

Identities and Agency in Transition: moving from special  
school to further education.

Submitted by Anastasia Douglas to the University of Exeter  
as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
In December 2016

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is  
copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published  
without proper acknowledgment.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been  
identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved  
for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature .....

## **Abstract:**

This thesis draws on the experiences of 21 young people transitioning from a special school for students with labels of moderate learning difficulty, to further education college. Taking a disability studies approach, that is, viewing disability as a social and political response to human diversity, I examine some social processes through which student identity and agency meanings may be negotiated during transition. Times of change offer circumstances of opportunity in which new identity and agency meanings may be improvised and tested in various forms. Some students found emergent ways to subvert and transgress expectations, given the different labels applied to them.

Transition, with its focus on future change, offers limbic moments which appear to support situations for such opportunistic transgression. Of particular interest are the environments and circumstances that support or promote broadening of identity and agency options, because an understanding of these may enable the engineering of such situations. Whilst the students were transitioning to college, my own researcher subjectivities and understandings of 'knowledge' were also in flux. I describe the considerable influence these changes had on the research processes and my understandings of identity and agency.

I propose that identity and agency meanings, whilst fluid and ever-changing, are linked with particular people and situated in particular social sites. With this in mind, and as a provocation to new ways of thinking I discuss foundation level further education as an ethical project, envisaging circumstances that may support and promote broader, more positive opportunities for identity and agency negotiations amongst young people with labels of learning disability. In this context, further education is re-imagined as an opportunity for potential empowerment, repositioning learning disabled students as agents of social change.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1 Theoretical and philosophical context for the research</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.2 Socio-political context for the research</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1.3 Structure of the thesis</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>1.4 Ethics</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>1.4.1 Access and consent in Weldale School</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>1.4.2 Introducing Weldale School</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>1.4.3 Relational ethics</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>1.5 Background information</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>1.5.1 Background to special education</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>1.5.2 Background to transition</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>1.5.3 Background to further education (FE)</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>1.5.4 Background to foundation learning</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>1.5.5 The Weldale transition process</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>1.6 Chapter summary</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>2 Methodological processes</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>2.2 Data collection methods</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>2.1 Learning as an ontological and ethical project</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>2.1.1 Introducing analytical reflexivity</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>2.2 Gaining information</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>2.3 Critical ethnographic practice</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>2.3.1 The dangers of viewing myself as a benevolent actor</b> .....	<b>63</b>
<b>2.4 Mediating my role in the school</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>2.5 Academic ‘expectations’ and emergent methodologies</b> .....	<b>68</b>

2.6 Applying epistemological questioning in my own family.....	70
2.7 Post-qualitative, post-coding analysis.....	74
2.8 ‘Thinking with theory’ – creative processes.....	84
2.9 Selection of examples – or some data simply demands more attention.....	88
2.10 Quality.....	89
2.11 Chapter summary.....	93
<b>3 Identity.....</b>	<b>96</b>
3.1 Identity and ‘self’.....	96
3.2 Identity, structure, and psycho-emotional processes.....	100
3.3 Identity meanings in times of change.....	104
3.4 Gerrard – a story about ‘naughtiness’ and the temporal nature of identities.....	107
3.5 Families ‘re-writing’ disability discourse.....	112
3.5.1 Chris Hoy – a story of cycling, and a ‘philosophy’ of upbringing.....	112
3.5.2 Lewis – a story about the relational nature of identity narratives.....	118
3.6 Transition and identity.....	124
3.6.1 Zane – a story of (re)presentation.....	124
3.6.2 Amber – a story of a ‘character’ label.....	135
3.7 Chapter summary – and a caveat.....	139
<b>4 Agency.....</b>	<b>143</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	143
4.2 Structure, agency and power.....	144
4.3 Theorising agency - a discriminatory, or emancipatory practice	146
4.4 Agency in times of change - ‘emergent’ agency.....	151
4.4.1 Amber – a story about emergent agency in changing environments.....	153

4.4.2 Andy. - a story about agency in interview situations.....	159
4.5 Chris' and Eddie's stories - introducing 'ordering agency' .....	163
4.5.1 Why complicity and co-operation must be considered agency .....	165
4.5.2 Complicating 'complicit' agency - introducing 'ordering' and 'disordering' agency.....	167
4.6 Projected identities – making sense of/through imagined lives...172	
4.6.1 Wolverine – a story about broader agency opportunities through projected identities.....	173
4.6.2 Anthony – a story about projecting/practising more assertive, agentic behaviour.....	178
4.7 The lack of 'real' role-models with learning disability labels.....	183
4.8 Roleplay in 'managing' future situations – imagined scenarios..	184
4.9 Chapter summary.....	186
5 Agency and identity meanings in school and college.....	187
5.1 Section 1. School – identity and agency.....	187
5.1.1 Deliberate provision of 'circumstances of opportunity' .....	188
5.1.2 Formalising Pete and Adrian's pedagogy through thinking with theory.....	191
5.1.3 Adam's role in the group.....	197
5.1.4 School uniform – a site of defiance and power.....	205
5.1.5 Transgression of rules about space.....	207
5.1.6 'Poor' behaviour (re)viewed as agency.....	211
5.2 Section 2. College - identity and agency.....	215
5.2.1 Foundation learning.....	215
5.2.2 Level one courses.....	221
5.2.3 Course 'choice' implications for identity meanings.....	224
5.2.4 Opportunity versus safety.....	231
5.2.5 Chapter summary.....	233

<b>6 Re-imagining foundation level further education (FE).....</b>	<b>235</b>
6.1 A brief summary so far.....	235
6.2 The purpose of education.....	238
6.3 Social capital.....	240
6.4 Social participation as an educational aim.....	244
6.5 Inserting students into the existing world – the teaching of life- and work-skills.....	245
6.6 Further education as an ethical project.....	248
6.6.1 Democratic education and the capability approach.....	250
6.6.2 An overtly political approach – the social model of disability and self-advocacy in education.....	254
6.6.3 Citizenship – formal social participation.....	257
6.6.4 Relationships – informal social participation.....	260
6.6.5 The difference between participation and inclusion.....	261
6.6.6 An emergent curriculum.....	262
6.7 Introducing a ‘practical social inclusion’ course.....	265
6.8 “Inclusion, participation and democracy: what is the purpose?” .....	271
6.9 Introducing ‘dispersed’ education.....	274
6.10 Difficulties of a practical social inclusion approach.....	278
6.11 Successful examples of similar projects.....	282
<b>7 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>8 Appendices.....</b>	<b>288</b>
8.1 Appendix 1 – Data collection methods.....	288
8.2 Appendix 2 – Ethical approval.....	289
8.3 Appendix 3 – Information and consent forms.....	293
8.4 Appendix 4 – Students, parents and school staff.....	298
8.5 Appendix 5 – College courses.....	300

**9 Bibliography.....302**

## 1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with exploring how young people with learning disability labels negotiate identity and agency meanings through transition, from school to further education college. The thesis draws on large amounts of time spent in Weldale School (pseudonym), a ‘special’ school for young people with special educational needs (SEN). Throughout the academic year 2012/13 I spent a day per week at Weldale with the 21 year 11 students, who had labels of learning disability and/or autism, as they prepared to leave school and move on to college. I hope to portray an understanding of identity and agency built on their experiences and opinions.

Historically, discussion focuses on transitions, from school to college and from college to adulthood, as times of potential difficulty (Sloper and colleagues, 2010). In this area, as in so many aspects of research with people with learning disability labels, information available “refers more to their problems than to them as people” (Booth and Booth, 1994: 1). This thesis, whilst taking seriously ‘transition difficulties’, views transition as an opportunity. The ‘lenses’ of identity, agency and opportunity offer a different view of transition, focussing on individual experience rather than the relative success or failure of transition processes. Transition offers different opportunities to different students, or groups of students, at different times. Some Weldale students took this time of change and discontinuity as an explicit potential for identity transformation and ‘development’. For other students, the skills developed through transition set them on a route towards increased ‘independence’. Some transition circumstances enabled agency to flourish in unusual ways, challenging institutional norms and expectations. Viewing transition as an opportunity for change may go some way to provoking a different, more positive view of transition as a time of potential and opportunity, in terms of agency and identities.

My interest in transition is influenced by my professional experiences. As a hearing therapist, I ran the ‘hearing services for adults with learning disabilities’ in an NHS Trust, and more recently, worked in Local Authority supported employment. Witnessing the structural and personal difficulties of adults with learning disability labels moving from college to work, I felt disillusioned that, although providing important activity, supported employment seemed to give the illusion of “busy work”



(Atkins, 2008: 197) rather than effective support towards employment. I was interested in how and whether environment interacts with/on identity. On starting post-graduate study I chose to explore what I saw as the 'pre-employment' stage, when young people choose college courses. At this stage I (naively) thought there would be such choices.

### **1.1 Theoretical and philosophical context for the research**

The original aim of this research was to understand transition from special school to mainstream college, from the perspective of the students. The aim of this *thesis*, that of examining identities and agency through transition, came from 'doing' the research. Chapter two describes the multiple processes contributing to this aim, and how throughout the research process my views have changed and consolidated. Retrospectively, I can identify some important theoretical underpinnings to my approach, none of which were familiar to me at the start of my PhD work. There follows a synopsis of the main informative standpoints to establish my current and evolving knowledge positions (Goodley, 2001).

Post-structuralism - Initially believing researchers should be(come) 'neutral', to avoid 'bias', post-structuralist thought has been liberating for me. Continual examination of the underlying forces that shape society and interaction has brought about a fundamental change in the ways I view and experience the world. After my own 'crisis of representation' (Denzin, 1994) any previous belief in 'reality' or 'truth' in language, power, experience, understanding, was replaced with a sense of multiple realities, of simultaneous and contradictory meanings, of partial and temporary evocations of experience, of complex subjectivities. The rejection of fixed meanings, general theories and explanations in favour of "[...] local narratives and piecemeal and contingent understandings" (Davis and Watson, 2002: 160) allows a relational 'understanding' of identities, agency, and disability.

Feminist critical theory – Like post-structural thought, this approach questions the privileging of particular standpoints and experiences, and the socio-political structures that support them. Feminist theory goes:

beyond a narrow focus on gender alone to undertake a broad sociopolitical critique of systemic, inequitable power relations based on social categories grounded in the body (Garland-Thomson, 2001: 4).

Issues of power, values and ethics are fundamental to feminist approaches and “cannot be added on afterwards” (Griffiths, 1995: 61) but should be integral to feminist thinking.

Disability studies – Building on the social model of disability (Barnes, 1991; Finkelstein, 1980,1981; Oliver, 1990, 1996), disability studies takes a socio-political approach to conceptualising disability, challenging individual, charity and medical/deficit discourses of disability. The major organising principle of disability studies is that disability is an act of social exclusion (Goodley, 2011: 8) caused by power relations associated with societal responses to human diversity. This positions disability as a cultural and political issue. Critique of disability studies centres on the politicising of disability (the social aspect) at the expense of the experience of impairment (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). However, Thomas (2003) points out that the two are fundamentally linked as the

particular character of our impairments plays a critical role in shaping the forms and degrees of disablism that we encounter. And, of course, these vary greatly (p.15).

Believing disability to be socially relational (Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir, 2010), discursively related (Corker and French, 1999), and constituted through narrative meanings made both individually and socially, need not deny the importance of individual experience of impairment. Rather, personal and public identity narratives that accompany and constitute the experience of impairment and disability, contribute significantly to social meanings, understandings and action, and vice versa. Discriminatory and ableist power is exerted against disabled people in opportunities of education, work, leisure, welfare, social activities, political and media representation, health (life and death), existence (Goodley, 2011). My disability studies starting point is that every discussion about disability must be framed within this wider context.

Michel Foucault – Foucault's understanding of ‘relations of power’ (2000a) as not ‘belonging’ to any individual or group, but as situational and negotiated through

interaction, has continuously informed my research. Particularly exciting is Fendler's (2010) interpretation of Foucault's writing as a provocation to envisage different possibilities for understanding what seems 'natural' or assumed. Foucault's philosophy offers me the language to describe social processes in the way that I view them, examining the historical, social, cultural and power contexts in which social norms and interactions occur and are reproduced. Like McKinlay (2010) I view Foucaultian thought as a starting point for different ways of thinking. I have not dwelt on the influences of institutional power on the students as this has been done in many exemplary ways (see Allan, 1999; Vlachou, 1997; Reeve, 2002; Tremain, 2005). Instead, I examine how some students negotiated power within institutional (and family) environments, and how this transgressive resistance affected their ideas of themselves and others' ideas of them. Reeve (2002) calls this the "interplay of dominating and emancipatory forces" (2002: 493) which contributes to a more fluid "disability identity" (2002: 493). Foucault's 'ethical project' (2011) is also influential in the framing of my challenging my own relationships with power, truth and freedom (Fendler, 2010). Foucault's ethical project will be discussed in further detail later (see ethical interruption 2, section 2.3).

Capability approach – Originally an economics approach to conceptualising ways of 'solving' inequality, this approach, based on equity rather than equality, examines the changes required in order for individuals to lead a life they consider worthwhile and valuable. Based on potential possibilities (capacity thinking) rather than 'need' (deficit thinking) this is a fruitful and positive method of considering different possibilities without overly dwelling on causes of inequality. Terzi (2005) suggests the capability approach could negate the use of the concept of 'need' in considering disability. I use the capability approach for thinking about circumstances of opportunity, or what is required for broader identity and agency meanings to emerge. Considering the capabilities approach has led me to use the term 'requirement' instead of 'need', judging this to remove inherent essentialist deficit implications, and project an expectation of equity through dispersed responsibility.

Post-qualitative approach – Post-qualitative research challenges the limits of "humanist qualitative inquiry" (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013: 630), as well as "refus[ing] positivist and phenomenological assumptions about the nature of lived experience and the world"

(p.630). Post-qualitative inquiry deconstructs concepts such as ‘representation’, ‘language’ and ‘data’, whilst acknowledging the difficulty of conducting research ‘without’ them. I draw on post-qualitative language and the way in which this evokes, constitutes and enables different, more fluid, dynamic methods of research. Using post-qualitative methods to make sense of what I have seen and heard (see section 2.7) both reflects and generates my approach as a researcher. However, despite the draw towards such approaches, I still privilege elements of humanism - “experience, meaning, and human subjectivity [...] justice for all [...] dialogue” (Plummer, 2011: 200) are all vital, both to the types of knowledge I value and wish to construct, and to my own ‘experience’ of the world. Education is fundamentally a humanist project, one which I value, however I reject the implicit humanist assumption that through ‘development’ humans can be ‘perfected’, as well as the concept of this as a desired aim.

I take from the above perspectives a “consciousness that valorizes difference” (Somers, 1994: 608), that recognises the temporal and complex nature of subjectivities, that values individual narratives, and ultimately, that works towards social justice through exposing the power relations of social norms. Reading widely within the above approaches, and the PhD process itself, have fundamentally changed my perspective on the world. This is not too dramatic a description of the ongoing reconsideration of the elemental beliefs that I held, and hold. Gottschalk(1998) describes this process:

When the self-reflexive “inscribing” replaces the authoritative “describing,” and when the modest “evoking” displaces the pretentious “representing,” one’s writing position and claims to authority demand radical re-cognition (p.213).

Brought up in a household both implicitly and explicitly questioning of the status quo, I became perhaps the worst type of critical thinker. I unknowingly based my idea of the ‘norm’ on myself, my critique and analysis often aimed at others’ opinions, less consistently at my own. My introduction to critical and feminist thought, to post-structural thinking and to basic philosophy (including Foucault), all new to me, have made me radically rethink my views on power, disability, ‘reality’.

Political critique for Foucault does not mean ‘to solve problems’. It means to challenge prevailing assumptions, undermine the status quo, question

authority, and provoke us to look with new eyes at ourselves and the world (Fendler, 2010: 8).

In this spirit, the questioning of everything I hold to be 'natural' and 'obvious' is an ongoing project, one filled with trepidation and pleasure. Using Fendler's (2010) approach to Foucault as provocative, problematising and poetic, as she suggests, opens up new, exciting ways of thinking, of viewing the world.

My post-structural, post-qualitative approach contributes to this thesis not 'conforming' to one particular 'style' of research. Some parts are ethnographic, some autoethnographic, always interwoven with critical ethnography approaches. In addition the thesis uses both empirical and theoretical approaches. I have adopted what Carter (2014) drawing on Martin (1992) calls a "magpie approach to theory and methodology: a honing in on what seems important, then using a range of approaches and theories as they seem helpful" (p.125). Martin (1992) describes such "critical pluralism" (p.237) as a response to negotiating "a world of plural discourses" (p.237). Carter calls a magpie approach "epistemologically useful" (p.125), "widening" (p.130) methodology. Certainly, for me, as described in chapter 2, this approach has broadened my understanding.

## **1.2 Socio-political context for the research**

Socio-political circumstances for people with labels of learning difficulties have changed dramatically since the times of large institutions and unquestioned segregated schooling (Scior and Werner, 2015). In many ways these changes are positive. Increased community 'inclusion' "appears to have led to more positive attitudes to people with learning disabilities" (Scior and Werner, 2015: 4) labels. Disabled people's movements such as People First, through campaigning for learning disabled people's rights, have brought about social and political changes in language and legislation (People First, online). Despite some criticisms (Beresford, 2011; Glasby and Littlechild, 2016), developments, such as direct payments, have offered some disabled people greater personal autonomy and choice over their carers, assistants and activities (Leece and Bornat, 2006). Increasingly, researchers are interested in the experiences of learning disabled people themselves rather than their family or carers (Walmsley, 2001).

However, despite such improvements, much governmental social, economic, welfare and political policy does not appear to value disabled individuals as people first, or even as 'people' at all. This research has taken place in a time of increasing legislation

to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity (United Nations, 2006: Article 1).

However, constructs of difference are never neutral and legal rights are not always reflected, or indeed visible, in the effect of systemic failings and discrimination in individuals' lives. Or as Foucault puts it, "The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them" (1991: 245). The human rights of people with learning disability labels are routinely violated, often through "hidden, dark and silent action through disciplinary powers at work" (Roets, Adams and van Hove, 2006: 171). Despite, the White Paper 'Valuing People' (DoH, 2001) stating that:

People with learning disabilities have the right to a decent education, to grow up to vote, to marry and have a family, and to express their opinions, with help and support to do so where necessary (p.23),

in 2016, the constant and largely unchallenged devaluation of disabled people, particularly disabled women, still has shocking consequences. Within a discourse of domination and oppression (Thiara, Gill and Mullender, 2011) the likelihood of disabled women experiencing sexual and domestic violence is between two (Smith, 2008) and four times (Martin and colleagues, 2006) higher than non-disabled women. Pring (2005) suggests that the sexual abuse of women with learning disability labels has been more tolerated than the same women having loving relationships and children. Hate crime leads to more significant harm in disabled women (Iganski, 2008) and typically, intervention may lead to the further exclusion of disabled women who report hate crime (Roulstone, Thomas and Balderston, 2011) and domestic violence (Hague and colleagues, 2011).

Rights legislation has not ensured that learning disabled people are safe in their own homes. In 2011, as this research started, an inquiry into the abuse of people with

learning disability labels at Winterbourne View, their 'home', reported a “systemic failure to protect people” (CQC, 2011). The inherent implication that anyone should require protection from those employed to provide care, is disgraceful. At the time, although shocking in the extreme, this was widely considered a 'one-off' situation. However, there was more to be revealed. In 2012, following their 2007 report ‘Treat me right!’, Mencap's report 'Death by indifference: 74 deaths and counting' (2012) highlighted the lack of even basic NHS care for some learning disabled patients. In 2013 Connor Sparrowhawk, an 18 year old man with learning disability and autism labels, died unsupervised in the bath in an Assessment Treatment Unit. His mother Sarah Ryan's tireless campaigning led to an independent review, the Mazars Report (NHS England, 2015), highlighting the institutional disregard in which the lives, and deaths, of ‘patients’ with labels of learning disabilities and mental ill-health were held. The report revealed Southern Health NHS Trust’s failure to investigate unexpected deaths of adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues. In 2016 Southern Health Trust accepted responsibility for Connor Sparrowhawk’s death.

Inequalities are also repeatedly evident in the area of mental health assessment and treatment. In 2015, the Learning Disability Census reported dis-spiriting figures about continued use of long stay assessment centres (HSCIC, 2015), and the overprescription of psychotropic (Sheehan and colleagues, 2015; Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2016) and antidepressant medication continues (NHS England, 2016). The Count Us In inquiry (Carpenter and Morgan, 2002) suggests that incidence of mental health problems in young people with learning disabilities may be up to four times (40%) that of young people in general. Although figures on learning disability and mental ill-health are contested (Whitaker, 2004), given how “disabled people are let down across the whole spectrum of life” (Deech, 2016), and the routine discrimination and abuse many learning disabled people endure, higher rates of mental ill-health and distress should come as no surprise.

Such stark contradictions between protective 'rights' legislation and lived experience continue to shock and depress. It has become clear that labels of learning difficulties are not only “used as a dominant category to justify deprivation of basic political and economic rights ” (Riddell, Baron and Wilson, 2001: 57), and do not only “affect individual consciousness, group interaction and group access to institutions, power and

privileges” (Traustadóttir 2006: 82), but can still also be a matter of life and death in England in 2016.

Given the socio-political context outlined above, at times it has been difficult to justify my own research (to myself) as it is not specifically about such stark discrimination and human rights breaches. I have wondered if I can consider research about identities, agency and transition 'political' given the far more immediate and serious situations that, as fellow humans, affect us all. And yet, identities and agency *are* political issues. If identity describes (on any level) who an individual 'is', how they see themselves and how others see them, this is critical in discussion of human rights abuses and discrimination. Identities can be viewed as linking people together, and/or separating them from others (Tajfel, 1981), ultimately leading to dehumanising thought and behaviour (Goffman, 1961; 1963) of the type exposed at Winterbourne View. Identity is intimately linked with societal inequalities and powerfully differing life chances (Hunt, 2003; Callero, 2003, 2014). The balance between structural forces, and agency, is an ongoing political dance, in theory, but also in individuals' everyday lives. The “‘real’ and pernicious” (London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004: 29) effects of structural limitations and opportunities are embodied in every individual, in terms of economic, educational, health, and well-being circumstances. In feminist post-structural terms identities are political in that they are issues of power relations and social forces (Delamont, 2003). So, although not 'life and death' research, I aim to contribute to an understanding of how identities, agency, and power are negotiated within constraining and enabling structures, through discourse and action, in relational terms. Whilst this thesis focuses on research in particular provincial school and college environments in South West England, the issues addressed, identities, labelling, agency, education, power and resistance are widely important political concepts.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

The literature applicable to this research is wide-ranging and found in the areas of education (special and mainstream, secondary and further education), disability, transition, identity, agency and many other areas. I have not separated the literature, 'discussion' and 'findings' into separate chapters, in what might be considered a 'traditional' thesis approach. Instead, the literature is introduced and discussed as it



becomes relevant to the narrative of the research. Discussion and implications too take place throughout the themed chapters to retain their context within the 'data' and the research processes.

This introductory chapter sets the scene with some background information about Weldale school, and the further education colleges, where the research is set. Some important concepts are introduced, along with an explanation of how ethics discussion features in the thesis. Setting the scene for the many different concepts and theoretical areas this thesis draws on may inevitably make this introductory chapter a little 'segmented', however the different elements will be brought together and expanded on throughout the thesis.

The second chapter can broadly be described as autoethnographic, and considers ontologies, epistemologies, methodology and methods. It traces my changing subjectivities throughout the research processes, and the ways in which these changes have affected my 'beliefs' about 'reality', 'knowledge', and methods of research. Through deliberately and enthusiastically deconstructing my own 'common-sense' (Bernstein, 2002) thinking, I reached a point where I accepted the indeterminacy of 'knowledge', yet wanted to continue to research, 'making' 'new' 'knowledge'. This chapter deliberates on these processes, and how they impacted the research, in the belief that whilst personal, it is also of ontological, institutional and educational significance. This chapter also sets out the processes of method, 'data' collection and data 'analysis', and discusses research quality.

In chapters three and four I draw on data from Weldale School to evoke some students' personal experiences of identity and agency negotiations through transition. These 'themed' chapters combine academic literature, data and discussion in considering and 're-defining' concepts of identities and agency in the light of students' experience. In this way definitions that take seriously individual subjectivities are formulated and identified. Although the social processes of meaning making are similar in identities and agency, for analytical purposes I split these concepts over two chapters. At this stage, as a provisional working definition, agency can be understood as "the way in which people act on, or assert themselves in, their world" (Leonard and Onyx, 2004: 23).

Chapter five considers identities and agency together and is in two sections. The first examines group agency and identities in Weldale School. The second discusses the limitations of further education (FE) for young people with learning disability labels, and the ways in which this may influence identities and agency.

Chapters three, four and five examine the circumstances in which broader, more positive identity and agency meanings may be negotiated. By this I mean, identities that are not dependent on SEN labels, but are based on individual strengths and abilities. Broader, more positive agencies may be those that are understood and valued by others, that allow and enable increased social interaction and activities.

Building on these chapters, in the final chapter I 'reimagine' FE as highly supportive of identity and agency negotiation. After discussing the current purpose of foundation level courses, (which the majority of Weldale students attended), I consider how FE could take a more political social-justice 'turn', so challenging, rather than reproducing, social inequalities. FE is reimagined as an ethical project, with the potential to position students as agents of change in their own communities, thus supporting more positive identity and agency negotiations, whilst generating processes of social inclusion. The brief conclusion draws together the discussion which takes place within each chapter.

As mentioned above, this thesis sits within a huge body of academic literature, about identity and disability, about 'inclusion' and transition. On starting at university, overwhelmed and excited by the amount of available literature in all the many areas I have drawn from, I read voraciously. Initially I read almost 'everything' I came across, literally hundreds of books and articles, indiscriminately consuming academic theory and ideas from varied sources and ontological positions. I used extensive library and internet searches, tracked down references from journal articles, asked my peers what they were reading, plucked wide-ranging books from library shelves. Drawing on Brummans and Vásquez's "textualization fever" (2016: 122) approach to 'recording' empirical data, I could describe my excited, almost frenzied approach to 'background' reading as '*con*-textualization fever' as I sought to understand existing literature about the many concepts I was examining. However, as I considered the varied research approaches, I became increasingly dissatisfied with the body of psychology-based research that considers identity and self-esteem as 'measurable' concepts. I required

more *detailed* information rather than numbers. It seemed that each statistic I read filled me with more questions: *how* had the statistics been ‘gathered’, and in what circumstances? What was the *context* of the research and *why* had each participant answered questions in particular ways? How had interacting elements of participants’ lives led them to answer one way or another? More ‘scientific’ or ‘positivist’ approaches seemed to ‘fix’ identity in ways I did not recognise in my own understandings of identity. I did not view my own identity as either ‘static’ or measurable.

As I continued to read, and my research progressed, my conception of identities became more fluid and less fixed. I gradually discarded my initial ideas of investigating ‘self-esteem’ (Cast and Burke, 2002) and ‘self-concept’ (Preckel and colleagues, 2013) as ‘elements’ of identity, even when such concepts were linked to more socially understood identities (e.g., Porter and Washington, 1993), and identity politics (Griffiths, 1993). These concepts seemed to concentrate on what was happening ‘inside’ individuals at the expense of what was happening around them. I found myself drawing on fewer articles and books that fixed or ‘measured’ identity and self-esteem (e.g., Timko and colleagues, 2010). Many psychology approaches decontextualise identity experiences in favour of identifying particular stages of identity ‘formation’. I could no longer accept the concept of fixed identity ‘stages’ (Erikson, 1959 ; Marcia, 1966; 1980), or that expectations of particular identity meanings might lead to “identity-discrepancy” (Marcussen, 2006: 1). The idea that individuals ‘had’ “positive or negative self-attributes” (DeMarree and colleagues, 2010: 628) seemed at odds with my increasing understanding of temporal, relational, and contextual identities. Such approaches seemed to limit the ways in which I could consider and discuss identity negotiations in social situations. Spending time talking and thinking about Weldale students’ identities, and my own, I became conscious of my own understandings of multiple and fluid ‘*identities*’ rather than an ‘identity’, rendering research approaches that did not acknowledge this, less applicable to my conceptualisation of identity meanings. If reading Foucault had given me the language to discuss the world in the way I viewed it, reading some psychology approaches to identity had quite the opposite effect.

Similarly, some literature on ‘inclusion’ seemed to focus on the ‘geography’ of education, on place, which schools, or which classes young people with learning

disability labels should be educated in. This 'placement' approach to inclusion did not resonate with me. Slee (1998) questions whether inclusion is a "statement of location or value" (p.131) and my own developing understanding of inclusion was something to do with feelings, with heartfelt and 'human' feelings of acceptance and value, rather than same-school or same-room types of inclusion. Evolving a broader understanding of the complexities of social processes, for example, the clear links between poverty and exclusion (Gray, 2007; Terzi, 2008; Rose, 2010) meant I could not simply view 'inclusion' as the 'opposite' of 'exclusion', but increasingly as a multi-faceted and complex socio-political issue.

Whilst reading so much varied literature on identity and inclusion, my ideas about disability also changed. I could no longer view inclusion or disability as discrete, or essential, but as concepts embodying the complexities of interactions between individuals and their environments. Gradually, through reading, and through 'being' in the school, literature that did not discuss disability in its socio-political context became less relevant to how I viewed, talked or wrote about disability. I was struck by how much writing on disability was medicalised and focused on epidemiology, difficulties and problems (e.g., Hemmings and Bouras, 2016) rather than on human lived experience. Similarly, I read a great deal about transitions of all types, much of which is referred to in chapter four. The majority of this literature views transitions as turbulent processes, fraught with potential 'danger', difficulties and anxiety. Whilst I recognise (and describe) this in the experiences of Weldale students and their families, this thesis presents a different view of transition, one which is largely lacking in existing literature, that of *opportunity*. Following extensive reading on these subjects, this thesis is positioned within the literature as taking seriously individual experiences of learning disabled people's lives, whilst examining the fluid, relational and contextual natures of disability, exclusion and inclusion, identities, agency and transition.

Issues of disability are complexly philosophical, ethical and practical in nature as well as intimately personal and value-laden. With this in mind, whilst examining the processes of meaning making in everyday interactions, I aim to contribute to an understanding of how social processes could support more positive identities and agency negotiation. By 'positive' I mean identities that are of equal societal value to

those of non-disabled people, offering the same opportunities and life chances in terms of education, work, relationships, leisure, choices.

As this research looks at how the students negotiated identity meanings, in places I use long extracts from discussion and interviews to illustrate the narratives of the students. Whilst this brings with it potential ethical difficulties to do with possible recognition of individuals, it illustrates complex, contradictory and convoluted narratives that go hand in hand with educational labels. Students' narratives “remind us that people with 'learning difficulties' are not helpless, involuntary victims of genetic adversity” (Goodley, 2001: 219), but are agentic individuals navigating their own meaningful identity narratives within both constraining and enabling socio-political environments.

All individuals' and institutional names used (except my own) are pseudonyms. 'Data' was 'collected' while visiting Weldale school and five different colleges later attended by the students. Appendix 1 shows information about visits made to Weldale school and the colleges, as well as recorded 'interviews' carried out. Information from ethnographic data 'collected' during this research is identified by a date (in year, month, day order), a data type and a name. Where relevant this identifier includes where the interaction happened e.g., 140726\_interview\_Eddie\_home.

To indicate direct quotes from conversation and literature I use double quotation marks. Elsewhere I use scare-quotes (single quotation marks) to indicate concepts demanding examination and which should be treated with suspicion in that they embody taken for granted categories and assumptions (Scott, 1992). This follows Burman and Maclure's (2005) recommendation that deconstructive practices highlight socially constructed concepts that therefore are imbued with power and can never be innocent. There are many scare-quotes, denoting much need for conceptual challenge. I continue to discover concepts requiring scare-quotes, in both my writing and my thinking.

#### **1.4 Ethics**

Issues of 'ethics' dominated every stage of this research. Because my own understanding of 'ethics' evolved with my research methods and approaches, the relationship between my reflexive approach and ethics (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) was inextricable. Early on I decided against using a traditional 'ethics section' in this

thesis, finding it too similar to the idea that ‘ethics’ could be ‘dealt with’ in a one-off form-signing procedure. This conceptualisation of ethics as deontological, that is, viewing “certain kinds of action [as] inherently right or good, as a matter of principle” (Osmo and Landau, 2006: 865), does not adequately describe the moment-by-moment ethical considerations of my research experience. For me, decision-making and reflection involved ‘ethics’ vastly different from the ethical guidelines (e.g., ESRC, 2015; BERA, 2011) available (see 1.4.3).

Therefore, although there follows a brief ethics section, throughout the thesis I also introduce ethics vignettes (in text boxes), taking Horton (2008) as my example. Horton describes particular research situations, posing ethical questions which remain unanswered, allowing the reader to make their own judgements and relate such questions to their own circumstances. Horton’s ethical questionings caused me to review my own practice in many different ways through “dwelling upon small, banal, everyday happenings and [ethical] ‘failures’” (Horton, 2008: 374). The vignettes, or ‘ethical interruptions’, are “representative, typical or emblematic” (Juel Jacobsen, 2014: 41). Sometimes they deliberately interrupt the narrative, bringing the reader up short in the way that ethical considerations often do in the research process, a reminder that ethical attention can (but should not) lapse. I have positioned such ‘narrative’ interruptions within the text so that readers come upon them suddenly, as a ‘surprise’, maybe even ‘shock’. At other times ‘interruption’ (Biesta, 2010) refers to a disturbance of thinking, a challenge to what has gone before. Such ‘thinking’ interruptions are placed so as to provide a different viewpoint, to challenge, or elaborate on, the preceding discussion. Like Horton I believe that because everyday happenings are often “not regular, repetitive, monotonous and predictable” (Horton, 2008: 375) ‘research ethics’ cannot be considered definitive and researchers “can never anticipate it all” (Horton, 2008: 375). Indeed, Tuffrey-Wijne, Bernal and Hollins (2008) suggest some research might benefit from an ethics advisory group and ethical supervision. However, although important, fixed rules and guidelines can also be unhelpful (Hopkins, 2008: 46) in unpredictable “ethically important moments” (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 261). This will be discussed further below.

Ethical guidelines take different forms depending on their purpose. The university required a formal ethical research outline, a “risk management” (Allen, 2009: 407)

necessity, signed by the ethics committee. This theoretical, deontological ethics approach, concerned with doing the 'right' thing and not doing the 'wrong' thing, was procedural, non-negotiable and straightforward. Using “ethics-committee speak” (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 263), I provided 'correct' answers, gained ethical approval (see appendix 2), and imagined what I had written guiding the research process.

#### **1.4.1 Access and consent in Weldale School**

The timing of the access process had a major influence on the shape of the research, constrained as it was by the school year. In research 'text' books, 'gaining access' comes in neat chapters, sometimes only a few paragraphs (e.g., Bryman, 2008), a hurdle to be jumped between 'ethical consent' and 'data collection'. However, gaining access became a significantly longer chapter in my own research. My initial communications (in October 2011) with Weldale secondary school, through email, and to a 'known' contact, led to nothing. Throughout the following four months I continued to email and phone the school and different named staff, with either no response or promises of a return call which never materialised. In the spring term my supervisor had a planned meeting with the Weldale head to which he added my research as a post-script. My research was accepted and, after six months of failed attempts, I finally met the deputy head and discussed how the research would proceed. However, despite this theoretical level of acceptance, practical access and communication difficulties continued. I continued to email and phone the school repeatedly, trying to find out how I should/could contact parents for their consent.

In retrospect I think many things led to these access difficulties. Like Robson (1999) I made assumptions about within-institution communication, which proved unfounded. On a practical level, access was linked not only to the politics of social research (Burgess, 1991) but to the politics of the school where different staff were responsible for student visitors and for transition, each thinking I was the other's responsibility. The school was always busy, lively, sometimes chaotic, and exceptionally responsive to evolving 'situations', moment by moment happenings demanding immediate responses. Student well-being was paramount, meaning repeated interruptions to a conversation, a class, or routine, were accepted as part of school life. Whilst initially a shock, I too came to accept that a responsive environment is necessarily a less ordered one. The inevitable interruption of processes left conversations and emails stalled, potential

research student's communications left until last. Once 'in' the school my main contact, Adrian, transition co-ordinator, told me he had seen a woman interviewing some students and assumed it was me and that 'it' (my research) had been sorted (120921\_fieldnotes). This seems to indicate both a procedural lack of internal communication and a surfeit of student researchers.

My own approach also slowed down access processes. Retrospectively I realised that whilst reading about ethnography and participant observation, whilst honing my imagined approach as a 'supporter', an 'invisible' yet 'useful' presence, a 'benign' observer, I had become increasingly passive. The 'realities' of research, current education policies and the school were new to me. When I asked the deputy head about distributing consent forms to parents, he said 'leave it with me', so I did. Although phoning and emailing to remind him, I did not sufficiently take charge. Indeed, I *could not* take charge as ethically, until students and parents agreed to be part of the research, I should not have access to students' addresses and, given the school consent policy (see below), I wanted to be sure forms were received. As such, the school held the key to access, but, understandably, in the daily rush my research was not their priority. My ethical questioning also hindered my assertiveness as, taken to its logical conclusion, I had no right to be in the school at all:

... I feel as though I am an interloper, have no real rights to be there and that everything is based on the goodwill of the staff, so it all feels very fragile. I am pathetically grateful for every email telling me they still haven't done what they promised yet, and uselessly subservient in my offers of 'help' to move the project on. I am not a project manager but am letting it wander along at someone else's pace. The problem is that the project is not important to the 'someone else' (research notes, June 2012).

In June, still cajoling staff to distribute consent forms to parents of students in year 11, it was clear that the opportunity to 'follow' students leaving school in summer 2012 had been missed.

Although I took parental consent very seriously, a blurred line exists between legal and institutional expectations of consent from child/young adult/adult with learning disability labels. In the absence of clear guidelines, personally, I felt both students and parents should give consent. A similar blurred line existed between access and consent.



Without consent I felt I should not 'have access' to students, but without access I could not gain consent. I stood between contrasting worlds, one whose concerns were ostensibly theoretically ethical, and the other based in the practical imperative of responding to 'real' situations. I was caught in the dichotomy of 'being here' (the academy) and 'being there' (the field) at the same time (Geertz, 1988). I realised what I considered the 'superlative' theoretical ethics I had envisaged must be, if not nullified, then adapted, by necessity. At the end of the summer term, in part disregarding my own understanding of procedural ethics, I took charge and, with deputy head approval, introduced myself to the two year 11 classes, explained my 'project' and handed out written information to be taken home and discussed with their families (see appendix 3 for selected information and consent forms). The school *assumed* consent for in-school activities (itself an ethical quagmire), but there was a system of implicit consent for out of school trips with parental consent assumed if they did not opt out of activities. The reason given for this was that some parents "don't even read the letters, let alone send the slip back" (120314\_initial\_meeting\_school). This was not how I wanted to 'do' consent, but respecting the school's methods and practical experience I wrote a straightforward information sheet with the option to contact me for further details. (No-one contacted me until eight months later when it was to complain about this procedure (see ethical interruption 7, section 5.1.2). I felt this was as good-as-possible an ethical and practical compromise. 'As good-as-possible' ethics became my mantra as the reality of the subjective and contextual nature of ethical decisions, in the context of practical situations, became apparent.

Consent processes are complex. As Masson (2004) says, a major consideration in research with young people is negotiating with adults who control spaces where children can be accessed for research (Masson, 2004). Initially, and correctly, I negotiated access to Weldale school through adults viewed as protecting the students, thus inadvertently contributing to accepted belief that children's consent is not "valid in itself" (Sime, 2008: 67). The development of childhood studies and sociology of childhood (Prout and James, 1997) has led to an increasingly open discourse about children's competency to give informed consent. "Ethical symmetry" (Christiansen and Prout, 2002), or the starting point assumption that ethically, the relationship between the researcher and adults or children will be the same, allows any differences to be *discovered* rather than assumed from the beginning (Christiansen and Prout, 2002). In

this context it is interesting to note my discordant feelings. On the one hand, although (as explained below), I obtained ‘consent’ (permission) from each child, and continued to do this, developing an ongoing processual ‘assent’ (agreement) method, I join Heath and colleagues, (2007) in questioning whether genuine informed consent can ever be achieved. “[T]he research process is unpredictable for the participants (and often for the researcher!)” (Sime, 2008: 68) and retrospectively I realise I did not really know myself, what I was asking participants to consent to. Under these circumstances, how can it be said that the participants gave *informed* consent?

Once in the school I adopted ‘process consent’ (Heath and colleagues, 2004), or ongoing assent, as the most ethically ‘comfortable’ approach. This meant I never assumed I could sit in on a lesson, or that a student or member of staff would be happy to speak to me, always informally ‘checking’ before starting a conversation. As Bayliss and Thoma (2008) point out, the concept of competence, a highly contested issue, lies at the heart of consent issues. Issues of competency and consent are inherently subjective, interactive constructs rather than essential characteristics (Melton and Stanley, 1996). Like Huf (2013) I believe an element of student consent developed through my gradual (and partial) acceptance into student “peer culture” (p.67). My understanding of each student's ways of telling me that they were or were not happy to speak to me developed and changed throughout the academic year. Had I known the students before starting the research, my ethical decisions may well have been different. However, researchers can only work with what they have, and an ethical approach grows and develops throughout the research. This is another reason why codes of ethical professional conduct cannot be universally applied (McNamee, 2001). I did not want to assume that the students could not give informed consent, or to deny them agency “just because they are children” (Heath and colleagues, 2004: 9) with learning disability labels. Before meeting the students I trusted the opinions of staff on student competency to give consent. Speaking to two senior members of staff I was told “don't worry”, the students “will sign anything” (120629\_observation). This was not reassuring.

In general, methodological and ethical questions in researching with young adults with labels of learning difficulties, are the same as those that face all researchers (Morrow, 2008: 51). However, as Morrow points out, the construction and understanding of ‘childhood’ requires specific consideration. The same issues of power and abuse of

power are important in constructions of learning disability labels. Increasingly legislation promotes and protects the rights of children to have their opinion taken seriously in matters that directly affect them (United Nations, 1989; DoH/ DfE, 2015). However, the conceptualisation of both childhood and learning disability means young people are often dependent on adults to inform them of both their rights and their options. Medical or charity understandings of disability can lead to positioning individuals as unable to give consent (Scott, Wishart and Bowyer), or as acquiescent, (Goodley, 2011) without examination of the contexts in which such understandings arise. The “coercive effect of a power imbalance” (Bell and colleagues, 2008: 96) between researcher and student can become problematic at the point of access, interview (Goodley, 2011) and the interpretation and presentation of research findings (Morrow, 2008: 52).

#### **1.4.2 Introducing Weldale School.**

At the start of the autumn term (2012) I was finally 'in' the school, with assumed parental consent and a whole academic year ahead before the year 11 students left school and transitioned to college. I became a visible presence, a living breathing human rather than just a name on a list of things to do. Once seemingly accepted, as un-confrontational, not pushy or judgemental (a position I worked on throughout the year) I settled into life at Weldale. Once we had met, Adrian became less 'gatekeeper' (Burgess, 1991), more 'doorstop', holding access to the school consistently open. The friendly and open relationship we developed made access to the school easy and enjoyable. However, as we shared many opinions, once I realised the danger, I continuously checked that my thinking and fieldnotes did not simply replicate 'our' point of view.

Despite an initial plethora of information, my understanding of school workings built slowly through collecting snippets of information from different people throughout the nine months I visited. I had not been in a school, except as a parent, since my own school-days and was amazed by how little I knew about education! However, this enabled me to exploit my situation, asking innocent, novice, sometimes deliberately naive questions about the workings of the school, thereby acquiring both the information I required, *and* the perspective of the person asked. It also enabled me to question routinised procedures and situations that, not being part of school education myself, appeared strange or unusual to me.

I initially approached Weldale School because of the (unfruitful) 'known', named contact. A city secondary school, the head teacher described Weldale as "generously staffed" (130523\_interview\_Bethany), with approximately 50 staff and just over 100 children. Described as accommodating children with moderate to severe learning difficulties, autism and social emotional and behavioural difficulties, I got the increasing impression that students found their way there for varied reasons. The majority of Weldale students had attended mainstream primary schools, each with more or less social and educational success, starting special education at secondary level when they moved to Weldale.

Initially, I was amazed at how closely school circumstances matched the literature on learning disability. For example, moderate learning difficulties (MLD) alone was not represented in the school as students also had additional labels such as language and communication difficulties and behavioural issues (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). For two autistic students in year 11, I was told "[t]he school isn't really the right place for them but there isn't anywhere else" (120314\_initial meeting). At the ratio of three girls to 19 boys, the gender representation of the year group echoed the literature on the subject. Although higher than the gender ratios of between 2:1 and 3.5:1 suggested by Coutinho and Oswald (2005), within-school anecdotal explanations of the gender discrepancy were that "boys kick off more so they get identified" (120314\_initial meeting) whereas "girls sit quietly and behave" (120314\_initial meeting) so supporting Wehmeyer and Schwartz's (2001) research on the disproportionate representation of boys in special education. Contrary to the literature (Tomlinson, 2016), but representative of the local area, children from ethnic minority families were not represented in the two year 11 classes. Interestingly, one member of staff estimated that 70% of the parents were "as needy as their children" (120314\_initial meeting). When I expressed surprise, this was given considerable thought before the opinion was confirmed. The label of MLD is linked with social deprivation (Emerson and Hatton, 2008) and class (Nind, 2008), but whilst this implies that MLD labelling is politically relational, this link itself can be considered part of discriminatory labelling. Additionally, some staff made it clear to me that they believed some students attended the school because their parents understood the education system and had 'made it happen'. This does not mean that Weldale was not the most appropriate school for these particular students. Rather I took it to mean

that there were many more students who might have benefited from attending Weldale, but whose families did not have the various resources required to 'work the system'.

Each year-group was divided into two classes, based on 'need', social and emotional 'need' taking precedence over academic 'need', although these were often linked. The two year 11 class tutors, were Pete and Ivor. Pete's class had 10 students. Ivor's started with 12 students but one, a gentle young man, was taken into psychiatric care in spring 2012 and did not return to school. His story deserves a thesis in itself.

Although understandable from a practical perspective, the physical divide of having two classes, ostensibly based on 'need' unsettled me from the start. At this stage unaware of my own ableist assumptions, I found myself happily using the word 'able' for Pete's group, yet struggling for a non-negatively weighted word to describe the 'less able' group, to myself and others. Despite some subjects being taught in mixed groups, for some students there seemed an unspoken hierarchy between the classes. The dynamic of the physical separation of the two classes seemed to represent many social inequalities in an affective and effective way. As so often the case, my semantic discomfort reflected unrecognised epistemological tensions (see chapter 2).

Most students left Weldale with entry level qualifications (for students working below grade G at GCSE) with very few taking GCSEs in maths, English or science. Interestingly, some students in the research year achieved an unusually high level of GCSEs. Modular life-skills teaching was accredited by the National Organisation of College Networks, equating an entry level qualification. Whilst the school was rightly proud of its pupils' academic achievement, in general, life skills, good manners, kindness and cheerfulness were at least equally valued.

Typically, teaching staff stayed at the school for many years, an indication that they felt comfortable in the environment and were committed to working with children with special educational needs (SEN) labels (MacKenzie, 2012), but maybe also that they felt "gently trapped" (MacKenzie, 2012: 208). This continuity meant staff, communally and individually, held vast knowledge about each child and their family circumstances. Most teaching staff and families considered this an advantage of the school. One of the main benefits that teaching staff felt the school offered, something I heard repeatedly, was that students could 'be themselves'. This implies non-judgemental acceptance and

understanding, a situation that, in the main, I can confirm. Whilst this is not without its own challenges, possibly supporting the idea that specialist education may not challenge students enough (Abbott and Heslop, 2009), most students appeared to be generally happy and contented in the school environment.

I was extremely impressed with the way in which the school provided a calm, student-centred environment, responsive to individual circumstances and requirements. Although inevitably a powerful institution, situations were negotiated and engineered, enabling students to make informed choices and decisions about themselves and their environment. I have no doubt that every member of staff had the students' 'best interests' at heart and the very best of intentions. This became particularly evident when I interviewed teaching staff and experienced an "[a]pparent duality between official statement and reality" (Holliday, 2007: 35). Some teaching staff spoke about their teaching practice in a socio-political way that surprised me, one I could not easily recognise in their practice. I entirely understand discrepancies between what a teacher believes, in the hypothetical and theoretical realm of the interview, and what they enact in the practical, immediate realm of the classroom (Argyris and Schön, 1974). This was recognisable in my own practice too as I wrote and read in the theoretical space of university, then tried to apply theory to practice in the empirical site of the school.

Visiting Weldale school brought home the tensions involved in creating educational labels that identify (for resourcing, or describing) but do not homogenise, that signal additional requirements, but do not stigmatise. These tensions arise between philosophical and policy levels. Drawing on the work of Minow (1985; 1990), Norwich calls this the 'dilemma of difference' (Norwich, 1993). Educational labels are part of a descriptive system identifying ways in which an individual can be supported by the education system. This is based on academic measurements, neurological or genetic aetiology, assessments of 'ability'. Value-judgements are made in all these categories, based on socially constructed ideas of what is 'normal' and what is 'not'. However, the experience of living with a label is embodied, involving emotions, feelings, identity meanings and social practices. Labels can influence how behaviours are interpreted and how people are perceived (Gifford and Knott, 2016). Therefore, a classification can never provide enough information about the *lived* experience of an individual. If viewed as an homogenous, educational or social 'group' it is possible to find descriptors

that adequately categorise learning disabled people. However, when applied to individuals, a son or daughter, work colleagues, friends, suddenly the group descriptors seem inappropriate, partial, dismissive, judgemental. This problem, or ‘dilemma’ happens at the interface between agencies or institutions, which require organising categories, and family or social groups who know learning disabled people as individuals, as John, or Chris, or Amber. This suggests that organising categories are of use in the distribution of resources, less so in the classroom or family.

However, the effects of categorical and organising labels are difficult to avoid. Educational labelling may highlight assumed inabilities and can be used as a short-hand for generalising what an individual cannot do, screening opportunities to emphasise their skills and contributions. Educational labelling, particularly, makes it difficult to “reject a focus on supposed deficits and emphasise competence” (Goodley, 2001: 223). Politically, viewing human diversity rather than dis/ability (Goodley, 2014) may remove the requirement for labels on an individual basis. The conceptualisation of disability as relational makes ‘measuring’ ‘learning difficulties’ difficult, and largely irrelevant. Yet organisations still require such categories to create access criteria for support and resources (Gillman, Heyman, and Swain 2000). Indeed, it is on the basis of educational labels that Weldale students accessed special education.

According to Barnes (1999) labels are generally “imposed rather than chosen” (p.578), and, therefore, “socially and politically divisive” (p.578). A major detrimental effect of labelling is that it happens in the context of an assumed ‘norm’ against which ‘others’ are ‘judged’. Consequently, “the effects of labelling on the individual will nearly always be detrimental” (Hatton, 2009: 91). Usually, the ‘norm’ is that of the labeller, someone with social, political or institutional power to assign individuals to categorising groups, as ‘other’. In the case of disability, the judgement is against an able, independent, mobile, largely fictional person. The devaluing of everything and everyone considered ‘less than’ ‘normal’ is an ableist (Campbell, 2008) approach, one deeply engrained in social processes, and which therefore often remains unrecognised and unchallenged. Ableism, can be understood as “the devaluation of disability” (Hehir, 2002: 3) (or disabled people’s lives), viewed from an ‘able’ standpoint. Ableism expects independence as the norm, positioning interdependent people as ‘other’, ‘less than’. Recently however, it is questioned how far ableist concepts such as ‘mobile’,

'able' or 'independent', are relevant in *non-disabled* people's lives (Goodley, 2014), with particular challenge to how far anyone is independent, emphasising *interdependence* in the social world (Shakespeare, 2016). Marks' (1999) phrase "Temporarily Able Bodied" (p.18), is a pertinent reminder that disability is likely to feature in some respect in the majority of individual's lives at some point. However, despite such challenges, labelling based on ableist assumptions continues to undermine educational attainment (Hehir, 2002), limit opportunities and have psycho-emotional (Reeve, 2002) consequences. This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Yet, despite the negative effects of labelling, when an individual loses 'their' label, for example by leaving education when the label is an educational one (Caton and Kagan, 2006), they may lose support they require to live without difficulty. Burton (1990) identifies how people with mild learning difficulty labels often do not receive support services, despite experiencing social difficulties. More recently, Whitaker (2004) described people with mild to moderate learning disability labels in the USA as "hidden" (p.142), saying:

It is likely that the bulk of people who could be classified as having a learning disability are not known about. It is also not known if they are coping or are in need of services (p.142).

Fujiura describes this same group of people as a "forgotten generation" (2002: 420). Although, as Caton and Kagan (2006) point out, "for some school leavers disappearing from services is a positive outcome" (p.150), it seems that despite labelling being associated with individual and social disadvantage, non-labelling and the resulting lack of services may also be detrimental.

My original research intention was to find out about the experiences of young people 'with' the particular label of MLD. Far from its initial continuum concept aim, of not specifically marking difference (Norwich, 2004), MLD has become used to label children who do not have severe learning difficulties, yet do have some difficulties in learning. From my first visit to Weldale it became clear that MLD would be an inadequate label. The MLD label would not do for the two autistic students, and as I got to know them it became clear that MLD did not adequately describe or explain the



situations of any of the students. This empirical situation echoes the theoretical and policy difficulties of the MLD category.

Like many socially constructed definitions of special educational need (Whitaker, 2013), the category of MLD has been particularly contested, since its introduction to replace the term 'educationally subnormal to a moderate degree' (Warnock Committee, 1978). As the largest group (26.8%) within those with a label of special educational needs (SEN) (DfE, 2016), conceptual and practical problems abound as the MLD label does not serve to describe all those to whom it is applied, nor does it cover all circumstances in which a label of 'educational diversity' might be useful. Previously associated with the contested (e.g., Dove, 1971) diagnostic of IQ testing, unlike previous terms which had not taken into account individual provision required, or the child's learning context (Norwich, 2004), the current definition of MLD is socially relativised:

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments significantly below expected levels in most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum. Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills. (DfES, 2005a)

However, Norwich, Ylonen and Gwernan-Jones (2014) question the self-esteem element of this definition, having found no significant differences between self-esteem of learners with the MLD label, and those with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or low attainment. This fundamentally questions the value of the category of MLD, as distinct from "part of the continuum of attainment" (Norwich, 2004, online). The broad nature, and use, of the MLD definition causes practical and conceptual confusion (Whitaker, 2004) as individual students may have more or less difficulty in any of the areas specified, requiring different teaching approaches and different learning imperatives in the classroom.

Of course, on meeting students at Weldale, individual characteristics and mannerisms were immediately more salient than educational labels or diagnoses, the majority of

which I never learned. Despite the critique of special education as pathologising individuals, essentialising difference (Runswick-Cole, 2011: 114), diagnoses were simply not routinely part of school life. Students were 'known' to each other and to staff, accepted as individuals, in a non-categorising way. Increasingly, the idea that a social, educational or medical label could in some way summarise and encapsulate an individual's experience became abhorrent to me. Acutely aware of the power exercised in applying a learning disability label, and the apposite question, 'who has the power to name?' (Gillman and colleagues, 2000), in the research context I would wait until a parent or member of staff used a term and then adopt their chosen language. By far the most common term was 'special needs', from special educational needs (SEN). The SEND Code of Practice (DoH/ DfE, 2015) defines SEN as comprising of four broad areas: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health difficulties; and sensory and/or physical needs. I use SEN as an "operational definition" (Riddell and colleagues, 2001: 66), that is, accepting the students' attendance in special education as a definition of their status as a person with a label of special, or additional educational needs. SEN also acknowledges the educationally contextual nature of some learning difficulties. Attendance in special education marks (usually) a lifetime of measuring, assessments, judgements, medicalised attention and normative 'gaze' (Foucault, 1989). Therefore, whilst I agree with contestation of the term SEN as representing a medicalising discourse (Barton, 1993), it is the term that most parents used, and also the term students used if 'labelling' themselves. The latter was, however, extremely rare, only occurring on a handful of occasions.

Like Wagaman (2016) I am aware of the contradiction of using educational labels I simultaneously critique through "problematizing the identity labels that undergird [them]" (p.208). Yet, I need(ed) a way to talk, write and think about group experience, to recognise why and how the students found themselves a year-group in a special school ("a school which is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs" (DfES, 2001: 207)). I had started by describing individuals as 'having' 'learning difficulties', the term many self-advocacy groups prefer, but found myself drawn by the disability politics of 'learning disabled person' in recognition that disability does not 'belong' to the disabled person, but is a form of social oppression in which wider society is implicated. However, Watson (2002) warns

that the use of 'disabled person' "must be historically situated, socially composite and seen as part of a multiple identity" (Watson, 2002: 513). Later 'people with labels of learning disabilities' indicated to me the way in which labels are used on, and often against, individuals to categorise and divide. Having worked in both NHS and local authority settings (each using different terminology) I have yet to decide about the use of learning 'difficulty' (usually used in children's services and education) or 'disability' (used in adults' services) labels, but err on the side of 'disability', again due to its link with political disability activism. I use these different terms in the knowledge that although each is likely to be found lacking by particular groups or individuals, I use them after careful consideration, and in the context of respect. Mindful of positioning people with learning difficulty labels as a homogenous 'other', I try to avoid using 'they' and 'them'. However, where a group term is necessary I use 'the students' as a non-infantilising, 'practical' descriptor.

#### Ethical interruption 1.

Ethical assumptions about consent can be applied on so many different levels. I have obtained implicit consent from parents, a signature from students I was told would "sign anything" (120629\_observation), and am basing my day-to-day interactions on what I perceive as 'messages' in student behaviour about how 'welcome' I am.

Students have different ways of telling me that they don't want me here. If I approach Lieb and she does not want to talk to me, she asks me politely to 'go away please', or lays her head in her arms on the desk, effectively and clearly shutting me out. Lewis, in our only individual 'chat', agrees that the voice-recorder can be used, but looks so uncomfortable that I immediately tell him I will not use it. He later says "It's getting boring without the others" (130313\_class observation) at which point I ask if he wants to go back to class. He does.

Michael, directly indicates in various ways that he does not want me to be in the school:

[Michael] is extremely self aware and in some respects assertive, often telling me to “piss off” and that what I am doing “following children and asking them questions” is ethically and morally wrong (121010\_class\_observation).

Michael’s body language makes his unease clear. Sometimes he kicks or hits the wall or a table when he sees me approaching. Michael makes me question my own practice more than he can imagine, particularly, as he so eloquently points out, the ethical and moral rights and wrongs of educational research. I seek teachers' advice about the best ways to ‘limit’ ‘his’ distress, but although I do my best to lessen our interactions, as the end of school nears, his obvious discomfort increases and Pete (class tutor) occasionally ‘fields’ me on my way to his class, advising that today is a good day to visit Ivor’s year 11 class instead. Michael uses his talk and body with great effect, letting me know I am not welcome. Although obviously more difficult for him than me, I am extremely uncomfortable about the reaction I elicit in Michael, yet have him to thank for not being lulled into a false sense of generalised welcome.

Worryingly, these signs of discomfort and indications that I am unwelcome are only the ones I recognise. What of all the signs and indications that are present in so many ways, but that, for whatever reason, I do not see, cannot read, or simply ignore? How unhappy must Michael have been, and for how long, before he tells me to “piss off”? In these circumstances, is implicit or assumed consent/assent ever good enough?

### **1.4.3 Relational ethics.**

The school's implicit/assumed consent approach had the un/expected result that almost all students in year 11 became part of my research. This unusual level of participation was uncomfortable, yet thrilling. My relief at such easy access to the students' stories remained largely untainted by my distaste at what I felt were the ‘underhand’ tactics of implicit consent. My ethical discomfort was somewhat vindicated in that it was ‘the school’s’ decision not to request specific consent.

Indeed, from the school's point of view, I was often unnecessarily concerned with ethics, insisting on consent forms, questioning the effect of my presence on pupils and staff, checking that my understanding of a situation 'fit' with others' perception of it. This could all make my presence more intrusive for individuals at the school. However, there was no need to ask participants to "set down their terms of engagement" (Walmsley, 1998) because these were already implicit in school systems. One more adult in a special school, asking more questions of everyone, was an accepted part of institutional life. This meant what *I* considered essential ethical checking could be perceived, by staff and students, as uncertainty in both my methods and capabilities. Ironically, this caused some situations where my ethical duty to those at the school required me to be *less* ethically conscious than I wanted to be. I repeatedly accepted decisions and situations that I personally thought ethically dubious, because they were handled in a way that was routine to the school, so left little space for questioning.

For example, although almost all year 11 students became part of the research, I was warned not to include one student as he had a label of 'challenging behaviour' and had once 'punched' a teacher. It was not made clear to me at what stage of his schooling, or under what circumstances this had been, 'his' 'deviancy' simply presented as 'fact'. A further reason given to me was that this student was finding the transition process extremely difficult and talking to me about it might distress him more. Although I made conversation with the young man when I met him, at the time I agreed not to include him in my research, finding the reasons given reasonable, accepting them as 'school rules'. However, I now view this as a level of discriminatory power that denied the young man the opportunity, both to tell his transition story, and to participate in something that his peers were involved in. Interestingly, this was (in part) put right when I later visited his college and it was (rightly) assumed that I would want to speak to him individually. We had a very pleasant, humorous and reciprocally informative conversation for nearly an hour. It was only at this late stage, (and after the transition process was successfully navigated) that I started to question the school's positioning of him as 'dangerous' and 'distressed'. I would be interested to know what my response would be now, were I given the same reasons for not including a student. I like to think that I would now challenge school recommendations and at least give the individual the option to participate. But contextual institutional forces are strong, and my presence

was reliant on teaching staff's goodwill, so (shamefully, but honestly) I cannot be entirely sure.

As described above, I initially believed Weldale school staff knew the students well enough to make decisions about who I should or should not speak to. After longer 'in the field' (van Maanen, 2011) ethical demarcation became less clear, less delineated. In practice, ethical decisions became less 'right' or 'wrong', more 'acceptable' or 'dubious'. However, viewed honestly, just as with the consent procedures, 'dubious' did not necessarily equate with unjustifiable. Increasingly, as my relationships with students, staff and families became less 'professional', more relaxed and more knowledgeable, flexible situational ethics (Gobo, 2008: 146) became less clear. My ethical thinking changed, moving from what Bayliss and Thoma (2008) call 'normative' ethics, asking 'is it right to do that?', towards 'meta-ethics' and 'applied ethics' (Bayliss and Thoma, 2008), that is, the examination of the underlying values and moral choices involved in ethical decisions. Bayliss and Thoma (2008) also introduce 'relational ethics', describing how "the dynamic 'object' under scrutiny only comes into existence through the co-relation of the researcher and the researched through action" (p.12). This approach, takes ethical examination to the point where the 'knower' and the 'known' are considered continuous with each other "through an emotional affirmation of engagement" (Bayliss and Thoma, 2008: 12-13), both co-constituted, and co-relational. This means that in every interaction with each individual or family, "issues of consent and confidentiality, researcher power, reflexivity, and researcher identity, [have] different methodological and ethical implications" (Yee and Andrews, 2006: 409). A major element of relational and feminist ethics is an awareness of, and critical approach to, power (Steiner, 2009).

