 - 14:00	Owen & Jenny
4	2	12/11/2014	14:00 - 15:00	Holly & Rosie
5	3	20/10/2014	13:00 - 14:00	Charlie & Matthew
6	3	20/10/2014	14:00 - 15:00	Izzy & Casey
7	4	26/11/2014	13:00 - 14:00	Rachel & Emily
8	4	26/11/2014	14:00 - 15:00	Sebastian & Joshua
9	1	03/12/2014	13:00 - 14:00	Joseph & Tom
10	1	03/12/2014	14:00 - 15:00	Abby & Bethany

Table 1: Pattern of fieldwork

The interviews

The purpose of these interviews was to obtain 'qualitative descriptions of the lifeworld of the subject with respect to interpretation of their meaning' (Kvale, 1996: 124) and to explore what they understood about the idea of 'success'. However, the word 'success' may not have been familiar to all the participants so, in discussion with my supervisors, I decided to focus the interviews around children's perceptions of 'being good at things' which was decided would be a proxy for success. Phrasing the main interview question this way would also allow participants to explore their lived experiences as widely as possible so that their responses could be looked at with regard to what success might mean allowing the analysis of them to construct categories, or alternatives, relating to the experiences of success.

I wanted the interviews to feel to the participants as 'conversational' as possible as I wanted to bring life to the multiplicity of experiences related to more extensive ideas of what success means for a 10/11-year-old child living in South-west England the early twenty-first century. Following a phenomenological approach, I wanted the interview questions to be as open as possible:

The art of the researcher in the hermeneutic interview is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open, to keep himself or herself and the interviewee oriented to the substance of the thing being questioned. "The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions, i.e., the art of thinking," says Gadamer. (van Manen, 1990: 98)

Therefore, I developed a simple interview script, which had a fundamental opening question 'What are you good at?'. However, I then had several prompts and extensions that might enable the exploration of the experiences when the children answered the

initial question (see Appendix 8). An example of one of the full interview scripts can be found in the appendices (Appendix 5).

However, the study needs to be mindful that an interview process conducted in the way proposed would produce data that was co-constructed between the participant and the interviewer.

Each interview was initiated by me asking the children some general questions and finding out a little about them to establish a relationship between myself and each interviewee 'in order to build a rapport and thus help to address 'otherness'' (Bucknall, 2014: 81). I also gave the participants the opportunity to ask me any questions that they had. For example, one pair was interested to know about my hobbies and interests. After the initial pre-interview discussion, I began the main interview by asking the participants to think about things that they were good at. I told them that there were no wrong answers to the questions and that I was just interested in what they thought. I had pencils and paper available for the children to use and said that they could write or draw in response to the questions which I thought might create a 'mediating artefact'. van Manen suggests that when 'description is mediated by expression, including nonverbal aspects, action, artwork, or text, a stronger element of interpretation is involved' (Friesen et al., 2012: 22). In this study, I use methods informed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as described by Smith et al. (2009). Smith et al. suggest that the phenomenological researcher demonstrates 'open-mindedness; flexibility; patience; empathy; and a willingness to enter into and respond

to, the participant's world' (Smith et al., 2009: 5). During the interviews, I looked out for short answers, inconsistencies, body language and hesitancy as these might indicate the reliability of what a child said. Any periods of silence by participants was also noted in the transcript, as it may be an expression of voice (Bucknall, 2014).

The first pair of children that I interviewed wanted to create a list of things they thought they were good at, which proved useful for them to return to throughout the interview. All the children in the study used the paper to create a written list, as an '*aide memoir*', which they talked to. The things they wrote on these lists can be found in the appendices (Appendix 7). The central question and subsequent prompting were designed to get children to describe their lived experience; however, towards the end of the interviews, I used some direct questioning in a conversational style.

During the interviews, I tried to guard against leading questions and 'putting words into the mouths of participants' both of which could reduce the reliability of the interviews. I did this by consciously trying not to introduce vocabulary into the questions and conversation that the children had not used and by only pursuing ideas raised by the children in their interviews. However, for Kvale (1996) the reliability of the qualitative research interview can be enhanced by the use of leading questions as they can be used to 'repeatedly check the reliability of the interviewees' answers, as well as to verify the interviewer's interpretations' (Kvale, 1996: 158). Also, the very nature of the hermeneutic approach views interview data as a 'co-construction' and the interview data was built and analysed as a co-construction (van Manen, 1990). The direct

questions varied from one interview to another, depending on what children had talked about in the first phase of the interview. Some examples of direct questions asked across the interviews in the study can be found in the appendices (Appendix 9).

In the interviews, I wanted the children to give descriptions of their lived experiences of success, and in so doing hoping that the children would tell stories to illustrate their descriptions, that they would articulate personal narratives. I used questions to try to get children to talk about actual experiences they had had, rather than reflect on the questions I was asking as I thought that actual experience was more likely to be narrative in nature.

Reflections on the interviews

Before embarking on the research interviews with children, there were a number of aspects of the methodology that were put in place to ensure that the voices of the children were heard. This section links back to the section called 'Research with children' in Chapter 3. I will briefly reflect on some of these aspects and note any impacts on the interviews and the data produced.

The interviews took place in pairs of children in order to make the children feel relaxed and able to contribute in a rich way (Flewitt, 2014). However, one potential problem with this method was that one child might dominate the interview at the expense of the other participant. After reviewing the recordings, the transcripts and any contemporaneous notes taken, there is no evidence that this was the case. There are

some interviews where one participant spoke more than the other, but both participants in all the interviews seemed to say what they wanted to. This was aided by children creating the lists of what they considered they were good at (see Appendix 7) which enabled the interviewer to ensure that all children had something which they could talk to. From the recordings, it appears that some participants were actually encouraged to make contributions to the discussions in response to what their partner said. An example of this can be seen in transcript of George and Joel's interview (see pages 135 & 136).

The potential effect of adult-child power relations (Flewitt, 2014) were also considered in the methodology section. It is difficult to assess from the evidence to what extent there was an effect caused by asymmetric power relations. The situation created by the interviewer did not seem to prevent children from talking and answering questions but what the difference would be with another interviewer, another child, for example, is not clear. There is evidence that some children were 'performing' their stories for a particular audience, and this has been noted in some examples in this chapter.

Finally, a response to Bucknall's (2014) comments about the importance of silence. Although some aspects of silence of participants were noted, and some silences can be heard in the interview recordings, these were usually associated with a period of participants thinking before then going on to produce a response. There is good evidence in the quantity and quality of data produced by the interviews with children

that the children had good opportunities for their voices to be heard (see Appendix 5, for example) (Mayall, 2002).

Some comments about how the interviews proceeded

The methodology of the study was informed by hermeneutic phenomenology and, as such, it acknowledged that the process of gathering data is a co-constructed process with researcher and participant working together 'to bring life to the experience being explored' (Laverty, 2003: 21). The only things that I took to the interviews were some prompts and extensions to interview questions (Appendix 9) and some pencils and plain paper for note-making by the children or me if we required it. The night before each interview I would read my reflective writing to try and be mindful of my own predilections and assumptions to avoid, as much as possible, 'colouring' the interviews with my own agendas. I think I was reasonably successful in this regard as I was so focused and interested in what the children had to say.

In the planning of the interviews, I did not imagine that I would be speaking as much as I eventually did: my role in the co-construction of the data was a little more significant than imagined. I also found, early in the data gathering process, that when getting participants to talk about their experiences, I could get very short interactions, for example (from the transcript of the interview of Joel & George, Appendix 5):

PG: Tell me why you do well in maths.

George: Well, I've got the highest-level last year.

PG: Highest level?

George: Maths.

PG: Last year?

George: In Year 5.

As the interviews proceeded, both in each interview and over the series of ten interviews, I think I improved my skills at getting children to extend their answers, here is an example from the transcript of the interview with Sebastian & Joshua:

PG: So how do you think you get from where you are at ten to being a Marine when you are eighteen? How does that happen?

Joshua: You are going to have to study a lot, you have going to have to do homework, research. You are going to have to first complete your Royal Cadets; then you will go up to a higher rank. Then, after you are out of school and your Marine cadets are finished, you can sign up to be a Marine reserve or part-time.

PG: Right. And what sort of things in school are going to help you with that?

Joshua: Research, literacy, maths because if you are in about fields, you are going to have to work out what... like if you have a compass, you're going to have to work out what direction you are going because you might be lost and you might have to find your way.

I believe that over the course of the data gathering, I achieved more extended answers by ensuring that I developed a good working relationship with the participants before using the question trails. To develop a positive working relationship, I engaged in a period of general talk before the interviews were conducted. I also refined my questioning technique after the first two interviews by listening more carefully to what the participants said and in paying more attention to picking up on words or phrases that seemed important to the participants. In the interviews, I only to use the word 'success' or 'successful' if the participants used it, this was to ensure that they knew the meaning of these words.

In an ideal outcome, the participants would richly describe their experiences of success, but this outcome was a rare event in the data, perhaps due to the age of the participants and the language that I used. Asking children to 'describe' their experience was not likely to be something that they are regularly asked to do. Below is an example from the transcript of the interview of Joseph & Tom, where I tried to elicit some richer description from a participant using the word 'describe':

- PG: Tell me what that is like when you are good at maths. Describe something you might do that you would be good at in maths.
- Tom: I am normally good at numbers. I am not very good at shapes because we've been learning about shapes last term and I wasn't too good at that. I found I was more of a numbers person because when I am doing mental maths tests, I always get really high marks.

Below is an example where I think I brought my own prejudice about what success is by jumping on the mentioning of the word 'university' by a participant causing me to use some direct questioning of the participant on this idea (from the transcript of the interview with Holly & Rosie):

- PG: You said, you mentioned that your cousin is at university doing ICT?
- Rosie: Yeah.
- PG: Is that, err, have you thought about university? Is that something you want to do when you're older?
- Rosie: I'd like go university, but I think I could do it in a, I think I could do a different type of topic, topic, cos I'm, I don't think ICTs my best topic that I do.
- PG: Why not? What would you do at university?
- Rosie: I think I'd do science cos, I think science is really fun!

Before the interviews took place, and before and during the data analysis phase, I undertook some reflection to try to develop a hermeneutic sensibility and a critical self-awareness of my own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions regarding 'lived experience of success'. Below is a short piece of reflective writing I created to help with this:

So, what are my views on success? A brainstorm on success produced the following ideas: how happy a person is; how much money someone earns; what qualifications a person has accrued through education; what job a person does; what possessions one owns; whether a person is in a loving relationship; whether someone is living a life they can be proud of; how proud other people are of someone; what position a person holds in their community/society; if one is 'famous'; where someone started from in life to where they are now. My own predilections on these views would shy away from materialistic definitions and centre on whether an individual is happy, loved and proud of what they do and that any further success aims to build on and secure these things. Obviously, what job one does and how much one is rewarded for it possibly influence security and therefore, happiness. In my own experience success is in getting to a point in one's life where one is in a stable position and feels in control of the future (as much as a mortal human being can be!), to the point where plans can be realised.

Participants responses about what success feels like could be very different from mine. However, with my views in mind, I would endeavour to treat all views of what success means equally. For example, if a participant expressed the idea that they think success is being a rich and famous footballer, a view that might be valued differently by my prejudice, it is treated in the same way as if a participant said that they thought 'being happy' was the best expression of being successful, a view that 'chimes' with my definition. However, returning to Friesen et al. (2012), I remain aware that by adopting a 'hermeneutic sensibility' means denying that it is not entirely possible to bracket out Objective Thought.

Research validity

As well analysing my own preconceptions, to become aware of the possible influence I might have on the interview process, I also undertook the following to increase the validity and reliability of the research: I constantly monitored the participants to see how at ease they were; monitored my own influence on the interviews; was open about the interviews with a clear role for me as the interviewer; developed some pre-thought through steady progressive prompts; was clear to ask participants to say what they thought; and valued the contributions of all interview subjects.

To further increase the validity of the research, I considered the work of Yardley (2000). Yardley cites four characteristics of good qualitative research: sensitivity to context; commitment to rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance (Yardley, 2000: 219). Described below are how each of these four characteristics is addressed in the study or how they may be judged to have been met in the conclusions of the study.

Sensitivity to context

The study uses a methodological approach which is based on theories of hermeneutic phenomenology. Therefore, sensitivity to context was built into the very early stages of the research process. 'Sensitivity to context is also demonstrated through an appreciation of the interactional nature of data collection within the interview situation' (Smith et al., 2009: 180). Yardley (2000) highlights that having an awareness of the sensitivity of the context includes having regard for the research participants'

perspectives and ethical issues, both of which have been addressed in the outline of the methodological process for this study (see above). Smith et al. (2009) argue that research informed by IPA methods, as this study is, can demonstrate a sensitivity to context by using 'a considerable number of verbatim extracts from the participants' material to support the argument being made, thus giving participants a voice in the project and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made' (Smith et al., 2009: 180-181). The children's own words will, therefore, be used to illustrate and support the arguments in the next chapter concerning the analysis of the data.

Commitment to rigour

Yardley (2000) describes that a commitment to rigour in qualitative research methods requires having an in-depth engagement with the topic; to be able to show methodological competence; to have a thorough approach to the collection of data and to demonstrate a depth and breadth to the analysis of the data. I will return to evaluate this aspect in conclusion to this thesis, Chapter 6.

Transparency and coherence

Transparency is how clearly the stages of the research process are described in the study, particularly in connection with participant selection; the interview schedule; and how the data was subsequently analysed. These points are addressed in this chapter and the next by being as clear and as transparent as possible to how the methodology outlined was applied in practice. The coherence of the overall study includes the regard

taken between the fit of theory with the method and whether the study produces a coherent argument that hangs together logically (Smith et al., 2009).

Impact and importance

Yardley makes 'the important point that however well a piece of research is conducted, a test of its 'real' validity lies in whether it tells the reader something interesting, important or useful' (Smith et al., 2009: 183). Bruner (1986) argues that unlike pure science art, or it could be argued, a qualitative study such as this, should aim for 'verisimilitude', or likeness of the truth (Bruner, 1986: 11) in its believability or resonance in narrative ways of knowing the world. As this study is for a Professional Doctorate in Education, the aims of the research are 'focused on improving practice within the profession that is the subject of the research' (Murray, 2011: 50). Therefore, the validity of this point will be judged by the reader in the discussions and conclusion to this study, Chapters 5 and 6. It could also be argued that the validity of the research findings will come from the quality of the writing that the study aims to produce as a result of the research. 'Issues of reliability and validity or the quality of this type of research have been addressed through the examination of rigour, trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity' (Laverty, 2003: 13).

The method used to construct the data

The dataset for this study comprises three main elements:

- The digital recordings of each interview;
- The transcript of each interview;

- The lists of ‘things they are good at’ produced by each interviewee.

The digital recordings of the ten interviews run to just under five hours in length, and the transcripts produced from these contain a little over 46,000 words. An example of one of the transcripts from the interview with Joel and George can be found in the appendices (Appendix 5). Each child created a list of things they thought they were good at, their initial response to the main interview question; there are twenty of these lists which can all be found in the appendices (Appendix 7).

Interview transcription

Kvale (1996) and others point out that the process of interview transcription is problematic, both theoretically and methodologically, and is not transparent:

The primary difficulties surrounding transcription as a methodology have to do with the “big questions” about the nature of reality and how to represent it, the relationships between talk and meaning, and the place of the researcher in this interpretive process. (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999: 82).

Bearing this in mind and Yardley’s (2000) notions of ‘transparency’, the process and the purpose of the transcriptions made of the interviews for this study will be made clear here.

I undertook the transcription of the first three interviews myself. In the transcriptions, I wanted to record every word and phrase verbatim and make sure that words were attributed to the correct person. During transcription assigning each interviewee to what they said was difficult at times as the interviewees were in pairs so short

interjected utterances were difficult to place with the correct child, particularly as all but one interviews were comprised of pairs of children of the same gender. However, with the help of the stereo recording, which recreates the spatial separation between the two interviewees, this aspect was mainly achieved, and where it was not, it is noted in the transcript.

In the transcription process, I recorded every aspect of the speech and so recorded all the pauses and disfluencies ('ums' and 'ers'). I used web-based software (Transcribe - <https://transcribe.wreally.com/>) which allowed me to loop phrases and play the recordings at half speed, so the results are felt by me to be an accurate representation of the words used in the recorded interviews. It also meant that I listened to the first three interviews many times over and in great depth, however, as I was so focused on producing an accurate transcription, I do not believe I consciously brought any form of analysis to the process at this point.

After transcribing the third interview, and after discussions with my supervisors, I decided that I would have the remaining seven interviews transcribed professionally: the rate at which I was transcribing them was too slow. I sent copies of the recordings and transcripts to a professional transcriber so that she had some understanding of what I was trying to achieve. However, it was decided that the transcriber would not transcribe the pauses and disfluencies. Once she had completed each transcript, I reviewed it while listening to the original recording and made any changes or amendments that were deemed necessary. The professional transcriber also marked

her transcript with any queries that she wanted judgement on; these were usually to do with who was to be attributed to specific words or phrases.

For this study, I view the transcriptions themselves as *representations* of an event, the event being the interview itself (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Therefore, primacy is given to the recordings of the interviews – although these were also representations, of a different nature – I consider there to be more data in the recordings, regarding *how* things are said, that is not evident from the transcriptions alone. For example, hesitations that may indicate the tentative nature of what was being said or the tone of voice used that might indicate humour or sarcasm in what was said. It is the intention, and the meaning behind what was said rather than just an analysis of what was said that I feel is important for this study. The analysis of the interviews will, therefore, use both sources of data alongside each other.

Initial analysis of data

In Chapter 2, the theoretical link between habitus, identity and personal narrative was established, so it is a narrative analysis tool that I used in the initial stage of the analysis of the data. Narrative analysis fits well with IPA, 'IPA has a strong intellectual connection with various forms of narrative analysis' (Smith et al., 2009: 196), and a hermeneutic methodological approach:

Narrative analysis is embedded within a hermeneutic tradition of inquiry in that it is concerned with understanding: how people understand and make sense of their lives, and how analysts can understand that understanding (Lawler, 2014: 27)

The first stage of the initial narrative analysis was to listen to each of the audio recordings of the interviews while following the transcript of it. The listening was undertaken to search for any parts of the interviews where the subjects had told stories to illustrate their lived experiences or explain and expand upon their answers. Stories, or narrativizations, were identified using Ricoeur's definition of narrative; that narrative is comprised of characters, action and plot (Ricoeur, 1988; Lawler, 2014: 24). The stories I found were copied out of the full transcripts and placed in a new document to allow a focus solely on the contents of each personal narrative.

From the original transcripts, and using the definition above, I selected thirty-seven utterances or exchanges that sounded and read like a personal narrative, this amounted to around a fifth of the total word count for the complete set of interview data. Not all the twenty study participants engaged in storytelling, the thirty-seven personal narratives were gleaned from fourteen participants. The reason why six participants did not articulate stories in their responses was likely due to the initial focus of the research study in encouraging children to 'describe' their experiences of success. It was only after the interviews were completed, and analysis started did the prevalence and importance of 'narratives' revealed itself. However, the descriptions that the six children who did not tell stories were still used in the totality of the study. Often, the child who did not tell a story related to success was part of the co-construction of a story with their interview partner, examples of this can be found in the interview with Joel and George (Appendix 5). Of the total number of participants, the average number of stories told were just under two per child and of the fourteen-participant subset told an average of just over two and a half stories each. The range was from between 1 to 5.

During initial analysis, and to check that each selected piece of narrative fitted with Ricoeur's (1988) definition, a note was made of who the characters were, what the action of the story was and, perhaps most importantly, what the nature of the plot was. For Ricoeur, the central element of a narrative is the plot (Lawler, 2014: 27). All thirty-seven utterances selected which sounded like narrative fitted Ricoeur's definition too. The next stage of initial analysis was a marking up of essential elements of language used by the participant in each personal narrative account to try to uncover meaning. Here is an example from Rosie with the key elements in italics and underlined (disfluencies have been left in):

Yes, me and Holly are *in the highest group*... in Literacy. Cos in my *parents' evening interview* Mrs B said because erm, everybody'd supposed to be, at the end, should be at ff, in the middle of four or four just near the top and I'm at the end of the Year 6 an I'm or, and she said that *I'm already at the top* near level five so they're gonna *pull me up* a bit but erm, when we had to erm, write a diary to do, to do with Pompeii um, our group had to sit on a certain table and she came over and said erm, 'I wa, I want you to focus on openers'... because um, cos we're, we're not using them very well in our sente, in our paragraphs and I like Literacy cos *I can show off* my handwriting which is...

Meaning is a prime aspect of Barthes definition of narrative (Barthes and Heath, 1977; Kehily, 1995) and meaning in its context is an important part of the hermeneutic approach. An examination of the language used led on to consideration and reflection on the meaning that the participant was trying to convey in their personal narrative. So, in the example above the meaning seems to be that Rosie is an able student who is recognised as such by her teacher.

Indeed, the interpretive analyst is more able to uncover meaning and perspective or insight into the narrative that the narrator is unaware of (Smith et al., 2009). Putting the idea of plot and meaning together, each piece of personal narrative was summarised as to what the intended point of the narrative was. This is the ‘so what?’ that ‘every narrator tries to fend off’ (Lawler, 2014: 29). The final process of the initial stages of analysis was to consider each narrative account, the characters involved, the action and the plot along with the meaning and the point of the narrative. This process was partially influenced by Sfard and Prusak’s (2005) ideas for an analytical tool for narrative analysis with a focus on a personal narrative. Sfard and Prusak (2005) ‘suggest that identities may be defined as collections of stories about persons or, more specifically, as those narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant’ (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 16). Juzwik (2006) develops these ideas further to help researchers ‘discern what discourse is narrative, and what discourse is not, within a body of discourse data’ (Juzwik, 2006: 16). Both sources informed the selection of text that was personal narrative. An example of this process can be found in the appendices (Appendix 6).

Here is an example from Sebastian, who is talking about caring for his family, illustrating the process outlined above. Again, the key elements in italics and underlined:

Sebastian

My Mum has got really strong asthma, and she struggles doing some stuff, and she has got a back problem she’d had since around 2007. She has been to the doctors and everything, and she’s been given medicine. For about two years it got better until a couple of months ago it came back. My Dad has a heart problem because every time he cycles down to the train station, he says his heart goes... like he jumps, he skips a beat. My sister has recently split her chin open. I helped her put her seat belt on. I said

everything will be okay, you will just get a couple of butterfly stitches, and now she really loves me.

PG How old is your sister?

Sebastian She is seven.

PG Right, so younger than you. When you say you care for them, what do you do for your Mum?

Sebastian If she drops something I help her pick it up. If she is really not well, she will sit on the couch and ask me to make her a cup of tea or something.

In the example above the following, with regard to the narrative aspects, were determined:

- The **characters** are the members of Sebastian's family.
- The **action** was Sebastian caring for his family.
- The **plot** was about helping his family because they have health problems.
- The **meaning** was that Sebastian is loved and respected by his family because he cares for them.

From the narrative analysis, and for this particular narrative account, Sebastian's story was categorised as showing his possible personal narratives as being 'a carer' and of being 'socially connected'.

Of the thirty-seven stories, thirty-one were first-person narrative, and six were narratives in the third person, stories about other people, usually family members. Third-person stories were usually used to illustrate a meaning or a point that the utterer was trying to convey. Here is an example of a third-person narrative told by Casey:

I don't really know that much, but there is someone in my family called Beth; she went to university a year ago. She was supposed to be going for the full four years, but she resigned, but she came back after two years because... She was there for two years and then she was just getting through the third, but she decided to come back because she didn't like it there. But I know that it makes you better at the things you want to do so I am going to go and try and do it.

After the development of categories, I returned to the context of the whole transcripts to recontextualise them for each participant to ensure that they seemed coherent. At this stage, I was also mindful that

[t]he interpretative analyst is able to offer a perspective on the text which the author is not. In the context of IPA research, some of this 'added value' is likely to be a product of systematic and detailed analysis of the text itself; some of it will come from connections which emerge through having oversight of a larger data set (Smith et al., 2009: 23).

The final categorisation process involved the removal of some categories, the merging of others and the development of new ones. It is worth remembering that these narratives were co-constructed in the interviews between pairs of children and the interviewer when exploring lived experiences of success together. As a result, virtually all of the personal narratives that children told were positive and agentic narratives which fit well with the focus and ethics of this research study. It is also worth remembering that I was not aiming to explore all possible personal narratives, and there may be some which I might have missed or deliberately avoided by focusing on those concerning children's lived experiences of success. This is why the personal narratives of six children were left out of the sub-dataset. However, the totality of what the children said during the interviews was considered in the wider context of the process of analysis and discussion.

Categories of data

From this initial stage of narrative analysis, I created fifteen categories of personal narrative that the participant's utterances suggested there was evidence for. These were:

- I am ambitious
- I am an autodidact
- I am a carer
- I am creative
- I am extrinsically motivated
- I am intrinsically motivated
- I am a geek/nerd
- I am a hard worker
- I am improving
- I am abler than peers
- I am naturally talented
- I am passionate
- I am socially connected
- I am sporty/physical
- I am tough/resilient

Now each category will be briefly described and an indication of how prevalent it was in the studies dataset.

I am ambitious – Six of the participants related stories that projected a possible future. The children were not claiming that in the future that they would necessarily be successful, but this category indicates that the participants were telling personal narratives with ideas about their future roles and identities. It might be more accurate to use the term used by Sfard and Prusak and talk of a 'designated identity' (2005: 18), this will be returned to in the discussions about the findings in Chapter 4.

I am an autodidact – Two of the participants related stories where they had taught themselves things using their own resources, usually learning things from an internet site such as YouTube.

I am a carer – One participant related a story about how he must care for some members of his family.

I am creative – Four of the research participants related stories where they performed a personal narrative which illustrated their creativity.

I am extrinsically motivated – One subject told a story about how she was motivated to do well in school subjects by being given external rewards by her family.

I am intrinsically motivated – Two children gave narrative accounts about how they did things because they were seemingly motivated their own volition.

I am a geek/nerd – Two children relating personal narratives that support the idea of it being 'cool' or 'chic' to be thought of as somewhat different by their peers: they seemed to like and celebrate the idea of being thought of as a nerd or a geek (Mendick and Francis, 2012).

I am a hard worker – Five children recounted narratives where they claimed their success was down to their own hard work and the practising of skills, usually in their own time.

I am improving – Two participants gave accounts where they seemed to be defining themselves with examples of the improvements that they had made, and continue to make, at school.

I am abler than peers – Five children told personal narratives about them being more able at school subjects than other children in their class.

I am naturally talented – Four children produced personal narratives where they seem to claim to have a natural talent.

I am passionate – Two children told stories about things that they were good at because they loved doing them.

I am socially connected – Seven children gave personal narrative accounts explicitly explaining how they were individuals who benefited from positive social connections with friends, peers, family or other adults. This category links to the greatest number of narratives.

I am sporty/physical – Five children told personal narratives about their role in sports or other physical activities, for example, parkour.

I am tough/resilient – Three children had stories about them, or someone they knew, overcoming an injury or failure but not giving up.

Thematic analysis of findings

The process of placing the data into categories, when complete, then led on to looking for themes that ran through the personal narratives. To begin this process, I used Morse's (2008) advice to help start the identification of meta-themes:

A theme ... is a meaningful "essence" that runs through the data. Just as a theme in opera occurs over and over again, sometimes in the foreground, sometimes in the background, and sometimes co-occurring with other tunes, so does the theme in our research. It is the basic topic that the narrative is about, overall. (Morse, 2008: 727)

I also worked through Chapter Five of *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Smith et al., 2009: 79-107) and the following was found to be particularly useful when developing super-ordinate or meta-themes and how to express them:

Themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual (Smith et al., 2009: 92)

Also, continuing consideration to rigour was considered during this stage of the analysis, and again Yardley has some useful thoughts on this process:

in a phenomenological analysis commitment and rigour might be demonstrated by the effective use of prolonged contemplative and empathic exploration of the topic together with sophisticated theorising, in order to transcend superficial, “common sense” understandings. In this type of research, the intuition and imagination of the analyst can be much more important than any formalised analytic procedures (Yardley, 2000: 222).

The themes

The following four themes are the result of the process described above:

- Personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way;
- Personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves;
- Personal narratives about how they are valued by others;
- Personal narratives about who they will be in the future.

In the next chapter, and through these four themes, a discursive account of the data will be given, and the process of analysis will begin to provide a sense of the lived experiences of success and the personal narratives of the participants of this study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

Using the theoretical frames outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter gives a construction of the research data collected in the interviews with the participant children. Towards the end of this chapter, the beginnings of answers to the research questions, outlined in Chapter 1, will be presented. In the chapter following this one, Chapter 5, there will be a more in-depth discussion about the study's overall implications and summaries of answers to the empirical research questions will be given at the end of Chapter 5. The questions relating to the empirical research are:

- For the children participating in my empirical research:
 - I. What personal narratives do the children express when they describe their lived experience of success?
 - II. What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?
 - III. How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?