For the researcher, different ethical considerations are required at different times, and for some researchers 'relational ethics' is ontologically irrelevant. For me, however, relational ethics is important in understanding and questioning relationships, 'representation', and educational labels. Taking a hermeneutic approach, Clegg (2004) says researchers "should regard ethics as an injunction to scrutinise their own commitments and interpretations at least as much as those of others" (p.190). This understanding of ethics further underlines Horton's (2008) view of the difficulty of 'anticipating it all', instead suggesting personal and situatedly responsive ethics. Such

personal research ethics must be based on the challenging of the researcher's own power in relationship to the research participants. Research is not a neutral activity, but comes from a position of power in itself. Reflexivity involves the ongoing examination of the position of the researcher and the effect that relative power has in all research situations (see chapter 2).

However, despite my increasing awareness of relational ethics, the difference between anonymity and recognisability was not entirely clear to me even as I made ethical commitments about these concepts to students and their families. Like Malone (2003), "insights gained after-the-fact" (p.797) render my commitments to participants naive and ill-informed. Later, it became evident that even with pseudonyms, any students who actually read my writing would be able to recognise themselves, and each other, as would their families, school staff and "all the people who really matter" (Malone, 2003: 799). Making students entirely unrecognisable would render the research so lacking in social and contextual detail as to be pointless. Although I had assured participants that I would do everything possible to anonymise their information, which I have, I have not done everything I could to make their stories and descriptions of them unrecognisable, as this would have 'left' no story to tell. In the end my editorial power, in terms of recognisability, remains uncomfortably powerful, a dilemma that I find impossible to alleviate.

## **1.5 Background information**

### **1.5.1 Background to special education**

This research took place against a background of increasing neo-liberal, marketised pedagogy (Apple, 2010) recognised as deepening educational inequalities (Gillbourn and Youdell, 2000; Apple, 2010). Within this context, attitudes to special education vary widely. For some, 'inclusive' education represents civil and human rights, positioning special schools as a vestige of discriminatory and segregatory approaches (CSIE, online). However, for many Weldale students, and their families, special schooling represented a haven, a halcyon for young people requiring 'protection' from society and harsh mainstream expectations. Without exception, all the parents in this study felt Weldale School was a better option for their child than mainstream would have been. Westling Allodi (2002) describes the tensions of these two philosophical and

political approaches to different sites of education by saying students have “both a right and an obligation to the compulsory school system” (p.182). This complex situation means that choice in where and how learning disabled young people receive their education is vital.

The year 11 Weldale students attended special school in a time when governmental policy leaned towards ‘inclusion’ (DoH/ DfE, 2015; DfE, 2014). I wondered why specialist schools were still needed? As mentioned, meeting the Weldale students, confirmed Norwich and Kelly’s (2004) research, finding students with MLD labels who attended special education as likely to have additional labels such as language and communication difficulties. However, as Farrell (2006) points out, the push towards ‘inclusion’ may provide a political incentive to define additional difficulties if required to attend special schooling. This may be particularly likely as students with MLD labels are considered one of the easier educational groups to ‘include’ in mainstream schools (Evans and Lunt, 2002). Certainly, many parents told me how they had ‘struggled’, ‘fighting’ to gain a statement of educational need enabling their child to access the resources they required. This ‘struggle’ is also identified in the context of gaining access to ‘inclusive’ (Vlachou, 1997; Allan, 1999) mainstream provision.

A major difficulty in discussing where and how students with learning disability labels would best be educated lies in the *concepts* of ‘inclusive’ and ‘special’ education, which are muddled, relational, and used in many different ways. Each can be considered as philosophical and/or place related concepts, or as a relational continuum. There are benefits and disadvantages from both ‘inclusive’ and ‘special’ education, yet discussion continues to use the concepts in binaried, oppositional ways.

In England, ‘inclusive’ education is a legal right (United Nations, 1989; 2006; DfE, 2014) and broadly accepted as a social justice issue. During the 1990s the UK government committed to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the philosophy of ‘integration’ was replaced with that of ‘inclusion’. Successive legislation increased the imperative for children with SEN labels to be educated in mainstream schools, language moving from ‘choice’ (HMSO, 1993) to ‘commitment’ (DfEE, 1997), to ‘rights’ (DfES 2001). This further complicates discussion about educational provision due to the implication that by not taking up mainstream education, special



school students forfeit their human, civil and legal rights. Yet, just as human rights legislation does not prevent the deaths of people with learning disabilities (section 1.2), inclusion legislation does not ensure inclusive education. ‘Inclusive’ education, whilst linked to rights discourses, has its opponents. Warnock (2005), once an advocate of inclusive education has more recently defined current inclusion approaches as problematic. Runswick-Cole (2011) questions the extent to which governmental policy *does* constitute a bias towards inclusion when “this rhetoric is rooted in conceptual incongruities which, rather than promoting inclusion, undermine an inclusive approach to education” (p.112). Runswick-Cole (2011) criticises ‘inclusive’ education as being not only ableist in its expectations, but also discriminatory in its exclusion of “any child that is perceived to deviate from the ‘norm’ or who fails to fit within the standards-driven marketised education system” (p.117).

Currently, the majority of children with labels of MLD are educated in mainstream schools (DfE, 2016). This has resulted in special education performing a (very important) catch-all role for children with multiple and complex requirements, who do not fit into, or cannot be accommodated by, mainstream schools. Indeed Dyson (2002) suggests SEN labels enable an essentialist approach, deflecting attention from how the education system fails particular pupils, by labelling the individual as ‘different’. Labels of special educational need are not only subjective and contextual but now take place against a back-drop of questioning whether some labels of SEN are needed or are used as a smoke screen to explain ‘under-achievement’ and disguise ‘poor’ teaching (Ofsted 2010). Here, as so often, “not fitting in is [...] related to issues of justice” (Griffiths, 1998: 12).

Weldale students in year 11 had differing academic skills, social skills and levels of confidence. I found myself wondering why some Weldale students were not in mainstream school until I heard their turbulent back stories, social in nature, and understood why their parents had pushed for their ‘protection’ (from their peers) in special education. A broad link between social, economic and environmental factors and MLD is widely accepted (Shaw and colleagues, 2016) and like Caton and Kagan (2007) I felt that only some students were at Weldale school for educational provision and that the “remainder of the participants may have been able to cope in mainstream education if their environmental circumstances had been kinder to them” (p.479).

Certainly, had mainstream schooling, and society in general, been 'kinder', many students would not have required the environment of Weldale.

### **1.5.2 Background to transition.**

This research took place within an interesting educational transition policy landscape, during a time of ongoing change. In the early 1990s academic attention recognised transition from school to college as a potentially difficult time for young people with labels of learning difficulty (Kaehne and Beyre, 2009; Heslop and colleagues, 2002; Caton and Kagan, 2007) and autism (Rydzewska, 2012). One reason for such historical 'risk' is the lack of specificity of the label of MLD (see section 1.4.2) leading to discrepancies between estimated numbers of people with learning disability labels and those identified by services (Whitaker, 2004). In 1990, Burton had found that many young people with labels of mild intellectual disabilities experienced social, health, employment and housing difficulties, yet received no services after leaving school (Burton, 1990). High attrition rates from post school services were also recorded by Clark and Hirst (1989). At this time the special educational needs statement ended at the end of school.

Governmental response to poor services at this time came through recommendations in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and governmental white paper, 'Valuing People: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st Century' (DoH, 2001). The Connexions service was launched to co-ordinate transition from school to college and to monitor all young people's progress (DfEE, 2000a). However, Cullen, Lindsay and Dockrell (2009) found several structural barriers limiting the effectiveness of Connexions, including a lack of expertise in working with young people with additional needs. Similarly, despite recommendations in Valuing People, resources had failed to meet the suggestions outlined (Hudson, 2006), and planning and provision for transition remained "ad hoc, confused and uncoordinated" (Heslop and colleagues, 2002: 1), causing Mittler (2007) to call for a "passport to services" (p.16) to ensure students were not 'lost' to services. Attrition from post-school services of people with MLD labels was still unexpectedly high (Caton and Kagan, 2006: 146), and transition to young adulthood for people with learning difficulty labels remained "characterised by discontinuity rather than continuity" (Hudson, 2006: 49).

Attempts to ‘smooth’ transition continue. The publication of ‘Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability’ (DfE, 2011) led to The Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) which again aimed to improve transition to adulthood for young people with learning disability labels. The SEND Code of Practice (DoH/ DfE, 2015) extended the definition of ‘young person’, to age 25, and introduced Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans for joint planning and commissioning of services. In addition the Code of Practice had “a greater focus on support that enables those with SEN to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood (p.14) (see chapter five). Repeated policy scrutiny of educational transition indicates both that it is a stage of life which requires particular attention, and that it is a time of great change and possibilities.

### **1.5.3 Background to further education (FE).**

Like transition policy, further education (FE) exists in an ongoing state of flux. Traditionally, further education primarily met the needs of commerce and industry through work-orientated training (Johnstone, 1995). Since the 1980s, provision for learning disabled students has been improving, both in numbers and attitude (Dee and Corbett, 1994). In 2008/9 approximately 163,000 students (aged 16-24) with learning difficulty or disability labels attended FE (DfE, 2011). However, in the mid-1990s it was clear that further education should become more inclusive, for students overall (Kennedy, 1997), and for students with learning difficulties or disabilities specifically (Tomlinson, 1996). The overall quality of learning for students with difficulties and/or disabilities was poorer than for other students, causing underachievement and difficulty in accessing the wider curriculum (Tomlinson, 1996). Lack of clear policy rendered courses discrete and vulnerable to cuts (Dee and Corbett, 1994). If FE were to provide learning disabled students with “the achievement of autonomy and a positive self-image realistically grounded in the capacity to live as independently as possible and contribute both to the economy and the community” (Tomlinson, 1996: 7), a radical change of focus was required:

Put simply we want to avoid a viewpoint which locates the difficulties or deficit with the student and focus instead on the capacity of the educational institution to understand and respond to the individual learner's requirements (Tomlinson, 1996: p.4).

However, despite this promising approach, the Tomlinson report (1996) was largely ignored (Young, 2011) and in the 20 following years there has been little positive change. During this time the identity of FE has become more corporate, competitive and market-orientated, conflating educational aims with cost-effectiveness and profit (Wright, 2006). This has further sidelined 'non-academic' courses in what Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole (2014) call a 'neo-liberal ableist approach'. Goodley explicitly links disablism with neo-liberal values:

Disablism relates to the oppressive practices of contemporary society that threaten to exclude, eradicate and neutralise those individuals, bodies, minds and community practices that fail to fit the capitalist imperative (Goodley, 2014: xi).

Viewed in this way neo-liberal education policies, and, given its historical links with 'the market', further education in particular, can be implicated in reproducing disablism in the workplace. Although increasingly, assistive and/or adaptive technology has improved, offering access to further education to some disabled people (Bevan, 2003) and provision is now a legal right (Dee and Corbett, 1994), there are serious limitations for learning disabled students. For example, governmental guidelines consider 22 hours per week to be full time, leaving many students with only a three, sometimes four day college week (see appendix 5). The Leitch Report (Leitch 2006; DfES 2008) recommended that young people stay in education or training until age 18. Consequently all young people are currently denied welfare benefits before age 18, although FE courses on offer may not suit them.

#### **1.5.4 Background to foundation learning.**

The Foundation Learning National Evaluation (Allan and colleagues, 2011b) commissioned by the Department of Education provides a useful overview of foundation courses, which the majority of Weldale students transitioned to. Foundation Learning was introduced in England in 2010 as both a curriculum and learning plan for 14-19 year olds and 19-24 year olds with learning-/disability labels working at entry level and level 1. Combining subject/vocational skills, functional maths, English and ICT, and Personal and Social Development, foundation learning teaches towards Qualifications and Credit Framework accreditation (Allan and colleagues, 2011b).

Foundation courses offer personalised learning with “specific intended destination[s]” (Allan and colleagues, 2011b: ii), such as FE, training/apprenticeships or employment. Allan and colleagues (2011b) found students developed self-confidence, aspirations and independence through attending the 14-16 courses, thought to be due to exposure to “different workplaces and codes of conduct” (p.iv) and students said they enjoyed college more than they had school. However, despite some teaching staff and partnership employers believing ability to perform tasks and interpersonal skills to be more valuable than foundation level accreditations (Allan and colleagues, 2011b), qualifications remained central to teaching. The lack of funding to support work experience unless students complete a qualification, is “unique” (Allan and colleagues, 2011b: i) to foundation learning. Despite teaching towards specific intended destinations, Allan and colleagues (2011b) highlight the lack of data about students’ destinations on leaving college.

Questions must also be asked about the length of college courses. Although the SEND code of practice (DfE/ DoH, 2015) stipulates all students with an education, health and care (EHC) plan “should follow a coherent study programme which provides stretch and progression” (p.113) until age 25, this is only possible if academic progress can be demonstrated (Martin and colleagues, 2011). Foundation courses last between one and three years, typically until the student is 19 or 20. Colleges offering more than one foundation level course may be placed to retain students for four years if they progress, for example, from life skills to a vocational ‘taster’ course. Although in theory foundation students may progress to level one courses, choices are limited and dependent on particular study- and social-skills, and this rarely happens. Which form ‘study’ should take once college options are exhausted is not clear, but the colleges in this study did not appear either equipped or prepared to provide study opportunities until age 25.

Atkins (2008), researching level 1 courses in FE, found that vocational programmes were linked with working class students, had lower status than academic courses and socialised students into particular job roles (p.196). Courses reproduced students’ “lack of credentials” (Atkins, 2008: 197) in carrying “no occupational currency” (Atkins, 2008: 200). Like Atkins I found many Weldale students did not attend courses they had

*chosen*, but the *only* programme that they could access due to prohibitive prerequisite qualification levels (see chapter five).

### **1.5.5 The Weldale transition process.**

Weldale school had a detailed, and largely successful, transition programme. In line with The Learning and Skills Act (DfEE, 2000b) guidelines, transition planning started in year 9 when a Connexions service representative attended students' annual review to discuss their options (Abbott and Heslop, 2009).

In years 10 and 11 at Weldale, many students attended the local college, Townwood, once a week to access the 14-16 level 1 (foundation learners) programme. Courses offered were catering and construction, with occasional placements on a mechanics course. Despite the unimaginative and largely gendered options, most students were enthusiastic about their college visits. Some students did not attend college, staying to do 'creative media' in school. A 're-engagement' programme was also available, occasionally accessed for particular students who did not attend the 14-16 programme.

Once students had chosen a post-school college course, they visited for a day, or two, or more. Townwood college ran an induction course near the end of the summer term so registered students could attend once a week, meet their tutors and become settled in their new class and environment. Elsewhere, the process was more personalised and managed on an individual basis. Transition to college is discussed further in chapter five.

## **1.6 Chapter summary**

In this introductory chapter I have set out the philosophical and socio-political background to this thesis and introduced Weldale School as the main site for the research. I have introduced educational transition and foundation learning, discussed the pros and cons of labelling, and described the difficulty of applying labels to individuals. In the next chapter I move on to discuss methodology in the light of changing researcher subjectivities and discuss some of the interactions between ontology, epistemology, methods and research questions.

## 2 Methodological processes

### 2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction, the PhD process has been transformational for me. Whilst watching, recording, and interpreting the narrative identity work of the Weldale students, my own identity work was also an ongoing 'ethical project' (Foucault, 2011). Fascinated by the effect of research education on my subjectivities, I paid attention to these recursive processes, developing a critical awareness of myself in my new 'academic' and 'educational' surroundings. Here, I attempt to provide a chronological and retrospectively linear evocation of many complex and emerging ontological changes and the effect these had/have on this research. Methodologies and researcher subjectivities are inextricably bound together within ready made cultural stories (Czarniawska, 1997) that accept and recognise ontological development and challenge as a legitimate element of research. This chapter is an autoethnographic examination of methodological and ontological processes and as such an example of "how we "I-witness" our own reality constructions" (Spry, 2006). It joins literature taking the researcher as the researched (Doloriert and Sambrook, 2009), examining the personal experience of narrative identity construction (Haynes, 2011: 135) in the light of methodological, ontological and epistemological disruption and reassemblage. The retrospective intellectualisation of my changes in thinking demonstrates to me, both the danger of unrecognised assumptions, and the power of deconstructive practice/thought.

This chapter examines the relationships between power, truth and subjectivity in research processes. Despite such processes being convoluted, complex and non-linear, for clarity I will introduce the data collection methods used, before describing the challenge and disturbance to my thinking, the research questions, *and* the ontological and epistemological assumptions associated with them. The effect these processes had on 'data analysis' is described, as well as the emergent analysis approaches I developed. The chapter finishes with a section on quality, suggesting 'measures' by which this thesis might be assessed.

Although autoethnography has been described as "self-indulgent and narcissistic" (Etherington, 2004: 19) it is an important analytical tool. Researcher 'self-formation', a

process of both “subjectification” (Foucault, 2002: 327) and objectification of the self, involving “active participation, engagement and construction” (Townley, 1995: 284), is important to the research process. Through ‘subjectification’, Foucault investigates how “a human being turns him- or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 2002: 327) through ‘technologies of the self’. “[T]he subject is led to observe himself, analyse himself, interpret himself, recognize himself as a domain of possible knowledge” (Foucault, 2000b: 461). Through such processes I have continuously (re)located myself within various ethical and political discourses, critically assessing my position, and challenging my own thinking and action, treating myself both as a subject and an object. In this respect changing researcher subjectivities can be seen as an ethical project in the Foucaultian sense. After writing this ‘chapter’ I read Fox and Allan (2013) writing about Davies and colleagues (2004):

“They [Davies and colleagues] conclude that a researcher must find a way to write that includes making visible the technologies of self and of researcher-selves that are engaged in analysis and writing; reveals the limits of our knowledge, particularly in the research act; and makes clear the political orientation driving our work” (Fox and Allan, 2013: 2).

I believe this describes the processes described in this chapter. Far from simply a self-absorbed approach, this is a moral, political project because “[c]onscience is the means by which a subject becomes an object for itself, reflecting on itself, establishing itself as reflective and reflexive” (Butler, 1997: 22) and because for Foucault “research knowledge [is] always implicated in the operation of power” (Hammersley and Traianou, 2014: 229).

## **2.2 Data collection methods**

This research draws on ethnographic processes of data collection, that is “[...] watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1), a “magpie” (Carter, 2014: 125) approach. In different sites, Weldale school, five further education colleges and in students’ homes, I recorded observations, conversations, my own thoughts and feelings. Different data collection methods happened contemporaneously, so that on any one day I might



observe a class, make written field-notes, record an interview, have multiple 'casual' conversations, ask specific questions of particular people. Whilst 'in the field', I wrote (in notebooks or on corners of paper, even on my hand, whatever seemed appropriate and/or was available), comments, 'memory-joggers' for particular interactions. At home I typed up more detailed field-notes based on these brief notes. I recorded my own comments and thoughts, wrote these as a form of 'research notes', transcribed recorded interviews along with the thinking and questioning that occurred during both the school visits and the transcription processes. I made 'spontaneous' voice recordings in the staff toilets, in my car, in the playground, to 'retain' conversation and thought. I replicated these same methods and processes in the colleges and students' homes. I made appointments to interview school and college staff and individual students, as well as to observe classes. I visited students' parents and carers in their homes, both for 'interviews' and more casual conversations. I sometimes phoned parents or carers, if they preferred this to a visit. I interviewed some students in their homes too. This flexible and responsive approach to data collection worked well, although the supporting interviews with families and carers cannot be called 'ethnographic' as they did not involve sustained or repeated episodes in one environment.

When I could not take contemporaneous notes, the school timetable provided a framework for remembering events in order throughout the day. Gibbs (2007) says field notes are "usually open-ended, loose, and often unruly and messy" (p.27). My notebooks actually appear quite ordered, but, in isolation, may be incomprehensible to others, actions, spoken phrases or glances recorded, but their perceived significance and relevance known only to me. Had I not rigorously written up more lengthy and explanatory notes the same or next day these relevances and theoretical links would surely have been lost.

In differing ways, I spoke to all 21 year 11 students repeatedly throughout the academic year. I tried out a selection of different methods of 'talking', always using a flexible, spontaneous and responsive approach. My communications with students were built on my interpretation of the type of interaction they appeared comfortable with. Some students, mainly those most comfortable with verbal methods of communication, quickly started requesting time to speak to me, indicating a preference for a recorded 'interview' in a separate room. I got the impression they felt the semi-formality of these

circumstances lent some seriousness to what they had to say. Other students seemed happier with playground conversations, also often initiated themselves, although here too the voice recorder was occasionally requested. Transition between classes and on the way to the hall for lunch provided particular opportunity for unscheduled, emergent conversation. Some conversations turned into interviews, some interviews were abandoned in favour of 'chat', some chats were aborted when a school 'crisis' or something more interesting called my participant away. I took up any and all opportunities to speak with students and staff, making little distinction between general 'relationship building' conversation and specific 'research' conversation, as each was reciprocally supporting of the other. However, I was advised that one student should not be part of my research (see 1.4.3), so did not record what was spoken about in our purely circumstantial and social school conversations.

Methods decisions became a constant process of trying to interpret what would be most comfortable to the participants *and* most useful in gaining the information I sought at any particular time. The salience of particular themes and ideas changed throughout the data collection process, and beyond, this flexible data collection approach allowing me to responsively follow different directions that interested me, or became important. My participation in school was also responsive, to the level of staffing in the school on a particular day, a request from a student or teacher that I undertake a task or role, individually arising situations creating space in which to talk, work and explore ideas with the students or staff. These circumstances also affected where, when and how the students and I spoke together, as well as what we spoke about on any occasion. For example, private school space was at a premium, a source of ongoing negotiation, both for me and the teaching staff. Often I would be offered use of a room for conversation with students, only to find that other staff were also using it at the same time. This inevitably influenced both the way students and I spoke to each other, and the content of our conversation. However, here too, a flexible and responsive approach worked best, facilitating a continual re-working of both approach and methods. Some days I would have a particular idea in my mind, often from my reading or an event witnessed in the school, and I would 'lead' conversations to help me answer a tricky conceptual question. At other times I would ask students and staff what they wanted to talk about, or directly request their help with 'understanding' some particular circumstance. Often I would take my lead from whatever students and staff appeared to want to discuss,

treading an uncertain path between showing enthusiasm in a way that ‘directed’ conversation, and unintentionally appearing less interested in some aspects of our talk. I did not usually have a ‘plan’, but let conversation and events lead talk into often unexpected realms.

My interactions with students were largely, influenced by simply spending so much time in their school and their classes. ‘Casual’ conversations with staff also came about in this manner, and during such ‘corridor-corner’ interactions I sometimes suggested a longer ‘recorded’ conversation to continue an interesting conversation. On such occasions we would arrange a time to meet later. I requested separate ‘interviews’ with key members of staff including the head and deputy head teachers to try to understand the ‘ethos’ of the school. I also sent out information asking that any staff members who wanted to be part of my ‘project’ to contact me and make an appointment for an interview. Through these different responsive methods I carried out 20 recorded interviews with school staff, and, using the same approach, 9 with college staff (see appendix 1).

I also approached some students’ parents and carers. Because this necessitated making appointments and visiting people in their own homes, here I could not use my casual, circumstantial approach as easily as in school and the colleges. I visited with the stated intention of ‘interviewing’ parents and carers, and although I approached this with the same relaxed, responsive methods, trying to evoke an easy environment in which to talk, some of these conversations were inevitably slightly more formal in some respects. There was less time to get to know individuals before embarking on discussing their son or daughter. Although I would have liked to speak to all families, mostly, Adrian arranged such meetings for me as I did not have access to private phone numbers. He and other staff agreed that, for various complex and private reasons, some parents would not want to be part of the research themselves, leaving me with little opportunity but to accept this interpretation. In all I carried out 28 interviews with parents and carers, where possible visiting before and after the transition to college (see appendix 1).

Ethnography, practised in this way, generates many and varied forms, as well as large amounts of, data. Idealistically, I started ‘analysing’ and writing about this data with the

intention of ‘telling’ the transition story of every student. I eventually understood that, given practical limitations, the stipulated length of a PhD thesis, and what could reasonably be expected of a reader, this would not be possible. I therefore chose to include writing about the particular students whose narratives and examples, at the time, most offered me opportunity to deliberate and elaborate on the interface between empirical experiences and theoretical concerns.

During my time in the school and colleges, and later, I repeatedly returned to the data resulting from these different collection methods, adding (with dates) further thinking and theory. Phonecalls and emails ‘became’ ‘data’ in that they contributed to a composite understanding, building layers of information and ‘knowledge’. I noted the circumstances of interactions, as well as where occurrences reminded me of what I had read. As I continued to return to the data, these theoretical comments and questions increasingly linked academic literature with empirical observations in an ongoing, overlapping dialogue.

My fieldnotes developed, becoming a continuum of primary observation, reflection and recall, ideas, ‘ethno-questions’ (Spradely, 1980), my own “emotional notes” (Gobo, 2008: 212) and thoughts, theoretical questioning and snippets from academic literature. I used quotation marks for direct quotes (Gray, 2004), and identified specifically what had been written at the time or later. Writing theoretical questions and memos in the first person (eg, I wonder why...?) clarified which parts of the data were observations and which my own thoughts. Although I tried separating these, as Gray (2004) advises, it quickly became clear that, for me, all these aspects of fieldwork should be recorded in the context in which they occurred so as to maintain their complexity, and my changing thinking and development processes.

The constant concern that the significance of seemingly mundane words, phrases or interactions may become clear only at a later stage, as well as my delight in my role as observer, meant that, at first, I wrote down ‘everything’. I relished individuals’ approaches in telling a story, their choice of words, the sense of drama or mundaneness achieved in playing something up or down to show its importance.

### 2.3 Learning as an ontological and ethical project

Although these methods proved fruitful, whilst collecting data, epistemological and ontological thinking processes led me to challenge these processes, as well as (amongst others) the concepts of ‘data’, ‘representation’ and ‘knowledge’. Deconstructive thinking and a reflexive approach have played important roles in the research processes. I will return to them throughout this chapter.

#### Ethical interruption 2.

Foucault’s ethical project.

For Foucault, ethical practice can be (conceptually) divided into four elements:

The *ethical substance*, or ontological element involves ethical reflection and change in aspects of the self that are morally ‘problematic’. For this to happen, morally problematic elements of self must be recognised, along with the discourses within which they occur.

*The mode of subjection* concerns an individual’s moral code and its relationship with ethical norms and expectations. This involves deontological questioning about “the reason for being moral” (White, 2014: 494).

*Ethical work* involves self-reflection through writing and reading, through intense self-analytical introspection “to effect transformation of oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour” (Foucault, 1992: 26) and thought. Constitution of the self as a moral agent involves examination of both ethical and moral norms, and of the self’s behaviour within such norms. For Foucault, this turning of ethical consideration from others to the self, or care of the self (Foucault, 1986), is vital in that it must precede both care of others, and taking of responsibility for oneself.

The fourth ethical element, *telos*, involves the purpose of ethical work, the aim of leading a life that is ethically and morally ‘worthy’.

These ethical elements point towards care of the self in terms of ‘knowing’

oneself. Whilst Foucault discusses the ethical project in terms of sexuality, particularly sexual austerity or self-control, these four elements are significant in terms of subjectification in a broad understanding of education. If education can be conceptualised as establishing an understanding of the self, of taking responsibility for ones own actions, of moral and ethical knowledge, of freedom of thought and action, the ethical project should be at the heart of the purpose of education. Certainly, for me, it was education that directed me to 'work' on myself as an ethical project in the way that Foucault describes.

In 2010 starting an MSc in educational research, I was unknowingly already “socialised into an objectivist tradition of research” (Banks, 1998: 167). Like Etherington (2004) I could not reconcile the research I wanted to do with what I considered 'real' (scientific) research. Yet, embarking on a PhD I felt I had values I was proud of and an approach to life I was aware of. I did not know that the research process would both enable and force me to deconstruct the basis of my beliefs, a process of “learning to make the obvious dubious” (Brinkmann, 2014: 724). I knew from the beginning that individual experience, ethical behaviour, respect and equity were important to me. I believed my approach would be ethical and respectful towards the people I met and asked questions of. I had no idea I would need to ask more questions of myself than of others.

An important catalyst for my changing subjectivities was my introduction to deconstructive thinking and critical theory which view 'common sense' simply as knowledge that remains unchallenged (Bernstein, 2002). However, the very *common-sense-ness* of unchallenged 'knowledge' makes it difficult to recognise and hence challenge. My own 'common-sense' beliefs were (and are) often invisible to me yet fundamentally influence(d) my thinking, speaking and action, rendering important elements of experience visible or invisible, understandable or bewildering. Even when my often contradictory ontologies became clearer to me and I questioned them or changed my thinking and speaking, on a *different* level the same underlying beliefs continued to influence me, how I spoke, what I did, what I thought. Goodley and Lawthom (2005) describe how researchers can occupy differing sociological standpoints during a research journey. I believe it is possible to hold *contradictory*

sociological standpoints at the *same time*, and that the unpicking and remaking of such complex ontologies is a personal, intellectual, philosophical and political project.

However, even within deconstructive, (and post-structural, and post-qualitative) thinking, 'common-sense' theory may still be useful. Especially if particular theory is considered the 'norm' in understanding social processes, it may be used as a 'stepping off point' from which to develop new theory by applying deconstructive thinking and demonstrating, making visible, socio-political effects of such theory. For example, in chapter four, I use Giddens (1984) structuration theory of agency as a 'background' against which to set my own understandings of agency. Throughout my research, Giddens was routinely suggested to me as 'the' agency theorist, to the point where his writings appeared to be inextricably linked with agency understandings. In line with deconstructive thinking, such widely accepted 'common-sense' 'knowledge' of social processes requires examination, to make transparent *whose* narrative is privileged through their use. For this reason, I use Giddens' theory to set the scene for my developing ideas about agency. This allows me to demonstrate how far my own thinking has moved, and to set this thinking against theory commonly thought of as 'describing' agency, as well as to show the processes of deconstructive thinking.

### **2.3.1 Introducing analytical reflexivity**

As well as deconstructive thought, reflexivity plays an important role as a tool which productively changed my thinking. Richardson (2002) describes how

[p]ersonal narration, reflexivity, and contextualization, I believe, are valuable tools. They help demystify authority claims, enlarge disciplinary boundaries, and contribute to the writing of a socially useful, culturally critical, publicly available, and vibrant sociology (p.415).

Documented alongside theoretical and methodological change, reflexivity supports valuable, critical, theoretical and conceptual processes. Reflexivity and subjective positioning both enhance and make more modest any claims to knowledge. This, for me, and for Richardson, is an important element of quality in research.

Like Etherington (2004), on 'discovering' the term 'reflexivity', I realised it had long been "an important part of [...] learning and transformation" (p.19) in my life. I had

called it 'thinking'. Reflexive thinking made me question my own and others thoughts and action, my position in interactions, my opinions and views. It is reflexive thought processes that lead me to question, to challenge, to problematise situations.

Although a reflexive approach allowed me to challenge my thinking, a further stage was required to destabilise engrained thinking. Bott (2010) says reflexivity involves “the active construction of interpretations of experiences in the field and a questioning of how these interpretations arise” (p.160). Rose (1997) suggests that “the search for positionality through transparent reflexivity is bound to fail” (p.311), dependent as it is on power and agency as 'knowable' concepts. For this reason, I would argue that a subtly different approach, one of *analytical* reflexivity rather than transparent reflexivity, takes the process further, allowing the theoretical *deconstruction* of subjectivities, and power relationships. Analytical reflexivity requires constant questioning, not only of why researcher subjectivity is what it is, but also *why it isn't something else*. Analytical reflexivity involved attentively examining concepts I could *not* accept as common sense, as well as those I could. It is exploring such difficult spaces, theoretical 'dead ends' that nonetheless bothered me, that has often exposed preconceptions and assumptions guiding my thought and action. I have often followed ideas and concepts that excited me, trying to understand how writers evoke particular feelings in me, the feelings that stir me and make me interested. However, I have also stayed with tricky, knotty concepts that draw me back, niggling and irritating because they could not be neatly 'resolved', holding together in the mind remembered and experienced situations, theory, and the possibility of new links and productive ways of thinking.

Whilst reflexivity and subjectivity are “important to recognizing and negotiating the danger of constructing unequal or hierarchical power relations in social research” (Bott, 2010: 159 - 160), it was only when I started delving further into analytical reflexivity that *my own* unequal, hierarchical practices became clearer to me. Pillow (2006) makes a distinction between “reflective and deconstructive practices in ethnography” (p.229) saying that only through deconstruction can the processes of power be confronted. Reflexivity, with all 'its' “fragmented, dynamic and partial” (Fox and Allan, 2013: 11) complications, can enable vital recognition and explanation of subjectivity. However, without the additional, deeper analytical level, practicing reflexivity can inadvertently lead to recognising and even reinforcing existing beliefs without necessarily questioning them.



Indeed, the practice of reflexivity itself may reassure the researcher of their ethical subjectivities, this in itself obscuring the need for further critical analysis of underlying, unrevealed assumptions.

However, this process demands thinking time and courage. It also demands time *not* directly thinking about concepts and theory. Time to absorb new information. Time to discuss difficult theoretical entanglements with colleagues. Analytical reflexivity is an identity constituting practice. I experience myself in particular socially constructed and contextual ways and as my standpoint changes my identity narratives are constantly reworked to accommodate new thinking. However, these processes do not always expose identity meanings that are welcome.

Although aware of the social and medical models of disability, and the concept of 'normalisation' (Wolfensberger and colleagues, 1972) underpinning much public policy, on arrival at university I described myself as having 'no theory'. Working as a hearing therapist, I had run the hearing services for adults with learning disabilities in an NHS trust. As a social model supporter I challenged medical model approaches, so imagined they had no claim on my thinking. Many hearing therapy 'patients' had recently been re-homed, from large institutions, to the community. I considered historical instances of enforced hearing aid use in institutions an infringement on human rights, as well as often frightening and unsuccessful. I felt 'my' service should try to counteract some of these abuses of choice, trust and power previously experienced by patients and their peers. I offered a highly personalised approach, using time and relationships to aid choices about the usefulness of 'medical' intervention. This unusual practice gave me the simplistic belief that the medical model of disability had no hold on my thinking, that I did not view disabled people as 'needing' medical intervention unless they themselves felt they would benefit from it. These personal experiences were intricately and complexly linked both to the the cultural context (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), and to my own beliefs about social justice.

After four years at university, I realised my 'lack of theory' was, rather, implicit and unchallenged ableist theory which, viewed through my evolving disability studies lens was patronising, discriminatory and embarrassing. Although I had challenged accepted medicalised approaches within the NHS, at the same time I had unknowingly absorbed

medical, deficit and charity approaches to disability. Unrecognised and therefore unchallenged, these approaches remained 'invisible', allowing me to both continue thinking and acting through their framework, while talking and writing as though I were 'free' of them. Slowly, I became and continue to become, "self-conscious about the assumptions" (Greene, 2013, online) of (some of) my ontological frameworks.

Through my reading I excitedly discovered retrospective conceptual terms for my approach to life, firstly 'sociology' (Douglas, 2013), and later feminist theory, post-structuralist and critical theories. Although these approaches supported my view of the world they were also inherently challenging, provoking non-linear, cyclical and multi-layered changes to my thinking. Some changes were 'light-bulb' moments. These episodes of transformative thinking, striking realisation and clarity, epiphanies that dislodged my status quo thinking, felt both exciting and risky. Other moments of change seeped in through long and repeated exposure to the new ways of thinking. Some journal articles troubled or excited me, demanding repeated reading and consideration. I found I could come to the same philosophical or ontological conclusion again and again, only for it to be repeatedly overwhelmed by reiterations of my engrained former thinking.

However, at the start, unaware of my limiting assumptions, I set about 'learning' some 'theory'. Unrecognised positivist ideas about research meant I felt that there were 'answers' and a 'right' way to do research. I tried to read the 'right' articles that would explain how to achieve the 'right' ends. There were plenty of questions to 'answer'. How particular, or similar, were individual's experiences of moderate learning difficulty (MLD)? Given the link between socio-economic status and MLD should MLD be viewed as a class issue (Nind, 2008)? Did post structural thinking have any affect those with the fewest opportunities? Could I adopt a post-structural view of the world in the knowledge of inequality of identity options? Within the multiple layers of my unrecognised ontological assumptions, I had a residual positivist 'knowledge' that researchers must be clear on their standpoint. I did not yet realise that professional researchers also continue to question and indeed, can consider 'not knowing' a positive force that moves theory on to new and exciting places (Lather, 2007). The idea of 'defence' at the PhD viva played on my mind. How could I 'be' a 'real' researcher if I was clear where I stood? How could I become certain enough about anything to be able to 'defend' (an aggressive concept, alien in my life) my views if my opinions were constantly in flux? I now view ontological questioning

as a powerful critical 'conceptual tool' (Thomas, 1999) encouraging useful suspicion of anything initially considered 'common sense'. Then, I did not know that this was a common process, that amongst post-qualitative researchers "epistemological indeterminacy" (Lather, 2007: 4) is keenly prized as an opportunity for thinking differently. I felt that there was something 'wrong' with my approach, that I could not grasp concepts that appeared 'non-issues' to many of my peers. The theme of academic expectations, real and imagined, is a recurring influence in what and how I think and write.

At this stage my research 'question' was about the effect of transition on identity and self-concept. My MSc dissertation examined the medical and charitable models of disability, agreeing with Shapiro (1993) that these are both oppressive and irrelevant to the "day-to-day reality of most disabled people" (p.17). Unaware of my own residual medical and charity model thinking and the role this played in holding back my thinking, I believed my approach to be a 'liberating' one.

## **2.4 Gaining information**

On first encountered ethnography I was immediately drawn to it. I liked the intensity of time spent in 'the field' (van Maanen, 2011); the potential quality of research relationships; the symmetry of ethnography as the doing, the practice, the product; the opportunity for reciprocity and exchange in ethnography; the idea of 'explaining' interaction through 'understanding' the context in which it happened. The potential for understanding social processes through discourse and interaction was exciting. For me, the concepts of "thick description" (Geertz, 2000), "thick participation" (Sarangi, 2005: 376) and later, "thick analysis" (Evers and van Staa, 2010) embodied the multiple ways in which researcher and 'host' could experience relationships, building emic understanding. Ethnography offered the opportunity to ask enough questions, to get a feel for context before explaining what was 'really' happening. I thought that "hanging out with people and doing whatever they happen to be doing" (Taylor, 2000: 68) would 'reveal' the 'true' reasons for their actions.

Ethical interruption 3.

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Visiting participants in their homes involves difficult and usually unspoken processes of “the construction of the home as a research site” (Sime, 2008: 72). Most importantly it is the site of the family, and through invitation into the home, without the institutional environment to professionalise their role, the researcher takes on some of the role of a friend. Yet, not a friend. With the “explicit research imperative” (Yee and Andrews, 2006: 405-406) complicated by being on the students’ “home ground” (Yee and Andrews, 2006: 404), relationships can become less clearly defined. The differences between 'friend' and 'researcher' become clear on visiting a student, John, and his mum, Nat. I find it easy to construct a friendly, communicative and honest relationship with Nat during our first interview, to “smooth my arrival” (Abbott, 2013: 44) through an awareness of signals about how I might be expected to behave in their home. On the first occasion John is at school and I speak to Nat for well over an hour. On the second occasion, when I arrive Nat is in her dressing gown having been taken 'poorly' earlier in the day. I suggest that we reschedule the meeting, but she insists we continue, this in itself indicating a different type of relationship. After the interview with Nat and John, Nat asks how long it will take to write the research. I explain that my daughter is ill and I am preparing to take some time off to look after her. Nat sincerely and politely inquires if my daughter will be alright. I give her some brief details. This leads Nat to tell me about a medical condition that, from John's body language, he would prefer me not to know about. My allegiances are torn. I know that John is my priority, yet Nat has been so welcoming and I know we have quickly formed a reciprocally open relationship. I can imagine being friends with her in a social situation. I am in John and Nat's home and as such it does not feel appropriate to challenge Nat talking about John, especially as talking about, and to, John is the only reason I am here. I want to continue to be “a good guest” (Yee and Andrews, 2006) yet this seems to mean different things to Nat, who has only met me in their home, and John, with whom I have a 'school' relationship. Nat and I have quickly identified commonalities that establish rapport (Sime, 2008). We share the anxiety of parents whose children have medical conditions, needing decisions made and appointments kept. I recognise a misplaced feeling of 'ownership' over information about our own children, something I am beginning to question,

yet cannot quite describe. It has been easy to “create the conditions in which talk of a certain quality might be possible [...] talk that went beyond the superficial” (Abbott, 2013: 50). Evidently we have succeeded in co-creating just such a relationship! These thoughts run through my head while I listen to Nat and watch John 'squirm'. I believe I show some sympathy, little interest, and change the subject quickly. This does not seem an adequate response. How researchers respond to such “ethically important moments” (Guillemin and Gillam 2004: 265) has important implications on the quality of relationships and, ultimately, the research. Clegg (2004) describes hermeneutic ethics, an ongoing process of responding ethically and sensitively, seeing ethics as relational and decisions as situated and contextual. Despite, or maybe because, of my understanding of ethics as situated and relational, sitting in John and Nat’s living room, like Horton (2008), I am left with a “sense of failure” (p.363).

Although feeling philosophically and theoretically unprepared, academic time pressure forced the start of data collection. I conceived a two-stage ethnographic design, ‘following’ students from their school to college. However circumstances, including access difficulties (see 1.4.1), meant the majority of the 'data' 'collection' took place in Weldale school, with a smaller number of visits to each of the five colleges that students attended. Although not as planned, this did enable me to get to know the students very well throughout the planning, course 'choice', interview and college visit stage of the transition process. Interviews with students, their families and teaching staff happened throughout the same data collection period. In essence, I talked, read, looked, listened, interpreted. I used every spontaneous opportunity to ask questions, watch, listen, discuss, think and wonder. Whether I casually cornered someone in the corridor or ‘interviewed’ someone (separately and often with a voice recorder), my initial aim was always rapport. Once rapport had been (re-)established I would ask an open question, often not ostensibly related to transition or identity (which I had declared as my research interests), and, using a flexible and spontaneous approach, would responsively pursue particular comments and issues. In this way interviews, whilst led by interviewee talk, were gently directed and guided toward the responses that interested me most. I believe my own demeanour and flexible approach also had a relational effect on the

interviewee's emotional comfort (O'Reilly, 2005), sometimes positive, sometimes less so.

All interviews, fieldnotes and items of 'data' (over 1000 items, nearly 4.0 GB) were transcribed by me, a process that was part of ongoing 'analysis' and one that, despite the intense physical, emotional and theoretical investment involved, I would not have willingly given up. As Daymon and Holloway (2002) suggest, many theoretical ideas, initiated during the day, or through reading, continued to form during this process. Sometimes I worried about being selective in what I wrote in my fieldnotes, and how I wrote them up later. It seemed an impossible task to record 'everything' that had happened during the school day, yet what Brummans and Vásquez (2016) call "textualization fever" (p.122) led me to believe that "lived experience must be captured in a text like a genie in a bottle, that experience must be eternalized in writing, or that we can capture and eternalize ourselves in our textualizations" (p.122-123). I privileged verbatim data, remembering exact comments until I could write them down and 'capture' them. Holliday (2007) warns that verbatim data, as much as other forms of data, must be "managed for its subjectivity" (p.61), and, as situational, co-constructed and of the moment, may not deserve the "higher status" (p.61) it often receives. However, unaware of this, I worried about my choices, how I represented situations, about my own preconceptions and beliefs somehow 'contaminating' the data. Increasingly my fieldnotes examined human dynamics, and my own part in these, rather than activities undertaken. Retrospectively, I realise I was 'recording' social narratives and interactions with a highly reflexive component.

My writing illustrates how educational expectations impacted on my ideas of myself as a researcher:

How the research is set up is influenced by the school system (institutionalism), my beliefs about individuals knowing the most about their situations, my own need to fit into the system and get the job done, my ideas about intrusion and usefulness, influenced by my beliefs, ideologies and the cultural rules and expectations. Because I must collect data in an efficient way that I feel comfortable with, the data collection itself (not to mention the data analysis) is a product of me. So it is important to locate myself in the research so others can understand my philosophical prejudices and bias (research notes, March 2011).

This writing is representative of my 'writing to think' at all stages of the research and shows an attempt to align oppositional thinking. The clash of sociological, post-modern, positivist and humanist thinking is typical of my writing and thinking at this time. Still thinking in terms of efficiency, bias and rules, I also recognised the huge effect my subjectivities would have on the research. I was trying to neatly fit my researcher-self into social and institutional systems, whilst at the same time acknowledging the effect of personal experience and beliefs. This writing reveals that I did not recognise my philosophical prejudices and bias. It is only since increasing post-structural understandings have forced me to *reject* ideas of 'unbiased', 'efficient', 'result' yielding research, that I have become aware these underlying assumptions existed.

Ongoing deconstruction of my common-sense assumptions highlighted unrecognised, yet clear and delineated binaried thinking. 'Good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', were prominent, and still are to some extent, although (when I recognise it), I now challenge the limitations of oppositional thinking, questioning who benefits from particular assumptions, whose story is privileged and why. Extensive reading of post-structural and critical research helped form this more conscious approach to binaried thinking. I understood that individuals had different experiences and understandings of their worlds, but underlying this I held unexamined value judgements about fundamentally 'better' and 'worse' ways of doing things. Where I held/hold a position of relative power these thoughts affect(ed) the rights of others. Thomson and Gunter (2011) describe their researcher selves as "liquid" (p.25), taking on "continuously shifting relationships" (p.25) and multiple positions, "with sometimes more than one at work at the same time" (p.25). Their understanding of the "provisionality of positioning" (p.25) is useful in an understanding of fluid identity meanings (see chapter 3), and in examining my changing researcher subjectivities.

## **2.5 Critical ethnographic practice**

As I read and thought, I continued to 'practice' ethnography. The cumulative knowledge I knowingly and unknowingly acquired, both through relationships made and my physical presence in the school, allowed me to form tentative ideas about student and staff actions and behaviours. The many hours spent in the school, listening, talking, asking, watching, waiting, idling and wondering did not enable me to *understand* the students or the

teachers, rather they limited opportunity to *misunderstand* them. I began to realise that the strengths and limitations of my own ethnographic practice, the timetable and structure of the school, the un-/willingness of pupils and staff to participate and my own social and emotional energy meant this ethnography, like any other, would be partial and personal. As a result of deconstructing and disturbing the concepts of 'experience' and 'knowledge', I could not claim to truly 'represent' the experience of the students, far less the experiences of others in similar situations. I began to see the shortcomings of ethnography.

Becoming aware of the limitations of (all) research methods, including ethnography, was an ongoing process. However, one aspect struck me as practical as well as conceptual. Whilst visiting the school during the day, writing fieldnotes and typing them up in the evenings, I began to discern a 'problem' with the effect of memory on both 'experience' and the writing of 'experience'. The *experience* of immersion in the field, is so very different from the taking of observational notes. The snatched questions, comments and shared moments of understanding, communicated through a raised eyebrow, a smile, a glance of subterfuge, fun or commiseration, are inevitably only partially represented in fieldnotes, partially remembered and partially reconstructed during and after the event. My own memory caused me worry. What if I misremembered something? Through frequent re-reading the data and associated memories became less rooted in a particular time and space, evolving and re-evolving to become part of the present, something different, not what *had* been. This worried me. I still held notions of 'data' as something that should be 'kept' intact. Different incidents and interactions became more or less salient as my theoretical understanding changed and as my interest in particular aspects of theory developed. So, as re-remembered interactions swam to the surface, my reconstructed memories of them could be trusted less and less in the light of new or newly significant theoretical thoughts and questions. Given my (as yet) unchallenged belief in something tangible or definable to 'find' in the data, this worried me. I understood time and memory as remaking evolving situations and could not find a way to stop this happening. Surely as a researcher it was my duty to keep as closely to the 'original' data as possible? My aim had been to present the students' own words. Yet the more salient my own role became, the less discernible student voices appeared. The act of making fieldnotes affects the ethnographer's understanding of situations, influencing and reinforcing their own narratives and meanings and therefore the way that they 'represent' their 'knowledge'. In this way the data, knowledge *and* researcher are constituted through



the act of making fieldnotes. It was only much later that I was able to re-evaluate this process of ongoing (re)construction as a positive *generative* process and to understand what I had observed and written as partial representations of subjectivities. I now consider the revisiting of fieldnotes an important element in the generation of both data and theory. Yet, at the time, having no examples of research that described this process as a positive, I tried hard (and inevitably unsuccessfully) to accurately remember and preserve 'original' data.

Despite my concerns about the role of memory, I enjoyed writing fieldnotes, carefully choosing particular words to evoke what I had seen and understood. I enjoyed the process of turning lived experiences into written descriptions. Although concerned with representation issues, I did not find the process of moving from the discursive to the literary, or from talk to text limiting (Clifford, 1983), I found it exciting.

My writing from this period shows how I repeatedly returned to questioning 'reality':

If compared to the way a novelist draws on information heard, seen, experienced and researched, then weaves it into a story of their own making, so an ethnography can in no respect be called a truth, more a work of fiction, reliant on the author to tell the story, but with a knowledge that some aspects have a basis in 'reality'. Original quotes could be considered 'true' but the theory that they are immersed in is a story of the researcher's telling (research notes, 2013).

Interpretive researchers may also hold beliefs that 'fact' is of more value than fiction, using original quotes to support theory generated of their own imaginations. Clough (1992) calls this "[f]actuality .. composed as a narrative defence against narrativity" (p.24). I now see that one way of counteracting this criticism of ethnography is to introduce a highly reflexive approach, not only to analysis, but also to writing, similar to the novelistic device when authors move aside from the narrative voice, directly addressing the reader (e.g., Kipling, 2007; Bell (Bronte), 1847). Such researcher 'presence' in the writing allows the constant acknowledgement, both that they are the creator and author of the work and that there is an intended audience, also applying their own interpretation and judgment against *their* own experience. This honest, open approach does not denigrate theoretical approaches, but highlights that theory, even if bolstered by quotes from participants and dressed in academic language, is a product of an inquiring, imaginative mind, based in an

understanding of individual subjectivities, just as a novel is. This approach is taken further by Ellis (2004) in her autoethnographic 'novel', 'The Ethnographic I', a compelling read full of questions, partial answers, personal and intimate revelations. Although based on actual teaching classes and people, the novel is structured to have maximum teaching impact. This and other work by Ellis (e.g., 1999; 2004; 2009), Bochner (2016), and Ellis and Bochner (1996; 2000; 2006) challenges and extends ideas of what ethnography can be and where the borders between ethnography and fiction lie.

As I continued to read, think, question and collect data, my ongoing writing shows my attraction to ethnography as a method(ology) was further questioned:

Throughout the research process my feelings about ethnography as a methodological approach oscillated between feeling completely positive about it and entirely negative. On a good day I was evangelical and idealistic about ethnography. I felt that ethnographic methods could bring out an individual's 'reality' in a way that nothing else could, allowing participants to prioritise topics themselves, tell their stories in their own words and have a voice, potentially changing power relations and making students' voices central to the research. On a bad day I felt ethnography could only tell the reader about the researcher, as every decision, what to ask, what to include, the writing style, representation of situations, characters and concepts depended on my own perceptions and decisions. On such days I would feel like a snooper, exploiting an already disempowered group of young people. I felt that not only are young people with learning difficulties "the people upon whom inclusion and exclusion is practised.." (Allan, 2008: 44) they are also the people on whom *research* is practised. The reality of ethnography is probably somewhere in between these two views (research notes, June 2011).

At this point, although immersed in post-structural thinking, I evidently still 'believed' in some sort of 'reality', albeit individual or methodological. On one level I had accepted and understood that "[p]oststructural and post-modern thought abandons any notion of methodology as able to produce knowledge that describes actual reality" (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002: 4) yet could not yet undo my residual realist thinking because it was not yet visible to me. I still considered the students to have a 'voice' only through the mediator of me as a researcher. 'Their' 'voice' depended on 'me', a more powerfully situated person choosing to 'help' 'them'. I now view this approach as based

on deficit and charity thinking. Dangerously, at the time I thought it was based on an ethical, emancipatory approach.

Analytical reflexive thought had led to this concern with knowledge production, but did not lead me to a clear 'answer'. If there was no 'truth' for me to 'discover', no existing 'data' for me to 'collect', the onus was even more heavily on me to practice ethically when selecting an incident for my fieldnotes or making a statement about someone. More ethically dubious even than describing someone in representational and inevitably (my own) value based terms, I hoped to show how the participants themselves were unaware of the subtext imbued in *their* own actions and interactions. This would involve me, not 'harvesting' information, but constructing it myself, making it exist through my looking, my seeing and my telling. I started to understand that ethnography embodies epistemological concerns in that "the whole process of gathering and moulding knowledge is part of that knowledge" (Blommaert, 2015: 9). This was a very different scenario from watching, describing and reporting what was 'really' there. Both the politically imbued responsibility of power and the insignificance of such personal interpretation in research struck me hard. Who was I to make institutionally supported claims about the lives of others? And why would anyone else be interested? If I was not aiming to 'speak for' the students, what was the purpose of my research? What was I 'looking' for? Suddenly neither my thoughts and beliefs, nor the 'substance', the 'common sense' I had imagined they were based on were 'safe'. This feeling was both exhilarating and (briefly) terrifying. I faced the conceptual and existential question: if there is no 'truth' and everything is subjective, what is anything based on?

### **2.5.1 The dangers of viewing myself as a benevolent actor**

My 'position' as a novice researcher was under challenge even as it was establishing. If there was no 'reality' the entire research project would be mediated by, and through, me. This rendered my subjective position extremely important. Fiske (1991) says "every stage of the ethnographic enterprise is theoretically driven" (p.334), however, my new theoretical understandings did not cause me to change my methods. I think that as my world-view transformed, as I lived my new theory all day every day, constantly realigning my views to new information, the straightforward ethnographic methods, using skills I already had, seemed to hold some level of security for me. Even whilst questioning humanistic concepts such as 'experience', I energetically 'recorded'

'experience data'. At least I knew what I was doing when it came to talking to people! However, this 'certainty' too was soon to be repositioned as dubious and dangerous.

Talking methods were successful in that I found it easy to direct conversations into areas I found interesting, and to encourage students to do the same. That is, some students. I had made good relationships with particular students, they were keen to speak to me about identity and transition. I found it harder to engage with other students, usually less vocal, less forthcoming individuals. Sometimes 'we' made what I perceived as 'meaningful' relationships, sometimes my attempts at interaction stuttered and I felt intrusive. At the same time, my residual realist beliefs made it difficult for me to *fully* accept a social model of disability. How could intellect be discounted completely when some individuals are so much more/less 'capable' than others? Much later, after I had left the school, my own part in discriminatory practice became apparent. Yet seeing myself as a compassionate, caring person who tries to put people at their ease, it came all too easily to view ('their') intellect as a source of (my) unease. At this point my unchallenged subjectivity as a benevolent actor still screened me from fundamentally examining my own actions and the ways in which these positioned students. Whilst the ableist concepts of intellect and ability were unrealised, but blocking further thought, I could not progress to a less egocentric, less ableist, less discriminatory way of thinking. I viewed the world through Foucaultian lenses, yet did not apply the same critique to my own practice, believing myself to be a benevolent ally to the students. I had yet to understand that "[t]he true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us" (Lorde, 1984: 123).

How I positioned myself, as a helpful and well-meaning 'aid' to the students was not only discriminatory, but detrimental to my ethnographic practice. I had read about acquiescence bias constructed by the researcher (Goodley, 2011), yet did not think I would do this. I had strived to *avoid* a position of authority, so could not imagine that my 'power' would force anyone into a position of "unavoidable and unwitting submissiveness" (Goodley, 2011: 111). I 'understood' about power inequalities and had spent my whole life on the side of the 'under-dog'. How could I, a caring, empathetic, understanding person who had spent her whole life honing social skills and (for the most part) 'careful' ways of being with people, have the type of discriminatory approaches of some researchers? My 'friendly' 'sit

back and see what happens' approach could not be damaging could it? I certainly did not have the direct, and disrespectful approach of information gatherers at the other end of the spectrum (Behr, 1985). However, I came to realise that it was exactly this frame of thinking that *was* discriminatory and made me part of the 'problem' I was 'investigating'. By assuming that I was a benign, 'kind' influence I neglected to see how I too used power 'over' the students, most effectively silencing them when I had least idea that I was doing it. It was with shock that I realised that it was exactly my social skills, the natural way in which I encouraged talk when I expected it (i.e., when I asked a question, or in an interview situation), the easy way in which I filled a social silence, sometimes answering my questions myself, that not only *disallowed* some student talk, but also gave me the illusion that I was somehow *enabling* talk and therefore being empowering when I was actually silencing.

At this stage I accepted the necessity of interrogating common-sense ideas, yet consistently failed to fully recognise or question my own assumptions. My idea of myself as a 'helper', anchored in professional discourse of NHS (non)intervention, although partially disrupted throughout both my professional and student experiences, continued to affect my actions and therefore the type of relationship I could have and the type of knowledge I could generate. The idea of myself as a powerful authoritarian force was unintelligible to me. For something to be comprehensible it must be audible, visible, noticable. Yet, I was 'complicit' (Chadderton, 2012) in reproducing unequal power-relations. The 'evidence' was, and is, in the recordings, the transcripts, my own head. This knowledge weighs heavily.

However, even following a conceptual shift, even after I challenged my own ideas of myself as a benign actor, I still could not understand why the students I had talked into silence had not spoken up anyway. After all, 'we' had 'good' relationships, could chat between classes and I had shared time and conversation, not only interview-type talk, with almost every student, 'even' the 'quietest'. Cycling to university one day something happened that made me understand. At a busy roundabout I was forced out of my lane by a four wheel drive vehicle. The driver deliberately and forcibly used her front bumper to manoeuvre me into the edge of the road so she could pass. As I looked at her she scowled at me and continued to force me off the road. I had a sudden realisation that in this context the power imbalance was non-negotiable, just as it would

have been in an interview situation with a student. The only difference was that, unlike the driver, I had exerted my individual and institutionally backed power with an encouraging smile, an image that continues to haunt me. Foucault says “The risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one’s desires” (Foucault, 2000b: 31). I began to more critically examine my ‘talking’ techniques with a view to challenging the interview as a site of exploitation and subordination, to knowing myself ontologically (Foucault, 2000b).

Whilst ensconced in collecting ethnographic data I became aware of participatory research (Kiernan, 1999; Burke and colleagues, 2003). The legacy of my deficit thinking meant this type of approach had not occurred to me. I had not considered the students as researchers. ‘They’ were the ‘researched upon’. Knowing about participatory research immediately positioned ethnography, which I had considered an ‘empowering’ method of research, as part of the discriminatory discourse I believed I was working against. I was shocked and thrilled by Chadderton's (2012) description of realising that her own ethnographic research was implicated in “the continued oppression of marginalised groups” (p.363), yet had naively considered my own practice somehow ‘neutral’. However, despite reading about participatory research, caught up in data collection and finding my way through research practice and reading, it was difficult for me to do anything more than see the disadvantages of ethnography, whilst continuing to practice it. Although, on a theoretical level I was thrilled by the idea of participatory research (and later, co-written and co-produced research), it was not long since I had believed that a researcher should be dispassionate and neutral. This ontological ‘leap’ was too much for me to act upon at that point. I was also ‘fearful’ of ‘handing over’ the research, ‘of losing control’. If participatory research could go in any direction, this was too open, too broad for the vestiges of my belief that the researcher led and ‘controlled’ the research. At a time when I questioned ‘everything’ I felt I needed to retain *some* stability at least.

## **2.6 Mediating my role in the school**

Although aware that my preconceptions and prejudices affected how I experienced the school, I was not always aware of how or why this happened. Deeper analysis of the

underlying reasons behind my preoccupied response to some situations, sometimes revealed different motivations and values than those that were obvious. Brinkmann (2014) calls such situations “breakdown in understanding” (p.724) in that an everyday situation “seems strange, confusing, and maybe even worrying” (p.723), causing the researcher to probe deeper into associated meanings, drawing broader theory from 'ordinary' yet troublesome situations.

For example, in an otherwise exceptionally accepting and supportive environment, I was often irritated and antagonised by the rude, dismissive way one teaching assistant (TA) Jean, spoke to students, belittling them and making what I considered unacceptable jokes at their expense. She also interrupted and contradicted teachers during lessons. This was tolerated, so I did not feel it was my place to intervene. Jean and Mandy (also a TA) would blank me (and others) or deliberately look away if I tried to make eye contact. Although disconcerting, I felt there might be more to my annoyance than I recognised.

After ongoing consideration, I interpreted Jean and Mandy’s behaviour as not purely personal, but also a way of registering displeasure about structural organisation in the school. For example, on one occasion I approached Jean and Mandy talking in the lunch hall. I 'hovered', trying to make eye contact, an opening to ask a practical question about an out of school trip that afternoon. They both ignored me. Finding this annoying, I moved position so I could not be ignored, smiled and greeted them, moving in, interrupting without making eye contact. Although my greeting was ignored I appeared accepted as party to their conversation. They were discussing some obligatory after-school training, how difficult this was for them (and their families) and how ‘they’ (school managerial staff) did not take this into account. Whilst discussing this, a teacher approached and was treated to the same displeased social rejection that I had been. It seemed Jean and Mandy associated me with the teaching staff in an ‘us’ and ‘them’ scenario’. I realised Jean and Mandy’s response to me highlighted that I had been unsuccessful in reducing possible perceived authority meanings associated with a research role.

My feelings about this were complicated. I did not like being associated with the teaching staff by Jean and Mandy. Whilst most TAs had gone out of their way to say

how un-hierarchical the school was, particularly in comparison to other schools, this was not the case with Jean and Mandy. To be classed as 'like a teacher' by them felt dismissive, negative and hostile. Did they think I felt in some way superior to them? I was confused about the cause of the hostility I felt from them, but felt it had something to do with hierarchy, perceived class. Did this explain my irritated response to what I perceived as rudeness?

I decided that my irritation was to do with a number of things, among them the hypocrisy of teaching yet not displaying what was considered 'good' communication. At the time my unrecognised and therefore unchallenged binary assumptions about 'good' and 'bad' manners did not allow me to view moments of transgression as agency. I was unable to negotiate a different meaning to what I perceived as rudeness. My feelings were complicated, linked to ideas of hierarchy, class, roles and social norms. I felt I was positioned, against my will, within school hierarchy, and confronted by my evident failure to regulate these positionings to my advantage. In post-structural terms I realised I should think about researcher 'roles' rather than 'role', about "continuously shifting relationships" (Thomson and Gunter, 2011: 25) and that my responses were always mediated by the way I wanted to be seen in the school (Renold, 2005: 78). Naively, I had imagined that by approaching everyone in the same 'friendly' way I could distance myself from hierarchical discourses in the school, without alienating others (Allan, Brown and Riddell, 1998). As so often, my nagging return to a particular situation had indicated that there was more to my response than I first thought. Although I may (still) have misinterpreted Jean and Mandy's responses to me, this incident did not only say something about them, and about the school, it said something about me.