As described in Chapter 3, four themes were identified across the subset data. The subset being comprised of the personal narratives that children expressed as part of their interviews. The four meta-themes are:

- Personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way;
- Personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves;

- Personal narratives about how they are valued by others;
- Personal narratives about who they will be in the future.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the interview data organised under each of the themes above, but first, I will give a brief overview of the responses to the interview questions.

Responses to research questions

In this study, when the participating children talked about their experiences of success at any depth, they told stories, personal narratives. The reason that narrative analysis tools were used to explore the data gathered by the study was due to the significance of these narratives in the responses that participants gave in their interviews when talking about success or 'being good at things'. For Bansel (2013), building on the ideas of Ricoeur (1988), narrative is more than an account or a story, it is understood as 'practice, that is as a way of constructing and shaping worlds, identities and experiences' (Bansel, 2013: 5). Further, narrative is not just an account but forms the very process by which identities are constructed and through which are constantly changed (Bansel, 2013). It is therefore worthwhile returning to the process outlined in Chapter 2 that Bansel describes, the process of 'refiguration', which involves a relationship between narrative, action and life, and this is shaped by the three processes of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

Prefiguration refers to the understanding we have of those everyday practices through which identities are constructed in and by narratives of what is normal, permissible and acceptable (and what is not). Configuration

refers to the emplotment or ordering of events memories and experiences, and the ways in which relations between and among them are coordinated into intelligible and coherent narratives. Refiguration refers to the practices through which narratives become embodied as the life of the human subject. (Bansel, 2013: 5)

The personal narratives in the study could, therefore, be considered as lived experiences configured into narrative and refigured into practice by the act of telling a story.

However, what might be important about the child's 'lived experience' is the prefigured aspect that they bring to it, the 'everyday practices through which identities are constructed in and by narratives of what is normal, permissible and acceptable (and what is not)' (Bansel, 2013: 5). The idea of 'prefiguration' is also similar to Bourdieu's habitus, described as being comprised of the beliefs, attitudes and dispositions (capacities, tendencies, propensities or inclinations) that 'are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation' (Mills, 2008: 80). Habitus is a 'complex, internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate' (Reay, 2004: 435). I suggest that the personal narratives produced by the children in the interviews are cultural capital that by their retelling may become part of their habitus, embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way

This theme is a reduction of the following personal narrative categories which were derived from the narrative dataset: 'I am abler than peers'; 'I am sporty/physical'; 'I am creative'; 'I am naturally talented'; 'I am tough/resilient'; 'I am intrinsically motivated';

'I am passionate', and 'I am extrinsically motivated'. All of the research participants who gave narrative accounts, except for two of them, told a story which was categorised as a personal narrative related to one of the categories above.

Here is an example of a narrative from Joel, which was categorised as 'I am tough/resilient':

Yeah, I bent over like that. And like the side of my face was like that, and I was on my toes and I pushed myself up and I and I had grass all over my face, so I wiped that off and then um, I got in, and my mum said, 'Joel what's that on your face?', and I said, 'What's on my face?', and she said, 'Turn around!' I had a massive cut going down my face there (points) from where I hit it. And I don't know where it came from but, where I hit my face and like so yeah, that happened. And then, um, we bought a 12-foot trampoline that went in our, which went in our Nan and Granddads back garden which I went on and um, that and I broke my leg on that because I jumped up really high and landed wonky and I broke my leg in um, two places, I broke my knee and my ankle.

What is interesting about Joel's story about his 'toughness' is that it comes very shortly after his co-interviewee George said the following:

- George Err, I don't care if like, I've cut my leg or something, I've, when I plate, face planted the pitch and lost long-distance, went and got an ice pack just did the sprint... [Here George is talking about how he fell on his face during a school run but it did not stop him taking part in a subsequent race].
- PG Right.
- George So, I don't care if I've got like an injury or something, I just keep on going...

In this interview Joel and George, who were good friends and had a lot in common, were very competitive, vying for the attention of the interviewer, and keen to impress and outdo each other's stories. In this context, it seems that Joel is trying to demonstrate

that he is tougher and more resilient than George, trumping George's story about a cut leg with his own cut face story and adding a story about a broken leg. Throughout their interview, Joel and George are engaged in demonstrating their social position in relation to one another. So, in this context, Joe and George are telling stories about an assumption that they are 'naturally tough' and that this is an attribute that they value, and they feel is also valued by their peers. These boys 'toughness' is part of their habitus and stories about it are cultural capital that has value in their field (Bourdieu, 1984).

This narrative might also be considered in terms of Holland et al.'s (2001) ideas of 'positional identity' as outlined in Chapter 2. That being, 'positional [and relational] identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance – with the social-interactional, social relational structures of the lived world' (Holland et al., 2001: 127). Perhaps, what is being described with the term relational/positional identity is how the children, in the context of being asked, 'what are you good at?', are involved in making comparisons with and between their peers to define their own position. For example, Rosie, who sees herself as able, compares herself to other children in the class to support her view:

Yeah, there's normally Shakira, Tyler, Kerry and all that, people who struggle, they have to go with certain teachers... and do different types of work to us. Which is easier, which I think is, that's why they have lower groups.

In some sense, all identities are relational, as 'all rely on not being something else' (Lawler, 2014: 12). Therefore, 'comparative identity' may be a better term to use here to avoid confusion. However, I will return to Holland's ideas of positional identities later in this chapter.

The example from Joel and George's interview above might also be used to highlight the very process of how an identity is being constituted by personal narrative (Lawler, 2014). In Chapter 2, Bansel's (2013) ideas of narrative identity forming from the refiguration of temporal experience were outlined. 'Refiguration involves a relationship between *narrative, action* and *life*, and this relationship is shaped by three interrelated and interacting process: *prefiguration, configuration* and *refiguration*' (Bansel, 2013: 5). Joel's experience of hurting himself has become the plot of a narrative; his story has undergone 'configuration' as the relations between his memories and his experiences have become 'coordinated into intelligible and coherent narrative' (Bansel, 2013: 5). With the idea that personal narratives are cultural capital, the retelling of this story demonstrates how it has become embodied in Joel's life, his habitus as embodied cultural capital, a view of himself as 'tough' which is likely to influence his practice (Bourdieu, 1990b). Indeed, Joel mentions later in his interview that he likes to be outside engaging in activities like parkour, 'jumping around and doing lots of cool stuff'. Joel's lived experiences of getting hurt but of overcoming it has become narrativised and 'refigured' or alternatively viewed as embodied into his habitus, becoming part of his practice of taking part in physical, risk-taking activities.

It might be predicted that clearer instances in the use of the term 'comparative identities' might be found in the data in the category, 'I am abler than my peers', and there is some evidence of this. Here, for example, is a short personal narrative from Rosie which contains this:

Erm, I like, cos in maths we're doing the grid method at the moment... and I like using multiplication... and addition and all that stuff and erm, and there's these different kinds of group. Cos in the maths there's a top group, and I think I'm sliding in there a bit because um, because Sarah was always, Sarah was supposed to be in the group, but she was away, and Mrs E said Rosie is the perfect person to replace her in this group, so I thought, I'm kind of sliding towards top group at the moment.

Rosie demonstrates that she understands where she fits in compared to others in her class and, in this narrative, she defines herself in a transition into the maths group for the more able children; remembering and repeating the teacher's phrase that, regarding the top group, she is the 'perfect person' to fill the top group's vacancy. Many of the participants made the claim that they were 'abler' than their peers in their interviews, but not many children expressed that they were abler than others through a personal narrative. Why might this be the case? Perhaps this has something to do with the nature of the experience and how it is translated into a personal narrative. The fact that many participants stated they were abler than their peers as an 'objective' fact rather than illustrating this through a story might be due to the 'everyday nature' of the process of labelling that these children have been subjected to at school. In Bourdieu's terms (1977a), labelling of children's abilities by having ability groups in a class is part of the cultural field in which these agents are operating. Many of the children talked about the use of ability grouping in English and maths lessons. Here are three examples from Ruby, Holly and Tom:

Ruby Because at school I am in the top group for maths, doing different things to most of the other people and um, one year after SATs, at the end of the year I got a maths award.

Holly I do lots of long, long sentences! And erm, I'm quite fast at writing as well and when, me and Rosie normally work together for Literacy because we're both really good, and we are in the top

group, and Miss B said that she's gonna try and get us up to a level six cos we're like five.

Tom I am not sure. Some classes I haven't been but some I have because sometimes I've been in the top group or sometimes I have been asked to do the highest level of challenges for anyone else.

Perhaps, only when the process has a more memorable, powerful or novel aspect may it undergo *configuration* into a coherent personal narrative and so be available for *refiguration* and perpetuating through retelling (Bansel, 2013). In Rosie's story, the teacher used the phrase 'perfect person' which seems to have stuck in Rosie's mind, making the experience memorable and thus able to become part of a personal narrative and hence woven into her developing identity and influencing her future choices.

With Bourdieu's lens, perhaps the school label of 'member of the top group' can be seen as a cultural artefact or an 'institutionalised' form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), becoming inscribed into the children (structured) by the laws of the field and embodied into habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Once part of habitus, future choices will be influenced (Bourdieu, 1990b). Is the very fact that they have been placed by the school into the 'top group' and see themselves in relation to others influencing the choices they make? For example, how hard they work to maintain their position?

What is captured more strongly by the theme, 'personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way', is the 'common sense' notion that aspects of identity exist in people and are essentialist in nature.

Essentialism has a long intellectual legacy in the West, such that it could be said to structure the 'common sense' of identity. It posits identity – or some part of identity – as stemming from some aspect of the person's nature rather than from social relations. That is, identity is understood as an essence. (Lawler, 2014: 17)

However, this idea may be further complicated, especially with regards to 'physical attributes', by material fact. Some people's body shapes may be better suited to some activities than to others. For example, in the USA's National Basketball Association, the average height of players is 2.01m compared to the average American male height of 1.76m (NBA, 2007). Taller people have a 'natural' advantage in basketball due to the nature of the sport. But, some people may also *believe* that they are 'naturally talented' at a sport even though they have spent many years attending coaching sessions. The result of years of training has produce muscle memory, suppleness and reaction times that make some children more physically able than others. Does that make them naturally better, or are they just a product of the environment and circumstances that they were raised in? These ideas are explored more thoroughly in Syed's book *Bounce: The myth of talent and the power of practice* (Syed, 2010).

The following extract from the narrative data is from Emily and was categorised as 'I am naturally talented':

Emily	Horse riding because the first time that I did it when I went with Rachel at Budleigh Riding School – no, it was the second time – when I went to Bud...
PG	Budleigh Salterton?
Emily	No, the Sidmouth one. The people that taught me ...
Rachel	Teachers? To trot first?
Emily	Yes, and they said that I looked like a professional the first time that I did it because they thought I was doing it for a long time.

The example above does demonstrate the essentialist view of identity (Lawler, 2014), particularly as Emily went on to say that her Grandmother was an able equestrian and that having her own talents recognised had made her feel proud. The constructionist view would be that this story provides evidence to indicate that, although the notion that aspects of her identity could be inherited from a family member, they are also likely to be constructed from ideas perpetuated by stories told within the family as cultural capital or by practices that the family are engaged in.

The personal narratives categorised as 'I am naturally talented' are not just stories about sports-based activities. Also included in this category are examples from Owen about being talented at art and from Sebastian about being good at acting and making people laugh. However, they do all seem to contain notions of some 'embodiment' of their identity. Bourdieu's notion of habitus has contained in it that bodily *hexis* combines the personal with the social (Bourdieu, 1977a). 'It is the mediating link between individuals' subjective worlds and the cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others' (Jenkins, 2002: 75). Perhaps, for these children, the social world in which they have grown up has provided them with beliefs and skills that are so naturally integrated and inculcated in them, that they 'are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit' (Bourdieu, 1977a: 94). Which may be why it is not clear from these stories how much practise and training has gone into the preparation of the skills in question. Owen thinks he is good at art, but he does not say if he spends large amounts of time drawing or painting or on some other activities which are honing his

skills. Sebastian talks about his performances as an actor but not about the time he has likely spent rehearsing and learning lines.

There are few examples in the narrative subset of the study data that give further evidence to the extent of an essentialist view of identity, but in the main study data set the idea that children are ‘just good’ at some things and not others is reasonably common, for example:

PG	How else do know you’re successful in English?
Ruby	Well, I’m in the top group for that but err, well I’m... I don’t know, I just naturally think I’m good.

Other examples from the main data-set to support the essentialist view are: ‘I’m just, really good at hockey’ (Kelly); ‘I’m just really good at it [English], I think’ (Rachel) and, ‘I’m just a really slow writer’ (Matthew). So, although not explicitly coming across from the narrative analysis of the data, there is evidence in the entire study data set that a Western essentialist narrative of identity is reasonably common amongst the interview participants. From the evidence in the interview data, and from the contexts in which the data were produced, the claim can be made that these essentialist ideas are part of the everyday narratives of home and school.

Personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves

The theme ‘personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves’ is a reduction of the categories which were derived from the narrative dataset: ‘I am a hard worker’; ‘I am an autodidact’; ‘I am a geek/nerd’ and, ‘I am

improving'. Although a seemingly disjointed group they all share the idea that work is done to maintain the identity being proffered, this contrasts with the personal narratives in the previous theme, where they seem to be maintained effortlessly as essential elements of their identity, part of their habitus.

There were six research participants who told personal narratives that were linked to these categories. This theme captures narratives of an identity-making process: children are appropriating narratives through a process of *identification* (Lawler, 2014: 10). The children tell stories about themselves which try to put forward a particular version of themselves. Here is an example from Kelly categorised as her performing the personal narrative of 'a hard worker' and 'an autodidact':

- | | |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kelly | I do extra bits of work because I, sometimes get bored on the holidays like six weeks holidays, I go, 'Ah, I'm really bored here', and instead of playing out with my friends I go and do like, um, maths, science or something. |
| PG | Right. Why? |
| Kelly | Erm, because, if say you got your maths, and you have to do your times tables, and you're on like sevens, like I am now... and, if you practise them when you got back and you have a spelling, no, times tables test... you will, um, know them off by heart. |

In this short narrative, it appears that Kelly is trying to convey the idea (the plot) that she is a hard worker and that she motivates herself to perform this work at a time when other children are playing. Of the fourteen children who told stories related to their success, five told stories that contained the idea that they were hard workers. Perhaps this narrative has come from neoliberal discourses found in the school system. As outlined in Chapter 2, Keddie (2016) argues that 'neoliberal discourses of performativity

and individual responsabilisation permeate' children's experiences at school, particularly regarding success (Keddie, 2016: 110). Neoliberal discourses may be powerful because they seem to connect to peoples understanding or even desire for how the world works, 'Western societies focus efforts on maintaining the belief that we live "in a just world where everyone gets what he deserves - or deserves what he gets"' (Lerner, 1980: 18). It also connects with the idea that hard work brings success: 'the belief that hard work leads to success is a particularly important norm in the school environment' (Wiederkehr et al., 2015: 2).

Outside of school, there is also a popular view that 'individual character, determination and hard work [are] essential ingredients of personal and social progress' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 22). Success attributed to an individual's hard work and practise is 'naturalised and taken-for-granted in what counts as being a good student' (Keddie, 2016: 118) and is associated with ideas from a neoliberal discourse which gains its power and popularity with being able to connect to 'folk wisdom' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 22) and 'naturalness' (Davies and Bansel, 2007). 'Gaining positional advantage through hard work is a central platform of neoliberal discourse' (Keddie, 2016: 109).

Perhaps a clearer example of an interview subject appropriating a narrative through a process of identification is Joel identifying with characters from the US TV, *The Big Bang Theory*, a show about a group of 'nerds', to claim the identity 'I am a geek/nerd' for himself:

Joel Well, I first started watching Bing Bang, Big Bang, I first started watching Big Bang Theory... (laughs) Saw Sheldon doing all his

physics and stuff... and then saw Amy mocking his physics and saying that astrophysics is better than just regular physics and that no, blah-blah-blah, so I was like mmm... Then I tried to do like, $e=mc^2$ and stuff with my teacher told me to do it. So, I'm still working on it.

PG So, when you are saying working on it, what, $e=mc^2$, what you, tell me about that?

Joel Err, she's actually to try to figure out how to do it, so I figured out what it means and all that.

PG Right, OK.

Joel Energy equals mass times by err... Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared. So, if I figure out the speed of light I can find out what the err, mass of something is, so err, if I put a k, one kilogram on a pair of, on a set of scales and a one thousand, which is one kilogram, err... times the speed of light, which is God knows what! But it's...

PG Big number.

Joel ...pretty easy. Yeah, big number! Err, and then I square it cause I like squaring, it's good (laughs) it's easy. And there's my answer, that shows the amount of energy, say, if gravity was alive, that's; the amount of energy it would be using to pull it down.

In this personal narrative from Joel, it seems that, although he is not sure of his understanding of the physics involved, he is trying to identify with and emulate the characters in the TV show. Mendick and Francis (2012) discuss how there is a recent trend in 'geek chic' identities being 'taken up by largely White, middle-class boys and men; leading to the accumulation of symbolic capital of qualifications (and relatedly often valued by teachers); and being valued outside of school within geek chic, 'nerd core' and related discourses within contemporary popular culture' (Mendick and Francis, 2012: 16). Joel is utilizing the current cultural prestige of the 'geek' identity to increase his social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the context of school and friendship settings. It might be, as Lasky (2005), suggests that Joel is using resources that are culturally and socially available to him to build his individual agency through the choices

he makes. 'Individual agency to change a context is possible in the ways people act to affect their immediate settings through using resources that are culturally, socially, and historically developed' (Lasky, 2005: 900).

The personal narratives contained in this theme, 'personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves', might all be examples of children attempting to achieve some form of agency, some control over the choices they have. The children may be working to change old patterns and habits which are holding them back from engaging with the possibilities for action in the present (Biesta and Tedder, 2007) by making new and novel choices. Children who are actively working hard and motivating themselves may, not only be conforming to a neoliberal discourse but also be engaged in taking control of their lives with a knowledgeability of the cultural context (Giddens, 1986). Perhaps they are demonstrating 'a relationship between agency and biographical learning about one's agentic orientations and learning how to reframe a particular agentic 'constellation' [which] can be important in shaping our responsiveness and hence achieving agency' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007: 146).

Personal narratives about how they are valued by others

The most substantial number of personal narratives in this study were linked to the categories of; 'I am socially connected' or 'I am a carer'. Out of the fourteen children who told stories in their interviews, eight told narratives that were linked to these two categories. However, only one child, Sebastian, told a story about his role as a carer. These narratives often display an explicit recognition of the role of others in forming the

interviewee's developing sense of identity. To be clear; the constructionists view is that all identity is socially created (Burr, 2003), but here, in the categories above, the children's personal narratives were about how an identity that they were performing or claiming was supported or acknowledged by their connections to others; adults, siblings, friends, peers, teachers and/or wider family. They are telling stories about themselves to show they are valued by other people. Perhaps this can be seen, in Bourdieu's terms as them building their social capital by an exchange of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Here is an example from Joel where his personal narrative gives a picture of a complex set of social relationships that, not only, affirm his 'success' with computers and his identity as a 'computer nerd' but also provides evidence of an individual who is performing an identity about social connectedness, a positional identity (Holland et al., 2001):

Joel Well, basically I learn, like, my friend Josh he's like really good with computers and erm, when like, we've been in school since we, since I started, I started in Year 1 because I went to a different pre-school... Um, he's been in this school for ages, and as soon as I came here we were best friends, we did everything together we... Um, we went in the computer suite and did um, ages and um, everything that basically we've done has been together so like going outside and playing, playing games um, I would say that we're like, we quite like doing a lot of stuff with the little kids because they're like, really funny and they... And they would look up to us, and a lot of the little kids are like, they really like us, and we really like them because they just play with us like, if there's a new kid or something then he would ahh, he would get, you would know, other people into the school and erm...

PG You were talking about ICT and why you think you're good at that, how does that link in then?

Joel Um, basically from little, from little kids erm, we've been, just playing with little kids and then they've been wanting to going into the ICT Suite... So, we got asked if we would take some of the

little kids into the ICT Suite, so they were allowed to play n'that in there...

PG Oh really, so you were given some responsibility over the younger ones?

Joel Yeah. And um, since then we've been playing with them and we've took them into the ICT Suite and they've loved it and right from when we just, me and Josh just, went in by ourselves just to do what we wanted to do um, we a, we got asked to set up um, some of the computers because they were having new computers in and we got asked to do that and we got told how to put all the wires in and all that... And, I, um, even helped my nan and granddad install their computer because they didn't know anything about it. So, the computer came in the morning I took, um, they took it out they were like, so how do we do this? so we look up on YouTube or something and nan's like, 'no, I can do it!' so I took it upstairs and plugged it all in set all of..., synced all the wires and stuff into the computer and..., just, just like that it went and I've just been good at computers ever since...

Holland et al (2001) try to make an 'analytical distinction between aspects of identities that have to do with figured worlds – storylines, narrativity, generic characters, and desire – and aspects that have to do with one's position relative to socially identified others, one's sense of social place and entitlement' (Holland et al., 2001: 125). In the example above, Joel is performing an identity from a figured world, that of 'computer nerd' (Mendick and Francis, 2012), and is demonstrating a positional identity as a responsible older member of the school pupil community who is looked up to by younger children and trusted by school adults. The personal narratives that were categorised as 'I am socially connected' are used by the interviewees to demonstrate their social position and power in regard to others and are therefore part of their positional or relational identities (Holland et al., 2001).

However, Sebastian's personal narrative about his role as a carer for members of his family, although part of the theme 'personal narratives about how they are valued by others', is different from other narratives in this theme:

- Sebastian I care for my Mum and my Dad and my sister.
- PG That is really interesting. So, you have put you're really good at caring. Caring for pets and now caring for your family. So, tell me how do you care for your family?
- Sebastian My Mum has got really strong asthma, and she struggles doing some stuff, and she has got a back problem she'd had since around 2007. She has been to the doctors and everything, and she's been given medicine. For about two years it got better until a couple of months ago it came back. My Dad has a heart problem because every time he cycles down to the train station, he says his heart goes... like he jumps, he skips a beat. My sister has recently split her chin open. I helped her put her seat belt on. I said everything will be okay, you will just get a couple of butterfly stitches, and now she really loves me.
- PG How old is your sister?
- Sebastian She is seven.
- PG Right, so younger than you. When you say you care for them, what do you do for your Mum?
- Sebastian If she drops something I help her pick it up. If she is really not well, she will sit on the couch and ask me to make her a cup of tea or something.

In the narrative above Sebastian is demonstrating his developing identity as a carer, an identity that he gives the impression that he is good at but that he is impelled to undertake: circumstances in his family have created this identity. Sebastian's identity, with regard to 'carer', is constructed by what he does for his family, by his practice (Wenger, 1998). However, listening to the audio recording of the interview, it is clear that Sebastian is proud to be a carer and keen to talk about his role indicating his knowledgeability about how caring for people might be viewed by others. Perhaps if his

personal narrative as a carer is acknowledged by others, it then becomes a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

The examples above from Joel and Sebastian may also provide another example of how children are using knowledgeability of their social situations to achieve some form of agency or an expanded possibility of choices. The identities that Joel and Sebastian perform, that of a 'computer nerd' and carer, could be constraining in some social environments however, it can be argued that their knowledgeability and reflexivity are allowing them to resist the constraints of their social environment and give them some sense of agency (Priestley et al., 2015).

Other stories told by the children in the study about their social relations also show traces of reflexivity and agency in demonstrating where they fit into complicated family structures and how they are viewed, usually positively, by their families and friends.

For example, here is Rosie and Holly doing this:

Rosie ...and cos I, my dad's friend, I went to his house... and I helped err, Claire, Simon and Claire, cook dinner, err, dinner, it was really fun cos I got to chop all tomatoes and make up this salad, and it was really fun and they said it was really nice in the end. So, I think I'm good at baking, and I really want to do baking things at my next school cos I think I'm really good at it.

Holly Um, I want to have like, a baking business because well, I think I'm quite good at baking because every time my granddad comes down, like a couple of, like every couple of months he um, he's gluten-free, and I always make him like, gluten-free cakes and biscuits and quiches... and um, he says they're all really moist, and when I make cakes at home my mum said they're really moist and they're really nice? So yeah, um, and um, I've got really perfect recipe for cakes, and that's always got good results every time, so I like making cakes, mostly.

Rosie and Holly's example above also demonstrates how Rosie is developing a future narrative trajectory to study cookery at secondary school and Holly has a view to open her own baking business. In the 'ecological approach' to agency taken by Priestly et al. (2015), 'people who are able to form expansive projections about their future trajectories might be expected to achieve greater levels of agency than those whose aspirations are more limited' (Priestley et al., 2015: 24).

In summary, there is evidence in the study that children were telling stories about how they are valued in 'position-practices'. A position-practice being a social position and associated identity and practice, together with the network of social relations which recognise and support it (Stones, 2005). Viewing this with Bourdieu's tools, the children were using their high social capital on the field to produce practice that gave them greater choices than peers with lower social capital would achieve (Bourdieu, 1977a).

Personal narratives about who they will be in the future

Half of the research participants in the narrative data sub-group told personal narratives that were categorised initially as 'I am ambitious', but which were more generally stories about their vision for their future lives or stories about what the future lives of people they know (friends, peers, siblings, family members, etc.) might be like. Below is an example which is part of a narrative about a future identity told by Joshua:

Joshua To be honest, I have loads of gun games, below me and just above me (age rating) because I am ten and I like to have eleven ones because they give me experience because I want to go in the

- Marines when I am older. I like games where you control your own army, be a captain.
- PG Well, let's start talking about that now then Joshua. You said you want to be in the Marines when you are older. Why do you want to be in the Marines?
- Joshua Because it's a good inspiration.
- PG Tell me about that. What do you mean be a good inspiration?
- Joshua You get to learn stuff, and you get to be a good person to your country, and you defend.
- PG How do you know all that?
- Joshua Because I have been watching programmes and I've been watching Royal Marines Cadets.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) would describe Joshua's claim, 'I want to be a Marine', as an example of a 'designated identity'. 'Designated identities are stories believed to have the potential to become part of one's actual identity' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 18). The importance of designated identities is that they 'give direction to one's actions and influence one's deeds to a great extent, sometimes in ways that can escape rationalization' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 18). Joshua says that he is choosing to play gun-based action games on his computer console because he believes that they will give him the experience he needs to become a Marine. He also says, when asked by me, 'What sort of things in school are going to help you with that [getting into the Marines]? He replies:

Research, literacy, maths because if you are in fields, you are going to have to work out what ... like if you have a compass, you're going to have to work out what direction you are going because you might be lost, and you might have to find your way.

Therefore, there is evidence to support Sfard and Prusak's (2005) claim that his current actions are influenced by a desired designated identity.

In the main exchange above, it appears that Joshua is also appropriating this designated identity (Sfard and Prusak, 2005) through a process of identification with a TV programme. Joshua lives in a town close to a Marine training facility, therefore, the community in which Joshua lives is full of narratives about life in the Marines, and it is likely that Joshua's designated identity is also a product of 'discursive diffusion' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 18). The narrative of 'being a Marine' has high cultural capital in the community where Joshua resides, so making that part of his personal narrative aids his 'struggles on the field' (Bourdieu, 1984). Throughout the broader study data, there are many examples of children making claims about what they would like to be in the future, but there are fewer examples that are expressed as part of a personal narrative.

As noted earlier, not all the personal narratives in the category 'I am ambitious' and collected in the theme of 'personal narratives about who they will be in the future', are first-person narratives. In fact, about half of the narratives in this theme are told in the third person, about someone else, usually someone known well by the interviewee.

Here, for example, is a narrative told by Casey about a family member called Beth:

PG You've talked about going to university. What do you know about university?

Casey I don't really know that much, but there is someone in my family called Beth; she went to university a year ago. She was supposed to be going for the full four years, but she resigned, but she came back after two years because... She was there for two years and then she was just getting through the third, but she decided to come back because she didn't like it there. But I know that it makes you better at the things you want to do so I am going to go and try and do it.

[Break in exchange while the co-interviewee speaks]

- Casey You know the girl I was talking about, Beth. Even though she was only there for two years, she got into... Because she worked very hard in the two years, so she got quite a lot of As and Bs. She got one D that she was very sad about, but she made it into the lawyer. Like when they wear wigs and stuff and put the hammer down.
- PG Oh yes, into court.
- Casey Yes, she made it into one of those jobs. And she's one of those people that when there is someone going into court, she asks the witnesses questions and stuff and pleads for them if they are guilty or not guilty.
- PG And, you say she is successful?
- Casey Yes.
- PG Why do you say she is successful?
- Casey Because it's hard to get that job and you earn loads of money.