## **2.7 Academic 'expectations' and emergent methodologies**

Throughout the research process, pressure to produce something academic, 'good' and 'clever', came implicitly from within me, from 'the university' and my research council funders. Academic expectations both attracted me and weighed heavy. I had not yet 'found' researchers who wrote 'differently' and was still reading articles that, although deconstructive and critical were 'traditional' in their form and language. The idea that I could write about being forced off the road when cycling as an instance of understanding power differentials was not yet one I could link with my own



expectations of 'academic writing'. Tensions between deconstructive practices and thought, and academic conformity were constantly in my mind. More than just conceptual, these tensions changed how I wrote and what I thought. I stated my intent to write in an accessible yet academic way (Douglas, 2013), but felt I the use of 'clever' 'academic' language was expected in a thesis. As a student and novice researcher, to "color (sic) outside the lines" (Richardson, 2002: 414) felt inherently risky, and, at the time, I had few examples of researchers successfully doing so. Richardson says "[h]ow we are expected to write affects what we can write about; the form in which we write shapes the content" (Richardson, 2002: 414). My ontological and institutional beliefs, remained largely unchallenged and therefore unknowingly limited my thinking and my writing.

At this stage I continued to collect 'ethnographic data', whilst also constantly critiquing ethnographic processes through new critical ethnographic 'lens'. This experience, that I later learned to call "methodology under erasure" (Lather, 2007: 2) was challenging as, at this point, I had not yet 'discovered' post-qualitative research, so had no alternative idea of academic writing with which to challenge my previous ideas of academia. It felt dangerous to 'trouble' (Lather, 1996) the methods I was using, yet once I started it was, and continues to be, impossible to stop. I felt that my 'inability' and unwillingness to assemble some sort of 'finished' thesis writing was a skills deficit, rather than recognising it as a major and important existential, philosophical shift in ontological and epistemological thinking. I could not write explicitly for the thesis while this thinking was underway, so I wrote as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 1994). Retrospectively I realise that turning my deconstructive eye on my own approaches had left my subject position destabilised, and it is hard to write without a recognisable subject position. I found myself in "the ruins of feminist ethnography" (Lather, 2007:135). But, to take Lather's metaphor further, I had only recently discovered what it was I had been building, and, with no alternative, I had only the original foundations with which to continue. My own identities, as an individual, as a novice researcher and as a mother were under transformation. This knowledge now academically legitimises what I felt was my inability to fulfil what I was 'expected' to produce. My epistemological and ontological understandings were out of sync, both with each other and with the empirical work I had already done.

But to describe ontological questioning purely as struggle would be wrong. Despite elements of self doubt, in the main I was having a wonderful time wallowing in thought, playing with ideas and concepts, applying theory to empirical situations to 'test' it. I was re-building my own ontological and epistemological 'knowledge' base and finding the process stimulating, exciting and enthralling. How thrilling to read about a theory - new to me - to start to understand it and to apply it to situations I found myself in or could imagine! The ongoing questions, the "but what about?" and "what if?" moments, the times when theory and practice could be enmeshed felt almost addictive. Self-doubt came only when this ongoing, indeterminate process came into conceptual and temporal conflict with the fixed, reified academic deadline, and when my peers told me I 'should' have finished my literature review and methodology chapters by now. I still had no doubt that I *would* write 'a thesis', but, equally, had no idea *how* or when I would do it and, although it was not this clear to me at the time, a feeling that I *could not* do it until I had explored my thinking further.

## **2.8 Applying epistemological questioning in my own family**

In educational research "[w]omen frequently have to re-evaluate the philosophical underpinnings of their own lives" (Carter, Blumenstein and Cook, 2013: 346). For me this has happened, particularly in the relationships in which I sometimes knowingly exert authority (power), that is relationships with my children. I have had to learn to practice ethnography within my own family, to examine my own actions and beliefs, to *really* listen, to hear beneath the words, to watch and consider, to question my subjectivity.

The Weldale students left school in summer 2013 and I visited them in their respective colleges. The time I could spend with them was limited by the need to visit five different colleges within a 60 mile radius. It was also hampered by circumstances in my own family. One of my daughters had become unwell and diagnosed with chronic fatigue. She missed many months of school, most of year 10 and all of year 11. It was a difficult time. We tried to understand what was 'wrong' with her, encouraging her to attend school whenever possible, believing this would help both her recovery and her education. Following a doctors letter to medically legitimate her absences, the school was accommodating, offering a part-time timetable. She became more and more

unwell, often unable to leave her bed, rarely able to leave the house, and a shadow of her former enthusiastic self. Again the theory I had read became salient in my own life as the dual lives (Brown and Watson, 2010) of doctoral student and mother, became impossible to 'blend' (Carter, Blumenstein and Cook, 2013). I interrupted my studies to care for my daughter. At the same time, my son, during his first year in secondary school, had 'shut down'. He stopped making eye contact, seemed to have lost interest in everything and was angry with us and the world. His confidence was worryingly low and his progress in class stalled. Although it was clear something needed to change, we did not know what. We investigated nutrition, exercise, motivational techniques, mental health options for our daughter. We considered an out of school tutor for our son.

One day, seemingly out of the blue, I realised our dual goals for our daughter, her recovery and her education, were oppositional. Spontaneously, without consultation with my partner or thought about what it would mean, I said to her "you know, if you get better you don't have to go back to school". She made sure I meant it and almost immediately her health started to improve. At this time our son started to stutter. These two events shook my unrecognised essentialist thinking and enabled me to assimilate many months of reading and thinking. Maybe there was nothing 'wrong' with our children. Finally, I understood our children's decline as complex and relational.

As our daughter slowly recovered, I kept my promise and, researching alternatives, found a 'democratic' school where lessons were not compulsory. The school ethos is that if children are happy they will *choose* to learn, and do so with enthusiasm. Lessons are taught in ability and interest groups not age groups. She could repeat year 11. Attending a fee-paying school demanded serious reconsiderations on moral, political, economic and practical levels. However, during the trial week our daughter spent three full days at the school, and managed the daily two hour round trip. She started to smile. On day two of the trial week, our son stopped stuttering and it has never happened since. Not once.

Like my change in thinking, this story is not 'the research' I set out to do. But it is a significant demonstration of the hidden essentialist assumptions that blinkered me, limiting my options and affecting how I viewed and interacted with my children. I had read about 'systemic violence' in our schools (Ross Epp and Watkinson, 1996) relating

it clearly to the lives of *some* children, yet, when my own children showed signs of being unable to manage the systemic violence they were living, I did not recognise this in *them*. Evidently, I unknowingly differentiated between the experience of my own children and the experience of 'others'. I did not view my own children as 'children who struggled in school', who 'could not cope'. "Neoliberal conceptions of education and the neoliberal child" (Goodley, 2011: 146) had found their way into my subjectivities as a parent and researcher. Despite writing about discriminatory binaried dis/ability thinking, I had positioned my own children as 'normal'.

Of course my 'moment' of realisation was a culmination of months of reading and thinking about other children's exclusionary experiences of school. Somehow, suddenly I saw my children as 'the same' as children who struggled, not 'different'. My starting place for thinking about subjectivity had been both a disableist and ableist (Campbell, 2012) one, in that illness and struggle presented me with a 'less than' situation leading me to subjectify my own children. My starting point had presumed that 'us' meant able-bodied and 'other' was ill or disabled. I had an "able-bodied perspective" (Campbell, 2012: 213). My positioning of my family is relational and so inevitably positions others, so how I think about my family is just as much an ethical and political issue as how I think about others. How did this reflect on my view of other families whose experiences were different? When my children struggled I looked for ways of changing *them*, 'healing' them with an essentialist, medical-deficit approach. Evidently, whilst actively criticising the deficit discourses of illness and disability I also still accepted and applied them. Although writing about the inter-related effects of environment on identities, I did not recognise the affects on my own children until long after a crisis point was reached. It took personal "stumble data" (Brinkmann, 2014: 724), or worrisome everyday situations to shed light on larger social issues as they are reflected in my life (Brinkmann, 2012: 3). Unrecognised binary thinking, 'insider/outsider', 'essential/social', 'success/failure', 'us/them', obscured my vision and did not allow me, either to recognise that I was thinking in binaries, or to apply my new-found theory to my own family. Eventually however, ongoing theoretical questioning had made a previously invisible perceptual field visible.

This 'thinking revelation' allowed me to negotiate a further, repeated ontological hurdle affecting my research. I still could not eliminate the concept of 'ability'. One particular

cycle of thought plagued me until, using repeated and ongoing analytical reflexive approaches I finally challenged and exposed what underlay my uncertainties. Two years previously I had read Goodley's (2011) book 'Disability Studies' and wanted to accept what I viewed as a positively political approach. However, still concerned with ideas of ability I constantly considered disability studies in the context of what learning disabled people could *not* do. After reading Cattle's (2008) book about community cohesion I understood identity politics as moving on when someone exceeds what is expected of a minority group. For example, female or ethnic minority heads of state challenge the structural barriers that delimit opportunity for their respective groups. Yet this type of thinking returned me to questioning how learning disabled people could challenge *their* social status' when it was unthinkable that someone with learning disability labels could take up such a valued social position. This was a simplistic cycle of thought that I undertook again and again, like a "bone caught in the throat" (MacLure, 2006: 731) that cannot be easily "spat out or swallowed" (MacLure, 2006: 731) but lingered, irritating and demanding ongoing attention. I continually questioned how a disability studies approach could disregard 'ability'. I reread 'Disability Studies' (Goodley, 2011), with the same response. What was stopping me from accepting it when I believed in it from a theoretical and political perspective? This is what I call analytical reflexivity, as I was questioning not only why I held a particular belief, but why I *did not* hold a different one. This is a very different level of reflexive analysis, one that is difficult yet fruitful.

It was only when attending an academic conference co-chaired by a man with Down syndrome that I recognised the ableist assumptions inherent in my discriminatory thinking. This was the same thinking that produces political barriers to equal social participation, something I had been writing about with political and emotional energy. Such thinking also acted as an invisible barrier to my fully accepting disability studies. I had applied ableist criteria, unrealistic to the *vast* majority of individuals, that of head of state, to a group of people with politically restricted life opportunities and found *'them'* 'lacking'. Yet at the conference, the co-chair pushed the boundaries of my expectations, taking on a role previously unimagined (to me) for a disabled person. This made me again realise the limiting nature of my own thinking. In Foucaultian terms, this demonstrates that care of the self "is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of living" (Foucault, 1994a: 89). My thinking was formed within, and limited by, hegemonic discourse, by accepted 'truths' as yet unchallenged. Yet these self-limiting beliefs had a repressive effect

on myself and others, through my thought and action, even as my thoughts and actions were formed within hegemonic discourses.

Foucault (1984) describes frank-speech or *parrhēsia*, as a “modality of truth-telling” (p.2) through which the individual constitutes themselves, and is constituted as “someone who tells the truth” (p.2). However, telling the story of the “bumpy ride” (Fox and Allan, 2013: 11) of a “reflexive trip” (p.11) is often uncomfortable. It embarrasses me to write so honestly about the thinking reconstruction I have undertaken. It is uncomfortable to say that I had and (no doubt) have discriminatory ableist assumptions. I understand the possible implications in terms of career development, personal integrity and moral positioning (Sikes, 2006) of doing so. However, it is only through honest analytical reflexive examination of ‘uncomfortable’ situations, that these assumptions are exposed and can then be challenged. I hope that in honesty lies integrity.

## **2.9 Post-qualitative, post-coding analysis**

The start of my interruption to studies had marked the end of data collection. I had left the different educational institutions, the school, the colleges and the university, sad to stop but with excitement about what I had 'collected'. Continuing vestiges of realist thinking made me view this as the academic equivalent of looking into a fishing net or lobster pot to see what had been 'caught'. Despite having already had the epiphany when I realised that I would be mediating the data at all stages, choosing apt examples to demonstrate *my* ideas, *despite* this, remnants of realist thinking would not leave when I envisaged ‘the data’.

Returning to university a year later, the thought of data analysis was daunting. I repeatedly put it off, reading, in the hope that I would feel better prepared, that I would find the “analytical 'nerve' and *will* to explore the data for recurring themes and patterns” (Watling, 2002: 73). I had worked hard to amass vast amounts of ethnographic knowledge and to systematically and rigorously question it left me feeling vulnerable and afraid. What if, under the serious scrutiny of 'analysis' my months of hard work ‘revealed’ ‘nothing’ at a theoretical level, if my fieldnotes did not demonstrate anything 'significant', that I had been doing it ‘wrong’ all this time and quantity did not contain quality of a rich, or thick (Geertz, 2000) nature?

Rose (1990) describes “the terrible reality – at least the fear [...] that one's experiences will not be relevant for the texts one will write” (p.14) as a mismatch between academic expectations and the researcher's experiences in the field. This was certainly my experience as I disregarded the intellectual and philosophical ground I had covered, in favour of what could be ‘found’ in the ‘data’. If the ‘research findings’ were ‘in’ the ‘data’ I must somehow ‘analyse’ ‘it’.

But this did not happen easily. Bewildered at my seeming inability to ‘tackle’ the data I turned to more and more data analysis text books, trying out different methods, looking for frameworks and guidance in how to ‘cope’ with data. Maybe I was just not yet ready? Text book layouts reinforced ideas of data analysis as a linear process.

Retrospectively I realise that I was unhappy with both the idea of a linear method and a distinct analysis phase. This approach no longer suited my increasingly post-structural lens. Unaware of this I went on software courses, convinced ‘Nvivo’ software was not working for me because I didn't know it well enough. Although sharing Charmaz's (2006) criticisms, in the absence of other methodological instruction I read more about grounded theory, trying to glean what I could, to make it work for me. I took a brief internship within my college, observing a research group coding their data using grounded theory. This gave me both confidence that I understood the principles of grounded theory, and the realisation that it was not for me.

So, I tried to work out another ‘system’. At every stage I had worked hard to retain the contextual nature of the relationships, dialogue and theory thinking I experienced. Now I resented and resisted the use of “mechanistic coding, reducing data to themes” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012: 1) feeling this would ‘fix’ ‘meaning’ in a way contrary to the lived, dynamic and interactive experience of data generation. In the absence of other options I considered ‘academic’ enough, I tried thematic analysis. I wrote face sheets for each recorded interaction (Grbich 2007: 29), developing a method of cutting and pasting sections of dialogue or observation into different (computer) folders based on different themes. I invented a complicated (and useful) system of colour coding my own comments, linking the data in different ways. My attempts went on for months, whilst I became more and more unhappy, with myself, with the data, and analysis methods. I felt I needed a practical and structured strategy for combining my new

feminist post-structural approach with the data I already had. However, as I discuss later, it was a creative approach that finally enabled productive thinking.

#### Ethical interruption 4.

The ethics of retrospectively applying critical theory and disability studies approaches to data.

I sit with my data on the laptop, poised for analysis. I find myself paralysed, not, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest, by the enormity of the task, or the idea that analysis must be “exactly right” (p.2). Rather by the thought that a retrospectively critical examination of the data will reveal hidden (but guessed at) 'nastinesses' in terms of power relations. I said I was interested in transition yet now know power relations are key to the knowledge I am interested in. Not only will critical data analysis delve into 'sordid' power secrets at the school, it will also reveal my own unintentional but 'true' identity as a hypocrite, traitor and spy. Teaching staff offered me their time, opinions, knowledge, and food. In one class the teacher, TA and I shared an inappropriate, unprofessional and uncontrollable fit of the giggles. I collected the data with the agreement and help of those nice teachers who welcomed, guided and trusted me. Will analysis reveal the same people, whose school I am openly impressed by, as the 'villains of the piece'? I know that it will. I am further paralysed by some teachers saying they want to read my thesis. I don't *want* to write critically about the school staff, but if I 'have to', I don't want them to find out and think badly of *me*. Analysing the data might open a Pandora's box, containing venomous secrets hidden within, the revelation of which could be perceived as upsetting, hurtful and underhand. I think my aim in data analysis is to examine the systemic, institutional 'goings on' that re-enact and reconstruct unequal power relations, yet cannot reconcile this with my firm belief that the teachers are (in the main) doing the best they can with the best of motives. Is it ethical to be critical of people I had such good relationships with? Is it ethical not to be?

I am hampered by ethical considerations. Can I consider the consent given



when the research was 'about' transition as 'valid' for critical research 'about' 'power'? It is one thing for *me* to realise that *I* hold unchallenged assumptions and am thus implicated in processes of inequality, quite another to retrospectively apply critical theory to others, particularly when I hear myself agreeing with interviewees on the recordings. Although I cannot un-know what I now know, it feels unfair. I have 'moved the goalposts' without the knowledge of the others.

With hindsight I recognise my interpretation of critical research as "negative or carping, or that it is somehow committed to faultfinding" (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998: 2) as an elementary mistake. Critical research is rather a "simultaneous process of 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction'" (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998: 3) of underlying power relations, not (necessarily) criticism of individuals. However, ethical concerns about applying a different epistemology in analysis, than was used in data collection still remain. Whilst visiting Weldale school I was continually challenged by contradictions between theory and practice. It is only later, when immersed in theory, with no practice, that I come to new conclusions. Therefore, apart from individual meetings with the students, my new theory is untested in practical situations. Does this have an ethical bearing on the quality of my 'new' theory?

One problem with the data-analysis 'stage' was that the methods I was trying to use were in epistemological disagreement with my philosophical values. In essence, I was *decontextualising* the data, when my ethnographic methods had been about *understanding context*. The contemporaneous and interconnecting nature of the way I write and think had been supported by context retaining methods which in turn supported 'free' thinking and exploration of thought, dialogue and behaviour. However, now 'in' what I perceived as the 'analysis stage', my methods and efforts succeeded only in sectioning, striating and making linear what I had sensed as an amorphous, intangible, exciting and indefinable collection of experiences. I required methods of generating meaning without compartmentalising, boxing up and decontextualising. I felt that by trying to 'analyse' the data I was losing it. By trying to define 'it' I was

undoing the very qualities I had relished, the qualities that gave the data their colour, value and vibrancy. I had forgotten Segall's (2001) idea that

[...] the ethnographic process [...] is not unidirectional – with the field its beginning and the academy its end but, rather, multidirectional – with the field and the academy continuously embedded in and implicating the other (p.583).

However, had I remembered this, at that point, I still would not have been able to convert this multidirectional approach into a 'method' of data analysis I felt would be valued by the academy. Even qualitative research articles seemed to describe rigorous and systematic analysis. It was this 'evidence' that caused me trouble. I 'knew' the data, some of it by heart, but how could I effectively demonstrate my efforts? Hindsight shows me I needed to “think data differently” in order to “break the realist frame” (Langsdorf, 2009: 202). Equally however, I needed to break the realist frame in order to think data differently. However, it was not possible to break a frame I was unaware of. Just as a frame constricts, holds something within and is a supporting structure, my residual realist frame did just this in terms of the data I held in my increasingly unwilling 'possession'. It took a long time for me to understand that this emergent, generative, becoming of the data could be seen as a positive, vibrant and living aspect of the research. It was this freedom of thought, the realisation, (and *much* later the acceptance), that 'the data' had never existed as a 'thing' in its own right, but had always been of my own making and should therefore not be privileged over any other part of the thesis construction, that allowed me to *think* with theory' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) as opposed to trying to *apply* theory. I will return to this later (see 2.7).

So with my data as yet 'intact', seen as a finite enclosed and collated unit, I continued to write, to think and to 'compost', a method of thinking and writing novelist Patrick Gale uses (2008) which perfectly describes my own thinking and writing process.

Composting involves making 'piles' of writing-for-thinking, ideas, concepts, quotes, anything considered thought provoking or relevant to a particular theme, or in Gale's case a character or plot. The 'piles' can be metaphorical (in my head, in computer files) and 'real' (piles of papers, annotated journal articles, memos, notes and comments on my desk). Gale described how, as with a real garden compost heap, he periodically returns to root around in a compost pile, re-reading his notes, adding new ideas, disturbing what

existed before, then leaving it to 'ferment' until it turns into something rich and promising to work from. This method of contemporaneously accumulating knowledge and ideas, adding them to existing ones and repeatedly revisiting them to disturb and rebuild the concepts, for Gale, and for me, provokes a synthesis, producing theory and understanding over time. It also allows a temporal and constant shifting of perspective, multiple viewpoints and, therefore, a multi-layered approach to understanding. The contextual and interconnecting nature of concurrent development of themes and concepts is constituted and retained. With adequate (dated) notes, it can enable a chronological understanding of thinking processes. 'Composting' does not involve *drawing* themes from the data, but "[v]iewing data across multiple perspectives" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), taking an interaction or event and applying different theory to it to see how it fits. The book Gale described writing in this way, 'Notes From An Exhibition', (2007) weaves together the story of art (painting), family, and mental ill-health over 40 years. Gale described writing the chapters and then 'hanging them' as though they were paintings in a gallery, choosing what should be next to each other, but with no compelling or obvious order to how the story should be sequenced. This appeals to my post-structural and post-qualitative understandings of emergence and could be viewed as a non-linear method of allowing emergent narrative to develop. Writing produced through this composting method is, in Gale's case, and, I hope, mine, recognisable as interconnected, inter-relating and multilayered.

The 'composting' method of thinking, whilst a natural way of working for me, does however, demand a confidence that protracted periods of time without production of 'finished' writing are in fact producing a lot of 'compostings' on different themes at the same time. My unconventional way of working has been unequivocally supported by my supervisor, who demonstrated unwavering faith that I would produce the writing that must inevitably emerge from my transformative thinking. The occasions when she mentioned I must produce writing at some point were more than equalled by her understanding that 'it doesn't work like that', giving me "the potential to end up really owning [my] own research – however challenging the process" (Clarke, 2009: 212).

At this stage, further thought progression was enabled by becoming aware of post-qualitative research, particularly Patti Lather (1996; 2006; 2007) whose work retrospectively gave the deconstruction and partial reconstruction of my thinking a

narrative, some academic and methodological 'validity' (ironically!), and both a language, and 'academic' 'permission' to describe what was happening and the effect it was having on me. Reading Lather helped me understand my ontological struggles as due to the difficulties of aligning deconstructive thought with educational research, rather than researcher inadequacies. Lather (2007) suggests possibilities for an approach that is both "complicit with and a critique of its methodology" (Langsdorf, 2009: 197). This approach acknowledges the value in applying a sceptical and critical approach to methods, yet continuing to use them under scrutiny. However, such "work under erasure" (Lather, 2007: 25) is time and energy costly. The very act of working under erasure is at times a hinderance to academic practice, as learning to live "without absolute knowledge, within indeterminacy" (Lather, 2007: 198) challenged linear education as I had known it until this point, disrupting doctoral expectations of a finished product, an endpoint. For me, however, the intellectual benefits of taking the risk of working under erasure have been extremely worthwhile.

Langsdorf (2009) sums up the difficult position to which my critical thinking had taken me: "The challenge is both an ethical and practical one: how, once we recognize the salience of "getting lost" and the values of not knowing, could and should we continue to do research?" (Langsdorf, 2009: 197). However, although "in mourning for lost certainties" (Langsdorf, 2009: 198), when shedding ideas of a 'reality' to be 'revealed', I also excitedly wondered what opportunities new *uncertainties* would hold. Lather (2007) too says these "stuck places" (p.15) give rise to opportunities. Moments of doubt can be the most productive. Within some academic circles it takes some confidence, maybe particularly as a female academic, to openly admit to not knowing, to questioning one's own methods and abilities, to expressing doubt (Richardson, 2000). Such disclosures are pervaded with risk and vulnerability to misinterpretations of ontological honesty as 'weakness'. Holbrook and Pourchier (2014) suggest "think[ing] differently about comfort and discomfort as we consider how discomfort gives way to inquiry and how comfort can be found in the loss of certainty" (p.762). It is exactly these moments, when theory and practice do not neatly align, these uncertain, bewildered moments are the ones when new thinking happens and new understandings start to form.

Until reading about post-qualitative data ‘analysis’ (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Mazzei, 2013), my socialised understandings of research led me to “extinguish the intuitive in favor (sic) of the rational” (Banks, 1998). Until this point I felt I would need to somehow ‘embellish’ the analysis, or the description of it (or both), making it appear more systematic than it was, for ‘academic’ reasons of ‘validity’ and ‘rigour’. This entirely opposed my feelings about ethics, dignity, honesty and respect. Holliday (2007) hints at this routinely happening, in data analysis, as “[...] what actually happens is very different to the apparently regular methods that are reported. Day-to-day research comprises shortcuts, hunches, serendipity and opportunism” (p.7). This tension, my perceived need to accentuate rigor for academic validation, is reflected in Holbrook and Pouchier (2014) trying to apply ‘rigour’ to collage making:

As systematicity in research is a valued construct in our profession, we want to say—feel compelled to say—that systematicity operates in our work, albeit a systematicity that looks different in collaged movements of folding (p.758).

I echo the feeling of ‘enclosure’ that the wish to ‘be an academic’ has/had on my own research practice and writing.

Aware that how data are analysed affects what sort of knowledge claims can be made, I realised I must return to my research question. However, one recurring difficulty of analysis was that since understanding there was no ‘truth’ to be ‘found’, having challenged many of the common-sense assumptions that had led me to previous research decisions, I now had no clear research focus. By disturbing concepts of research ‘representing’ ‘others’ ‘experience’, I had lost sight of my aim. From a state of post-structural bewilderment, I needed to remind myself of my research aim, and return to a ‘stable’ starting point, a ‘practical’ position from which to analyse the data. However, this was not easy. The deconstructive thinking and the reading I had undertaken since the research had rendered many of my understandings about learning disability irrelevant and/or questionable. I no longer understood people as ‘having learning disabilities’, or learning disability labels as ‘representing’ ‘ability’. The ontological and epistemological environment of my own thinking had (been) changed so fundamentally that I could not return to questioning, as if in isolation, how the transition process

affects identity (broadly my original aim) when identity was, for me, now such a complexly political concept.

My faltering analysis attempts thus far had ‘showed’ depressingly predictable institutional power, viewing diversity and disability as political and social issues, but not challenging existing discourses about power and disability. Whilst important, such power relations have been eloquently described by many researchers (Allan, 1999; Vlachou, 1997; Reeve, 2002; Tremain, 2005). Reproducing existing analysis methods reproduced existing theory. This approach offered no understanding of individual or group agency or transgression, and thus failed to reflect my current ‘thinking with (Foucaultian) theory’.

Reading Goodley, Allan and Shakespeare, among others, had led me to understand that a political approach could be *useful* in academia and not, as in my previous workplaces, a point of epistemological/professional confrontation. With data that “do not contain, expose or reflect any universal truth” (Youdell, 2006: 513) and an understanding that the *researcher’s* purpose and commitments are embodied in the interpretation and sense-making processes (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001), I had only my own values to draw on. I returned to my political interest in structure and agency as a theoretical driver to the ethnographic enterprise (Fiske, 1991). My research approach became a focussed critical ethnography, or “conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (Thomas, 1993).

This may imply that having ‘collected’ ‘data’ I ‘chose’ what to ‘look for’ in ‘it’ based purely on my interests and current subjectivities. And ultimately, this *is* what I have done. I would argue that *all* research is based on the researcher’s, or the funders, interests. Every stage of research, from forming a research question, through choosing participants, asking questions, selecting examples, to writing, every stage is mediated through/by researcher interest. Unusually, in my own case, due to the timing of my introduction to deconstructive thinking, the selection of a research question happened *after* data collection. However, the comprehensive nature of ethnographic immersion in an environment meant I found I had more than sufficient data to support my focus on identity and agency. Retrospectively re-examining data for new insight is a routine research practice. Through challenging and disturbing accepted assumptions which

form a veil of 'objectivity' around research practices, I was left with little to justify my 'choice' of research question, except my own subjectivities.

I feel vulnerable to personal, researcher, and methodological criticism in disclosing such information about myself and my research process. It feels dangerous, risky. Yet it exemplifies how the researcher's 'lens' focuses in on some aspects, while making others less visible. 'Data', and data collection, are never neutral, but reflect the researchers' view of the world, in choices of what to 'collect', what to select, and what to 'say'. In short, researchers see what they look for.

Taking a Foucaultian approach to power as constantly (re)negotiated, enabling resistance in even the tightest spaces (Cruz, 2011), I re-considered the data, focussing on agency to enable new, productive ways of thinking. This approach also enabled further analytical reflexivity. Whilst in school I was thrilled and shocked at what I, and school staff, considered 'naughty', 'out of control' behaviour of one of the classes. Students had challenged teachers' authority such that they were asked/allowed to leave school several weeks before the end of term (see chapter five). Whilst realising this was significant, my thinking then centred on how to entertain and 'control' bored students at the end of term. Therefore, I understood the situation in terms of the students being let down by a system that was not interested in the broader meanings of education, leaving them to their own devices after their exams. However, with an agency lens, this situation could be regarded as a hugely powerful demonstration of agency and power. Institutional power had been challenged, and to some extent overturned. Yet, whilst focussing on unequal power relations I had not fully 'seen' this radical, powerful act! I worried that my ontological framework had 'blinkered' me to the significance of this dramatic turn of events. Had I not changed my focus, I would have done the students a dis-service by not taking seriously enough their 'revolutionary' acts. Not only would I not have been a "faithful witness" (Cruz, 2011: 547), I would have been even more guilty of being part of the discriminatory processes that disempower disabled people. Epistemological blinkering has powerful effects in the representation of others, which is why I have explained these processes in such detail.

Knowing about post-qualitative research weakened the hold my imagined academic expectations had over me, freeing me to use language and theoretical approaches I had

formerly considered 'non-academic'. I had chosen a new research question as a lens with which to view the data, already 'collected' and awaiting my attention. I had recognised and challenged much of my positivist, ableist and deficit thinking, increasing my awareness of my own power in the research process. I now felt better prepared to 'tackle' the data.

However, I did not have a 'method' with which to analyse the data.

Slowly, through reading, talking, thinking, I developed an emergent and "generative methodology" (Lather, 2007: 117) of analysis. I began to realise that, like Jackson and Mazzei (2012), I was not a "good methodologist" (pviii). This did not however mean make me a 'bad' methodologist, but, maybe, a post-qualitative methodologist, still constrained by the "sometimes limiting strictures of qualitative research methodologies" (Cumming, 2015: 138). The 'rules' relevant to grounded theory, coding and data analysis were not the rules by which I should be 'measuring' myself.

The gradual emergence of methods of analytically viewing the data was exciting, yet presented a new challenge – how to adequately describe processes that went beyond language? Developing methodologies require new, different language for description and conceptualisation. On 'finding' and developing 'emergent' language, acts of analytical thought came easier to me, language and meaning constituting both each other, (Greene, 2013) and me as a researcher (Skeggs, 2002; Mazzei, 2013). My own difficulties of conceptualising post-qualitative methods have included trying to arrange both theory and practice into "inadequate existing concepts" (St. Pierre, 2011: 613), simultaneously delimiting, yet required by the academy. Following Markham (2012), Holbrook and Pourchier (2014) reclaim the term 'fabrication', distancing it from associations with 'falsification' and instead using the definition of "the activity of combining, molding, (sic) and/or arranging elements into a whole for a particular purpose" (Markham, 2012: 338). Whilst this term is directly relevant to their practice as collage makers, it is also relevant to my own emergent analysis approach. I like the dual meaning of fabrication with its nod towards St Pierre's "we made it up" (St. Pierre, 2011: 613) as a provocation to 'traditional' expectations.



## 2.10 ‘Thinking with theory’ – creative processes

My own analytical processes continued, the ‘composting’ technique liberating my thought processes through ongoing creation and disturbance. Retrospectively, I understand the processes of analytical thought and thinking with theory, although at the time I did not have much confidence in this approach. I developed various methods, realising they aided data analysis, but not imagining they ‘were’ data analysis. I now describe some of the creative analytical processes that I use in thinking with theory.

Creative approaches and metaphors for thought can be borrowed from other disciplines and many approaches in literature involve examining thought from an oblique angle. Wolfe (1999) says of Alan Bennett, a master in the art of seeing and relaying more than just what is observable, Bennett has a “..knack for spotting something vital out of the corner of his eye, often the way the fantastic permeates the everyday” (Wolfe, 1999: 6). Bennett himself says “...I’ve got great faith in the corner of the eye [...] ‘Only what is seen sideways sinks in deep’” (Bennett, 2005: 458). My own ‘knowledge’ generation processes involve just such an oblique approach. Similarly, I employ a technique of ‘half-thinking’. Siegel’s (2007) concept of “the dance between our mind and our brain” (p.3) is useful in the differentiation between direct and oblique approaches to thinking described in my writing:

How can I describe how I think? Increasingly, it is an embodied experience not a purely intellectual one. Sometimes when trying to find the right word I find myself moving my hands near my head in an attempt to physically dislodge the word, draw it out. Often, theoretical connections are made while walking or cycling, while my mind is preoccupied with repeatedly singing the words of a song in time with my steps. The combination of physical movement and unfocused attention seems to shift thought into a different realm. I am reminded that the best conversations with my children come out of the blue when we are otherwise occupied. Teenage revelations come easier in the car when we are singing, bellowing, music turned up too loud; no risk of eye contact or awkward expectation. As though confessions are softened with “by the way...”, disclosures carry less ‘weight’ when competing with other activities or noise. As though sneaking in a question, a worry while something else is going on makes it less important; a distraction, a diversion, is needed before an announcement. Although distracted I am ‘available’, ‘present’, ready to catch these fleeting opportunities, the teenage offerings of angst and wonder. I have learnt to

keep singing while listening, play down surprise or shock, to offer the 'right' words, but keep singing. This is also how analytical thoughts sneak themselves into my mind when I am cycling, walking, thinking about something else. Unexpected, from left-side, from the wings, from the unattended corners of my mind. In the same way I know that turning my head to my child and questioning them will chase away the moment of opportunity, concentrating directly on a half formed thought could do the same. As though thought-links must be made without me concentrating on them, as though they almost have a momentum of their own. They will come in their own time. As though I receive rather than make them. So I continue cycling, humming the tunes, allowing the thought to seep in, to take shape, to become something I *can* attend to. A thought can be on the edge of my mind, like a word on the tip of my tongue, like a teenage revelation almost perceptibly in the air. Hard to capture, hard to describe, easy to frighten away before it is formed. (December 2014)

When I wrote this it felt both liberating and frustrating. It expressed how I thought, yet I felt it was not 'academic' enough. Now I recognise it as “[n]omadic writing [that] is non-teleological, exploratory, and legitimises reflective writing from lived bodily realities rather than sanctioned narratives” (Done and Knowler, 2011: 841). Attention to a bodily, physical element in research is increasingly found, both within post-qualitative and new materialist research. Braidotti (2001) describes thinking 'through' her body (p.5) and MacLure (2010a) suggests the possibility of “a more materially engaged research practice” (p.4), what Clough (2009) terms ‘infra-empiricism’. MacLure (2010a) describes infra-empiricism as “attend[ing] to sensations, forces and movements beneath the skin, in matter, in cells and in the gut, as well as between individuals and groups” (p.4). It is useful to combine this attention to embodied experience with intellectual processes to see new possibilities in describing what happens in thinking with theory. New materialism has inspired a change in my thinking, an optimism about future research that views the world in different ways, challenging what is considered as ‘knowledge’. For now it directs me to re-examine the ways in which my body and emotions play a part in my thinking.

For me, thinking with theory allows theory to seep into the data, to hang, like a fog, until it takes shape in the form of questions and an energy of thought. Like taking in an abstract painting, thinking with theory requires a certain distance, taking a step back to 'do' theorising. Becoming too involved with the individual brush-marks may mean

losing sight of the whole picture. Griffiths (1998) follows Lugones (1989) in advocating playfulness to evoke “openness to surprise” (Griffiths, 1998: 14). Thinking with theory performs an interruption, offending, unsettling, “block[ing] the reproduction of the bleeding obvious” (MacLure, 2010b: 277). Whilst thinking with theory I printed pages of my theorising and data, cutting them apart with scissors, physically disrupting existing modes of thought, and taping them back together, provoking different and new approaches. In this way “[n]ew theory uses old theory as a springboard” (Griffiths, 1998: 82). I now consider this attempt to “irrupt or break apart efforts at containment” (Mazzei, 2004: 26) a ‘playful’ approach that “opens up different ways of seeing and thinking” (Mazzei, 2013: 776). However, I did not make this association at the time, experiencing instead the trust, belief, guilt and doubt (Holbrook and Pourchier, 2014) that is part of ‘analysis’. Brinkmann (2014) describes “analysis after coding” (p.720) as “driven by astonishment, mystery, and breakdowns in one’s understanding” (p.720). It was only after I was immersed in such post-coding processes that I read post-qualitative writing (e.g., Hickey-Moody, 2015; Cumming, 2015; Ringrose and Renold, 2014) which I felt ‘legitimated’ my approach.

As well as thinking with theory, I wrote with theory, “[e]ach new draft added another dimension - but not just any old dimension: a sociological” (Richardson, 2002: 417), political and theoretical dimension. However, I found a difficulty with ‘taming’ emergent thinking processes into residing in words. It is questionable whether post-coding analysis can ever really be captured in language (although for me it is the best option!) This is exemplified in Holbrook and Pourchier’s (2014) story of a grandmother who bakes and can identify when dough has been kneaded enough but cannot explain how to recognise this point. They compare this with their experience of making collages:

Just as my grandmother will never be able to capture what happens when she folds flour into grease, I will never capture exactly what happens when I do collage. These strange couplings—chaos and order, folding and unfolding—cannot be captured, and when we give into the loss we experience when we try, we notice that the loss pushes us into other questions and different inquiries (Holbrook and Pourchier, 2014: 762).

Such 'loss' can be conceptualised in various forms. Post-structural and post-qualitative thinking led me to question the stabilising concepts of 'self', 'truth', 'data', 'representation'. In taking on new thought systems I inevitably 'lost' others. However, I relished new thought and the way it allowed me to expose inequalities in my surroundings. For me, the loss experienced in trying to capture "what happens" (Holbrook and Pourchier, 2014: 762) in thinking with theory, is similar to turning the music off during an open conversation with my children, or trying to grasp a thought when it is not yet formed enough to be called a thought. Both can halt the emergence of something that is on the verge, about to form.

Thinking with theory transcends language. I find myself "trying to describe [my] experience within the limits of inadequate language" (Speedy and colleagues, 2010: 899). Trying to explain *intuitive* analysis is similar to my original difficulty of 'organising' data, the grouping and categorising. It inhibits fluidity, vibrancy, in the process, reducing it, and in the end I am left with only words. The academy requires these words, however, expecting explanations of the unexplainable. Maybe this is what has led to 'validity' in qualitative research still "resid[ing] in the way in which the research is expressed in writing" (Holliday, 2007: 1).

What Holbrook and Pourchier (2014) call 'loss', what Lather (1997) calls "ruins" are the starting points for a different way of looking, of describing, involving a leap of faith, from both researcher and reader. A way of looking and describing that offers opportunities for enlarging possibilities rather than closing them down, that challenges and expands what has gone before rather than reproducing it.

## **2.11 Selection of examples – or some data simply demands more attention**

So how do I 'choose' which 'data' to write about? Like MacLure (2010b) I remain "wedded to 'examples'" (p.280). I 'find' examples within my writing, my fieldnotes, the transcriptions, my writing to think. 'Examples' can be particularly 'revealing' or enthralling moments in the school or colleges, times when I had a 'thinking breakthrough', sections of dialogue that left me confused or uncertain. Moments that draw me to them, demanding further attention. Taking each interaction, or part of an interaction, as an individual situation, I 'look' to see what they, if put together with existing theory and my own thoughts could illustrate. 'Looking' is almost a case study approach (Yin, 2014),

using fragments of dialogue, experience, theory and thought in collaboration. Some collaborations are more fruitful than others, some lead to further questioning, some are discarded before they bear fruit, only to be retrieved, suddenly more useful in the light of further thinking. Others remain 'on hold' for later attention.

Describing openly intuitive, non-systematic selection relies on an honesty I may previously have neglected in favour of making the processes sound sufficiently linear and 'efficient'. For post-qualitative researchers however, quality is associated with such processual honesty. Lather (1997) describes "[...] how arbitrary are the made versus the lost stories" (p.241) challenging the reader to accept researcher judgement and discretion in constructing some stories as 'deserving' of representation in particular moments and contexts.

Indeed, it is what Lather sees as this 'arbitrary' selectiveness that brings research to life for the reader. Quite apart from the impossibility of writing about all data,

[s]tories are like searchlights and spotlights; they brighten up parts of the stage while leaving the rest in darkness. Were they to illuminate the whole of the stage evenly, they would not really be of use (Bauman, 2004: 17).

The researcher recognising or feeling particular data as "hot-spots" (MacLure, 2010a, online) applies deeper meaning to them, bringing them to theoretical life. For me as a reader, knowing that the researcher has chosen particular episodes for more analytical thought imbues them with importance. Whilst intuitive selection of stories to tell could be viewed as a weakness, when openly discussed as a researcher-led process of selection, it can be viewed as a strength. Laurel Richardson (2000) sees the selective nature of story as a complex process:

The story of a life is less than the actual life, because the story told is selective, partial, contextually constructed, and because the life is not over yet. But the story of a life is also more than a life, the contours and meanings allegorically extending to others, others seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another's life story, re-visioning their own, arriving where they started [...] (p.158).

Viewed through Richardson's lens, the subjective, partial and constructed nature of selection of data is an unavoidable (and exciting) element of research.

Here, I have described methods of data collection and 'analysis' within the context of changing subjectivities and the effect that researcher positioning has on each research decision. The dangers of imagining myself to be an 'emancipatory' yet, at the same time, benign actor, may not have been exposed without deconstructive thinking and analytically reflexive approaches.

## **2.12 Quality**

Ethical practice, intrinsically linked to the conceptual frameworks of methodology, is interpreted as a measure of quality by many researchers. Waltz (2007) sees ethics and quality as inextricably linked, and Lincoln (1995) says quality criteria are indistinguishable from ethical criteria. At the very least, individual's research integrity is expressed through ethics. I consider my honest examination of the limits of my own ontological, epistemological and methodological 'knowledge', an ethical practice.

Different research approaches require different quality 'measures', so, given that I started with unrecognised positivist values, and used both ethnographic and post-coding methods, which quality measures are appropriate for this thesis? "Criteria serve as shorthand about the core values of a certain craft" (Tracy, 2010: 838), yet I agree with Hammersley's (2007) concern that the use of quality guidelines may mean the loss of the "ability to make sound judgements" (p.289). Guidelines (e.g., BERA, 2011; Bell, 2008; Bell and colleagues, 2008) may constrain, limiting possibilities to those already conceived and regulated. By historicising the concept of generalisability, Fendler (2006) shows it as "[...] a local phenomenon and not generalisable to other times and places" (p.437), illustrating how post-qualitative, post-coding approaches demand post generalisable quality 'measures'. However, ethnographies are "curious things to evaluate" (Clough, 2002: 61), particularly when, as in Ellis' work (2004), they deliberately include fiction. Relational 'measures' of quality cause tensions within research communities where funding and 'credibility' are based on predictable and 'replicable' 'quality'.

In particular, a post-structural understanding of relational, contextual and temporal indeterminacies of knowledge causes difficulties with issues of quality, when ‘traditional’ expectations of validity and generalisability remain, even within some highly interpretive research. Richardson (2001) says,

What postmodernism does is to recognize the situational limitations of the knower. It recognizes that you have partial, local, temporal knowledge – and that is enough (p.35).

However, within the context of academic judgement and funding, how is it possible to demonstrate that partial, local and temporal knowledge *is* enough? This issue, one that concerns both post-structural researchers and their critics is summed up by Bochner:

[...] one side believes that “objective” methods and procedures can be applied to determine the choices we make, whereas the other side believes these choices are ultimately and inextricably tied to our values and our subjectivities (Bochner, 2000: 266).

Quality assessment embodies “knowledge, power and politics” (Clegg, 2005: 416). The complexity of knowledge *production* and *use* leads to complexity in knowledge *judgement* (Gough, 2007). Different epistemological standpoints lead to different approaches to judging quality. Bochner (2000) points out that the effectiveness of quality criteria themselves is reliant on a research community's agreement to comply with them. Therefore, it is important to judge quality by the epistemological assumptions underlying the research itself.

In the light of the impossibility of agreeing a “single standard for deciding the good and right purposes, forms, and practices of ethnography” (Bochner, 2000: 268), what is required is not so much guidelines, as *approaches*, that promote and enable new possibilities rather than constraining and limiting options to what has already been. In post-structural research *critical* content and *explanation* of contextualisation become part of quality assessment. It is the *process* that is a sign of quality, not necessarily the ‘outcome’.

Quality in post-structural research is based on authenticity, coherence, likelihood, the building of trust between the writer and the reader through layers of plausible

information, a web of evocations of relationships between the researcher and participants, the researcher's understanding of ethics, of humility, of honesty. The writer must 'believe' what they have experienced and written and the reader should believe that this is their situated, subjective, perceptual evocation of what they believe to have understood from the situation. For me, the most affecting writing also has vibrancy and immediacy.

Bearing this in mind, the following is an amalgam of different qualitative research criteria which could be applied to this thesis:

Is the data placed within the context of ethics?

Is the topic worthy of research?

Does it show sincerity, credibility, sensitivity to context, meaningful coherence and continuity?

Is there transparency, about researcher subjectivity, methodological difficulties or contradictions?

Does it show in-depth engagement with the topic?

Does it move you?

Does it explain the methodological processes involved in generating data and theory?

Does the research extract meaning from experience?

Does it place the researcher within the research, displaying the self on the page?

Does it place the research as constituted in a particular moment in time?



Does the research show integrity and humility?

Does it show researcher reflexivity?

Is it an engaging narrative?

Does it portray detail?

Does it demonstrate the author's emotional credibility, vulnerability and honesty?

Does it show ethnographical self-consciousness?

Does it provide a stimulus for social criticism and/or social action?

(Adapted from (influenced by) Tracy, 2010; Bochner, 2000; Yardley, 2000; Waltz, 2007; Abrahams, 1986)

In short, do I give you the honest impression that 'I was there and this is how it seemed to me'?

### **2.13 Chapter summary**

This chapter has told a story of doubt, excitement, hard critical thinking-work and flourishing. It is a story of how meanings about my own identities have been constrained, limited and enabled through different experiences, thought processes, influences. It honestly and openly reveals the limits of my knowledge (Davies and colleagues, 2004), exposing how technologies of the self play out through expectations (real or imagined) and beliefs that come from a myriad of different powerful sources. For me, this describes Foucault's ethical project, through the subjectification of 'me', as an individual, as a member of different communities, as a mother, and as a researcher. But I am not 'finished' yet. Subjectification does not yield a 'finished' individual, but is a process that plays out through social interactions, through politicisation, through exposure to new situations and people. Subjectification involves an openness to new possibilities and is therefore always in the making, never 'done'. Reflexivity,

particularly analytical reflexivity, used as a method of challenging my own ontologies and deconstructing subjectivities, is an identity constituting practice. Practising care of the self (Foucault, 1986) is an important process towards individual freedom. For me, this is an ongoing experience.

However, far from purely personal processes, researcher subjectivity and underlying ontological assumptions wield power over every stage of research. The ethical trip wires of 'voice' and 'representation' leach unseen into the way researchers 'represent' both themselves and others, and doubtless continue to do so in my own research writing and thinking. I have highlighted and challenged some situations in which I unwittingly "operate within and perpetuate, uneven power structures" (Allan, 2008: 148). There are still more to recognise and challenge. My current and new ways of thinking are no less deserving of critique (Richardson, 2001: 35) than my previous thinking. My research is no doubt littered with "remainders" (MacLure, 2010b: 280) of unchallenged thinking. But where I am aware of these I now challenge the basis, whose experiences are privileged and who benefits from this. I hope that I am now more aware of "some of the fascism which still runs round in our heads and still plays itself out in our everyday behaviour" (McWhorter, 2005: xvii). The continuous exposure of my own unknowingly discriminatory assumptions has had a significant effect on my ontological and epistemological thinking, and therefore my research practice and wider life. I continue on an extraordinary, if "bumpy" (Fox and Allan, 2013: 11) journey.

Both as a provocation, disrupting 'rigorous and systematic' description of such an unlinear process as post-qualitative, post-coding research, and due to a dearth of suitable traditional 'academic' language, prose and poetry is increasingly used in post-qualitative writing. Through 'happenstance' I was introduced to a poem (Kunitz, 1978) which encapsulates the ontological, epistemological and methodological PhD 'journey' I have described in this chapter.

The Layers by Stanley Kunitz (1978).

I have walked through many lives,  
some of them my own,

and I am not who I was,  
though some principle of being  
abides, from which I struggle  
not to stray.

When I look behind,  
as I am compelled to look  
before I can gather strength  
to proceed on my journey,  
I see the milestones dwindling  
toward the horizon  
and the slow fires trailing  
from the abandoned camp-sites,  
over which scavenger angels  
wheel on heavy wings.

Oh, I have made myself a tribe  
out of my true affections,  
and my tribe is scattered!

How shall the heart be reconciled  
to its feast of losses?

In a rising wind  
the manic dust of my friends,  
those who fell along the way,  
bitterly stings my face.

Yet I turn, I turn,  
exulting somewhat,  
with my will intact to go  
wherever I need to go,  
and every stone on the road  
precious to me.

In my darkest night,

when the moon was covered  
and I roamed through wreckage,  
a nimbus-clouded voice  
directed me:  
“Live in the layers,  
not on the litter.”  
Though I lack the art  
to decipher it,  
no doubt the next chapter  
in my book of transformations  
is already written.  
I am not done with my changes.

### **3 Identity**

In the previous chapter I described some of the multiple internal, academic and social processes I have ‘lived’ whilst doing this research. Academic constraints, (a fixed word limit for example), mean I could only touch on the identity work that is inextricably linked with processes of subjectification. However, through subjectification processes, themselves an ongoing transition, identity work or (re)placing my understanding of ‘myself’ within ever-changing circumstances, has been momentous. I now turn to the experiences of Weldale students during transition from school to college.

This chapter, and the following two, address identity and agency meanings, examining processes through which these are negotiated. Although produced through similar social processes, for analytical purposes I have broadly separated ‘identity’ and ‘agency’ into separate chapters, followed by a chapter integrating both concepts. These themed chapters incorporate academic literature, theoretical discussion, and student ‘stories’. In order to discuss the myriad of internal and social influences affecting identity and agency meaning-making, processes must inevitably be oversimplified and made linear. I am mindful that identifying particular ‘strands’ of ‘identity’ negotiation fails to make visible other interwoven strands from which examples are drawn.

This chapter examines what Winkler (2014) calls the micro-processes of identity work. In the context of disability, this includes ways in which thought and action are “conditioned and constituted by social structures of constraint and enablement, as well as by forms of the representation of persons, as both ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ (Young, 2002: xiii). I start with discussion of definitions of identity and self, followed by a series of ‘stories’, narratives from students’ lives, offering opportunity to ‘think with theory’ about identity meanings. These stories and interwoven discussion contribute to a processual understanding of how some identity meanings are developed over time and in particular environments (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

#### **3.1 Identity and ‘self’**

I conceptualise identity as multiple relational narratives, processes, unfinished stories which individuals tell themselves, tell others, and are told about themselves. This involves direct ‘telling’ and categorising through talk and action. It also involves

indirect 'telling', not the words, but implicit meanings, discourses within which individuals make sense of who they believe themselves to be. These processes can simultaneously reproduce the same discourses and/or challenge them, (re)constituting identities. Direct identity 'telling' may (still) take the form of categorising children as boy or girl, distinguishing between family, friends and strangers, labelling good and bad behaviour. Implicit in these examples are complex discourses. For example, 'boy' is a clearly delineated gender construct (Schmader and Block, 2015), a binary of 'girl'; particular relationships require different responses; particular behaviour attracts different value-judgements and responses. Before understanding the concepts involved, children are attributed socially constructed identity meanings, many of which are (of course) simply accepted and unquestioned, but which contribute to 'shared narratives' (Waller, 2010) about identity meanings. In this way discourses, spoken and implicit, encroach, unrecognised, into minds and bodies (Goodley, 2011), becoming part of identity narratives and behaviours. Powerful discourses (Wodak, 2012) infiltrate and become part of individual and group identities in nuanced and unrecognised ways. Competing discourses are always at play, causing multiple, often conflicting identity meanings (Gilchrist, Bowles and Wetherell, 2010). Individuals do not, however, simply 'receive' their identities from their surroundings. Complex internal dialogue continuously challenges, reinforces and constitutes relationships between individual and external discourses. Shared and individual stories, narratives, develop to explain particular discourses and where the individual 'fits' within them. Both 'talk' (Cohen, 2008) and its underlying discourses place individuals in relation to other individuals and groups.

Identity discourses are associated with power. The above examples of identity 'telling' (gender, relationships and good/bad behaviour) have multiple, complex and powerful discourses surrounding them, supported by professionals, policy, multi-billion pound industries, and personal and social expectations and judgements. Identities are implicated in, and constituted by, the production and reproduction of discourses in institutional regimes of education, welfare, healthcare, psychology and family (Goodley, 2011). Thus, multiple discourses inter-relate, contributing to internal and social narratives of identity as fluid, ever responsive and dynamic.

‘Disability’ presents a site for many contradictory discourses. Some discourses associated with disability, such as those of self-advocacy and political activism may promote and enable positive identity meanings (see chapter six). Others, such as ableism, reproduce discrimination and oppression through institutional and structural forces (Goodley, 2011). Within judgemental and value-laden discourses, particular identity meanings assign power to individuals and groups, and/or position them in relatively powerless situations.

Identity meanings are ever-changing and unstable, fragmentary and indeterminate. Whilst this renders identity meanings fragile, it also presents opportunity. Foucault (1988) says “we can never be ensnared by power; we can always modify its grip” (p.123). It is identity *processes* that enable power to be ever-(re)negotiated as identities are never static but in constant (re)construction. (Re)negotiation of identity meanings enables flexibility and multiplicity as “different aspects of our identities intersect, combining and modifying each other in the process” (Gilchrist and colleagues, 2010: 8). The constant managing of processes of modifying and negotiating identity positions within different environments, may be called ‘identity work’.

Although identity meanings are fluid, temporal and ever (re)produced, particular identities may be situated in social sites, and linked to/with other individuals or groups. Particular social sites and people may promote or support positive identity meanings at some times, whilst others may restrict or constrain identity meanings. I call such identity (and agency) supporting and/or restricting situations ‘circumstances of opportunity’. Such circumstances do not *prescribe* action, but are “circumstances of possibility” (Doney, 2015), in which the grip of power (Foucault, 1988) may be modified.

As mentioned in chapter one, identity must be considered a political issue. Reeve points out that the gaze of a society that accepts and reproduces invalidating discourses, impacts on the feelings and emotional well-being of disabled people (Reeve, 2002), affecting their own internal identity narratives, at thought, behaviour and action levels. Foucault's (1988) concept of *technologies of the self* describes ways in which individuals produce and re-/co-produce selves in different situations, responsive to social expectations and norms. This positioning in relation to discourse is ongoing,

temporary and fluid, however, always happening within and against power structures and the ways in which individuals believe they should behave. Such ‘technologies of the self’ are restricting and restraining, but also opportunities for agency and resistance (Foucault, 1988: 18). Particular circumstances of opportunity may enable individuals to resist unwanted identity meanings, building positive identity narratives about themselves even in a discourse environment which is hostile towards them.

Pragmatist, George Herbert Mead has been highly influential in the discussion of identity and self. His concepts of symbolic interactionism (1934) and behaviourism moved understandings of identity from ideas of a 'true reality' to the dynamic processes of interpretation and interaction between individuals and the social world. Importantly, Mead linked thought, action and interaction, connecting individual behaviour with social understandings, with meanings and objects. Mead's understanding of 'self' suggests individuals view themselves through the eyes of others, a process which effectively 'others' the individual from themselves. Post-structural thought conceptualises the self as “performative and reflexive” (Riddell, 2005: 185), a relational and dialogical (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) component of identity narratives. Self-meanings may be considered and enacted with a potential audience in mind, a public engagement, a *representation* of identities. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) call this “self-image” (p.619), described by Winkler (2014) as the ongoing effortful “sense-making process” (p.291) between internal and external identity meanings. Braathe and Solomon (2015) call this process “self-authoring” (p.160) describing “representing the self (to the self and others)” (p.157). Identity meanings are not only offered, attributed and enforced on individuals, but are responded to and interpreted by the same individuals, allowing multiple and many-faceted understandings of identities.

Some aspects of self-meanings remain ‘internal’, unrecognised or private. Others are performative (Butler, 1990), coming about through their enactment, demonstrated and 'lived' in public. Identity meanings come about through ‘doing’ identity, through talk, action, social processes. Different aspects of self may be exposed or revealed in different circumstances, to different audiences and at different times. However, meanings about visible identity markers are particularly difficult to regulate (Reeve, 2002), with social responses limiting identity options available to particular individuals. Similarly, all labels run the risk of limiting potential identities available to an individual



if label-associated meanings become their most salient identity discourse (Taylor, 2000). This is particularly the case if, as with learning disability labels, the label itself attracts socially, politically, economically and personally discriminatory processes. Therefore, any discussion of identity and self must take place within an understanding of social environments implicated in identity negotiation processes.

Ideas of 'self' may be likened to stories, narratives, which individuals tell about, and to themselves, to 'explain' experience, their own and that of others. McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich (2006) describe 'life-narratives', co-constructed stories, internal and social, which help individuals position themselves within different environments. Life-narratives are 'produced' within social constraints and influences, so "self-understandings" and "self-narrative[s]" (Lawy, 2003: 331) are developed, challenged, and re-produced in processes of continuous contextual (re)presentation. This approach conflates identity and self to some extent, in that both are developed through stories, narratives and meaning making, both internal and social. For me this is best described by Holland and colleagues (1998):

[...] we conceive persons as composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities, whose loci are often not confined to the body but "spread over the material and social environment" (p.8).

Narrative approaches to self and identity acknowledge multiple realities but also, how identity associated value judgements, such as stigma, emerge from the "interplay between individual agency and social context" (McAdams and colleagues, 2006: 6).

### **3.2 Identity, structure, and psycho-emotional processes**

If, as described, identities and self are co-constructed between individuals within particular discourse environments, powerful social forces have an important influence on identity. The concept of 'fluid' identities suggests individuals may present themselves in different ways according to environment and circumstances. The coming together of different identity meanings as an identity 'project' has been variously described as a bricolage (Braathe and Solomon, 2015), a web (Griffiths, 1995), kaleidoscopic (Ross, 2014), or a "patchwork self" (Griffiths, 1998: 12) in which every piece "adjoin[s] or obscure[s] what is already there, changing it in the process"

(Griffiths, 1998: 12). However, whilst these metaphors illustrate the assemblage of different subjectivities, they do not adequately describe the “provisional, contested, and multifaceted” (Winkler, 2014: 292) element of self-notions, the ever changing interconnected meanings, or the active way in which some identity meanings are thrust upon individuals against their will. Indeed, these metaphors imply that the individual simply *assembles* their own identity meanings, without highlighting the powerful environments and discourses (many unrecognised by the individual on whom they work) within which the bricolage or web is constructed. This question, the extent to which “people [are] involved in the voluntaristic construction of social identity and to what extent are their lives shaped by social structural factors” (Riddell and colleagues, 2001: 58) is an ongoing major concern, particularly with critical and feminist researchers (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004). If multiple realities and subjectivities are recognised, how can the similarity between experience of members of similar socio-political groups be explained?

Wodak (2012), researching national identities, makes the connection between identity and structure very clear, outlining how language, power and identity contribute to the discursive construction of fluid identities, influenced by vested interests. She highlights how national identities as co-constructions “operate within clear borders created in politics, in the economy and in legal frameworks” (Wodak, 2012: 229). This explains how *individual* subjectivities and identity meanings are also experienced *within* structurally limiting and enabling forces. For example, if structural constraints were removed and policy were to promote employment, meaningful leisure opportunities and choice of where to live, and with whom, then identity opportunities for learning disabled young people may be increased dramatically. Socio-political influences require examination and challenge if disabled people are to have increased identity narrative options. This implies that post-structural ideas of fluid identity opportunities are more relevant in the lives of those for whom the structural environment is advantageous, than for those for whom it is discriminatory. It also aids understanding of the similarities between individual identity meanings produced within similar environmental constraints.

As previously mentioned, socially attributed labels associated with human diversity can have an important effect on the type of identity meanings available to individuals.

Dominant discourses about particular identity markers can be difficult to resist. The disciplines of psychology and psychiatry are implicated in negatively affecting identity meanings of disabled people (Goodley, 2011) through such labelling. Foucault described how 'normalising judgements' (Foucault, 1977: 173) came about through the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, leading to an industry of normalisation based on monitoring the body and mind against the discursive practice of newly created norms. Disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977), whilst constantly in flux (Foucault, 1991), renders the body as docile through classification and continuous surveillance, objectifying individuals' bodies (Foucault, 1977). Goodley and Lawthom (2005), view traditional psychology as "a pathologising, voyeuristic, individualising, impairment-obsessed discipline that has contributed to the exclusion of people with impairments" (Goodley and Lawthom, 2005: 136). However, they accept *community psychology* as "value base[d]" (Goodley and Lawthom, 2008: 192) and as such, linked to social justice aims rather than pathologising ones. Oliver (1990) too views traditional psychology, and its tool psychoanalysis, as an individualising and pathologising discipline, one implicated in the determining of 'normal' and 'non-normal' classifications.

Normalising and pathologising judgements are intrinsically related to medical, social and educational labelling. Viewed through Wodak's (2012) lens of social, political, economic and legal frameworks, labels of all kinds have the potential to seriously delimit the identity options of 'labelled' individuals and groups. Educational labels, the result of educational and medical diagnostic processes, are themselves vested with power and institutional values, often reproducing social inequalities and discourses. The inevitable interplay between reified structural forces and internal identity narratives is complex and multifaceted, as are the effects of labelling on individuals.

A Foucaultian analysis is particularly apt for examining how disability labels may influence identity and psycho-emotional processes, because people ascribed medical or educational labels are more vulnerable to ongoing disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977). This is the way in which bodies are measured, classified, regulated, viewed and 'cured' within the context of intimate knowledge of the body as object, and the (institutional) power that this provides. The power of normalising judgements (Foucault, 1977), constantly comparing and recording individuals against others, can lead to institutionalisation, segregation and life-limiting situations. Institutional systems, be

they hospitals, schools or prisons, normalise surveillance and regulation as justified by the relative power of the observers over the observed. Such performative acts normalise the “power to define others” (Corker, 1998: 226). However, rather than dominating or oppressive power (Foucault, 1994b) ‘governmentality’ constitutes individuals as subjects who self-govern, absorbing such powerful values as 'natural' ways of being. By comparing disciplinary power with a torture scene in the opening pages of 'Discipline and Punish' (1977), Foucault draws attention to the ongoing ‘torture and punishment’ that is simply accepted and absorbed, in the form of (institutional and psycho-emotional) restrictions, constraints, expectations. Rather than a site of torture (sovereign power), the body becomes a site of power relations (disciplinary power). These power relations are reciprocal, investing negotiated political and social positions in both the observed and the observer, the object and the subject, significantly contributing to identity narratives.

Foucault's 'technologies of the self' allows examination of “exercises of power” (Fendler, 2010: 48) in the social environments and processes in which narrative identity meanings are continuously (re)formed. The power of ableist discourses is such that they remain unexamined 'truths' in narrative identities of many disabled and non-disabled people. My own unexposed ableist assumptions cause(d) me to not only accept a subjective position, but to actively constitute and reconstitute (Foucault, 1988) myself and others in terms of that position. Campbell (2012) says:

We all live and breathe ableist logic, our bodies and minds daily become aesthetic sculptures for the projection of how we wish to be known in our attempt to exercise competency, sexiness, wholeness and an atomistic existence (p 212).