For Casey, it appears that her designated identity of 'university student' has been influenced by Beth's story. In the wider context of the full interview, and through listening to the recording of it, the impression is given that Beth's story is a narrative of success that exists within the family, a story about how Beth had a tough time in university but eventually overcame it to work in the legal profession. A narrative of struggle leading to eventual success. Success in terms of high economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Here is an example of a narrative of success from Ruby, a story told to her by her Grandmother about her Grandfather:

...but first this is just like my nan said that her husband, I never met him, because he died... But apparently, he started off, like when he was really, really young, he started off loving playing instruments and stuff... all sorts and then when he got older he, um, like, bought a shop and started selling instruments and stuff and then, apparently, he got like a company or something.

Narratives told about others may not be as effective in the identity building process as first-person stories; 'first-person self-told identities are likely to have the most immediate impact on our actions' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 17). However, they may be important in helping to structure a person's lived experiences into their personal narrative.

How do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? Is there evidence that the children do things to make their ambitions more likely to become realised? Below is an example from George, where his ambition to become a footballer is driving him to work towards that aim:

George Err, but I want to be a footballer err, cause I recently got into it when I saw Ronaldo playing for Real Madrid. Err, it was actually when I was quite early Year 5 he was playing Atletico Madrid or something. But, so I used a, I figured out how he did some of his skills like step-overs and stuff, so I'm now addicted that I got goalposts for my birthday and I practise at least an hour and a half in the garden.

PG That's really interesting, so, who told you you've got to practise every day then?

George Myself.

PG Yourself?

George Yeah.

PG Right so you, you think that by practising every day is the way to be good at these things, is it?

George One of the ways, you've also gotta like, YouTube football and stuff and Google it, Google 'tricks, you've gotta learn it off that too. I watch other kids.

PG You look at Google, and then you watch things that happen then you go and practise them... skills. That's really interesting, that's really interesting, and you're working hard by the sound of it to get those things improved.

George Yeah, I come in like, clothes literally wet with sweat, the first thing hear is, 'George change those clothes!'

Examples of children having ambitions for the future that is driving the choices that they make in the present, like the example from George above, are rare in this study. Most of the expressions of ambition that the children in the study make are extensions of what they currently enjoy doing or what they think they are already good at. This may be due to the way that the interview questions were structured, the main question being; 'what are you good at?'. The resulting conversations and narratives were driven by answers to that key question. It may also be that the last year of primary school is a time when, although some children may have ambitions for the future, they have not yet come to an understanding of what they might do so that these are realised. Also, as previously stated, about half of the personal narratives in this theme are told in the third person, about someone else. Children may be in the process of collecting narratives and ideas about ambitions and future possibilities to weave into their own personal narratives but may not yet understand what they might do to influence the attainment of these ambitions.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe agency as being made up of a 'chordal triad' comprising of the iterational (past histories), the projective (future aspirations) and the practical-evaluative (cultural, structural, material, etc.). The evidence from this study suggests that the participating children were in the process of putting elements of this triad together but were not always at the point of producing practical activity (agency) driving the choices they make. 'Emirbayer and Mische's approach ... acknowledges that

agency is in some way 'motivated', that is, it is linked to the intention to bring about a future that is different from the past and present' (Priestley et al., 2015: 24). The study suggests that, for these primary school children, the future aspirations part of this 'triad' were still being developed.

From the evidence above, it appears that the designated identities (Sfard and Prusak, 2005) of the participants are constructed from appropriated or inscribed from narratives that exist within the family or the broader community. Which supports the idea that 'designated identities are products of collective storytelling – of both deliberate moulding by others and uncontrollable diffusion of narratives that run in families and communities' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 21). Indeed in some recent research with older children conducted by Hoskins and Barker (2017), they concluded that 'family backgrounds and histories influenced our participants' aspirations far more than their school or teachers' (Hoskins and Barker, 2017: 64). They conclude that the 'habitus and disposition constructed through early childhood socialisation and family background, norms and values, as identified by Bourdieu (1977a; 1984; 1993)' are largely set and not easily changed by education (Hoskins and Barker, 2017: 63).

Are there any patterns of gender difference in personal narratives?

An attempt to examine if there any patterns of gender difference in the personal narratives was made by separating out the narratives by boys and girls for each personal narrative category and for each theme (see Table 2 below).

Theme/personal narrative category	Total expressed through personal narrative	Total expressed through personal narrative - Boys	Total expressed through personal narrative - Girls
<i>Personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way</i>	26	15	11
I am abler than peers	5	4	1
I am sporty/physical	5	3	2
I am creative	4	2	2
I am naturally talented	4	2	2
I am tough/resilient	3	2	1
I am extrinsically motivated	1	0	1
I am passionate	2	0	2
I am intrinsically motivated	2	2	0
<i>Personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves</i>	11	5	6
I am a hard worker	5	2	3
I am an autodidact	2	1	1
I am a geek/nerd	2	2	0
I am improving	2	0	2
<i>Personal narratives about how they are valued by others</i>	9	5	4
I am socially connected	8	4	4
I am a carer	1	1	0
<i>Personal narratives about who they will be in the future</i>	9	5	4
I am ambitious	7	5	2
TOTALS (excluding theme totals)	53	30	23

Table 2: Gender distribution of personal narrative

There were nine boys in the study compared to eleven girls. Boys were more likely than the girls to tell a personal narrative in the interviews: of the 53 personal narratives expressed, as identified by the analysis' methodology, 30 were from boys, and 23 were from girls. At the *theme* level, the number of personal narratives was reasonably equal between boys and girls. In three out of the four themes, the number of personal narratives found only differed by one. There was a difference for the theme 'personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way', here the boys revealed fifteen of these stories, compared with eleven for girls. It is difficult to judge if this is particularly significant, so it may be more enlightening to look at the stories told at the categorical level.

At the categorical level, there were some differences. Boys told significantly more personal narratives, judged as two or more (see Table 2 above), for the categories of; 'I am abler than my peers', 'I am intrinsically motivated', 'I am a geek/nerd' and 'I am ambitious'. Girls told significantly more personal narratives, judged as more two or above (see Table 2 above), for the two categories of; 'I am passionate' and 'I am improving'. It might, therefore, be worthwhile briefly exploring how this might relate to other research regarding gender identities.

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, Mednick and Francis (2012) speak of how there is a recent trend in 'geek chic' identities being taken up largely by boys, the findings of this study support this as none of the girls in the study identified with a 'geek' or 'nerd' identity. Girls were also much less likely than boys, through the narrative evidence, to

claim to be abler than their peers. Many girls in the study did claim to be able, but, unlike some of the boys, they did not tell personal narratives to support this view of themselves. Renold and Allan (2006) conducted a study of girls, who were at primary school, into their experiences of achievement and the construction of their femininities. In their work Renold and Allan found that girls were 'negotiating the competing demands of changing modes of femininity and achievement and, thus, how girls [were] working within and/or transgressing and pushing the normative boundaries of 'doing girl' and 'doing clever'' (Renold and Allan, 2006: 470). Although girls involved in the interviews for this study were less likely than the boys to claim to be 'clever/able' through a personal narrative, there is no evidence that this was due to a conflict between femininity and achievement as was found by Renold and Allan (2006).

However, in my study, girls were more likely than the boys to tell stories about their improving ability. None of the boys in the study told stories about improving but two girls, Casey and Izzy, did. Casey and Izzy were interviewed together, and their narratives are about the same circumstances:

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Casey | Well when I was in year 3/4 every time Mr T was saying like we were doing gases ... |
| Izzy | That was in year 4 too. |
| Casey | Yes. He was talking, and I was listening the whole time, but he didn't really make it that clear so didn't really... I did do it, but then everyone else was really good at it. They all done loads of stuff and they were drawing pictures, and I just wasn't very good at it. But now I am in year 6, I have done it. We went over gases again, and I understood it a bit more. |

In response to what Casey said, Izzy told this story:

Last year I didn't really like science doing gases because he made it sound really, really boring. And by boring, I mean very boring. So, most of the time, I would just sit there doing something with my fingers or my pencil or my pen. This year, since we have been doing materials, I've really enjoyed it, and I think I have got much better at doing it.

Despite some subtle gender differences in this study it is beyond its scope to comment on Bradford and Hey's (2007) assertions, based on their work with secondary school pupils, that 'feminism's political presence, at times residual and at others more marked, may support young women's reflexive capacity for narrating stories of success and identity' (Bradford and Hey, 2007: 607).

In this study, there does not appear to be evidence of a marked difference between boys' and girls' capacity for narrating stories of success. However, from notes made during interviews, and by listening to the recorded audio of the interviews, there seemed to be a tonal difference between the boys and the girl's responses in their interviews. Boys seem much more certain in their responses than the girls who were a little more hesitant but more realistic in their answers. But this is a gross generalisation; there were some highly confident girls and also some boys who gave hesitant responses.

Missing personal narratives

Perhaps what is interesting in the data, both the narrative sub-set and the wider study data is the seeming absence of personal narratives that reference the grand social 'identity' categories of class, race, religion, disability, and so on. The first response to the reason for this might be based on the context in which the research was undertaken and

in and the makeup of the research participants. The research was carried out in four schools which were all in the same town in the South-west of England. The schools serve similar communities, which are predominately white (all the participants were white) and are comprised of people from a mixture of middle-class, lower-middle-class and working-class communities. Using the New Social Classes from the *Great British Class Survey* (Savage, 2015), they would be described as from the; Technical middle class, New affluent worker class, Traditional working-class or Emerging service worker classes, with a small percentage from the Precariat class. The twenty children participating in the research represent all these class categories as judged by my knowledge of the children rather than hard data or deliberate participant selection.

Only one of the schools in the study was faith-based (Christian), and the communities the schools serve would be described as mainly non-faith or broadly Christian influenced. None of the participants in the study was registered disabled. Perhaps the relative 'homogeneity' of the participants, all coming from similar backgrounds with regard to race, class and religion, makes the grand identity categories not a feature of distinction for the interview participants. As 'all identities are relational... all rely on not being something else' (Lawler, 2014: 12) it may be that at this age and in this location that the children who participated in this study have yet to form a view of their identity, where, for example, their racial distinctiveness is not an important factor in their lives, so it is absent from their personal narratives. A similar study in a highly multicultural and multi-ethnic inner London borough may give some different results with regard to children's personal narratives and their developing identities. A personal form of identity, personal narrative, is constructed from the unique characteristics of a person

whereas social identity derives from their membership of various social categories (gender, race, nationality, etc.) (Goffman, 1963). Whom people think they *are* is formed from a construction they derive from their personal and social identities. In the community where this research was conducted, there are, from the perspective of the children, not clearly 'visible' social identity categories. Social identity categories exist, but it might be that they exist on a more subtle level, and it may be that the children are still inexperienced in noticing the differences. Therefore, reference to them does not come through in their personal narrative.

A distinction between 'identity' and 'subjectivity' may also be useful to consider when reflecting on why there is an absence of reference to social identity categories in the personal narratives told by the participants. 'Identity stands for an association with social categories (race, gender, class, nation, etc.) – categories that are normative and ideological – and subjectivity refers to the more conflictual, complex and cross-category processes by which a person or a self gets to be produced' (Lawler, 2014: 8). Some researchers separate out identity and subjectivity in an attempt to contemplate possible ways in which people live and understand their lives and the types of social categories available to them (Lawler, 2014). Researchers working in primary and secondary schools (Archer and Francis, 2005; Renold and Allan, 2006; Bradford and Hey, 2007; Archer, 2008) found barriers to success reproduced by schools and communities for children whose identity was other than white, middle-class and male. Except for some small gender differences described earlier, there is not the evidence in the data for this study to suggest that a particular view of what constitutes a 'successful subject' is being reproduced by the schools or the community forming the context of this study

therefore, this may be why there is no reference to them in the children's personal narratives.

Focus on two children

To further explore my ideas and seek answers to my research questions, I will focus on two children from the study in more detail. The two subjects chosen from the research are Ruby and Owen. Not only will data from their personal narratives be used here but also data from the entirety of the interviews with Ruby and Owen. Focusing on two children will also allow a little exploration of the affective (moods, feelings and attitudes) and gain some insight into the unsaid or implicit, as revealed in any inconsistencies, contradictions and tensions.

Ruby

Ruby's personal narratives were categorised as 'I am socially connected', 'I am ambitious', 'I am a hard worker' and 'I am extrinsically motivated' and, although she did not tell stories about her being abler than her peers, she did make comments to this effect in her interview. Ruby sees herself as different and 'abler' than the other children in her class in the subjects of English and maths. In her interview, Ruby said that she is in the top group for English and for maths and that, in maths, she does different work from the other children and can get high scores on tests by answering questions and solving problems that other children cannot do or solve. As Ruby speaks about such things, it sounds more like she has confidence in her assertions rather than is being arrogant. For example, when pressed as to why she knows that she is good at English

she quickly replies; 'I got three awards in English'. The tone in her voice conveys confidence in her assertion that she is good at English: she is citing this evidence, as a statement of fact. The awards are from school and from what Ruby says in her interview it seems that the school have developed and fed her confidence through the awards that they have given her in maths and English for scores on tests and by placing her in 'top ability' groups for these subjects. Shortly after talking about her awards Ruby goes on to further justify why she thinks she is good at English by saying; 'I'm in the top [English] group' and then goes on to state that she thinks that: 'I just naturally think I'm good' at English.

For Ruby, it appears that testing; praise, positive feedback and awards; and labelling are part of the school's systems and procedures, perhaps we can regard them as 'structures' (Bourdieu, 1990b), that operate in combination to give Ruby a clear sense that she is succeeding at school. The communication of test results and awards by teachers to Ruby is further evidence that the school is permeated by notions of 'performativity' (Ball, 2003b) and has been influenced by a neoliberal discourse (Keddie, 2016: 110). One might conclude that this supports the idea that Ruby is part of a process where children are 'incited to conduct themselves as competitive subjects' by their school (Wilkins, 2012: 202) and that they are competing against their peers for 'symbolic rewards (teacher approval, for example)' (Wilkins, 2012: 202). Perhaps, as Thompson (2010) concludes, 'the significance of this performativity is that it encourages students to accept hierarchical discourses' (Thompson, 2010: 428).

It is not only in the school subjects of English and maths that Ruby feels that she is successful and where praise, positive feedback and awards; and labelling, also seem to play a role in the knowledge she has about her skills and abilities. Ruby has also been involved in receiving awards for participating in competitions in gymnastics and fencing in clubs outside of school. In school, Ruby has been chosen to play on teams and has been labelled by the school as 'gifted and talented' for sport. Again, Ruby speaks with confidence about her abilities in sport, to illustrate this here is part of her interview where Ruby is talking about the process of being chosen for the netball team:

PG: So, you get to play for a lot of school teams? Not everyone gets picked for that I guess in a school of this size? Do they?

Ruby: Not really, cos netball and our PE teacher Mr B he just chose a load of people in Year 5 and 6 I think, that are quite good at sport and then he took us to practise at the community college, and we done quite well and then at the end when it was the tournament on Tuesday he chose the best people to go.

Here the experience of success for Ruby is not only of an academic nature and not solely in a school context which may be seen as giving a further insight into how far, with regards to Ruby and the other children in this study, 'neoliberal discourses of performativity have taken hold of students ways of thinking about and valuing themselves and others' (Keddie, 2016: 111).

Like Ruby, many of the children in the study were involved in sport both as part of school curricula and outside their school contexts, as members of sports teams and clubs. Some children were involved in competitions at a national level while others played sports as part of the school curriculum or for their school teams. Many of the boys talked about

experiences of success related to football. Girls were equally forthcoming in talking about their experiences of success in sport. Kelly, for instance, gives a similar account of an experience, as is common in the interviews with boys, while she was involved in hockey.

So, are these experiences of success in sport further evidence that within the 'labyrinth of performativity' Ruby is creating identities of success and crafting a 'triumphant self' (Ball, 2003b; Keddie, 2016) fuelled by the influence of neoliberal discourses upon her life?

Maths and English are the focus of English primary schools' assessment systems, and sport also lends itself to assessment against 'quantifiable standards of success' (Ball, 2003b; Keddie, 2016) making it also susceptible to neoliberal discourses. Coakley (2011) argues that neoliberalism now pervades all levels of sport in the Western democracies. Coakley believes that neoliberal ideas are so influential in sport that all levels of sport, not just elite sports, are influenced, even those which take place in schools or clubs that young people are part of:

To fit with a neoliberal model, non-elite forms of sport are legitimized by organizing and labelling them as "developmental" - a commonly used [term] to describe youth sports organized around progressive skill development with young people "graduating" from lower to higher and more demanding levels of competition. (Coakley, 2011: 77)

For example, in the interview, Ruby talks about how she attended an after-school gymnastics club when she was in her Reception class. As she showed promise, she was

involved in a school gymnastics squad and involved in taking part in competitions. From here she joined a gymnastics club outside of school where she received more expert coaching. From an after-school activity, she has 'graduated' to become a club gymnast who takes part in local, regional and national competitions. Kelly, who was interviewed with Ruby had a similar experience and, in the interview, stated that being a gymnast was now one of her ambitions.

I now turn to consider what Ruby said with regards to hard work, practise and self-motivation. Ruby said that she works hard in school, but for her, the impression is, that her success is more related to her natural abilities. However, Ruby also talks about spending time outside of school engaged in both reading and writing as well as talking about preparation and training for gymnastics and fencing competitions. It would be interesting to know the role that school and her sports coaches have on promoting the idea of hard work and links to success in Ruby's experiences. The idea that success is down to hard work and perseverance is another example of the influence of a neoliberal discourse, such as competitive individualism (Keddie, 2016), playing a role in shaping experiences for some participants in this study.

However, from the accounts the children in the study give, I feel that there is a subtle difference between the way experiences of success in English and maths and sport are described. In English and maths, there seems an impression that children enjoyed the subject *because* they knew that they succeed at it, in sport it feels like the children are succeeding at it because they enjoy taking part in it. Ruby also does not explicitly talk

about her enjoyment and interest in the things she does but, it is evident from the way that she speaks, that she enjoys being regarded as able at school and talented with regards to sport. For Ruby, her enjoyment seems to derive from the knowledge, promoted by testing; praise, positive feedback and awards; and labelling, that she is 'naturally good' at some things.

When talking about people she knows who are or were successful, Ruby speaks of a deceased grandfather who was a musician and bought a shop and developed his own business selling musical instruments. This narrative of success seems to have come to her via her family, from her grandmother as Ruby never knew her grandfather. This appears to be a family story of how talent, opportunity and hard work combined to produce success. Ruby also cites an older sister as someone whom she considers as successful; Ruby reports that she did well at school: she achieved high grades in her GCSEs. This is the only measure of success that Ruby uses here as her sister currently works in retail but wants to establish her own photography business. When talking about this, Ruby laughs after describing her sister's ambitions and her current reality, working in retail, giving the impression that Ruby sees the tension here between ambition and reality.

Ruby refers to school exams and success again when she talks about her future saying that she thinks that being successful at school is important as 'the higher grades you get, like when you get older, and you do your GCSEs, so the better job you're gonna get'. Therefore, Ruby claims she works hard in school and has confidence in her future

because, so far, she has done well in tests. Here again, through her family, I believe we can see some evidence of the influence that parts of a neoliberal discourse or 'competitive individualism', come through in 'folk wisdom' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 22) that appears to be 'natural and inevitable' (Davies and Bansel, 2007: 258).

When talking about her future and ideas that might be described as ambitions, Ruby says that she has been discussing these with her parents. Ruby's says that her mum has suggested that Google might be an excellent company to work for and that people who work for them are also paid well. In the interview, Ruby seems to be very excited and animated when talking about the idea of working for Google. There was no other evidence from the interview that Ruby had ideas about how she might achieve this outcome, that of working for Google, other than working hard at school and going on to do well at the secondary level in her GCSEs. Perhaps, here is evidence that Ruby believes that she is 'being educated in a meritocracy that will reward hard work and desire' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014: 65).

To summarise, Ruby believes that her successes are down to her natural abilities combined with some hard work and practise, and these ideas are influencing her personal narratives. The evidence suggests that Ruby sees herself as a 'good' student an understanding framed by discourses of neoliberal performativity (Keddie, 2016; Ball, 2003b). However, there is a tension between which of these she might consider to be most important, her natural abilities or her hard work. This is evidence of the influences of ideas of meritocracy which seem to have come to her via her family history. It seems

that Ruby believes that she has natural ability, which is reinforced by the structures in school that reward things like attainment in tests by the giving of awards. Ruby seems to accept this performativity culture and also accepts the 'hierarchical discourses' that flow from it (Thompson, 2010: 428).

Ruby does acknowledge the role of hard work and practise in both academic school subjects and her chosen sports. She does have some focus for her hard work, to do well at school, but has limited knowledge of how this would translate to a future career working for Google. Ruby made no mention of education past her sister's experience of GCSEs. A-levels and a university education in a subject area, computer science, for example, were not mentioned which, one would imagine, would be required to consider a career in a company like Google. It would be reasonable to say that for Ruby, as Amanda Keddie found with the Year 6 children in her study, 'working or studying hard [are] key to getting a good education, a good job and a good future' (Keddie, 2016: 118).

Owen

Owen told personal narratives that were categorised as; 'I am socially connected', 'I am sporty/physical', 'I am creative' and 'I am naturally talented'. Despite making claims to be good at English and maths, which he expresses with real confidence, Owen did not mention success in school tests to support his claims at all in his interview. Owen is one of five children in the study who did not make any references to testing. Owen says that he enjoys maths and that it is his opinion that he is good at it. See the extract from his interview below:

- PG: So, Owen, you've put maths, tell me why you have put maths on that list?
- Owen: Well, I enjoy it because I like doing times tables in the grid method. I mostly, sometimes, I use different ... what do you call it? The grid method and standard written method. For every times, divide, take away and plus I use a different method.
- PG: Are you good at maths?
- Owen: Well, as my opinion, I think I am.
- PG: So, it's your opinion?
- Owen: Yes.
- PG: No-one tells you you're good at it?
- Owen: No.

Owen does not mention his success in relation to the end of year school tests or SATs or in weekly multiplication and spelling tests either, this is unlike other participants in this study like Ruby or Tom or Bethany, for example. Also, with regards to being ability labelled by his school, Owen does not mention if he is in 'top groups' for English or maths, or if he has been identified as 'gifted and talented' by his school. In fact, throughout his interview, Owen does not indicate that the school regard him as successful. Perhaps he is not successful at school, as he is not in 'top groups' or it may be that *his* school does not place as much importance on 'testing', and 'labelling' as other schools in the study do, Ruby's school for example.

Owen says that he enjoys doing maths work and that he likes the feeling that he gets from solving maths problems. Owen also says that he enjoys the response that he gets from his peers when he solves maths problems:

- PG: So what does it feel like when you solve a problem in maths, and you get that?

Owen: Well, if it's a really hard question, then I like to tell my friends that I have done it and they go, 'Wow, cool!'. And you feel kind of happy inside that you have done something and, yes.

Owen does not mention the role of teachers or school, nor does he mention awards, in his experience of success in maths. Owen says that he can see the importance and usefulness of maths in everyday life. However, the example he gives of what this means is very simplistic. For example:

PG: Do you think maths is important?

Owen: Well, yes because you can use it in everyday life. If you were having toast or something and there are three bits, and you only want one, then you take one. Everything is to do with numbers really.

From the way that he speaks, Owen gives the impression that he just enjoys maths work, but there is no evidence from what he says, unlike other children in this study, if he is regarded as an able mathematician by his teacher or the school. If this is the school's view of him, Owen does not appear to regard it as important and so did not mention it in the interview. Owen does not directly mention working hard at school, but he gives the impression that he does as he is enjoying what he is doing.

Owen mentions the role of peers in his work during art lessons; art is another subject that he thinks that he is good at and that he enjoys doing. Owen mentions comments made by his teacher about his artwork and his teacher showing a picture of his to the rest of his class; this is an event he remembered happening from several years before and told as a story:

When in Year 2, we were doing stuff about the rainforest, and we had to draw something out of the book, and I drew a jaguar. And when I showed it to the teacher, she said it was really good and showed it to the whole class, and they thought it was good.

He clearly enjoyed the response of his teacher and his peers to his picture. Owen shared a similar experience about some writing that he did, with his teacher praising stories that he has written at home and then brought into school. Owen states that he spends his own time outside of school engaged in both drawing and writing, but again, the impression is that he is doing this for the pure enjoyment rather than with a focus on getting better at them in mind.

Activities that Owen also enjoys doing in his own time and which he feels that he is good at are playing football and computer gaming. Owen says that he likes the feeling of winning in football and being part of a team. Owen believes that 'practise, practise, practise', is the key to success in football. However, when he is talking about football Owen is not talking about an organised club or school team run by a school staff member. Owen is talking about playing football at lunchtimes with his friends, an informal activity. Again, here, Owen appears to be free from neoliberal discourses like those described by Coakley (2011). However, when asked to identify someone who is successful Owen chooses the footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, Owen's justifications for this choice are that Ronaldo 'is a good player and earns a lot of money from it'. This is a similar response to that given by several boys in this study and does indicate influences of a discourse which links hard work to success, leading to fame and wealth. Mendick et

al. (2015), believe that this is part of 'neoliberal meritocratic discourses' valued by some young people, which Mendick et al. (2015) believe to be problematic:

We have problematised this investment in hard work, showing how it operates within broader neoliberal practices, which celebrate entrepreneurialism and individualism, whilst obscuring inequalities that limit who can go where in education and the labour market. In doing so, these celebrity narratives of individual achievement via hard work facilitate a shift from structural frameworks for understanding 'success' and 'failure' towards intimate, personal ones. (Mendick et al., 2015: 175)

Is it that Owen is more independent of some of the 'structural frameworks' that other children in the study may be influenced by and has developed something more personal, internal, a model that 'feels' more independent of the structuring forces of the external world? Perhaps in Owen, the structure has become internalised, and so he no longer makes direct links to the external, dispositions and skills that are so naturally integrated into Owen that they 'are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit' (Bourdieu, 1977a: 94). In the interview, when talking about what he is good at, Owen gives a strong impression of confidence *in* and the independence *of* his ideas.

When asked questions directly about success and the future, Owen is clear in his response that, 'you've got to be successful in school to have a good career'. Although, during this section of the interview it feels like he is not entirely convinced by what he is saying: he is not as confident in this part of the interview as he was when is talking about what he enjoys doing and what he is good at. Owen says, 'if you want to work for art college or whatever then you would be successful at art and try to be successful at art. If you want to do science, then be successful at that as well'. Owen thinks that he

will go to university, although he is not sure if his parents went to university. Owen says that his parents want him to do a job that he wants to do, that he will enjoy doing:

I think they want me to be successful because I always talk to them about what I want in the future, and then they say you've got to be successful to be there. That is what I was put into school for, being successful. ...They just want me to do a job of my own that I want to do.

Owen has the ambition to be a professional footballer, though he is aware that it is unlikely that he will achieve this, Owen is mindful of the fact that he is not involved in the system of 'progressive skill development' that Coakley (2011: 77) describes. Owen also says that he would like to be a computer games designer. Both ambitions are related to what he enjoys doing in his free time and are typical of the responses from boys in this study when probed by questions in this area.

Summary

Ruby and Owen were chosen because they gave contrasting responses during the interviews but still represent the spectrum of the replies that children in this study gave. This has produced some evidence to support the idea that the way that children view the world, their personal narratives, directly influences their choices at school. For Ruby, there is strong evidence that she has been influenced by 'neoliberal discourses of performativity and individual responsabilisation' (Keddie, 2016: 110) and that these influences have come to her through the experience of the school system and through her family narratives. Owen does not demonstrate the influence of these discourses as obviously, or, for him, it may be that they have become more intimate and personal (Mendick et al., 2015). However, Ruby and Owen's interview responses illustrate the

range of the responses given by the interview participants and should not be used to make neat conclusions or generalisations. The interview data produced by this study is messy and is not always consistent or coherent, so interpretations of it should remain tentative and dynamic. This is the nature of this type of qualitative work (Tracy, 2010).

Despite the qualification given above, there is evidence in the data that supports the idea that the children's personal narratives influence the choices that they make at school. The personal narratives children express are as a result of lived experience 'refigured' into personal narratives (Bansel, 2013). We therefore have somewhat of a recursive loop or spiral of the development of personal narrative. As evidenced in this chapter, children's lived experience of success is somewhat dependant on what they believe and understand about the way that the world works, and these ideas are informed by their current personal narratives. I also argue that personal narrative can be understood as cultural capital, and through the relationship with habitus and field produces social activity or practice (Bourdieu, 1990b). Therefore, there is evidence for children's personal narratives having an influence on the choices they make at school and more broadly.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5 Discussion, evidence from the study's findings and sociological theory will be used to explore how personal narratives might broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have. This may provide some ideas as to how the choices that children make at school can be improved, particularly with regard to the problems caused to a child's 'social mobility' by an unequal society.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

My thesis is primarily concerned with what primary school teachers could do to influence the choices that children make in the education system and beyond it, particularly those children from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. Contained in this chapter is a continued discussion of the findings that were constructed in the previous chapter. The chapter will begin with a further discussion around the study's research questions concerned with the personal narratives that were being constructed by the children who participated in this research, and what was influencing their development. The chapter will then continue with a discussion using social analysis to illuminate the opportunities and constraints contained in the answers to these questions drawing on the contents contained within the study's full interview data set.