Psycho-emotional identity-shaping politics of ableist discourses require particular identity work from both disabled- and non-disabled people (Campbell, 2008). To differing extents ableist discourses, such as expectations of “enforced ‘normalcy’” (Ashby, 2010: 345) are absorbed into identity meanings, rejected and resisted. The existence of such “pernicious standards of worth” (Goodley, 2011: 81) provides an unjustified judgemental and categorised power-knowledge axis (Foucault, 1982) environment within which narrative identity meanings must be negotiated. Campbell (2012) further questions the implications of 'failure' to meet the expectations of this

unachievable “perfectability project” (p.212). The very omnipresence of power suggests that any response is always circumscribed by power (White, 2014: 490), meaning that subversion is always also defined by power. Ableist discourses can be fundamentally dangerous in the lives of disabled people, and individuals and communities are implicated in ableist culture. Even where ableist discourses are resisted, they continue to set the agenda of expectation, for disabled and non-disabled people. However, some circumstances offer increased opportunity for identity meanings to challenge such ableist assumptions.

### **3.3 Identity meanings in times of change**

The concept of ‘transgression’ (Foucault, 1994) is useful in recognising how learning disabled people may challenge limiting and disabling discourses of their environments, by “crossing of limits or boundaries” (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 92), by the subversion of the powers that influence identities. However,

[t]ransgression is not antagonistic or aggressive, nor does it involve a contest in which there is a victor; rather, it allows individuals with disabilities to shape their own identities by subverting the norms that compel them to repeatedly perform as marginal (Allan, 2011: 154).

It is important to understand how disabled people may resist and challenge dominant ableist discourses, “[...] designing and creating their own status and frame-work in a society that has allowed them limited access, space and voice” (Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir, 2010: 60). Like Allan (1999, 2011), I too found student transgressive practices surprising due to my understanding of powerful institutional practices restricting and inscribing individuals.

Transition seemed to offer particular emergent opportunities for transgression, in limbic and unstructured moments. Opportunist transgressions, often spontaneously negotiated in such moments, were “temporary and partial, had to be constantly repeated, and reactions to them had to be monitored” (Allan, 2011: 155). Riddell and Weedon (2014) describe some disabled higher education students as having a ‘choice’ of whether or not to disclose as disabled. They describe disability as a “flag of convenience” (p.41) which may be “jettisoned” (p.41) or employed, in different circumstances. However, this

option very much depends on the disability. Hernandez-Martinez and colleagues (2011) view transition as “growth of identity” (p.119), or the chance for learners to “become a new person” (p.119), to “develop a new identity” (p.119). Specifically, they conceptualise transition as a *question of identity* (p.119). If identity work is the forming and reforming of self-notion (Alvesson and Willmott, 2008) within particular surroundings, it is understandable that projecting identity meanings into a different environment, that is from school to college, may provide an opportunity for regulation of the presentation of self.

Useful here is a body of writing about identities in organisational settings, linking transition, or change, with identity work (Beech, MacIntosh and McInnes, 2008). During times of change in the workplace necessitating identity work (Mallet and Wapshott, 2012) individuals may need to align differing and contradictory identity meanings (Beech, 2011). Collinson (2003) highlights how insecurity in the workplace can influence identity meanings, while Winkler (2014) describes his own identity meanings as “narratively accomplished” (p.304) within particular subjectivities and environments. Identity work is inevitably engaged in transition, or change. If identity meanings are fluid and dynamic ‘they’ must necessarily (re)align if circumstances, such as environment and expectations, change.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) developed a model of *agency* that I find useful in the discussion of *identity* narratives at times of uncertainty and change. They describe agency as:

a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its “iterational” or habitual aspect) but also oriented toward the future (as a “projective” capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a “practical-evaluative” capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment) [...] (962).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe how the past, through habit and repetition, recall and selection, becomes *schematized*. The *schema*, a cognitive, “corporeal and affective” (p.975) pattern, supports the actor in making meaning of situations and interactions. Agency comes about in how actors “selectively recognize, locate, and implement” (p.975) schemas in their social interactions over time.

Emirbayer and Mische's temporal and emergent conception of agency is particularly applicable in times of transition. If agency 'happens' in the space between past and future, change or transition will 'open' such spaces, or circumstances of opportunity, as past and future identities and roles are negotiated, first in anticipation, then in the new environment. Discussion of transition involves constantly changing the viewing position from the present to the future, which inevitably involves recalling, and sometimes analysing, previous situations from the past.

Whilst developed in terms of agency, for me, this model also describes the process of narrative *identity* meanings, as past, present and future identities influence thought, action and interaction. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualise the *iterational* element (past), the *practical-evaluative* element (present), and the *projective* element (future), as the "chordal triad" (p.972) which constantly inform one another, none taking overall precedence as they cannot be theoretically separated. These three dimensions are contextually salient and "resonate as separate but not always harmonious tones" (p.972). Like agency, identity meaning making is "an internally complex human dynamic" (p.964) as well as "intrinsically social and relational" (p.973). Understanding identity as "continually accomplished in the course of social interaction" (Winkler, 2014: 291) allows the conceptualisation of identities constantly in flux through social interactions. This, together with Emirbayer and Mische's view of agency as both internal and social reinforces the conceptualisation of times of social and individual change as particularly requiring identity work. This model is important in its conception of the temporal element of agency and, I would argue, identity, as well as the recognition of emergent and opportune moments of change, improvisation and opportunity. Change, such as transition, offers circumstances of opportunity for differing agency and identity meanings to emerge. Circumstances of opportunity are not certainties, change will not inevitably happen in such circumstances, but spaces are produced, in/from which new possibilities can emerge. I discuss this further in chapter four.

I now turn to discuss some Weldale students' experiences in school and college. The 'stories' focus on interactions with labels, but not necessarily educational labels. Firstly I introduce a story about Gerrard. Using Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) chordal triad

of past (“iterational”), present (“practical-evaluative”), and future (“projective”) elements, I evoke a particular identity negotiation.

### **3.4 Gerrard – a story about ‘naughtiness’ and the temporal nature of identities**

This section introduces Gerrard, his school friends Lewis (‘best’ friend) and Amber, and Anthony who attended the same college course as Gerrard. Gerrard chose his own pseudonym, naming himself after his favourite footballer.

As described, identities and agencies are inextricably interlinked, complex internal and social processes. The way in which past, present and future identity meanings may influence identity and action, and vice versa, is seen in the way that Gerrard talked about and behaved in science lessons in school. My fieldnotes give an impression of how the processes of narrative identity meaning-making produced and reproduced a particular event:

Gerrard was already anticipating a difficult science lesson. He kept saying to me “I’m naughty in science, miss”. I asked him why he’s always naughty. He said “I just am, aren’t I Amber? I’m always naughty in science. I’m good for the first twenty minutes, then when we’ve been there about twenty five minutes I’m naughty. I always get zero points [merit points assigned at the end of each lesson] or minus one.” I suggested that he try to be good and get more points, then he could report back to me next week and surprise me by telling me he had got a good points score. He listened then said “No, I’m always naughty in science. I hate science don’t I Amber? I always get zero points.” [Amber] agreed (130425\_class\_observation).

In this interaction Gerrard and Amber ‘confirmed’ his identity as “naughty”. Through offering a different solution, I implicitly accepted and reinforced Gerrard’s ‘naughty’ identity meanings. Shortly afterwards, whilst waiting to enter the science room a play-fight between Gerrard and Lewis became noisy and boisterous:

Mr M [science teacher] asked Colin [class TA] to keep Gerrard and Lewis out of the class for a moment until they had sorted out their argument. When they did come in Lewis was immediately put in the work station (for swearing) and Gerrard was put outside the room in the corridor (also for



swearing). Gerrard glanced at me triumphantly as he went out.  
(130425\_class\_observation.)

(The 'work station' was a single desk screened off from the rest of the class).

Emirbayer and Mische's agency terms (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 979), and their idea of 'self' as a "dialogical structure, itself thoroughly relational" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 974) allow an interesting understanding of the thinking and acting patterns involved in Gerrard's understanding of himself. Gerrard's account of himself included *selective attention* (p.979), as he focussed only on previous occasions when he had been in trouble in science, forgetting times when he had *not* been naughty. *Recognition of types* (p.979) led him to recognise a scenario that helped him believe he could predict a future situation. Gerrard clearly identified 'being in trouble' with the science class and teacher through *categorical location* (p.980), linking previous experience with particular people and places. Gerrard's opportunity to *maneuver among repertoires* (p.980), or imagine differing resulting options, was limited by his recognition of types, leading him to expect that he would misbehave in the science classroom, which he did, with the expected results. In this way his expectations were fulfilled (*expectation maintenance* (p.980)) and this process could (and did) repeat 'itself'. The pattern of stability through predictability that Emirbayer and Mische (1998) link with expectation maintenance was apparent for Gerrard, despite him viewing being in trouble in science largely as a negative experience. Interestingly, Gerrard's *schematization* (p.975) of social interaction in the science class led him to believe he had no agency or choice in his actions at all. He appeared to believe he surrendered his choice (and by implication responsibility) as soon as he entered (or queued up outside) the science room. My suggestion that he behave well was considered, then rejected as not fitting within his *schema* of identity meanings. The added *recognition of types* provided by Amber agreeing with his *schema* that he was always naughty may have increased his feeling that 'his' 'naughtiness' was 'inevitable'. Mr M's response to Gerrard's behaviour appeared to supply the required affirmation, both that Gerrard's behaviour was 'naughty' in the school context, and that Gerrard, through 'his' behaviour, 'was' 'naughty' himself. Gerrard was actively involved in the production of his subject position. His identity as 'naughty' was temporally situated in

the science lesson (either through physical presence, or memory/imagination), and linked with Mr M and others in the class.

The idea of himself as naughty in science lessons perpetuated as Gerrard looked back on it from his situation in college nine months later. In a joint interview he and Anthony discussed “mean” teachers at school:

Gerrard: And Mr M [science teacher], cor...

Anthony: He was the meanest.

Gerrard: I was the naughtiest one there, every day nearly in science.

Ana: Mmm... You did get into trouble a lot in science didn't you?  
(140127\_interview\_Gerrard\_and\_Anthony)

In this example relational identity meanings in Gerrard's schema gain support as Anthony agrees that Mr M was ‘mean’ (although I personally would describe him as exceptionally kind, patient, fair and consistent) and I confirm that Gerrard had repeatedly got into trouble. Together we are implicated in co-constructing Gerrard's identity meanings of himself. Gerrard's narrative identity meanings of himself as 'naughty in science' were repeated, agreed with and perpetuated, in turn supporting his relational idea of Mr M's identity as ‘mean’. Gerrard's identity meanings came from his internal understandings, external influences such as school rules about behaviour, routine and habitual circumstances, and other people. Complex dynamic interrelations between all these sources led Gerrard to believe he was ‘naughty’. Gerrard did not take science at college, but had he, his own science-context identity meanings may have continued to influence his behaviour, reasserting himself as ‘naughty’. My own identity meanings of myself as 'no good at maths' have followed me from school to adulthood, affecting both my view of myself and my 'attempts' at maths.

I do not know when Gerrard became aware of himself as ‘naughty in science’, or what brought this about. However, these interesting interactions illustrate how identity (and agency) meanings are inextricably linked with other people and the environment in which they take place, an ongoing interaction between internal meaning making and

external circumstances. ‘Naughty’ identity meanings were reinforced and co-constituted by Gerrard and those around him, his friends, Mr M, Colin (TA), me. Strong institutional power was available to ‘deal with’ Gerrard’s ‘naughtiness’ further reinforcing these particular identity meanings. Gerrard did not have this understanding of himself in any other lesson, although he was periodically told off for distracting other students or playfighting with Lewis. It seemed that for him, and for those around him, science was *the place* where he was naughty. Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) model of agency illustrates how such meanings (and action) may come about, and highlights the temporary nature of identities and agencies, causing both anticipatory and reflective elements to affect the present. This story illustrates how labelling, even labelling oneself, can restrict and limit the negotiation of alternative identity meanings. Gerrard could not consider taking up my suggestion that he ‘be’ ‘good’ in science as this did not fit with his own understanding of himself as ‘naughty’, making this option unavailable to him. In the presence of powerful learning disability labels, the importance of alternative labels, those highlighting skills, interests, positive character traits, are of even more importance, in order to broaden identity options.

#### Ethical interruption 5.

I am now used to talking to students about their identity meanings and how they view themselves. I start to write about their stories.

I am aware that I cannot guarantee confidentiality, but may have given “blanket reassurances of confidentiality” (Lewis, and Porter, 2004: 193). Although I have never disclosed the school or colleges I research in, and had thought this would ensure confidentiality, my grounds for believing this are shaken when two incidents happen within two weeks, making me intimately aware of “social network confidentiality” (Hill, 2005).

#### Incident 1. 12<sup>th</sup> September.

A friend calls in for a cuppa. She tells me her daughter has started youth club nearby. It emerges she has met another parent there, a tutor at one of the colleges. I did not know that we live a mile apart. She tells me how

she found out that we knew each other.

He was telling me about his job and how he had 44 students with learning difficulties starting courses last week, and I said 'oh, I know someone you might know' and when I told him he said 'oh yes, Ana's coming to see me next week.'

This causes ethical problems for me. I have not impressed on college tutors that my research presence should be kept confidential. I have somehow assumed tutors are bound by a level of professionalism that means they would 'know' this. Is it unprofessional of him to agree that he knows me? Could I have expected him to lie in this situation, and if so to what aim? Does he think I have told my friend which colleges I am visiting? (I have not, this was happenstance). How do I broach the subject when I see him, either at college or in 'our' town? *Should* I broach the subject? If so, with what aim? Is this part of general life knowledge and information or is it part of the 'surveillance' linked to people with learning disability labels? Does it matter?

#### Incident 2. 18<sup>th</sup> September.

Kylie is the 18 year old daughter of a family friend. I have known her since she was born. Recently my social role has subtly changed from 'friend of her mum' as she has asked me several times for advice on some difficulties she has had at work. We have discussed these situations at various mutual friends' parties. I meet Kylie in the street and she excitedly tells me she is returning to college to continue her foundation level childcare course. She tells me how this came about, literally jumping for joy at the thought of returning to college. Whilst genuinely and openly excited for her, I quickly run through things in my head. 'Kylie's' college is part of my research. The college is small. I will inevitably see Kylie when I visit. Kylie is observant, gregarious and chatty. This will mean that her mum who knows vaguely about my research subject, will also know which college (and may 'work out' which school) I am visiting. Kylie will ask me what I am doing at 'her' college. However much I accentuate confidentiality she is likely to know the students I visit. Does this matter? Is it more of a problem if someone finds this out who knows me? Having to consider what constitutes personal

and/or professional information will cause discrepancies in my relationship with Kylie. I am used to being open and reciprocally exchanging information with her. If I change to a professional 'I can't tell you' approach she will feel rejected, yet can I continue in the more open manner that we usually enjoy? Does it matter if Kylie knows who I speak with at college? Does this information make any difference if Kylie, or her mum, reads, or does not read, any part of my writing?

### **3.5 Families 're-writing' disability discourse**

#### **3.5.1 Chris Hoy – a story of cycling, and a 'philosophy' of upbringing**

Given the 'weight' of institutional and societal value-judgements associated with labels, the inherent ableist discourse, and willful legislation for inequity, what circumstances of opportunity might allow resistance and transgression of learning disability labels? As children's identity meanings are intrinsically linked with their surroundings, family environment plays a large part in the negotiation of individual identities (Hjörne and Saljö, 2004). Drawing on Syme and Berkman, Goodley (2011) says "families [can] act as powerful networks that mediate between disabling society and the impact on disabled children" (p.44). Thomas (1998) indicates that where parents challenge negative impairment assumptions and barriers to inclusion associated with disability labels, their disabled children have more positive self-notions. This certainly seemed to be the case for one student, Chris Hoy, who had a particular skill and approach to life that transgressed not only expected disability discourses, but those of many people's lives.

Chris was an excellent cyclist, and keen member of his local cycling club, cycling 40 or 50 miles several times a week. He also attended weekly spinning classes at his local gym, and regular time-trials organised by his club. Cycling offered him experiences that are unusual for most people (he had taken part in several 100 mile night rides) but especially for someone with learning disability labels. Cycling also gave him mobility and social experiences unusual amongst his school peers, affording him increased independence in many ways. For example, after leaving school, Chris attended the school summer fête unaccompanied, using the train and his bike, independently navigating the 30 miles between his home and the school. Cycling also ensured that he

had meaningful and valued shared contact with members of his community and knowledge and experience to discuss with others.

During my time at Weldale School, Bradley Wiggins, a British cyclist, was consistently in the public eye having won both the Tour de France and the time trial in the Olympic Games in 2012. Ivor, Chris's tutor, sometimes called Chris 'Bradley Wiggins', (I could never tell if this was a joke or real acknowledgement of his cycling prowess) and suggested this as a pseudonym for this research. However, Chris politely declined 'Bradley Wiggins', choosing 'Chris Hoy' instead. I knew that Chris Hoy had won three gold medals in one olympic games (2008), but investigation showed that, at the time, he was the most successful Olympic cyclist ever. Chris had undoubtedly known this himself yet did not feel the need to point it out. His modest approach implied he knew he had made a 'better' choice of pseudonym, without the need to boast, either about his cycling skills, or his knowledge. For me this is a good example of Chris's apparent approach to his life. He appeared modestly confident in his knowledge and abilities.

I was interested to know how this unusual situation had come about. Chris's mum, Nancy, mentioned a “philosophy” of how Chris was brought up and I later investigated this idea with her. She described the philosophy as “a completely unplanned way forward” (130522\_interview\_Nancy\_home):

... the philosophy of bringing up Chris, the theory is, it's just like all children they need a loving, caring environment and supportive don't they? And we've never labelled Chris as being special needs because I *feel*, I personally *feel*, that it puts more pressure on them because they're trying to overcompensate what they are, and then having to accommodate themselves around the label, so we've just basically put Chris on a road and if there's been any issues that we needed to have dealt with we sort of deal with them as and when. And that's (laughs) the philosophy and Chris has actually turned out to be quite a good...example of ad-libbing things (both laugh) You know.... (130522\_interview\_Nancy).

Although there are political activism reasons for learning disabled people to be aware of SEN labels (discussed in chapter six), here Nancy explains the negative effect she feels such labels have on some children's identities. By avoiding the label, Nancy implied

she felt she avoided the effects of stigma, stereotypical expectation, threat to personal and social identity, and discrimination (Major and O'Brien, 2005), on Chris's behalf.

However, Nancy's description of "ad-libbing things", whilst evident in her approach, belies the enormous input on her part in researching available options at each stage of Chris's life. She described each "barrier" (e.g., Chris's diagnosis, decisions about starting playgroup, primary and secondary school, college) as causing some "floundering around" (130522\_interview\_Nancy) while the family worked out which options were available and which would best suit Chris. Each decision was made in the knowledge that if it did not work as well as hoped, they would find a different solution. This emergent and calmly agentic approach appeared reflected in Chris's beliefs about his identity and his *own* ability to make decisions and choices.

Nancy and I discussed how easy it is to predict potential problems and for this to affect behaviour. In relation to the imminent transition to college, Nancy felt it important to be prepared for what *she* knew might happen, yet not to let this affect Chris's confidence:

So I'm not saying that the first week that Chris gets onto the bus to Ponymead [college] he's not going to be picked on, *we don't know that yet*, but if he *is*, then I will deal with it *accordingly* and *appropriately*. But I don't know that, so I can't put this into my son's head so I'm just gonna take him down there, or in actual fact he's going to *walk* down there himself, and get himself on the bus (130522\_interview\_Nancy).

That Chris would, on his first day of college, confidently walk half a mile through town to get on a public bus full of students is, I think, what Nancy meant by him having "turned out to be quite a good... example" (130522\_interview\_Nancy) of their approach. This was facilitated by Chris's open friendly nature, his humour, his love of having a chat with people he met, and his confidence in himself, these qualities themselves no doubt reinforced by his part in his social and geographical environment. Chris's individual and family identity narratives positioned him as a social and successful individual. As a result, interactions that supported this narrative were held salient, and those that challenged it appeared forgotten.

However, despite Nancy's positive approach, she also made it clear that there had been times when she did not know where to turn and when available options were not good enough or not what Chris needed at the time. Naturally she was anxious about Chris going on the bus, but felt that Chris would cope:

Do you know what, I think it will be [fine]. I really do, because you know, I could've probably, in a sort of different way have gone about getting him a taxi [to college], but that isn't the real world any more is it? This is the real world where you have to get in it and people aren't nice to you, they flick things at you and say things that are inappropriate, but at 16 ... hopefully we've given him all the skills that you just ignore it or turn to someone who can deal with it (130522\_interview\_Nancy).

Chris's social participation, facilitated in part by Nancy's approach, in part by his skills and optimistic identity narratives, increased his skills and ability to “turn to someone who can deal with” problems arising. His practical and identity options locally were increased by being 'known' and respected as a cyclist, and cycling increased his options for social participation in a wider geographical and social area, thus broadening his identity narratives. Chris's parents' decision not to 'apply' the SEN label 'to' Chris appears successful in their wish to limit the power of labels to “contain individuals” (Rix, 2007: 26), *and* the types of interaction others have with them. By viewing Chris as an individual within a community, rather than a member of a labelled group, his abilities became more salient than his disabilities. However, the educational label did not cease to exist within the identity narratives of and about Chris. Indeed, the label had a forceful and powerful effect in the 'philosophy' of his upbringing. For Chris's parents, rather than “a trigger for a whole range of assumptions” (Rix, 2007: 26), the SEN label became a *challenge* to a range of assumptions about deficit:

Nancy: ...the sort of prognosis for Chris wasn't that great because obviously dyspraxia is motor skills, well I was sort of envisaging things like erm, not being able to walk, ride a bike, swim, actually these things have all been pretty much before the average age for his peers, yeah.

Ana: Do you think you kind of tested it out with him, do you think you were sort of thinking 'well he's unlikely to be able to swim so I'll just see how well he gets on?'



Nancy: Yeah I did. I just took him to the local swimming group and said 'well if he can't he can't and we'll take him out'.

Ana: So you haven't seen any of those kind of, what might be considered like erm, prognosis '*barriers*', you just haven't considered them?

Nancy: No, not at all. If we had come across a barrier when we tried it out then you have to deal with it again. He was swimming before half the group, children in the group. He was riding a bike before half of his peers, so... (130522\_interview\_Nancy).

However, whilst apparently in no way 'lowering' Nancy's expectations of and for Chris, receiving a diagnosis of SEN will not only have provided a challenge. Identity meanings of difference, as with all other identity meanings, will have been under challenge, verification, valorisation (Allan, 2008) and examination in contradictory, complex and multiple ways throughout Chris's life, even his day.

As with any story, many things may have influenced the telling of the philosophy of Chris's upbringing. I am aware that during my time at Weldale school, I became very fond of Chris. I was in cycling training myself at the time and we discussed this at great length. I benefited greatly from his advice, always given with a kindly joke about the likelihood of me *ever* getting *really* fit. But more than knowledgeable, Chris was kind to me. Sometimes, in the playground, I felt lost, wondering who to approach, aware that as an adult with no clear role I did not fit easily into this 'children's' space. On such occasions Chris would approach me, start a conversation and put me at my ease. He happily explained the workings of the school to me and patiently re-explained when I forgot them. His quiet enthusiasm meant that he always had something interesting to tell me. He was interested in my life, offering useful advice on gardening and looking after my car, recommending his favourite food and recipes. I liked his positive yet modest 'it-will-be-alright' approach to life and had been interested to know how this had come about. Nancy was aware of my interest and I told her that Chris had welcomed me and that I enjoyed his company. Nancy said Chris had spoken "very warmly" about me too. These circumstances will have influenced the positive nature of our discussion. Nancy too was aware of this, at one point saying, "I'm sounding as if I'm so together, but there has been times when it (both laugh) hasn't been quite this together. As you can

imagine” (130522\_interview\_Nancy). Yet, Nancy's positive approach was part of the family's life and her deliberate transgression of what might be ‘expected’ from Chris’s medical and educational labels *did* affect their inter- and intra-action with their communities and their identity narratives.

Of course there is no clear link between Chris's parents' approach, the “ad-libbing”, the agentic research, the love and support, the lack of a SEN label in their family life, their explanation of the world to Chris, and his quiet confidence and optimistic manner. These approaches are also evident in other families without the same ‘philosophy’. However, the *idea* of a ‘philosophy’ of upbringing *did* contribute clearly to Nancy's *narrative* of their family identity and combined agency. The relational aspect of family action, the 'wait and see approach', affected identity meanings and agency causing a reciprocal cycle where successful agency fed into family identity as able to cope with difficulties and rise to the challenge, in turn reinforcing belief in their own agency. Nancy summarised the family's optimistic approach:

...this transition [to college] is going to be *fine* I'm sure. And if it's not (laughs) we'll just deal with it (130522\_interview\_Nancy).

Chris's approach to life seemed similar. His work experience placement was set up at his local bike shop run by people he regularly cycled with. Unusually, this placement ran for a whole school year. Chris was keen for me to visit him at the shop, which I did. Just as Chris's social interaction had gained him the opportunity for interesting and supportive work experience, so the placement itself offered him more opportunity for social interaction. While I was there Jim, 'the pasty man', arrived and, in his break Chris went out to buy his lunch. I watched Chris and Jim speaking at length, laughing and joking. At the time I thought this demonstrated Chris's easy access to social interaction, his ‘social’ identity, but he recalled 'the pasty man's' conversations eight months later when I interviewed him at college, quoting what had been said on various occasions. This leads me to remember that Chris's apparently easy approach was highly dependent on a receptive audience, not purely on his own communication skills (see chapter six).

Chris’s story seems to suggest something about identity and the challenging of developmental and educational labels. His parents’ decision not to apply labels to him, and not to allow labels to ‘hold him back’, is a transgressive, and Nancy felt, successful

approach. Nancy's deliberate decision to expose Chris to situations where he might succeed in challenging expectations led to his development as an accomplished cyclist, giving him unusual access to social participation. Whilst Chris's situation is unusual in a young man with learning disability labels, the labels still set the agenda *against* which Nancy worked. Identity meanings were negotiated within and against the social, political and educational structures associated with learning disability labels, indicating that even when transgression occurs, it does so *within* the discursive structures of a labelling system.

I return to the conceptualisation of identity meanings as temporal, situated in social sites and linked to/with particular people. Chris's story is temporally situated in a time when cycling had high recognition and social value, on national and personal levels. The independence afforded by cycling meant Chris's identities were associated with and situated within dispersed social sites, the local cycling club community, the bike shop where he did his work-experience, broader cycling communities on a national and international scale, the places and activities he could access when out and about, his school, his college, his local community. His identity meanings are linked with his family, and particular people and groups in all these places. Having access (and exposure) to a large range of social sites and therefore a large number of people over time, meant Chris could develop relationships, acquaintanceships, friendships, with many different people, all of which added to, and influenced, the various identity meanings Chris negotiated. For Chris, having a particular socially valued skill, and having social relationships with many different people, seems to have afforded him circumstances of opportunity in which his identities were socially valued.

### **3.5.2 Lewis – a story about the relational nature of identity narratives**

Like Chris Hoy, and indeed all the students, Lewis' family environment was highly influential on his identity narratives. I have chosen to write about Lewis' family, not because they are representative, indeed they are unusual, but because his situation allows some processes of narrative identity work to be exposed. In terms of transgression and rewriting of labelling identities it is also interesting. I also refer to Taylor's (2000) ethnographic story of the Duke family as, although different in very many respects (Lewis's family are not associated with any of the 'chaotic', 'unhygienic'

or 'antisocial' behaviours of the Dukes) there are similarities in how both families 'dealt with' potentially stigmatising labels.

There are many examples of disability labels' non-salience in disabled people's lives (Brown, Dodd and Vetere, 2009; Beart, 2005; Watson, 2002) However, there are fewer examples of learning disability labels and associated societal identity meanings being rewritten in positive personal ways. Yet, the Duke family (Taylor, 2000), despite attracting multiple and repeated medical, educational and potentially socially denigrating labels, "constructed a life world in which disability is not stigmatizing or problematic for their identities" (Taylor, 2000: 59). Rather than allowing institutional, medical and societal classifications and value judgements to negatively affect their narratives of their individual and family identities, they "define themselves and each other in terms of their personal characteristics and family relationships" (Taylor, 2000: 59). I was struck by a similarity between Taylor's description of the Dukes, and Lewis' family. Unlike the Dukes' unstable living arrangements, Lewis's extended family lived on a council estate, his mum, Tracey, for over 20 years and his Dad, Kev, all his life. When I asked Tracey if she had grown up locally she laughed and said 'no', telling me she was from a town six miles away. She obviously felt very attached to her geographically contained and stable adult environment. Like the Dukes, many of Lewis's extended network of family and friends were medically, socially and educationally labelled in various and multiple ways. Given the potentially socially stigmatising effects of such labels and the social circumstances that these both attract and result from, it could be expected that they might play a significant role in identity meanings in the family. McNamara, Stevenson and Muldoon, (2013) found the potential for stigma to undermine solidarity and social support (McNamara and colleagues, 2013) in the context of disadvantaged areas in Limerick, Ireland. However, in Lewis's case, many potentially stigmatising labels seemed to *unite* the family's wide network, a narrative of similarity and collective experience acting as "a buffer against abstract cultural meanings attached to disability" (Taylor, 2000: 61). For example, Kev could not work due to a medical condition and, when I first met her, Tracey did not work either, a situation which, although potentially stigmatising, gave them time to spend together and with their family and friends. The collective label of 'council house tenant' resulted in family and friends living in close proximity to one another. Lewis's family did not have a phone, but Tracey gave me a neighbour's number. The realities of

'community' became clear to me when, on both occasions I rang, Tracey was with the neighbours and was, very naturally, immediately passed the phone. This sense of supportive community was also evident when Tracey spoke about the estate.

Weldale school also played a pivotal role in collective experience. Tina told me proudly that Lewis went to the same school as his Dad:

Yeah, he [Kev] went Weldale, my brother went Weldale, you know, so quite a few of us went there (130417\_interview\_Tracey\_home).

Lewis shared the school identity with family members, meaning the institutional label of learning difficulties was ignored in favour of informal family labels such as 'like his Dad and uncle'. Here it is possible to see how language is used to “determine and define similarities and differences” (Wodak, 2012: 216). Tracey attended a mainstream school, but by using the word “us” she associates herself with Weldale in a way that shows pride in attending a special school. Rather than SEN labels pointing to difference, in this case they point to ‘sameness’, to fitting in, to shared identity narratives. The school was a linking factor, one of many, that imbued the family and social network with identity narratives of continuity, stability and closeness.

Interestingly, although Tracey explained the reason for Lewis not attending mainstream secondary school, she did not dwell on it, simply seeing it as part of his progression to Weldale:

... they said he'd never cope down in the mainstream [secondary] school, he'd *never* cope down there. *I* knew that anyway. So from here he went straight to Weldale (130417\_interview\_Tracey).

Tracey told me how the different school environments had affected Lewis' progress:

He couldn't even write his name *down there* [local primary school]. He'd gone up to year six and he couldn't even write his name, but when he started Weldale, he started writing his name (130417\_interview\_Tracey).

Amidst a narrative of Lewis struggling to cope in primary school, working with a full-time TA, becoming unhappy and finally “hating” (130417\_interview\_Tracey) primary school, Weldale was seen as the ‘right’ place for Lewis, and, given the family history, maybe even the ‘natural’ place.

I wondered about Lewis' understanding of why he did not attend the local mainstream school with his friends. Lewis told me that “the teachers sent me” to Weldale for “being naughty” (130313\_interview\_Lewis). This appears to support Kelly's (2005) findings that “young people who had been given limited or partial information [about SEN labels applied to them] were more likely to develop idiosyncratic explanations” (p.264) about themselves. In the absence of direct acknowledgement of the educational label reason for attending special schooling, the 'naughty' element of Lewis's schooling will, of course, have been woven into his own understanding of himself in multiple formations. Here, differing discourses contradict and overlap. Lewis's individual discourse, making sense of external happenings, was based on his behaviour, a social judgement attributed to him, and evidently regularly highlighted to him in primary school. The discourse he was trying to explain to himself, was also socially constructed, one of learning difficulties and segregated education.

In the context of his family network, it is not that Tracey *resisted* Lewis's SEN label, or that she *ignored* it, rather it became part of the identity narrative of the family, *rewritten* both as a positive unifying attribute, and as less salient than other, more important elements of family identity. This is not to say that the SEN label was unimportant. As Rapley warns, it is a mistaken assumption that if individuals do not mention ‘their’ SEN label, they do not know about it (Rapley, 2004). However, with such strong unifying family identity narratives the identity label of 'learning difficulties' appears not to play a pejorative role in the family stories about themselves. Because of the family history, there is “a repertoire of nonstigmatising meanings of disability labels available to individuals” (Taylor, 2000: 69) and to the family as a whole. The SEN label may have been salient in other circumstances, but it was not foremost in family identity narratives. By examining Tracey's story about Lewis, it is possible to see how “multiple selves are [...] actively assembled from the available repertoires and negotiated by the individual with those relevant at the particular point in time ” (Riddell, Baron and Wilson, 2001: 58).

Another similarity between Lewis's family and the Dukes, is in the interpretation of situations in terms of personal characteristics and competencies. In a later interview Tracey told me that Lewis was “growing up” and consequently now spent little time with his primary school aged friends:

He's got a couple of friends that's bigger, but down the big school, but he don't see much of them, I don't know why. They tend to get into trouble and I think that's why he stays away. Which is a good thing really. I think that's why he stays away. 'I'm not getting in trouble mum' (140110\_interview\_Tracey\_home).

In this extract it is possible to see the development and reinforcement of the relative positioning of Lewis as 'good', someone who chooses not to spend time with his friends to avoid getting into trouble. Tracey reinforced the idea of Lewis making 'sensible' decisions, with repetition, as though clarifying this position to herself as well as to me. Helping in positioning this reinforcement were discourses such as, there being no obvious reason why Lewis didn't see much of his friends, the hegemonic binary of young people as 'good' versus 'in trouble', of 'trouble' being associated with being 'big', of sons who talk to and reassure their mum's. Macro-level socio-political issues were brought in and incorporated into micro-level narratives of Lewis's personal identity. The power of language, *spoken* and *internal* discourse, in the 'making' of identity meanings is evident, even in this short extract. However, of course it is not just Tracey who wove and directed identity narratives of Lewis. In this case Lewis's own explanation of avoiding trouble was one of the (short-term) instigating factors in Tracey's positioning of him. Long-term identity narratives since before Lewis was born will have incorporated ideas of his past, present and future identities, helping Tracey to position new meanings, to attribute them more or less worth in relation to how she 'understood' Lewis. Lewis and Tracey's interactions were continuously cross-referenced with previous understandings of their individual and communal identities.

Whereas in some families the loss of previous friends might be taken very seriously and personally, Tracey simply made meaning of it in a positive way. If the label of 'different' were more dominant, this situation could have been interpreted as isolating behaviour on the part of Lewis's friends, a form of social exclusion, or derision, possibly as a result of differences and labels. But for Tracey, the situation was a result of Lewis's decisions, seen as reassuring and sensible competencies, rather than social or individual difficulties. There is no right or wrong understanding, but Tracey's personal interpretation positioned the loss of friends as a positive decision on Lewis's part. Rather than question the friends' behaviour or Lewis' popularity, she interpreted the situation in a way that both normalised it and identified positive personal qualities in

Lewis. This 'fit' with her narrative of him as happy and competent, able to make 'good' decisions.

Tracey had started work straight from school. Kev too had not been to college. Lewis' transition, which I visited to talk about, fit neatly into identity narratives of Lewis's success and his parents pride in him. It may be that this, and her knowledge that I already knew Lewis in his school environment, influenced Tracey's telling of the story, but I did not get this impression. Tracey's talk about Lewis demonstrates that, at any time, by asserting some aspects of identity, others may be obscured, and that "[...] we give objects, people and events meaning by the frameworks of interpretation which we bring to them" (Hall, 1997: 3). Taylor and Bogdan (1989) illustrate that the "definition of a person is to be found in the relationship between the definer and the defined" (p.136). In the case of Lewis' family, rather than powerful, externally defined relationships, those that mattered were based on family, father, mother, brother, son, on mutual compassion and understanding. As Taylor says, "[c]ulture is experienced, to a large extent, through face-to-face social groups and especially through those groupings we refer to as families" (Taylor, 2000: 89).

I do not mean to give the impression that for other families the label of SEN was *more* salient than other identity meanings, yet it was almost always present, spoken or intimated in a way it was not in Lewis's household. It was extremely rare for a parent *not* to talk about difficulties or potential problems in terms of their child's education or future life. No other parents I spoke to saw attending Weldale as a unifying experience, something to be proud of. The Dukes understanding of their world, and Tracey's narrative of Lewis are similar in demonstrating that it is possible to (re)construct, to "re-story" (Harmeling, 2011) institutional, educational and social meaning, making difference less salient, positioning individuals as effectively less 'different'. Although "the 'unities' which identities proclaim are, in fact constructed within the play of power and exclusion" (Hall, 1996: 5), in this case the power and exclusion discourses were rewritten as a *unifying* factor. For the Dukes, this performed the largely successful function of "[...]insulating [the family] from the messages received from programs, agencies and schools" (Taylor, 2000: 69). It could be said that Tracey's interpretation of Lewis helped to 'insulate' him, and his family in this way too. Focussing on positive identity meanings led to forming positive 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988:18).



Watson asks:

Do disabled people know who they are because of the fact that they have an impairment, because of the fact that they face discrimination or because of who they, ontologically, believe themselves to be? (Watson, 2002: 512)

It seems that all of these factors, impairment, discrimination, ontological self-understanding, and a myriad of other factors are woven into identity narratives, coexisting and “manifest at different times in differing forms” (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 211). For Lewis, within his extended family, the most important factor was that he 'was' Lewis. The family resisted and transgressed ‘their’ labels, rewriting many ways in which powerful discriminatory discourses of difference could have (negatively) affected their lives. This demonstrates both the relationality of identity narratives and meanings, and how some disabled people are more affected by psycho-emotional oppression than others. This story also challenges prejudicial approaches that might construct the family as 'oblivious' to the ways in which labels are attributed to them.

Lewis’s identity meanings are in constant flux through time as he grows up and as his circumstances change. Identity meanings are situated, within his extended family, his friendship group, his school and college, his local community. They are linked to different people in all these different social sites. Lewis's family, and the Dukes, remind me of families I have known in other circumstances. It seems that the large social network of friends and family with similar labels is key to their narratives that ‘re-write’ both labels and the ‘reasons’ for labels, focussing instead on competencies and personal characteristics of both individuals and groups. This gives backing to ideas of difference as cultural and relational (Goodley and Lawthom, 2005), and that a major challenge for people with the label of learning difficulties is contending with discourses of normality and disability (Goodley, 2000). Lewis's family, and the Dukes, seem to model non-judgemental and accepting communities, ones that we might all strive to replicate.

## **3.6 Transition and identity**

### **3.6.1 Zane – a story of (re)presentation**

Although transition can offer opportunities to 'reinvent' identity meanings in new environments, current ideas about 'effective transition' involve increasing amounts of

documentation, situating individuals in “a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them” (Foucault, 1977: 189).

Nunkoosing and Haydon-Laurelut (2012) describe how such documentation maintains expectation that learning disabled people require surveillance as “they cannot be trusted to manage their bodies, behaviours and emotions” (p.204). At transition to college, documentation is handed from professional to professional, often without students’ knowledge. All the school and college staff I spoke to considered increased documentation and communication at transition to be of benefit to students and staff in that it allowed an understanding of 'need' and an expectation of how students might 'cope with' transition. However, documentation can be viewed as a 'fixed' legacy of identity narratives from a particular time and place, not identity meanings that are necessarily wanted, or helpful, in a new, more 'adult' environment.

For Zane, a complex, introspective and entertaining young man, transition to college offered opportunity to shed ‘his’ labels, and what he considered to a historical legacy of difference. Studying this in detail illustrates how identity meanings, in this case past meanings, ‘stick’ (Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012), affecting current and future meanings and behaviour.

Zane freely described how his previous aggression and anger had been 'treated' by medics, confidently telling me in our first interview:

...to be honest compared to everyone in Weldale school, and this was recently announced by my consultant paediatrician anyway, I am practically the equivalent to a mainstream student apart from [a congenital condition], I'm literally as normal as any other student could be. Apart from the fact that I came here a few years ago and I was pretty messed up and then over the years I've been discharged from the consultant paediatrician and they said to me that they can't help me any more and that I'm cured, well not that I'm cured, they just said that I'm fine now (131130\_Zane\_interview\_school).

Here Zane distances himself from other Weldale students, likening himself to “mainstream student[s]”, and backing this up with medical opinion. Appearing to view his special school education as limiting his 'normality', he acknowledges being “pretty messed up”, but presents himself as “fine now”. Such complex, contradictory ideas of Weldale at the same time framing him as 'different' and ‘helping’ him be(come) ‘the

same' were frequent in Zane's conversation, demonstrating his "oscillating subjectivities" (Ringrose, 2007: 275). For him, and for his consultant, identity meanings labelled as 'special needs' were now in the past. Zane gave the impression this was the start of his 'new', 'current' identity and that he proposed to shed any labelling legacy. He told me he would not tell anyone which secondary school he had attended. In a later interview he confirmed his intent when I asked if he thought college would be very different from school:

There's a few people in my [school] class like Ken and Dave, there's my mate in real life, Kian, and a few others [who will attend the same college], and so... but yeah, I'm intending to get a fresh start there yes. Just leave everything that's happened here behind me (130228\_Zane\_interview – school).

Here, Zane's idea of a fresh start is described in entirely social meanings and related to friendships. Unlike Zane, Tina, his mum, associated misunderstandings between Zane and teaching staff or other students with his 'condition' rather than his environment. She seemed to suggest that there were misunderstandings between Zane and his "real life" friends too. For Tina, Zane's 'condition', described to me as 'autism', although environmentally and socially relational, was not temporal in the way Zane described 'it'.

I asked more about Zane's use of the intriguing phrase "real life". Zane explained:

Yeah, my friends outside school. All my friends off of X-Box Live as well. I've got, a couple of friends outside school who I keep in contact with and they're alright, but they have their moments (130228\_Zane\_interview\_school).

Whilst enjoying the irony of Zane calling his 99 'virtual' friends more "real" than his day-to-day school friends, I understood he was differentiating between two parts of his life, his schooling where he lived with constant reminders and frustrations that he was not 'like' his 'mainstream' friends, and his 'real' life where he felt he could act and live without educational and social labels. Despite having understood himself as "literally as normal as any other student could be" (131130\_Zane\_interview\_school) Zane spent his time at school with others, most of whom he did not feel an affinity with. In associating college with his 'real life' friends, and anticipating a 'fresh start', I felt Zane

was signalling his intent to lead a different, less restricted life once at college. The negotiation of identity meanings enabling his new start would be an ongoing project, not linear but emergent and relational. Zane seemed optimistic about this, describing how he eagerly anticipated expected new freedoms such as choosing what to eat for lunch, or going into town in a free lesson.

Trust was a huge issue in Zane's life. He spoke openly of his history of catastrophic bullying at primary school, leading him to spend months out of school and a year in Link education, and of frequent misunderstandings with people he considered friends. Repeatedly let down by people whom he had trusted, this inevitably and understandably influenced new relationships. Given his history of medical, social, educational and implicit labels it is clear why a medical 'diagnosis' of 'normal' was so significant. It is also clear why he described light and dark, happy and depressed sides of his 'self'. Far from the expected teenage self-reflection I initially suspected, events in Zane's life had at times led to existential questioning, ultimate effects of bio-power (Foucault, 1978) at work. Throughout this traumatic time Zane and Tina remained largely unsupported by educational and social systems which projected deficit and 'normal/non-normal' discourses onto their identities. Like so many other disabled families, Tina was forced to 'battle' what should have been supportive systems, for what her son deserved (Franklin and Sanderson, 2014). In Zane's case the basic requirements Tina fought for were physical safety (first), followed by education.

Although Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) agency model describes the effect of projecting remembered situations into the future as 'stabilising', they also recognise that this is not necessarily the case:

The maintenance of expectations regarding how oneself and others will act is not an automatic process: one's expectations about the future can break down (requiring what Garfinkel calls *repair*) due to disruptions, misunderstandings, and changes in systems of relevance (p.981).

While discussing 'identity', I asked Zane to describe himself. Sadly, Zane described his main "attribute" as being "cold" (121130\_Zane\_interview\_school), an ability to become emotionally detached in social situations, "cultivated" (121130\_Zane\_interview\_school) due to frequent disappointment and repeated let down. Constructed in the light

of past experiences this type of “psycho-emotional” (Thomas, 1999) 'repair' inevitably influences present and future scenarios. Zane attributed this 'coldness' to others' perception of him:

...after time and a lot of soul-searching which has moulded me into what I am now, and what people would call, what I *have* been called before, heartless and monster... I think to myself 'people call me that, they obviously want me to be like it' and then when I act like it to them they start complaining, so it's their own fault really (121130\_Zane\_interview\_school).

This fascinating dialogue demonstrates Zane's reflexivity and his sense of self, indicating clearly how he sees his identity meanings as relational, *responsive* to what others 'expect' and say to him. He implies that his current identity meanings are relatively 'fixed', but have come about through a process, “soul-searching” which has had an effect on his identity meanings, 'moulding' him into “what I am now”. Although Zane often had a deterministic view of his situation, here he indicated that he was, to some extent, in control of his actions, responding to others' comments and adjusting his behaviour which then caused more responses. However, he appeared happy to attribute 'responsibility' for his behaviour to those who called him a 'heartless monster'.

It is understandable that Zane hoped to break with his past. Using Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) terminology, Zane's *selective attention* on previous experiences, meant he associated difficulties with making and keeping friends with 'his' labels and school experiences. However, inevitably 'his' 'coldness', whilst an understandable protective response, affected how he interacted with new environments. Zane's *iterational identity meanings* (his memories of past experiences) were something he hoped to discard. Knowing Zane's history it is easy to imagine the social trust he felt had been so fundamentally attacked. Such an emotional and embodied *schema* would be difficult to discard, as, however hopeful Zane was about his new start in college, rather than a positive stabilising feeling that he could repeat the successes of the past, Zane's *negative* “reliable knowledge of social relationships” (p.980) led him to also fear and expect the worst.

Zane's proposed process of identity transformation started in school where he began rejecting school identity meanings. During the school-to-college transition process,

throughout his last school year, and following his discharge from medical services, Zane increasingly mentioned how other students (not his friends) irritated him. He often complained of being treated as though he were like 'the others' in the school, experiencing dis/ability (Goodley, 2014) acutely. On one occasion (following a class telling off for poor behaviour) he told me that he felt as though he was in primary school rather than secondary school. I asked him to explain:

Zane: Because of all the 'special' people here. It sucks!

Ana: do you think you've become more aware of that as you've gone through the school and as you've got more and more mature yourself?

Zane: I've noticed it since the beginning of year 11, half way through year 10. Year 11's been the biggest difference though (130523\_Zane\_interview\_school).

This suggests that in a school year dominated by both transition and exams/coursework Zane was re-identifying himself through meanings about his academic achievements and his future. In particular Zane highlighted the difference between his own class and the 'less able' year 11 class. I got the impression that as Zane started to make more associations with the person he wanted to be at college, he experienced residual, unwanted meanings (reinforcing his 'unnecessary' presence in a special school) as increasingly irritating. Viewing transition as a new start, he was keen to discard "sticky" (Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012: 5) identity meanings he felt no longer belonged to his 'new' self. His socially relational identity meanings were also temporally relational in terms of his past, present and future through transition. Zane's contradictory identity narratives led him to both hope for a fresh start, yet fear and expect a repeating pattern of social misunderstandings and people who appeared trustworthy only to reveal themselves as *untrustworthy*. Contradictory expectations of hope for a new start and trauma-related expectation of danger in the social world (Mitchell, Clegg and Furniss, 2006) were incorporated in Zane's concept of transition to college.

Unfortunately for Zane his intent and hopes for college were not entirely fulfilled. When interviewing him after one term in college, I asked how he was finding it:

Zane: ... I'm a different person than when I left Weldale.... I'm not the same, in any way, the same that I was.

Ana: Errr.... In what way?

Zane: Emotionally, mentally, different, no, different circumstances, things changing. It's like a reality check really, or soul-searching as people call it.

Ana: Right...? Going to college is a reality check?

Zane: No. Nothing special about college. It's just another day of the week (140124\_Zane\_interview\_home).

Always reflective, here Zane interprets his 'self' as to do with emotions, mental processes and circumstances - a psycho-social relational understanding of identity. Zane painted a picture of an unsettled environment in his level 1 media course. His teacher, obviously struggling, sometimes broke down in the classroom. Some students had been asked to leave. Despite describing himself as a "different person", his implicit hope of being accepted more easily than in previous situations seemed to have faltered:

Ana: And are the other students alright?

Zane: Here and there. Some of them are downright dicks, other ones are all right. I don't particularly have any really close *close* friends. I have a... like... I *did* have a few friends, but then a few things changed. So now I have few-er, which I really don't tend to care too much about.... (140124\_Zane\_interview\_home).

Although *Zane* did not feel he needed help, deliberately casting off the label of SEN, it might have been no coincidence what had happened. Tina explained that in an attempt to control 'disruptive' student behaviour, a seating plan was initiated:

Tina: Zane was *made* to sit next to so... support worker one side and the other person [who was allocated the support worker] the other side. And no one next to him, so he then kicked off really badly because he said "wherever I'm seated I cannot see the board".

Ana: ...which is an issue for him isn't it, with his eyesight.

Tina: For one thing, "I'm sitting next to *no* friends. Secondly, I don't need the help".... Erm, so he was really, really, really, really annoyed ...he *wants* to be... normal (131206\_Zane\_interview\_Tina\_home).

This seating plan not only left Zane sitting without his peers, thus limiting his chances of making friends, it also placed him next to the support worker, indirectly associating him with the 'need' for help. A college tutor told me that a support worker allocated to a particular student often helps others in the class, and, knowing Zane's educational history this was probably the reason for this particular seating plan. However, it lent Zane's identity work unwanted meanings. Zane may not have been aware of the documentation that preceded and accompanied his transition to college. He had implied that by not specifically mentioning his educational history he could leave it behind. However, the systems of surveillance established as part of a 'good' transition had not left this particular identity option open to him.

Zane's class was obviously not an easy environment for him, or indeed for other students. The seating plan appears to have been introduced to help the tutor to cope with the class. However, this had a direct effect on Zane's hoped for identity. It appears that Zane's *iterational* (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) or past identity meanings, supported by documentation and institutional 'knowledge' about him, encroached on his *practical evaluative* (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) or present, attempt to create new identity meanings. These had a clear affect on the way that he behaved at college, which in turn would affect how he was treated:

Zane: ... I don't normally tend to talk much at College. I tend to talk to people who I get on with, or who I like, or who I trust, but apart from that not very often (140124\_Zane\_interview\_home).

This response is unsurprising and demonstrates the damage that both discourse and action had inflicted on Zane, his experience leading him to protect himself from current and future social rejection and disappointment. He may have *recognised the types* (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998), comparing past situations with current ones and predicting what he saw as inevitable outcomes, evoking habitual protective behaviour.



This example supports the view that “neither social structures nor psychological traits in themselves determine habits of action; rather, actors develop relatively stable patterns of interaction in active response to historical situations” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 982).

Gradually, in realising previous difficulties were not entirely institutionally based, Zane started to re-evaluate his own part in the misunderstandings that were a consistent part of his life. Tina told me:

...he said he's really, he does really struggle with friendships and how to deal with people and he said he feels like a shadow in the class  
(131206\_Zane\_interview\_Tina\_home).

At this stage Zane had been diagnosed with depression and was receiving counselling. He had attracted further labels. It is too simplistic to say that Zane had become depressed as a result of realising that social difficulties had ‘followed him’ to a new environment. However, the poignancy of the word “shadow” is revealing of how little he felt he was part of his new class, without the confidence to speak easily, haunted by past social difficulties and the injustices of violence enacted against him, still having unwanted decisions made about his 'needs' presumably on the basis of previous educational labels, unable to successfully challenge powerful institutional discourses and decisions.

Tina, Zane's mum felt Zane required ‘social’ support rather than academic support:

[...] I've pointed out to [his college tutor] now... His special needs aren't educational, that's not why he needs the help, his, his problems are everything that goes on that *isn't* to do with the work, that is why he went to Weldale. It's the break times, or lunch times, things that are not said, the looks, the unspoken stuff that *he* doesn't get  
(131206\_Zane\_interview\_Tina\_home).

Nunokoosing and Haydon-Laurelut (2012) illustrate that without specific labels “most of the signs associated with intellectual disability are simply what differentiate one person from another. That is, what constitutes one’s identity” (p.207). They give the example of Dennis, a man who without the label of 'challenging behaviour' might more helpfully

be described as “a man who does not take criticism easily, who resents being singled out and humiliated in the presence of his co-residents” (Nunkoosing and Haydon-Laurelut, 2012: 207). The removal of the 'label' immediately situates Dennis’s behaviour within particular social circumstances, positioning it as a relational response, rather than purely something to be responded to. Rix suggests the use of labels that might “encourage those who hear them to engage with possibilities” (Rix, 2006: 28), suggesting “person supported by signing and visual communication” (Rix, 2007: 26) as a more 'useful' label for his son than 'Down Syndrome'. This approach is similar to the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999) in focussing on individual requirements to achieve 'equality', indicating an expectation of responsibility from others as well as from the labelled individual. Maybe in Zane's situation, had he agreed, a label such as 'a young man who requires support in making social relationships' would have helped both him and others at college by giving an indication of what might be required for him to thrive.

Zane's attempts to transform his identity meanings show how options for ‘new’ identities, and opportunities to enact them, operate within particular power relations. For Zane, powerful and complex discourses limited his thoughts and action in the new environment, despite, and possibly because of, his aim to 'shed' past identity labels. Feelings and narrative meanings about 'his' ‘inability’ to “become a new person” (Hernandez-Martinez and colleagues, 2011: 119) were incorporated into his self-notion, reinforcing and contrasting with previous and continuing identity meanings. Riddell and Weedon (2014) clearly set out three competing disability discourses in late capitalist societies. These are: the idea of disability representing a “spoiled identity” (Goffman, 1963) linked with stigma; disability labels as categories of “administrative convenience” (Riddell and Weedon, 2014: 45); and disability as a political identity drawing individuals together to challenge and change society's prejudicial and discriminatory practices. Clearly, disabled people may be influenced by some or all of these discourses, but despite their very different implications for identity meanings, not all ways of viewing disability are available to all disabled people. Equally, disability meanings may be salient in different circumstances and at different times. Inherent in all three disability discourses is the possibility of emphasising difference through different treatment, or downplaying difference through same treatment (Minow, 1990), either of which can lead to stigma and further difficulties.

In the absence of political disability identity meanings that could reframe his life in terms of discrimination and political and social power enacted against him, Zane had only individual deficit models of disability to draw on, (re)positioning him within the very discourse that ostracised him. Zane had though, experienced both stigma and the effects of labels as an 'administrative convenience'. Zane's transition story shows how "discourses get into the bodies/minds of (non)disabled people in ways that might contribute to their disablism" (Goodley, 2011: 103), and how, when environmental discourses support these, individual alternative discourses may be no match.

It is important that in writing about Zane in this way I do not 'fix' him in a particular discourse, giving the impression that his beliefs and behaviour reproduced how society saw him, and thus reproducing the same discourse myself. Complex interactions between structural forces, policy decisions, Zane's psycho-emotional understandings of himself, and individual and social identity meanings are evident in this story. It is simply that this story, (as with the others that follow), offers the opportunity to examine a particular situation by thinking about and through 'it', with theory, a chance to expose some of the circumstances of opportunity in which identity narratives are produced. In many other ways Zane's activities did not replicate the disability discourse I have written about here. His social life transgressed ideas of learning disability by its very 'normal-ness' in terms of experimentation with new situations and experiences, including dating and going to music gigs. Whilst still in school his unusual and carefully styled 'look' would not have been out of place amongst young people far his senior in terms of age and experience. In many ways Zane seemed in control of his identity narratives until his self-notion collided with social situations which challenged his identity meanings and his action. Indeed, it is exactly *because* Zane went to such self-aware lengths to regulate his identities, that this story demonstrates the powerful effect that multiple discourses, past, present and future, have on individuals' understandings of themselves. Despite Zane's self-awareness, his calculated and carefully executed plan to leave behind educational labels and to engineer a fresh start through transition to a new environment, *despite* this, it was not enough to "trump" (Bey Cheng, 2012: 716) powerful and limiting norms about expected social interaction. When Zane's social interaction did not match expectations, maybe without the educational labels he so hated, there was no explanation for his 'unusual' and self-

protective behaviour, so he simply attracted other, equally hampering (but less official) labels.

However, Zane's attempt to transform his identity through transition should not be understood as a 'failure'. His transgressive practices should not be dismissed purely because his environment was not receptive to his particular forms of interaction. As will be discussed in chapter four, agentic *processes* should not be discounted in favour of outcome. Zane's identity meanings were temporal, situated in particular social sites and linked to/with particular people associated with those sites. However, as his story illustrates, identity meanings are not only linked with and situated in the present, but are, at the same time, salient in the past, present and future.

### **3.6.2 Amber – a story of a 'character' label**

Whereas Zane actively tried to shed 'his' educational label at transition, for Amber it seemed that the change in educational environment brought about an *unexpected* change in her identity meanings. Goodley (2011) views disability as created through a relational mis/match between the person and the environment, the situation and/or context. This interpretation of disability allows for an understanding of different circumstances having continually different and complex influences on disability.

For Amber, learning disability labels did not appear important in school. This may have been to do with her social nature and good communication skills. However, Amber did have another label, one that influenced many interactions between her and school staff. Amber had a reputation for 'moaning', one repeatedly mentioned both seriously and jokingly by staff. Despite her usually sunny nature, this had the effect of maintaining and reproducing meanings of Amber's identity as 'difficult'. This may have come from historical situations of Amber, by her own admission, "freaking out" (130507\_Amber interview). Although, throughout the year I did observe some situations where Amber withdrew co-operation, it was alluded to on many *many* more occasions than it happened. It seemed to me that when Amber refused to do what was asked of her (usually in art lessons) (121108\_fieldnotes), chose to sit separately from the class (121010\_fieldnotes), went "on strike" (130425\_fieldnotes) or "stormed off" (130507\_Amber interview) it was because she was, or felt, unable to do what was expected of her. Such responses appeared to me to be tools to gain assistance, but had

differing levels of success. Depending on the class, teacher and context, her actions drew frustration, reprimands and disciplining, only occasionally attracting help and understanding, usually in maths lessons where the teacher seemed able to interpret Amber's behaviour in more productive ways. Like Allan, (2008) I found teachers unsympathetic to many student acts of agency within the school. Although Amber sometimes complained about being labelled as 'moaning', in some ways the label served her well. It distracted attention from difficulties with her work, drawing discussion about her character rather than her abilities, sometimes removing the need to continue with the work at all. However, when Amber demonstrated (what was considered) 'positive' behaviour, it was often ignored or misinterpreted under the salience of the identity label of 'moaner'. Maybe because of the salience of this 'difficult' behaviour in the classroom, her frequent offers of help to friends, peers and teachers were rarely commented on. It was not that Amber had limited strategies available to her, rather that her environment was receptive to only one narrative, Amber moaned. Over time this had become an unquestioned and historicised 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1991).

To me, on a trip out of school Amber's 'helpful' identity was particularly visible:

[Amber] took on the role of mother or older sister, offering to put Gerrard's phone in her bag "so you don't lose it", and accompanying Andy down in the lift "so he doesn't get lost" (130704\_morning\_out).

Using her impressive social skills and understanding of social situations Amber chose to align herself with the adults on the trip, fearing "the boys" would "show [her] up" (130704\_morning\_out) and embarrass her. However, this 'grown-up', agentic, if gendered, behaviour was not usually acknowledged in talk about or to Amber, or (unless prompted) in her talk about herself.

It is interesting that Amber did not attract educational labels of requiring help. My interpretation is that her social skills led people to forget that she might struggle with situations, the work in particular. Every situation which challenged Amber, seemed to fuel the general feeling that she 'moaned', as though this were a character trait. The label served to belittle her dissatisfaction with some school situations and expectations, leaving some staff free to ignore her indirect requests for help, and signals that she found the work difficult. Her social, caring, kind, happy-go-lucky attitude with her

peers was routinely ignored with the repeated generalised reinforcement that she 'was' 'a moaner'. Like O'Brien's (2006) daughter, Amber was "labelled in ways that negate[d] her full personhood and the complexities of her identity" (online).

However, the educational labelling concept of deficiency was noticeable when Amber spoke self-deprecatingly about herself. She often emphasised her inabilities rather than her achievements. Amber spent most Easter and summer holidays with her grandparents who lived in Spain:

Ana: .... you said you go to Spain nearly every year. Can you tell me about that?

Amber: Yeah, in Spain, I go on my own on the plane. Because I got people with me, you know, to help me on and help me off of the plane... And I meet my grandma and grandpa, and maybe the puppy... On the other side of the plane at the airport.

Ana: That's brave, that's a brave thing to do. How long have you been doing that?

Amber: (laughing) Oh God... Erm, I think I did it on my own maybe about five or six times now (Ana expresses surprise) but when I started I was really scared, but when I've been doing it for a while I've been getting used to it to know where, I don't know where the way is because I probably get lost, I'd probably get on the wrong plane, I just have to ring mum saying 'got on the wrong plane' (both laugh) (130507\_Amber\_interview).

This interesting interaction suggests how Amber's articulation of her own agency was influenced by her own interpretation of her *identity* - as someone who makes mistakes and doesn't get things right. Amber may have internalised societal disabling discourses about herself. She regularly flew to Spain alone (with airport 'special assistance'), yet downplayed this *actual* feat, joking about the *hypothetical* possibility of flying to the wrong country. In this instance Amber's generalised ideas of her identity as ditzy, fearful and unable to 'handle' crowds or new situations, outdid clear, specific and real abilities. However, as Goodley and Rapley (2002) explore, this interaction also shows how "the assumption of incompetence is reproduced through the talk of researchers and

people with the label of intellectual disabilities” (p.110). By suggesting I thought Amber 'brave' for flying alone, I unwittingly introduced and reproduced an assumption of incompetence. For Amber, as for Zane, and for me, such disability discourses had unknowingly become part of her own identity narrative, devaluing her achievements and influencing how she viewed herself and represented herself to others, contributing to 'her' disability.

However, despite such limiting deficit discourses, in many ways Amber was confident in her abilities. Like many teenagers, frustrated at parental restrictions Amber wanted the opportunity to show she could do more. Excited about college she told me that she was hoping to be allowed into town with the new friends she expected to make:

Ana: ... do you think that's something you'll be able to do, do you think for *yourself*, ... 'oh, I could do that'?

Amber: yeah, yeah. I just (laughing) want to prove my mum and dad wrong! But they never let me anyway (130507\_Amber interview).

If labels are conceptualised as relational there are always possibilities that they, or their meanings, can be changed. Educational labels are often less salient in adults lives, once they have left the educational environment (Taylor, 2000). For Gerrard, leaving science lessons behind, helped him discard ideas of himself as 'naughty'. Happily too, in Amber's case, the negative label of 'moaner' and associated expectations were 'naturally' disrupted during transition to college. Transition allowed her to leave behind both the school work that had caused her such trouble, and the label that had risked becoming a durable identity marker. During college Amber significantly matured, increasing her confidence and abilities. Amber herself attributed her calmer approach to a combination of things, including a family behavioural approach using withdrawal and allowing of treats (social in nature), and medication. The foundation level course she attended gave her increased social opportunities allowing her skills and associated 'able' identity meanings to develop in ways that were acknowledged and praised. Amber's transition story illustrates how:

changes in identity imply changes in the meanings associated with a person, and meanings are not simply located in the 'subjects' but in the relationship between the individual and the organization (Beech, 2011: 288).

In Amber and Zane's stories it is clear how identity meanings are situated within particular social sites and how these change over time. Unlike Zane's specific attempt to shed unwanted educational labels, for Amber this appeared to happen unknowingly through a different environment with a different focus that valued her skills. Continuing in school would likely have prolonged the association of historical behaviours and identity meanings, limiting Amber's chances to change and mature. I will examine how these new, more adult identity meanings affected Amber's *agency* opportunities in the next chapter (see section 4.4.1).

A Foucaultian approach to identity enables the students to be shown, not as 'passive' (Finkelstein, 1980) subjects, but as actively constructing their own identity meanings in negotiating experiences. Technologies of the self can never be extracted from governmentalities, powerful structures of thought and behaviour that influence individuals at all times. However, as discourses, governmentalities can be challenged and changed, through new discourses and through action. The students were involved in constantly ongoing negotiations between internal dialogue, powerful discourses about themselves (and education and their institutional environments), and opportunities and chances for stepping alongside what was expected of them. Although technologies of the self enable (and enforce) regulation of individual bodies, thoughts and action, there is no single way in which these affect all individuals. Changing subjectivities and fluid identities mean technologies of the self are also in ongoing states of flux, able to be influenced and changed. However, it is the 'natural'-ness of technologies of the self, the ways in which they come to be accepted as parts of individual 'selves', that can leave them unchecked and unchallenged.

### **3.7 Chapter summary – and a caveat**

This chapter has looked at five examples of student and family identity narratives in the light of learning disability labels and transition. I have examined some ways in which identity meanings come about through both social and internal processes, and how transgression of learning disability labels can occur. I have introduced identity



meanings as temporally situated within social sites, and linked to/with particular people. Exposure/access to different situations and human relationships can offer differing circumstances of opportunity in which identity meanings may be negotiated.

Naturally, through recording, analysing, selecting, and writing them, these stories give an unintended idea that these processes are *the way* in which identities are generated. My writing about identities is (still) in a linear format which can suggest a straightforward causal relationship between environment, thought and identities. This belies the ways in which identities are constantly and multipally performatively (re)enacted, (re)made and (re)considered. However, these *are* co-constructed stories from which I have made meaning, and an opportunity to explain how I view identity, as well as to make some broader political comments about labelling and society. The stories do not explain how Gerrard, Chris, Lewis, Zane or Amber's identity meanings come about, but suggest some influencing factors that may have made a difference in the complex internal and social processes involved. The stories should not fix any of the students in time, but are my understanding of a brief period in their lives, based on what they, their families and teachers told me, and what I observed.

Examining the stories makes apparent some different ways in which structural, policy and labelling forces may impact on identity narratives, and therefore on behaviour. Equally important are individual and family understandings of identity, as in Lewis's and Chris's stories. Amber and Zane each had different experiences of labelling through transition. Amber's historically situated label continued to 'stick' (Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012) until she left school and went to college, where expectations were different, such that her skills were recognised, not rendered 'invisible' by the label of 'moaner'. For Zane, transition represented a point of potential active identity change, transformation. Despite effortful and emotional investment in identity work, for Zane this opportunity was hindered by powerful forces of social and educational concepts, of the 'usefulness' of documentation in transition and resulting decisions based on labelling implications that followed him to college. His own psycho-emotional understanding of himself in social situations, based on a history of damaging and confusing interactions, added further complex discourses that, at the time, it was not possible for him to shake off. This does not mean that Zane's transgression was unsuccessful, although when I last spoke to him it had not had the effect that he hoped for. His effort at resisting labelling

implications had been apparent to me every day in the school as he told me he 'should' have been in a mainstream school, and that Weldale wasn't the 'right' place for him, disassociating himself from most Weldale students, and working on individually distancing identity narratives of ability and capability. The effort involved in Zane's ongoing resistance against identity meanings projected onto him throughout his school/college life should be acknowledged and not underestimated. The concept of agency 'effort versus outcome' will be discussed further in chapter four.

In these stories there are apparent contradictions in identity meanings in different environments and with different people, or in the same circumstances but at different times. Holland and colleagues (1998) describe situations where apparently conflicting identities based on different discourses "simply coexist... manifest at different times in differing forms" (p.211). It is certainly possible to recognise this in myself at many junctures in the research process. It is also clear that social and educational labels may have more or less salience depending on environment, and that contradictory identity narratives can operate alongside each other. However, at other times different identity meanings intersect, sometimes reinforcing identity meanings, sometimes challenging them.

The effect of social and educational labels on identity meanings cannot be predicted, or differentiated from the environments in which they are produced and reproduced. However, what is becoming apparent is the importance of a 'receptive environment' for more enabling, wide ranging and positive identity meanings to be nurtured. If "[i]ntellectual disabilities are understood as an ideological construction – a creation of culture, politics and society – a category of mass education, differentiation, testing and auditing" (Goodley, 2011: 59) then similar processes (creation of 'inclusive' culture, politics and society, education) can be envisaged as 'undoing' discriminatory effects of labels.

These stories also point to how social participation in a receptive environment can provide circumstances of opportunity that may offer options for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings. For example, cycling became one of Chris's 'tickets' to social participation. Similarly, Amber's 'ticket' to social participation was her social skills and 'sunny' nature which became more acknowledged once the environmentally

linked label of 'moaner' was 'lost'. Zane had hoped that his 'ticket' to social inclusion would be 'normality'. In Zane's case his new environment appeared less receptive, meaning his attempts to mediate his social identity were not as he hoped. The concept of an individually acknowledging and receptive environment becomes clearer when viewed through these case studies and will be explored in more depth in chapter six. In the next chapter I explore agency, a performative element of identity, in the context of circumstances that enable and promote increased agency in transition.

## 4 Agency

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider agency and examine how different situations and environments, in school and college, appear to create circumstances of opportunity for agency for some students. My starting definition of agency was “the way in which people act on, or assert themselves in, their world” (Leonard and Onyx, 2004: 23) (see section 1.3). Through applying different agency definitions to situations experienced in Weldale school, this definition will be further developed throughout the chapter to be explicitly appropriate to Weldale students' agency.

Although for analytical reasons I have separated identity and agency into two chapters, as seen in the students' stories, the two concepts are similar, entangled, and reciprocally interlinked, ongoing processes of relational meaning and action. Agency is involved in the production, uptake and/or resistance of particular identity positions, as seen in Zane's story (see 3.6.1) which discussed his active, relational and reflexive (Coffey and Farrugia, 2014) identity and agency negotiations. Agency is implicated in the purposeful positioning of individuals' identities within, amongst and against others' positioning of them. These processes occur when individuals are “active participants in social practices” (Hernandez-Martinez and colleagues, 2011: 121 – 122).

If, as I described in the previous chapter (see section 3.1), ‘self’ is an objectively viewed element of identity meanings, agency can be considered as a performatively (Butler 1990) enacted element of identities. Butler (1990) conceptualises gender identity as ‘performative’, that is identity meanings are formed and reinforced through action, narrative about that action, through internal and external response to action. Action, like all other aspects of identity meanings, is produced within discourses, which themselves engender constantly negotiated identity meanings.

In discussing agency as performative elements of identities, I am aware of the danger of reproducing unchallenged neo-liberal ableist expectations of assertiveness and individual, active, normative change. Neo-liberal thought attributes agency to particular individuals and groups. However, because agency comes about through temporal, situated and relational *processes*, attributing agency to a particular person is less useful

than identifying situations, circumstances of opportunity, in which agency and assertiveness may be practised. Therefore, I aim to develop an understanding of agency that respects apparent ‘non-action’ and *interdependence* in negotiating agency. This discussion of agency should “[...] incorporate both the useful insights provided by deconstructionist positions and a retention of the notion of agency and of the emancipatory project” (Francis, 2002: 50). I will discuss neo-liberalism and agency in more depth below.

## **4.2 Structure, agency and power**

The free-will versus determinism debate stems from the Enlightenment preoccupation with reason and individualism. The related concepts of structure and agency have formed the foundation of much social-science research. Essentially, debate focusses on the extent to which individuals determine their own life courses or to which these are determined by broader social structures. Post-structural and feminist agency theory challenges previous ideas of free will, considering the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989: 141) of classed, raced, and gendered effects on agency. Acknowledging this relationship with structural forces, Ahearn (2001) describes agency, as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (p.112).

Defining agency causes continuing conceptual and political difficulties for post structuralists (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004) and increasing cross-disciplinary use of the concept of agency is associated with uncertainty about its definition:

This lack of clarity has led to confusion surrounding the whole concept; notions of agency have usually been loosely associated with active striving, taking initiatives, or having an influence on one’s own life situation (Eteläpelto and colleagues, 2013: 46).

Despite lack of conceptual precision or agreement, concepts of agency allow researchers to “explore the co-existence of creativity and constraint” (Tomlinson and colleagues, 2013: 247), of structural forces and individual thought and action.

Although some commentators maintain that individuals can “[...] act independently of the constraining power of social structure” (Campbell, 2009: 407), the structure/agency

dualism (see Archer, 1988) is an oversimplification of the simultaneous interplay of agency and structure (Davis and Watson, 2002). Rather, all action and interaction is the result of complex and multiple inter-relationships between power, structure and agency, between individuals and groups within and through whom powerful discourses are imbued and embodied. As described by Braathe and Solomon (2015) a more fluid understanding “avoids a reliance on structural and structuring discourses which appear to fix the individual in time” (p.165). Viewing agency as *negotiated* offers hope for discourses to change towards broader social equality, because situations that empower agentic behaviour may be engineered.

Spencer and Doull (2015) also highlight the lack of both a definition of agency itself, and of discussion regarding the relationship between agency and power, suggesting that this reflects the “assumption that agency equates to power” (Spencer and Doull, 2015: 2). However, if agency is conceptualised as *equating* power, power may simply be attributed to individuals or groups demonstrating action or agency. Neo-liberal approaches legitimise particular agencies as positive, imbued with social value (Bey-Cheng, 2015), to be strived for so individuals can take control in their lives, make choices and effect change. Individuals are viewed as independently determining their decisions and action, benefiting from their own hard work and rational choices, linking agency with aspiration (Priyadharshini and Watson, 2012). This neoliberal and ableist understanding of agency positions those with less structurally supported *social* power to determine their own lives, or who may enact more interdependent agencies, as ‘less than’ (Olli, Vehkakoski and Salanterä, 2012). Focussing on agency-as-power without examining the inter-relationships between structural and individual discourses negates the influence of the environments in which agency is conceived and enacted, or emerges. Not only does agency dis/allow individuals to enact power, but power is implicated in the *circumstances* of the enactment of agency, restricting and enabling agency through co-constitutive processes (Spencer and Doull, 2015). The relationship between agency and power is complex and contradictory, far more complicated than a simple push-pull process in which individual and structural forces act against each other. Social and individually internal processes are influenced by multiple fluid meaning-making processes that are under constant (re)negotiation and (re)constitution. Individuals negotiate agency *within* and against powerful determining structures and situations. Describing agency *processes* evokes “how individuals orchestrate the

multiple strands” (Braathe and Solomon, 2015: 165) of agentic identities. Agentic acts challenge, reproduce and constitute power differentials, disrupting, continuing and (re)inscribing social discourses. Discourse environments and the people in those environments affect how agency is performed, acknowledged and responded to (Nind, Flewitt and Payler, 2010). In turn individual agency affects the individual, others and the environment. In this way, structure, agency and power are mutually (re)productive of each other.

Exposing powerful structural forces that both constrain and enable agentic action is important for several reasons. Firstly, this approach challenges the implicit idea that agency is individually ‘earned’ through determination, vision and effort. Secondly, agency can be seen as discursive and relational, distributing responsibility for enabling or supporting agency rather than situating it within individuals. Thirdly, distributed agency opens possibilities for engineering particular social circumstances that support or enable increased choice and agency in people’s lives.

### **4.3 Theorising agency - a discriminatory, or emancipatory practice**

Agency is not only associated with individual or structural forms of power. Different definitions of agency can be used to acknowledge or disregard individuals' active force in their own lives, including or excluding particular actions or behaviours from recognition. As Murphy, Clegg and Almack (2011) say, positioning young people with learning disability labels as lacking self-determination is “ethically flawed” (p.71) and “morally culpable” (p.71). Historically, however, within learning disability institutions, efforts of monumental agency have often been constructed within the discourses of 'naughty', 'bad' or 'challenging' behaviour and ‘dealt with’ accordingly. At the same time, learning disability labels may be associated with acquiescence (Goodley, 2001) and passivity (Finkelstein, 1980), without examining the circumstances in which this happens, or the discourses that may bring this about. (Goodley, 2001) A strongly structurally restricted life may offer few opportunities to try out different types of agency, to learn from previous attempts, or to build on previous successes.

Opportunities for agency may be infrequent and spontaneous. For these reasons defining agency is a powerful political act, and the definer has a responsibility to use such definitions in alliance with people whose agency is, (or isn't) to be defined.

Giddens (1984) theory of structuration is extremely influential in agency discussion. For Giddens, 'action' requires a recognised outcome in order to be considered agency. Duits and van Zoonen (2007), drawing on Giddens, also consider agency only as "purposeful actions of individuals" (p.165). Giddens describes three conditions under which actions can be understood as agentic: intentional rather than habitual action; a capability to perform the intended action; and the power to influence events, either evoking or intervening in social situations:

Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any given phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened (Giddens, 1984: 9).

Eteläpelto and colleagues (2013) suggest "this makes Giddens' definition of agency demanding from the perspective of individuals, since it places the emphasis strongly on individuals' capacity to use power to influence social events" (p.49). This level of conscious intent acknowledges agency only in situations where it is explicitly and powerfully 'successful', changing something in a recognisable, foreseeable way. This approach de-legitimises agentic action when individual intent and power are "trump[ed]" (Bey-Cheng, 2012: 716) by more powerful forces. It does not recognise the important influence of environment on agency. Under Giddens' definition, Zane's ongoing attempt to discard the labels that accompanied him to college would not be considered agency as it did not have the planned outcome (see 3.6.1). Equally, Giddens' (1984) use of the word "perpetrator" suggests neo-liberal understandings of agency as action rather than inaction or non-action, however deliberate. This definition fails to acknowledge agency that 'maintains' the status quo (see section 4.5).

Spencer and Doull (2015) offer the useful conceptual tool of agency 'affect' and 'effect', the former being 'ability' to enact agency and, the latter, the consequences of agentic action. Affective agency processes may be easier to observe and recognise, although, as with agency effect, processes are always the result of complex and ongoing social interactions. Defining between affective and effective agency to some extent counters Giddens' (1984) conception of intention and power to evoke change, as conditions of agency. Lacking Spencer and Doull's distinction between affect and effect, Giddens' approach restricts what can be recognised as agency. In lives where opportunities for



what Giddens might recognise as agentic behaviour are extremely limited, this can leave agents with no acknowledgement of their hard, yet 'ineffective' (by Giddens' 'measure') endeavours. For example, Zane's attempt to jettison the label of SEN can be described as highly *affective*, yet less *effective* than he hoped.

Giddens (1984) agency definition also fails to account for individual *feelings* of agentic empowerment or "[...] a sense that an individual has the right to create and take action on his or her own behalf" (Horne and Zimmer-Gembec, 2005: 29). In this case, agency is not purely to be found in an individual's actions, or responses to these actions, but also in the way the person feels about themselves, the internal and externally articulated narratives about identities and their 'place' in any interaction, group or situation. A feeling of (potential) agentic empowerment is not necessarily directly associated with action, and cannot be measured in agentic 'outcome', yet is extremely important to identity meanings.

Structural forces mean the power to evoke change is more evident in privileged lives, less so in lives restricted and discriminated against by others with *more* power to evoke change. Discussing women's sexual agency, Bay-Cheng (2012) describes what, using Spencer and Doull's (2015) definitions, could be called agency *affect* without clearly discernible agency *effect*:

Despite their efforts and apparent individual agency, all but one of the participants' stories ended with them being coerced, deceived, violated, and/or shamed [...]. Without meaning to oversimplify their experiences and situations, it was not lack of agency – sexual or otherwise – that was their downfall: it was that their agency was not enough to trump their lack of leverage with male (often older) partners, their depleted social and familial networks (leaving them with few models, sounding boards and supports), and the inaccessibility of resources (information, services and even simply money for bus fare home) (p.716).

The women Bay-Cheng (2012) describes were not un-agentic, but their agency could not 'win' in the multiply repressive circumstances in which they practised agency. The women's agency was not as powerful as that of their partners, but that does not mean they had *no* power. Bay-Cheng (2012) points out the danger of viewing agency as an inherently individual circumstance without examining the power relations intrinsic to

agency negotiations. She clearly describes the multipally interacting elements of social networks and resources that influence agency. To use a linear, effect-led, and judged, definition of agency that does not acknowledge all attempts and enactments of agency, however minor, or apparently ineffectual, is to reproduce a structural system that privileges some whilst discriminating against others. To view Zane's behaviours, or those of the women Bay-Cheng describes, as non-agency can be seen as a highly political, powerfully repressive act.

Neo-liberal and ableist conceptualisations of agency privilege particular types of action as relevant, rewarding and imperative in 'successful' 'humans'. The effect of neo-liberal thought (Bey-Cheng, 2015) leads to ideas of acceptable agency in stereotypically male forms of assertiveness, self-confidence and competitive action or stereotypically female, caring, compassionate and co-operative action (Schmader and Block, 2015). Schmader and Block (2015) call these gendered forms of agency "highly agentic" (p.475) and "highly communal" (p.475 ). There is a tendency, when considering agency to replicate neo-liberal thought that positions increased agency as positive, and limited agency as negative. However, this one-dimensional moralist continuum (Bay-Cheng, 2015) belies the complex and multi-dimensional meanings involved in meaning making and action.

The "neo-liberal imperative of personal agency" (Bey-Cheng, 2015: 280) risks further marginalising students with learning disability labels, by representing them as having little, or socially 'unacceptable' agency. In line with neo-liberal ableist (Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2014) thought, 'good' agency is arrived at independently with rewards linked to 'merit'. 'Bad' agency is considered a character trait and is restricted. Thus the enactment of agency attracts further dualistic labels, of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour, of 'co-operation' and 'challenging' characteristics, of 'successful' and 'dangerous' personalities. Such dualisms simultaneously validate socially acceptable agency and invalidate socially unacceptable agency. Bay-Cheng (2015) puts it:

[...] neoliberalism purports to celebrate and protect agency, but it also operates as a hegemonic imperative such that not exerting free will – no matter the reason – invalidates one's status as a fully-fledged human. In this way, neoliberalism does not simply affirm agency, it demands it (p.280).

Learning disabled individuals are already marginalised by neo-liberal *educational* labels. Neo-liberal agency definitions have an additional sidelining effect. Demanding particular types of agency that are simply not available to an individual should not be a cause for labelling them 'without' agency. Such definitions reproduce social inequalities, in particular those inherent in disability discourses. I accept that within neo-liberal discourse, by highlighting agency in the students' lives I run the risk of criticism of ableist assumptions about expectations of agency. However, by considering agency as highly relational and contextual, I hope to disturb ideas of agency as personal attribute, and promote agency as a socially relational responsibility.

There are, however, aspects of neo-liberalist ableist agency understandings which overlap with some aims of education, and maybe in particular, specialist schooling, in terms of teaching towards 'independence' (DoH/DoE, 2015). The complex and contradictory relationships between neoliberalism, independence, ableism and agency may never be clear. However, a less demanding concept of agency may go some way to validating different forms of action and acknowledging the relational, situated, interactive and subjective elements of what constitutes agency. Agency definitions are particularly important in learning disabled people's identity narratives because 'competency' is often 'measured' through choice-making and action. Therefore, more accommodating conceptions of agency can be used to trouble previous definitions of competency.

Feminist post-structural discussion offers more complex, less imperative-led concepts of agency. Feminist definitions acknowledge co-operation and apparently submissive behaviour as forms of agency, view following 'rules' as equally agentic as breaking them, and examine the circumstances in which agency can be enacted rather than assessing agency against predetermined expectations. This approach negates the association of increased agency with neo-liberal positive aims, disassociating itself from 'measuring' agency in favour of *recognising* agency and examining the multiple situations that may enable agency to be practiced.

As agency occurs through participation in social practices (Hernandez-Martinez and colleagues, 2011), it follows that agencies, like identities, are temporal, situated within social sites, and linked to/with particular people. Nind and colleagues (2010) clearly

demonstrate this in their description of Mandy (a little girl with a statement of SEN) whose agency and choices were directly affected by the responsiveness of those around her in different environments. In the Children's Centre at snack time, the communicative methods she had learnt were met with unresponsiveness from the staff as they concentrated on functional aspects of feeding her. At home, with her family, these same communications were recognised as social competences which affected her own participatory agency. Nind and colleagues (2010) explain how this situated understanding of agency was enabled by accompanying Mandy to the different settings, also enabling a subtle understanding of how "the young children's 'being' was sometimes curtailed through adults unwittingly constraining and undermining the children's sense of their competence" (Nind and colleagues, 2010: 664). Mandy "required greater resourcefulness to make her meanings understood" (p.660) at the Children's Centre, resorting to 'grabbing' to secure attention. In many contexts this action could be considered 'inappropriate' and may be reprimanded without recognising it as agentic action, born out of unrecognised communicative attempts through 'appropriate' methods.

Nind and colleagues's (2010) description of Mandy's agency raises the theme of interdependent agency. Not only was Mandy's agency dependent on the understanding of her family environment, but her family's agency was dependent on Mandy using shared methods to communicate with them. Agency meanings are never a one-way process, agency is never 'finished', but, like identity meanings, are interdependent and relational.

#### **4.4 Agency in times of change - 'emergent' agency**

In her research on geographical and social mobility of Ukrainian women, Näre (2014) introduces "the notion of agency as a continuum of capabilities" (p.223) in times of change. As introduced in section 1.1 Sen's (1999) capabilities approach has aims of social and economic equality. Sen (1999) describes 'functionings' and 'capability' (also called 'capabilities' or 'freedoms' to differentiate between different capability sets in different aspects of life) as important in how people behave. Functionings are 'beings and doings', such as being well fed and having the opportunity to be in paid work. Capabilities refer to the functionings available to the individual, or the capabilities s/he

has to make choices to live the life they value. Viewed through the capability approach agency is the opportunity to be involved in society's social, economic and political arenas. However, agencies, as capabilities, are judged within the individual's own personal, moral and social values, not within an objective measure or assessment. The ultimate subjective 'measurement' of freedoms associated with capabilities is *eudaimonia* (Nussbaum, 1986), or human flourishing.

Näre (2014) argues that the capability approach positions agency as a continuum rather than a dualism, enabling an understanding of agency in times of social transformation. Näre's approach is also useful in times of individual change, such as educational transition. At such times "habits and routines cannot guide in meaningful ways" (Näre, 2014: 223), necessitating ever-changing, experimental agencies. Viewing agency as capabilities "grasps the new forms of action needed in situations of social change better than definitions of agency that emphasise deliberation and reflexivity" (Näre, 2014: 223). A capabilities understanding of agency acknowledges less planned, more spontaneous and inventive agencies, occurring in times of change or opportunity, agencies with no predetermined outcome, associated with impromptu, non-teleological action rather than thought through processes of change. In some social groups (e.g., people with learning disability labels, or teenagers), spontaneous action may be dismissed as impulsive, implying negative associations, something to be grown out of, belying often ingenious, unplanned and imaginative methods of resisting expectations, questioning norms and challenging authority. Such spontaneous, contextual and opportunist agency may be dismissed as 'poor' behaviour in some circumstances, belying sometimes highly responsive and creative action.

A conceptualisation of agency as emergent allows recognition of opportunistic, unpremeditated, experimental acts of agency, of daring, of fun, of imagination. Opportunities for such agency are likely to occur when ritual, habit and routine become less influential, meaning agency is less easily predicted. Emergent agency is particularly pertinent to limbic times of transition, when routine is fractured, both practically and philosophically. Whilst attempting to conceptualise an emergent theory of agency I came across the Emirbayer and Mische (1998) model introduced in the previous chapter (3.3), which did just that. Although Emirbayer and Mische (1998) do not adequately examine the relationship between agency and context, instead focussing

on individual agency processes, their temporal element allows an understanding of emergent agency. Similarly, Evans's (2007) "re-conceptualization of agency as a process in which past habits and routines are contextualized and future possibilities envisaged in the contingencies of the present moment"(p 85), what Evans calls "bounded agency" (p.85) also adds temporality to the process of agency. Using these emergent concepts of agency disrupts ideas of planned and enacted action, rather focussing on small in-the-moment acts of agency, enabling a more equitable view of agency and resistance. Agency, if it can be 'judged' at all, should be viewed in the context of the individual, their resources, their support, their capabilities and the structural environmental forces within which they operate.

Through this discussion, a less limiting definition of agency is emerging. Agency can be subtle and unpremeditated, is situatedly responsive and may have unexpected consequences. This type of emergent agency occurs at in-between times and 'in' in-between spaces:

[...] agency takes shape in what we call the space of authoring. This space is formed, both within us and outside us, by the multiplicity of persons, who are identifiable positions in networks of social production, and of worlds of inner activity that are also scenes of consciousness. When we act, whether that act is instrumental or imaginative, we "move" through this space figuratively (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 210-211).

Agency 'happens' between "dominating and emancipatory forces" (Reeve, 2002: 493), 'improvised' at times when cultural norms inadequately lead normative behaviour (Holland and colleagues, 1998). Agency and identity meanings may be in flux at times of change in organisations (Beech and colleagues, 2008; Mallet and Wapshott, 2012; Beech, 2011; Collinson, 2003; Winkler, 2014), in educational transitions (Huf, 2013; Adair, 2014) and personal transitions (Näre, 2014).

#### **4.4.1 Amber – a story about emergent agency in changing environments**

With this new, more flexible understanding of agency, I return to Amber, who, at Weldale, had been labelled a 'moaner' (see 3.6.2). Whilst at school, this label eclipsed both significant achievements (such as flying alone to Spain), and her day-to-day cheerfulness and helpfulness. Happily, in college Amber shed the label of 'moaner' and

negotiated increased social participation opportunities, in turn changing identity meanings about herself and opening up possibilities for new identities. I now discuss how circumstances of opportunity helped Amber to do this.

I did not get the impression that Amber felt badly about 'her' label, but that she felt it to be a genuine representation of herself. I am convinced she did not set out to 'lose' the label, but, just as Gerrard 'lost' his conception of himself as 'naughty' once he no longer went to science lessons, Amber's college environment also influenced identity options available to her. Her new environment supported more adult identity meanings, concentrating on social interaction, with which Amber had less difficulty. This new focus also supported Amber's own aims. For Amber, social participation, doing what her older sister was 'allowed' to do, was her aim in adulthood. Independent trips to town, meeting friends after college, going to the cinema with her boyfriend, these things were among her dreams for the future.

When I interviewed Amber at Townwood College she was staying with relatives (who she called her grandparents), while her parents were on holiday. This had not happened before and presented circumstances of opportunity which Amber used to negotiate new agency and capability meanings through a long hoped for opportunity to negotiate an independent trip to town, albeit deceitfully.

Later, I interviewed Amber and her parents, Dawn and Stuart, at their home. I asked if Amber was now doing new things:

Amber: I think (cautiously) yes because sometimes I didn't, not allowed to go to the shops on my own because I just started, with my, with my ... grandma and grandad... *They* let me go in town on my own to get more independent.

Stuart: Yeah, wait a minute, let's just... rewind here a minute. *You* told *them*, that *we* let you!

Amber: No! (Stuart laughs, knowing that Amber knows she's been caught out) No, I didn't!

Stuart: (laughing) That's why that happened. But you proved her [grandma] right...

Amber: I didn't say that!

Stuart: But, you proved her right, you *could* do it. I'm not saying it was a bad thing.

Amber: (triumphant and defiant) Yeah, I did. I rang her when she told me to ring her.

Stuart: Yeah I know! I know, I'm not saying you've done anything negative... But you *did* tell her that, you said that *we* let you.

Amber: (subdued) I thought you did once, maybe I'm wrong. (All adults laugh) No, I just... (Amber gives in and laughs herself) (140217\_Amber\_interview\_with\_parents\_home).

The family went on to explain that, once they (all) realised that Amber could go to town alone, they had started trusting her to do many more things than before she “prove[d] them wrong” (130507\_Amber\_interview\_school). I was interested that, what in some situations might be treated purely as teenage subterfuge, was within Amber’s family, valued as agency and interpreted as a need to re-evaluate Amber's capabilities. This story shows how Amber’s temporal agency meanings were linked with particular people and situated within social sites. She clearly used her differing identity meanings, linked to/with particular people, to her advantage, playing them off against each other to achieve her aim. As her identity meanings were negotiated in favour of increasing social opportunities and she became viewed as more ‘grown up’, more ‘capable’, her social interactions became less constrained, offering her broader, more positive identity meanings.

It is interesting to look at the different motivations for, and responses to, Amber's different types of agency. In her family context, Amber's pro-active opportunist agency took the form of demonstrating, in her words 'proving', that she could *exceed* expectations, enabling, forcing, her family (and herself) to see her as *more* able. In



school she often withdrew co-operation while saying she *could not* do what was expected. This tended to draw negative responses and the subjectifying label of 'moaner'. It is too simplistic to say that academic constraints somehow *caused* her to enact the 'moaning' role that seemed to be expected and (re)produced through school interactions. Indeed, her family, and Amber herself also reinforced the idea that she could be "quite a handful" (130507\_Amber\_interview). Equally, rather than ignoring her sociability as the school had done, when (at her home) I praised Amber's sociability, it was re-framed as a potential disadvantage. (Comment in square brackets was made during transcription the day after the interview).

Whilst discussing Weldale school:

Amber: We got on really, I think I got on really well with teachers and pupils. I don't know why, I just did, it's just my Amber thing.

Ana: It *is* your Amber-thing isn't it? You'll just talk to anyone and make friends won't you, you seem to find that quite easy which is really *lucky*, because a lot of people don't.

Amber: (agreeing) At College now, I just talk to str... people... [maybe realising that telling her mum she talks to strangers is not a good idea?...]

Ana: Yeah, that's one of your, one of your skills isn't it, (Amber agrees) because you're a people person, so you make people feel comfortable talking to you, so then you've got someone to chat to.

Dawn: It can also be a worry, because then she goes up to people she shouldn't go up to...

Amber: I don't do it that often now.

Dawn: ... that's where, you know, she's mad on animals, so if somebody's got a dog... you know, she could potentially go off with that person because they've got the animal, she's friendly, very... so you know, the fact that she's very friendly can also... she doesn't see the fear you know, the... the... that people.... (140217\_Amber\_interview\_with\_parents).

As with so many conversations, here, danger and fear were left hanging in the air, unspecified. So, even at home social dangers and potentially threatening power relations positioned the skills Amber had, so difficult for most Weldale students to acquire, as a potential hazard. At this stage in Amber's life there was no discussion about *preparing* her for social situations where she might be taken advantage of, "the fear" was left unexamined, undiscussed, yet avoided. Safety measures involved protection in the form of avoiding social interactions where Amber's friendly nature might attract abusive responses. Understandable though this is, it limited Amber's opportunities for social interaction and therefore 'training' situations where, with support, she could have learned to identify 'risky' situations or people. Typically, where 'society', and therefore social interactions, are seen through a generalised risk lens, both opportunity and skills development are inhibited.

#### Ethical interruption 6.

'Defining' identities through 'chat'.

Whilst at the time I felt this conversation to be both positive and 'easy', with retrospect the "coercive effect of a power imbalance" (Bell and colleagues, 2008: 96) between researcher and student is clear to see. Although intending to agree with Amber, to praise the skills which were so often ignored, I can now see how, through my talk, I forcefully 'defined' her identity, in this interaction. 'Telling' Amber what she was 'like' as a person is neither a good ethnographic approach, nor a method of reducing researcher power. Quite the opposite. This interaction defines Amber as someone about whom value-judgements can be made, and me as someone with the power to do so. Despite my 'good' intentions, the identity processes are the same as had I made stigmatising comments about Amber's identities. Both limit opportunities for Amber to make further personal statements about her identities and how she perceives herself to 'be'. Both fix Amber in a particular way, requiring great confidence and assertiveness to contradict the speaker. Both are subjective meanings based on something seen or perceived about another person. Particularly in this situation where I am an adult making forceful value-judgements

about a young person's identities and behaviour, such talk is identity defining, contributing to many other 'strands' of identity meanings.

In my 'defence', by this stage I had 'known' Amber for 16 months and we had spent many hours in each other's company. Although I did not know where my comments would lead us, or what Dawn's response might be, I believe that Amber accepted my 'praise' in the way that I intended (although 'praise' is also a value-judgement). However, this interaction demonstrates underlying ethical and power imbued positioning of individuals in what might be considered 'just' a conversation. I wonder how often, despite feeling strongly about the rights of young people to express their opinions, I 'silenced' students with my 'chat'.

On moving to college, Amber was determined to increase her social participation, and particular circumstances of opportunity had enabled her to do so. There are many complex elements of transition and change at play in the type of agency that Amber displayed, in proving she could do more, and the opportunities this opened for her. Whilst still at school Amber had embarked on regular travel training and social trips with an enabler, to increase her confidence and skills. At school, college discourses had consistently reinforced ideas of 'independence', 'adulthood' and 'freedom'. In college Amber was confidently mixing with students three years her senior, who demonstrated their independent travel and socialising on a day-to-day basis. The academic side of school that had caused her some distress, was now no longer prominent in her life. Although still taking maths and English, the majority of Amber's skills-for-living course broadly promoted skills she was 'good' at. Having previously compared herself to her older sister who "can do anything she likes" (130507\_Amber\_interview\_school), Amber's ideas about what was possible and 'normal', both for someone her age, on her course, and for herself, had broadened through exposure to new possibilities. During her time at college Amber's parents had gradually but consistently increased her opportunities for independence. So when the opportunity arose for her to negotiate an independent trip to town, Amber was in a philosophical and practical position to both recognise it and successfully use it to her advantage. Happily, in this example, her family interpreted Ambers agency as a sign that she was ready to be more independent,

meaning her action drew positive responses, gaining her some of the freedoms she wished for. Amber was successfully negotiating different contextual agentic identity meanings, and she and her family were gradually becoming used to the implications of the idea of Amber as an adult.

However, meanings of identities and agency do not have straightforward causal relationships with environment and action. Amber's agency was complexly interdependent on her environment and others within it. In amongst these 'discourses of Amber' are multiple complex and contradictory meanings: her attempts at an 'adult' role in school, almost always outdone by the label of 'moaner'; her family's view that her social capability made her 'vulnerable'; her own interpretation of herself as "a bit of a handful" (140217\_Amber\_interview\_with\_parents); her mum's comment that in terms of independence "if you give her an inch she'll take mile" (140217\_Amber\_interview\_with\_parents); medical and social ideas of 'good' behaviour. Complicating meanings of agency still further in this complex teenager/parent/school/college/society mass of meanings about Amber, are strands of meanings about vulnerability and danger, particular but unspecified worries about adulthood, and the realities of the social dangers that learning disability labels may attract (Mitchell, Clegg and Furniss, 2006). Agency and identity meanings are negotiated within, amongst and against all these discourses, and many more, making any agency and identity 'positions' assumed, complex, fluid and temporal.

#### **4.4.2 Andy. - a story about agency in interview situations**

This story, about Andy, shows how his agency in terms of giving consent for research processes was clearly situated in particular environmental sites and liked to/with particular people.

Andy seemed exceptionally aware of expected school behaviour. He was keen to be 'good' and to follow school rules. He appeared embarrassed and apologised profusely when he contravened expectations and was reprimanded. Talking to me offered him unusual opportunity for agency within the school. My 'rules' were different. When I initially spoke to Andy in an 'interview' situation (in a room on our own and with the voice recorder) I explained that he could tell me if/when he wanted to stop, or if he

didn't want to answer my questions. After several minutes of talking Andy clearly and appropriately brought the discussion to an end:

Talking about his art project, Andy invited me to see how much he had finished:

Ana: I'll come and have a look shall I?

Andy: Next time.

Ana: Yeah, alright...

Andy: Got about a quarter finished, a quarter.

Ana: Yeah?

Andy: Stop.

Ana: Stop? OK, thank you very much Andy (130228\_Andy\_interview).

When interviewing Andy's mum, Erica, at home, unexpectedly Andy was also there. Erica decided Andy should join us and after much persuasion he came downstairs. I had been recording our conversation so made Andy aware of the recorder:

Ana: Andy, do you remember I have that little recorder on when I'm talking to people? (Andy agrees) Are you happy for that to stay on?

Andy: Not today.

Ana: You don't want it on? (Andy shakes his head) Okay, that's fine, I'll turn it off (reaching around cat) if I can get to it. Excuse me cat.

Andy: When I was at [Weldale school] I said yes to that, but not here, no.

Ana: Yeah, that's fine, I've had it on in the College as well haven't I?...

Recorder is turned off, Ana asks whether Andy was happy to be recorded at College and he smiles happily, nods and says "just not here" (140121\_Andy interview\_Erica).

Andy's clear distinction between what he felt was OK at school, college and at home is interesting. At school he had appeared happy to speak to me, sometimes requesting a 'chat' (my 'cover-all' term, quickly appropriated by most students). His initial reluctance to see me at home surprised me, but he later invited me to visit again. Within the powerful constructs of school expectations, Andy may have felt he had no choice but to speak to me. Indeed, despite him appearing to enjoy speaking to me, and me telling him he had a choice, within school norms, this may not have been a real opportunity for him. David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) question the concept of 'choice' when based on the construction of 'information', introduced by an adult within the power relations of the educational setting. This is a valid concern in my own research. Many things may have influenced Andy's actions, but for me it is important that in his own home (in his Mum's company) he felt able to choose not to have the recorder on, and to decide, in retrospect, that he had been happy to be recorded at college.

One reason why he might have been happy to speak to me at school and why he was happy with the recorder had become clear in a school interview:

Andy was very keen to come and talk to me. He seemed chatty (as always) but afterwards said that it had made him tired. He was fascinated by the recorder and after we had finished he wanted to hear the recording. We listened to it together. Adrian (teacher) came in to check that everything was OK so I turned the recorder off, explaining I had promised I would be the only one to hear it. Andy was very happy about this. After one and a half minutes I turned off. Andy, looking at the clock said he wanted to listen to all of it. I asked if he was trying to miss the whole of ICT and he said yes. [We listened to a further few minutes.] Then he said it was making him tired so we turned it off (130228\_Andy\_interview\_notes).

The relationship between opportunity and agency is distinct but different in this case. Andy was not alone as several students (and occasionally members of staff) openly used talking to me as a way of avoiding lessons. This situation offered an opportunity for agency, in Andy's case the chance to determine whether he wanted to speak to me and

the length of time this took. However, his agency, and my acceptance of it, offered the opportunity to spend more time with me and less time in the ICT lesson. More likely though, it was the expectation that in the school Andy should do what adults asked him to, inherent in the system but unspoken by me, that adult requests should be complied with. Epistemological assumptions can render some circumstances invisible and it may be that the concept of choice, although I talked about it, was not 'visible' to Andy at school, but was salient at his home.

Acutely aware of the potential of exploitation if a students' ability to give informed consent was compromised (Roberts and Roberts, 1999), I was thrilled to see Andy making choices about whether, and how much my presence should affect his experiences, not least in matters of consent. Most of the time I felt uncomfortable about assuming that agreement to speak to me indicated informed consent, although I sometimes found myself lulled into a distasteful sense of 'consent by default'. I consistently 'checked' that students were 'happy' to speak to me but did not mention my 'university project' at each encounter. However, it was unusual for students to say they did not want to speak to me or to cut a conversation short. More often they requested time to 'chat' with me, making it clear that they wanted to go into a different room and have the recorder on. When students chose *not* to participate I was pleased, inferring that on occasions when the same student did *not* object they must be *choosing* to speak to me.

However, my own actions are clear in the limiting of agency as well as accepting it. For example, at school, when Andy and I listened to the recording I turned it off after a minute or so, indicating that I was 'in charge' of it. I remember at the time, wondering if it was OK to keep Andy from his lesson for any longer, but did not mention this, simply turning off the recorder, *then* asking him if that was enough. Equally, when at home Andy asked for the recorder to be turned off, I mentioned school and college recordings meaning to offer him the chance to say he hadn't wanted me to record there either (but obviously hoping he wouldn't say this). However, looking back, it established a sense of expectation that the recorder would be on when I spoke to him. Andy's feeling that he could ask for the interview to stop, or for the recorder to be turned off was dependent on many factors, my own behaviour included. It is no surprise that he was able to exert most agency when he and I were in his own home.

These examples, and my interpretation of them, position Andy's agency as interdependent with my own agency within our mutually constituted identity meanings in interview situations. In the circumstances described, Andy felt able to make choices (which I interpret as demonstrating 'competency' in decision making about research consent), and to change situations through his actions. The discourse environment, one in which many competing norms and expectations played a part, both supported and restricted Andy's agency and identity meanings, as well as my own. This is one understanding of some of the processes involved, inevitably partial and subjective. Yet it complicates the concept of agency being linked with particular people, in that my own part in negotiating Andy's agency appears to be both supportive *and* restricting, temporal and always under reconstruction.

#### **4.5 Chris' and Eddie's stories - introducing 'ordering agency'**

As discussed above, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration requires a recognised outcome to agentic action in order for it to be considered agency. However, feminist and Foucaultian definitions of agency have a broader view, considering "following, resisting, choosing, or ignoring" (Fendler, 2010: 48) as ways of responding to social discourses and expectations. Yet, active agency that changes situations in recognised positive ways is still privileged over the type of agency that keeps things constant, that reinforces or reproduces the status quo. Indeed, such agency was invisible to me until late on in the research process.

In the light of this, I now look at the agency of two students, Chris Hoy and Eddie Stobart. Chris (the cyclist introduced in chapter three) and Eddie were good friends having shared taxi transport since starting at Weldale school. They sat together in class and spent almost all of the school day together. There did not usually seem to be much chat between them, but they were both polite and accommodating if I approached, Chris initiating conversation and Eddie answering if I asked him a question, both enjoying some fun or a shared joke.

Chris and Eddie had unusually consistent and similar approaches to school. In every class both immediately opened their bags, setting their books and pens out neatly on the desk in front of them, then waiting quietly to be told what to do. Often finishing a task earlier than the others they would again both wait quietly without drawing attention,



either to their achievement, or to their patience. It seemed they were enacting a role of 'good student' even at times when chaos and uproar surrounded them. I recorded this in my fieldnotes, in an ICT lesson:

Chris logged on then waited for further instructions. Waited for about five minutes, apparently quite contentedly. Patient and not distracted (121108\_day\_I\_was\_given\_the\_keys).

This self-governing, performative (Butler, 1990) role, that is, by *behaving* like good students Eddie and Chris *were* good students, was not without effort. An interview with Eddie made me realise this. As Eddie's quiet, often nervous manner made me think he would need some time to feel comfortable with me, I waited until February, eight months after I first met him, before asking if he would like to be 'interviewed' separately. During that time I had seen Eddie politely answer teacher's questions in class with 'yes', 'no', or occasional snippets of information. Usually when I spoke to Chris and Eddie in the playground he would give one word answers, or nod enthusiastically in agreement with what others had said. It was only when he spoke at greater length in the interview that I heard his Midlands accent. Surprised, I realised just how little I had heard him speak, either in front of the whole class, or to Chris. It takes some skill to deflect the expectation of speech in this way without attracting reprimand.

All other students displayed a continuum of what was considered 'good' (compliant) and 'poor' (disruptive) behaviour, at different times and in different circumstances.

However, in my whole time at the school I never saw Chris or Eddie behave in a way that meant they were told off or reminded how to behave. I never saw a teacher appear irritated or frustrated with either student. Naturally, in a class of students whose demands for attention were both more audible and immediate, Chris and Eddie's 'exemplary' behaviour gained them few observations of praise and only occasional plaudits. Neither student showed any sign of minding this. When Chris's efforts *were* recognised and I asked him what he had done to win the weekly individual merit points competition, inherently modest, Chris replied, "“Just get lots of points and work hard” as though this was nothing” (121112\_school observation).

However, Chris's "complicit" (translated from German by Huf, 2013: 64) agency was recognised at the leavers' assembly. The two year 11 teachers led an assembly of slides and talked about each individual student before presenting them with a class photograph, the whole school cheering and applauding. Chris's teacher, Ivor, said of him:

You always see him giving his very best... he never gives less than 100%...  
(130612\_Ivor\_leavers\_assembly).

Always quiet and reserved, Eddie's approach, and his increasing confidence and agentic capabilities, were also acknowledged in the leaver's assembly.

Eddie has got so good in the allotment that he can tell Tim [allotment supervisor] what to do. He knows what to do himself and he has started telling other people what they should be doing too... he has had Wolverine [another student] as his assistant on the allotment... It is a real development that he is able to tell people what they need to do ... He has worked hard...  
(130612\_Ivor\_leavers\_assembly).

It is interesting that using his increasing confidence on the allotment, Eddie adopted another institutionally accepted and valued role, that of instructor or teacher. His "development" carefully maintains his identity as a 'good' student, someone who commands respect within the educational discourse, receiving accolades for successfully moving from 'instructed' to 'instructor'. These particular identity meanings were relational, yet linked with those of Tim, Wolverine and Ivor's, and situated within the allotment and the school as social sites.

#### **4.5.1 Why complicity and co-operation must be considered agency**

These examples bring the importance of the definition of agency into sharp focus. Giddens (1984) might dismiss Chris and Eddie's behaviour in class as 'habitual' and therefore not consider it as agency. Yet these examples suggest that action supporting and constituting the 'status quo' is equally as influencing of events, and effortful, as *challenging* agency might be.

Previous definitions of agency that focussed on either resistance, or active change, may also not class co-operation and complicity as agency. Yet it is important both to

recognise and question such agency. Feminist post-structural ideas conceptualise agency as contributing to the reproduction of social situations, as well as to changing situations. “A notion of agency which is centred on the idea of children’s visible impact devalues this permanent contribution” (Bühler-Niederberger and Schwittek, 2014: 506). Individuals actively participate in and contribute to the construction of social processes, which concurrently influence their opportunities for participation and agency. Although initially, agentic acts that disrupted the smooth running of the school were most apparent to me, this is what makes compliant agency as significant as non-compliant or defiant agency. Taking Buehler-Niederberger's (2011) concepts (from the German original), Huf (2013) describes 'cooperative complicity' and 'competent submissiveness' as ways in which children willingly assume and “actively seek for possibilities to cooperate” (p.64) within the expected role of 'child' in asymmetrical power relationships. Buehler-Niederberger sees the dependent nature of young children on adults as leading to 'competent submissiveness' as a form of agentic behaviour, in new situations. “Trying to meet the teacher's expectations can thus be seen as a strategy to establish the role of the school child” (Huf, 2013: 73).

For Chris and Eddie, their roles in meeting teacher expectations were extreme, indicating the effort and considered approach this must have taken. However, although power relations *were* obviously asymmetrical between the two young men and their teacher, Ivor, it appeared that rather than simply a *result* of unequal power, their 'good' student roles *enabled* some fun between them. Most mornings Chris would check that Ivor's 'wig' (his hair) was 'on straight', which was accepted as a humorous part of the morning routine. I suspect that, because this was practically the only 'demand' that Chris made of Ivor, it was consistently tolerated in a way it would not have been had Chris needed more attention throughout the day. Similarly, apparently unknowingly acknowledging his own role, (and that of environment) in agency, Ivor said at the leavers' assembly:

Eddie has a good sense of humour when you let him express himself...  
(130612\_leavers\_assembly).

These examples illustrate the interdependent nature of agency. Chris's joke about Ivor's wig was dependent on Ivor accepting it and playing along good-humouredly. Eddie's

sense of humour was dependent on Ivor 'letting him express himself'. Equally, Ivor's agency was interdependent on and with the agency of his class and other teaching staff. Everything to do with the circumstances in which agency emerges, plays an interdependent role.

Discussing how girls talk about school, Gordon and colleagues (2008) claim girls invest in their successful educational performance and “use a range of strategies. Their apparent subjectification is by no means passive or devoid of agency – rather acquiescence is performed with particular aims and objectives in mind” (Gordon and colleagues, 2008: 182). Chris and Eddie too, appeared to exhibit their apparent aims, of being good students, in terms of the practice of 'good studentship'. However, that they sat quietly, listened, followed instructions and worked hard also appeared to *be* the objective they had in mind.

“[C]hildren's agency always has elements of both, the 'making' and 'breaking' of structures” (Huf, 2013, p.72) or indeed a myriad of alternatives that lie between these binary options. What is important is that all the students played a part in structural and agentic processes within their school, colleges, families and friendship groups. Bühler-Niederberger and Schwittek (2014) found that in Kyrgyzstan, a highly hierarchical environment, the kindergarten children they worked with were:

*reliable accomplices* of the authorities most of the time and they [were] even proud of their compliance. Their compliance becomes part of their self-conscious definition of their own person and their own value (p.513).

This suggests compliance is not simply the passive opposite of resistance, and should be equally interpreted as agency.

#### **4.5.2 Complicating ‘complicit’ agency - introducing ‘ordering’ and ‘disordering’ agency**

Particularly in the context of learning disabled people, it is important to conceptualise such reproductive, 'ordering' agency as important in its own right, rather than a ‘natural’, passive, default position from which resistance, or 'disordering' agency ‘emerges’. Too often (and I was also guilty of this) action or lack of expected action is attributed to a condition or diagnosis rather than the social environment in which it

happens (Goodley, 2001: 221). However, *ordering* agency processes, reproducing the order of things, are as much a relational product of negotiation, of situations, of expectations, of interactions, as *disordering*, status-quo challenging agency processes.

Context plays a big part in which elements of these processes are salient at any one time. Demonstrating this, importantly, despite their 'good student' role in school, both Chris and Eddie were active in more traditionally valued, more acknowledged ways in other aspects of their lives. Chris's social, humorous, and enthusiastic approach to life made him popular. He often initiated friendly, appropriate conversations with people he met in passing. He cycled around 200 miles each week. Although calm, he could not be generally described as 'passive'. Eddie, whilst always vocally quiet, was also active, gardening, mowing the lawn, playing basketball with a neighbour. In a later interview Eddie confidently explained his planned 35 mile journey to college, involving changing buses and negotiating a city bus station, as though this were straightforward (130228\_Eddie\_interview). Although his route was later changed he competently made the still complicated trip, confidently phoning the relevant people to let them know when an expected connection did not arrive. And despite being quiet, Eddie was not without passion. He would tell me (quietly and in the playground) when he felt something had been badly handled in school, or when school systems were 'wrong'. At the end of year 11, voluntarily acting in a film made by some students, Eddie was required to shout loudly at a 'bully' which he did, effectively and (to everyone who witnessed it) surprisingly.

These examples, and there are many more, show that both young men (and, importantly, their families) were working at types of agencies that enabled and empowered them. In school Eddie and Chris appeared to happily and effectively reproduce what they believed school should be, supporting their education in the process. Such 'school-appropriate' agency is generally valued in young people. That both students were more *actively* agentic and making choices in other aspects of their lives indicates that their co-operation and complicity in school was also an active choice, an ongoing enactment of how they believed they 'should' behave. In Sen's capability approach terms, both young men had capabilities that they chose not to employ in school. It is an unusual school pupil who never attracts a negative comment about their behaviour. This must have taken some doing. So what did this school-based agentic co-operation and

complicity 'do' for Chris and Eddie? What was the purpose of their consistent hard work and preparedness to learn, not to join in with misbehaviour even when enjoying it from the sidelines, not to 'give up' when unexpected events made the lesson's planned learning patchy, or non-existent, when they packed their books away untouched at the end of the lesson?

One suggestion is that Chris and Eddie's 'good' behaviour meant that, although, inevitably, they did not attract as much praise as they 'deserved', they also did not attract negative reprimands. All interactions with teaching staff were functional, social or humorous rather than corrective, so avoiding confrontation or embarrassment. They were not drawn in to situations they felt were unsafe or unpredictable. Working hard and embodying the role of 'good' student avoided embroilment in the goings on of the other students. It distanced them from other students and bound the two of them together as friends. Their behaviour gave their own identity meanings (as good students, hard workers) stability as they were supported by the school environment. When in school, their performative behaviour 'made' them 'good' students, ready to learn and work hard. Their families had become friends and both supportively valued education, hard work, and their sons' roles in 'being' educated. I got the impression that neither family would have exhibited or accepted poor behaviour. It seems Chris' and Eddie's individual and joint learner identities were representing, enacting, family "educational inheritance" (Ball and colleagues, 1999: 211), social and personal values and that these were embodied in their behaviour.

Chris's steady and positive approach to school continued into his work experience as detailed in my fieldnotes of tutor time:

Free time with the laptops. Chris talked to me and showed me his work experience card. Someone at the [bicycle] shop has to write in every week how he has done. Every entry was "excellent attitude, good approach to work, positive and consistent" (130204\_fieldnotes).

Unusually, Chris continued in the same work experience all year. Teachers predicted his steady, positive approach as useful in later life too, seeing it as part of his identity. For example, one teacher, Claire, said:

Chris is a very soc[iable].... Yes, and he'll be an asset to anybody who ... gives him a job as well, and I think he'll just do..... yeah, he'll just do what he's told and do, do it, you know and... and everybody will love him... (130225\_interview\_Claire).

Eddie and Chris's complicit agency not only helped the smooth running of the classes, it perpetuated discourses of school and student. In institutional terms, their behaviour was exemplary, valuable in the running of the school, but also in their identity meanings of themselves, individually and as friends. As such, their co-operative, systematically rule-following agency should not be understood simply as complicity, or as following someone else's agenda, but considered as *ordering* agency which fulfilled its own function for the two actors.

However, defining *ordering* and *disordering* agency (usually described as compliance and resistance) reproduces a binary understanding of action that belies the complex relational nature of agency. Eddie and Chris were highly unusual in their consistent behaviour. All other students, and indeed staff, exhibited differing levels of both ordering and disordering agency in different situations. In the next example I will show how both ordering and disordering agency can be practised alongside each other to useful effect.

Some forms of ordering agency, such as working hard in class, are clearly (if implicitly) valued, while other approaches are undervalued, even rendered invisible to the viewer. Eddie's mum, Felicity, concerned by his lack of initiation of conversations, searched for situations where his clear understanding of social expectations 'forced' him to talk to people. This was not always successful:

...apparently at [Farmton College] they'll be doing this cafe and they have to serve people and do the food, so I'm hoping that might bring him out of himself, handing over change and, 'cause they did a fair at school a couple of months ago and he had to do the cakes stall with a few other boys, (sighs) he hardly ever did anything, all he did was kept moving along the line out (laughs) the way, bringing a few more cakes out and then 'Eddie, serve that person', 'oh no it's alright.....' It was so difficult, he just kept moving down and out the way every time. So how he's going to do it I've no idea. (130521\_interview\_Felicity\_Eddies\_mum).

Interestingly, here Felicity clearly describes Eddie successfully using a method of avoiding uncomfortable social interaction. This skilful avoidance technique, undeniably a useful form of agency, was not one that Felicity explicitly acknowledged or valued, as her aim was different from his, *wanting* him to serve customers, thereby improving his social skills and confidence. However, Eddie's agency in *avoiding* customers was already socially appropriate, quiet, polite, non-aggressive or confrontational, and also extremely effective, ironically revealing significant social skills. These skills doubtless contributed to the effectiveness of Eddie's approach, and also to its lack of recognition. In this situation Eddie's particular agency fulfilled several roles. He did what was expected of him (taking part in the school fair), contributed to the smooth running of the stall (replenishing the supply of cakes), whilst avoiding what he did not want to do (serving customers). Using *complicit resistance*, Eddie, at the same time used his agency to *maintain and erode* expectations about his behaviour. At the same time Eddie exhibited *both* ordering and disordering agency.

Studying the types of agency that Eddie felt happy enacting has helped me answer a repeated question in my theorising – is resistance to expectations and norms always confrontational and risky? In this case Eddie shows me that it is not. His version of resistance was polite and safe whilst ostensibly still complicit. Rather than viewing complicit/resistance agency as a binary or continuum, with complicity and resistance opposing each other, this example shows both complicity and resistance in a single ongoing, responsively agentic interaction. This demonstrates both the complexity of relational agency, and its uses to the actor. “Foucault saw power and resistance as the two sides of the same coin, arguing that the power embedded in one discourse is only apparent from the resistance embedded in another” (Corker, 1998: 231). By demonstrating complicit resistance, Eddie negotiated power through resistance, but was, at the same time reproducing the structures of power that he was resisting against. This demonstrates the complexity of agency in a way that is rarely recognised. By being *complicitly resistant* Eddie found a method of achieving his aim without attracting unwanted attention. McNay (2000) critiquing the simplistic association of agency and resistance, highlights creative agency as important, stressing that “adaption as much as denial” (McNay, 2000: 3) should be recognised as agentic action. It is vitally important that definitions of agency acknowledge such skilled, effortful and complex forms of agency, rather than labelling actors such as Eddie as 'without agency'.



This story illustrates how Chris and Eddie, in their ‘good student’ roles, run the risk of being positioned as ‘unable’ to enact agency due to excessive institutional discipline and control, modes of domination, or to some essential trait. However, by contrasting their classroom agency with their out of school agency, this example shows the active role of individuals in subjectification processes (Milchman and Rosenberg, 2011). I also describe how contradictory agency, both ordering and disordering types, may be present and salient alongside each other at the same time. In the light of this, any agency definition must recognise such subtle, easily overlooked types of agency in order to acknowledge the agency and identity work that is always in play.

#### **4.6 Projected identities – making sense of/through imagined lives**

Preparing for transition from school to college offers perfect opportunity for imagining ‘new’ identities, as discourses become centred on change, adulthood and unfamiliar circumstances, in preparation for the future. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualise the past (iterational element), the future (projective element) and the present (practical-evaluative element), or the “chordal triad” (p.972) as inextricably interlinked in the processes of agency meanings. In this section I look at the *projected* agency of two students, first Wolverine and then Anthony. I will discuss the processes and value of projected agency.

Projected identity narratives may perform several different functions. One such function is to allow imagined possibilities for increased personal authority, agency and power. Against strong learning disability discourses of ‘inability’, ‘vulnerability’ and ‘need’, in imagined scenarios agentic identity narratives may offer circumstances of opportunity to exaggerate, develop and experiment with what might be understood as ‘risky’ agency positions.

Some types of agency are associated with risk. Society does not allow a space for legitimately angry and raging identities. Instead of viewing such agency as having a “communicative function” (Smidt and colleagues, 2007), fear, frustration, anger and their associated acts may be funnelled into a discourse of violence and ‘challenging behaviour’, dealt with in terms of restriction, medication, discipline and containment. Such responses, ironically and sadly, often further constrain already limited life choices which may have contributed to the angry response (Vandekinderen, Roets and van

Hove, 2014). Behaviours generally associated with adolescence may, within learning disability narratives, be medicalised (Sheehan and colleagues, 2015), with policies, agreed behaviours and responses available to 'deal' with them. This, combined with often limited geographical and social experiences and tightly regulated boundaries, can leave little space for young people with learning disability labels to 'try out' different identity narratives in ways adolescents without such labels often can. Powerful educational, political and medical discourses restricted some Weldale students' opportunities to try or test out different identity and agency positions. Is it any wonder then, that given the limited boundaries of their 'real' lives, some students sought alternatives in imaginary scenarios? In projecting imagined agentic identities into either future or imaginary scenarios, some students tried out new and different agency narratives, lives and situations in which they were more powerful (even having super powers), and had more opportunity to affect both their own and others' behaviour. These projected identities were often forceful, 'powerful' in ways students were reprimanded for in their 'real' lives. Imagined power and agency allowed students to get their own way, make choices, and be authoritative over others without question, comeback or punishment.

In this way some students had found 'safe' environments for testing out alternative, less readily acceptable, riskier identity narratives.

#### **4.6.1 Wolverine – a story about broader agency opportunities through projected identities**

Wolverine provides a good example of this. His day-to-day life did not offer him many opportunities for exerting power and receiving praise. He painted a portrait of personal and family identities under constant and repeated threat. This threat came from both outside and within the family, from people who could be expected to protect Wolverine's safety and identity. He told convoluted stories of having been unfairly 'picked on' by a teacher, so much so that he 'had' to leave his previous school; of telephone companies falsely accusing his mum of owing "too much" (130513\_Wolverine\_interview\_school) money and cutting off the phone; of his only friend chased away by his mum amidst confusing accusations he had broken their games console; family members who "scrounge" (130513\_Wolverine\_interview\_school) money for playing the lottery; of knowing

people he described as “weird”, “evil”, jealous; and indirectly a knowledge of drug and alcohol fuelled situations. He described a need to be vigilant, a skill learned from these experiences and of being ‘knowing’ - about eye contact, about body language, about untrustworthy people. Authority figures cannot be trusted in Wolverine's story, family must be treated warily and a friend is a rare and potentially temporary thing. It becomes difficult to make the traditional distinction between child and parent when Wolverine appears to perform surveillance and protection work that a parent might do. Given Wolverine's 'realities' is it any wonder that he projects his own identity into an imaginary world, one in which he takes real control, has a hero role, and where the vigilance, suspicion and people skills he has learnt are recognised both socially and financially. Wolverine retreats (or projects) into the world of James Bond.

Wolverine occupies an imagined and future professional role as an MI6 spy, someone who not only commands respect, but is *supremely* respected for his intelligence and wily cunning. The boundaries between Wolverine's alter-ego and his day-to-day life are blurred. For example, far from purely an imaginary scenario, Wolverine has worked out a plan to reach his aim. Amid school transition discourse of work experience and further education he has worked out a way of transferring the skills he has already amassed (surveillance, an understanding of body language, seeing beneath what people say, cunning and knowing) through recognised and respected methods, as Wolverine told me in the playground:

My opening gambit was to ask if [Wolverine, Chris and Eddie] had all had a good weekend. Wolverine started talking and wanted to tell me about how his [school organised] work experience hasn't materialised.

Wolverine: We're fed up with it. My mum's friend works at the St John's Ambulance so she's going to ask if I can go there.

He then went on to say that he wanted to work nights because he could get more money.

Ana: Oh, I thought most people at the St John's ambulance service were volunteers?

Wolverine: I'll only go there for the training and then I'll get some experience working nights. I want to work at night because more people drive or fall over at night when they've had a drink. Another reason why I want to work at night is because you get paid more. And it's a useful skill to have for when I'm 18 and I get my job working for MI6 (121119\_observation\_notes).

Wolverine's plan, his “imagined future” (Ball and colleagues, 1999: 211) is not dissimilar to the “career trajectory” (p.210) of some mainstream vocational learners, Ball and colleagues (1999) describe as “relatively clear, relatively stable” (p.210). However, despite a clearly thought through trajectory, based on a knowledge of widely accepted and valued skills and ways of achieving experience, unlike Ball's young people, Wolverine's imagined future is not “relatively possible” (p.210). Sadly, within the discourse of learning disability, the skills he already has, learned he tells me, through a history of ‘bad’ treatment, being in unsuitable environments and hinted at potentially unsafe/unstable or unpredictable situations, are unlikely to be valued. Worse, they are likely to be considered as nosy, untrustworthy and suspicious behaviour, medicalised as 'peculiar' or “dark” (130513\_class observation) effects of ‘his’ 'condition'.