Before continuing further, and for clarity, it is my view that people, or children here, form and reform many personal narratives in a highly dynamic and ongoing process and I am using two main theories to explore this, Ricoeur's *prefiguration, configuration* and *refiguration* model (Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 2002) and Bourdieu's 'field theory' developed over several works (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990b). The findings constructed in Chapter 4 captured part of this process at a particular time with the specific children involved and in regard to a particular focus, that of their lived experience of success. It must also be remembered that the data for this study was a co-construction, made by participants and the

interviewer, consistent with the hermeneutic-phenomenologically informed research methods (van Manen, 1990) used and described in Chapter 3.

In the previous chapter, Chapter 4, narrative categorisation was chosen to examine the interview data because of the prevalence of the use of 'stories' by the study's participants. In the findings, Chapter 4, the personal narratives that children told were organised under four themes. The first, 'personal narratives which assume they are naturally good at some particular thing or in some particular way', were stories where an essentialist view of identity prevailed, stories that seemed to originate from home and school as well as other environments, sports clubs for example. The second theme, 'personal narratives which try to put forward a particular version of themselves', were narratives where the children appeared to be working to change old patterns and habits which were holding them back from engaging with the possibilities for action in the present. These narratives were influenced by neoliberal conceptions of what a 'good' pupil should be like, and tended to be more influenced by school and by the media – TV shows, films, YouTube clips – although families had a role in supporting these ideas. The third theme, 'personal narratives about how they are valued by others', were stories where the value of social capital was acknowledged by participants and seemed to be more directly influenced by family and peers. Finally, the fourth theme, 'personal narratives about who they will be in the future', contained first and third-person narratives about their possible future selves usually influenced by a family narrative or a community context.

However, these four themes are perhaps a bit too 'neat' and oversimplified. The data is more complex than the themes suggest, and the personal narratives that children expressed do not always fit into easily definable categories. During the interviews, an individual could express personal narratives that are seemingly contradictory.

Belief narratives

The beliefs and attitudes that children have when they enter primary school, their 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990b), and which develop further while they are there (Brooker, 2002), are formed by previous lived experiences at home and school and so are of importance to the argument of my thesis. In the study's findings, there was evidence to support the notion that the lived experiences of success for the participants was in large part dependant on what they believed and understood about the way that the world works, influenced by their pre-existing personal narratives, at the point when they encountered a new experience. A belief that was reasonably common among the study's participants was the essentialist view that people are naturally good or talented at certain things.

For example, Joel and George's physical abilities; Ruby being 'naturally' good at maths; Emily's natural aptitude for horseriding or Sebastian's sense of humour. These views seem to have come from everyday discourse and narratives from both the family home and the school environment. There was evidence that these essentialist ideas were also supported by some school practices, for example, the running of 'gifted and talented' programmes for groups of children identified as 'gifted' or 'talented' by schools.

Holly ...and I really enjoy it because everyone says my backhand's really good and erm, I went to a Gifted and Talented group and it's what like, the best people, like the best tennis players in the school, went to and I just really enjoy tennis, and I felt that I quite good at it.

However, if children have a personal narrative that they are simply not good at something, then this may be 'limiting' and potentially self-perpetuating. Somewhat illustrating this point is Matthew, who does not think that he is very good at 'literacy' (English) because he is too slow at writing:

PG What aren't you so successful in...
Matthew Literacy? I'm okay at it but not really good.
PG Why do you think that is?
Matthew I'm just a really slow writer.

If Matthew has this view of himself, it is likely that he will avoid situations where he has to write and therefore will not improve his speed and fluency further feeding his personal narrative of not being very good at writing because he is 'a really slow writer'.

Having an 'essentialist' view of success might be limiting for some children though this might be self-evident, as why if inequality of ability is seen as fixed or 'natural' and so a part of life, would education systems bother to do anything about it? The argument in this thesis is that inequality in education is a result of a social process and is, therefore, open to change through a better understanding of them by educators. Bourdieu's field theory provides the basis of such an understanding (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b). In Holly's example above, Holly has been given some 'institutionalised' cultural capital

(Bourdieu, 1986) by being labelled as 'gifted and talented' at tennis by her teacher. This capital, combined with her belief that she is good at tennis and an attitude of enjoying playing it (habitus), means that in the context of playing tennis (field) the outcome, the practice she produces, is further success at tennis.

Some other belief narratives about 'the way the world works' may be limiting for some groups of pupils. For example, here is part of the interview with Tom who seems to articulate the belief, a conception of 'the way the world works', that you are only successful if you have a job.

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tom | I don't really have anyone in my family that is successful. |
| PG | Okay, why do you say that? That is interesting. Why do you say there is no-one successful in your family? |
| Tom | My Mum is successful because she did do a job, but I don't know too much about it. She doesn't any more. But none of my family really has a job. |

It is not clear from the interview with Tom if he thinks that his family are 'failures', and he certainly does not seem to express that idea about himself, as evidenced at other points in his interview, but in much of Tom's interview responses, the importance of having a job is mentioned several times in response to different questions:

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------|
| PG | Why do you think it's important to be good at maths? |
| Tom | If you are doing ... so you can get into a job easier. |
| PG | Do you think being good at technology is useful Tom? |
| Tom | Again, it depends what job you are doing. |

- PG Maths, it is most important that you are good at maths? Okay, why would you choose maths rather than technology or reading?
- Tom Because maths is one of the key things you need to know for any ... because maths normally comes up for any job or for anything like that.

Neoliberal narratives

Being economically productive, having a job, is core to a neoliberal identity that schools seek to promote (Keddie, 2016). Success, a job and money, come together in the interview data multiple times, here are some typical examples from Matthew, Charlie and Casey of what participants said:

- PG Right, so you need to be successful to help them. Any other reasons?
- Matthew So, I get a chance to pick more jobs.
- PG So, if you are not a footballer what other job would you like to do?
- Matthew Plumbing.
- PG Why do you say plumbing? Do you know somebody who is a plumber?
- Matthew No, just because it gives you quite a lot of money.
- PG What about you Charlie? Is being successful important to you?
- Charlie Yes, I was thinking of saying it gives you a good career when you are older. Makes your life easier and you get more money if you do better at school and you get a better job and more money. So, you don't have to worry about the rent so much.
- PG Why do you say she is successful?
- Casey Because it's hard to get that job and you earn loads of money.

I argue here that 'neoliberal discourses' in education are equally as problematic as essentialist ideas because they are taken for granted and also need resisting by

education, especially in the primary school years. The current climate in Western education seems to be one where education's core purpose is to serve the economic future of the country, to maintain the 'status quo', and other conceptions of what education should or could be, have become crowded out (Apple, 2006). This use of primary education to maintain a 'status quo' may be precisely how the reproduction of social inequality is persisting, and individuals in disadvantaged positions, such as some of the children above like Tom, might be part of the reproduction (Biesta, 2015).

Perhaps, if Tom's primary school education had explored ideas of other ways of being successful, engaging with his personal narratives of what makes a person successful, he would have a different view on his family and his future. I argue that education needs to widen out children's narratives about 'the way the world works' and what is possible to overcome educational inequalities and enable children to 'engage critically and reflexively with the society they are part of' (Reay, 2017: 191).

The study found evidence of other 'taken for granted' beliefs or narratives which can be organised under the heading of 'neoliberal discourses'. Some examples being a narrative that success can be achieved as a result of 'hard-work' and attitudes that indicate a belief that it is individuals that are responsible for their success; indicating the influence of discourses of 'individual responsabilisation' (Keddie, 2016). Here are some examples, further to those given in Chapter 4, from Kelly and Izzy:

Yes, cos erm, if you wanna be like some gymnasts then, you have to like, work hard to be a gymnast and, well you have to like, work a lot about subjects and especially erm, gymnastics watch like videos, how to do a back flip or something like that. (Kelly)

I do know someone who went to university and now is a teacher. Josie, one of my stepsisters. And Emily, the other one of my stepsisters, is at university now. She has to work very hard. (Izzy)

Evidence in the study data, such as Ruby's claims that her hard work and natural abilities have led to her success at school, supports other researcher's assertions that neoliberal discourses are commonly found in the school systems of the Western world (Keddie, 2016; Reay, 2017). In this study (see Chapter 4), there was evidence that neoliberal ideas were supported by 'folk wisdom' (Hoskins and Barker, 2014) and 'naturalness' discourses and narratives (Davies and Bansel, 2007) that occur in the family setting. A fuller discussion on why 'neoliberal discourses' in education are problematic can be found in Lerner (1980), Ball (2006), Davies and Bansel (2007), Lakes and Carter (2011), Wilkins (2012), Wiederkehr (2015), and Keddie (2016).

Therefore, two of the research questions that Chapter 4, and the discussion above go towards answering for the children participating in my empirical research are:

- What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?
- How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?

From the study's findings, there was evidence of a limited variety of beliefs or narratives which have a powerful influence over children's developing personal narratives. These narratives were primarily based on 'essentialist ideas' and neoliberal conceptions of 'the way the world works'; they are narrow and may be limiting for some groups of children.

The research in this study tells us that the personal narrative formation of the children that were participants in this study is a process where beliefs, formed by previous experiences at home and school, are built upon further by subsequent lived experiences and woven together in the process of narrativization. The model for this that Bansel (2013) proposes, that of 'refiguration', seems to be supported by the evidence in this study. A further discussion about this model will be conducted below.

Influencing personal narratives

It has been my concern in this thesis to consider that the constitution of personal narratives are configured over time and are profoundly social and continually interpreted and reinterpreted. We can view a person's ongoing personal narrative as providing the context through which experience is interpreted:

Ways of telling and ways of conceptualizing that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future. (Bruner, 1987: 31)

Or, 'it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience' (Leve, 2011: 514) and this process of constitution is a process of the *refiguration* of narrative (Bansel, 2013). Here is a typical example from the study data of how an experience has contributed, been refigured, to form an aspect of personal narrative, in this case, Kelly seeing herself as being a 'sporty' person, who is good at hockey:

Kelly	I'm really good at hockey.
PG	Oh right, really?

Kelly Yeah erm, cos we done a hockey tournament with lots of teams ... I was in goal, and everyone said, 'Oh Kelly can be in goal cos she's really good'. It was a really hard job, but I managed to do it. And someone done a really hard shot and I think it was Ben, he done a really hard whack and I saved it, and everyone went, and Miss Williams, our teacher, said, 'Nice save!'. I'm just, really good at hockey.

It is likely that Kelly, through experiences such as the one above, will have a positive personal narrative in relation to sport, and so more experiences like the story she tells above will continue to build her personal narratives in this regard. This will influence her choices at school, for example, with participation in physical education and sporting events and opportunities.

The personal narratives that children bring to school with them contribute to the *prefiguration* process by which future identity, practice and agency results (Bansel, 2013). 'Prefiguration refers to the understanding we have of those everyday practices through which identities are constructed *in* and *by* narratives of what is normal, permissible and acceptable (and what is not)' (Bansel, 2013: 5). In the study, Joshua made sense of or justified, his playing of gun-based, first-person shooter computer games, designed for older children as part of his future identity as a Marine. He seems to justify what he knows is 'not permissible' – that being an eleven-year-old playing computer games rated for over 18s – because he knows that by framing it as part of his ambition of being a Royal Marine his actions are more likely to be seen as acceptable by adults, in this case, the interviewer. In his interview Joshua further supports this developing personal narrative with stories about meeting an ex-Marine; watching TV programmes about The Royal Marines; working hard at school at subjects that will build

his skills to be a Marine; and his experiences of target shooting with a BB gun. The narratives he tells are from a variety of periods in time and woven together to constitute his possible future 'designated identity' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005).

In Ricouer's (1988) model, identity results from the 'refiguration of temporal experience', into narrative (Bansel, 2013: 4) in a relationship between narrative, action and life. '[T]he very constitution of an identity is configured over time and through narrative' (Lawler, 2014: 30). Identity is produced through the personal narratives that children use to explain and understand their lives, through the stories that children constantly tell and retell, which produce the self as something continuing through time. In Joshua's example, his 'Royal Marine personal narrative' appears to have been built up over time and form a 'projective' into the future, driving his aspirations, actions and agency through the choices that he makes at school (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Giddens also views identity as 'the capacity to keep a particular narrative going' (Giddens, 1991: 54). Giddens argues how the modern self has become a 'reflexive project' sustained through revisable narratives of self-identity. However, narrative identity is 'unstable' (Bansel, 2013) and dynamic and in children, this is more likely to be so. With Joshua, one could imagine that he could encounter some experiences that interfere with his personal narratives. What if he, at some point in his life, failed to get into the Royal Marines? Or had an experience at school that made him question this future? Perhaps then, there is an opportunity for schools to *influence* children's identity-making process through personal narratives by engaging with the wider narratives that children have and have access to, to provide knowledge of a range of other possible

future identities. In Bourdieu's terms, this could be seen as teachers helping children to build their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and in doing so influencing their habitus.

Evidence from theory and this study enable us to consider that children arrive at school with an emerging set of personal narratives which shape their view of how the world works, their habitus. Their further lived experiences at home and school build on these narratives in a continuous and recursive process (Giddens, 1991). For example, in the research Ruby, a child who thought of herself as 'naturally able' at a number of school subjects, was creating a personal narrative of success and crafting a 'triumphant self' (Ball, 2003b; Keddie, 2016). Her sense of success seems to be driving her practice, inclining her to choose to work hard at school thus making more 'successful' experiences for her, which, will go on to be woven into her personal narratives and embodied in her habitus.

This study provides some answers to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices and how personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have. It also contributes to an understanding of how the process of personal narrative formation and development works at primary school and how this is influenced by the lived experiences that children have. Perhaps then, it is now worth examining what the implications of this research for teachers and schools might be.

The role of school curricula

Stemming from the argument above, one potential way for schools to *influence* children's personal narrative development process is to facilitate access to a wide and diverse range of narratives or build cultural capital through their curriculum: a school's curriculum being 'a selection from the culture of a society' (Lawton, 2012, p. 7). Although there is not a vast wealth of evidence in the study data to illustrate how this might work, there is an interesting example in the data in the interview with Joel and George which is worth considering:

- PG So, who do you think successful then George?
- George Err, I think seeing that Nelson Mandela over there.
- PG Okay, yeah, I can see a photo on that wall but why is he successful? I mean in, the...
- George He's err, fought for... he fought for like, black rights and stuff and he wouldn't give up, he does, does all the...
- Joel He got even sent to prison for black rights...
- George Yeah, he got sent to prison for going, for a...
- Joel Bus trip for white people.
- George Yeah, he went on a train for white people, it was a peaceful pro, err, non-violent protest, I think.
- PG Right, Okay.
- George Err, so he even get sent to prison for it and comes out and still becomes Prime Minister.
- PG So, you've, you've learnt about him in school, have you?
- George Yeah. We mainly did him, err, when we was doing biographies last year... and err, when he died.

The fact that both boys remember aspects of the experience of learning Mandela's story might indicate that it is important to them and would form part of their understanding of their own narratives, their sense of who they are and what they believe. Indeed, in

the interview, both Joel and George talk about standing up to bullies, standing up for what is right. I am not suggesting here that the work that they did about Nelson Mandela in school led directly to this attitude, but it could certainly have contributed to or reinforced their pre-existing ideas of what 'justice' means to them, a belief in 'justice' would be regarded by Bourdieu as part of habitus.

In Bansel's (2013) model, their previous experiences of justice (or injustice), their 'prefiguration', may have connected with Mandela's powerful and moving story – if you experience it with an already developed sense of justice – to undergo configuration into a coherent narrative and so be available for refiguration and perpetuating through retelling. The boys were retelling parts of the Mandela story which suggest that this is the case. Therefore, this may provide evidence for ways in which a school curriculum can influence pupil personal narrative (narrative identity here) formation in ways suggested by Bansel:

The concepts of narrative identity and refiguration also enable us to see ways in which the student identities and experiences, knowledge and literacy/ies are refigurations of more than teachers' intentions and pedagogical interventions but also refigurations of broader social and political narratives, practices and relations. This enables us to understand narrative and narrative identity, students literacy/ies, as fluid, mobile and open to change. (Bansel, 2013: 8)

Outside the teaching of reading, British primary schools have always used stories for religious, moral and values education (Halstead and Taylor, 2000) but perhaps not with the explicit aim of influencing the personal narratives of children. Without due regard to the process by which lived experience is refigured into narrative and then woven into

identity (Bansel, 2013), schools may be guilty of promoting a narrow range of narratives with regard to school success.

Self-knowledge

In his extensively researched book *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Rose (2010) describes how many nineteenth and early twentieth-century working-class people, through access to reading in free libraries of classic and popular literature, begin to see themselves as individuals. As one working-class person cited in the book phrased it; 'how I may be able to make a break from the general situation of which I had regarded myself as an inseparable part' (Rose, 2010: 69). The reading of 'canonical literature' led to the questioning of authority by working people (Rose, 2010) and contributed to the explosion in social mobility in the first half of the twentieth century in the UK (Rose, 2010). Gee and Hayes (2011) argue that literature, both old forms (books) and new digital media, such as video games, can 'free new identities' as readers and players identify themselves with the characters, projecting themselves into them. 'Any specific way of reading and thinking is, in fact, a way of being in the world, a way of being a certain 'kind of person', a way of taking on a certain sort of identity' (Gee, 2014: 7).

When suggesting that schools should provide all children with access to a broad and diverse range of narratives, this does not mean only reading stories from literature to children or to just encouraging children to read more widely, although these would also be very important in this process as there is a wealth of evidence on the impacts to future success that reading widely for pleasure brings, for example, see Clarke and

Rumbold (2006). It would also mean giving children a broad and diverse range of *experiences* so that they have knowledge – cultural capital – of the wider world and can read these experiences as text and weave them into their personal narratives.

Some participants in the study, for example; Joel and George; Kelly and Ruby; Owen; Casey; and Sebastian, were able to draw on a wide range of lived experiences to illustrate their narratives. Here is Joel talking about an experience out of school that his parents have invested a great deal of time and other resources in, such as travel costs, to enable him to have:

- Joel ...ever since I started school, Um, but then my mum brang up Honiton gym when we went to a competition in Exeter for, for the National finals.
- PG So, you've done, you've been in National finals?
- Joel Yeah...
- PG ...for gym?
- Joel ...in gymnastics, for, we've done it two, thr, three times now?
- PG Right.
- Joel And, we've come 6th, 5th and we came 4th last year.
- PG Right.
- Joel Um, hopefully, we're gonna go this year and do some stuff, come first...
- PG Is that important to you?
- Joel Yeah, my gym is really important to me because, like, for my parents it's really easy for them to take me down there and then they can just like, chill-out and so, they can do their work when I'm out and stuff, cos I go up to gym in Honiton for four hours from half four til eight.
- PG Really?
- Joel Yeah.
- PG That seems, that's a, that's a lot of time for someone of your age...

Joel Yeah.

Lareau (2003) in *Unequal Childhoods*, outlines how upper and middle-class parents access out-of-school learning and enrichment activities to cultivate their children's identities or build their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In Lareau's work, summarised by Gee and Hayes (2011), she found that upper and middle-class parents cultivated their children's personal narratives:

They arrange, monitor, and facilitate a great number of activities for their children, such as museum trips, travel, camps, lessons (e.g. music), and special out-of-school activities (e.g. ballet). ... They encourage their children to look adults in the eye and to present themselves to others as a confident and knowledgeable person, or at least a person with a right to an opinion. They encourage their children to develop a mastery with digital tools, using things like games as a gateway, and help their child relate this mastery to literacy and knowledge development. (Gee and Hayes, 2011: 105)

This cultivation process produces confident and empowered children who become the 'shape-shifting portfolio people' who appear to dominate in our society (Gee, 2006). I would argue that this cultivation process gives children access to a 'toolbox' of narratives on which to draw upon. Upper and middle-class parents are engaged in building, not only their child's social and cultural capitals and a sophisticated 'cultured habitus' (Bourdieu, 1967; Bourdieu, 1986) but also, it is argued here, their access to a wide and diverse range of narratives, through *experiences*, that help them to gain a strong sense of their own narrative and perspective on their place in the world. In this study children like Joel, and those others listed above, seem to have benefited from 'cultivation' by their parents that required a great deal of parental time and resources, for example, in transporting children to and from coaching sessions and competitions.

It is my argument that education should look to provide enriching experiences to *all* children building their embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have parents who can provide for them, for a variety of reasons, the types of experiences listed above by Lareau. There is evidence in my research's findings that children were using their knowledge of the world, their cultural capital, from the narratives refigured from their more extensive experiences, such as the participation in gymnastics competitions, to build a sense of the choices they have in the world. There was also evidence that they also used narratives appropriated or inscribed from their family or community as well as narratives conveyed to them through the media to build a sense of the choices that were open to them. These narratives can be conceptualised using Bourdieu's field theory as cultural artefacts or forms of cultural capital (1984; 1990b).

I will now turn to how having knowledge of a range of narratives provided by a broad and diverse range of experiences might lead to the improved possibility of choices for children. This links to my research questions of; what are the implications of this research for teachers and schools?

Exploring the choices that primary children can make

In this section, I will discuss some of the ideas about 'agency' outlined in Chapter 2 using examples from my research study. Although he did not use the term, 'agency' Bourdieu believed that people have some ability to make choices or rather that their practice can

be influenced at the point of the interplay between habitus and social field (Jenkins, 2002: 82). The other models of agency outlined in Chapter 2; those of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Lasky (2005) and Priesly, Biesta and Robinson (2015), all contain the potential for people to influence the context within which they find themselves, and they take agency as situated. As discussed in Chapter 2, although the term 'agency' is used in my thesis, I am more specifically considering it to mean the ability of children to make choices in a particular context.

In Chapter 4, there were examples of children appearing to be working to achieve some form of choice in their present contexts. In Chapter 4, Joel's personal narrative of social connectedness is explored. In this account, we can see how Joel is building agency through the trust that he is given by his teachers to work with younger children:

So, we got asked if we would take some of the little kids into the ICT Suite, so they were allowed to play n' that in there. (Joel)

In this example, Joel is demonstrating a positional identity (Holland et al., 2001) as a responsible older member of the school pupil community who is looked up to by younger children and trusted by school adults and by which he achieves a greater level of choice at school. Joel has been given permission to choose where he spends his lunchtime break, outside with his peers or inside working with younger children. This is built upon his personal narrative as an expert with computers, an expertise that he has, which is greater than many of the adults that he has around him in his life. Joel built his social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) with the adults in the school, which allowed him to achieve greater levels of choice relative to his peers.

Sebastian's example also explored in Chapter 4, demonstrates how he increases his agency by being 'seen' as a carer for his family.

- Sebastian I care for my Mum and my Dad and my sister.
- PG That is really interesting. So, you have put you're really good at caring. Caring for pets and now caring for your family. So, tell me how do you care for your family?
- Sebastian My Mum has got really strong asthma, and she struggles doing some stuff, and she has got a back problem she'd had since around 2007. She has been to the doctors and everything, and she's been given medicine. For about two years it got better until a couple of months ago it came back. My Dad has a heart problem because every time he cycles down to the train station, he says his heart goes... like he jumps, he skips a beat. My sister has recently split her chin open. I helped her put her seat belt on. I said everything will be okay, you will just get a couple of butterfly stitches, and now she really loves me.

By showing he is caring for the members of his family, he gains the respect of others which is something that Sebastian appears to have knowledge of in terms of the way it is raised during the interview. His role as a carer gives him aspects of trust and respect from others which, in turn, offers Sebastian some transferrable amounts of agency: he will be seen as a trustworthy and responsible individual in other situations and so be given greater ability to choose. Again, as with Joel above, Sebastian has invested in building his social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and expressed it in his personal narrative with a certain amount of knowledgeable about how this will be seen by the interviewer.

In the two examples above the participants in the research study were valued in position-practices (Stones, 2005) appearing to demonstrate their social capital. Having

some value, some social capital creates agency or greater degrees of choice in the social structures in which a person is involved (Bourdieu, 1977a; Giddens, 1986). The personal narratives told about their social position or about family, peers and teachers, were taken from often quite long and expansive narratives involving expressions of feelings and emotions which gave the impression that they formed an important part of the children's personal narratives. This provides some evidence that Joel and Sebastian were trying to make sense of complex social contexts, their agentic 'constellation':

a relationship between agency and biographical learning about one's agentic orientations and learning how to reframe a particular agentic 'constellation' can be important in shaping our responsiveness and hence achieving agency'. (Biesta and Tedder, 2007: 146)

In the research findings in Chapter 4, personal narratives about possible futures told by the study's participants were collected under the theme 'personal narratives about who they will be in the future'. In the research data, there were only a very few first-person narratives that reference a 'designated identity' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). 'Designated identities are stories believed to have the potential to become part of one's actual identity' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 18). The importance of designated identities is that they 'give direction to one's actions and influence one's deeds to a great extent, sometimes in ways that can escape rationalization' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005: 18). Having a personal narrative that connects to a future 'designated identity' or having 'future aspirations' may well be important to a child making choices in the world.

A key aspect of a fully formed sense of identity may be on having a clear biographical continuity which encompasses past, present and future (Giddens, 1991). The potential

stories a person may tell about themselves links to the self that a person wants to be, the 'ideal self'. 'The 'ideal self' is a key part of self-identity because it forms a channel of positive aspirations in terms of which the narrative of self-identity is worked out' (Giddens, 1991: 68).

In Chapter 2, some perspectives of how agency might be theorised were outlined. Priestly, Biesta and Robinson's 'ecological' model of agency contains the notion that the 'implication ... that people who are able to form expansive projections about their future trajectories might be expected to achieve greater levels of agency than those whose aspirations are more limited' (Priestley et al., 2015: 24). Priestly, Biesta and Robinson's model was based on the 'chordal triad' of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) which describes agency as being made up of the iterational (past histories), the projective (future aspirations) and the practical-evaluative (cultural, structural, material, etc.). Providing children with a wide and diverse range of narratives may also provide them with personal narratives about their possible future identity and so allow them to 'form expansive projections about their future trajectories ... to achieve greater levels of agency' (Priestley et al., 2015: 24). I would, therefore, argue that with access to a wide and diverse range of narratives children have better knowledge on which to base the choices that they make.

There was evidence in the data that a few of the participating children appropriated narratives from people they knew, mainly family members, to help them achieve some

ideas on possible future 'designated identities' (Holland et al., 2001). For example, here is Sebastian talking about his father's job at Tesco:

- PG Have you got any ideas about what you are going to do later in life Sebastian?
- Sebastian I was thinking maybe I might take on my Dad's job, which is working at Tesco because he took me there once on his shift and he showed me how to reduce items, and I found it really fun when he gave me a go. Basically, you scan the tag, a little sticker comes out, you peel it off, and then you put it on, and it's regularly 90% off.

But there were very few other examples to be found in the research study. Therefore, one potential way for schools to help children be more agentic – to make better choices – is to provide them with experiences that cultivate personal narratives that are projective.

In the study Rosie shows how she is developing a projective personal narrative, a future trajectory, to study cookery at secondary school and Holly has a future trajectory to open her own baking business (see the text taken from the transcript as shown on pages 120).

The evidence from the examples above demonstrates how some of the research participants were actively seeking opportunities for agency or making their own choices. Joel and Sebastian were using their knowledgeability of the resources that were culturally and socially available to them as social capital to build their individual ability to make choices through projecting identities through personal narratives of 'trusted

pupil' and 'carer'. Rosie and Holly could be seen as agents who were developing their range of choices through projected future narratives by planning to study cookery at secondary school and open a baking business (Priestley et al., 2015). Joel and Sebastian were *identifying* (Lawler, 2014) with a particular narrative that gave them the possibility of agency in their context while Rosie and Holly *appropriated* a narrative with a projective future identity as the potential precursor to agentic choices. These highlighted examples from children in the study illustrate the power of narrative, which is refigured into a personal narrative providing the potential for improved choice making in children. Or how they have built their social capital which plays out with their personal narrative (habitus) on the field to produce practice.

Personal narrative and its relationship to habitus and cultural capital

In this study, personal narratives were articulated in response to a specific context, an interview, and at a specific time. The personal narratives were co-constructed by the participant children and the interviewer in response to the questions concerning their lived experiences of success. The ability to tell convincing stories to different audiences at different times and in different contexts (fields) is, in some regards, a form of cultural capital. This is consistent with a constructionist view, a view that there is no true singular self, the self is continually being constructed and reconstructed in time and space, which lends some weight to the view that personal narratives can be thought of as a type of cultural capital.