Within the school Wolverine's projected future and those of other students were often referred to by staff in terms of ‘lies’ and ‘stories’. However, it could be argued that this form of identity work is also a form of agency. In a world where opportunities for enacting agency to change situations are as limited as they appear to be for Wolverine, should such agentic thoughts and plans be completely discounted as imaginary? Where is the boundary between imagining, rehearsing, and enacting agentic acts? Wolverine's career plan could be considered an attempt to

[...] attain ... imagined futures in the context of possibilities and limitations framed by the resources at [his] disposal. These resources are formed through intersecting social, cultural and economic dimensions of difference such as social class, gender, ethnicity, embodiment, culture, sexuality and age (Gordon and colleagues, 2008: 187).

Is it fair that, in this context, Wolverine’s imagined agency, his projected future, be considered a 'lie'?

Wolverine's projected identity and agency meanings were starkly different from his day-to-day life. During year 11 he missed nearly five consecutive months of school and many individual days. His stories gave an impression of perceived victimisation from organisations and institutions, and certainly he was often the target of bullying comments from another student, Adam. Wolverine often gave the impression of being lonely. Although he worked hard in class, his frequent absences meant he was often 'catching up' with class or course work. As the following extracts show, his agency in school took a very different form from his imagined agency, often withdrawal of communication in an attempt to convey his wishes or emotions:

Pete [teacher] asked Wolverine for his planner. He refused. Pete asked Jean (TA) to get it out of his bag, he pulled his bag away.

Pete: "I will have to phone Cindy [Wolverine's mum] and tell her that you have refused to show it to me. What's in it that you don't want me to see?"

Another member of staff came in and Pete explained about the planner. She was kind and said, "If there's something in it you don't want us to see it's still better to show us because we're going to know in the end anyway." Wolverine looked very upset so she asked if he would like to leave the classroom and talk to her. He said yes (121008\_whole\_class\_observation).

Later in the day:

Wolverine had closed his eyes and stopped working part way through the [English] lesson. Near the end he was in tears and a TA who had been assigned to help him for this lesson asked if he wanted to leave the room. They did. The phonics teacher later said [to me] she had made it worse for him when she said "Are you just having a really bad day?". This had made him cry. The other pupils did understand and Michael said to Adam, "Wolverine is having a really bad day, stop asking why he is going out". I can't help comparing with times in my life when a bit of kindness has made me cry. That, 'don't be nice to me or I'll cry' feeling. Wolverine's day may have been 'bad' as a result of something that happened at home that was written in his book (the one he didn't want to show in tutorial). Actions from this morning or yesterday accompanying him throughout his school day and making him miss classes. Of course this is pure speculation, but I

was pleased when he was treated nicely and no-one called him names for crying in class (121008\_whole\_class\_observation).

These extracts from 'real' life bring Wolverine's chosen pseudonym and imagined career into sharper focus. It is poignant that he shuts his eyes when he can no longer cope with the reality of his day. Pete was not Wolverine's usual teacher and did not know him as well as his own class. I felt that on this occasion Pete had misjudged the situation and showed unusual impatience. However, against the personal and institutional power, the physical intent to take the planner used for home-school communication, the procedural expectation that his planner be shown whatever his own feelings about it, he had little option but to pull his bag away to try and protect his privacy. This form of agency was environmentally constructed, powerful factors influencing, and limiting, Wolverine's options.

Given Wolverine's lack of options for affecting his environment, or for refusing to do something he did not want to, it is not surprising that his imagined self is agentic in more successful ways. There are parallels between Wolverine's lives, real and imagined, and those of Sean, a young autistic man, described by O'Leary:

And who could blame Sean - or indeed any other person with autism - for lending more importance to their own worlds of individual interest, to the point of crossing the boundary of what separates reality from fantasy, when the alternative – the social world - is so often dull, scripted and devoid of imagination (O'Leary, 2011: 181).

Wolverine's imagined future says something about the quality of his present. Rather than assuming that inhabiting an imagined world is an unworldly character trait or part of a 'condition', it could be seen as associated with life opportunities that are unexciting and limited. If Wolverine had realistic and interesting opportunities for work, something he could work towards with a plan, like the one he explained to me, there might be no need for an imaginary and heroic projection. If he had real opportunity to "shine" (130215\_Adrian\_interview), to be praised and to feel proud of his achievements, the role of MI6 agent might lose its importance. In the mean time, I feel that it did no harm at all. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) model of agency, if used for understanding identities too, can show how, in projecting identity meanings from the past and present into the future, a little imaginative embellishment can brighten

potential 'future' identity meanings. More importantly, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggest that "human actors do not merely repeat past routines; they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 983-984). Through this projective element, new agency possibilities can emerge.

Although Wolverine's imagined world was unusually clear and planned, he was not alone in his imagined interactions. This form of projecting parts of identity meanings into an imagined world was not unusual amongst the students and has been recognised by Ball and colleagues (1999), O'Leary (2011) and Moore (2011). Unlike Wolverine's imagined identity, most projected identities were relayed to me in the form of repeatedly retelling actual or plausible conversations or situations, each time bringing a more forceful agentic element into the telling. Frequently, I did not know how to respond to this, sometimes feeling the 'teller' was waiting for me to comment on their exaggeration and embellishment, testing their story's plausibility. Sometimes I felt they simply believed their new 'improved' version of events. Often the situation related was one I had not witnessed myself, but I got the impression, knowing the individual as I did, that what they told me they had said or done would have been very out of character. Sometimes I had been witness to what happened and could compare a student's story against my own memory and interpretation of the situation. So I came to understand that in this way some students (and at least one parent) had found 'safe' environments for testing out alternative, less readily acceptable, riskier identity narratives. Viewed in the context of agency 'practice', such projected identities performed a useful function.

#### **4.6.2 Anthony – a story about projecting/practising more assertive, agentic behaviour**

For example, Anthony and his Mum both had a particular way of talking that led me to think the boundaries between their 'real' and projected agency and identities were fluid. They both gave long and specific enactments of confrontational conversations with authority figures, often switching between the solid past tense and the potential future tense in a way that revealed how an imagined phrase could become more real as they spoke about it. The following is an example of Anthony developing his agency and assertiveness throughout a conversation. Gerrard was (again) reliving his 'naughtiness' in science lessons at school:

Gerrard: Every time when I wanted to go with Lewis, right, Mr M used to, every time when I used to speak to Lewis in his class he used to send us ... . one of us out of the room.

Anthony: Well say to him, say...

Gerrard: Yeah, but then Lewis said “why did you do that, it was *me* who was speaking to *him*.” But I got... I think he done that for me not getting in trouble.

Anthony: I said to Mr M right, I said to Mr M right, I said..... “right, you got a problem with Gerrard, right...”

Gerrard: But I, one time I was the only one what had a five [merit points], the rest of them had three. Lewis had five as well.

Anthony: Gerrard.....

Ana: Cor, that was good.

Anthony: Gerrard.....

Gerrard: Because we was helping [the TA] and Mr M.

Anthony: Gerrard, I said to him...

Gerrard: But that was only a one off.

Ana: yeah?

Anthony: I said to Mr M, right, I said “you got a, you got a bloody problem with Gerrard right...” (140127\_interview\_Anthony\_and\_Gerrard).

In this situation Gerrard was discussing a situation we all knew well, he and Lewis were being split up for talking in the lesson. Anthony initially started to suggest something



that Gerrard *could* have said to Mr M. Caught up in the story, Gerrard ignored Anthony, instead describing how Lewis had defended him, taking the blame himself. Anthony switched from *suggesting* a future interaction to Gerrard, to *describing* how he had *actually* challenged the teacher. Gerrard, now intent on portraying himself as an occasional 'good' student in science lessons ignored Anthony again as he tried to come back into the conversation. I also did not respond to Anthony's talk. Anthony finally embellished his part in the conversation with a swearword. While Anthony did sometimes swear in school I did not ever hear him swear at a teacher. After this episode the conversation moved on without Gerrard acknowledging Anthony's last comment. In this situation Gerrard carried the conversation and Anthony found it hard to break in. This was not unusual and certainly, in general, contributed to Anthony's feelings of not being taken seriously, possibly leading to his last statement. It occurred frequently that both students relived situations, enjoying previous conversations, particularly 'naughtiness' or minor infringements of rules. That Gerrard did not acknowledge or support Anthony's last statement, combined with it appearing to develop from an initial suggestion of what Gerrard *could* have said, meant I wrote in my fieldnotes that I thought this had been an '*imaginative overlap*' with a remembered situation.

This type of imaginative overlap was common in Anthony's talk, as demonstrated in this school interview when, after we had both attended a 'taster' day, he was talking about how he thought he might behave at college:

Anthony: (sounding gleeful) ... I'll be chatting up, I'll be chatting up girls.

Ana: Will you?

Anthony: I was.

Ana: What, when we went on your visit you were chatting up...

Anthony: No, on my day, up until three [o'clock – a full college day].

Ana: Oh right, when you *really* start College? (Anthony nods) You'll be chatting up girls? Is that new for you? (Anthony nods) How do you think that's going to go?

Anthony: 'Cause this girl, she was like waving to me, and she said erm, 'Hi' and I said .....(as if testing it out) 'I think I want to have you'...?

Ana: Did you? (Anthony confirms) And what do you think a girl would say, or think, if you said 'I think I want to have you'? Do you think that's a good way of chatting up a girl?

Anthony: No, no, I say, I want to say, 'I want say hello to you, but I want to (sounding as if he's making it up as he goes along) .....meet you at the cafe...?'

Ana: I think a good way, Anthony, is to get to know somebody first, so have a bit of a chat about all sorts of things... (130507\_Anthony\_interview).

Our initial discussion of whether Anthony had been or would be “chatting up girls” was typical of our conversations as I tried to establish how 'real' our talk was. Initially, on meeting Anthony, I thought he simply conflated the tenses in his talk, ‘confusing’ the past with the present and the future. However, as this interaction shows, there was more to his past and present tense use, as it seems to be connected to his actual and imagined conversations and behaviour. Although we establish approaching girls as a future potential, he initially talked about it in the present tense, making it seem more ‘real’. It is quite likely that a girl said “hi” to him on his visit to college, however, I do not believe that he then spoke to her in the way he said he did. My own use of the future tense when discussing the appropriateness (and effectiveness) of “I think I want to have you” as a chat up line was intended to indicate to Anthony that I considered we were discussing a potential rather than actual conversation. Possibly taking his lead from this he also changed to using the future tense, testing out a different strategy, one that finished with “meet you at the cafe?” as a question. Responding, I interpreted this question as aimed at me, asking if I found this approach more appropriate than his first. Later, we discussed other potential ‘chat-up’ lines for some time.

This conversation served many purposes. Initially it allowed Anthony to project himself as a confident, agentic lothario but with little risk to his self-confidence or person. By now we knew each other well and he could (I hope) assess that I would not belittle or publicly question his statement but would consider it seriously. Anthony's projected agency allowed him to imagine what he would like to say to a girl, practise it and consider my response, before moderating his own. Although socially confident, in the 'reality' of college he may not have been confident enough to approach a girl and would most likely not have had the chance of a second attempt given his opening gambit! For Anthony, agency and assertiveness could carry certain risks, particularly when confronting authority figures or approaching girls. Anthony's imagined scenarios often indicated what he would *like* to say to others (often swear words, obscenities and crude instructions) without the usually associated powerful and often embodied recriminations and punishments he would receive had he *actually* said them. So his, and other students', projected agentic identities afforded 'safer' environments in which to try out different approaches, to test how it felt to 'be' a different version of themselves, to make mistakes and experience successes in situations close to, but different from their 'realities'.

These two examples of Anthony's talk are also useful in another way. They enable an understanding of how agency comes about through its practice, in this case the practice of speaking about acting. There is no plan of outcomes or change in Anthony's conversation, yet it is clear to see how he practised, acted out, agency, in a safe and theoretical environment. Definitions of agency such as Giddens' (1984) that demand a clear aim and objective as well as the power and ability to carry an action through, would not recognise this form of Anthony's agency. Eteläpelto and colleagues (2013) point out the usefulness of Giddens (1984) link between power and agency, as without the power to see an action through agency is purely theoretical. However, Anthony's conversations demonstrate that *theoretical* agency is both useful *and* powerful. Anthony demonstrates a capacity to change events that *does not* rely on Giddens' (1984) preconceived plan of action or a hoped for result. In these examples Anthony does not require the power to carry out the acts, indeed it is *better* that he does not enact them, instead trying them for size in a 'safe' and theoretical way. The power in his agency is that by using *theoretical*, or *imagined* agency he did not upset the girl at college or get into trouble for swearing at a teacher. He (and I, and others) used such conversations to

help him decide *not to* enact the sort of agency he was considering. This form of ‘non-action’ agency is one that is not often recognised, the power and ability to decide *not to* act.

#### **4.7 The lack of ‘real’ role-models with learning disability labels**

For all the talk in school, and college, about independent lives, work and adulthood, I rarely heard of or saw examples of what happened when other students left college. Within a well organised transition process, this absence of role models or realistic examples of what students might expect in their adult lives was conspicuously absent in discourses of adulthood. This may have contributed to unrealistic adult expectations of students in Pete's class, so often mentioned by the teachers. It may be that Wolverine's and Anthony's projected lives were based on what they knew, characters in films and conversations with authority figures, because there were few opportunities to see what 'real' lives are like for adults with learning disability labels. Broader experiences, more opportunity to make decisions, to practise talking to girls, to have increased control in their lives might have enabled Wolverine and Anthony to *enact* parts of the identities they projected. Identities are “improvised – in the flow of activity within specific social situations – from the cultural resources at hand” (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 4). Through their projected, or imagined situations, Wolverine and Anthony may simply have increased the social and cultural resources within which to “improvise” (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 4) different, broader identity meanings. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) touch on the idea of projective agency: “*anticipatory identification*” (p.988) draws on the knowledge available to understand a situation, followed by “the construction of narratives that locate future possibilities in relation to more or less coherent causal and temporal sequences” (p.988). “*Symbolic recomposition*” (p.990) allows the agent to explore different agentic possibilities, or hypothetical resolution[s]” (p.991?). “*Experimental enactment*” (p.991) is the actual implementation of agentic action. It seems that in Wolverine's, and Anthony's situations, experimental enactment happened in imaginary and discursive environments. Improvised, or emergent agency will be discussed further in chapter five.

Positive acknowledgement of skills, ambitions and aims can play a large part in broadening identity and agency narratives, and options for social participation. Yet even

within a school where this was paramount, where independence and adulthood were part of the transition discourse, what adulthood would, or could mean, was left unspoken and unexamined. Within personal situations where adults had the power and authority to reprimand and make decisions on their behalf, it is perhaps no surprise that Wolverine's idea of adulthood was based on power and acknowledgement of his skills, and Anthony's was based on power and authority.

In the absence of a favoured future Wolverine had worked out a practical and credible way of increasing his work experience and skills to enhance his opportunities and the likelihood of him being able to get the job of his dreams. This demonstrates his understanding of the job market and what is needed to do well, which challenges ideas that he occupied a fantasy world or had no grasp of reality. Baron, Riddell and Wilson (1999) describe a young man with learning disability labels, who, in the absence of real intimate relationships, fantasised about having relationships with the characters from the television soap-opera, *Neighbours*:

We found no evidence of Martin having formed, or attempted to form, an intimate personal relationship which, at the age of 23, is relatively unusual. Fantasised relationships with characters from *Neighbours* stand in their stead (Baron, Riddell and Wilson, 1999: 495).

Griffiths (1998) suggests that play, developing imagination and creativity, offers “[s]afety to explore identities” (p.18-19). Certainly, the imagined worlds of Martin, Wolverine and Anthony offer safe environments in which to explore different, broader identities and agency meanings.

#### **4.8 Roleplay in ‘managing’ future situations – imagined scenarios**

Roleplay (sometimes online) is recognised as a useful and fruitful application in learning and teaching in medical professions (Warland and Smith, 2012), engineering (McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick, 2004) and mental health interventions (Webster and colleagues, 2005). Roleplay is valued for development of generalisable and transferable skills, empathy, understanding systems. Typically roleplay involves imagining a ‘realistic’ scenario which could prove difficult to navigate and manage, simulating the

situation, and reflective discussion about the simulation and improvements that could be made.

Roleplay has a link with identity meanings in that “[p]eople tell others who they are, but more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are” (Holland and colleagues, 1998: 3). In order for this to be possible, initially, future identity meanings must be imagined. Although largely ‘performed’ alone, it seems to me that Wolverine and Anthony’s imaginative situations can be understood as roleplay, a useful method of examining different options in any situation. This type of movement between present and future (and past) circumstances and identity meanings is ‘safe’, as situations can be envisaged, responded to, and acted upon, without ‘damaging’ the individual or their position in their environment. Imagined ‘travel’ between the different times and places is also reversible, unlike the actual transition from school to college.

Neil Baldwin, whose life has been the subject of a BAFTA winning BBC film (Marvellous, 2014) and recent book (Baldwin and Clarke, 2015) continuously uses the tenuous ‘barrier’ between imagination and 'reality' to his advantage. His friend Malcolm describes their first meeting in 1964 when he arrived at Keele University as a student:

I appreciated [Neil’s] warm welcome, but who exactly was he? The university chaplain? I wasn't quite sure. And so it has always been with Neil, who lives by many roles. It is not that he doesn't know the difference between fantasy and reality, but rather that he renders the distinction irrelevant and continually turns one into the other across the loves of his life: Keele University, Stoke City, the Church, circuses, the Boat Race and famous people (p.22-23).

Baldwin, a man with learning disability labels, creatively turns ideas, imaginative leaps, into action (both his own and that of others) in turn affecting past, present and future understandings of his identities and agency. His agency and success in living out his imaginative dreams are unusual. Ball and colleagues (1999), and Atkins (2008) have both suggested it is not unusual for young people to hope for and believe in a sudden transformation from their ‘mundane’ lives to a fantasy future of fame and riches. Atkins (2009) suggests that such incongruous fantasy futures “provide some relief from the

drudgery of their day to day life” (p.123). Within a dominant discourse environment that, along with labels of learning disabilities, ascribes multiple other potential deficit discourses implying essential traits such as vulnerable (see ethical interruption 8, section 6.10), disadvantaged, passive, is it any wonder that imagined identities are vested with moments of unquestioned authority and imbued with powerful actions and potential change. Reconceptualising such imagined scenarios as roleplay, opportunities to practice, refine and reject agency meanings within a ‘safe’ environment, enables a more productive and validating understanding than simply ‘lies’ and ‘stories’. Positioning such imaginary agency within situations where opportunities for ‘real’ agency are limited, exposes areas where different circumstances could support broader, more positive identity and agency meanings.

#### **4.9 Chapter summary**

In the light of this chapter, definitions of agency that do not take into account subtle, contradictory and ordering agency are no longer relevant, but can be viewed as themselves repressive and discriminatory. I now give my own agency definition/description which takes seriously the different types of agency that Weldale students clearly demonstrated:

‘Agency’ describes the social processes by which individuals situate themselves within, amongst and against discursive, actual and imaginary environments. This situating process is highly subjective and fluid, in constant (re)production, and can be viewed as a performative element of identity meanings. Agency, both pre-considered and/or emergent, is situated in social sites and linked to/with particular people and the particular circumstances which support and/or inhibit agency processes. Agency, temporal, contextual and relational, may take varying forms of action, imaginary roleplay, and ‘inaction’, each being effortful and situating the individual in their environments in ongoing and relational ways. Viewing agency processes as multipally interdependent disperses responsibility for supporting agency, complicating ideas of agency as an individual ‘skill’ or ‘trait’.

Using this definition, in the next chapter I discuss group agency.

## 5 Agency and identity meanings in school and college

In the previous chapter I discussed different forms of individual agency, and some circumstances which may influence agency negotiations. In this chapter I ‘re-entangle’ identity and agency meanings in examining some circumstances of opportunity in which agency and identity meanings may be negotiated. This chapter is in two sections, the first discusses the agency negotiations of a group of students in Pete’s year 11 class, linking this agency with particular people and social sites in school. The second section examines student identity and agency meanings in further education environments.

### 5.1 Section 1. School – identity and agency

You can't trust us with anything. Us year 11s are bad-ass  
(120921\_fieldnotes).

I overheard this comment on my first observation day in Weldale school, two weeks into year 11. It was said in jest in the context of a group of students, Scott, Adam, Zane, Ken and Tall-man nominally planting fruit bushes, but actually messing about with the allotment tools. When Tim (allotment supervisor) pointed out they were potentially blunting a newly sharpened spade, the comment was made by Scott, a quiet, thoughtful, young man who, rumour had it, was never ‘allowed’ out alone. He did not at this stage, or later, appear to be “bad-ass” and his comment was received with much laughter from his peers and Tim. Whether “bad-ass” came from the film of the same name, released that Spring, or from street slang, the implication was one of a dangerous, uncontrollable, confrontational gang with no respect for the law. Although a joke, this throw-away comment represented in part, how some year 11 students came to view themselves, and later were seen by others.

‘The group’ comprised Adam, Ken, Zane, Scott, Dave and sometimes John. Their strong, linked, group identity meanings, built over the course of five school years appeared to have strengthened throughout this time and ‘the group’ was often described as such. Throughout the course of year 11, the group’s strength, their relational and contextual identity, came to be burdensome on institutional workings and challenging of school expectations.



For many reasons transition influenced circumstances of opportunity for group agency. Firstly, as already discussed, ideas of past, present and future identities were salient in thought and discourse during year 11. Remembered transitions and future expectations were repeatedly drawn on to 'aid' transition. Secondly, physically, the students were projecting themselves into different environments by attending college courses and (for some) work experience. Thirdly, the end of the school year, provided idle moments, limbic hours with a need to occupy students, but no clear goal or intent further than entertainment and containment. These liminal states of transition opened spaces, both non-timetabled spaces and theoretical and philosophical spaces for agentic thought and action. It appeared that Pete's class had more frequent and wide-ranging opportunities to enact agency than Ivor's class. This was in part influenced by the perceived difference in 'ability', (structure, routine and security perceived as particularly valuable 'for' Ivor's class), but also by the attitudes of the two tutors, Ivor and Pete. Ivor taught in a way aimed at containing chaos and disruption. Pete did not.

### **5.1.1 Deliberate provision of 'circumstances of opportunity'**

Particularly Pete, but also Adrian, (teacher and transition co-ordinator), adopted unusual pedagogical strategies, what Teague calls "pedagogic politics" (Teague, 2014: 3), which broadened engagement. These pedagogical strategies provided 'circumstances of opportunity' in which improvised identity and agency meanings could be negotiated. Pete and Adrian enjoyed less formal, more friendly relationships with the students, embodied in their classes, leading to more relaxed but sometimes chaotic learning environments. Interestingly, the relaxation of institutional expectations in their classes meant that when these teachers stepped in with criticisms or admonishments they tended to be taken seriously. Whilst disregarding what could be considered 'petty' rules, both Pete and Adrian took respect and fun seriously. Tasks were routinely shared between students and the two teachers, breaking down many expected roles and allowing imaginative identity experiments. Power was often devolved, co-operation was valued, and students had the chance to adopt different identity roles within the classroom. A representative example of this was when Adrian and Lewis were clearing the hall after assembly:

Adrian was carrying a bench with Lewis who tried to stack his end too high.

Adrian: (in mock horror and shock) Not three on top [of each other], that's breaking every rule.

Lewis: But, Adrian, rules are meant to be broken.

Adrian: Yeah, but not the bench rule! (130612\_leavers\_assembly).

Although in jest, this interaction challenges many implicit institutional expectations, whilst strengthening others. Lewis, not known for risk-taking, is jokingly positioned as challenging school rules, allowing him to 'try out' the temporary identity of 'rule breaker'. In doing so he uses Adrian's first name, complicating school hierarchy of teacher and student. Adrian's response, talking about the "bench rule" as though it were the most important of school regulations, both validates and questions its position as an institutional expectation. Adrian simultaneously questions (ridicules even), the bench rule, whilst effectively (re)inforcing it. Lewis immediately repositioned the bench so it was not too high and they continued to clear the hall.

This interaction is typical of Adrian's form of (non-)assertion of authority. Without confrontation, and using humour whilst inverting his own relative hierarchical position, Adrian offered Lewis the opportunity to rethink his original action (stacking the benches too high) without losing face. The resulting circumstances of opportunity enabled Lewis to improvise a novel identity role, that of 'rule-breaker', in relation to Adrian's adopted identity role of 'rule enforcer'. This approach, what could be called 'identity play' (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010), is very different from how many teachers might have dealt with the situation, by seriously telling Lewis what he had done wrong. This would have strengthened hierarchical positions, positioning Lewis as *unable* to stack benches correctly, reinforcing a deficit model of behaviour and *restricting* his identity options rather than broadening them. Although a seemingly unimportant moment of interaction and fun, this example is representative of how Adrian skilfully did his job, maintained mutual respect between himself and students, but also routinely challenged discourses that created unequal positions between staff and students. Pete's approach was very similar.

Just as Lewis did here, ‘the group’ often used Pete and Adrian’s first names, symbolically challenging expected hierarchy. However, as Pete explained to me, he did not consider this a problem:

...to be honest I don't think being called 'Mr' or 'Sir' earns respect, I think treating other people with respect and having a good relationship earns respect and ... [to an ex-student] I was just 'Baldy'... (both laugh) ... but, you know it was a respectful 'Baldy', it didn't bother me....you know, a respectful relationship doesn't come from having a title does it, it comes from *being* respectful and.... You know, you build that trust and relationship over a number of years don't you (130225\_Pete\_interview).

Certainly Pete and Adrian were held in high regard amongst Pete’s class, with students regularly telling me they could ‘talk’ to them and were ‘listened to’ by them. In an interview, Scott interpreted ‘identity’ as “being myself” (130201\_Scott\_interview), a topic that Pete’s class evidently discussed amongst themselves as later this was often mentioned to me by members of ‘the group’ in relation to Pete and Adrian’s classes and company. Students felt accepted ‘as themselves’ in their company. Pete and Adrian were discussed in terms of them standing apart from other teaching staff, as somehow more ‘real’, more ‘human’.

Pete and Adrian exceeded the boundaries of expected behaviour, both in their own behaviours and those tolerated from the students. Fun was a determining factor in many interactions. There is no doubt that both teachers made significant and memorable relationships with the students they taught and talked with, their supportive roles going beyond the boundaries of school premises. Both were talked about with enthusiasm and affection by their students. Both Pete and Adrian believed their mutually respectful relationships with students had come about through out-of-classroom activities, shopping for school barbecues, international trips and activities weeks, training for extra-curricular sporting challenges. These off-timetable activities seemed to present unusually flexible dynamics in which stronger, more equal, respectful relationships developed, based on excitement, fun and shared purpose. More equal and positive interdependent identity and agency meanings seemed to flourish through such extra-curricular activities, supporting broader and stronger relationships *in* school.

Zane clearly articulated his relationship with Adrian in an interview (explaining why he 'hated' Weldale):

...it's the teachers who mostly rub me the wrong way because they think *strictness is authority* is the way to go. Whereas teachers like [Adrian], who give us freedom and actually *trust* us and let us get away with things, and actually show us that we can *actually* have *fun* in school and we can work as well, instead of 'do this' and all that load of crap and it's like then, we can't have any fun, there's no point (121130\_Zane\_interview).

Pete and Adrian's refreshingly unusual pedagogies appeared to be based on respectful relationships that allowed as much 'fun' as possible. Whilst many staff members appeared disdainful of these approaches, implying that 'the group' had been allowed to run riot under Pete's care, I (and many students) found their approaches exciting and productive. Pete and Adrian's lessons were responsive, emergent, unpredictable, occasionally chaotic, always exciting. They offered circumstances of opportunity in which identity meanings could be tried out, tested, rejected, accepted. Both teachers transgressed expected teacher behaviour and acts of resistance were "infused with spontaneous playfulness and linked to their [own, and the students'] sense of self and meaning" (McGregor, 2009: 353). Griffiths (1998) says "[g]iven that play is to do with the development of imagination and creativity it is always liable to turn naughty" (p.18), yet, I believe, the opportunities for emergent learning outweighed the naughtiness, even when 'the group' was perceived as 'bad-ass'. Indeed, much learning could not have happened were it not within the context of naughtiness and (minor) risk.

### **5.1.2 Formalising Pete and Adrian's pedagogy through thinking with theory**

Pete and Adrian can be viewed as 'teaching' towards social justice, in that their behaviours aimed to both challenge unequal school roles, and to broaden identity possibilities rather than focussing on educational labels.

Griffiths (1998) describes a playful approach to social justice, conceptualising (at least) four categories of "play that can be usefully naughty" (online). These are *role play*, *playing with stereotypes*, *playing for laughs*, and *playing with ideas*. These categories help formalise and theorise Pete and Adrian's mildly subversive approach in school.

The importance of *role play* to agency meanings was discussed in the previous chapter (see 4.8), and Griffiths (1998) describes how role-play can enable “trespassing beyond the boundaries, and then claiming the space” (online). *Playing with stereotypes* also involves adopting alternative identity positions, sometimes (re-)claiming stereotypical positions, sometimes resisting them. Pete and Adrian both offered multiple opportunities for students to do this, both in talk and in action, broadening identity meanings whilst both acknowledging and rejecting educational labels and associated expectations.

Griffiths (1998) third category, *playing for laughs* was clearly part of Pete and Adrian’s pedagogy, but more than this they both encouraged and enabled students to develop their own humour and humorous opportunities within an accepting environment. Students were encouraged to make jokes because such interactions were valued by both Pete and Adrian. A humorous, fun environment was established in which it was accepted, encouraged even, to take risks. Students were allowed, enabled, to laugh and poke fun at the teachers in the same way that *they* joked about the students. In many students’ lives, opportunity for non-risky laughing at adults must have been rare. I recorded Pete ‘playing for laughs’ in my fieldnotes:

Pete took register.

Ken: The reason I wasn't here yesterday is...

Pete: Skiving!

Ken: No, my mum hit her head on the way home from Butlins...

Pete: (genuinely concerned) Oh no, is she OK?

Ken: Yes, she is now, but I had to stay at home with her yesterday to make sure she was alright.

Pete: Oh yes, I completely understand. (returns to the register, then quietly) Skiving!

Pete and Ken both laugh (121114\_school\_observation).

Of vital importance here is Pete's very real and genuine concern for Ken's mum amidst the mickey-taking. Pete and Adrian were both skilled at taking seriously the worries and concerns of the students, quickly switching between 'playing for laughs' and showing genuine emotion and concern. Although Pete positions Ken as 'skiving', he does not apply a value-judgement to it, appearing to accept missing school as a possibility. Indeed, Pete and the students together negotiated situations where they could 'skive' unenjoyable situations in school. Such situations involved engineering situations where extra-curricular learning, social learning, could take place. When talking to me, Pete often compared the experiences of Weldale students with those of mainstream students, feeling that special education and socially restricted lives left fewer options for trying out different experiences. Contextualising this interaction in this way is important, as taken out of context it could show a lack of respect and failure to take Ken seriously. Yet, in the context of care and deep respect, combined with the valuing of broad experience, I consider this interaction representative of Pete's relationship with his tutor-group, contextual, growing and changing throughout the year.

Humour, poking fun at each other, removed the seriousness of institutional hierarchy, lessening its power *over* the students, enabling them to negotiate and claim power *within* its systems, using the same discourses as the two teachers. Humour and fun could be equally enjoyed, shared, so lessening the adult/child, teacher/student binaries, challenging these until, with structural roles lessened, *human relationships* remained.

*Playing with ideas*, the fourth of Griffiths (1998) categories of 'naughty play for social justice' was also evident in both Pete and Adrian's pedagogy and approach to life. Pete often offered circumstances of opportunity to imagine alternative scenarios, in the above example, (hypothetically) skiving school rather than regular attendance. Both teachers' critical and questioning approach made their lessons and tutor time interesting and inventive, enabling some students to think beyond their current situations, projecting themselves into different circumstances and positions. This 'possibility thinking' was enjoyed by many students, and also evidently by Pete and Adrian themselves. In playing with ideas, Griffiths (1998) sees "opportunities in entertaining forbidden fantasies; in putting on imaginative performances; and in dreaming up, and then doing,

the unexpected” (online). Griffiths (1998) suggests ‘naughty play’ is important in both identity meanings and learning. Griffiths’ (1998) offers six reasons for this, discussed below (in italics). In playing for laughs, challenging stereotypes, role play and playing with ideas, Pete and Adrian offered both *safety to explore identities* and *food for the imagination* (online). Their *broad curriculum and wide range of teaching methods* provided a style of teaching and learning that suited some Weldale students.

Responsive and inventive in their methods, with fun as a guiding principle, both teachers introduced thinking and questioning that went far beyond the curriculum, allowing students to learn about themselves and about the wider world.

Griffiths’ (1998) final three reasons for naughty play are particularly significant, however. These are *telling truth about admirable lives, understanding the complexity of patchy compromises, and moral imagination* (online). Pete and Adrian, in lessening the hierarchical and social divide between themselves and the students, performed an important role. They did not use institutional power to promote themselves, rather to show their own flaws, insecurities and mistakes. These ‘imperfections’ were divulged, shared, discussed and accepted in a daily, routine fashion. In this way students did not position Pete and Adrian on metaphorical pedestals, making ‘being’ like them impossible, but could see that “they did what they did because of their mixes of perfections and imperfections, their patchy selves and creative vigour” (Griffiths, 1998, online). Pete and Adrian’s own choices to contravene a minor rule, to make allowances, to over-rule an expectation, introduced an understanding of degrees of tolerance and autonomy. Both teachers modelled acceptance of their own imperfections, an approach which extended to tolerance of others’ imperfections. This also offered routine opportunity for moral imagination to develop, to understand the difference between being ‘naughty’ and ‘bad’, itself an “ethical sensitivity” (Griffiths, 1998, online). Griffiths offers these reasons for the importance of naughty play as principles of social justice in educational practices. Without the environments provided by Pete and Adrian, learning and practicing moral imagination and agency would have happened on a theoretical basis, *talking about decision-making*. In Pete and Adrian’s classes, moral imagination, agency and decision-making became everyday processual elements of the students’ skill-sets.

### Ethical interruption 7.

March 2013.

Completely unexpectedly and shockingly, seven months into the research, the school's implicit consent procedure backfires!

I get an email from my supervisor. A man has left a message for her, she thinks he is a parent of a Weldale student. He said he had her phone-number from my student consent form. He has complained about me interviewing his son in school.

My response is one of both alarm and calm. I am (fairly) sure I have done nothing worthy of complaint, yet this phonecall must mean that I have made a mistake. A serious one.

I phone the parent. He introduces himself as Eddie Stobart's Dad, Marcus. He asks who I am, what I am doing in the school and why Eddie has arrived home with a consent form (signed by him and me) for a recorded interview. Why hadn't Marcus been asked to give his consent? Eddie is 'unable' to give his consent to be interviewed without his parents' help in explaining what this would mean. As of now Eddie's participation is withdrawn from the research unless I can convince Marcus otherwise.

I explain, placatory and calm, that if my son had arrived home with the consent form without warning, I would have responded in the same way. I apologise for the alarm caused. I explain about the implicit consent system at the school, explain that I had wanted to request signed-for consent from parents but that this was considered possibly destabilising of the current system. I explain that information was sent out in July 2012, via post and students, explaining about my research. I agree that there probably should have been a 'reminder' in the meantime. The conversation turns from immediate to hypothetical. What if parents *hadn't* received the information? Implicit consent is not good enough. The school is not dealing with the situation well enough. This is not a personal criticism of me, but a process problem that needs addressing. As a school governor Marcus will bring this up at the next meeting. As an individual Marcus makes it his business to examine how 'systems' can be improved for



everyone's benefit. He is interested in protecting Eddie, and was alarmed by the idea of me 'drawing' unknowing consent from him.

I agree.

We finish the phonecall on friendly terms. Marcus offers to 'help' me by discussing any future questions with Eddie before I ask them. As agreed, I send Marcus an email summarising our phonecall, explaining the research in much more detail, justifying my research decisions and reasons for the ways I have project-managed. I give as much detail as possible about how future visits (to school and college) will function. I agree to let them know each time before I visit Eddie's college. I receive a friendly reply. Eddie is now part of the research again.

I breathe a sigh of relief and ponder the ongoing ethical questions. Questions about who 'judges' someone 'able' to give consent? About who should *give* consent? About ongoing information that for some is vital, for others a nuisance. About parents making choices for their children. About implicit consent. About researchers 'being' in schools at all. About my own abilities to placate an angry and worried father and the effect this has on his son's participation in the research. About practical and theoretical levels of ethical concern. I wonder how many other parents are equally uninformed about my research at this stage of the year. I ask three senior members of staff if they think I should re-send parental information. They all say 'no'.

As described, having Pete as a class tutor, and the transition process certainly played a part in enabling 'the group' to 'become' 'bad-ass'. A further important element in the institutional narrative of 'the group' as 'uncontrollable' was that institutional power had lost much of its strength. The students would soon be leaving, so accepted (generally theoretical, but respected) methods of serious discipline, such as school expulsion, had lost their power. This became clearer once exams were finished and some students felt they had 'nothing to lose' by misbehaving, or at least by pushing the boundaries.

Pete's class had developed a reputation as 'difficult' throughout the school. Often this was discussed as a group rather than individual situation. In my fieldnotes on that first day I recorded in surprise, "there is nothing formal about year 11 [Pete's class]" (120921\_fieldnotes). As the year went on it became clear that this was not only new for me, but had been new for Pete's students too as they had moved on from two school years with a very clear, calm, consistent and predictable teacher, Donna:

Ana: Would you say that [Pete's class] was quite a difficult group?

Donna: Yeah. *Extremely* difficult, yeah.

Ana: Can you say, have you got an idea why that is or is it just the dynamics of...

Donna: I think the dynamics are really hard, I think huge amounts of skills and even then you just, you know, the energy level needed, the skill set needed to manage them is really high (130626\_Donna\_interview).

### **5.1.3 Adam's role in the group**

Despite '*group*' identity and reputation, one character in particular stood out. Adam was particularly witty, articulate and quick in his disrespectful and mostly humorous put downs. He did not appear to differentiate between students and staff when making such comments which often went unchallenged. Staff responses tended to take the form of humorous retorts, as though they knew there was no point trying to 'control' Adam. From the beginning, I had conflicting feelings about Adam. I immediately understood that Adam played a pivotal role in the "process of admission" (Emond, 2005: 129), to the school and to 'the group'. I was wary of him, treating him with caution after witnessing how he could demean people with a few carefully chosen words. I admired both his skills and his standing within the school, acknowledging his transgression of learning difficulty labels, using skills not usually associated with the label to distance himself from it. Although mostly humorous, he could be brutally acerbic, cutting and extremely accurate and targeted in his verbal attacks. Amongst the staff he had a reputation for 'nastiness' which I only occasionally witnessed, in the form of disrespectfulness and lack of interest or regard for what they said. He did however target

Wolverine in unprovoked verbal attacks. His wit and belittling humour often allowed him to 'get away' with comments and action that others would have been reprimanded for. I felt vulnerable in his presence, yet was surprised when going through the fieldnotes multiple times, that there was never an instance when his ire was directed at me, on the contrary, I regret failing to realise his direct interactions with me were either purely humorous or supportive of me. One such interaction, on my fourth day at Weldale, is recorded here:

[I] wandered over to some year 11s (Adam, Zane, Michael) who I realised too late were 'chatting up' two girls from the year below. Michael immediately said "Why don't you go away! Nobody likes you. Everybody hates you and we just wish you'd go away. Why don't you understand?" I said "OK" and moved away a few meters. I didn't know where to go though and was just looking around for some other year 11s to 'visit' when Adam approached me and said "Don't take any notice of him. He's just a bit... I don't mind you being here and Zane thinks you're alright too. He [Michael] just doesn't like people". I felt quite touched and thanked him. Said I understand how Michael feels and that is OK too. This is quite an acceptance from Adam and Zane (121016\_whole\_class\_observation).

Such clear, direct and sensitive communication was unusual from Adam as almost all his comments in school had a sardonic, sarcastic, ironic or confrontational quality. It is revealing that Adam distanced himself from Michael who "doesn't like people", implying that he himself *did* like people, despite his often disparaging treatment of others. Equally revealing is that this interaction, despite touching me at the time, became forgotten in my foregrounding of his less sensitive behaviour, my ongoing feeling of potential vulnerability to his verbal 'attacks'.

One outspoken supporter of Adam was Tricia, who had taught Pete's class in their earlier years in school. Appearing to have an unusual understanding of the reasons for Adam's 'difficult' behaviour she explained it in relational rather than personality terms:

Ana: Adam particularly, he strikes me as being quite key with [the] group.

Tricia: Absolutely! Absolutely! If there's a key it's definitely Adam. Because I know, when I taught that group in year 10. They were an *interesting* group but I *loved* them. They were bright and sparky, you could

push them on, push them forward... And they did some amazing work... they were absolutely amazing. The one or two occasions during that year that I had Adam, the class went to pot. But that was the year Adam had ... [major] ... surgery and he was away a lot and there was still an inclusion room to a degree and that's where he went. And yet Adam always says he respects me as one of the teachers he listens to but he's told me on many occasions to "f off you old bitch" you know. Which is like "OK Adam".

Ana: And can you put your finger on what it is that he was doing that would disrupt a lesson?

Tricia: Disrespect to the teacher, ignore any instructions, not engage. When he did engage, which he did occasionally he was *brilliant*. Cause he's a very bright lad. I think like a lot of badly behaved young people, I think perhaps because he'd missed bits he could easily catch up, but because he'd missed stuff, he didn't necessarily feel part of the group because he didn't spend all of his time with them. When he came back, "mine!" he had to really put a stamp on it. And assert his authority over everyone in the room including the adult.

Ana: And he does do it very effectively doesn't he.

Tricia: Very effectively. He's a very bright boy. Very bright boy and very angry and you can't blame him (130626\_Tricia\_teacher).

Adam had missed a lot of school and spent a lot of time in the "inclusion room", ironically the name for what might be called a 'time out room', for students disrupting or struggling in class. With a complex home life and physical conditions requiring ongoing hospitalisation and difficult decisions about treatment, Adam felt he had plenty to be angry about. Interestingly, as Tricia says Adam missed much of year 10, this means that in year 11 he spent an unusual amount of time with 'the group'. In year 11 Adam and his class teacher Pete appeared to get on well, both good at banter and sharing a similar sense of humour. Pete effectively 'channelled' the feeling of volatile energy in the room when Adam was in the class. There was a certain competitiveness between them, but Pete always seemed to retain the last word, using institutional power, clearly re-establishing his position as teacher, when banter and humour did not suffice.

Both Pete and Adam obviously enjoyed the edginess of their interactions, but when eventually told to 'shut up' Adam would do so with evident respect for Pete.

Adam was also valued and liked by his friends, Zane, Ken, Dave and Scott. Adam had obvious power within the group, a position ostensibly retained through a combination of inclusive and potentially exclusive behaviour. He would jeer at his friends whilst inviting their company. How he spoke to other students was a frequent reminder of his power within the school. On one occasion Adam stood, a few metres away from a TA who feigned obliviousness, repeatedly shouting "Wolverine, you fat slag", while Wolverine walked the whole length of the playground to sit with me and escape this abusive attack. I was shocked by this, yet honestly examining my own likely response, shamefully found that, as the TA, maybe I too would have ignored rather than challenged Adam and risk humiliation and loss of 'authority' if he completely ignored me, or worse, demeaned me in front of other students. Adam was someone I wanted on 'my' side, it would have felt risky to oppose him. It seemed some staff too felt this was the case, and the decision to overlook Adam's behaviour may have been instrumental in the 'rise' of 'the group' and their momentum within the school.

Certainly Adam's role in 'the group' was acknowledged by others. I interviewed another teacher about this shortly after Pete's class had left school:

Ross: And I think where Adam was very clever, he could throw a comment up and let it sort of explode around them and then watch all the others getting fired up and aggravated, or hyperactive. He was quite clever that way (130626\_Ross\_interview).

Yet, Adam's relationships were far more complex than simply those of a bully, or provocateur. He was fiercely supportive of his friends, standing up for them when considering them unfairly under 'attack' from other students or teaching staff. Scott in particular seemed to revere Adam, yet turned his scathing comments back on him in a way Adam accepted and appeared to enjoy. For example, I recorded this interaction when, in English, Adam and Scott were placed in different groups, Adam to do GCSE coursework and Scott to join a phonics lesson:

Adam: [loudly, to me] They're in the thick group you see. They can't even spell 'but'!

Scott: b-u-t

Adam: Aha, the phonics is paying off (121016\_class\_observation).

Both Scott's and Adam's comments appeared to cause both students great hilarity and have a bonding effect rather than a divisive one.

The whole group, but particularly Scott and Adam appeared to have a reciprocally loyal relationship, particularly when one of them was 'under attack':

Scott: .... erm because Adam's got a [medical] problem, yeah, so if Cameron [whom Scott described as 'violent'] punched him he would have to go to the doctors and all that, so of course I don't mind if I get punched or hit so I don't really care, cause I haven't nothing problems with me. So Cameron caught .... Adam so I got in front of them, cause if like Cameron, he don't punch, he kicks, so I just tensed my legs so I, then he don't push me back so he the one who like getting me with all that and then I said 'no' so he tried and kicked me and it don't hurt my legs.

Ana: So you would physically be putting yourself in between the two of them to protect Adam because you know that he's got a [medical] problem?

Scott: Yeah, and if like Ken was in a fight or anything I would be like in the middle of it and saying 'don't....' (130201\_interview\_Scott).

Tall, but slightly built Scott was willing to risk physical harm himself to protect his friends. Interestingly, Scott switches between tenses making it difficult to know whether the altercation with Cameron was real or potential. However, the message is clear. He has, or would risk punishment and hurt in the cause of friendship, loyalty, and protecting Adam from harm. This implies Adam held a complex yet pivotal role in 'the group', both as a cause of friction with staff and other students, and as a figure who held the group together with fun, daring, with his verbal accomplishment and with his perceived physical frailty.

Adam's agency disoriented and challenged expectations of educational discourse. He resisted and threatened the binaries of teacher/pupil, adult/child, able/disabled, and did so very effectively. In this way he lent 'the group' an air of volatility. If Adam decided to co-operate, educational discourses would be followed and expectations met, albeit with the occasional verbal challenge, as if to remind others that he was *choosing* to follow the rules. When he chose to protest, expected roles and behaviours could be challenged to the point where they could not be maintained or recovered. Critical discourses of transgression and resistance allow this to be viewed as agency rather than simply anti-social behaviour. Understandably, it was rare for teaching staff to make this distinction! Like Eddie Stobart at the school fair, Adam also demonstrated both ordering and disordering agency at the same time.

Given Adam's important role in challenging authority and expectations, I often wondered why Pete joined in with, and allowed, what would generally be called 'misbehaviour' in an educational context. Their relationship was extremely complex, their identity meanings situated in the social space of the classroom and linked with each other's, and those of others in the class and school. In part an 'if you can't beat them join them' approach, partly a way of introducing fun into a routine timetable, partly a way of demonstrating a way of being that involved both respect and silliness, Pete's approach appeared both responsive and emergent. Behaviours (of individuals, 'the group', teaching staff), interacted in ever changing ways, non-linear, complex and unpredictable. Yet, by channelling Adam's anger in productive ways, through laughter and inventive approaches to situations, Pete both modelled and enabled more acceptable behaviours than might have been the case had he tried to 'control' Adam. Pete and Adam, in part became allies, meaning Adam had less cause to be 'angry'. Pete could help Adam imagine scenarios, however fantastic, that enabled Adam to think about his behaviour before enacting it. Here too, role-play, the taking on of alternative identities, was used to make decisions about potential future agencies. It is important that Pete took his class's verbalised imagined scenarios seriously, commenting on their social appropriateness rather than telling them off for pushing the (imaginary) boundaries. In this way, imagined scenarios themselves were not criticised, but the values represented were dealt with and discussed.

Although Pete seemed to value emergent interactions, retaining the ability to stop situations when they got out of hand, this was not always the case with other staff members as I recorded in tutor time when Pete was busy elsewhere:

The atmosphere in registration was like a youth club or birthday party that has got slightly out of control. All the students except John were rushing around and messing about. Dave chased Scott [blowing air at him] with a bicycle pump, continuing after Tim [Pete's stand-in] told him to stop. I think Tim likes an easy life and wants a good relationship with the students rather than authority. Pete would have stopped them immediately, once the running had started. They were also throwing a basket ball at each other for some time, then a teddy, then the bike pump (130313\_class\_observation).

It is interesting that for Tim (and for me) it seemed authority and a good relationship with the students were mutually exclusive. For Pete, however, it was different. My feeling that Pete would have stopped this 'game' at an earlier stage remains. However, similar situations presented both Pete and the students with opportunities to '*improvise*' (Holland and colleagues, 1998) identity meanings and agency. At times when normative social 'rules' become irrelevant or unsatisfactory, new 'norms' must be developed within the situation, offering opportunity for improvised identities. Throughout all the fun, the petty rule breaking, the jokes and teasing, it was always done with a feeling that Pete would show the students where the limits were and how to stop just in time. This meant they shared a common goal, to have as much fun as possible without being 'caught'. But it also meant that the students respected Pete, *both* for his decisions to bend the rules *and* for his ability to take them in hand and say 'stop' authoritatively. As with Adrian, somehow Pete's understanding of the importance of fun, his admission that some school rules were 'ridiculous' and should be bent, his ability to see opportunity in situations, added strength to his authority.

Despite how they were viewed and discussed, 'the group' did not do anything really outrageous. But they did transgress school expectations of behaviour enough for most of them to be put on behaviour report in February of year 11. This involved the setting of behaviour targets, and their parents being called to a school meeting. I believe that some contributing misbehaviour took place on visits to college, where new identity meanings were improvised in an environment perceived as more 'free' than school.



In the main, 'the group's' misdemeanours took the form of petty rule breaking, ignoring reprimands, pushing the boundaries. A common year 11 complaint was that students were not treated like adults. John in particular, was disappointed and bemused by the lack of independence, linking this with responsibilities that he felt ready and able to take on. John liked systems and order, finding 'the group's' wilder behaviour worrisome and disconcerting. However, although his chosen form of agency, often discussion rather than action, meant he distanced himself from some group behaviour, he agreed with their dissatisfaction, becoming increasingly vocal throughout year 11. John felt he behaved well, enacting 'adulthood' (and I agree) and that this should attract both responsibility and increased independence. The perceived absence of official recognition, of their age and 'abilities', also led to 'the group' feeling undervalued and to their increasing questioning of school systems.

Over the course of the year, many, many small comments questioning adult power, institutional regulations and the reasons behind school norms and expectations gradually broke down institutional power. One particularly bitterly resented procedure was that staff controlled the locked doors between buildings and playground, making students dependent on finding a staff member with a key-card to enter or leave a building. For much of the year the students were also accompanied to the toilet by staff, which aged 16, they found unnecessary and demeaning. Adam explained to me how this situation had ended: "Then someone pointed out that it's not really right to have a teacher waiting for you outside the toilet. Well it isn't is it? You wouldn't like it!"

(130228\_interview\_Adam). 'The group' used various means of challenging such regulations. Some approaches were based on engineering situations which necessitated the regulations being broken, for example, offering to run errands for staff, therefore needing to borrow the key-cards. This 'semi-official' flouting of the rules was frowned upon by some staff as making the students "vulnerable" (130626\_Trícia\_interview). Students would routinely go to the toilet just after the start of registration, or a lesson, meaning staff engaged in teaching could not accompany them to the toilet. Increasingly, 'the group' would simply try their luck at blatantly flouting the rules (such as ringing the reception bell for access through the 'prohibited' entrance), making their presence noisy, or difficult (by laughing, shouting and pushing) until they got what they wanted. Increasingly repetitive student challenge about the underlying reasons for some regulations meant staff had to admit that (some) students 'could' not be 'trusted' and

that, as a result, all students were treated as 'untrustworthy'. Through this combination of noisy hilarity, physical transgressions of space, and reasoned and reasonable points repeatedly addressed, the students systematically 'dismantled' many accepted norms within the school.

#### **5.1.4 School uniform – a site of defiance and power**

One very visible way of doing this was the constant and blatant contravention of school uniform rules. The potential for self-expression and confrontation held by the uniform was simultaneously inherent and visible. For some, non-uniform was a matter of taste. Aiden told me his motive was hatred of the school sweatshirt colour, agreeing he would have no problem conforming if the uniform were changed to what he was wearing at the time, a bright blue hoody with 'Bench' written in orange on the front. John said he felt embarrassed wearing the bright school sweatshirt but he would be happy to wear a dark blazer instead. Whilst simply hated by some, for others the uniform held possibilities for rebelling, for visibly flouting the rules, for challenging school norms and regulations. For some students (non-)uniform became a site of defiance and power. I recorded Adam wearing blue trousers and a rust coloured jumper, hoodies of different colours were routinely worn over school uniform trousers, and, by the spring term it was unusual for anyone in Pete's class to wear the much hated school sweatshirt. Zane, for whom both the security of obeying rules and the wish to disobey them were simultaneously salient, carefully planned his rebellious clothing:

Zane :... I decided to break the rules while keeping them intact ... because... I'm fed up of being the same and I'm fed up with everyone being treated the same. So, I just decided to change my uniform to show that I *want* to be different. ... because it's like 'oh everyone has to wear school uniform', and my argument against uniform is that everybody would be more confident if they were in their own clothes.... and that's my argument against it. I wanted to keep myself to being unique and so I did, I changed the uniform but only so I can use it.

Ana: ...so can you explain to me what you've done .... I like your phrase breaking the rules, but not breaking the rules.

Zane: yeah, breaking the mould in a way. How I like to do it is, they say that we have to wear black shoes or trainers or something like that, but they can't have any white on them, so I wear black converse to school pretty much 99% of the time .... Erm, the regular black trousers that we have to wear... I changed those to black Cargo's [combat trousers] because Cargo's are technically classed as trousers, they're not jeans, all it is is regular trousers with extra pockets so they can't tell me off for that. Erm, they, we have to wear a white shirt so I wear a proper shirt to school, I have it undone because there is no rule in the planner to say I can't have a white shirt undone, to my own pleasure, and I always wear whatever T-shirt I feel comfortable with underneath because they can't tell me off because it's still uniform (121130\_Zane\_interview).

Zane's carefully considered response to a school rule he disagreed with was typical of his approach to what he saw as institutional limitations. His contravention of school rules usually made an ethical, political and social point. Zane took care not to contravene school rules to the extent that he would get into trouble, yet made his individuality and discontent clear. This approach was sometimes visible in the actions of 'the (whole) group', particularly if Dave and Scott were not with them. For example, John told me about the rule that, on arrival, sometimes 15 minutes early, students (and their drivers) must wait outside the school gate, only allowed in at 8.55. Whilst he understood reasoning about insurance and staffing levels, he felt this was fundamentally unfair and I witnessed him and the others making their opinion clear through subtle action:

Arrived just before 9 and the students were all congregated outside the gates. Tricia [teacher] was on duty and let them all in at the allocated time. As I was getting out of the car I saw [the group] all getting a bit boisterous in their discussion and smiled to myself when they continued to stand outside the gates until Tricia came and *told* them to come in. Several of them have complained about the ruling of not being allowed in earlier and [I felt] they were playing the school at its own game (130313\_class\_observation).

Although minor, possibly irrelevant in other circumstances, I understood this as a demonstration of the annoyance that Pete's class verbalised about being treated as 'children'. This was often present in their (unknowingly Foucaultian) talk, their language of surveillance, observation and repression.

### 5.1.5 Transgression of rules about space

Other 'group' irritations to the school included transgressing rules about student and staff space. The reception and route through the school hall was an entrance for staff and visitors only, with students expected to take an alternative route around. The reception door had a bell, the receptionist checking who was approaching, then opening the door. Throughout year 11 this system was repeatedly contravened, becoming a point of challenge and a symbol of student power. At the beginning of the year individual students from 'the group' would 'get in' with a member of staff, or would ring the bell as though with a legitimate reason, say 'thank you' when they were let in, then 'slip' through the hall. Although the receptionists (exceptionally conscientious, but also busy and with no clear authority) would grumble at this, it was not stopped. It may be that this lack of response, and multiple similar ones throughout the school, contributed to 'the group' later taking increased liberties:

... Adam, Zane, Ken, John, Dave and Scot were all banging on the main door to be let in. I made signs to show that I didn't have a key so couldn't let them in, then the receptionist came. They all came tumbling in and Adam and Dave leant on the desk peering at what [Linda, the receptionist] had written down from today's calls and making comments, "Oh dear, Sophie isn't in school today, she's poooooorly" (130313\_class\_observation).

As mentioned, 'the group' already had a reputation for being 'difficult'. Adam could be acerbic and cutting. However, if other group members were rude or unpleasant it was unusual and usually opportunist or poorly judged. John, occasional member of 'the group', was never knowingly rude or confrontational in school. However, *as a group* they appeared forceful and powerful, even John's identity becoming caught up with 'the group's' unruly identity meanings. Here, Linda let them in despite school policy. Linda was confident and outspoken, possibly the reason for her autonomous decision to admit the students. Or it may have been kindness, possibly regretted as she realised it allowed circumstances of opportunity for them to annoy her. This interaction is representative of 'the group' *believing* they were able to break the rules, and of them *being* able to break the rules without consequence. Physically entering the adult area of the reception, then leaning over the desk, a space symbolising the privacy of the information that Linda was party to, met with little rebuke. Laughing about the information in this private

sphere was (to me) funny, but also symbolic of how some students felt school rules had no power over them. That the group was sent to their lesson with no reprimand may have reinforced their feelings of being 'above the law', at the same time reinforcing staff feelings of 'the group' as 'not worth bothering with'. Such interactions in a school are frequent and inconsequential. Teachers turn a blind eye to misdemeanours so as not to fuel situations. Students take up opportunities for fun, 'naughtiness' and exceptions to the rule on many occasions. The significance of this situation was not so much that it happened, but that 'the group' already felt brave and powerful enough to behave like this in March of the school year.

Interestingly, here, and at all times during their 'bad-ass' year, the group demonstrated both ordering and disordering agency. They both transgressed and obeyed school rules and norms, pushing boundaries, yet staying within the limits. These limits changed, transgressing themselves, throughout the year. In Foucaultian terms, both transgression and self-mastery (Foucault, 1986) are aspects of power, supported and constrained by environmental norms and rules. The group demonstrated this in all their interactions, their transgressions themselves acknowledging the power that school and social norms still held. Not only were *the group* improvising identity meanings, they were also engineering situations in which school staff were forced to improvise their own identity meanings, even within (previously) clear professional roles.

As the year progressed I discovered that the two year 11 classes had different leaving dates. Pete's class would leave in mid-June (one month before Ivor's class), on the day of the last GCSE exam. This was explained to Pete's class as a 'privilege', to Ivor's class in terms of coursework requirements, and to me as a behaviour management decision. Group agency in the form of multiple minor misdemeanours, group identities as an 'uncontrollable' force, and school identities as having 'lost' power over 'the group', had combined to bring about change in official procedure. This too may have influenced how 'the group' perceived themselves, and was perceived.

Almost all infringements of school rules were either physical or verbal, but one defacing incident caught my eye on the penultimate day of school for Pete's class, 13th June:

In the hall, one of the noticeboards has a display showing all the year 11s and their college destinations. There are two group photos and an individual

one of each student. Adam's photos have been removed, the individual one in its entirety and his face carefully torn out of the group photos. I assume he has done this himself. Someone has written next to the photos in red pencil (the same writing on each). Next to one photo of Dave the red pencil proclaims "I love you" and next to another "sly". Next to Ken's photo the red pencil says "Kenny Bear" and next to Tall-man "tall dude". I wonder if whoever did this would have dared to do it at the beginning of year 11, or if it is just the bravado of nearly leaving school (130626\_staff\_interview\_day).

This struck me as significant because it seemed more 'concrete' than 'banter' or 'trespass'. Here someone had deliberately and physically removed Adam from the school display in a way that implied motives to do with disregarding the part of school in his life, or his part in school-life. I felt as though 'the group', like many students about to leave school, had reached a different level of behaviour, one where they simply did not care about possible repercussions.

Interviewing Bethany, the head teacher, the previous month, she had first described how the transition process had vastly improved since Adrian's appointment, then:

Bethany: ... I think there's probably more to do as well, I still think we could design a... better leavers programme. I still think there's work to do and I'm talking in particular about...their leaving date, now for Pete's tutor group this year, we've had to do that very individualised because they were presenting us with such challenges back in February.... Their behaviour was escalating and escalating out of control so I think five out of that group we had to meet with their parents... we set them individual behaviour contracts. And had to, and were thinking it's going to get even worse once their exams are over and once we've got no, how are we going to give them any incentive...

Ana: Yes, you lose your bargaining power once they know they're soon going to go...

Bethany:... and collectively their behaviour was sort of escalating out of ....*really* out of control (160523\_interview\_Bethany).

It seems that how 'the group' were perceived had a lot to do with conflation of the individuals' identity meanings, strengthening how they were viewed and experienced,

by others and by themselves. Conflation is the fusing of identities and characteristics, causing differences to be overlooked and individuals to be seen as a single entity. So Adam's caustic wit and Zane's apparent indifference may have been falsely attributed to the others in the group. Equally, Dave's willingness to do anything for his friends and the combined physical energy and space the group took up may have made the group seem more ebullient than it perhaps was. Several teachers made comments about the effect that being in the group had on individuals. While Adam was routinely discussed as instrumental in the group, others were considered 'useful' in other ways. Ross, a teacher thought the group "used Dave as a bit of a battering ram really" (130626\_Ross\_interview), encouraging him to do things they did not dare.

This implies that Dave was at the mercy of his friends and Adam's wily cunning, but simultaneously Dave benefitted from being in 'the group'. His carer, Maggie, described him as *very* immature, *very* easily influenced and *very* loyal, explaining "his friends are everything" (140124\_interview\_Maggie\_home). When I suggested Dave was sometimes used as a scapegoat by his friends Maggie agreed, saying "he takes the can" (140124\_Maggie), implying he did this willingly, out of loyalty. Maggie also said Dave would rather be in trouble himself than tell tales and that being 'used' by his friends was a recurring situation. Although Maggie described how Dave's loyalty could disadvantage him, it undoubtedly made him a popular, and 'useful', member of 'the group'.

Just as group identity and skills became conflated, they were also interdependent, on other members of the group, on the school environment and on other people in the school. For example, Ross described 'the group's' social skills as 'good' "with each other" (130626\_Ross\_interview) implying their knowledge of each other allowed conflation of their communication skills as well as other identity meanings. Certainly, where teaching staff may have challenged individual group members' behaviour, the increasing lack of enthusiasm for maintaining school expectations was clear as 'the group' became more and more perceived as both a unity and as 'uncontrollable'. As year 11 progressed, I got the impression that *individual* group members were also less likely to be challenged, as though group identity became part of their own individual identity meanings, salient even when they were alone. In this way identity meanings are complexly incorporated in agency meanings, and vice versa. So, the group felt 'it' was

invincible, unstoppable, an opinion shared by teaching staff. This caused staff to become more lax about school rules and expectations, enabling and supporting group contravention of school norms. Through the enactment of rule contravention, the group reinforced identity meanings of themselves as 'above the law', daring to take their actions further. As staff observed group action and their own collective (and relative) inaction, group identity meanings were co-produced between group members and staff. Through complex processes, identity meanings and agency, both perceived and enacted, raised group confidence that they would, (and could) not be 'stopped' whilst reducing staff confidence that they could, (or would) 'control' group behaviour. Conflation of group member's skills and energy aided both these processes, as did the approaching end of term, increasingly viewed as the 'natural' end to what appeared to be considered an inevitable process of transgression.

#### **5.1.6 'Poor' behaviour (re)viewed as agency**

Although it was unusual for 'the group's' behaviour to be viewed positively, some teaching staff were able to do so. Ross linked their rebellious behaviour with feelings of safety in the school:

... I think they were all comfortable and because of that I suppose ..... I think that's why they were demonstrating or displaying the behaviour that they did when they were here, it was because they were safe and comfortable (130626\_Ross\_interview).

In a way this implies that the difficulties the school had with the group were a sign of success in making them feel safe, confident and agentic. Martin (pastoral support) thought so too:

.... you can see that wildness. (Laughs) the out-of-control, the ' I can do anything I want because I am going anyway and I've done all my coursework so I'll get my qualifications, so actually I can just do what I like'. But then that's the time for them to go [to college], because then they start to become scary for the younger children, because for them they're just enjoying themselves and in some ways it's *really* nice to see but on the other hand it can be quite scary for younger children. To see all these year 11's charging about the playground, rough-and-tumble... (130507\_Martin\_interview).



Martin and Ross both imply that ‘the group’s’ behaviour is not an entirely negative sign, but they were unusual in this perception. However, if circumstances of opportunity are viewed in terms of increased and broader agency possibilities, the school had evidently excelled in offering such opportunities!

As Pete’s class’s religious education teacher, Ross had a unique understanding of ‘the group’s’ views about the school. Less constrained by curriculum issues, he had increasingly facilitated ‘debates’ about ‘the group’s’ irritation with what they perceived as lack of rights. Whilst making it clear that such debate would not lead to school policy change, Ross’s classes became a useful outlet for frustration, ideas and discussion. Ross in particular associated the change in timetable with ‘the group’s’ ever ‘wilder’ behaviour. Unusually, he could see frustration as a causal element:

Ross: I think they appeared to sort of outgrow the school, but I think it's purely because of the structure for them had changed, instead of going to six lessons a day, they'd have revision sessions or they'd have exams, or they'd be going off and doing college stuff. And so because it became all over the place there were times where half the group were somewhere so it left three or four back here and then, so what do you do with the three and four, you could carry on and deliver a curriculum or you can sort of abandon it and do something else. I think they sort of, they could see that and identify the fact that things weren't routine and weren't normal and therefore they could then become quite frustrated with it. And that's what we saw when they get a bit restless and a bit rebellious (130626\_Ross\_interview).

This conversation clearly links the group agency with transition, or more specifically, with the limbic un-timetabled elements of transition.

Transition contributed to circumstances of opportunity for different, and broadened identity and agency meanings, in many different ways. College visits and work experience allowed students to both experience and envisage themselves in other, more ‘grown up’ environments with different expectations of their behaviours. Discourses of adulthood, increased freedoms and change made projected elements of identity and agency meanings more salient at this time. Student confidence was high at the end of the year and a certain ebullience was evident once the exams were underway. Ongoing boredom was also clear to observe during what in mainstream schools would have been study leave, leading up to the exam period. Personalised timetables, whilst useful in

terms of individualising transition to college, left classes incomplete when some students were visiting their future college or on work experience. Often, students left in school appeared left to their own devices, a situation which was both frowned upon and tolerated within the school. Pete's consistent attention to the students and their individual requirements continued, but within a less structured framework. Doubtless Pete's often jovial, relaxed approach to the students, intersecting with the inter-relational growth of their belief in themselves as 'invincible' contributed to increasing levels of transgression and challenge to school rules and expectations. As the end of term neared, students appeared to feel they had nothing to lose by enacting such transgressions, and teaching staff felt they had nothing to gain by intervening.

In the light of 'the group' experience, Ross was considering a 'leavers project' for the following year, involving trips out, students leading physical education lessons, marked report writing about the different activities and a graded certificate at the end of term. Ross had successfully used this approach in a previous school as a focus at the end of year 11.

Looking back I am interested in how little I recorded of the actual behaviour of 'the group', and of the language that 'we' (as observers) define(d) them with. 'Out of control', 'wild', 'rebellious', these are excessive words for what was, at most, minor misdemeanours. And yet institutional power was consistently threatened, rules contravened, challenges set, leading 'us' (the adults) to envisage group behaviour in a way that was, retrospectively, wildly out of proportion. I remember, near the end of term, watching as Adam and Dave wandered around the playground talking and making audible comments about Cameron, who was also walking around the school. A year 7 teacher, holding her class outside, called to Adam that he should go back inside the school. Adam listened to the teacher, then led Dave away to a different part of the playground and continued his audible comments. He was not rude, did not directly challenge the teacher, yet did not do what he had been asked to do. Consistent and repeated behaviour such as this is what had led to 'the group' being asked to leave school a month early.

However, identity and agency meanings are temporal, situated in social sites, and linked with particular people in those sites. Although 'the group', with the exception of Scott,

all attended the same college, once their group 'power' appeared to dissipate. Circumstances of opportunity were different in college and Weldale students were on different courses. Once, near the start of college, I saw Adam and John talking at the entrance. Apart from this there did not seem to be much contact between group members. Speaking to Zane at the start of the spring term, he explained how being apart and in their new environments affected their affiliations to *different* social groupings:

Zane: So it's like how we've separated, Dave's become a proper chav, Ken's kind of become a lot more punky, you've got Adam, he's become more into himself, more casual, you've got John who's gone for like the higher grade sort of look and I've gone for like Gothic and Emo, so it's kind of like, your personality and your look starts to really un-fold, and you kind of start to develop.... (140121\_Zane\_interview).

For Zane and the others, at last free from the hated school uniform, here was an opportunity to take more control of particular identity meanings associated with clothing and 'look'. However, Zane's comments also indicate how situated and potentially transient identity and agency meanings are. The particular circumstances of opportunity for some Weldale students, in some situations in school, had supported group development and maintenance. In college, circumstances were different, supporting different identity meanings to develop. 'The group', so very salient in year 11 at Weldale, became relatively unimportant in college identity meanings, probably for very many reasons. 'The group's' situated emergent agency and conflated identity meanings were unsustainable in different circumstances and environments, and indeed there may have been no wish to sustain them. In college, group members may have, in part, shared Zane's wish not to be associated with Weldale school. If this were the case, association with friends from Weldale could have lent their own identity work unwanted meanings.

Although emergent processes cannot be predicted, the students' knowledge of Weldale staff would have aided decisions about how far to push their (mis)behaviour. Situations in college were new, initially presenting less stability and security. The new environment required the re-working of identity and agency meanings. In any case, college discourses revolved around ideas of adulthood, rule following and

responsibility. And the students were now the youngest in the college rather than the oldest in the school.

It is often assumed that people with learning disability labels ‘need’ routine and predictability in their lives. Yet this research seems to show that for some students, when routine is lessened a little, when individuals have more say over what happens, that then different and unexpected identity meanings are possible, through increased emergent agency. This is not to say that this approach would work for all young people, or that the circumstances of agentic opportunity are the same for everyone, but for some young people, a less programmed, more self-determining approach could provide an environment for change. Whilst ‘the group’s’ agency was not universally accepted, the increased self-determination enabled through circumstances of opportunity arising from transition, appears to have led to broader identity and agency meanings. This leads to the possibility that situations could be engineered in which *productive* emergent agency could be enabled.

This first section of the chapter has concentrated on how agency and identity meanings are linked to particular people and situated within social sites. The second section discusses student experience in the different colleges, and some implications of college environment and course choice on identity and agency meanings.

## **5.2 Section 2. College - identity and agency**

### **5.2.1 Foundation learning**

During the year that ‘the group’s’ conflated identity and agency gained power, all year 11 Weldale students were transitioning to college. This process can be viewed as (re)negotiating identity and agency meanings in new environments, linked with new individuals and sited in new social places. All but four year 11 Weldale students attended foundation courses at college (see appendix 5), with John, Aiden, Zane and Michael attending level one courses. As described in section 1.5.4, Allan and colleagues (2011b) found foundation level students increased in self-confidence and independence. This was also the case for Weldale students who, in the main, enjoyed their new environments and new challenges. Each of the five colleges attended by Weldale students (see appendix 5 for details) had separate rooms, areas or buildings for

foundation courses. Although students shared canteens, libraries and social areas with mainstream students, fundamentally, foundation level courses continued the discrete, segregated education that students had experienced at Weldale school. These circumstances continue the discourse of separate rather than inclusive education, and exclusion from mainstream opportunities in the post-compulsory sector (Tomlinson report, 1996).

New environments, classmates, tutors and expectations support (and require) negotiation of new identity and agency meanings, whether or not students feel 'ready' for their transition. Individually, their new circumstances of opportunity presented students with challenges and excitement. The transition process had been well-managed by Adrian (specifically appointed transition co-ordinator) taking seriously the importance of good communication and information provision during transition (Sloper and colleagues, 2010). Since his appointment three years previously, college and school staff agreed that relationships between the school and colleges, and therefore transitions, had improved immeasurably. Adrian visited the colleges specifically to make and maintain these relationships and to introduce students personally to their new tutors. College staff in particular praised these individual relationships that Adrian had made, and continued to nurture, as being of vital importance to the transition process. I got the impression that having a named, personable transition contact at the school meant communication happened more easily, therefore easing transition.

Adrian's appointment reflected transition becoming an important element of educational policy, since identified as "tentative and lacking a cohesive approach" in the 1990s (Dee and Corbett, 1994: 321). Adrian accompanied students on their college visits and Pete (and others) took students to their 14 – 16 college courses during years 10 and 11. In this way the particular people linked with students' school identity meanings made the transition, aiding the linking of identity meanings with new people in college environments. This performed a 'bridging' function in terms of transition expectations and identity negotiations.

However, despite new environments and experiences, on a structural level, options for negotiating broader, more positive identity and agency meanings were limited by the lack of course choice at college. Despite undeniable improvements in transition,

education policy at 16+ tends to focus on the *processes* of transition and choice, largely dismissing what students are transitioning *to*. The SEND code of practice (2015) says the “post-16 education and training landscape is very diverse” (p.111). However, this study shows that courses actually available to students with less than four GCSE level qualifications (a frequent pre-requisite for level one courses) are *extremely* limited in the South West of England. For most Weldale students there was only *one* ‘suitable’ course. All the students started courses at FE college, echoing the concern that FE pathways

may be favoured over other options, not because they are more suitable for the individual, but because it offers all stakeholders involved a clearly identifiable destination, a sufficiently funded and tested route (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009: 144).

This supports Heslop and colleagues’ (2002) assertion that of the 283 families they surveyed, over three-quarters of the young people with learning disability labels went to FE, “because this seemed to be what was expected rather than something the young person might choose to do” (p.3).

Government recommendations (DoE/DoH, 2015) highlight integrated planning and support, access to information and high quality education, training and parental choice, but whilst undoubtedly important, such language is of little help if there is *no actual choice* to be made. If there is only one suitable course at one appropriate college which a student can access, using the word ‘choice’ is at best misleading, at worst disingenuous and deceitful. Valuing People (DoH, 2001) promotes a person-centred approach to post-school education for students with learning disability labels, saying “[y]oung people in particular should not be sent to further education colleges because there is a lack of suitable provision either in updated training facilities or in supported employment” (p.78). Yet in the absence of other alternatives, all students in the year group went to FE, the majority with no choice at all. This challenges the idea of the “local offer” (DoE/ DoH, 2015: 24) with its implication of choice, and questions whether FE offers ‘suitable provision’, or simply ‘provision’. Despite the rhetoric of ‘choice’, possible student identity meanings were, in the main restricted to those of students in foundation learning in discrete areas of the colleges, with peers with similar educational labels.

Lack of course choice influences the identity positioning of the students. Even before the transition to college, most parents expressed worries about what services, if any, would be available when college finished. The general understanding was that there was ‘nothing’ available after college, and families would be “left to their own devices to identify suitable placements” (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009: 142). The feeling this evoked was made clear to me by Catrina, Joey’s mum who explained that the CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) advisor had recently told her:

...when [Joey’s] 18 there's nothing else for him. Sign him off! (she makes a ‘shoo-ing’ motion with both hands) That's it! Din-da-din. Didn't he? (Joey agrees) (131218\_interview\_Catrina).

Maybe this fear for the future made students and parents accept lack of college course choice as inevitable, better than what was to follow. Even if Joey were only able to stay in college until age 18, his family still saw it as a temporary solution to his requirements, one they should be grateful for. Eddie Stobart’s parents, Felicity and Marcus felt similarly. Describing themselves as “proactive” (130521\_Felicity\_interview), they had researched college options early and Eddie had attended ‘taster days’ at his ‘chosen’ college for four years before leaving Weldale. When I asked how they had chosen the course Felicity’s response was typical of the parents I spoke to:

There's very little isn't there? There's foundation learning and that's it. We didn't realise that that was *it*... But that is, yeah, you have no choice... (130521\_Felicity\_interview).

And later:

It isn't ideal. But at least they *do* a course for special needs, thank god, but er.... (130521\_Felicity\_interview).

The relief and gratitude evident in parental talk about college evokes particular identity positioning of students as somehow not ‘deserving’ choices of college course. Family identities are ones of being expected to manage alone, of learning disabled young people as a family concern rather than a societal one. The very real fear about post-college options, or lack of options, meant students identities were already negotiated

within an unspoken 'problem' scenario, one in which any college provision was to be gratefully accepted and taken up. Weldale students' adult identities were already starting to be associated with future service difficulty and unease.

For many of the 21 students, the one course available to them was in itself a compromise. Amongst parents and school staff there was a generalised acceptance that "[y]ou can't expect to get exactly what you want.... If you're fairly happy, that's good enough" (130630\_Joy\_phonecall). As Pete, year 11 tutor, put it, "I think the trick is to make sure your learner, your kid, gets on the course that *most* fits him..." (130225\_Pete\_interview). This situation is at best limiting, reproducing inequalities inherent in the education system, and in society. The range of skills and interests the students had were not reflected in the courses available to them. Course content seemed unimaginative and replicated what had been available in school. For example, Eddie Stobart's course, like many others, had a horticulture element. Eddie knew he enjoyed garden work because Weldale school had an allotment. Had there been other opportunities at school he (and others) might have known that he enjoyed other activities too. Eddie's mum, Felicity, felt Eddie might have chosen mechanics had the school offered this, but gardening "happened to be what was there" (130521\_Felicity\_interview). Such *limited* choice of courses is *limiting* in terms of identity negotiations. In effect Eddie could only negotiate his identity meanings within the college limitations of horticulture, not mechanics, nor anything else. College options limited students' identity work to what their qualifications 'allowed' them entry to. Limited identity negotiations are available to someone with only limited choices.

Foundation and level one courses also suggest worryingly gendered vocations, broadly, hairdressing or healthcare, construction or automotive courses. Yet there is no evidence that adults who complete such courses are later employed in these areas. Despite the glossy college-brochure photos of young women on construction courses, these unimaginative reproductions of the 14-16 college courses already attended by many of the students whilst in school, appear to manoeuvre young people, those with the fewest choices, into predictable 'work' scenarios that reproduce social inequalities. The subjects available at college, such as gardening and catering, replicate low-paid, low-skilled work, generally undervalued in current society. However, the likelihood of foundation level students becoming employed in these areas is small. As such, college



courses represent *undervalued* yet, at the same time, *unattainable* ambition for the students.

Limited course options provide limited opportunities for expanding interests and identity meanings. Additionally, the purpose of the courses is not clear. During this research I noticed a largely unspoken feeling that the courses provided ‘containment’ and ‘entertainment’, a prolonging of education rather than teaching with specific aims. Aston and colleagues (2005) suggest that such courses defer transition “for two or three years whilst the young person continues along a pre-ordained track” (p.xii). Atkins’ (2008) view of level one courses as “low value” providing an extended transition doing “low level activities” (p.203) and being “‘busy’ (rather than engaged in learning) as a preparation for low-paid, low-skilled employment” (p.203) appears to also apply, even more so, to foundation learning.

This research confirms Abbott and Heslop’s (2009) experience that options at post-school and post-college stage are extremely limited, the “respondents expressed the view that finding one suitable option was incredibly difficult; having a second or reserve option was described by several people as ‘gold dust’” (p.50), particularly after college.

I was shocked by this situation. Like many Weldale parents I had been lulled into a *sense* of available alternatives by neoliberal language, of choice, of the students as ‘consumers’. Post 16 education appears to replicate too many other SEN ‘containment’ situations where parents and carers are relieved that there are any services available, when “good enough” (130630\_Joy\_phonecall) is broadly considered a successful college placement and a “catch all course” (130225\_Pete\_interview) is considered appropriate for students with extremely disparate interests and requirements.

Appendix 5 shows that students with the qualifications needed to access level one courses *did* have choices, albeit limited ones. For the majority of the other students there was no choice of course, or only a ‘choice’ between a course in which they had absolutely no interest and one which may have suited them slightly better. This situation was explained by Maggie, Dave’s carer. Although excited about going to Townwood college, Dave showed little interest in the vocational taster course which Maggie described as “the only course available for him” (140124\_Maggie\_interview).

Farmton agricultural college, only three miles away from his home, had not presented an option as, having no interest in horticulture, agriculture or animals, Maggie said Dave simply “wouldn't have gone” (140124\_Maggie\_interview). Consequently, although geographically Dave *did* have a choice, given that this choice was between a course he might attend and one he would not, in terms of *real* options there were none.

### 5.2.2 Level one courses.

Although the majority of students transitioned from school to foundation level courses, four students, Michael, Aiden, John and Zane, accessed level one courses at college, for Weldale, a “[b]igger variety of courses ... than ever before” (130225\_Pete\_interview). However, here too, the actual choice available and of interest to any of the students was, at the most two, or possibly three courses.

Like Dave’s ‘choice’ of courses, Michael also found himself with what could be called a ‘non-choice’. Michael found my presence in the school extremely challenging, but was happy for his mum, Joy, to speak to me about his transition experience. She described Weldale school as a haven where Michael recovered from the ‘damage’ of mainstream school. Although taking some GCSEs, Michael needed GCSE maths to access a level one course. Weldale negotiated Michael a place on a level one Information Technology (IT) course, on the basis that he had the ability to pass maths at GCSE level, but was unable/unwilling to sit the exam. This successful negotiation was considered a triumph, particularly when Townwood’s pre-requisite qualification regulations were extremely strict. Joy felt Weldale had exceeded their remit in terms of the transition process. However, attending the IT course meant re-entering a mainstream class. This was challenging for Michael. His only non-mainstream alternative would have been the foundation level skills for living course, at the same college and *entirely* inappropriate for him. Joy maintained that the move to mainstream was a “necessary step at this point” and that Michael needed a “wider spectrum of people” to mix with (130630\_Joy\_phonecall). However, the concept of ‘choice’ came with a caveat:

The options are limited so in some ways it is his choice, but could he be offered the same thing in a special education environment? No! ... Because he hasn't got those two offers he doesn't really get that choice... If he wants

to go on and do this [the IT course] then he has to go into a mainstream setting (130630\_Joy\_phonecall).

Joy explained there is no ‘real’ choice of course “when you don’t fit certain profiles” (130630\_Joy\_phonecall). In one phrase this sums up the situation of the vast majority of Weldale students. The courses offered suit some students in some ways at some times. But, ‘choices’ are poor, and largely reproduce social inequalities rather than tackling them. In terms of ‘choice’ it was frequently mentioned that the ‘trick’ with transition was helping students *want* to do the course that was available to them.

For Michael, re-entering mainstream education came with potentially difficult expectations. Whereas Weldale school had been extremely accommodating of his requirements, Townwood college made it clear he had six weeks in which to comply with their expectation of full attendance and presence in the class, or he would have to leave the course. Continuing education within such narrow choices presents complicated circumstances of opportunity for identity and agency negotiation. Students are positioned within particular environments with particular expectations, in many ways continuing to limit their identity options on the basis of ‘their’ educational labels. However, these same circumstances of opportunity also offered new situations within which identity and agency could be positively negotiated. Joy felt Michael was ‘ready’ to move into a mainstream environment, and that this would be a positive move for him, yet lack of choice positioned him (and others) as *having* to take up particular identity and agency positions.

Unlike Townwood’s strict procedures, Ridgewell College’s approach appeared altogether more flexible. Aiden initially applied for the only course (foundation level life skills) his entry level qualifications prescribed for him, but on registering at the college, was offered a place on a level one sports science course. Staff recognised Aiden would become bored doing life skills. Although Ridgewell offered over 20 level one courses, (unlike Townwood college mostly requiring only a genuine interest in the subject, some asking for entry level maths and English), sports science was one of the few requiring three GCSE passes. Aiden did not have these, but, refreshingly, the head of department explained to me “We are flexible, we have to be. Why not?” (131021\_college\_visit). This approach benefited both Aiden and Ridgewell college in the short term, as this interview excerpt shows:

Ana: (confirming previous conversation)... in general you're working hard? (Aiden agrees) and that's because you like it?

Aiden: because what I like doing is sport yeah... if it wasn't the course I wanted I would just arse around chucking stuff at the teachers, and being naughty (140127\_Aiden\_interview).

Although this comment was made while with other members of his class, so may be partially attributed to bravado, to me Aiden was unrecognisable as a student when I visited him in college. I saw his handwriting for the first time, witnessed him participating in class work, in groups, in discussions. He was confident, motivated, engaged, answered questions addressed to the whole class, and seemed very happy. For the first time I saw Aiden stay in a classroom for a whole session, and he worked without a personal TA. Aiden explained this by saying it was the first time that he had been interested in what was being taught. The sports course allowed him to make friends with others with the same interests as him (“they're all football” (131021\_Aiden\_interview), and showed him he could do well in college. Education appeared to be working for him, possibly for the first time. In these new circumstances of opportunity Aiden was negotiating identity meanings as a happy, popular and successful student.

Although I initially, and somewhat over-enthusiastically, drew conclusions about choice of college course and maturity, Aiden’s carer, Libby, told me (on two different occasions) that it was not attending college that had motivated and enthused Aiden, but the National Citizen Service project he had attended in the summer. He had participated in a social action project, organising and running a music festival with a group of other young people, helping him “realise that he's *able* to do things, on his own and... you know, cope on his own” (140107\_interview\_Libby). This approach, one of teamwork and social participation with a particular aim, suited Aiden well. Socially aware and caring, Aiden’s motivation had been harnessed by the citizenship project, enabling broader identity meanings to develop, those of community member, of capable, of useful. The social action project had allowed Aiden to recognise his skills and, as Libby put it, view himself as ‘able’, broadening both his *concept* of his own identity and agency, and his agency *skills*.

However, despite Aiden's increased motivation, confidence and evident happiness and satisfaction with his course, his time in college did not last long due to structural limitations. At the end of the one year course, the only level one course staff felt he could have progressed to was one he had no interest in. Aiden decided college had nothing more to offer him and left with hopes of finding TA or sports coaching work in a special school.

Aiden was not alone. Although Ofsted (2011) found “[f]oundation learning programmes were successful for learners whose main goal was to progress to level 2 provision or higher” (p.7), this was not an opportunity even for the most well qualified, or fortunate students in this study. Structural limitations routinely denied students the opportunity to attend courses they were most interested in. I spoke to three of the four level one tutors who made it clear that Weldale students on their courses would not be able to progress to level two courses, thus limiting both their choices and the length of time they could stay in college. The continuing “lack of progression” (p.324) in FE provision for students with learning difficulty labels, identified by Dee and Corbett (1994) over 20 years ago, meant Aiden had few opportunities and, understandably, saw the ‘choice’ of attending a course he had no interest in, or leaving college, as no choice at all. This mirrors Atkins (2008) findings that level 1 FE courses do not link to further courses. Whilst Aiden's achievements are considerable and should be celebrated, the college system did not allow him to build on his new found study skills.

### **5.2.3 Course ‘choice’ implications for identity meanings**

For some students the courses they attended supported their changing identity meanings. As described, transition to college helped Amber shed the label of ‘moaner’ and develop the label of ‘adult’ through use of her social skills and development of her interests. The course suited her and increased her options, allowing her to negotiate further freedoms such as going into town on her own in her leisure time. For Aiden too, the sports science course helped him to make friends with whom he had sport in common. It taught him about how the body works, helping him make healthier choices about food and exercise. This supported his self-proclaimed identity as someone interested in football and in passing on his knowledge to others, through the coaching element of the course. Additionally, his acceptance on the level one course aided a

feeling of adulthood, building on the confidence skills he had developed through the National Citizen project he attended. Crucially, the course allowed Aiden to spend time with students who did not have SEN labels, to find other things in common with his classmates, and to develop identity meanings in which educational labels had little salience.

All the students learned new skills through attending college and their identity meanings will have been changed and influenced through 'being' college students rather than school pupils. Their experiences and opportunities were expanded through meeting new people, experiencing different situations, challenging themselves and being challenged. Going to college is broadly (and rightly) seen as a 'good' thing, whether this is for individual reasons, or for reasons of equal rights. All parents were justly proud of their children's achievements. After at least five years at Weldale School, moving to college presented new and exciting ways of identifying with different people and places, new social sites in which to negotiate different identity meanings.

Equally, agency opportunities were increased through transition to college, with the courses promoting situations where agency could be practised safely. However, just as at Weldale, supported agency took place within particular circumstances, considered useful to the student and promoting particular skills. Despite the much discussed 'freedom' of college, educational choice and emergent agency did not appear to play a particular part in any of the courses.

However, alongside identity meanings linked to concepts of adulthood, freedom and independence are other, less positive discourses that affect how students view themselves. The lack of choice of course, the likelihood that students are encouraged to fit the existing course rather than choose a course that suits them, the wasted opportunities and the young people who fall by the wayside, all demand consideration. These issues are part of an educational discourse implying that 'something' is better than 'nothing', of limited options, limited progression and ultimately, limited adult lives. The neoliberal market-driven approach that views students as 'customers' fails those who do not have the 'choice' promised by the market, yet, by the same discourse are positioned as 'needy', not 'able enough' to access the broader choices available to other students. Inevitably education systems will find it difficult to support the interests

of every student, but the courses available limit opportunity in many ways, offering narrow pathways and failing to take students' interests and skills into account.

Interestingly, in FE, 'success' is partially 'assessed' through a measure of retention and achievement (Martinez, 2001). Townwood college in particular, took this very seriously, with computer-generated graphs plotting the trajectory of attendance, and policies implemented at differing stages of falling attendance. However, year 11 tutor, Pete, suggested that attending college should not be unquestioningly understood as the result of a good placement, but could also be attributed to a lack of other opportunities. Pete viewed college as presenting continuity in students' lives. The set-up and learning were similar to school, the same social life could be expected, some students spent their college day with the same friends from school. He compared this to the 'real' freedom that college represented to many mainstream students. We discussed how alternatives available to mainstream students (e.g., leave college, get a job, move into a flat with friends, go travelling, take up an apprenticeship) were unavailable to Weldale students. Pete put it simply:

If you are a SEN child you haven't got [other] options available to you, college *is* the option! (130225\_Pete\_interview).

If college *is* the option, having a 'choice' of only one course (however good that course may be) limits possibilities for negotiating broader identity and agency meanings, positioning students' adult identities within delimiting constraints.

For students with learning disability labels in FE, it is recognised that

[...] poor planning of support is exacerbated by a lack of choice and opportunities for young people: for example, a limited choice of entry-level courses in further education that do not build on what has gone before, or prepare young people for life and work; poor quality work experience; and a lack of supported employment opportunities to help them prepare for, find and retain work (SEN green paper, 2011: 10).

What is less understood is the effect that this lack of choice and opportunity has on how individuals, caught up in choiceless yet (now) compulsory education, feel about themselves and how others view them. Absorbing the value-judgements inherent in a

discriminatory education system within discriminatory communities has a damaging yet often unrecognised effect on identity meanings. This is particularly evident in the discourse of educational ‘failure’.

In the main, Weldale school, colleges and parents worked together to settle students during their initial time in college. Once the initial transition period was navigated, transport and daily routines clarified, most students settled happily into their courses. However, this was not the case for all students. Three students left in the first term, one predicted, two surprising. Adam, had been highlighted as a potential college ‘leaver’ in school, but that does not make his leaving any less important or significant. Despite Weldale negotiating on his behalf, saying he was easily capable of completing a level one Information and Communications Technology (ICT) course at his local college, Riverlee, without the four GCSEs required, Adam had been denied this option. For Adam, the requirement for pre-requisite qualifications “created artificial barriers to progression” (Ofsted, 2011: 21) prohibiting access to further levels of practical subjects. In the absence of the required qualifications, Riverlee stipulated Adam should complete their one year foundation level course before attending the ICT course. Adam was not happy with this, telling me he didn’t want to “waste” a year of his life to get onto a course (ICT) that he was not one hundred percent sure would suit him in the end (130228\_interview\_Adam). Instead, he started a foundation level vocational course at Townwood college. As predicted by staff at Weldale, this did not suit him, and after consideration of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) re-engagement programmes, he left. I was unable to contact him after this.

The second student, Ken, who, when I spoke to him during his first term, was extremely happy at college, left soon after. Ken had excelled in the 14-16 college course whilst still at Weldale, achieving distinction standard in all four elements of his construction course. Interviewing him at home in January 2014, he had several complaints about his vocational taster course. He told me he had been confused and cross at being required to learn maths and English at a level below his previous qualifications. Ken said he had not been told, and he certainly had not realised, that the course would involve changing subjects mid-term. He struggled to attend when after the hairdressing module which he had really enjoyed, the course changed to catering. Ken told me he had absolutely no interest in catering as he could already cook himself a meal at home. As Ken’s



attendance waned, a part-time timetable was arranged by the college, involving only the maths and English component of his course. He told me he tried hard to stay, but “just couldn't handle it” (140124\_interview\_Ken\_and\_Diane). When I last spoke to him Ken was looking for a job.

The third student to leave was Scott, the only student to attend Riverlee College. Scott had given no indication that he might find college difficult, speaking about his transition with confidence. When I phoned his Dad in January 2014, he told me Scott had become too ‘anxious’ to attend college. Despite my attempts to visit Scott and his family, I was not able to gain more information.

Like Adam, Ken and Scott, Ivy too struggled with college, missing several months of term due to prolonged hospital stays. I had visited her in the second week of college and she described sleepless nights, worry, struggle and ill-health. Increased responsibility (for example getting to class on time without a bell to alert her), combined with not having a personal TA for the first time since aged four, left Ivy feeling lost and out of control:

I mean in Weldale I get a little bit grumpy but Tessa [her TA] cheers me up and then it's fine.... but you don't have that here, they treat you like an adult and... That's just like... It just, it shocked me! I'm just saying to myself "I'm not an adult. By the eyes of the law I'm not adult". And I don't want to be an adult yet (130910\_Ivy\_interview\_college).

The pre-college transition process had been taxing for Ivy. Weldale had arranged extra college visits to help her get used to Ponymead college. Ivy attended Weldale only four days a week, and found the hour long journey to and from school exhausting and tiresome. She required extra time off school to ‘recover’ from attending college visits. She told me she didn’t like change, and was distressed at the thought of leaving school. Despite this, she and her family discussed her requirements with Ponymead, and it was decided that she would attend full-time. When I visited Ivy in her respite home in January 2014, she told me she had a new part-time timetable, but, like Ken’s, this involved only the paperwork element of the course, meaning she had no motivation to attend. Respite-home staff travelled with her to college, supporting college staff in understanding her medical condition and other requirements. This was considered a

temporary measure but a permanent support-worker was soon to be appointed by the college. Ivy saw college as something to endure, saying, “I just... want this to be over and done with as quick as possible. Because it's just really irritating and frustrating” (140119\_Ivy\_interview). Although Ivy had known she would not have a personal TA and she and the college had felt she was ready for this step, with hindsight, she and her respite carer agreed that a more graded transition to independent learning might have helped her.

For reasons of privacy I will not go into other complicating factors that may have needed to be addressed in order for Adam, Ken, Scott or Ivy to be supported to attend college. Suffice it to say that whilst well meaning, reducing the timetable to the least interesting or inspiring elements (presumably those attracting funding) did not work for either Ken or Ivy. Ken and his mum repeatedly stressed how excellent his tutor's response had been and how she had tried her hardest to help him stay in college. However, when she reached the end of the Townwood procedures for retaining students, there were no options left. I asked the department director if Ken could restart his course the following year and was told he had “wrecked his chances” (140129\_audio\_note\_discussion) through poor attendance. Speaking with Townwood teaching staff I felt they had the students' best interests at heart but that their hands were tied by college protocol.

Weldale staff had spoken from experience, saying that they could usually predict which students would complete college and who would leave, citing ‘chaotic’ lives and ‘difficult’ personalities as common reasons for college placement breakdown. There was a feeling that staying in college would inevitably be more difficult under these circumstances. Ken and Scott were not expected to leave college, suggesting that more could have been done to support them to stay. Adam was predicted to leave, also suggesting more could have been done to support *him* to stay. A more flexible approach, my feeling is, one less attuned to ‘successful outcomes’ and more towards education in its broadest sense, might have encouraged all the students to complete their courses, or restart them had this been an option.

These situations present educational institutions and individuals with complex identity narratives to negotiate. Adam was considered by Weldale to be a potential ‘leaver’.

This information will have been transferred to college during his transition, accompanying him and affecting how he was viewed and responded to from the outset. Labelling Adam as a potential leaver also offered some level of vindication to college systems when he did leave. The implication is that college ‘intervention’ had not succeeded because of something to do with Adam, some inherent characteristic that made it difficult for the college to ‘retain’ him. Adam became part of a discourse about ‘ineducable’, ‘difficult to engage’ young people, ‘resistant’ to college systems set up to keep ‘them’ in college. The discourse of young people with labels of MLD denied access to courses they are interested in, because of institutional restrictions, is less strongly heard, yet vitally important in understanding Adam’s ‘choices’. Adam’s personal motivation is clear in his decision not to “waste” time doing a course he did not feel would benefit him in order to attend his chosen ICT course at Riverlee college. By leaving Townwood college it appears that he made this same decision a second time.

For Ken and Ivy, identity narratives about failure were evident in their talk. This is particularly salient when, as discussed above, college *is* the option and there is only one ‘choice’ of course. For someone who does not feel that their only option suits them, or that they cannot do what is required of them (e.g., attend full-time), the implications in terms of identity meanings can become extremely limiting and negative. Full-time attendance is required to attract FE funding, making personalised or discretionary options impossible unless the college is able and willing to ‘re-arrange’ funds from other sources (131021\_Ridgewell\_college\_visit). Rather than outcome-centred approaches, this would require a person-centred approach, such as the one at Aiden’s college. Dee and Corbett (1994) predicted that the market context might lead colleges to accept “easier and more promising learners” (p.324) and reject “learners who cost too much for too little return” (p.324). Certainly the cost/return discourse is more evident in some colleges than others. It is important for identity meanings that this socio-political educational landscape is understood by the individuals traversing it. In the absence of a social model of disability understanding, pervasive deficit identity meanings can become particularly destructive and damaging when viewed through the lens of ‘failure’ to ‘achieve’.

#### **5.2.4 Opportunity versus safety.**

Throughout my time at Weldale and the colleges I was repeatedly struck by talk about student safety. Most staff and parents mentioned student safety, or danger, at some point, most commonly linking this with other members of society, or with temptation into dangerous situations. The ‘danger’ of society (Mitchell, Clegg and Furniss, 2006) was considered a ‘given’ for students with labels of learning disability, not something to be challenged, but to be guarded against, protected from. Understandably, parents wished to safeguard their children, as did the school, however this sets up a difficulty in terms of opportunity. This became clear to me when discussing students’ expectations about college.

Although most students felt excited about going to college, their hopes for this time were painfully limited. Both before and after transition, when discussing the ‘freedom’ of college, students mentioned things their mainstream peers would take for granted, such as choosing lunch in the canteen, walking into town, meeting friends, buying a drink in a shop. That these simple and easily achieved activities are considered ‘freedoms’ is a damning indictment of the type of social participation that is enabled and expected for young people with learning difficulty labels.

Andy’s situation, taken from my research notes is a good example:

Like the young people in Aston and colleagues’ (2005) research, Andy’s opportunities for leisure and social experiences happen within the context of ‘learning disability’ services. Andy’s social context/environment is broadly reliant on the label of MLD, in that, in the absence of access to mainstream social and leisure activities, social services and charity run opportunities specifically for people with SEN labels are his only option. For Andy (and for others in the same situation) opportunities for envisaging a different life are restricted, repressed by his current limited experiences and lack of role models. Limitations take the form of having few friends with whom to spend time, fear of and lack of support to use public transport, the cost of hiring a taxi, uncertainty in using some methods of communication such as Facebook or phone. Andy’s mum, Erica, tells me she stepped in when Andy received verbal abuse through internet conversations from a college friend’s father. Erica is resourceful (threatening to call the police on that occasion) but circumstances limit her effectiveness against what seems like an onslaught of ‘poor’ and antisocial behaviour from ‘friends’ and neighbours. It is no surprise she is protective of Andy in a world that seems so

threatening. At college Andy is learning how to make a cup of tea, to shop for ingredients and to cook. Acquiring these new skills involves a renegotiation of his identity meanings as 'able' to do these things. This is, as it should be, exciting, but also anxiety provoking for both him and Erica. I in no way wish to belittle Andy's achievements, but this is not the pinnacle of his abilities, nor should it be the apex of his hopes and dreams (140121).

That activities such as making a drink or using a shop are restricted until students are 16 or 17 not only indicates a level of discriminatory control, but also suggests that some social participation skills have been neglected in favour of 'safety'. Any 17 year old who had not had the opportunity and resources to buy a soft drink in a shop would lack the skills to do so easily. Understandably, parents worry about the risk to their young people of being out in town on their own. Worries expressed to me about students involved an understanding of traffic, of money, of dangers from other people. These worries, the same as mine for my own children, can be viewed as the vulnerability of the students *from* others, not an inherent vulnerability *within* them. The largely unspecified fear about encouraging young people with learning difficulty labels to take steps towards social participation is based on potentially poor and abusive behaviour of *others* in the community. Yet the response to this 'danger' is to limit social interaction and to teach students life skills. Whilst undoubtedly useful and important, this continues ableist assumptions that change should happen at the level of the individual, and does not challenge imagined and actual poor behaviour of others in society. Society must *also* be changed to present less of a threat to someone whose dreams of adulthood include buying a drink from a shop. I do not wish to belittle either lifeskills teaching, which I consider important, or the achievements of the students, which are significant. However, that accessing a public shop represents an exciting challenge aged 17 illustrates limited thinking in terms of education for young learning disabled people. The 'problem' and the 'solution' is still seen as residing in the individual rather than also in their communities. Teaching 'independence' in isolation belies both the interdependence that is natural in society (Goodley, 2011), and the responsibility of communities to welcome, understand and accept individuals. Viewed through this lens, current foundation level teaching could be viewed as adhering to the outdated concept of *assimilation*. A different method of navigating between safety and opportunity is required in order that young people with learning disability labels have opportunities for broader, more positive identity and agency negotiations.

### 5.2.5 Chapter summary.

The first section of this chapter examined how Pete and Adrian's particular pedagogic approach offered circumstances of opportunity in which some students were supported to improvise, to try out, new and unusual agency and identity meanings. I discussed how such experimental identities were associated with agency, with 'the group' perceiving themselves, and being perceived as 'bad-ass'. Agency and identity meanings were linked with particular people and situated in particular social sites.

The second section has examined student identity and agency negotiations in the structural context, showing FE 'choice' available to young people with learning disability labels to be largely in rhetoric only, particularly at foundation level, but also at level one. FE colleges, whilst the only option for most Weldale students, appear to replicate the options available to students when still at school, rather than broadening them. Although students learnt new skills and had different opportunities in college, these were limited, often gendered, and restricted by (lack of) qualification. Staff and students implied, that in college and in school, the most important and exciting learning took place on social levels, meeting new people and accessing social spaces. Staff were committed, well-meaning and skilled, and I agree with Atkins that, "[i]f considered in isolation and at a superficial level, the activity in the field of [level one] vocational education looks positive" (Atkins, 2009: 138-139). However, like Atkins, I consider it imperative that vocational courses be viewed within the broader context of both education and employment, as "[w]ithin these broader contexts, what these students are doing and achieving carries little currency and holds no value beyond the immediate field" (Atkins, 2009: 139). Ofsted (2011) found, as I did, foundation level courses "too narrowly focused on accreditation" (p.7) and providing too few days in college. This Ofsted report implies that the purpose of FE for students with learning disability labels is skill development, work experience and progression to "some form of employment" (p.7). The dispiriting opportunities at foundation level and level one lead me to question the current, somewhat vague purpose of FE for students with learning disability labels. At a stage of education which should prepare young people for their adult lives, broader opportunities are important, particularly for identity and agency meanings, especially when students continue to be positioned as 'successful' (possibly, as Pete suggested, because there is no other option), or 'failures' by binaried educational

discourses. It seems that transition to FE, for some learning disabled students, misses opportunities, in not taking seriously either motivation, enthusiasm and interests, *or* difficulties and requirements. In the next chapter I discuss ways in which foundation level FE could be re-imagined as offering broader opportunities for emergent agency and broader, more positive identity meanings.

## **6 Provocations for re-imagining foundation level further education (FE)**

### **6.1 A brief summary so far**

At this point it is useful to recap a little. In chapter two I described my own journey of subjectification, or construction of the individual subject (Biesta, 2009), negotiating broader identity meanings through new environments and ways of thinking, through the research process. I then discussed identity and agency through students' stories. I introduced transition as a time of change in terms of identity meanings, some changes deliberate, others happening simply through exposure to new environments, people and social expectations. I brought in Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) model of emergent agency, using this to describe identity negotiations in times of transition when expectations are in flux, leading to 'improvised' (Holland et al, 1998) identity negotiations. Gerrard's story evoked how an understanding of himself as 'naughty' was clearly linked with place (science lessons) and people (Mr M and other students). Similarly, Amber's school-based label of 'moaner' highlighted 'difficult' behaviour associated with school work, whilst rendering her skills less 'visible'. Both Gerrard and Amber shed these (unofficial) school labels on transition to college. Zane's story illustrated the potential difficulties of 'losing' a SEN label, how his college environment continued to assign him difficult-to-manage 'identity labels'. Rejecting institutional support, yet struggling alone, Zane's identity work caused him difficulties.

I discussed how different families have different approaches to SEN labels. Chris Hoy's story suggested how his family's choice *not* to associate a SEN label with him may have influenced his gaining a socially valued skill, that of cycling. Chris's quiet confidence and independent travel, when in an environment of acceptance and support, afforded him opportunities largely unavailable to other Weldale students. Lewis's family too negotiated different meanings of SEN, 're-writing' potentially negative and stigmatising labels in favour of family labels of similarity, belonging, positive character traits and relationships.

In chapter three, I discussed how definitions of agency requiring a considered outcome do not do justice to many agency negotiations. I described agency as emergent in social



interactions, situated in social sites, and linked with particular people. So, while staying with relatives, Amber was able to negotiate a much hoped for independent trip to town. Similarly, Andy was able to negotiate agentic decisions regarding our conversations and interviews. My own (dis)empowering agency played a large part in how/whether this came about. Through Chris' and Eddie's stories I introduced ordering and disordering agency, evoking how both may be present at the same time in agency negotiations. I described how Wolverine's and Anthony's imaginative agency can be understood as methods of practising agency, similar to role-play, testing out different meanings and positions within a 'safe' environment.

In chapter five, I re-linked identity and agency negotiation processes, describing how 'the group' gained both actual and perceived power through complex interactions between student action and staff acquiescence. Particular people (Pete, Adrian and Adam), places (Pete's tutor times and Adrian's classes) and times (limbic, less structured moments which came about through the transition process) contributed to this, situating group power within school processes. On transition to college, the 'group' disbanded, conflated identity and agency relying on ongoing social processes that, in a different environment were difficult, maybe impossible, to continue, even had this been their intention. Through conceptually situating broader, more positive identity and agency meanings within social sites and linking them with particular people, an understanding of the importance of increased positive social interactions is developed.

I then discussed the somewhat limited opportunities for broader more positive identity and agency meanings to be developed in further education (FE). I have suggested that increased social experiences offer increased social processes and circumstances of opportunity in which broader identity and agency meanings can be negotiated. This was evident in Aiden, whose inclusion and involvement in a community project had noticeably positive implications for his college learning, and for his identities. In general, however, although going to college appears to be (largely) successful in terms of increased confidence and independence, this only goes so far when course choices are so limited, positioning students identities within restricted, contained options. As described, the FE system's reliance on funding allocated through the maths and English elements of foundation courses contributes to some students taking courses they are not interested in, and/or leaving college unnecessarily. The fundamental question of

whether foundation learning prepares students for their later lives remains largely undiscussed.

These issues, and others, in the previous chapters, throw up many questions, questions about human flourishing and possibilities. For example:

What forms of education could support young people with learning disability labels to enact agency and negotiate broader, more positive identity meanings? How can agency-supporting situations, each requiring *different* circumstances of opportunity, be engineered? Which situations could make productive use of ‘the group’s’ energy, imagination and relationships? Are there situations in which Chris and Eddie could still enact roles of ‘good student’, whilst *also* using skills and motivation exhibited in their home lives? How could Amber be ‘allowed’ to use her social skills in a way that did not render her ‘vulnerable’ to the ‘dangers’ of ‘society’? Could Zane and Wolverine be persuaded to trust others, and view society as offering acceptance and possibilities, rather than hurt, uncertainty and fear? How could Aiden’s newly acquired motivation and learning skills be ‘harnessed’ and used for his own, and society’s benefit? Could Wolverine and Anthony’s imaginative role-playing agency be spliced into their day-to-day lives in a productive way? How could their existing skills be supported and accentuated, enabling more socially valued methods of interaction, negating the need for these to take place in imagination only? Where, and how, could students *practise* agency without causing potential difficulty or reprimand? How can questions of educational equity be addressed when each student may require something different for their adult lives? What could FE courses offer that would broaden opportunities for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings, seen through a capabilities lens as ‘freedoms’? If identity and agency meanings are linked with particular people and situated within social sites, how can this ‘knowledge’ be used to enable students to negotiate broader, more positive identity meanings?

However, the previous chapters do not only suggest questions, but also some circumstances, relationships, and approaches that seem to support more positive identity and agency negotiations. Spending so much time at Weldale gave me opportunity to think about what the school provided in terms of positive identity and agency-supporting situations. Drawing on this ‘ethnographic knowledge’ I now draw together

some circumstances that appear to be important to the Weldale students' identity and agency negotiations described in this thesis. These may be considered 'provocations' to re-thinking educational relationships.

As described in chapter five, Pete and Adrian offered a 'different' sort of school relationship, often non-authoritative, equalising and fun, yet always maintaining clear boundaries about mutual care and respect. The lessening of hierarchical power appears to have enabled opportunities for the taking up of unusual, imaginative identity positions, the trying out of different stances and approaches to identities and agency. I have described this as the deliberate provision of circumstances of opportunity. Humour played a huge part in this, and, valued by Pete, Adrian and many students, it appeared to help, both with relationships and more positive identity and agency meanings. The context of reciprocal care and respect in which such humorous games and talk happened, is vital in the prevention of 'banter' *about* people with learning disability labels, which is not of their own making. I have experienced this in other contexts. Describing what constitutes 'successful' and respectful 'mickey-taking' transcends available language in the same way that post-qualitative analysis does. I cannot describe exactly *how* Pete, Adrian, and 'the group' made situations 'funny' or provided circumstances in which jokes 'worked'. I can, however, say that within the 'safety' of Pete and Adrian's classes, and within such well established relationships, humour was a shared resource, an important reciprocal tool for testing out, taking on, different identity and agency positions.

The relaxation of institutional expectations and timetables towards the end of the school year, like the relaxation of expected staff and student roles, appears to have had a supportive role too. Offering less predictable learning situations supported new, improvised and imaginative identity and agency negotiations. Loosening institutional ties and limitations seems to provide limbic moments, transitional understandings of identities and agency. Repeatedly I observed how 'the group' tested and pushed the boundaries of expectation when left to their own devices, or when they had 'spare' time in which to dream up imaginative approaches to challenging expectations and having fun. Such unscheduled time does not often feature within a school timetable, yet it appears that it is here that improvisation and imagination play an increased part in the fluidity of identity and agency meanings. The complex relationships between such

unstructured hours and individual and group decision-making, agency, that emerge when there is no teacher leading or ‘controlling’ activity seems important here. Here again, language does not suffice, either to describe or prescribe, exactly what happens between individuals and social interactions in such circumstances, making it difficult to draw conclusions about ‘how’ to provide successful circumstances of opportunity.

‘Being known’ and ‘accepted for who they are’ were phrases often reiterated, by staff and parents, as advantages that Weldale school could offer students. ‘Being known’ situates identity and agency meanings in particular social sites and links them to/particular people. It is likely that there are reciprocal social processes involved in ‘being known’ and ‘being accepted’. In a school the size of Weldale, every staff member knew every student and vice-versa, linking each of their identities’ with each other person. Whilst this could have a detrimental and limiting effect on identity meanings (e.g., being ‘known’ for reasons that delimit identity options), it also offers increased opportunity for different identities to be negotiated in different circumstances with different people. From this I draw the idea that being ‘known’ and ‘accepted’ by particular people in particular places can have a supportive effect on positive identity and agency meanings.

Social and institutional norms may have a limiting effect on both staff and students. However, these same norms can also offer security and support. Pete and Adrian, (maybe because of their hierarchical authority) managed to renegotiate school rules to their own advantage, offering identity and agency supporting circumstances in the process. They also maintained authority when they deemed it necessary, able to renegotiate order in a chaotic situation. However, this cannot be expected of all teaching staff, nor would it be empowering for all students. Indeed, it may have quite the opposite effect for some students and staff. Equally, the type of humour enjoyed by Pete, Adrian and some students can never be a ‘requirement’ of teaching staff and would not be appreciated by some students. Such relationships are based on, and in, reciprocal respect, knowledge and acceptance. It seems imperative that any ‘loosening’ of institutional and hierarchical power happens in circumstances, and at a rate, that is comfortable for both individual students and educational staff. Here too, mutual knowledge and acceptance in reciprocal relationships built over considerable time seem to be important.

Drawing on these ‘provocations’ from ethnographic knowledge of the school, this chapter largely departs from individual student experiences to take a more philosophical approach. I briefly discuss the current aims and purpose of FE before reimagining education as a potential force for social justice, with a deliberate role in subjectification, as an ethical project. I imagine how foundation learning could become less (re)productive of inequality and disadvantage. I consider opportunities for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings through positioning students as agents of change in their own communities. I envisage foundation level learning as an opportunity to consider some of the questions that previous chapters pose. This chapter, reimagining foundation level FE can in part, be read as implications of this research. I acknowledge however, that this discussion replicates the many attentions trained on FE as a ‘failing’ sector, replicating, on a theoretical level, the ‘re-organisation’ of aims, roles and practicalities in FE, a sector that has undergone many iterations and reorganisations.

Because FE is known for having endured many attempts to ‘improve’ it. However, FE is also recognised as being responsive, flexible and innovative (Skills Commission, 2016) in times of change. I see both these circumstances as having several causes. One is that FE is a discrete element of education, often a short time period in students’ lives. Interventions can be relatively quickly enacted, outcomes and implications assessed, usually within two years. In this way FE may be viewed as ‘separate’ from school-based education, and as such, is in a position to accommodate both ‘experimental’/innovative, and remedial approaches. A further reason for viewing FE as a site for educational change is the unspoken idea that by age 16 students have the majority of their education behind them. This implies that any unsuccessful approaches introduced at this stage, might have fewer negative implications for their future lives. By focussing on FE in this imaginative provocation of a different way of educating students with learning disability labels, I am aware that I too view FE as a discrete system, an opportunity to describe an unusual approach that could be quickly piloted, assessed and introduced. The approach that I develop throughout this chapter introduces a radical departure from the foundation level FE courses that Weldale students attended. I feel that, although a similar approach would benefit school age children, under 16s are unlikely to be considered mature enough for this approach.

Equally, FE offers an important stepping stone between education and broader society. Jahnukainen (2001) says:

It is not enough that we concentrate simply on creating inclusive schooling, we should also try to create equal opportunities for everybody to join the post-school society. In other words, we should be more concerned about creating an inclusive society (p. 246).

Viewed as sited between secondary education and society, further education offers a unique educational site through which to consider 'post-school society'. Drawing on 'provocations' from time spent in Weldale school, I use FE as a site from which to consider education that is directly applicable to 'post-school society', to social inclusion and to social justice, as an ethical project.

I use Griffiths (1998) concept of social justice as equity of distribution and application of law, as well as living happily and well, with room for "passion, laughter and risk" (p.12).

## **6.2 The purpose of education**

In this discussion, as in so many SEN areas, the 'dilemma of difference' whilst paramount, appears to complicate the question of the purpose of education. If foundation courses are 'the same as' mainstream, they may not adequately address the needs of their learners. Yet specifically differentiated courses may be considered discriminatory in treating students as 'other'. 'Different' education emphasises difference in individuals, yet the 'same' education downplays difference (Minow, 1990) and avoids important questions: Should young people with learning disability labels be educated towards 'the same' future as students in mainstream courses, in an aspirational and ambitious response to discriminatory environments? Or should students be educated in a way that acknowledges (and therefore accepts) the likelihood of fewer adult choices and opportunities?

Whilst visiting Weldale school I consistently questioned the purpose of the particular education students received. Observing individual and institutional struggles with particular areas of the curriculum, I considered in which ways "equal entitlement to education is a different concept from an entitlement to equal education" (Terzi, 2008: 1).

Like Lawson, Waite and Robertson (2005), I wrestled with “the desire to maintain breadth and balance while meeting individual needs and preferences” (p.12). At different times, both students and staff led me to believe they felt elements of school learning were simply tick-box exercises. An example of this was a post-lesson staff-room discussion about the necessity of teaching ‘correct’ mathematical language. Class teaching had focussed on ‘number sentences’ such as  $3 + 7 = 10$ . Most students struggled to understand and/or learn maths terminology such as ‘equals’. As a result, re-introducing ‘multiply’ and ‘divide’ had been postponed until a later lesson. Whilst staff broadly agreed such language was unnecessary in students’ later lives, to understand the entry level exam questions it still had to be taught (and learnt). This demonstrates a “curriculum for compliance” (Young, 2011: 267) where ‘useful’ knowledge is a given (Young, 2011) and access to knowledge is the purpose, with little questioning of how applicable that knowledge is to those learning it. This interaction, amongst many many others, led me to question the applicability of the students’ education, and which information and skills were most important, most useful to the students’ later lives. As described in chapter five, FE courses are limited in choice and content. Yet, there is a legitimate social interest in wanting to spend educational funds wisely, and young people should receive an education useful for their own circumstances.

Terzi (2008) specifies the lack of framework, definitions and guiding policies, as well as the inequitable distribution of resources as reasons for incoherent practices in educational provision for children with disabilities and SEN labels. Certainly governmental aims for *FE* are unclear, citing abstract concepts as ‘targets’. The 14-19 Education and Skills white paper (DfES, 2005) aimed to raise participation, deliver “functional skills” (p.10) for employment, “stretch all young people to succeed” (p.10), and to “pursue their aspirations” (p.22). It later discusses social participation through providing “knowledge and skills crucial to living, learning and working in modern society” (p.40). What these skills are, or what constitutes ‘success’ is unspecified. Similarly vague, “productive adult lives” (DoH, 2001: 41), “high expectations” (DoH, 2001: 34) and “good outcomes” (DoH/DoE, 2015: 127) feature in governmental aims of both FE and “fulfilling [adult] lives” (DoH, 2001: 26), as positive sounding yet nebulous aspirations for education. The concept of “potential” (DoH, 2001: 35), either explicit or implicit in much educational discussion, is troublesome, and institutional

power to ‘judge’ students’ lives as ‘worthwhile’ is inherent in these phrases. Like Kaehne and Beyer (2009), I question what constitutes “meaningful outcomes” (p.143) in transition to FE and beyond. In their research into constructions of adulthood, Murphy and colleagues (2011) identify opposing discourses, one positioning young learning disabled people as entitled to self-determination, the other qualifying this status and “emphasising the obdurate reality of intellectual disability” (p.61). Echoing these findings, it appears governmental aims for both education and “transition to adult life” (DoH, 2001: 123) use the *language* of empowerment, whilst in educational institutions, reification of inequality associated with learning disability labels continues. Liberal egalitarians “[...] maintain that in a society of equals, social and institutional arrangements should be designed to show equal consideration and respect for all” (Terzi, 2008: 4). However, in the absence of a clear purpose for foundation level FE, it is difficult to identify what it is that should be equally distributed.

However, despite such broadly unclear educational aims, slightly more concrete objectives can be gleaned from policy documents. Valuing People (DoH, 2001) and the SEND code of practice (DoH/DoE, 2015) share aims of social participation, supporting individual contribution, friendships and relationships within communities. Unusually specific, is the aim of increasing access to mainstream community facilities, leisure and social activities through “access to staff with expertise in supporting young people with different needs” (DoH/DoE, 2015: 75). Valuing People (2001) used rights language, describing a different, more political approach, citing increased individual control, “[d]eveloping and expanding advocacy services, particularly citizen advocacy and self-advocacy” (DoH, 2001: 45) amongst its aims. Its political aim is to develop an inclusive society in which disabled people are valued (Burton and Kagan, 2006). Elsewhere, guidelines for personalising the curriculum for 14-25 year olds with learning disability labels specify respect, self-determination, inclusion in the community and relationships, as guiding principles, or values (QCDA, 2010). These aims, access to communities, citizen- and self-advocacy, self-determination and community relationships, will be discussed later as potential methods of ‘increasing’ social participation.



### 6.3 Social capital

Implied in these educational policy documents is the concept of social capital. Social capital, conceptualised by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Putnam (1995) and Fukuyama (1995) can be viewed as the benefits of processes of participation in social relationships and networks. Benefits may be social, economic or political, but for the purpose of this discussion I mainly focus on social capital as increasing possibilities for broader identity and agency opportunities through social inclusion in different communities, and as (re)produced through these same processes. Social capital may be split into three types, bonding (strong social relationships between ‘similar’ people from socially similar groups, friends and family) and linking or bridging capital (associations with people from socially ‘different’ groups, or different hierarchical positions). Bridging and linking social capital may offer the broadest identity and agency options, but may present possible difficulties in terms of challenging deficit models of disability. Bonding social capital, whilst vitally important to positive identity meanings, (as shown in Lewis’s story of family and friends with similar labels) (see section 3.5.2.), in isolation may serve to limit broader social identity and agency possibilities. Das (2004) highlights the reciprocal relationship between social conditions and social capital, and, just as the “economic-political conditions of poor people have an enormous constraining effect on social capital” (Das, 2004: 27), the socio-political circumstances of some people with learning disability labels may also constrain opportunities for social capital. However, the approach I suggest, that of both *learning social participation* processes and *teaching social inclusion* processes might go some way to ‘operationalising’ social capital in education (Allan and Catts, 2014).

The World Bank (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) identified several dimensions of social capital, developed in the context of sustainable development, which are equally useful in terms of social change. These are *groups and networks; trust and solidarity; collective action and cooperation; social cohesion and inclusion; information and communication; and empowerment and political action* (King, 2013: 9). The World Bank (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) suggests distinguishing between *structural* and *cognitive* social capital. The structural element includes established roles and networks, supported by rules and procedures. The cognitive element encompasses trust, beliefs, shared norms and attitudes (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) similar to Dewey’s (1916)

understanding of communities as sharing "aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge - a common understanding" (p.4).

Whilst difficult to quantify, the cognitive element is useful in terms of the sense of eudaimonia, wellbeing and individual development that feeling accepted and valued within societal groupings can bring. In the context of individually valuable lives, this subjective 'measure' is important. As Allan and Catts (2014) suggest, the concept of social capital provides a language with which to discuss the *importance* of relationships and social processes.

However, whilst policy and legislation can (in theory at least) address structural elements of social capital, cognitive elements are more difficult to respond to. For many learning disabled people, shared beliefs and attitudes are not easy to acquire, or are not recognised, due to the difficulty of actually accessing different societal groups. A large-scale longitudinal study of post-16 transition case studies showed that for some young people with SEN labels

their leisure activities and social life are often facilitated by adults, and provided by statutory and voluntary agencies. Whilst this provides a relatively rich social life, it tends to be restricted to other people with difficulties and disabilities, and to some extent, to be dominated by adults (Aston and colleagues, 2005: xii).

This may limit wider social participation, almost inevitably limiting identity options and reinforcing ideas of difference and separateness. As Allan and Catts (2014) point out, social capital is not a possession to be acquired, but is "flexible and shared by networks" (p.221). This conceptualisation of social capital (like identities and agencies) as relational, dispersed and shared, leads to an understanding that in order to increase positive options for all three, opportunities for social participation should be increased.

Onyx and Bullen (2000) identify reciprocity and trust as elements important in social capital. Community trust, or a generalised 'feeling' that others can be 'trusted' is equally important. If trust and reciprocity are a necessary condition for social capital (Riddell, Baron and Wilson, 1999), Wolverine and Zane's experiences of social interaction mean generating social capital must be approached very carefully. For Zane and Wolverine it would take more than simply the skills and opportunity to buy a drink in a shop for them to

feel that they trusted their communities. However, similarly, members of communities would need to feel they could trust Zane and Wolverine in order for them to be *accepted* as community members. This is an aspect of social participation that is not often discussed, but will be addressed later. (For the purposes of this discussion a ‘community’ denotes any group with which individuals associate themselves).

The links between social capital and agency are multiply reciprocal. Onyx and Bullen (2000) identify social agency as an important element of social capital while Leonard and Onyx (2004) find agency “crucial to social capital formation. People must be able, and believe that they are able, to take the initiative” (p.194). Social agency has important links with “proactive social capital” (Leonard and Onyx, 2004: 23), or the ongoing processes of (re)making social relationships, which can be productive of agency, “facilitat[ing] spontaneous individual action” (Plagens, 2011: 56). Plagens (2011) believes that identification with and caring about a community can lead individuals to take action in the interest of that community. Certainly, the feeling of confidence and wellbeing associated with being valued by others may lead to increased circumstances of opportunity for both group (Leonard and Onyx, 2004) and personal agency, as was the case with Aiden (see section 5.2.2)

Viewed through the capability approach, whether someone has bonding, linking or bridging social capital is not as important as that their social capital supports a valuable life (their choice of what constitutes this). If a valuable life constitutes spending time with already established friends then bonding social capital may be ‘adequate’, although through democratic processes this view of a valuable life may be ‘broadened’ (see below). However, if a valuable life involves taking part in local politics, this will both *require*, and *produce* linking and bridging social capital. Social capital, just as identity and agency meanings, is reliant on social relationships, not just in its production and development, but also in its maintenance and ongoing (re)production. Social capital is a *product* of social interaction, but also *produces* social interaction, and “can only exist within a pattern of relationships” (McGonigal and colleagues, 2007: 3). For this reason, social capital is particularly important in this discussion, because of the way in which social capital interacts with identity meanings and agency opportunities, each providing the context for the others. Allan and Catts (2014) recognise this in analysing bonding,

bridging and linking *practices* and resulting *effects*, rather than ‘measuring’ *amounts* of social capital.