Throughout this thesis, I have equated personal narratives as cultural capital which may become embodied as habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). But it may be that personal narratives are neither wholly part of habitus or cultural capital. It may be that personal narratives are better understood as entrenched parts of a person's subjective experiences of the world, but which are aligned with habitus. Or it may be that personal narratives are stories that are deliberately told as a form of objectified cultural capital that people use to present themselves in a particular way and which influence their practice consciously or unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1990b). Personal narratives could also be thought of as objectified cultural goods which can be exchanged for influence in social situations as social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, Sebastian's personal narrative concerning him as a carer for his family could be viewed in these terms as could Joel's narrative about being regarded as good at helping people with their computer problems.

There is evidence in my findings that personal narratives do indeed influence practice when combined with certain beliefs and attitudes or habitus and a specific context (field). For example, Joel and George's personal narrative 'I am tough/resilient' influences their adventurous, risk-taking habitus and associated practice in outdoor settings as they engage in parkour.

Personal narratives may be seen as capital in another way. 'Bourdieu's reflections on the role of cultural capital arises from his interest in how inheritance takes place in modern societies' (Savage, 2015: 49) and there is some evidence in my research data, such as Emily's equestrian family narrative, of personal narratives, and with them beliefs,

attitudes and tastes, being passed down through the family. Ruby's family 'rags to riches' narrative about her grandfather was also passed down through the family, inherited, as a form of capital.

Whether personal narrative is viewed as habitus or as cultural or social capital will be dependent on the field, illustrating how the constructs of habitus, cultural and social capital and field are relational, as Bourdieu intended them to be (Bourdieu, 1998). Also, I take the stance that Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' are not an objective reality; there is no such thing as 'habitus', for example. Bourdieu's tools are subjective and open to critical debate, and part of my contribution in this thesis is to add to this debate by suggesting that personal narratives can be used to grapple with, clarify and critique Bourdieu's concepts. To repeat a point made in Chapter 2 'the struggle to work with Bourdieu's concepts ... is worthwhile, just because to do so forces one to think' (Nash, 1999: 185).

So, to conclude, seeing personal narratives in relation to ideas about cultural and social capital and habitus may be helpful to educators in using Bourdieu's theories (1977a; 1977b; 1986; 1990b) to understand how they can influence children's practice and the choices that children make at school, their 'moves within the field' (Webb et al., 2002: 107). Importantly for this thesis, the personal narratives of children are something tangible that teachers in schools can engage with.

Answers to the empirical research questions

The discussion above has provided some answers to my main research questions of; how do children's personal narratives influence their choices at school and more broadly? I will now give some summarising answers to my supplementary research questions concerned with my empirical research study, which further build an answer to this main question. These questions and answers below relate to the children participating in my empirical research.

What personal narratives do the children express when they describe their lived experience of success?

As discussed in Chapter 4, the list of personal narratives, in relation to the participants experiences of success, constructed from the data in this study were: I am ambitious; I am an autodidact; I am a carer; I am creative; I am extrinsically motivated; I am intrinsically motivated; I am a geek or nerd; I am a hard worker; I am improving; I am abler than peers; I am naturally talented; I am passionate; I am socially connected; I am sporty/physical; and I am tough or resilient.

What factors might be influencing their developing personal narratives?

In the study's findings, there was evidence to support the notion that the personal narratives that the participants expressed were partly dependant on what they believed and understood about the way that the world works, their beliefs about the world, their habitus, at the point when they encountered a new experience. Many of the children in the study seemed to express beliefs in an objectified, common sense, 'essentialist' and

taken for granted view of the world, and their personal narratives about success were often linked to neoliberal ideas of performativity, ideas supported by the discourses of home and school. This meant that the majority of personal narratives of success the children in this study told were connected to having a natural ability; doing well in tests; being placed into higher ability groups; receiving awards from school; performing well in sport, and in winning competitions.

Most of the narratives listed above appear to have been influenced by essentialist narratives and neoliberal discourses of individual responsabilisation and performativity circulating in school environments and some out-of-school settings. The personal narratives that were not influenced directly by essentialist or neoliberal discourse seem to stem from narratives that circulate within families and the communities where the children live. There is some evidence from this study of the role of the media in influencing the development of personal narratives by amplifying the effect of narratives and discourses circulating in the school or the family. What the study has shown is that a particular lived experience may have a powerful impact on the personal narrative development of an individual if it can be reconfigured into narrative (Bansel, 2013); or is one that chimes with an existing personal narrative which is already developing.

How do personal narratives broaden or restrict the future opportunities children believe they have?

In Chapter 4 and 5 there is evidence from social theory, outlined in Chapter 2, that an essentialist view of identity, identity as understood as an essence (Lawler, 2014) could

be limiting or constraining for some children, both in terms of how they view themselves and as they are constructed as subjects by others, school staff for instance. Neoliberal conceptions of identity may be equally constraining, particularly where the focus is on individualism, competitiveness and the anxiety produced by these discourses (Keddie, 2016). However, my thesis adds a contribution towards demonstrating how personal narrative formation is a fluid process and a 'reflexive project' sustained through revisable narratives (Giddens, 1991). The argument here is that this opens up opportunities for teachers to engage with the processes of personal narrative formation and broadening out the narratives that influence the formation of personal narratives or helping children to build cultural capital which may become embodied into their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984).

The research question concerning the implications of this research for teachers and schools, although hinted at above, will be addressed in the final chapter, Chapter 6. Also contained within Chapter 6 will be an evaluation of the overall quality of the research aspect of my thesis; the reliability of the findings; the study's contribution towards knowledge; and possible future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Introduction

In this chapter, there will be a brief evaluation of the overall quality of the research aspect of my thesis and the reliability of the findings contained in it. This chapter links back to Chapter 3, where the methodology for the research part of my thesis was detailed, to consider how the validity of the research was planned for using the work of Yardley (2000) as a guide and considers whether these objectives were achieved. The evaluation here also uses Tracy's (2010) 'criteria for excellent qualitative research' to make some comments about the overall quality of the empirical research work that was undertaken and the reliability of the findings. Under a response to Tracy's criteria, I also comment on the contribution to knowledge that this study makes.

My thesis is part of a Professional Doctorate in Education, therefore, contained at the end of this chapter, is a summary of the implications of the research study for school teachers and policymakers as well as implications for my own future research. The implications, along with the discussion in Chapter 5, address the last of the research questions of this study: what are the implications of this research for teachers and schools? I will also summarise an answer to my research question: how do this study's conclusions contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?

Research validity and quality

As a piece of qualitative research Yardley's (2000) four characteristics of good qualitative research were used at the study's planning stage to aim for the research, and the resulting findings, to be considered of at least good quality. Yardley's four characteristics, sensitivity to context; commitment to rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance (Yardley, 2000: 219) and the details of how these characteristics were planned to be met are contained in Chapter 3. Reflecting on these characteristics and how the study was designed with regard to them, I believe that they were all achieved by this study. However, since planning and carrying out the research, I have been made aware of Tracy's (2010) 'eight criteria of quality in qualitative research', which have an overlap with Yardley's ideas but also go beyond them in their scope. Therefore, below, I will use Tracy's model to help evaluate my work and provide further evidence of the study's overall quality.

Eight criteria of quality in qualitative research

Tracy argues that high-quality qualitative research can be marked by eight criteria. These are:

- Worthy topic
- Rich rigour
- Sincerity
- Credibility
- Resonance
- Significant contribution
- Ethical
- Meaningful coherence

(Tracy, 2010: 840)

Below I will use each of these criteria and comment on how this study might be judged against each of them using Tracy's ideas as a guide.

Worthy topic – Tracy considers a topic of research to be worthy if it is 'is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative' (840). In the introduction to my thesis, I argued that the current underperformance of disadvantaged children in England's education system is an important concern and is a matter of social justice. I believe that through a better understanding of how children build their identity through personal narratives and how these influence the choices they make at school some of the issues around the reproduction of inequalities that exist in society can be better addressed by schools. As discussed in the introduction to my thesis, the last two governments see current low levels of social mobility as a problem and have directed educational resources to try and promote an increase in social mobility. In a time of fiscal restraint and 'austerity', the spending of any money needs to be effective and well thought through. This study aims to add to the knowledge of teachers and policymakers about the issues of the underperformance of disadvantaged children in the school system. I, therefore, consider that this study is contributing to a worthy topic of research.

Rich rigour – Tracy's view is that high-quality qualitative research is 'marked by a rich complexity of abundance' (2010: 841). The theoretical perspectives laid out in Chapter 2 are complex because the subjects that they are theorising about, the structure-agency debate and the nature of identity are complex. The research data is complex as it comprises of the interviews with twenty different individuals and one researcher and

therefore requires complex theorisations to make some sense of it. Both Yardley (2000) and Tracy (2010) cite the importance of transparent methodological processes of data collection and analysis in the quest for quality. I believe that Chapter 3 and the findings and discussions that follow in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate how this study achieve both complexity and transparency.

Sincerity – Tracy defines this term as research that is ‘marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher’s biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research’ (2010: 841). As this study was informed by a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology the role of the researcher in the co-construction of data have been considered throughout and where biases or mistakes have been made, they have been honestly dealt with and made transparent. I believe that this study is sincere in its aims, its approach and in its conclusions.

Credibility – As described in Chapter 3, this study aimed for what Jerome Bruner (1986) argued qualitative study should aim for, that being ‘verisimilitude’, or likeness of the truth (Bruner, 1986: 11). Tracy (2010) also mentions verisimilitude along with trustworthiness and plausibility when dealing with issues of the creditability of research findings. She suggests that one way that these things might be achieved is through the ‘triangulation’ (Tracy, 2010: 843) or convergence of theory and data. The findings of this study do converge well with the theory outlined in Chapter 2, in particular, as discussed in Chapter 5, with the theoretical perspectives of Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 2002)

and his model of narrative identity construction; the use of Bourdieu's 'field theory' (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990b); and the 'ecological' model of agency proposed by Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2015). What also adds to evidence of credibility for this study is the extensive use made of the participants' voices which are heard through the data in the findings and the discussion chapters, Chapters 4 and 5. The whole analytic process used in this study is highly qualitative, specific and non-generalisable, yet as Mackey and Trites (2016) have argued, this very 'particular' way of working is in the tradition of other research studies; where even single cases can be used to explore and illuminate ways of working and understanding that may seem new.

Resonance – The context of this study, as is true of all research of this kind, is unique. It is unique in terms of it being carried out in a set of schools with groups of children at a specific point in time. The conditions under which this study was carried out can never be reproduced and therefore, nor can the results. However, a reader who has worked in English primary schools with children will hopefully recognise some aspects of the findings that chime or resonate with their experiences. In terms of Tracy's (2010) ideas, as this study takes small instances from the pupil interviews and places them within larger theoretical frames, it is working to provide 'within case generalizations' (Tracy, 2010: 845) that achieve a greater resonance 'even if it is based on data from a unique population during a specified moment in time' (Tracy, 2010: 845).

Significant contribution – This study meets Tracy’s most basic definition of significant contribution by ‘examining how existing theory or concepts make sense in a new and different context’ (2010: 846). The findings of this study, as outlined in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5, contribute towards the knowledge of the process of the development of children’s personal narratives by bringing together Ricoeur’s (2002) model of narrative identity construction through a process of ‘refiguration’, alongside Bourdieu’s ‘field theory’ (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990b) and Holland’s (2001) ideas on identity construction and agency. These theories are then combined with Priestley, Biesta and Robinson’s (2015) model for agency, their ‘ecological model’, to examine issues of identity and agency of children. This combination is unique to this study. Also unique to this study is the focus on ‘personal narrative’ as a way of understanding and accessing aspects of the development of habitus through Bourdieu’s notion of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The methodology used in this study, one that is informed by a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009), has not been widely used with children of a young age and is unique to the context of this study. Finally, as will be summarised at the end of this chapter, my study is also aiming for practical change in English primary schools and ‘aiming for practical change is no more subjective than research that aims to build theory’ (Tracy, 2010: 846). Therefore, the combination of context, use of theory and methodology are unique and so provide a contribution.

Ethical – Outlined in Chapter 3, the methodology for the study, are the ‘procedural ethics’ that were undertaken to ensure that, for example, the participants of this study remained anonymous. This procedure followed the guidance outlined by the University

of Plymouth and was approved by them before any research took place (see Appendix 3). Reviewing this procedure at the conclusion of the study, I can state that none of it was broken. Tracy highlights the importance in qualitative research of 'exiting ethics' (2010: 847) how the results of research are shared and how researchers might avoid the unintended consequences of the findings of their work. This will be taken into consideration in the 'summary of implications' which can be found at the end of this chapter.

Meaningful coherence – Tracy suggests that research studies attain meaningful coherence if they:

- Achieve their stated purpose;
- Accomplish what they espouse to be about;
- Use methods and representations practices that partner well with espoused theories and paradigms;
- Attentively interconnect literature reviewed with research foci, methods, and findings.

(Tracy, 2010: 848)

From the very start of the study, I have worked to ensure that the theorists used, and methodologies employed, are consistent with the constructivist perspective articulated in Chapters 2 and 3. Over the course of the research, I have kept the aims and the resulting research questions in mind when constructing the methodology and analysing and discussing the research findings. I believe that this has helped to attain meaningful coherence, but I leave it up to the reader to ultimately judge whether this has been achieved.

Using Tracy's work, I would suggest that the work contained in this study has attained a level of quality and coherence that leads to an appropriate level of confidence in the findings and any subsequent implication of the research.

What are the implications of this research for teachers and schools?

It has been the developing argument in this thesis that there is an opportunity for primary school teachers to improve children's choice making by influencing their identity-making process and engaging with the narratives that children have access to providing knowledge, cultural capital, of a range of other possible personal narratives. This 'access to narratives' should take the form of a wide and diverse range of literature and a wide and diverse range of experiences which teachers should work with children to critically engage with. Teachers should seek out literature that engages the children in their particular school, which builds cultural capital and promotes empathy and self-awareness. Schools should actively seek ways to, as Postman and Weingartner (1969) argue, provide students with 'a workable concept of self' and the ability that allows a person not to be 'completely captivated by the arbitrary abstractions of the community in which he happened to grow up' (Postman and Weingartner, 1969: 18). Or, as Apple has articulated a similar idea more recently, schools need to:

Create an education that highlights and opposes in practice social inequalities of many kinds, help student to investigate how their world and their lives have come to be what they are, and seriously considers what might be done to bring about substantial alterations to this. (Apple, 1996: 108)

Primary schools could ensure that they provide high-quality, early education that gives children access to a wide and diverse range of practical and social experiences with the

aim of children building narratives of themselves as successful learners who are part of a community of individuals who display similarities and differences between each other. Evidence from this study has highlighted the importance of the beliefs about the world that children have at the point that they encounter a new experience. Primary education should help children to build stories about themselves from an early age. In the early years, and right throughout primary education, the use of experiences which reflect the local cultural context should form a strong part with the aim of helping to build in children biographical narratives of themselves and 'others' as well as building other forms of their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Teachers should be planning school experiences that extend children's horizons beyond those of their local community and family context. This could be achieved through, for example; visitors to the school, trips to other places, and cultural trips both locally and further afield. Here it is worth emphasising the importance of a 'cultural education' for example, the contributions that music and art can make upon a sense of identity and the identity of others. It would be important for the curriculum for a cultural education to reflect the local community and contexts as well as those beyond it.

Another important consideration in the primary school context would be the use of narratives from a wide and diverse range of periods in time and cultural contexts which, again, have the explicit aim of helping children gain a critical perspective on their own context and personal narrative. Incorporated into this should be explicit work on life narratives with children exploring both those of their own and those of others.

Finally, and as hinted at in Chapter 5, schools should provide children with access to a curriculum that builds both their 'self-knowledge' and their 'knowledge' of the world and a curriculum that exposes them to a body of 'canonical' work or all aspects of Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). There is not space here to enter into an extensive epistemological discussion, but the view here would be to consider a 'complexity inspired epistemology' (Biesta and Osberg, 2007: 46) where teachers are encouraged 'to stand by children's sides together constructing contexts in which they can explore their own ideas and hypotheses individually or in groups and discuss them with friends or teachers' (Vecchi, 2010: 28).

Young in *Bringing Knowledge Back In* (2008) argues that 'the acquisition of knowledge is the key purpose that distinguishes education ... from all other activities' (Young, 2008: 81) and the knowledge acquired in schools is fundamentally more powerful than that gained from everyday life. It is the argument here that all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should have access to a 'knowledge-rich' curriculum but with an understanding that, where knowledge is concerned, there are important choices that need to be made by schools about which knowledge they intend to promote (Vecchi, 2010; Fielding and Moss, 2011). Although in England there is a 'national curriculum', this should be viewed as a minimum entitlement which schools need to frame in a broader, deeper curriculum tailored to the local context and the characteristics of the local community.

All of the above should be carried out with an understanding of the identity-making process through the development of personal narratives and with the aim that the purpose of education is not just to socialise children into society and provide academic 'qualifications' but also to promote individual identity, their 'coming into the world' (Biesta, 2015).

Implications for policymakers

My thesis was started in response to policymakers in the Government trying to address the 'social mobility' issue that exists in British society through the introduction of a Pupil Premium policy. The argument in this thesis, begun in the introduction, is that all children, but particularly children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, need to be provided with more than just a narrow education that is focused on raising their attainment in reading, writing and maths. Participants for the empirical research part of this thesis were not specifically selected for their background characteristics, and therefore, any conclusions from the research concerning children from low socio-economic status backgrounds are speculative. However, I believe that I have argued why all children, but particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, need an education that is rich in experiences, experiences that some children may not have access to otherwise. All children need a broad education that is rich in experiences, and they need to be taught by teachers who can engage with them as individuals to understand and be involved in shaping their developing personal narratives through building their cultural capital. Or as Gee (2017) argues for, 'experiences where a person has an action and cares about the outcome and where attention is well-managed' (Gee, 2017: 33). I believe that this type of education system has a different

focus from the one that currently exists in England, and so there would need to be changes in policy and funding arrangements to bring it into being. The main levers that England's education policymakers are currently able to 'pull on' are funding and the accountability systems. Funding needs to be enough to enable schools to provide more than a basic education as it needs to allow schools to be able to plan for and provide *rich* experiences for children through the curriculum. Funding also needs to be sufficient to provide quality professional development for teachers to give them a broader understanding of the effects of education upon individuals and the ability to develop a critique of their own personal narratives. Accountability systems need to be redesigned to evaluate the broader work that schools undertake in the development of young people.

Implications for future research

There are several lines of enquiry that I would like to explore regarding possible future research. One would be to conduct a similar study, using the methodological tools that I developed here, but in a contrasting locality. Perhaps a study could be conducted with children who live in an inner-city who come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds or possibly conduct this research in another country with an entirely different education system and culture. I would like to explore if the findings from a contrasting study would have similar themes to those found in this study. For example, what are the similarity and differences in the personal narratives of children growing up and going to school in a contrasting locality? Other lines of enquiry I would be interested in developing are around my ideas of the role of literature in developing the personal narratives of

children when they read and engage with texts. For example, are there some authors or types of literature that are more useful or effective than others in this regard?

My research for this study developed a methodology which was informed by a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis. Therefore, I would be interested to develop this methodology further so that it could be used by teachers and other educators who want to explore the lived experience of their students and their students developing personal narratives.

Another tantalising idea came to me during the final stages of my work that I would be interested in exploring further. According to Jenkins (2002), Bourdieu believed that ‘the habitus can be controlled – and it is not clear what he means by this – as a result of the ‘awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis’’ (Jenkins, 2002: 82, 83). Perhaps, the work in my thesis has produced some ideas of some possible lines of enquiry for ways to how ‘awakening of consciousness’ could be achieved through a clear understanding of how one’s personal narratives are constructed enabling one to better shape one’s own ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53) or, in other words, the processes by which cultural capital becomes embodied as habitus. It would be interesting to research and think further if the work here could contribute to the ability of individuals to understand and effect more ‘control’ over the formation of their habitus.

How do this study's conclusions contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices?

My final supplementary research question for this thesis is: how do this study's conclusions contribute to our understanding of the relationship between personal narratives and life choices? This question has been answered over the last three chapters, but I would like to respond to it directly here.

Throughout this thesis, I have been developing an argument that lived experience is refigured into personal narrative (Ricoeur, 1988) and personal narrative can be thought of in terms of Bourdieu's notion of cultural or social capital. My argument has been that personal narratives become embodied as habitus, 'conditions of existence produce *habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53). Bourdieu describes how habitus produces social activity or 'practice' (Bourdieu, 1990b) and I have shown in my empirical research study how the personal narratives that children express link directly to their beliefs and attitudes, and so influence their practice, the choices that they make at school and more broadly.

Part of the contribution that this thesis makes is in attempting to understand better the way that personal narratives are produced at home and school through lived experience. The aim of this thesis is that with this understanding teachers working in primary schools will feel more able to engage with the personal narratives that children express and will consider the learning experiences that children have at school in a new light and so influence the choices children make. The research for this study also contributes to arguments about the importance of educational researchers (Mayall, 2002; Roberts,

2017) and practitioners in schools listening carefully to what children say, to their voice and, perhaps, to the personal narratives that they express.

Final comments

Finally, I would like to make some brief comments about the two anecdotes that I recounted in Chapter 1, the introduction to my thesis, those concerning Katie and David. Katie was a pupil who seemed, by luck rather than design, to have received a set of experiences at home and school that had given her a perspective on her own social position and created a strong personal narrative. She used this 'self-knowledge' to undertake a number of actions, for example, she chose to fully engage with the learning she was offered at school, in order to change her outcomes from what they might have been had she chosen differently. At the time that Katie was in the school where I worked, she was more 'agentic' than many of her peers because, I would now argue, of her clear personal narrative developed from self-knowledge and the cultural capital she acquired from school experiences that she engaged with.

David had a plan from the age of ten to join the military, an 'ambition' that he ended up fulfilling a decade later. David had a personal narrative that was projective and, as he passed from primary school to secondary school, I imagine that each time he had a choice to make he took one that would lead him inexorably to fulfil this ambition and become successful in the eyes of his parents and in his own. The 'projective narrative' David had, and the plan he expressed, were already part of David's personal narrative *before* I asked him and the children in his class to write it down for me to see.

Both Katie and David had a sense of who they were and ideas about where their future lives would take them. From the findings of this study, it is likely that their personal narratives were formed from their lived experiences in and out of school and the narratives that they encountered in their lives. With a better understanding of these processes I hope that, in the future, I am more effective in educating the children I am responsible for to understand themselves better and to help them with the process of becoming a successful person.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Some context of the English state-funded primary school system pertinent to this thesis

In England, compulsory education starts the term after a child's fifth birthday, though the majority of children start primary school in the September after they turn four years old. School academic years run from September. Before this time, children may attend pre-schools or nursery schools, some of which are attached to primary schools. Therefore, primary schools in England take children from age four or five until age ten or eleven. At eleven years old children begin their secondary school education.

The first year of primary school is called the 'Reception year' at the end of which teachers have to statutory assess children against a set of criteria to produce a 'profile' for each child. From age five to seven children are in Years 1 and 2 or 'Key Stage 1', as it is collectively known. In the summer term of Year 1 children are tested on their knowledge of phonics, this is a statutory test. At the end of Key Stage 1, when children are in Year 2, their teachers make more statutory assessments of children in reading, writing and maths. Key Stage 2 comprises of the school years 3, 4, 5 and 6. At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) when children are ten or eleven years old, they are tested, tests that are statutory and externally marked, in reading, writing, grammar, spelling and maths. Teachers also assess their ability in science, though this is not an externally marked test.

Most parts of England have a primary and a secondary school system though there are some places that have a first and a middle school system, where children attend a first school from age four or five to seven and a middle school from age eight until fourteen. There is also an increasing number of 'all-through' schools where children can attend from nursery or Reception until age sixteen or eighteen.

Some of the information collected by the statutory assessments and tests is published by the Department for Education along with other information as part of an online database that enables parents and carers to compare schools against each other. This is done to enable parents and carers to make choices about which school they send their children to. Every three to four years, schools are visited by inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education or Ofsted. Along with interviews with staff, pupils and Governors, parent surveys and observations of the school's work Ofsted inspectors use the statutory data to make judgements about a school in a report which is published alongside the other school performance data. The report can be read by parents and carers to inform school choice, and poor reports may trigger an intervention in the school by local or regional bodies.

If a family is eligible for certain state benefits, they can apply for their children to have free school meals. The school receives a 'Pupil Premium' for each child eligible for free school meals. The Pupil Premium was introduced into school budgets from April 2011. In the 2011/12 financial year, primary and secondary school budgets received an extra £600 per free school meal (FSM) pupil. This figure rose to £1,320 per FSM pupil by 2015/16 (DfE, 2011) and this is the current figure that schools receive the present. Ofsted uses the percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals to gauge the level

of 'disadvantage' that the school context is facing as pupils eligible for free school meals are from families with low socio-economic status. From 2012 until 2019 Ofsted would closely scrutinize how well a school performs with regards to its disadvantaged pupils.

Appendix 2 – Application for Institute Ethical Approval

Plymouth Institute of Education

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Application No:

(for EdREC use)

APPLICATION FOR INSTITUTE ETHICAL APPROVAL



Part A: Ethics Cover Sheet

Part B: Ethical Review Statement

Part C: Ethics Protocol Proforma

This form consists of three sections. Parts A and B must be completed in ALL cases. Depending upon the method of data collection / analysis, Part C may also be required (see the Ethics Review Statement).

All documentation should be submitted **electronically** to Claire Butcher, Administrative Assistant (Research), tel: 85337, claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk. At the same time, a hard copy of this application form, signed by all relevant parties, should also be submitted to Claire Butcher.

Part A: ETHICS COVER SHEET

1	<p>Principal Investigator (staff or research student)*:</p> <p>Name: Paul Gosling</p> <p>Email: paul.gosling@plymouth.ac.uk</p> <p>Address for written correspondence:</p> <p>3 Betjeman Drive, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 5ST</p>
2	<p>Other members of project team who will have access to the research data (<i>Please indicate School of each named individual, including collaborators external to the Faculty/University</i>):</p> <p>Dr Peter Kelly - supervisor, Plymouth Institute of Education</p> <p>Dr Clare Dowdall – supervisor, Plymouth Institute of Education</p> <p>Dr Nick Pratt - EdD programme Plymouth Institute of Education</p> <p><i>*Note: Principal investigators are responsible for ensuring that all staff employed on projects (including research assistants, technicians and clerical staff) act in accordance with the University's ethical principles, the design of the research described in this proposal and any conditions attached to its approval.</i></p>

3	<p>Type of research (tick one):</p> <p>Staff research <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MPhil / PhD research <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>EdD research <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
4	<p>Project Title:</p> <p><i>How can a sociological analysis illuminate children's understanding of the meaning of school success?</i></p>
5	<p>Type of application:</p> <p>Initial application <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Resubmission with amendments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Version Number: 2</p> <p>Amendment to approved application * <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Renewal <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>* For full details of the amendments procedure, please see the guidance notes</i></p>
6	<p>Duration of project with dates*: 1st November 2014 to 31st June 2015</p> <p><i>*Approval is granted for the duration of projects or for a maximum of three years. An application for renewal will be required for projects exceeding three years in duration.</i></p>
7	<p>Summary of aims, objectives and methods (max 250 words)</p>

Aims

The aims of the research project are to add to the debate of whether we, as a society, have explored all of the problems and solutions to the 'social mobility' debate. The proposal argues that, as well as raising the attainment of socio-economically disadvantaged primary aged pupils in English and maths, education needs to better understand the process of identity construction and the roles that agency, structure and reflexivity play in the lives of children. The proposal uses Pierre Bourdieu's work on reproduction in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) as its main theoretical framework and aims to explore if the ideas in this theory can help add to what primary schools might use Pupil Premium resources to achieve before pupils enter their secondary phase of education.

Methods

To carry out a series of semi-structured interviews, using a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodological approach, with between 8 and 16 children who are in their final year of primary school. The sample is of this size to allow for 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) and participant drop out. Mediating artefacts will be used, (children's drawings) some of which may be created before the interviews take place. The interview of pairs of children will be recorded using digital audio and then transcribed. I will maintain a journal before and during the interview process and also

	<p>during the period of the analysis and interpretation of the transcribed interview data.</p> <p>The journal will form part of the research data.</p>
8	<p>What will be the outcomes of this project?</p> <p>My proposed Doctoral work can be justified as making a contribution to knowledge in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will provide current knowledge about what children’s perceptions on success at school are. • My work will make a contribution towards the debate about the potential effectiveness of the spending of Pupil Premium resources by primary schools in England. • It will add toward the debate about ‘social mobility’ in England from the perspective of the lived experience of children. • By using a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach it will add to the knowledge about the usefulness of this methodological approach to working with children of primary school age. • It may also have implications for teachers and schools when considering the issues around the underperformance of socio-economically disadvantaged children.
9	<p>Is the project subject to an external funding <input type="checkbox"/>Yes (<i>please complete questions 10- 16</i>) bid?</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>No (<i>please go to Section B</i>)</p>
10	Funding body:
11	Bid amount:
12	<p>Bid status:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Not yet submitted Submission deadline:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Submitted, decision pending</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Bid granted</p>
13	University Project Finance Team costing approved with Dean’s signature?

	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> . No: <input type="checkbox"/> (Please contact the University Project Finance Team as soon as possible)						
14	Has the funding bid undergone peer review? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
15	Partners & Institutions:						
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name (including title)</td> <td>School:</td> <td>Institute / Organisation:</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Name (including title)	School:	Institute / Organisation:			
Name (including title)	School:	Institute / Organisation:					
16	<p>Is there a potential conflict of interest in the research arising from the source of the funding for the research (for example, a tobacco company funding a study of the effects of smoking on lung function)?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes/No</p> <p>If the answer to the above question is yes, please outline the nature of the potential conflict of interest and how you will address this:</p>						

<p>Declaration:</p> <p>To the best of our knowledge and belief, this research conforms to the ethical principles laid down by Plymouth University and (where applicable) by the professional body specified in C.11 below.</p>

Principal Investigator:

Signature Date

Other staff investigators:

Signature(s) Date

Director of Studies (only where Principal Investigator is a postgraduate student):
Signature Date

Part B: ETHICAL REVIEW STATEMENT

The purpose of this statement is to clarify whether the proposed research requires ethical clearance through an Ethics Protocol. Please read the relevant section of the guidance notes before you complete your statement.

Please indicate all the categories into which your proposed research fits:

	Data collection / analysis involved:	Action required:	
1	This study does not involve data collection from or about human participants.	➤ <i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research and intended data collection methods.</i> <i>Part C not required.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	This study involves the analysis or synthesis of data obtained from/about human subjects where such data are in the public domain (i.e. available in public archives and/or previously published)	➤ <i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research, the nature of the data and intended data collection methods.</i> <i>Part C not required.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	This study involves the analysis of data obtained from/about human participants where the data has been previously collected but is not in the public domain	➤ <i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement</i> ➤ <i>Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	This study draws upon data already collected under a previous ethical review but involves utilising the data in	➤ <i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement</i> ➤ <i>Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	ways not cleared with the research participants	➤ <i>Submit copy of original ethics protocol and additional consent materials (if relevant) attached.</i>	
5	This study involves new data collection from/about human participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement</i> ➤ <i>Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma</i> ➤ <i>Submit copies of all information for participants AND consent forms in style and format appropriate to the participants together with your research instruments.</i> 	☒

Please Note: Should the applicant wish to alter in any significant regard the nature of their research following ethical approval, an application for amendment should be submitted to the committee together with a covering letter setting out the reasons for the amendment. The application should be made with reference to one or more of the categories laid out in this document. ‘Significant’ should be interpreted as meaning changing in some fundamental way the research purposes and processes in whole or part.

Part C: ETHICS PROTOCOL PROFORMA

Please indicate how you will ensure this research conforms with each clause of the University of Plymouth's *Principles for Research Involving Human Participants*. Please complete each section with a statement that addresses each of the ethical principles set out below. Please note that you should provide the degree of detail suggested. Each section will expand to accommodate this information.

Please refer to Guidance Notes when completing this proforma.

1	<p>Informed consent</p> <p><i>Please attach copies of all draft information / documents, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules, etc intended for the participants, and list below. When it is not possible to submit research instruments (e.g. use of action research methods) the instruments should be listed together with the reason for the non-submission.</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the attached draft Consent Letter to parents/guardians of participating children. • See attached 'Draft information for participating Schools' • See attached 'Draft information for participating children'
2	<p>Openness and honesty</p>

	<p><i>It is generally accepted that research with human participants would not involve deception. However, if this is not the case, deception is permissible only where it can be shown that all three of the following conditions have been met in full.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Deception is completely unavoidable if the purpose of the research is to be achieved.</i> <i>2. The research objective has strong scientific merit.</i> <i>3. Any potential harm arising from the proposed deception can be effectively neutralised or reversed by the proposed debriefing procedures.</i> <p><i>If <u>deception is involved</u>, applicants are required to provide a detailed justification and to supply the names of two independent assessors whom the Committee can approach for advice. Please attach relevant documentation and list below.</i></p>
	<p>There will be no deception involved in this project.</p>
3	<p>Right to withdraw</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding their right to withdraw from the research.</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See attached draft Consent Letter to parents/Guardians of participating children. • See attached 'Draft information for participating children'
4	<p>Protection from Harm</p> <p><i>Indicate here any vulnerability that may be present because of the:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>participants e.g. children or vulnerable adults.</i> ○ <i>nature of the research process.</i> <p><i>If you tick any box below, please indicate in "further information" how you will ensure protection from harm.</i></p>

<i>Does this research involve:</i>	
<i>Children</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Vulnerable adults</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Sensitive topics</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Permission of a gatekeeper in place of consent from individuals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Subjects being academically assessed by the researcher</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Research that is conducted without full and informed consent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Research that could induce psychological stress and anxiety</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Intrusive intervention (eg, vigorous physical exercise)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Further information: The research is designed with an awareness that there will be a real or perceived disparity in power and status between the researcher and child participants. The disparities will be addressed in the research design and the researcher will strive to develop relationships with child participants on a basis of equality, trust and partnership. The research interviews will require ongoing consent and participation from children and a clear recognition of their right to withdraw at any stage with no negative consequences. Participation in this research involves minimal risk (i.e. risks no greater than those in everyday life) and will not infringe the rights or impact on the welfare of participants.</p> <p>See also the 'Risk' section of the draft Consent Letter to parents/Guardians of participating children.</p>	
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> . No: <input type="checkbox"/> N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>	

<p><i>Do ALL researchers in contact with children and vulnerable adults have current DBS clearance?</i></p> <p><i>If Yes, Please give disclosure number(s)</i></p>	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Paul James Gosling</i>	<i>001359454818</i>
If No, please explain:	
5	<p>External Clearance</p> <p><i>I undertake to obtain written permission from the Head of any external institutions (school, social service, prison, etc) in which research will be conducted. (please check box) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></i></p>
6	<p>Participant/Subject Involvement</p> <p><i>Has this group of participants/subjects already been the subject of research in the current academic year? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></i></p>
	<p>I will ask the schools taking part to only select children to take part that have not been subject to any other research projects in this academic year. See the attached 'Information to participating schools' document.</p>
7	<p>Payment</p>

	<i>Please provide details of any payments, either financial or in kind, made to participants for participation, compensation for time given, etc.</i>
	None.
8	<p>Debriefing</p> <p><i>When? By whom? How? Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding debriefing.</i></p>
	<p>Parents of the children participating and the children themselves will be offered a meeting with the researcher after the children have been interviewed to provide an account of the purpose of the study. This will not be done before the interviews to prevent ‘colouration’ of the data, i.e. parents talking to their children about the interviews before they take place. However, an explanation of the purpose of the study is laid out in broad terms in the draft Consent Letter to parents/Guardians of participating children. It says:</p> <p>‘The purpose of my research is to try to understand and describe what Year 6 children understand about the world; whether they consider themselves as successful at school; what they imagine their lives might be like at Secondary school and beyond; what they think will help them achieve their ambitions and what might be a barrier for them.’</p>
	<p>Dissemination of Research</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding dissemination of this research.</i></p>

	<p>'The results of my research will be written into a Thesis for presentation to Plymouth University. The Thesis will be read by a small number of people employed by Plymouth University and one person who is not part of Plymouth University, who will act as an external examiner. However, aspects of my research may be published more widely in academic journals and the principals of confidentiality, as described above, will be maintained.' Taken from the draft Consent Letter to parents/Guardians of participating children.</p>
10	<p>Confidentiality</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding confidentiality issues.</i></p>
	<p>'I will record my interview with your child on a digital audio device. This recording is for my use only and it will be kept securely on a password protected laptop, it will not be stored on an external server. The recording of the session will be used by me to review what your child has said and to transcribe what they have said. During transcription the name of your child will not be recorded, your child will be given a pseudo name, such as Child A. All transcribed materials will also be kept securely on a password protected laptop and not stored on a networked server. Only the anonymised pseudo name will be used in any publication made as a result of the research. The recording of your child and the transcribed materials will be kept for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.' Taken from the draft Consent Letter to parents/Guardians of participating children.</p>
11	<p>Ethical principles of professional bodies</p>

	<p><i>Where relevant professional bodies have published their own guidelines and principles, these must be followed, and the current University principles interpreted and extended as necessary in this context. Please state which (if any) professional bodies' guidelines are being utilised.</i></p>
	<p>None.</p>

Outcome of Application for Ethical Approval of Research

Reference Number 13/14-74

Applicant's Name: Paul Gosling

Staff or Student: PhD student

Title of Research Project: An exploration of children's lived experience of school success and its implications

Revised title: *How can a sociological analysis illuminate children's understanding of the meaning of school success?*

Date of Education Research 8 October 2014

Ethics Sub-committee

Meeting

Education Research Ethics Resubmission with minor corrections

Sub-committee Decision:

Feedback

Response

Please indicate in this column how and where you have responded to the feedback in your resubmitted application

Please clarify why video is being included as a medium of data collection if only audio transcripts are being used for analysis.

On reflection the need for the use of video has been removed. See 'Methods' (pg. 2) and 'Confidentiality' (pg. 7) sections in resubmitted application (Track changes was also turned on for that document).

Issues of anonymity and data storage have not been addressed; whilst names are omitted it is always challenging to maintain anonymity within a small group when direct quotes are used in text.

See the 'Confidentiality' section (pg. 7) of the resubmitted application.

The participants' right to withdraw is identified; however, the information sheets should include a cut-off point for withdrawing data at the conclusion of the data gathering phase of the research. This prevents difficulties arising with

See the amended 'Right to Refuse or Withdraw' section of the Draft Consent Form.

Feedback

Response

Please indicate in this column how and where you have responded to the feedback in your resubmitted application

participants wanting to withdraw after data analysis has commenced.

A rationale for the sample size is required. See the 'Methods' section (pg. 2) of the resubmitted application.

In order to maximise the potential for realising the aims of the research, a more systematic methodology for participant selection is required.

In my 'draft information for participating schools' document I am asking the teachers of the Year 6 classes to choose children who are articulate and who will be confident and even enjoy talking to an adult who they have not met before. Although it would be interesting to have a range of pupils and groups represented having that range is not important to my research focus. The selection method I have chosen gives me the best chance of recording the quantity of data I need.

Feedback

Response

Please indicate in this column how and

where you have responded to the

feedback in your resubmitted application

Children of this age have the capacity to give consent to participating in the research. An age appropriate information sheet (or script for explaining the research to the children) and procedure for the children to give consent is required.

See the 'Draft information for participating children' document.

The application form has not been signed. Electronic signatures are acceptable.

See form.

The document requires proof reading for typographic errors.

Done.

Appendix 3 – University of Plymouth Education Research Ethics Sub-committee approval letter



28 October 2014

CONFIDENTIAL
Paul Gosling
3 Betjeman Drive
Exmouth
Devon
EX8 5ST

Dear Paul

Application for Approval by Education Research Ethics Sub-committee

Reference Number: 13/14-74

Application Title: *An exploration of children's lived experience of school success and its implications*

I am pleased to inform you that the Education Research Ethics Sub-committee has granted approval to you to conduct this research.

Please note that this approval is for three years, after which you will be required to seek extension of existing approval.

Please note that should any MAJOR changes to your research design occur which effect the ethics of procedures involved you must inform the Committee. Please contact Claire Butcher on (01752) 585337 or by email claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Velle'.

Professor Linda la Velle
Chair, Education Research Ethics Sub-committee -
Plymouth Institute of Education
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Plymouth University
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AA

T +44 (0)1752 585337
F +44 (0)1752 585328
E claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk
W www.plymouth.ac.uk

Professor Linda la Velle
[Chair](#), Education Research
Ethics Sub-committee
Plymouth Institute of Education

Appendix 4 – Text of the letter of consent that was given to the parents of all interview subjects



Contact: *paul.gosling@plymouth.ac.uk*

Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Carer of _____

Introduction

My name is Paul Gosling I am a Headteacher who is undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Education with Plymouth University. As part of my research work I am interested in talking to a number of Year 6 children about their thoughts and feelings as to what it means to be successful at school and about their transition to Secondary school and their future lives in education or work.

Purpose of the research

The title of my research project is: *How can a sociological analysis illuminate children's understanding of the meaning of school success?* The purpose of my research is to try to understand and describe what Year 6 children understand about the world; whether they consider themselves as successful at school; what they imagine their lives might be like at Secondary school and beyond; what they think will help them achieve their ambitions and what might be a barrier for them.

Participant Selection

Your child's teacher suggested that your child might be suitable for me to work with. I asked for children who could talk confidently to an adult they have not met before. I asked for a mixture of boys and girls and children who may represent a variety of groups in the school community.

Voluntary Participation

Your child's participation in this research is entirely voluntary and will only take place with your full permission and the child's willingness to do so.

Duration

I estimate that I will an hour with your child and another year 6 child, the timing of which I will liaise with your child's class teacher to minimise any impact on their school work.

Risks

There is a risk that during our conversations children may become upset if they talk about things that they see as problems in their lives. If this happens I will deal with sensitively and will inform you of what happened. I will follow the school Safeguarding Policy and as a serving Headteacher have a thorough and up to date criminal records check.

Confidentiality

I will record my interview with your child on a digital audio device. This recording is for my use only and it will be kept securely on a password protected laptop, it will not be stored on an external server. The recording of the session will be used by me to review what your child has said and to transcribe what they have said. During transcription the name of your child will not be recorded, your child will be given a pseudo name, such as Child A. All transcribed materials will also be kept securely on a password protected laptop and not stored on a networked server. Only the anonymised pseudo name will be used in any publication made as a result of the research. The recording of your child and the transcribed materials will be kept for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.

Dissemination of Research

The results of my research will be written into a Thesis for presentation to Plymouth University. The Thesis will be read by a small number of people employed by Plymouth University and one person who is not part of Plymouth University, who will act as an external examiner. However, aspects of my research may be published more widely in

academic journals and the principals of confidentiality, as described above, will be maintained.

Debriefing

After I have interviewed you child I would be very happy to meet with you and your child to tell you more about my study and to answer any questions that you may have.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You and your child have the right to withdraw from the interviews before, during and after they have taken place. However, there is a cut off for withdrawal at the point that I begin to analyse the transcribed interview data. You can have a copy of the recording if you so choose.

Paul Gosling

Plymouth University Doctoral Student



Name of child who is taking part in the research is:.....

I, as the parent/carer of the child named above give my full consent to him/her taking part in the research project outlined above:

Signed:..... Date:.....

Appendix 5 – The transcription of the interview of Joel & George

06/11/14 School 1

PG	Now, I didn't know what your, what your names were? What's your name?
Joel	Erm, Joel.
PG	Joel, I'll put that down, so we've got Joel, and what's your name?
George	George.
PG	Joel and George, unusual, two names with x's in. Erm, I don't know if you know, I'm doing some work for a University...
Joel	Yeah, Plymouth.
PG	Plymouth University, that's right, and I'm finding out really about, err, children's experience of school, particularly Year 6 because you're the oldest children, so you've had lots of time at primary school and, I'm going to be just talking to you, maybe asking some questions and it's not one of those, it's not right or wrong answer I just want to know your opinions. I'm not going to tell Mrs [headteacher] what you say...
Joel & George	(laugh)
PG	...or your teachers, (laugh) so we can have a chat, so if you want to tell me anything, um, err, you can, that will be absolutely fine. Obviously if you say something that worries me, you tell me something that I'm worried about,

	I'll talk to Mrs [headteacher] about, if someone was hurting you or something like that, you understand, but...
Joel & George	Yeah.
PG	Um, so my name's Paul and I'm doing a study about Year 6 and children at school, and their lives, erm, and I really do want to hear your opinions. But first before, we do that Joel and George, I just want to find out a bit more about you, OK? And you can ask me some questions as well, if you want. Erm, so Joel, just, just tell me about you, your family, when your birthday is, what you want for Christmas, anything you like...
Joel	I like, like when mmm at home or someplace like a park or something, I like to just like, like go round and forget about everything and just like do crazy stuff (laughs)
PG	So, you like outdoor stuff?
Joel	Yeah
PG	Have you, what sort, what, tell me about your family, you got brothers, sisters?
Joel	Um, I don't have any brothers or sisters...
PG	Ok.

Joel	Um, my mum and dad are called Mandy and Kev. They, um, we, em, just like, I don't like, basically we have like, the weekends and stuff together but it's because like, they go to work like, really, really early in the morning...
PG	Do they?
Joel	So, I can't really like, get, I do get like, loads of sleep because I go a bed at half seven if it's, if it's a school day or something...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	And then, I'll wake up at like half six for them to, for me to get dressed and go down to my nans where I can't just like, go back to sleep and stuff.
PG	What, what do your patents do?
Joel	Um, my mum works at the NH hiss Hos.. N, N, S, H Hospital...
George	(whisperers) NHS...
Joel	NHS Hospital (next word unintelligible) ...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	Um, up in Exeter and my dad works at Matford Land Rover so knows a lot about cars.
PG	Yes, they are busy jobs, working in the NHS...

Joel	Yeah.
PG	Ahh, right, good, what about you George? Tell me about your, well, tell me what you like, about yourself...
George	So, I love like, sports and football and stuff like that and I'm out on the MUGA everyday playing...
PG	OK, yeah, yeah.
George	Yeah, err, so I like cricket, but any sport.
PG	We might come back to that later. Tell me about your family and, you know, erm, brothers and sisters...
George	I yeah, I've got, err, I've got a sister whose half African, all I've got is half-sisters and step-brothers...
PG	Oh really? That's interesting.
George	Err, she's half African but she lives in the Netherlands and I haven't seen her since I was like, one.
PG	Blimey!
George	Got a photo of her, err, so that's...
PG	What's her name?

George	(Name).
PG	(Name), right, OK.
George	Err, and I've got two, err, so I've got three half-sisters including her, I've got Jasmine and Jade...
PG	Ah-ha...
George	Jade's gonna be a teacher...
PG	Oh right...
George	Got it all sorted, Jasmine works in Co-Op.
PG	Ah-ha.
Joel & George	(both boys laugh)
George	So, that's really good (laughs)...
PG	Brilliant.
George	Err, my mum's got a new job in err, Boots.
PG	Umm.
George	(Unintelligible) ...in there...

PG	Right.
George	Stacking shelves and stuff, my dad says he can't tell me what his old job was, God knows what it was...
PG	Right, OK, a mystery job, maybe he was a spy or something like that? I don't know...
George	Hopefully it was!
All	(laugh)
PG	OK...
George	So, if I ain't a footballer when I'm older, I wanna MI6... (next words unintelligible).
PG	Yeah, there we go... Erm, have you got any questions for me before we start getting into our conversation?
Joel	Err...
George	Err...
PG	No?
George	No.
PG	That's fine. You comfortable? Relaxed? Happy?

George	Yeah.
PG	<p>Good. Cos, as I say, all I want you to do is just talk like you've done there, you've done brilliantly, you've told me about..., I now know a lot about you I can picture, picture what you do. OK. Now, I want you to, you might need, you might need a couple of minutes thought and I've given, I've got some paper you can draw a picture or, or jot down some ideas in case you've forgot and, OK. (PG gives out paper). What I want you to think about, then we're gonna have a little chat about, is... what, thinking about school stuff now and that's the whole curriculum, yeah, all the things you do in school... what do you think that you are good at? So, if were looking this week, if I came this week, what would, what d'ya think your good at? Have a little think about that. You can jot some things down erm. (boys are writing lists) Could be, I won't give you any ideas, I wanna hear what your ideas are. The other way you could think about it is, what do you do well? What do you do well?</p>
George & Joel	(Several minutes of boys writing lists while occasionally whispering to each other)
Joel	It's fun.
PG	It's alright
George	Err...

PG	It's interesting isn't it, because you spend all day in school then somebody asks you a question like that you think, 'What do I do in school?'
George	Yeah, you're like, 'what am I good at?'
PG	What is it I do all day in school? Well look...
Joel	Daydream, and get to sleep...
PG	I've seen, I've seen, I've seen Joel you got a bit of a list there so...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	So, erm, I'm gonna, I'm gonna ask you to talk about those things, so tell me about the first things you've got on your list.
George	Maths.
PG	Maths.
George	Yes.
PG	Tell me why, tell me you, you do well in maths.
George	Well I've got the highest level last year.
PG	Highest level?
George	Maths.

PG	Last year?
George	In Year 5.
PG	Right, and who told you that?
George	Erm, in assembly em, on the last days of the year they hand out all these leadership awards and...
PG	Right.
George	And best in maths, writing and err...
PG	Leadership awards how does it, how did it, how did you feel when you got a leadership award?
George	I didn't get a leadership award, I got the mathsy thing.
PG	How did you feel when you got the, the highest the maths award?
George	Good, because it's like, I've been the, trying to do all this stuff to get that coz that was the first time.
PG	Really, so you've been working hard, you had the ff, you had, you had that in your mind that you wanted to do. So, tell me err, how... how did, you have that in your mind that you wanted to be good at maths.
George	Well I was...

PG	Why do you think that was?
George	I randomly started improving in maths in Year 4...
PG	Right.
George	And then I got all right Ben, who's like level 5a.
PG	Mmm.
George	Err, err, last year he moved out because he was Year 6 last year, and he taught me a bit about maths and taught me a bit about (unintelligible word) and stuff...
PG	Hmmm.
George	But er, so he helped me with the maths and I helped him and stuff...
PG	Mmm.
George	And then he sort of said 'Oh George you might get Year 5 highest level thing', about a week in, I was like 'Oh yeah!'
PG	Do you, do you think that's important...
George	Yeah.
PG	Being really good at maths, why do you think it's important? Tell me why...
George	You go get a good, err, good job.

PG	Right.
George	You can, yeah you can be a MI6 Field Agent (laughs).
PG	Is that a sort of job you'd like to do something like that?
George	Err, I wanna be do, be a footballer for Man. U.
PG	Right.
George	But if I don't get that (laughs) that then I want to be a Field Agent for MI6.
PG	Oh, right OK. And you think maths would be useful for that?
George	Yeah.
PG	Yeah. Why do you think it would be useful?
George	Err, coz like, you could figure out err, a lot of stuff, if you're not a Filed Agent you have to use maths to work all this stuff out n'..
PG	Right.
George	And you've got cameras and stuff that you can fit, use to speed travel (?) figure that sort of stuff out so that speed equals distance over time...
PG	You seem, speed equals distance over time, ahh, whey, you're giving some maths equations there, you're really are good at maths aren't you?
George	So, that's how you calculate the amount of speed...

PG	Right.
George	Err, you can do that and tell the Field Agent through a thing roughly how fast err, he gotta run so that, not like run exactly twelve miles per hour...
PG	Mmm.
George	So, run really quick, pretty quick or this blokes' so slow you can just walk it.
PG	I see, now you used some really interesting words there, field agent do d'you, how do you know lots about being a, er, spies and that? Where do you get that from?
George	Erm, James Bond (laughs).
PG	Right, watching James Bond?
George	Yeah.
Joel	Or climbing up tress in the school...
George	Yeah.
Joel	Looking over and like...
PG	Do you, is that watching films or reading the books or?
George	Err, a bit of everything really, I do a bit of spying on people...
PG	(Laughs) Oh, blimey!

George	I like doing that.
PG	Cool. Um, Joel, Wha..., let's look, top of your list that you've written there is...
Joel	ICT computers.
PG	Tell me about why you think you do well at those then? How do you know you do well at those?
Joel	m, well, basically I learn, like, my fiend Josh he's like really good with computers and erm, when like, we've been in school since we, since I started, I started in Year 1 because I went to a different pre-school...
PG	Ah-ha...
Joel	Um, he's been in this school for ages and as soon as I came here we were best friends, we did everything together we...
PG	Right.
Joel	Um, we went in the computer suite and did um, ages and um, everything that basically we've done has been together so like going outside and playing, playing games um, I would say that we're like, we quite like doing a lot of stuff with the little kids because they're like, really funny and they...
PG	Right.

Joel	And they would look up to us and a lot of the little kids are like, they really like us and we really like them because they just play with us like, if there's a new kid or something then he would ahh, he would get, you would know, other people into the school and erm...
PG	You were talking about ICT and why you think you're good at that, how does that link in then?
Joel	Um, basically from little, from little kids erm, we've been, just playing with little kids and then they've been wanting to going into the ICT Suite...
PG	Right.
Joel	So, we got asked if we would take some of the little kids into the ICT suite, so they were allowed to play n' that in there...
PG	Oh really, so you were given some responsibility over the younger ones?
Joel	Yeah. And um, since then we've been playing with them and we've took them into the ICT Suite and they've loved it and right from when we just, me and Josh just, went in by ourselves just to do what we wanted to do um, we a, we got asked to set up um, some of the computers because they were having new computers in and we got asked to do that and and we got told how to put all the wires in and all that...
PG	Oh really?

Joel	And, I, um, even helped my nan and granddad install their computer because they didn't know anything about it...
PG	Oh right.
Joel	So, the computer came in the morning I took, um, they took it out they were like, so how do we do this? so we look up on YouTube or something and nan's like, 'no, I can do it!' so I took it upstairs and plugged it all in set all of..., synced all the wires and stuff into the computer and..., just, just like that it went and I've just been good at computers ever since...
PG	That's, that's, that's really interesting. Do you think that's going to be useful for you in your life? Computers?
Joel	Um...
PG	What?
Joel	Yeah, because you sort of like need a compu..., like a computer in everyday life, like (pause) like even if you um, are like a footballer, like George said, you do need a computer so the you can like target your speed and so you know where you can stand and go in for, get a goal or something so, and like a headteacher or school something you need a computer so you can work out like, OK, we're gonna have this club on this day...
PG	Right.

Joel	...then you'll have that club on that day and...
PG	Mmm...
Joel	...so, you need a computer in like, everyday life really.
PG	W-we heard that Joel said that he would like to...
Joel	George
PG	Sorry, George, beg your pardon, it's the Xs in the names, George said um, said that he would like to be a footballer and he's...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...and if not, he'd like to be a Secret Agent. What would you like to do as a (unintelligible word)?
Joel	Um, I'd like to be um, sort of a person that could work with computers and just like, like you work at Apple or something, just set up all the computers cos my cousin he wants' to be the person who makes like the disks for the games...
PG	Ah-ha, right, OK.
Joel	...and er, that's the job that he wants to be so, he could have that job and... (pause) said it af.. and like it would come um, like, Game or something and then they could set it up and then on PC games, you could just like get one of the games and you could like put it into, don't know, an Apple Mac

	computer or something, and see if it works on that and take it out and then you could give it back to them and say 'Yeah, it works on this computer and...
PG	Right.
Joel	...that and...
PG	So, you'd like to do some sort of job in designing games?
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...and computers, I could see why that would be important. That's really interesting, I'm going to come back to George then. So, the next two things you've got on your list that you're good at in school or you thought you do well at...
George	Yeah.
PG	... is PE and football.
George	Yes.
PG	And obviously that's linked to what you want to do in your life. So, tell me, tell me about, tell, describe for me why you think, you know, you're good at PE and football or descr...
George	Um, running fast.
PG	You can tell me about that.

George	Yeah, I like err, running quick and stuff...
PG	Right, yeah.
George	Yeah.
PG	OK.
George	I love sprinting.
PG	Yeah.
George	Err, I don't care if like, I've cut my leg or something, I've, when I plate, face planted the pitch and lost long distance, went and got and ice pack just did the sprint...
PG	Right.
George	So, I don't care if I've got like an injury or something I just keep on going...
PG	Umm
George	Err, but I want to be a footballer err, cause I recently got into it when I saw Ronaldo...
PG	Right, OK.
George	...playing for Real Madrid.
PG	Yeah.

George	Err, it was actually when I was quite early Year 5...
PG	Right.
George	Err, he was playing Atletico Madrid or something...
PG	Mmm.
George	...But, so I used a, I figured out how he did some of his sk-skills like step-overs and...
PG	Um-hmm.
George	...Err, stuff, so I'm now addicted that I got goal posts for my birthday...
PG	Right.
George	And I practise at least an hour and a half in the garden.
PG	That's really interesting, so, who told you you've got to practise every day then?
George	Myself.
PG	Yourself?
George	Yeah.
PG	Right so you, you think that by practising every day is the way to be good at these things, is it?

George	One of the ways, you've also gotta like, YouTube football and stuff and Google it, Google 'tricks, you've gotta learn it off that too.
PG	Right, so...
George	I watch other kids.
PG	You look at Google and then you watch things that happen then you go and practise them...
George	Yep.
PG	..skills. That's really interesting, that's really interesting, and you're working hard by the sound of it...
George	Yeah.
PG	...to get those things improved.
George	I come in like, clothes literally wet with sweat, the first thing hear is 'George change those clothes!'
Joel	(laughs)
PG	(Pause) Urm, well maybe not this time of year..., mind you this time of year you can still work hard can't you? So, how's does that, how does that make you feel when you're um, when you're, you know, how do you know when you're being successful at football? You know? I guess...

George	When you like...
PG	...that's an easy question isn't it?
George	When you score an awesome goal or something...
PG	Right.
George	...or you achieve like...
Joel	Like a bicycle kick or something.
George	Yeah that's actually quite good.
PG	Yeah.
George	Or like you do your first ever Rainbow Flick.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Right.
George	Yeah.
PG	Right. Can you do that? Have you been practising those sort of things?
George	Yeah.
PG	Right.
Joel	Yeah.

PG	And that's off of YouTube as well, you been looking at that have you?
George	Actually, I learnt it off some... err, you know Olly from Year 5?
Joel	Yeah.
George	He told me, he told me about a Rainbow Flick ages ago like, in Year 3 and I've been trying to do it, I've only mastered it in Year 5!
PG	Right. I think, I think it's a very skilful thing to try and do. That's, that's great. That's very interesting. So, we've dealt, we've sort of looked at those two, so we're going to come back to your list you've got ICT computers, we've talked about.
Joel	Oh yes!
PG	You've got 'jumping around' stroke 'playing', tell me about what you, why you think you're good at that at school then.
Joel	Umm, because a lot of the time when we're outside...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	...playing, I'm a basically I'm jumping around and doing loads and loads of crazy stuff. Like when we were out there just today I um, there was like, something about as long as this, like this table and um, I ran and then cleared the entire thing and then I started running again and I, I just like running around jumping playing hanging off trees...

PG	Um.
Joel	...like.
PG	What makes you think you're, cos I said write me a list of things you're good at, why do you think you're good at it? How do you know you're good at those sorts of things?
Joel	Um, because...
PG	Because lots of kids jump around, don't they?
Joel	Yeah, because em, from my gymnastics I do up in Exeter, ah, not Exeter, Honiton, and erm, school gym here...
PG	Right.
Joel	I tend to jump around and do a lot of stuff because it's safety mats...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	...you can't get hurt, sort of like...
PG	Right OK.
Joel	...it's sort of one of those things, because there's mats everywhere and there's people on top of people and there's stuff everywhere, just crazy mats, and, all that and basically when you've just got time you can just like make something like if I'm gonna build a circuit, you can just like, make

	<p>something that's really tall and then like, climb on top of it and then jump off and then like they'll be like a really big safety mat right at the bottom which you can just land on and you won't hurt yourself cos you, cos you know the good landing to do and the good rolls to do after you've done it and...</p>
PG	<p>So, tell me...</p>
Joel	<p>...that.</p>
PG	<p>...you joined the gym club, why did you join the gym club?</p>
Joel	<p>Umm, it was a bit of like, a test thing really because when I was young I used to like, always roll around on my back and do some stuff. I was, I always used to hurt myself and...</p>
George	<p>(laughs)</p>
PG	<p>Right.</p>
Joel	<p>Like that (laughs) cos I always used to climb up the tree in the back garden then wonder how I'm gonna get down?</p>
PG	<p>Right, yeah, yeah, yeah yeah.</p>
Joel	<p>(laughs) So, one day I tried to, I, I tried to jump down and I jumped, I jumped down and landed sort of on then, on my toes and my face...</p>
George	<p>(laughs)</p>

Joel	(laughs)
PG	Right, bent over, yeah?
Joel	Yeah, I bent over like that. And like the side of my face was like that, and I was on my toes and I pushed myself up and I, and I had grass all over my face so I wiped that off and then um, I got in and my mum said 'Joel what's that on your face?', and I said, 'What's on my face?', and she said, 'Turn around!', I had a massive cut going down my face there...
PG	Oh!
Joel	...from where I hit it and I don't know where it came from but, where I hit my face and like so yeah, that happened. And then, um, we bought a 12 foot trampoline that went in our, which went in our Nan and Granddads back garden which I went on and um, that and I broke my leg on that because I jumped up really high and landed wonky and I broke my leg...
George	Wooh.
Joel	...in um, two places, I broke my knee and my ankle.
PG	So, how did you go from that to going to gym club then, what's the...?
Joel	Um...
PG	...tell me.

Joel	...from doing the trampoline stuff...
PG	Umm.
Joel	...I was learning front flips, back flips, side flips, flares, everything.
PG	OK, right.
Joel	And then one..., I was, I, I've always been to XXXXXX gym...
PG	Ok.
Joel	...ever since I started school, Um, but then my mum brang up Honiton gym when we went to a competition in Exeter...
Joel	For, for the National finals.
PG	So, you've done, you've been in National finals?
Joel	Yeah...
PG	...for gym?
Joel	...in gymnastics, for, we've done it two, thr, three times now?
PG	Right.
Joel	And we've come 6th, 5th and we came 4th last year.
PG	Right.

Joel	Um, hopefully we're gonna go this year and do some stuff, come first...
PG	Is that important to you?
Joel	Yeah, my gym is really important to me because, like, for my parents it's really easy for them to take me down there and then they can just like, chill-out and so, they can do their work when I'm out and stuff, cos I go up to gym in Honiton for four hours from half four til eight.
PG	Really?
Joel	Yeah.
PG	That seems, that's a, that's a lot of time for someone of your age...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...isn't it?
Joel	Yeah, and we, and like the time just goes really fast cos we're just having so much fun and then I was just outside, and I was just jumping around and doing lots of cool stuff and...
PG	Right, is that almost a bit like parkour kind of stuff?
Joel	Yeah.
George	Parkour's awesome!

PG	Yeah.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Yeah, yeah, I can see how your gym skills are used for that...
George	Oh, yeah..
Joel	Yeah.
PG	I notice you've got, underneath gymnastics, you've got dancing.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	How do'ya know (laughs at boys reactions). Tell me about your dancing?
George	Both of us like Street Dancing.
PG	Oh right, Street Dancing is it?
George	Yeah, both of us.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	So, what do you do for? Is that, are you a club? Or is that something you just...?
Joel	No, I, erm, basically I just self-taught myself.
PG	Ok.

Joel	I, learnt how to do um, handstands and spin rounds and back, and I go on my back and like jump around and stuff and then push myself back up...and, um, make tricks and I just taught myself everything about...
PG	Right.
Joel	...dancing, I know where to put my foot if I try and trip, if I'm tripling(?) on my feet. I know where to put my hands where I don't break my arms.
PG	That's useful!
Joel & George	(Laugh)
Joel	Just got to make sure they bend...
George	(unintelligible)
Joel	Owch!
PG	And, and tell me how you feel when you're doing this gym stuff and you're successful at that...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...and the dancing...
Joel	Sometimes...

PG	...how do, how do you feel inside, cos err,...
Joel	Umm...
PG	George was telling me about what he feels like...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...when he scores a goal.
Joel	Yeah. When I um, (laughs) when I, I like, when I win, when I win a medal at gymnastics or certificate or something it's, it, it's really good because I like, put them on like, a wall and I'll just like, have that as my wall of what I've, done and like, so I draw at home and I'll do something and I'll think yeah, that's really good.
PG	That's an interesting word you used there, succeeded, and success...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...so, you feel you're successful at gymnastics and...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...dancing and you're computers. That's really interesting an is it, is success at school, cos they're sort of school things but they're out of school as well aren't they?

Joel	Yeah, um, I do do dance and stuff in school if I've just got time by myself and erm, computers I do in school and dancing I do in school and gymnastics and...
PG	Um.
Joel	Um, basically, this is like my third home cos I'm not always here even if I've got a bit of a cold I'm still here, I don't wanna like, take a day off school or anything...
PG	Really? You enjoy it that much?
Joel	Yeah.
PG	That's really nice to hear, and, and is being successful at those things at school, you've got ICT on there, I can see maths, PE, gym. Are those things important, why d'ya think they're important to you?
Joel	Um, I think they're, I think they're just a part of me, I th, I like, like I've got a really busy life erm, I just think that the stuff that I've put down on here I just think that I'm really successful at and um, done really good and tried my best and I've done amazing...
PG	What I'm interested in, in asking you is...
Joel	...And that.

PG	...where has that wanting to try the best come from? Is it somebody else has told you you've got to do these things?
Joel	Um, yes, sort of like, my family erm, my erm, peop, my cousins and auntie and uncles, some of them live up in Exeter and they travel all over the world and they like come back and say, 'Oh, Joel you should try this it looks really good I expect you could do this in there or there'...
PG	Right.
Joel	And like I get call and texts from my cousins say, 'Oh Joel you should try this, here's a video link', and I'll press on it and it's just amazing so I try it out and then, dam I've, I just keep on practising and practising and practising and then finally I'm there, I've done it and I'm...
PG	Wow.
Joel	...fine with what I've done, I'm really enjoying it.
PG	That's, that's' really, really interesting. Have a look down you're list there, you're, you were writing away furiously...
George	Yeah (laughs)
PG	...while Joel was, Joel was speaking.
George	I just got loads of ideas, just like...

PG	You've got loads of ideas, do wanna pick, pick something else that you think you're, you're, err, you're, that you do well at, at school and talk about that for me.
George	Ah, games and PlayStation ain't school...
Joel	(laughs)
PG	You can perhaps talk about some home things later but, don't cross them out entirely...
George	Right.
PG	Tell me some things that you're, that at school you're, you, you're good at or you do well at.
George	Err, I sometimes joke around like...
PG	Ok.
George	Being Russell Howard...
PG	(laughs) Right!
George	Yes, sometimes joking around, have that a lot...
PG	Is that, is that err, is important to be successful at that sort of thing?

George	Sometimes, if I don't, if I don't get any of those jobs I can be like the next Peter Kay or something (laughs).
PG	Oh right, so all the time you're thinking about your future it sound to me? Cos you're thinking about a football career, a, a career in, err, spying or working for MI5 or MI6...
George	Yep.
PG	...and now you're talking about comedy career, are you always thinking about the future? Is that something you do?
George	Yeah.
PG	Right.
George	All-we-else(?) I wanna,t, time travel one day.
PG	Time travel! Right, backwards in time or forwards in time?
George	I even put out, I've, I've, I've seen all the Back to the Futures.
PG	Right.
George	So, I've even ma... err, made a like blueprint of a Flux Capacitor and stuff...
All	(laugh)
George	I've explained how it can actually send you back in time.

PG	Right.
George	It's got to be encased in rubber because that's err, stops electricity.
PG	Right... absolutely... Let's just have a look down here... So, you've got science on your list there...
George	Yeah.
PG	Are you successful at science?
George	Yes.
PG	Is that something you're good at? Your both saying 'yes' to that. OK, y-you first, you describe, describe why you think you're, you're good at science.
Joel	Well, I first started watching Bing Bang, Big Bang, I first started watching Big Bang Theory...
PG	Right, OK.
Joel	(laughs) Saw Sheldon doing all his physics and stuff...
George	Yeah.
Joel	...and then saw Amy mocking his physics and saying that astro-physics is better than just regular physics and that no, blah-blah-blah, so I was like mmm...

George	Yeah.
PG	An that's, that's...
Joel	Then I tried to do like, $e=mc^2$ and stuff with my teacher told me to do it.
PG	A-ha.
Joel	So, I'm still working on it.
PG	Yeah.
Joel	And.
PG	So, when you saying working on it, w-what, $e=mc^2$, what you, tell me about that?
Joel	Err, she's actually to try to figure out how to do it, so I figured out what it means and all that (unintelligible word).
PG	Right, OK.
Joel	Energy equals mass times by err...
George	Mass times by...
Joel	Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared...
PG	Right.

Joel	So, if I figure out the speed of light I can find out what the err, mass of something is, so err, if I put a k, one kilogram on a pair of, on a set of scales and a one thousand, which is one kilogram, err...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	Times the speed of light, which is God knows what! But it's...
PG	Big number.
Joel	...pretty easy.
PG	Yeah.
Joel	Yeah, big number!
PG	Yeah.
Joel	Err, and then I square it cause I like squaring, it's good (laughs) it's easy.
PG	Yep.
Joel	And there's my answer, that shows the amount of energy, say, if gravity was alive, that's; the amount of energy it would be using to pull it down.
PG	Wow! You do know a lot about, about science don't you?
Joel	Yeah

PG	And is, is, do you think that's useful to you? Is that, are you successful at that?
Joel	I'm not that good at it, I just know that.
PG	How, why, you say you're not that good, how do you know you're not that good then?
Joel	Cos I'm actually not that good, I don't norm, I'm not really trying the other stuff.
George	(something whispered)
PG	What would somebody of your age...hello (recording interrupted as some children enter the class we're in to retrieve some items at (29:08-29:29)
PG	So, you were interrupted earlier, tell me (unintelligible) so how do you think compare to children in your class about science?
Joel	Don't know...
PG	...to other people in the country.
Joel	I've never thought about that.
PG	You've never thought about that?
Joel	No.

PG	Right, OK.
George	He's really good.
PG	Yeah, I-I was (unintelligible).
Joel	I not that bad, I'm not that good, I'm not that bad.
PG	I say, I don't hear many, many children, cos there's two things you've said today, you've, you've talked about force, mass accelerat... speed, distance...
Joel	Err yeah.
PG	...equation.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Yeah, erm, dis..., erm, speed equals distance over time, you said earlier...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...didn't you, and now you're giving me this $e=mc^2$, which is not something, I, I don't think you usually do that at primary school, do you?
Joel	No.
PG	Oh, my goodness. So, you've got science on the list there. Reading, OK.
Joel	Yeah, I'm good at reading.

PG	You're good at reading, how do you know you're good at reading then?
Joel	Err, cos I normally understand everything about it what's, what you're doing err, to the err, like, when you're in Year 6 and stuff.
PG	Mmm.
Joel	So, like, I'm good at understanding other stuff that most kids won't get.
George	Yeah.
Joel	Dirty mind! Err...(laughs)
PG	Right, OK.
Joel	And also (laughing) I'm good at, you can just err, show me a word and I'll err, read it, I could be like, if it's an English word...
PG	Yep.
Joel	I'll be like, oh yeah that's so and so, so like...
PG	So, you know a lot about words. What sort of books do you like reading then?
Joel	Any that's not about, err, any that's not about Tinker Bell and Fairies an...
George	(laughing)
Joel	...anything that's not...

PG	What's your...
Joel	Jacqueline Wilson.
PG	What's your favourite book? If I said well, what book have you read in the last few weeks that you've thought you've enjoyed?
Joel	Well...
George	Is it like that that book we're reading in school now?
Joel	Err, naa. Just picked that cos it was like the most boy-ey one there.
PG	Be honest...
Joel	Err...
PG	If I say you could read any book again, if you'd already read them, what would you...
Joel	I read through Harry Potter on the, the third one, ahh, what's it called err, not The Order of the Pheonix...
PG	Right.
George	No, it was err...
Joel	Prisoner of Askaban.
PG	Prisoner of Askaban.

George	Yeah.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	You like that.
Joel & George	Yeah.
PG	Have you read all of those books, have you?
Joel & George	Yes.
George	I've seen all the movies....
Joel	Yeah!
PG	You've seen all the movie, yeah.
Joel	I've got all the movies (laughs).
PG	That was, that was the problem, ten years ago, before all the movies were out the only way you could access that world was to read the books...
Joel & George	Yeah.

PG	And when the movies came out everyone watched the movies and then you don't want to read the book when you (unintelligible) because you think I know what happens.
Joel	Because like....
George	But it's not what happens!
PG	No, it isn't!
George	No, cos the books give, like, a bit more sort of detail...
Joel	It's the books are better than the films, you can see how the characters feel, you can see how the...
George	Yeah....
Joel	Char... we, err, you get more stuff in it, you get more stuff added...
George	Books like....
PG	Right...
George	...in the movies you get what they're saying....
Joel	Yeah.
George	...you don't let, you don't get, like, like say 'Harry, Harry, no don't go!' said Hermione, like...

Joel	Feelings, how awkwardly feelings get, or whatever...
George	Yeah.
PG	Oh, Right.
George	Yeah, but like if, if you, hear, hear it in the movie like, 'Harry, Harry, no don't go!' and you wouldn't actually see, you would see what it would look like but you wouldn't have
Joel	Feel what Hermione was feeling.
George	Feeling.
PG	Right, OK, that's a really interesting point. And that's what, you, you enjoy reading as well do you Joel? That's a...?
Joel	Um, yeah, I've haven't, I haven't, I've got a book now that's got, I'm on the fourth story of it, cos it has four, four stories in it which I read the three...
PG	OK.
Joel	...And now I'm on the fourth one.
PG	Umm.
Joel	Um, I've read that an it's, an it's taken me like, from the like, I bought it on Friday, not last week, the week after, I got it on Friday and it's taken me a whole week just to get through the three stories...

PG	Wow.
Joel	They're quite long.
George	Excuse I.
PG	Wow, that's alright (long pause).
Joel	Ah, let me, I want to...
PG	Street Dance, you mentioned Street Dance...
Joel	Yeah, I love Street Dance...
PG	Humour...
George	Yeah, humour.
PG	Mum? Numer?
George	Num, what word?
PG	Numer? That one there.
George	Ah, Nun chucks!
PG	Nun chucks!
George	Yeah, I'm good at that!
PG	You're good at nun chucks.

George	Yeah, I watched a Bruce Lee video, I was like, Ooo!
PG	Seems like you get a lot of your ideas from err...
George	Bruce Lee and videos...
PG	From films and videos...
George	...and stuff.
PG	...and YouTube and stuff?
George	Err, so I basically watched him and just thought ooo, if I do that then I (unintelligible) it looks cool, if I do that it looks cool, it's a figure of eight...
Joel	Yeah.
George	...I'm right handed so I'm gonna practise with my left hand, ahh.
Joel	So, like you just like?
PG	Got some....
George	Yeah...
PG	...free running, sprintage, we talked about...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...messing with computers....

Joel	But that one....
PG	What's that one?
Joel	I randomly like, oh, er, ers, randomly, when I was like Year 3, started playing with the right click button see, see what happens, I went on a err, 'View So,urce' and I was like, yeah, did some stuff to it, err, and it went 'send' err, 'send rebound cut', it was like, OK, 79472113 some stupid radio station...
PG	Right.
Joel	Bay FM...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	It wasn't on the radio, it weren't on the radio then, it was on the err, erm, what's it called? Ahh the computer...
PG	On the, on the internet?
Joel	On the internet, yeah.
PG	Yeah.
Joel	Err, it, I d..., it was like 'okay, sending the (unintelligible)' cos mum mum's like mates with all the people there...
PG	Right, OK.

Joel	I think there ain't been one that's not given her a lif, given her a ride somewhere...
PG	Right.
Joel	They were like, 'Oh, we've got this virus in to there', I was like....
PG	Opps!
Joel	Yes....
PG	(laughs)
Joel	...shouldn't have done that!
PG	So, you, messing with computers in an evil way!
Joel	Yeah! And I'm good a fixing em.
PG	You're good at fixing them?
Joel	Yeah...
PG	That's, that's...
Joel	Because like, he taught me about, um, when, when there was something wrong with the computers in the school...
PG	Yep.

Joel	He said, George said, 'If you press right click and then you go on this and then this', you can actually go into the system and take this out and put it in the Recycling Bin and then un, undo this and then turn the computer off, reboot it back up and then everything will be there and it will be all the same...
George	Yeah, it's basically...
PG	Ahh.
George	...if there's like a virus...
Joel	You like go, you like...
George	...you can just do that....
Joel	Not badly hack into the system but get in...
George	...but just send a rebound and blow the other people's, err, the others, the hackers computer up err... metaphorically.
PG	Yeah...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Yeah, yeah, yeah. Messing with computers.... what does that one say helu?
Joel	What?

PG	Hack?
Joel	Yeah....
PG	Hacking, hacking?
Joel	...that's the one I was talking to you about....
PG	Hacking computes!
Joel	...that's the one I was talking to you about.
PG	And electricity?
Joel	Yep, um gonna like that too...
PG	Don't play with that, don't play with it too much, don't put your fingers in the sockets!
Joel	Nah.
George	Nah (laughs).
Joel	Put your finger in sockets szzzz!
PG	No, don't do that!
Joel	Err, tracing back at em, cos, err if you have AVG then it just goes like that, it's easy.

PG	Oh, I see, so this is all related to hacking and computers...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Did you add, did you add something to your maths, free running in school, PE, maths...
George	Ah, yeah, I love free running like that...
PG	So, that's, that, you've, that's really interesting, you've, you've both told me some really, some really good detail about what you do, a lot of computers a lot of sports stuff that's related to school...
Joel	Yeah.
PG	...maths, science, you've talked about what you, what you want to do. I've got some, some, some questions erm, that I'm going to ask you now. What do you think someone who is successful is like? Have a little think about that. Just think of somebody, either someone you know who you'd say is successful, err...
Joel	I know someone!
PG	Yeah, okay, let's start with you then Joel, tell me about..., oh right okay, you're pointing to George
George	Okay.

Joel	I think he's really successful.
PG	Why is he successful then?
Joel	Umm, sort of like he's the highest level in reading, he's the highest level in a lot of stuff...
PG	Yep.
Joel	Um, because he's, like, really like...
George	Highest I maths classes...
Joel	His, yeah. Something that the teachers taught him, it will just go into him and it won't, like, you know when you, like when say it goes in one ear and comes out the other...
PG	Yeah.
Joel	...it's like, the ear that it needs to come out of is like blocked...
PG	(laughs)
Joel	...and it won't let it go out!
PG	Sss, so you would...
Joel	And it stays in his head!
PG	That's really interesting...

Joel	And then like when the teacher asks him, 'Oh George, what's em, 12 times, 12 times 49?', he'll be like oh, this and this and...
PG	Ahh...
Joel	...It will just...
PG	How do you do that then?
George	I memorise it.
PG	You memorise, you think you've got a good memory for things, have you?
George	Yeah, I like err, I memorise all my square numbers up to twelve...
PG	D'you, d'you know some children in school...
George	Yeah.
PG	...don't seem to do very well and are not very successful, why do you think that is? You two seem like very successful chaps, why do you think there's some children who are not successful?
George	I think....
Joel	Because they don't listen.
George	I think they're the sort of kids that think they know it all and stuff so they li..., don't listen...

Joel	Yeah.
George	...go like. 'Oh, I know this so I'm not going to listen', teacher asks them a question there like...
Joel	And then they're just like, talking off to their friends, 'Yeah, yeah, did you see this and this and like...
George	And, 'See Sponge Bob last night?'
PG	Hmm.
George	And then they're, and then the teacher asks them a question...
Joel	They're like, 'Ow...'...
George	'What's the cube root of three hundred and thirty-three to the power of four Shaylah?'
Joel	Erm...
George	'Erm...'. 'The answers two thousand four hundred and one!'
Joel	Umm.
George	It's like that, basically.
Joel	Like that...
PG	Right.

George	When if that that had been (unintelligible word) if she weren't listening, but, yeah, that is just an example, although like, we know she mo...
PG	So, who do you think successful then George?
George	Err, I think seeing that Nelson Mandela over there.
PG	Okay, yeah, I can see a photo on that wall but why is he successful? I mean in, the...
George	He's err, fought for...
PG	(unintelligible few words) but why was he successful?
George	...he fought for like, black rights and stuff...
PG	Okay.
George	...and he wouldn't give up, he does, does all the...
Joel	He got even sent to prison for black rights...
George	Yeah, he got sent to prison for going, for a...
Joel	Bus trip for white people.
George	Yeah, he went on a train for white people, it was a peaceful pro, err, non-violent protest, I think.
PG	Right, Okay.

George	Err, so he even get sent to prison for it and comes out and still becomes Prime Minister.
PG	So, you've, you've learnt about him in school, have you?
George	Yeah.
PG	That's really interesting.
Joel	Yeah.
George	We mainly did him, err, when we was doing biographies last year...
Joel	Yeah.
George	...and err, when he died.
PG	Of course, yes, cos he died there would have been lots of stuff in, in...
George	Yeah.
PG	...the newspaper. And, is being, err, you can, you can both think about this, is being successful at, a-any of the things we've talked about important. I'm going to go to you Joel first. Is it important to you?
Joel	Umm, yeah, like, computers, I think it's successful for me cos like, if like, I don't know, say if my mum got really like angry with a computer cos she wanted this to happen and, and it's not doing it and she like (unintelligible word) and like, mum, mum, mum, just calm down and I'll take the laptop off

	of her and I'll do it all and take this off, cos normally it's because she got too many programs opened...
George	Yeah....
PG	A-ha.
George	...that won't help!
Joel	And I'm, an I'm saying, 'Mum can I just take this off?', she's like, 'Yes, do what you want just, I want this website to work!'. So, I'll like, deleted every single program that was on there and the comp, and the computer like, the screen just went, like, you know when it goes black?
PG	Mmm.
Joel	Like when the screen goes black, and then it just came back on and there was only one program open and that was the program that she wanted. I said, 'Mum, here it is!'
PG	Mmm.
Joel	And she, and she said 'Ah, thanks!', she said, 'Ah, thanks!'
PG	Mmm.
Joel	And then um, she um, got, all she wanted to do was like, e-mail um, her sister to say um, what d'ya want to, what shall I get for Christmas for my cousin? And she was, no his birthday for cousin, for my cousin, and she said,

	'Oh, Jack wants a really big watch, like a watch so he knows what the time is...
PG	Mmm.
Joel	...and um, she did that and like, when it came it was like a big watch, it had, it wasn't set yet, but it was really big, it was...
PG	Mmm.
Joel	...good, nice weight and I helped her with that and then she's just been wanting me to do a lot of the computer stuff...
PG	Right so...
Joel	So, helping with computers...
PG	Helping...
Joel	...I think, is a big thing for me...
PG	That's good...
Joel	... to do computering.
PG	And what about you? What, is success, being successful at stuff important to you?
George	It depends on the other people around you, so...

PG	Right...
George	...like you're good at something like maths or something, some people are like, err, some people like, another kids like, the get bullied that they're good at maths and stuff...
PG	Right.
George	...like in Diary of a Wimpy Kid books, Alex Arruda was like...
PG	Yep.
George	...yeah (laughs). I think there was another one err, all the people who were good at maths and stuff and smart were like, oh, they're invisible now. But if you got err, people who don't, who don't actually act like bullies and stuff they're like, I'm like the other people there not, 'Oh, we're better than you, cos you're not, cos you're good at maths...'
PG	Um.
George	...so, like that sort of...
Joel	'We know all that stuff, so we don't even need to be here!'
George	Yeah.
Joel	And then when it comes up to like, their GCSEs, they're like 'Oh...
George	Right.

Joel	...I'm err'...
George	'I really should have listened'...
Joel	And then they go to that kid that they've been bullying and like, 'Hey, kid, can you...'
PG	So, are you, are you thinking even at your age now, you mentioned GCSEs, are you thinking that far ahead?
George	Oh yes!
Joel & George	(both laugh)
Joel	Oh yes!
PG	Really?
George	Cos you've got our SATs coming up in May? Isn't it?
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Right.
George	Yeah, so um, I thinking that it's gonna be like GCSEs like, really hard work but there's a kid that just came out of em, pre-sch, primary school went in and he's in the comp now that's in Exeter and he said SATs were really easy

	for me if you just like, concentrate on the question like, you look at the question read it and read it and read it even if you haven't learnt it...
PG	Mmm.
George	...you just look at the question and just think and think and the answer will pop into your head and like, oh, could be, and you write it down and then you get it right and then you ss, and then you get and then you get your good grade and then the teachers that um, when you go into like the college, the teachers there will be like, 'Oh, why don't you come into this lesson with me and we'll teach you about', I don't know, um, algebra squares or something...
PG	Umm.
George	...if that's the name of it, yeah.
PG	Umm. Wo, what about you? Is it, is that some, is it important to you that sort of thinking ahead like that?
Joel	Yeah. You're thinking, 'Oh my God I've gotta learn this and stuff, you've, sometimes you over think stuff.
George	Yeah.
PG	Right, okay.

Joel	Yeah, like you get too, err, wound up about your SATs but if you start thinking about it early enough, you've got enough time, cos like, it's a bit like when my mum nags me to do my homework.
PG	(laughs) Right, does she have to nag you to do your homework, does she?
Joel	Well she's, when I get, when I get back and I've got homework, thank God we ain't had any this term!
George	No, we haven't any, for like eight weeks...
Joel	Apart from that spelling thing, yeah.
George	So,...
Joel	Err, but she's like, 'You got any homework?', 'No mum.' 'Do it now!'
PG	Right.
Joel	Yeah.
PG	Don't you do it yourself? Just sort of say 'I'm gonna do it.'
Joel	Yes, but I have to, I have to do it err...
George	I do what...
Joel	...myself, she don't like giving me any help.
George	...I do it on the weekends.

PG	Right.
George	Like, but normally, I do it on the weekends in the morning so then, throughout the day I can go outside or play on the Xbox...
Joel	Sure!
George	...or something.
Joel	I just go on the (unintelligible words).
George	Yes, and do it in the morning on a Saturday or just...
PG	So, is, is school, is the school work important to you then? Cos you're kind of saying there...
Joel	Yeah, and err, yeah and no.
PG	Yea and no. Right what about you George?
George	Ish!
PG	Ish!
George	Ish.
PG	So, you work hard in school...
George	Yeah.

PG	...and then when you get home?
George	Err, yeah, school? Boring!
Joel	You don't really want to do it because you got like, all your like, electric around you, you got like, your computer, your phone, your tab..., your iPad, your Xbox...
George	And your little virtual pet is going, 'I need a pee!'
Joel	Yeah, and it's like, 'I need a wee!' and you're like, you're like, 'Oh, but I've gotta do my homework!' and he's like, 'I need some food!', your like aww! And you put your pen down and you get up and then you go back and your mum's, and your mum's stood there like that....
George	Yeah like...
PG	(laughs)
Joel	Cos you've, cos you've just gone up to do, play with your electric and you shouldn't have...

Appendix 6 – An example of the selection of text from an interview that was marked and categorised as narrative

Subject	Narrative 1	Analysis
George	I <u>randomly started improving</u> in maths in Year 4 and then I got all right Ben, who's like level 5a. Err, last year he moved out because he was Year 6 last year, and <u>he taught me</u> a bit about maths and <u>taught me</u> a bit about (unintelligible word) and stuff... But err, so <u>he helped me</u> with the maths and <u>I helped him</u> and stuff and then he sort of said 'Oh George you might get Year 5 <u>highest level thing</u> ', about a week in, I was like 'Oh yeah!'.	Character/s: Himself & a friend Action: Being taught maths by an older friend. Plot: His friend helped him improve in maths and this is important as good maths leads to a good job later in life.
PG	Do you, do you think that's important?	<i>The point of the narrative:</i>
George	Yeah.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Connected to others who can help him with his learning</i>
PG	Being really good at maths, why do you think it's important? Tell me why...	Possible identities:
George	You go get a <u>good job</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially connected • Intrinsically motivated
Subject	Narrative 2	Analysis
George	I <u>love</u> sprinting. I don't care if like, I've <u>cut my leg</u> or something, I've, when I plate, <u>face planted the pitch</u> and lost long distance, went and got and ice pack just did the sprint...	Character/s: Himself Action: Getting hurt while taking part in sport and physical activities.
PG	Right.	Plot: He does not give up, he is resilient.
George	So, I don't care if I've got like an <u>injury</u> or <u>something I just keep on going</u> ...	<i>The point of the narrative:</i>

- *Resilient, won't give up easily*

Possible identities:

- **Tough and resilient**
- **Sporty**

Subject Narrative 3

Analysis

George Err, but I want to be a footballer err, cause I recently got into it when I saw Ronaldo playing for Real Madrid. Err, it was actually when I was quite early Year 5 he was playing Atletico Madrid or something. But, so I used a, I figured out how he did some of his skills like step-overs and stuff, so I'm now addicted that I got goal posts for my birthday and I practise at least an hour and a half in the garden.

Character/s: Himself and his hero Ronaldo

Action: Watching his hero and other children and copying them.

Plot: Practising football skills learnt from others help him improve.

The point of the narrative:

PG That's really interesting, so, who told you you've got to practise every day then?

- *Motivated to learn new skills*
- *Persistent in practising skills*

George Myself.

Possible identities:

PG Yourself?

- **Hard worker**
- **Intrinsically motivated**
- **Sporty**

George Yeah.

PG Right so you, you think that by practising every day is the way to be good at these things, is it?

George One of the ways, you've also gotta like, You Tube football and stuff and Google it, Google 'tricks, you've gotta learn it off that too. I watch other kids.

PG You look at Google and then you watch things that happen then you

go and practise them... ..skills.
That's really interesting, that's
really interesting, and you're
working hard by the sound of it to
get those things improved.

George Yeah, I come in like, clothes literally
wet with sweat, the first thing hear
is 'George change those clothes!'

Subject Narrative 4

Analysis

PG And what about you? What, is
success, being successful at stuff
important to you?

Character/s: Himself and other
children who are good at maths

George It depends on the other people
around you, so like you're good at
something like maths or something,
some people are like, some people
like, another kids like, the get
bullied that they're good at maths
and stuff... like in Diary of a Wimpy
Kid books, Alex Arruda was like
yeah (laughs). I think there was
another one, all the people who
were good at maths and stuff and
smart were like, oh, they're invisible
now. But if you got err, people who
don't, who don't actually act like
bullies and stuff they're like, I'm like
the other people they're not, 'Oh,
we're better than you, cos you're
not, cos you're good at maths...' so
like that sort of...

Action: Being bullied for being
smart.

Plot: People who bully others for
being smart will get their
comeuppance.

The point of the narrative:

- *Smart people win out in the
end*

Possible identities:

- **Geek/Nerd**
- **More able than others**

Joel 'We know all that stuff, so we don't
even need to be here!'

Knowledge of the world from fiction
narrative

George Yeah.

Joel And then when it comes up to like,
their GCSEs, they're like 'Oh...

George Right, 'I really should have listened'.

Subject Narrative 5

Analysis

George Yeah, so um, I thinking that it's gonna be like GCSEs like, really hard work but there's a kid that just came out of em, primary school went in and he's in the comp now that's in Exeter and he said SATs were really easy for me if you just like, concentrate on the question like, you look at the question read it and read it and read it even if you haven't learnt it... you just look at the question and just think and think and the answer will pop into your head and like, oh, could be, and you write it down and then you get it right and then you ss, and then you get and then you get your good grade and then the teachers that um, when you go into like the college, the teachers there will be like, 'Oh, why don't you come into this lesson with me and we'll teach you about', I don't know, um, algebra squares or something... ..if that's the name of it, yeah.

Character/s: Himself and peers

Action: Preparing for SATs and then GCSEs

Plot: Hard work and concentration will lead to success.

The point of the narrative:

- *Working hard now will pay off in the end.*

Possible identities:

- **Hard worker**
- **More able than peers**

PG Umm. Wo, what about you? Is it, is that some, is it important to you that sort of thinking ahead like that?

Joel Yeah. You're thinking, 'Oh my God I've gotta learn this and stuff, you've, sometimes you over think stuff.

George Yeah.

PG Right, okay.

Joel Yeah, like you get too, err, wound up about your SATs but if you start thinking about it early enough, you've got enough time, cos like, it's a bit like when my mum nags me to do my homework.

Appendix 7 – Lists produced by interview participants of things they are good at

Joel:

ICT
Computers
Dancing
Free running
Gymnastics
Jumping around
Maths
PE
Playing

George:

Common sense
Computers
Ear wiggling
Electricity
Free running
Hacking
Humour
ICT
Looking after animals
Maths
Nun chucks
PE
Reading
Science
Self defence
Solving problems
Sprinting
Street dance

Kelly:

ICT
English
Gymnastics
Maths
PE
Playtime
Science
Spellings

Ruby:

English
Fencing
Gymnastics
ICT
Maths
Netball
PE
Reading

Holly:

Art
Baking
English
Photography
Science
Swimming
Tennis

Rosie:

Cake baking
English
ICT
Maths
Netball
PE
Science

Spellings

Swimming

Jenny:

Art

English

Gymnastics

Maths

Science

Owen:

Art

Football

Maths

Xbox

Charlie:

Football

Gaming

Learning

Maths

Swimming

Matthew:

Football

Handwriting

Maths

Rugby

Casey:

Art

Dance

English

Football

Judo

Netball

Rugby

Science

Sports

Swimming

Izzy:

English

Football

Gymnastics

Hockey

ICT

Maths

Reading

Swimming

Tennis

Rachel:

Art

Caring for
animals

English

Horse riding

Emily:

Art

Horse riding

Maths

Swimming

Joshua:

Cycling

Football

iPads

Maths

PE

Science

Walking dogs

Sebastian:

Rosie:

Abby:

Acting

Horse riding

Drawing

Caring for mum

Maths

English

& dad

Reading

Horse riding

Cooking

Running

Swimming

Going to the
woods

Swimming

Looking after
pets

Xbox

Joseph:

Tom:

Basketball

Handwriting

Football

Maths

History

Reading

Maths

Spelling

Rounders

Technology

Science

Technology

Appendix 8 – Prompts and extensions to interview questions

- Prompts:
 - Why do you think you did well?
 - How did you know?
 - Did anybody tell you?
 - If so, who?
 - Describe how you felt?

- Extensions:
 - Can you give me an example of that?
 - That's interesting, can you tell me more about it?
 - Can you explain that?
 - Can you describe any more successes you've had?
 - Tell me as though I know nothing about you.
 - Take me through that step by step.
 - Is there another time things have been like that?

Appendix 9 – Examples of direct questions asked across the interviews in the study:

- Describe what someone who is successful is like.
- Is being successful at school important to you? Why?
- Do you think you are successful in school?
- Do your family want you to be successful in school?
- Do you know of anyone who is successful?
- What do your parents want you to do when you are older?
- What do you want to do when you are older?
- What are your ambitions?
- What will help you achieve your ambitions?
- What might get in the way of you achieving your ambitions?

References

- ADAMS, M. 2016. Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity? *Sociology*, 40, 3, 511-528.
- ALLEN, B. 2018. *The pupil premium is not working* [Online]. Available: <https://rebeccaallen.co.uk/2018/09/10/the-pupil-premium-is-not-working/> [Accessed 10/11/2018 2018].
- APPLE, M. W. 1996. *Cultural Politics and Education*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- APPLE, M. W. 2006. *Educating the "right" Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality*, New York, Routledge.
- ARCHER, L. 2008. The Impossibility of Minority Ethnic Educational 'Success'? An Examination of the Discourses of Teachers and Pupils in British Secondary Schools. *European Educational Research Journal*, 7, 1, 89-107.
- ARCHER, L. & FRANCIS, B. 2005. 'They never go off the rails like other ethnic groups': teachers' constructions of British Chinese pupils' gender identities and approaches to learning. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26, 2, 165-182.
- ARCHER, L. & FRANCIS, B. 2006a. Challenging Classes? Exploring the Role of Social Class within the Identities and Achievement of British Chinese Pupils. *Sociology*, 40, 1, 29-49.
- ARCHER, L. & FRANCIS, B. 2006b. *Understanding Minority Ethnic Achievement: Race, Gender, Class and 'Success'*, New York, Taylor & Francis.
- BALL, S. 1994. *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-structural Approach*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

- BALL, S. J. 2003a. *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage*, London, Taylor & Francis.
- BALL, S. J. 2003b. The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18, 2, 215-228.
- BALL, S. J. 2006. *Education policy and social class: the selected works of Stephen J. Ball*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- BALL, S. J. 2013. *The education debate (second edition)*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- BALL, S. J. & BOWE, R. 1992. Subject departments and the 'implementation' of National Curriculum policy: an overview of the issues. *Curriculum Studies*, 24, 2, 97-115.
- BANSEL, P. 2013. Same but different: space, time and narrative. *UKLA Literacy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- BARKER, C. 2005. *Cultural Studies: Theories and Practice*, London, Sage.
- BARTHES, R. & HEATH, S. 1977. *Image, Music, Text*, London, Fontana Press.
- BENJAMIN, S. 2003. What Counts as 'Success'? Hierarchical discourses in a girls' comprehensive school. *Discourse*, 24, 1, 105-118.
- BERNSTEIN, B. 1971. *Class, Codes and Control*, London, Routledge.
- BIESTA, G. & TEDDER, M. 2007. Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39, 2, 132-149.
- BIESTA, G. J. J. 2015. *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*, London, Taylor & Francis.
- BIESTA, G. J. J. & OSBERG, D. 2007. Beyond Re/Presentation: A Case for Updating the Epistemology of Schooling. *Interchange*, 38, 1, 15-29.
- BLANDEN, J. & MACHIN, S. 2007. Recent changes in intergenerational mobility. London.
- BOTTERO, W. 2010. Intersubjectivity and Bourdieusian Approaches to 'Identity'. *Cultural Sociology*, 4, 1, 3-22.

- BOURDIEU, P. 1967. Systems of Education and Systems of Thought. *Social Science Information*, 14, 338–58.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1973. Cultural Reproduction and social reproduction. *Knowledge, education and cultural change*, ed R. Brown, 71-112.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1977a. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1986. Forms of capital. In: RICHARDSON, J. (ed.) *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1990a. *In Other Words: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1990b. *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford CA, Stanford University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P., CALHOUN, C. J., LIPUMA, E. & POSTONE, M. 1993. *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. & NICE, R. 1980. The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods. *Media, Culture & Society*, 2, 3, 261-293.
- BOURDIEU, P. & PASSERON, J. C. 1977b. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London, SAGE Publications.
- BOURDIEU, P. & REYNAUD, J. D. 1974. Is a Sociology of Action Possible? In: GIDDENS, A. (ed.) *Positivism and Sociology*
London: Heinemann.

- BOURDIEU, P. & WACQUANT, L. J. D. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- BRADFORD, S. & HEY, V. 2007. Successful subjectivities? The successification of class, ethnic and gender positions. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22, 6, 595-614.
- BROOKER, L. 2002. *Starting school: young children learning cultures*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- BRUNER, J. 1987. Life as Narrative. *Social Research*, 54, 1, 11-32.
- BRUNER, J. S. 1986. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- BUCKNALL, S. 2014. Doing Qualitative Research with Children and Young People. In: CLARK, A., FLEWITT, R., HAMMERSLEY, M. & ROBB, M. (eds.) *Understanding Research with Children and Young People*. London: SAGE Publications.
- BUNZEL, D. 2008. International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies. Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- BURR, V. 2003. *Social constructionism*, London, Routledge.
- CAUSA, O. & JOHANSSON, Å. 2010. Intergenerational Social Mobility in OECD Countries. *OECD Journal: Economic Studies*, 2010, 1.
- CHOWDRY, H., GREAVES, E. & LUKE 2010. The pupil premium: assessing the options. In: STUDIES, T. I. F. F. (ed.). London: The Institute of Fiscal Studies.
- CLARK, C. & RUMBOLD, K. 2006. *Reading for Pleasure: A Research Overview*, London, The National Literacy Trust.
- CLEGG, S. 2014. Managerialism: Born in the USA. *Academy of Management Review*, 39, 4, 566-576.

- COAKLEY, J. 2011. Ideology doesn't just happen: Sports and neoliberalism. *Revista da Associação Latinoamericana de Estudios Socioculturales del Deporto*, 1, 1, 67-84.
- CORAK, M. 2006. Do Poor Children Become Poor Adults? Lessons from a Cross-Country Comparison of Generational Earnings Mobility. *Dynamics of Inequality and Poverty*. Bonn: IZA.
- CROTTY, M. 1998. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, London, SAGE Publications.
- DAVIES, B. & BANSEL, P. 2007. Neoliberalism and education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20, 3, 247-259.
- DEER, C. 2008. Doxa. In: GRENFELL, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen.
- DFE. 2011. *Pupil Premium - what you need to know* [Online]. Available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance> [Accessed].
- EMIRBAYER, M. & MISCHÉ, A. 1998. What is Agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 4, 962-1023.
- FIELDING, M. & MOSS, P. 2011. *Radical education and the common school: a democratic alternative*, New York, Routledge.
- FINLAY, L. 2008. A dance between the reduction and reflexivity: Explicating the "phenomenological psychological attitude". *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 39, 1-32.
- FLEWITT, R. 2014. Interviews. In: CLARK, A., FLEWITT, R., HAMMERSLEY, M. & ROBB, M. (eds.) *Understanding Research with Children and Young People*. London: SAGE Publications.

- FOUCAULT, M. & RABINOW, P. 1984. *The Foucault Reader*, New York, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- FREEDMAN, S. & HORNER, S. 2008. *School Funding and Social Justice*. London: Policy Exchange.
- FRIESEN, N., HENRIKSSON, C. & SAEVI, T. 2012. *Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Education: Method and Practice*, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.
- GADAMER, H. G. 2013. *Truth and Method*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- GALL, M. D., BORG, W. R. & GALL, J. P. 1996. *Educational research: an introduction*, New York, Longman.
- GALLAGHER, S. 2012. *Phenomenology*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- GEE, J. P. 2006. *Self-Fashioning and Shape-Shifting: Language, Identity, and Social Class. Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives, 2nd ed.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- GEE, J. P. 2014. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy. Second Edition*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- GEE, J. P. 2017. *Teaching, Learning, Literacy in Our High-Risk High-Tech World: A Framework for Becoming Human*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- GEE, J. P. & HAYES, E. R. 2011. *Language and Learning in the Digital Age*, New York, Taylor & Francis.
- GERGEN, K. J. 1999. *An Invitation to Social Construction*, London, SAGE Publications.
- GIDDENS, A. 1986. *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- GIDDENS, A. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

- GOFFMAN, E. 1963. *Stigma; notes on the management of spoiled identity*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall.
- GRAND, J. L. & ESTRIN, S. 1989. *Market socialism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- GRENFELL, M. (ed.) 2010. *Pierre Bourdieu key concepts*, Durham: Acumen.
- H. M. GOVERNMENT 2011. *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility*. London: H.M. Government.
- H. M. GOVERNMENT. 2015. *English Indices of Deprivation 2015* [Online]. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015> [Accessed].
- HALSTEAD, J. M. & TAYLOR, M. J. 2000. Learning and Teaching about Values: A review of recent research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 30, 2, 169-202.
- HARVEY, D. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- HEATH, S. B. 1983. *Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HEISE, A. 2005. The political economy of meritocracy: a post-Kaleckian, post-Olsonian approach to unemployment and income inequality in modern varieties of capitalism. Hamburg: University of Hamburg, Department of Socioeconomics.
- HIGGINS, S., KOKOTSAKI, D. & COLE, R. 2011. Toolkit of Strategies to Improve Learning: Summary for School Spending the Pupil Premium. *The Sutton Trust*. Durham: Durham University.
- HOLLAND, D. C., SKINNER, D., LACHICOTTE JR., W. & CAIN, C. 2001. *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- HOSKINS, K. & BARKER, B. 2014. *Education and Social Mobility: Dreams of Success*, London, Institute of Education Press (IOE Press).

- HOSKINS, K. & BARKER, B. 2017. Aspirations and Young People's Constructions of Their Futures: Investigating Social Mobility and Social Reproduction. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 65, 1, 45-67.
- JENKINS, R. 2002. *Pierre Bourdieu*, London, Routledge.
- JENSEN, E. 2009. *Teaching With Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids' Brains and What Schools Can Do About It*, Alexandria VA, Ascd.
- JIMÉNEZ, A. 2018. Inclusive innovation from the lenses of situated agency: insights from innovation hubs in the UK and Zambia. *Innovation and Development*, 9, 1, 41-64.
- JUZWIK, M. M. 2006. Situating Narrative-Minded Research: A Commentary on Anna Sfard and Anna Prusak's "Telling Identities". *Educational Researcher*, 35, 9, 13-21.
- KALFA, S. & TAKSA, L. 2016. Employability, managerialism, and performativity in higher education: a relational perspective. *Higher Education*, 1-13.
- KAŠČÁK, O. & PUPALA, B. 2011. Governmentality - Neoliberalism - Education: the Risk Perspective. *Journal of Pedagogy / Pedagogický časopis*, 2, 2, 145.
- KEDDIE, A. 2016. Children of the market: performativity, neoliberal responsibilisation and the construction of student identities. *Oxford Review of Education*, 42, 1, 108-122.
- KEHILY, M. J. 1995. Self-narration, Autobiography and Identity Construction. *Gender and Education*, 7, 1, 23-32.
- KIRBY, P. 2016. *Leading People in 2016*. London: The Sutton Trust.
- KVALE, S. 1996. *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, London, SAGE Publications.
- LAKES, R. D. & CARTER, P. A. 2011. Neoliberalism and Education: An Introduction. *Educational Studies*, 47, 2, 107-110.

- LAPADAT, J. C. & LINDSAY, A. C. 1999. Transcription in Research and Practice: From Standardization of Technique to Interpretive Positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5, 1, 64-86.
- LAREAU, A. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- LASKY, S. 2005. A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 8, 899-916.
- LAVERTY, S. M. 2003. Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2, 3.
- LAWLER, S. 2014. *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge, Wiley.
- LERNER, M. 1980. *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, New York, Springer.
- LEVE, L. 2011. Identity. *Current Anthropology*, 52, 4, 513-535.
- LOCKE, R. R. & SPENDER, J. C. 2011. *Confronting Managerialism: How the Business Elite and Their Schools Threw Our Lives Out of Balance*, London, Zed Books.
- LOSEKE, D. R. 2007. The Study of Identity As Cultural, Institutional, Organizational, and Personal Narratives: Theoretical and Empirical Integrations AU - Loseke, Donileen R. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48, 4, 661-688.
- MACKEY, M. & TRITES, R. S. 2016. *One Child Reading: My Auto-Bibliography*, Alberta, University of Alberta Press.
- MAJOR, L. E. & MACHIN, S. 2018. *Social Mobility: And Its Enemies*, Milton Keynes, Penguin Books Limited.

- MATON, K. 2010. Habitus. In: GRENFELL, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen.
- MAYALL, B. 2002. *Towards a Sociology for Childhood: Thinking from Children's Lives*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- MCADAMS, D. P. & MCLEAN, K. C. 2013. Narrative Identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 3, 233-238.
- MENDICK, H., ALLEN, K. & HARVEY, L. 2015. 'We can Get Everything We Want if We Try Hard': Young People, Celebrity, Hard Work. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 63, 2, 161-178.
- MENDICK, H. & FRANCIS, B. 2012. Boffin and geek identities: abject or privileged? *Gender and Education*, 24, 1, 15-24.
- MILLS, C. 2008. Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in schooling: the transformative potential of the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29, 1, 79-89.
- MOORE, R. 2010. Capital. In: GRENFELL, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen.
- MORSE, J. M. 2008. Confusing Categories and Themes. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18, 6, 727-728.
- MURRAY, R. 2011. *How to Write a Thesis*, Maidenhead, Open University Press.
- NASH, R. 1999. Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research: Is it all worth the candle? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20, 2, 175-187.
- NBA. 2007. *2007-2008 Player Survey: Height* [Online]. www.nba.com: NBA. Available: http://www.nba.com/news/survey_height_2007.html [Accessed 03/03/2018].
- NODDINGS, N. 2003. *Happiness and Education*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- OECD 2015. *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*, Paris, OECD Publishing.

- OFSTED 2018. School inspection handbook. London: Ofsted.
- PALMER, R. E. 1969. *Hermeneutics*, Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press.
- PERRY, E. & FRANCIS, B. 2010. The Social Class Gap for Educational Achievement: a review of the literature. London: RSA.
- POSTMAN, N. & WEINGARTNER, C. 1969. *Teaching as a subversive activity*, New York, Delacorte Press.
- PRIESTLEY, M., BIESTA, G. & ROBINSON, S. 2015. *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- REAY, D. 2004. 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25, 4, 431-444.
- REAY, D. 2017. *Miseducation: Inequality, education and the working classes*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- REAY, D. & WILLIAM, D. 1999. 'I' ll be a nothing': structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 25, 3, 343-354.
- RENOLD, E. & ALLAN, A. 2006. Bright and Beautiful: High achieving girls, ambivalent femininities, and the feminization of success in the primary school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27, 4, 457-473.
- RICOEUR, P. 1988. *Time and Narrative*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- RICOEUR, P. 2002. Narrative Identity. In: WOOD, D. (ed.) *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*. London: Routledge.
- ROBERTS, H. 2017. Listening to children. In: CHRISTENSEN, P. & JAMES, A. (eds.) *Research with Children*. London & New York: Taylor & Francis.
- ROMDENH-ROMLUC, K. 2010. *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception*, Abingdon, Taylor & Francis.

- ROSE, J. 2010. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- SAUNDERS, P. 2010. *Social Mobility Myths*, London, CIVITAS.
- SAVAGE, M. 2015. *Social Class in the 21st Century*, Milton Keynes, Penguin Books Limited.
- SFARD, A. & PRUSAK, A. 2005. Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher*, 34, 4, 14-22.
- SHAMIR, R. 2008. The age of responsabilization: on market-embedded morality. *Economy and Society*, 37, 1, 1-19.
- SMITH, J. A., FLOWERS, P. & LARKIN, M. 2009. *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, London, SAGE Publications.
- SOCIAL MOBILITY COMMISSION 2017. State of the Nation on Social Mobility in Great Britain. London: Social Mobility Commission.
- SPOHRER, K. 2016. Negotiating and contesting 'success': discourses of aspiration in a UK secondary school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37, 3, 411-425.
- STIGLITZ, J. E., SEN, A. & JEAN-PAUL, F. 2009. Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. Paris.
- STONE, A. A. & MACKIE, C. 2014. *Subjective Well-Being: Measuring Happiness, Suffering, and Other Dimensions of Experience*, Washington, National Academies Press.
- STONES, R. 2005. *Structuration Theory*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- STRATTON, A. 2010. David Cameron aims to make happiness the new GDP. *The Guardian*, Sunday 14th November 2010.

- SYED, M. 2010. *Bounce: The Myth of Talent and the Power of Practice*, London, Harper Collins.
- THOMPSON, G. 2010. Acting, accidents and performativity: challenging the hegemonic good student in secondary schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31, 4, 413-430.
- THOMSON, P. 2008. Field. In: GRENFELL, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Durham: Acmen.
- THOMSON, R., HENDERSON, S. & HOLLAND, J. 2003. Making the Most of What You've Got? Resources, Values and Inequalities in Young Women's Transitions to Adulthood. *Educational Review*, 55, 1, 33-46.
- TRACY, S. J. 2010. Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16, 10, 837-851.
- TRNKA, S. & TRUNDLE, C. 2014. Competing Responsibilities: Moving Beyond Neoliberal Responsibilisation. *Anthropological Forum*, 24, 2, 136-153.
- TROWLER, P. 2001. Captured by the Discourse? The Socially Constitutive Power of New Higher Education Discourse in the UK. *Organization*, 8, 2, 183-201.
- UNIVERSITY, P. 2013. University Research Ethics: a policy for staff and students. Plymouth.
- VAN MANEN, M. 1990. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, New York, State University of New York Press.
- VAN MANEN, M. 2007. *Phenomenology of Practice*, Alberta, University of Alberta.
- VAN MANEN, M. 2014. *Phenomenology Online: A Resource for Phenomenological Inquiry* [Online]. Available: <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/orientations-in-phenomenology/hermeneutical-phenomenology/> [Accessed 21/09/2016].

- VECCHI, V. 2010. *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the Role and Potential of Ateliers in Early Childhood Education*, London, Taylor & Francis.
- VYGOTSKY, L. S. 1962. *Thought and language*, Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- WACQUANT, L. 1989. Towards a reflexive sociology. *Sociological Theory*, 7, 1, 26-63.
- WALKERDINE, V. 1990. *Schoolgirl Fictions*, Verso Books.
- WALKERDINE, V. 2002. *Challenging Subjects: Critical Psychology for a New Millennium*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- WALKERDINE, V. 2003. Reclassifying Upward Mobility: Femininity and the neo-liberal subject. *Gender and Education*, 15, 3, 237-248.
- WALKERDINE, V., LUCEY, H. & MELODY, J. 2001. *Growing Up Girl: Psycho-Social Explorations of Gender and Class*, London, Macmillan Education UK.
- WEBB, J., SCHIRATO, T. & DANAHER, G. 2002. *Understanding Bourdieu*, Crows Nest, N.S.W., Allen & Unwin.
- WEBER, M. 2002. *The Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: and other writings*, London, Penguin.
- WEEDON, C. 1987. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- WENGER, E. 1998. *Communities of practice : learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- WHITTY, G. & POWER, S. 2000. Marketization and privatization in mass education systems. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20, 2, 93-107.
- WIEDERKEHR, V., BONNOT, V., KRAUTH-GRUBER, S. & DARNON, C. 2015. Belief in school meritocracy as a system-justifying tool for low status students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1053.

- WILKINS, A. 2012. The spectre of neoliberalism: pedagogy, gender and the construction of learner identities. *Critical Studies in Education*, 53, 2, 197-210.
- WILKINSON, R. & PICKETT, K. 2010. *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*, London, Penguin Books Limited.
- WRIGHT, A. 2012. Fantasies of empowerment: mapping neoliberal discourse in the coalition government's schools policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27, 3, 279-294.
- YARDLEY, L. 2000. Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology & Health*, 15, 2, 215-228.
- YOUNG, M. 2001. Down with meritocracy. *The Guardian*, Friday 29 June 2001.
- YOUNG, M. D. 1958. *The rise of the meritocracy*, Abingdon, Transaction Publishers.
- YOUNG, M. F. D. 2008. *Bringing Knowledge Back in: From Social Constructivism to Social Realism in the Sociology of Education*, Abingdon, Routledge.