Some critics discuss the overly positive (Johnston, 2011) and “overly optimistic claims about social capital” (Das, 2004: 27), Das in particular, noting the importance of contextual and structural elements in any social capital discussion. However, particularly with powerful contextual forces in mind, social capital and social relationships are of vital importance in feeling, and being, part of the social world.

#### **6.4 Social participation as an educational aim**

In terms of being part of the social world, for the benefit of this discussion I will consider social participation (DoH, 2001; DoH/DoE, 2015) as a medium towards increasing, broader and more positive identity and agency meanings, and social capital. Additionally, Dee (2006) describes a broad range of social opportunities as enabling the development of a “‘vocabulary of experiences’ on which to base future choices” (p.97). De Winter (1997) describes participation as “the active commitment of children and young people to their own environment and decision-making on it [...]” (p.55). However, this is not a one-way process, depending also on broader commitment *from* communities *to* individuals. As discussed, social participation is referenced in educational and social policy, is an aim of disabled rights movements, and is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Social participation is often viewed as a ‘method’ through which social exclusion and marginalisation may be countered, but also as a ‘measure’ of ‘inclusion’. The much discussed ‘freedom’ of college involves opportunity to access ‘the community’ via shops and cafes, streets and amenities, and this is an important part of the foundation curriculum. However, although in some cases lack of such opportunity *has* led to lack of social participation, simply having access to social spaces does not equate with social participation. Social participation involves personal agency as well as a reciprocal response from other individuals and groups within communities. Equally, ‘improved’ social participation is not only empowering for “those who are the usual targets for inclusion by virtue of their labels” (Allan, 2008: 102) but can be of advantage to everyone. The relationship between social participation and social inclusion will be discussed later (see section 6.6.5).

As societies and communities are not homogenous, are in constant flux and ever-changing, processes enabling and making up social participation must also continuously adapt. For this reason social participation is neither a possession, or an ‘ability’ that can be ‘learned’ and ‘used’, but a *process* of knowledges and skills, continually (re)developed and practised. Social participation is particularly important for marginalised individuals because the barriers that oppress also prevent access and inclusion to many aspects of life (Goodley, 2011: 13) that are social in nature. Yet those same preventative processes could be changed to become enabling processes. For this reason lack of social participation must not be located in individuals, but in broader societal processes. Agency is implicated in the purposeful positioning of individuals’ identity meanings within, amongst and against others’ positioning of them, these processes happening when individuals are “active participants in social practices” (Hernandez-Martinez and colleagues, 2011: 121-122). It is through social interaction that identity and agency meanings are negotiated, placing levels of social activity as central to broadening and/or restricting opportunities for both identity and agency. FE could, and should provide circumstances of opportunity, skills, knowledge, and the practices, processes and relationships necessary to build and *maintain* community or social participation. This involves both a broader and more focussed approach than is currently recognisable in FE.

### **6.5 Inserting students into the existing world – the teaching of life- and work-skills**

Foundation learning offers functional maths, English (which attract the funding for the courses), ICT, subject/vocational skills, and Personal and Social Development (Allan and colleagues, 2011b), often in the form of life- and work-skills. Primary and secondary education has long since discarded ideas (in rhetoric at least) of ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ in favour of ‘inclusion’, yet, as with many elements of education, the teaching of life- and work-skills reproduces identity meanings of individuals who must be changed to fit into society. Whilst the social model of disability is envisaged as emancipatory, and much research encompasses this (Goodley and Lawthom, 2005), disability awareness learning is unusual in special schooling and foundation level education. Despite rights language in discussion of social participation and education in Valuing People (DoH, 2001), *actual* learning often centres around changing the

individual rather than aspiring to make broader social environments more inclusive. Although life- and work-skills are important, teaching towards individual change without addressing, or discussing, social, political and economic barriers arguably embodies an ableist approach.

Promotion of social participation still often involves such an assimilation approach, in the form of teaching marginalised individuals skills deemed necessary for social interaction. Although important, the acquisition of 'life- or interpersonal-skills' does not counter lack of opportunities for social participation. The necessity of *inclusion* work, or training, of the group an individual wishes to become part of, is less often discussed. It may be the case that it is distasteful to discuss the need for groups and communities to 'learn' how to accept diversity. Yet, teaching life skills as a 'permit' to social interaction can only be viewed as an ableist assimilation approach when this happens without discussion of socio-political environmental barriers, and exclusionary social processes. An inclusive approach would shift some 'responsibility' for social participation from being a concern of the individual to (also) a concern of the 'existing' community. Reinders (2002) says "[t]o improve the quality of life for people with ID [intellectual disability] in the long run, we need decent people as well as decent laws" (Reinders, 2002: 5), but this is not currently addressed as part of education.

This is not to belittle life-skills and independence skills which are all the more important in situations where the social environment is unfavourable to diversity. Hehir describes how, "perform[ing] in a manner [...] similar to that of nondisabled children gives disabled children distinct advantages" (Hehir, 2002: 3) in a "barrier-filled world" (Hehir, 2002: 3). However,

[f]rom an ableist perspective, the devaluation of disability results in societal attitudes that uncritically assert that it is better for a child to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check, and hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to other disabled kids (Hehir, 2002: 3).

Such ableist valuing of some skills over others is damaging. If this critique of ableism were taken to its ultimate conclusion, the valuing of 'independent' living and employment over other skills in FE may be viewed as ableist. This conceptual dilemma

has accompanied me throughout this research. Currently, I believe that anything strengthening a disabled person to challenge and overcome the barriers they face, whilst encouraging and assisting society to be accepting of them, is positive.

Teaching work-skills presents a particular dilemma. In his assessment of ‘good’ education, Biesta (2009; 2010) suggests questioning not only whether educational interventions achieve the required purpose, but also the nature of the purpose itself. For example, as discussed, foundation courses teach towards “specific intended destination[s]” (Allan and colleagues, 2011b: ii), such as apprenticeships or employment. Yet with only 6.6% of learning disabled adults in paid employment (HSCIC, 2012), the majority of these in part-time work, the aims *and* outcomes of teaching work-skills are questionable. Current employment environments and policy, mean students would need to “become nondisabled” (Hehir, 2002: 27) in order to access employment. Work skills, and their contribution to employment, have been widely criticised (Atkins, 2008, 2009; Hehir, 2002; Kaehne and Beyer, 2009), specifically as “commodif[y]ing our young people under the guise of preparing them for future employment” (McGregor, 2009: 351), reproducing social and educational disadvantage. Many learning disabled people would like work, but remain unemployed despite many college courses teaching work skills. As with young migrant students studied by Priyadharshini and Watson (2012) foundation level students “remain uncomfortably suspended in the gulf between desires and outcomes, with government policy failing to capitalise on the vibrancy of their agency to achieve” (p.159).

Evidently, the current work skills approach fails to produce “the ‘human capital’ sought by industry” (McGregor, 2009: 351), or more accurately, industry does not value the human capital produced. Certainly, other sectors with success rates of only 6.6% would be unlikely to continue unchallenged. But in foundation learning, containment and entertainment, “busy work” (Atkins, 2008: 197), appears considered adequate, without an interrogation of the socio-political and economic circumstances in which this work statistic exists.

Increasingly, critical theory questions the educational production of *human capital* rather than *human possibility* (McGregor, 2009), although educating “in the interests of the individual” (McGregor, 2009: 351) may well yield both. McGregor places neo-

liberal discourses in direct opposition to critical educational discourses facilitating human possibility (McGregor, 2009: 355). Human possibility will be discussed below.

## **6.6 Further education as an ethical project**

I have argued that current FE foundation courses teach towards work and social participation through an ableist, assimilation approach, yet social participation and employment levels in adults with learning disability labels continue to be low. This suggests that a different purpose and method of education is required.

Biesta (2010) defines three major functions of education, as *qualification*, *socialization* and *subjectification*. Qualification is the building of knowledge, skills and understanding. Socialization is becoming part of a particular culture. Socialization is closely linked to qualification in that knowledge, skills and understanding of norms and expectations are requirements of fitting in to a culture. As with Foucault's concept of subjectification, Biesta's subjectification involves the 'becoming' of an individual with personal and political opinions. These three functions of education cannot be split, but overlap and are complexly related. Biesta considers "the actual influence of education can be confined to qualification and socialization" (Biesta, 2009: 40). Certainly, subjectification may happen as a 'side-effect' of contemporary education, but is rarely a specific aim.

Biesta (2010) claims:

Education becomes uneducational if it only focuses on socialization – i.e., on the insertion of "new-comers" into existing sociocultural and political orders – and has no interest in the ways in which newcomers can, in some way, gain independence from such orders as well (p.75).

This suggests that FE foundation level courses described above, are "uneducational" (p.75) and that educating towards subjectification, or "person becoming" (Black and Lawson, 2016: 2) may provide circumstances of opportunity for human possibility and, in capability approach terms, freedoms. Certainly, individuals cannot be expected to participate in something unless they feel they have something to contribute. If this is not the case, the external forces that have led them to believe this about themselves must be examined.



Given the problematic situation in FE described above, the lack of a focussed or successful purpose, the lack of a political approach, foundation courses' failure to address environmental barriers whilst changing individuals to 'fit in' to society, a different approach is long overdue. Perhaps FE students should access education that enables the challenging of their own social positions whilst supporting the skills needed to engage with discriminatory environments, with the aim of changing them.

Foucault's concept of an ethical project (2011) described by Fendler as "pessimistic activism" (Fendler, 2010: 206) (introduced in section 2.1), involves actions in the name of freedom. For Foucault, 'freedom' constitutes actions towards *freedom from normative discourses*, whilst always in the knowledge that structural forces shape the ideas of freedoms that might be possible. For Foucault, an ethical stance challenges the relationship between the self, power, truth and freedom (Fendler, 2010). Allan (2008) suggests viewing educational inclusion as an ethical project "in which oneself – and one's capacity to act – is considered part of the material on which work has to be done" (p.158), through ethical substance, mode of subjection, ethical work and telos (Foucault, 2011). The capacity to act, or agency, as a vehicle for both individual and social change makes the ethical project particularly pertinent to this thesis.

Although his concept of 'the subject' can appear contradictory, for Foucault, an ethical project is a communal project as "one cannot attend to oneself, take care of oneself, without a relationship to another person" (Foucault, 2011: 43). Subjectification therefore involves a level of reciprocal responsibility in that an individual should "take care of the city, of his companions" (Foucault, 2000: 294). 'Community' and 'communal' are nebulous concepts as individuals can associate themselves with many overlapping geographical, social and cultural communities at any one time. However, it is social interactions, a feeling of community, that is important here. Of equal importance is that the community takes care of the individual, as "besides institutional space, inclusion requires something else as well, namely that one is participating in other people's lives. To be participating in other people's lives, one has to be accepted and appreciated by them" (Reinders, 2002: 2).

Foucault's concept of freedom from normative discourses allows an interesting discussion. Biesta says "education should always entail an orientation toward *freedom*"

(Biesta, 2010: 128-129), citing Kant as establishing “a link between education and human freedom” (Biesta, 2010: 77). Yet, if current education is “confined to qualification and socialisation” (Biesta, 2009: 40) and teaching to pre-determined aims (Osberg and Biesta, 2007) there seems little scope for increasing freedoms. Sen (1999) says:

The intrinsic importance of human [economic and political] freedom, in general, as the preeminent objective of development is strongly supplemented by the instrumental effectiveness of freedoms of particular kinds to promote freedoms of other kinds (p.xii).

Viewed in these terms, a potential purpose of education should be the development of freedoms, of capabilities and of choices about further freedoms. This places education in the position of expanding freedoms and therefore “both as the primary end and as the principal means of development” (Sen, 1999: xii). Biesta (2012a) draws on Arendt as she “provides a political ‘reading’ of the public sphere as a space ‘where freedom can appear’” (p.684). These writings bring together education, the public or social sphere and freedom in a way that supports Foucault’s ethical project of the self.

### **6.6.1 Democratic education and the capability approach**

The link between education, freedoms, and participatory democracy is widely discussed. Both Foucault’s ethical project, as an individual and social move towards freedom, and Dewey’s work (1916) highlight democratic processes as a collective approach to education. Biesta describes democratic decisions as “the outcome of collective deliberation and hav[ing] an orientation toward the common good” (Biesta, 2010: 100), while Dewey (1916) associates democratic processes with social participation and participants’ “personal interest in social relationships” (p.99).

Foucault died before he could finish his work on the relationship between care of the self and democracy as care of others. Michman and Rosenberg (2011) develop his work, suggesting democratic politics could maximise spaces within which new modes of subjectivity could flourish, *broadening* subjectivity rather than allowing unchallenged discourses to *narrow* subjectivity. Equally, democratic processes in education can be viewed as broadening opportunities for identity and agency meanings, for freedoms, through both social interaction and subjectification.

Strømstad (2003) poses the question “[i]s it possible to imagine a truly inclusive school that is not also a democratic school?” (p.33), such is the link between inclusive and democratic processes. Democracy is a practice of equality, as those influenced by decision making are involved in the processes and outcomes of decision making (Young, 2000). In a democratic environment everyone should feel valued, listened to and of equal decision-making worth. Democracy is inclusive when it has the “ability to value and utilize individuality while being able to articulate a common good” (Nemorowicz and Rosi, 1997: 4). This describes circumstances where “diversity is not a problem, but the most important resource of a complex system” (Heylighen, Cilliers and Gershenson, 2007:17). However, Biesta (2010) positions both inclusion (who is ‘allowed’ to take part), and exclusion (who is not) as ‘problems’ of democracy. Within education, this suggests the necessity of changing the role of teaching staff to empower all students as part of a democratic learning environment (Clements, Hardy and Lord, 2010). Currently, many teachers are ‘information givers’, but Biesta warns against viewing democracy as choosing from existing options, saying democracy only exists when citizens can also set the agenda, collectively deciding on the options to be chosen *from* (Biesta, 2010: 103) rather than simply choosing. This is where democratic processes are most exciting. Quoting Mills (1959), Biesta (2010) says democracy translates “private troubles” into “collective issues” (p.100), suggesting a political approach that is long overdue in education.

In the context of democratic education, it is important to discuss the capabilities approach in more detail. As discussed introduced earlier (see section 1.1), the capabilities approach has aims of equality, social justice and well-being, and is a moral and ethical approach to understanding what individuals require for equality and *eudaimonia* (Nussbaum, 1986) or human flourishing, without focussing on 'impairment' or 'need'.

Originating in economics Sen introduced the capability approach in the 1980s and it has been further developed by Nussbaum (2001; 2003; 2011). Examining the *circumstances* of individual's lives rather than applying an ‘objective’ expectation of what individuals might be expected to do or achieve, the capability approach may be viewed as the antidote to current neo-liberal age-and-stage assessments and policy.

Sen uses the concepts of functionings and capabilities to show how wealth, assets or ability do not necessarily indicate well-being. Unlike current welfare policy and legislation, the capabilities approach allows an interpretation of individual circumstances, multiplicity of influences, and intersectionality of social structural positions. This means an 'input', or resource, has no intrinsic value as it is the way that the individual can attain *functionings* from the resource that produces its value. So for many college students a bus pass would allow independent travel to and from college. However, without travel training, an escort, wheelchair access, and/or a less-discriminatory environment, some students would not be able to convert the bus pass into the capability to travel. This demonstrates the problems of grouping and comparing individuals requirement of resources on the basis of assumed functionings and capabilities. Capabilities and functionings represent freedoms of 'choice' and 'action' to the individual. For this reason, capabilities and functionings can be considered as agency.

Nussbaum (2000) developed a list of requirements for a 'good life', considering Sen's model too vague to support normative ethical and political judgements (2003). Although acknowledging Nussbaum's list as useful in her context, Sen (2004) rejected the absolute and unresponsive nature of a general list as "dogmatic" (p.78), devaluing individual values and democratic methods of change. Sen (1979) does, however, state that 'basic capabilities' (health, nutrition, clothing, shelter, social participation) are broad areas in which adequate requirements are always necessary. Sen viewed decisions about valuable lives as contextual, social and political, not limited by purely theoretical concerns (Sen, 2004: 77).

Sen recommends using five elements to understand inequity in the relationship between people and resources: individual physiology, illness, impairment, age, gender; local environment diversities; variations in social conditions, climate, epidemiology, pollution; differences in relational perspectives, cultural norms and expectations; and distribution within the family, rules about allocation of resources (Sen 1999: 70-71). Using these elements to understand why more resources might be required for someone to achieve the 'good life' challenges reductionist, essentialised deficit discourses of current welfare systems, exposing inequality, or capability deprivation, as political rather than individual. An advantage of the capabilities approach in education is that

requirements for individual freedoms may be assessed separately, facilitating a person-centred approach. Theoretically this enables the ‘advancement’ of a capability set in one area of life that could have a huge impact on all areas of life (e.g., travel training can make the bus pass useful, offering opportunities for increased social participation). Rather than simply a justice of resources approach, the capabilities approach takes into account differing abilities to convert resources to support a life that the *individual* values.

The capability approach is cross-disciplinary, and, whilst accepting the social model of disability on some levels, yet acknowledging how *impairment* can also be a social and/or educational barrier, Terzi (2005) claims its use could resolve 'dilemmas of difference'. Whilst discussion continues about the capability approach as a basis for decisions about educational provision (Norwich, 2014), as a theoretical tool it has many advantages when discussing disability. As Terzi (2005) reiterates, the dilemma of difference is whether, and how, to define and acknowledge difference in order to aid ‘equitable’ and ‘effective’ education systems that suit the children within them. The capability approach allows *individuals* to define what is important to their own lives, whilst also engaging communities and society in the process. It has the potential to ethically “shift the focus away from outcomes to processes and practices of everyday life” (Morrow, 2008: 59). Because social processes support the (re)production of identity and agency meanings, examining how these processes impact on quality of life can broaden opportunity for positive identity meanings and agency opportunities. The capabilities approach supports the view of agency as an “interactive construct” (Bayliss and Thoma, 2008: 9), relational and distributed, dependent on multiple circumstances.

Although the capability approach is excellent in terms of ethical and ‘justice’ concerns, and positive in “its focus on positive flourishing and opportunities” (Norwich, 2014: 17), in times of austerity it is difficult to envisage how this approach could be resourced. However, this should not prevent the use of the capability approach as a theoretical construct through which to view the “dilemma of difference” and the purpose of education.

There is a clear link between democracy in education, and the capabilities approach, as Sen views decisions about what constitutes a ‘good life’ as a social responsibility.

Someone requiring assistance to access greater social participation is inevitably likely to have limited ideas of the *possibilities* of social participation. What someone values “being and doing” (Terzi, 2008: 3) may be limited by discriminatory policy and practices (and Terzi would say, also impairment (2005)), reducing their capacity to conceptualise as yet unknown possibilities of a valuable life. Here Sen's concept of participatory democracy is useful in defining 'value' in both social and personal terms. So individuals may be supported to understand that improved literacy and numeracy are important, despite perhaps not individually valuing these skills. Dewey shares this view of participatory democracy as social, communal and collective processes through which social justice and “the common good” (Biesta, 2010: 100) can potentially be achieved. Individuals finding themselves ‘unable’ to participate may be assisted in gaining the skills necessary to do so. In this way participatory democracy becomes similar to Foucault’s ethical project in that it involves personal development for individual and collective benefit.

So far I have discussed foundation level FE in terms of individuals defining what constitutes a valuable life for themselves, with the assistance of their college communities, and through democratic processes. Using the capabilities approach to define what *individuals* might require to access social participation as opposed to what ‘*students*’ might require, would ensure that education was specifically useful to the particular individuals on each course, supporting broader, more positive identity and agency negotiations. Through individual and collective decisions about what constitutes a valuable life, person-centred learning would be made possible, relevant for each valuable adult life.

### **6.6.2 An overtly political approach – the social model of disability and self-advocacy in education**

As Atkins (2009) says, rewriting courses and qualifications within an unchanging political, social and educational context is useless. But students cannot wait until society becomes more accepting. Therefore, it seems a good idea for the students themselves to go about ‘changing’ ‘society’, in the process learning skills they require to access that ‘society’.

Biesta views politics and education as connected, and “locates both firmly in the public domain” (Biesta, 2012a: 684). MacGregor too calls for “a critical pedagogy with the capacity to help students deconstruct the world around them and negotiate a just place within it” (McGregor, 2009: 356). As Atkins (2009) says, to develop the agency required to challenge the structural forces that hold and restrain, students would need a different education, a political education.

Two well recognised approaches in disability politics and activism are the social model of disability and self-advocacy.

Teaching students about the social model of disability could refocus foundation level education, from changing individuals, to changing society. This refocussing could lead to considering the individuals’ *social requirements* in order to access community inclusion, rather than purely the *individual* skills required, moving from deficit to capabilities thinking, dispersing both knowledge requirement and responsibility. Current approaches implicitly teach students to accept their social positions, thus reproducing and continuing social inequalities and existing identity meanings. Given that FE is considered the stepping stone to adult life, and educational policy documents associate adulthood with social participation, it is hard to understand why the social model does not yet underpin foundation learning. Dewey (1897) views education as an ‘embryonic’ society, but the extent to which education and society are reciprocally influential is too large a topic to discuss here. Certainly though, if education does not address political discourses of disability, it replicates wider societal orders whilst leaving them unchallenged. Equally, if political change begins in schools and colleges this could have a significant effect on broader society.

Linked to individual and collective political change, and ‘revolution’ (Goodley, 2000), self-advocacy involves people with learning disability labels “conspicuously support[ing] one another to speak out against some of the most appalling examples of discrimination in contemporary British culture” (Goodley, 2000: 3). Goodley (2000) associates self-advocacy with the politics of resilience, linking it to “identity, selfhood, personal biography and personal ambition” (p.4). People First, a disability rights organisation established in 1984, supporting self-advocacy groups, state “[w]e all want to be in control of our own lives” (People First, online), and self-advocacy supports this

aim. Self-advocacy involves many processes, and is linked with agency through self-determination, or “choosing and setting goals, being involved in making life decisions [...] and working to reach goals” (Calkins and colleagues, 2012: 14). Politicisation through exposure to disability politics can enable individuals to view their circumstances through a socio-political ‘lens’ rather than a deficit one. Collective discussion can form bonds and friendships, ‘allies’ between disabled and non-disabled people. Particular knowledge and skills are developed, specifically useful to the individual. Individual valuable lives can be worked towards. ‘Speaking up’ demands involvement in social processes and organisations from which many people with learning disability labels are routinely excluded. Self-advocacy promotes a change in how people with learning disability labels are viewed, after all “[h]ow can society be convinced that people with disabilities don’t want charity and dependency if someone else is always speaking for them?” (Worrell, 1988: 13). Self-advocacy broadens opportunities, offering access to situations and organisations that would not otherwise be routine, empowering individuals (and groups) to be part of society. Self-advocacy can be viewed as embodying Sen’s concept of freedoms promoting further freedoms in that the processes involved lead to further social opportunities. Increased freedoms also increase identity and agency opportunities. For this reason, self-advocacy is perhaps the epitome of Foucault’s concept of freedom and Biesta’s description of subjectification in education.

However, despite the personal and social advantages of self-advocacy, provision of advocacy services is patchy (DoH, 2001: 44) in England and it appeared none of the Weldale students had had contact with self-advocacy influences. School-aged children may be considered too young for such approaches. However, the values of self-advocacy could and should be embedded in education for children of all ages, as the previous chapters illustrate some identity and agency effects of having *only* charity and deficit models of disability to draw on. Currently, colleges fail to adequately support performatively enacted, socially constructed learning disability identities that are positively socially included. This is something that, with political will, and the training of self-advocacy advisers in colleges, could be easily and cost-effectively remedied.

Inevitably, education that challenges the status quo would involve discussion of the labels that students may have, and the social, economic and political barriers that these



labels attract. Through making visible the oppressive discourses that position people with learning disability labels as 'less than' or 'other', opportunities can be engineered in which, through alternative discourses and action, these can be exposed and contested. This may be painful and difficult for some students, particularly given that many may not have discussed 'their' labels with their families, friends (Davies and Jenkins, 1997; Beart and colleagues, 2005) or teachers (Ross, 2014). However, 'inadequate' understandings of self-identity based on experiencing powerful deficit discourses, are damaging and disempowering. A self-advocacy understanding of learning disability labels (Goodley, 2000) is important in politicising young learning disabled people, and increasing their ability to access social participation. Self-advocacy "challenges the way society works. It involves a fundamental change in the way that people think and see themselves" (Worrell, 1988: 8), in their identities. In an attempt to counteract discriminatory power enacted upon people with learning disability labels such political consciousness-raising is key. As discussed above, self-advocacy and an understanding of the social model of disability is important and should be introduced and discussed in further education, at the very latest.

Such education would challenge existing power relations. Foucault did not see power as purely repressive, but also productive. There is no way to predict how power, or freedoms, might be used, as actions could be "virtuous, evil or neutral" (Fendler, 2010: 67). However, to deny young people an understanding of their social positions and the reasons for this, is to replicate repressive structures and processes. Self-advocacy is the first step towards the political subjectification that is required for, and comes about through, democratic decision making. It is also an important element of agency in challenging deficit thinking, thus renegotiating power relations and identity positions.

### **6.6.3 Citizenship – formal social participation**

One method of increasing student power and presence in society, within the context of community (Fergusson and Lawson, 2003) is through citizenship activity. Black and Lawson (2016), in the context of students with severe learning difficulties labels, suggest that "broader purposes of education for *all* young people should be more vociferously and explicitly recognised" (p.16), to include personal development and citizenship. Like work skills, citizenship teaching, a compulsory, yet sidelined (Burton, 2015) element of English secondary school National Curriculum, may be viewed as a

method of ‘inserting’ young people into communities, yet it has the potential for encouraging political change. Citizenship addresses the formal modes of social interaction, the structural element of social capital (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001), aiming to teach students to contribute to society and take up ‘valued positions’ within societal structures. Citizenship as a status (Lawy and Biesta, 2006) is particularly important for socially excluded young people who, de Winter (1997) says, feel less committed to society and are “not adequately taught to come to grips with it” (pvi-vii). In the context of the Netherlands, de Winter questions how:

we expect autonomy, independence and responsibility of young people, whereas their age, their development and their world, on the contrary, presuppose dependence, inequality, trust in adults and intimacy (p.31).

Citizenship in schools is associated with broad benefits such as improved attendance, attainment, confidence, independence and responsibility (Hanham, 2003). Citizenship teaching is associated with civic participation, students ideally acquiring skills in the classroom which assist with social participation in broader social situations (Wales and Clarke, 2005). Citizenship skills are learned through both formal and informal practices and participation in society (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly, 2009), and can be viewed as a “force to drive [inclusion] forward” (Fergusson and Lawson, 2003: ix).

However, despite the advantages, there are difficulties with the concept of citizenship teaching. Lawy and Biesta (2009) point out, citizenship concerns are often about the methods and approaches of ‘manufacturing’ citizens in school rather than in society, yet young people are “shaped as citizens” (Nicholl and colleagues, 2013: 829) through their social experiences, long before citizenship teaching begins in school. Some young people are excluded from formal structures of society, whilst others may already ‘be’ ‘citizens’ in the accepted sense. Citizenship often entails production of ‘good’ citizens (Biesta, 2011), ‘finished’ and finite social beings contributing in ‘appropriate’ and already valued ways, taking on responsibilities and accepting the rights associated with social participation. This approach does not value or accept individuals who may enact citizenship in diverse ways. Reducing citizenship learning to ‘qualification’ (Biesta, 2010) in this way, limits learning to knowledge and skills, rather than broadening identity and agency opportunities. Viewing citizenship as an outcome rather than an ongoing process (Lawy and Biesta,

2006) runs the risk of adopting neo-liberal discourses, adding capital value to individuals rather than advocating collective social responsibility (White and Wyn, 2008). Concepts of dispersed or collective responsibility for citizenship are important in order to avoid reproducing powerful discourses of individual citizenship, neo-liberal understandings of agency and meritocracy. However, despite such negative possibilities, through citizenship teaching “power is exercised through the mobilization of knowledge and its internalization in the constitution of the subject” (Nicholl and colleagues, 2013: 837-838). Citizenship is an important element of further education as an ethical project, and can be viewed as broadening opportunities for more positive identity and agency opportunities.

Citizenship cannot be considered in isolation, but must “be seen within a context of people, relationships and within communities” (Fergusson and Lawson, 2003: 8). Nicholl and colleagues (2013) view citizenship as “materially embedded within the structures, institutions and practices of any society” (p.830). Discrimination and inequality too are embedded within these same structures, making citizenship teaching of vital importance in foundation learning as a means of challenging the processes through which devaluation of particular identity positions is (re)produced. Rather than discussing young people as lacking citizenship knowledge and skills, (a deficit approach), addressing the power relations that lead to this situation (Yeung, Passmore, and Packer 2012) is a more productive empowering approach. Returning to Sen’s capability approach, and Biesta’s conception of subjectification as an element of education, citizenship may be viewed as based on “a desire for a particular mode of human togetherness or, in short, a desire for democracy” (Biesta, 2011: 141), a broader conceptualisation of citizenship learning, (Biesta, Lawy and Narcie, 2009) rather than the curricular (re)production of particular types of citizen. Such relational citizenship is produced “through relations where norms have to be renegotiated, performed, refreshed, and reestablished, through interactions” (Vandekinderen and colleagues, 2014: 1428). It is not accomplished purely in a set of lessons in a school or college. Kerr (2000) describes “education through citizenship” (p.201) suggesting that, as with democratic processes, what is learnt through ‘doing’ citizenship is as important as citizenship itself.

For young people with learning disability labels it can be extremely difficult to access citizenship as “engagement with and commitment to the public domain” (Biesta, 2010: 99), largely because the ‘public domain’ often shows little engagement with, or

commitment to them. Allan (2008) calls for “collective investment” (p.102), as it is not just that individuals should ‘become’ part of society, but that society should invest in individuals too. If “doing citizenship” (Claire, 2001: 107) ‘produces’ “active participating citizens” (Claire, 2001: 107), this relies on communities supporting citizenship from/in everyone. Citizenship does not simply require individuals learning how to ‘be’ citizens. It also demands active acceptance and encouragement from already active citizens. Teaching students about citizenship in isolation from teaching communities about citizenship isolates citizenship (or ‘lack’ of it) ‘within’ individuals when, as a process, it is a distributed responsibility and requirement.

#### **6.6.4 Relationships – informal social participation**

The World Bank defines citizenship as *structural* social capital (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) which, located within the structural, legislative, more formal aspects of societal involvement is possible to define and ‘teach’. However, formal citizenship participation is only one element of social participation, and “taking people with [learning disability labels] seriously as citizens is not necessarily taking them seriously as human beings” (Reinders, 2002: 3). The importance of meaningful social connections (Abbott and McConkey, 2006; van Asselt, Buchanan and Peterson, 2015), interpersonal relationships (Hall, 2005; Milner and Kelly, 2009), and friendships (Reinders, 2002) in social inclusion, is now well recognised. Identity meanings are inextricably linked with such relationships. However, how to ‘do’ social relationships is more indefinite and nebulous than citizenship learning. Unlike *some* areas of citizenship, ‘human relationships’ cannot be taught only in theory or in the classroom, but require access to community-based social interactions, with all the complexity, challenges and ‘risk’ this may incur.

In the context of citizenship and relationships it is useful to note that Reinders (2002) makes the distinction between two types of ‘morality’, public and private. *Public* morality, supported by legislation and policy, is associated with citizenship, “self-determination, individual choice and the equal rights of citizens” (p.3). *Private* morality addresses “the good life according to our own ideals” (p.3) or what it means to ‘be’ human (Goodley, 2014). ‘Humans’ have individual (or private) ideas of morality associated with “human fulfilment” (Reinders, 2002: 3), or Nussbaum’s *eudaimonia*. Reinders points out that

public morality (rights and regulations) often support the circumstances of opportunity in which private morality may flourish:

We create space and include people with ID [intellectual disabilities] as citizens in our institutions, but do we also include them in our lives as human beings? Is that also part of our politics of inclusion? (Reinders, 2002: 3).

Yet, it is not only intimate and/or meaningful relationships that represent social inclusion. Friendships, companionship, casual and habitual relationships with others can all enrich lives and ‘ease’ social interactions. Informal adult social relationships, or “civic friendship” (Reinders, 2002: 3) is important in challenging the association of learning disability labels with “eternal childhood” (Baron and colleagues, 1999: 497), and vital for human ‘flourishing’. Social psychology views individuals’ wellbeing as the responsibility of communities, yet unspecified social danger (felt by parents in particular), prevents many students from accessing their communities. Reinders (2002) suggests people with learning disability labels pose the challenge “not so much what we can do for them, but whether or not we want to be with them” (p.5). Despite the binaried homogenisation of ‘us’ and ‘them’, Reinders makes an important point. Citizenship learning and interpersonal ‘relationship’ skills can only take inclusion so far. Individuals who accept, welcome and value diversity are also required for communities to be less ‘hostile’ to learning disabled people.

### **6.6.5 The difference between participation and inclusion**

The discussion so far raises questions about the role of social participation in education and the role of education in social participation. Here I separate (on theoretical and practical levels) *participation* as individual agency, and *inclusion* as community (groups of individuals) agency. Currently FE addresses individual agency (in Biesta’s terms, socialisation), yet appears not to address either community agency or subjectification as “freedom from existing social orders” (MacAllister, 2016: 381). Inclusive environments respect and value human diversity, valuing individual strengths (Carter and colleagues, 2015) and fulfilling the requirements of individuals and groups within it. Such environments can be viewed as circumstances of opportunity for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings. For this to happen, not only do all individuals

need to know what is ‘expected’ by their environment, but also to understand the requirements that all others need for full participation. Whilst social participation can be seen as the ‘ticket’ to social inclusion, the ticket alone does not guarantee entry. So, for young people with learning disability labels life- and communication-skills *are* important. But *equally* important is the learning, training, of others within particular environments, to understand how to ‘be’ inclusive. A willing and ‘receptive’ environment is vital, without this, knowledge and skills, (whether individual or communal), are not enough.

Social inclusion offers increased circumstances of opportunity in which broader, more positive identity and agency meanings may be negotiated. Whilst Cummins and Lau (2003) rightly question whether social inclusion and “community integration” (p.145) is the wish of all learning disabled people, the Weldale students in this research routinely spoke of freedoms associated with both “physical integration” (p.145) and “social integration” (p.145) that were currently out of their reach. Social inclusion is also reciprocally and positively associated with increased social capital. For these reasons, I assume social inclusion as a positive aim for the purposes of this discussion.

This section has discussed how opportunities for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings could be increased in foundation level FE through introduction of democratic processes, a political approach (in the form of social model of disability, and self-advocacy learning), and citizenship and relationship approaches.

#### **6.6.6 An emergent curriculum**

I now return to the *purpose* of education, the discussion of which implies a particular predetermined aim, maybe a certain curriculum. However, although some agreed purpose is important in political change, what I suggest is an educational *approach*, one that enables an emergent curriculum, to be collaboratively decided by students and teaching staff. In the previous chapters I suggest that transition provides particular limbic times of uncertainty in which improvised identity and agency meanings may emerge. I discuss how transition processes broaden identity and agency opportunities, but that these opportunities appeared to be limited by lack of choice in FE. However, through an emergent curriculum, FE could continue to provide just such circumstances of opportunity in which identity and agency meanings continue to develop and broaden.

The idea of an emergent curriculum is not new. Osberg and Biesta (2007) claim that the purpose of modern schooling is to inform children about a pre-existing world, through “presentational or representational means” (p.49). Drawing on complexity science and in particular the notion of ‘strong emergence’, Osberg and Biesta (2007) describe how, if the idea of pre-existing knowledge is removed, issues of “responsibility and response” (p.32) can become salient, changing ideas about the purpose of education. Such a new educational approach would be complex, responsive, and ever adapting to new situations within its environment, not based on ‘known’ and static knowledge, but emergent, unpredictable situations. This opens possibilities for “taking responsibility for the future” (p 48) and responses to chance, happenstance, which, in our current educational situation have few opportunities unless teachers such as Pete and Adrian (see chapter five) are supported in their endeavours. However, whilst advocates of a strongly emergent educational approach reject predetermined aims, to discuss how circumstances of opportunity for an emergent curriculum could be established, some broad agreed aims are necessary in the pursuit of political change. The educational aim in this discussion is social inclusion.

In discussing the purpose of education, there is a danger of reverting to neo-liberal ideas of independent agency that significantly changes individuals’ lives. However, using the capability approach to identify and discuss the freedoms, (and methods of gaining freedoms) valuable to individuals’ lives, protects against an all-encompassing view of the direction in which education should move. In this thesis I have demonstrated how young people with learning disability labels actively construct their own identity meanings and agencies, forming positive “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988:18) within structural environments. These processes, broadening more positive identity and agency meanings, should be encouraged and supported by educational processes. If agency happens through social interaction, and agency “contributes to social capital” (Leonard and Onyx, 2004: 31), education should surely facilitate as much variety of social interaction as possible. Increased social interactions also increase “the substantive opportunities people have to choose the life they have reason to value” (Terzi, 2005: 450-451). Combining Foucault’s ethical project, democratic processes, political education and an emergent curriculum based on individual and collective ideas of a valuable life, if taken “beyond tokenism” (Lawson, 2010, p.137) could promote social processes necessary for social inclusion.

I acknowledge that this discussion runs the risk of positioning marginalised individuals as ‘arriving’ in society, to be ‘welcomed’ by ‘host’ groups. Distasteful as this is, in some ways it is legitimate. Currently many societies and communities are not inclusive, but quite the opposite. The systematic rejection and sidelining of people with learning disability labels, through political-, economic-, social- policy, and the media means many young people on the verge of adulthood, particularly those who have attended special schools, *do* attempt to ‘join’ society. However, as de Winter (1997) puts it, “‘fitting in’ cannot be considered an active form of children’s participation. Neither the development of young people nor that of society is served [...]” (de Winter, 1997: 42). Van Asselt and colleagues (2015) define social inclusion as ‘multidimensional’, their research suggesting that both internal individual factors and socio-political/environmental factors intersect to bring about social exclusion and inclusion. An inclusive society, one that responds positively to diversity, relies on both social participation processes and inclusion processes. Therefore, an educational approach that supports inclusive processes in *both* young people *and* their communities is required.

A way of re-thinking foundation learning is required, changing both aims and curriculum to broaden students’ opportunities for social inclusion whilst, at the same time, developing skills that will be of real use in their valuable adult lives. This necessitates envisaging what young people *require* in their later lives rather than what can currently be accredited or assessed. It requires a more holistic and ongoing approach than is currently possible given funding restrictions and assessment procedures, particularly if social inclusion is conceptualised as “a work in progress” (Connor and Berman, 2016: 98). Capacity rather than deficit thinking (Goodley, 2000) is important here.

In this chapter so far, I have discussed the current purpose of further education, and questioned the teaching of life- and work- skills as changing students to ‘fit in’ to ‘society’, thus limiting their identity and agency options. I have proposed that teaching an overtly political approach to disability through the social model, self-advocacy, and democratic processes, could equip students with knowledge and skills important to their future lives, and to understanding and challenging their own positions in society. I will now suggest how this theoretical and philosophical discussion of the purpose and



possibilities of rethinking FE at foundation level could be used in empirical approaches. Although Foucaultian ethics, as a critical project, does not suggest solutions, I will discuss how access to an individual's community, citizen- and self-advocacy, democratic self-determination and social relationships could be methods of both increasing social inclusion, and working on personal subjectification. I suggest a change orientated curriculum, with the ultimate aim of social inclusion. While making "modest proposals" (Griffiths, 1998: 19) there is a "grand motive" (Griffiths, 1998: 19), that of addressing "the structures of injustice in present day England" (Griffiths, 1998: 20). This may go some way to addressing the chasm between ideological (often theoretical) thinking, and the empirical practicalities of education policy.

### **6.7 Introducing a 'practical social inclusion' course**

What has become clear is that social inclusion, self-advocacy, citizenship, and relationships are social processes, distributed and relational. As such, teaching individual students skills required to access such processes is of limited value if the 'communities' in which these processes happen are not also 'taught'. With increased social participation as a stated aim of FE, if viewed through the social model of disability, a political approach is necessary. So how can a *curriculum* promote social and political change and self-advocacy? How can communities be taught about social inclusion? What could be taught, and how? Is it *possible* to 'teach' social inclusion? A major philosophical and practical shift is required to move from "the insertion of 'newcomers' into existing cultural and socio-political 'orders'" (Biesta, 2012b: 823), to what Biesta calls 'subjectification', that is "the process of becoming a subject of action and responsibility" (Biesta, 2012b: 823). Like Terzi's (2005) view that the capability approach reduces the reliance on categories of 'need', viewing FE as a means of self-empowerment and 'equal' social participation is a philosophical ideal. Dewey's and Sen's ideas of participatory democracy are integral here, as is the suggestion that increased social participation can offer increased opportunities for broader, more positive identity and agency meanings. Re-imagined FE would offer circumstances of opportunity for students to transgress expected positioning of young people with learning disability labels, whilst, at the same time 'changing' society through citizenship activism. In addition to teaching students about social participation, a dual aim would be to teach members of communities about different forms of student agency and how

to respond positively to these. Biesta's and Foucault's ideas of subjectification, or 'becoming', are paramount, particularly when international research (1000 students in 15 European countries) reports that schools often do not offer opportunities to discuss identity (Ross, 2014). Time spent at college would aim to inform students about opportunities for social participation whilst equipping them with socio-political skills and knowledge required to access such opportunities. Circumstances of opportunity for broader, more positive identity and agency negotiations can be identified and engineered through this particular approach.

Subjectification could initially be promoted through teaching students about the social model of disability, about rights and self-advocacy. Later, and crucially, students could also be involved in *providing* disability awareness training in their communities. This is important as it utilises individuals' expertise to broaden community understanding of what is required for improved social inclusion, as well as what communities can gain through inclusive processes. In this way students become agents of change in their own communities, expert in their knowledge of their own requirements, rights and expectations. Just as subjectification processes happen through democratic processes (and others), skills required for training others can develop through the *processes* of training and being trained. (At least) three elements useful for adult life are supported here: training 'the public', learning interpersonal and presentation skills, and becoming socially 'known' at the same time.

These processes would start with group discussion in college about which social activities students wish to access. Hall (2005) points out that social participation processes are more helpful if socially excluded individuals choose their own activities and sites in the community where they should happen. Initially, these might conceivably be buying a drink in a shop or pub, accessing library or leisure facilities, using public transport, a youth club, or the cinema. How (and whether) suggested activities contribute to a valuable life would be discussed together by students and tutors, broadening individuals' knowledge about possible activities and their attractiveness and/or importance. Activities would be suggested and chosen democratically (although obviously not all activities would suit all students). Socio-political barriers to accessing the chosen activities could be acknowledged, and ways of overcoming these discussed. Through democratic processes, students and college staff

could together develop a plan of how to deliver information about the requirements needed for social participation in the chosen activities. A practical plan could be prepared.

For example, if John, a college student from Weldale, wanted to access his local library for courses, books and DVDs, he could make contact with a member of staff there, for example, Callum. John could make an appointment, then go to the library to meet Callum, with a college tutor, individually, or with a small group of students. John could explain the socio-political barriers that currently make library access difficult for him. These might be a range of issues, for example, a feeling that people are looking at him, uncertainty due to not knowing where to find what he requires, lack of a clear place to head to on arrival, staff making too much eye-contact with him, a feeling of being among (potentially hostile) strangers, a fear of meeting 'bullies' from his previous school, etc. Although some barriers will be similar for many students, this would be an opportunity for John to explain exactly how he would like to use the library and what this would require on the part of Callum and his colleagues. He could explain how he feels on entering the library, and how this affects his use of the library. He could explain the structural aspects of the library that intimidate him, or make him uncertain. John could also explain the social model of disability and how he would like to be treated/considered by Callum. Callum could explain what the library could offer in terms of accommodating John's requirements and a strategy could be worked out. This may include simple things, like a tour of the library to help John locate what he requires, or an arrangement whereby John (when possible), has a brief chat with Callum on arrival, to re-establish relations and confidence. If John, Callum and the college tutor agree on a strategy, they are each, and all, invested in John becoming a library user. A 'practise' library visit could be set up on a day when Callum would be there. Assuming Callum was willing to accommodate John's requirements, this scenario would set up a named and known contact at the library which, for John would immediately support his accessing the books and DVDs, but also a level of social inclusion. That is, not only accessing the library as a citizen, but also as a 'known' person, someone Callum recognises. As John. Callum, in turn, would know how John wished to be responded to and what was required for him to use the library in the way he wished. Assuming all went well, John could visit the library on several occasions, if necessary, with college staff. Callum could disseminate information, such as, 'John prefers non-direct eye-

contact and would like you to greet him by name' to other members of the library staff, so increasing their skills and knowledge about how to interact with John.

I spent many hours talking with John and believe that with an approach such as this, he would feel happy accessing the library alone after a few practise runs.

As John's confidence grew, if required, he could introduce himself to Callum's colleagues in the same way. 'Disability awareness training' could take the form most useful and appropriate to both John and the library staff. With the help of college tutors, John could potentially prepare a disability awareness 'package' for Callum and other staff at the library. This could take the form of a letter, a video, a one-to-one conversation, a 'classroom' talk, a power-point presentation, whatever suited John and the library staff best. As a 'known' library contact, Callum could help discuss how and when this could take place. Training could be an individual or group endeavour, but of vital importance is that *individual* students have social contact with *individual* 'gatekeepers' to their chosen social activities. This ensures both that social relationships are built, and that individual students are treated as such, rather than viewed as a homogenous 'group'. The relative successes and failures of the approach could be discussed in college, and at the library, allowing preparation for John's next chosen social activity to build on previous experiences and knowledge. Interpersonal skills, incidentally the same as those required for employment, could be practised in college with particular *real* social scenarios in mind, then taken into the students' communities, making them relevant and directly useful. Wales and Clarke (2005) see reflection on learning as particularly important in citizenship teaching, and the same applies to social inclusion processes. Reflexive thinking about relative difficulties and successes should allow students to gain transferable social skills. Equally, Callum and his colleagues could benefit from reflexive thinking about their own practice, and many other library users may benefit from more inclusive library approaches. This process could position John as a resource, someone who could potentially train libraries (and later, other public organisations) how to introduce more inclusive practices.

Putnam (1995, 2000) centralises the importance of *active social involvement* in building social capital. Leonard and Onyx (2004) conceptualise social capital as formed "whenever the five elements of social capital are present: networks, reciprocity, trust,

norms and agency” (p.182). The educational approach described above would promote all five elements within both the college and social sites. This approach to ‘teaching’ socially useful skills is unusual in that it not only addresses *social participation* knowledge and skills (John), but also *social inclusion* knowledge and skills (Callum). Callum and John could learn from one another, positioning John as providing useful and important information for Callum as a member of library staff. A human connection would be made, one that would support both John’s use of the library and Callum’s work as library staff. This reciprocal exchange would equip John with knowledge and skills required for using the library, but also those required for future work, whilst also equipping Callum with information and skills necessary to ‘include’ John. If this imaginary scenario were to take place in John’s *local* library, it would also be forging human relationships and connections in the *specific place* John would require them, to access books, courses, DVDs and *social contact* in his adult life. This would situate John’s agency within the library, linking it to Callum, in the same way that many Weldale students’ agency was situated within the school, some processes linked to Adrian and Pete. Similarly, Callum’s agency would be linked with John. Such situated negotiating processes could broaden John’s positive identity and agency meanings, positioning him as a library user, as an expert, as a teacher, as a useful member of society. Wolfensberger’s (1972) concept of social role valorization suggests that stigmatised individuals who take on valued social roles may also take on the value associated with those roles. In becoming socially included through the negotiation of broader, socially situated identities, linked with people already part of the social environment in which the processes occur, John’s identity and agency opportunities could be broadened.

Using this basic method, throughout students’ time in college, as their experiences broadened, individuals’ awareness of social participation opportunities would grow. Through increased social participation, identity and agency negotiations could happen in increasingly diverse and broad social spaces, with different people and in different environments. Because this approach positions the students as agents of change in their own communities, individuals’ identity and agency meanings could be negotiated in terms of socially and environmentally applicable knowledge and experience rather than in terms of deficit. Students would be positioned to engineer their own circumstances of opportunity for more positive identity and agency meanings, whilst harnessing the

support of key individuals acting as ‘gatekeepers’ to social spaces. This approach could increase access to communities, to community organisations, community development opportunities, to paid and voluntary employment, but also to incidental interactions, to happenstance and unpredicted social possibilities.

The processes of ‘being’ included in the structural and social elements of the library could equip *both John and Callum* with the knowledge and skills required to include John, *whilst at the same time* including him. Inclusion knowledge and skills are likely to be beneficial to other library users, with and without disability labels, so John’s social participation may be useful in many unpredictable ways.

Through similar processes, John could become socially included in many areas of social life important to his own valuable life, gaining skills, knowledge and social allies. So, for example, if students and tutors discuss how to gain information about the voting system, and where and how to register to vote, and students are then supported in making a personal choice and voting, this could expand not only their knowledge and their capabilities, but also their social participation. Such ongoing processes would “entail an orientation toward *freedom*” (Biesta, 2010: 128-129), “both as the primary end and as the principal means of development” (Sen, 1999: xii).

Potentially, students could become part of their college’s, and other organisations’ diversity training, ideally with the aim of students receiving payment for their work. Defining education as subjectification positions pedagogy as “an active and deliberate intervention in the ‘public’ domain” (Biesta, 2012a: 692). If students were to have this type of education until age 25, on leaving they would have a much improved knowledge of themselves, and their own communities, social spaces where they were ‘known’ and ‘understood’, and, because they had democratically *chosen* the activities, skills and knowledge *directly relevant* to their own valued future lives. The applied and relevant nature of this type of positively subjectifying education removes the conceptual and practical difficulties associated with both homogenised future lives thinking, and with overly optimistic and/or pessimistic outcome expectations.

Glassman and Patton (2014) describe Dewey’s vision of a democratic classroom as “a small laboratory for socially driven development of new capabilities” (p.1357), implying that education may be associated with societal freedoms. Although Sen’s

discussion of basic capabilities involves the learning of skills, like Glassman and Patton (2014) I associate *social processes* with movement towards freedoms. Drawing on Friere, Glassman and Patton say “[b]y praxis we refer primarily to the action – reflection - action cycle that helps individuals understand what they are doing and why they are doing it” (p.1358). Emergent and improvised situations can be discussed before, during and after they arise through use of role-play and evaluation processes, but always with the focus of ‘real’ experiences and situations. The feeling of investment, “the advantages of extra motivation, of real ownership of tasks” (Wales and Clarke, 2005: 13) inherent in democratically decided learning activities may go some way to reducing the drop-out rate amongst students in college.

### **6.8 “Inclusion, participation and democracy: what is the purpose?”**

In her edited book, Allan (2003) questions the purpose of inclusion, participation and democracy. Within the classroom, the answers to this question are highly complex. However, ‘teaching’ ‘practical social inclusion’ processes takes the question of inclusion out of the classroom and into local communities. In the example of John using the library, the purposes of inclusion, participation and democracy are (relatively) clearer. *Democratic processes* enable co-operative decision making to occur for the benefit of individuals and groups. Through democratic processes new and important skills would be learned, transferable skills useful in employment and decision-making in later life. Using the capabilities approach means discussion of ‘valuable lives’ offers both autonomy and guidance in making decisions about what is (both socially and individually) relevant and important to individuals’ lives. *Participation* is important in inclusive processes, the ‘ticket’ to inclusion. Participation in social processes and in social spaces would allow John access to situations in which he could negotiate broader, more positive identity meanings, broadening his opportunities and ways in which he could be perceived. Participation in disability awareness training could reposition John’s identities in more positive valued ways. Through participation processes John could negotiate *inclusion* into spaces and social networks important to his own valuable life. The purpose of *inclusion* would be to make John part of social communities, to allow him to maintain the participation processes he learnt in college, and, through situated and linked relationships, to continue these into his adult life. Inclusion would allow John to be ‘known’ in his communities, to offer useful and important knowledge

and training, to form reciprocal and interdependent social relationships, positively supporting his identities and agency. In capability approach terms, John's 'functionings', what he can do and who he can be, would be broadened, increasing his capabilities, or the functionings available to him. In Sen's terms, (1999) the pursuit of (social) freedoms would promote freedoms of other kinds.

Biesta (2010) points out that the inclusion of mathematics in the curriculum, maths testing, and definitions of 'success', sends particular messages about the importance of mathematics, performing a socialization function into a world where mathematics is important. Similarly, segregated education that does not encompass subjectification or social participation sends particular messages about the place of individuals within (or outside) their communities. Equally, *centralising* social participation challenges such messages, disturbing social exclusion narratives and providing an expectation that social participation be part of young adults' lives. It implicitly sends messages that social participation and inclusion are desired, possible and that students can influence this. Equally, it positions students as knowledgeable agents of change, as trainers, as important and useful members of society.

Biesta questions whether citizenship education should concentrate on possible conditions for citizenship, or should "play an active role in the "production" of a particular kind of citizen" (Biesta, 2010: 23-24). Re-envisaging FE with the aim of increased social participation could actively 'produce' both social participants, and 'collaborative communities' (Nemerowicz and Rosi, 1997). Biesta's concept of a pedagogy of interruption (2010) is a pedagogy that aims to challenge the 'normal' order of things, opening opportunities for unpredictable, emergent happenings and possibilities, working towards subjectification whilst acknowledging that human subjectivity cannot be educationally produced. Such a pedagogy is necessarily political and does not fit neatly into policy or curricula, however, 'teaching' socially participatory and inclusive processes in social spaces could actively 'produce' increased social inclusion.

A further important implicit message inherent in this approach is that of the value of individuals with learning disability labels. Charity and deficit models of disability lead to the salience of *dis*-ability and negatively valued traits. Whilst reimagined FE starts



with the individual requirements of the student (which could be viewed as emphasising deficit), these are introduced within a discourse acknowledging the validity of the students' perspectives (McGregor, 2009), as people with knowledge. Combined with the political approach of the social model of disability and self-advocacy this could lead to individuals being known for their strengths (Carter and colleagues, 2015). Yet knowledge is not enough for civic friendships (Reinders, 2002:3) to be formed. Reinders (2002) describes the "politics of culture" (p.3) as seeking to "foster a different set of values. Its strategy is to build relationships through character rather than through legal rights" (Reinders 2002: 4).

McDougal, Evans and Baldwin (2010) suggest a relationship between self-determination and perceived quality of life in young adults with chronic conditions and disabilities. This suggests that self-determination not only builds the skills and confidence to define a valuable life, but also effects how that life is perceived and experienced. Social inclusion processes can challenge how learning disabled people are viewed, enabling a valuing of character, of individuality, that participation alone cannot achieve. Equally, through taking on informal/formal roles as disability awareness trainers, students would be viewed differently by members of their communities. For deficit-based positioning of individuals to be challenged, other identity possibilities must be available. The social model of disability, disseminated and taught by young people with learning disability labels would in itself serve to challenge and disrupt deficit assumptions. Implicit in this approach is the value of the students, both as individuals, and to their communities. Encompassed within this approach are both empowerment and emancipation, described by Biesta (2012b) as providing individuals with "power to operate within a particular 'order'" (p.823) and the challenging of the processes that "grant individuals the power to speak and act" (p.823), respectively.

An under-discussed implicit concept in special education is that emulating 'real-life' situations in schools and colleges, prepares students for 'real' experiences in their later lives. However, supporting students to access 'real' situations rather than *emulating* them can improve both skills and the feeling of relevance for the student. In determining their own learning opportunities, students recognise the relevance of their learning, and "gain incentive" (Worrell, 1988: 12) to learn. This approach would remove what Foucault calls pedagogization, or the separation and segmentation of

education, in contrast to adult life. It would challenge the simulated adult world often available in education. Most importantly, practising the processes of social inclusion in 'real' situations would ease the transition from college to 'after college', when expectation is that families are responsible for finding activities for young people with learning disability labels (see 5.2.1). As Dewey believes, "education [...] is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Dewey, 1897, online).

## **6.9 Introducing 'dispersed' education**

Currently, most FE foundation learning takes place in colleges. However, if, as I propose, identities and agency are situated in particular social sites and linked with particular people, broadening the social sites in which learning takes place could also broaden opportunities for increased positive identity meanings. In order for relationships developed to have maximum impact in the lives of all those involved, the social 'arenas' should be those in which the students are likely to spend time as adults.

There are several advantages of moving from predominantly institutional learning to community-based learning. It challenges the concept that people with learning disability labels require physical separation from others, contesting ideas of special education arising from educational labels. It also offers opportunity for students to become teachers, experts, rather than 'learners'. Public pedagogy, or its subgenre, identified by Sandlin, O'Malley and Burdick (2011) as "educational activity and learning in extrainstitutional spaces and discourses" (p.338) focuses on multivarious processes and sites of education, extending beyond educating towards a predefined purpose (Biesta and Osberg, 2008), towards human possibilities. Sandlin and colleagues (2011) point out that this view of public pedagogy links with Dewey's (1916) ideas of education and democracy, positioning schools as "incubation sites for the development of an engaged, critical citizenry" (p.343). For Biesta too, "The political and the educational dimension come together in the idea of 'public pedagogy'" (Biesta, 2012a: 684). The link between public pedagogy and agency (Sandlin and colleagues, 2011) is important in that through utilising the public sphere (Biesta, 2012a), agency is located within broader social sites and processes than those available within educational institutions. Through establishing social relationships with particular people in particular social sites, positive identity and agency meanings become processes that can

be reinforced through repetition. Sandlin, Schultz and Burdick (2010) take this further, not only espousing public spaces as places of learning, but also saying “the public can be viewed as a site of educational discourse” (Sandlin and colleagues, 2010: xxii). Educational processes in the public domain affect individual, social and educational discourses, broadening knowledge in all these areas. Viewing the world through a social model of disability ‘lens’ and building on self-advocacy skills invites particular emergent agency meanings and actions that challenge accepted interfaces between learning disability labels and society. This supports a more relational, distributed concept of education, drawing on students’ knowledge and expertise, the tutors and wider society. Building on existing social connections, this approach could build communities of practice (in the college and broader society), explicitly and implicitly engaged with social change. This is similar to Allan’s (2008) call for inclusive education to be “reframed as a struggle for everyone to participate in – to be included in” (p.101), distributing responsibility for *social inclusion* amongst all members of society, rather than locating responsibility for *social participation* within excluded parties. Examples of radical changes to education demonstrate that this approach can enable “personal growth and, in some cases, transformations of future prospects” (Clements and colleagues, 2010: 41) (see section 6.11).

In contrast to socialization (Biesta, 2010), in which individuals are socialised into an existing ‘stable’ social system, public pedagogy *challenges* accepted methods and aims of education, providing opportunities in which “norms can be examined as they are developed and contested” (Hickey-Moody, Savage and Windle, 2010: 229). Through this approach, social inclusion becomes not only the *aim* of ‘teaching’, but also the *method*. Biesta’s questioning of the purpose of educational aims (2009) is countered by individuals stipulating what is most useful to their own lives at that particular point. Social inclusion education deconstructs the idea that students’ require particular assistance to access to their own communities, through supporting the *processes* of access. This form of radically contextualised learning, supported through democratically agreed decisions about what constitutes a valuable life, could have a significant effect on students opportunities in adulthood, by increasing potential functionings, and therefore capabilities and freedoms.

What I have described above can be called ‘dispersed education’. Knowledge is not didactically defined and transmitted by ‘teachers’, but is developed through communal, democratic, social relational processes. Students, staff and members of the public are each defined as knowledgeable, and at the same time requiring ‘knowledge’, dispersing traditional educational roles in ways that support emergence of communal knowledge not yet known. Learning becomes a reciprocal project, between peers (Connor and Berman, 2016), and with a socio-political aim. Equally, there is no one site of education, but multiple individually valued social sites are found, and knowledge, identity and agency meanings situated within these sites and linked with particular people associated with these environments. Traditional roles of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ are challenged as both become dispersed, amongst and through social relationships. Thus, education is reciprocally dispersed between (groups of) people, over multiple social sites, and amongst multivarious social relationships. The dispersal of education performs an important role in also dispersing the sites and relationships within which identity and agency meanings may be negotiated, (re)produced and maintained. This can be viewed as increasing social capital, but importantly, rather than viewing social capital as a tool to achieving social inclusion, here, each is produced through the ‘doing’ of the other, through reciprocal social processes. This approach could equip students with both increased skills with which to access society, but also with ‘allies’ (Goodley, 2001) within their chosen communities, challenging the generalised fear of society through opportunities for reciprocal socially appropriate relationships.

Aspis (1997) criticised the use of self-advocacy to ‘allow’ disabled people to make choices from a selection of options ‘provided’ by non-disabled people, leading to “people only speaking up about what society is prepared to make available [...] rather than challenging the (lack of) power that people with learning difficulties have in their lives” (p.647). Although social participation may start with accessing local amenities and services, the ultimate aim is much more “grand” (Griffiths, 1998, p.19). Ultimately learning disabled people should not just have access to social processes but should also participate in ‘setting the agenda’. For example, the employment of people with learning disability labels as NHS Quality Checkers (NHS England, online) is an important move, having potentially major outcomes for both the NHS and the individuals involved. Viewing individuals with learning disability labels as experts

positions their identities very differently and opens up opportunities for human possibilities.

Obviously, such dispersed education would require teaching staff to also change both their role and their approaches, incorporating enabling and empowering democratic processes and the resulting social participatory action. Despite reported advantages to both students and staff when this happens (Clements and colleagues, 2010), departing from a clear curriculum may “worry some teachers unused to it” (Wales and Clarke, 2005: 10). In addition:

[s]taff need to be sure that their own attitudes are not blocking a student's right to integration and progression. This includes the right to take risks, to fail and to be supported in making informed choices (Dee and Corbett, 1994: 323).

As I did/do, college staff would also require ongoing training in a socio-political approach to disability, and a non-ableist standpoint, in order to make potential disabling thought and action visible. Staff and students would each be involved in their own ongoing ethical projects of subjectification.

Mentoring approaches have been increasingly central in policy concerning disadvantaged young people (Colley, 2003: 1) and are particularly appropriate for further education. Whilst difficult to define (Colley, 2003: 30), broadly the role of mentor can be described as an ally, someone supporting the personal development of individuals, whilst also learning themselves. Self-reflective practice and ongoing discussion about mentoring relationships are vital. Colley (2003) discusses power relationships in mentoring for social inclusion. She says the “fairly crude” (p.139) concept of empowerment in mentoring means “the mentor is seen as the powerful member of the dyad, thanks to his or her greater age or experience, and the mentee is seen as relatively powerless, awaiting empowerment by the benign actions of the mentor” (p.139 – 140). However, the purpose of a co-operative, democratic approach is for this power-differential to be challenged, and for different working relationships to emerge. The purpose and aim of social inclusion should go some way to maintaining a coherent learning experience, despite such a personalised person-centred approach (Lawson, Waite and Robertson, 2005).

Staff and student roles are not necessarily one-way or static. Over three years, one school, Risinghill, (Clements and colleagues, 2010), developed an emergent, student-personalised educational approach, to preparing students with autism labels for work. This approach was considered a great success, enabling development in both students and staff, education becoming “a joint effort, a community of learning and development rather than something educators do to students” (Clements and colleagues, 2010: 9). Staff roles were redefined as “coach, work partner, life skill tutor or learning assistant” (Clements and colleagues, 2010: 19), and more equal joint-problem-solving relationships developed. Teaching and learning was restructured under the headings of well-being, work skills and world knowledge. Not only teaching and learning, but also staff management became a collaborative project. At Risinghill, the roles of both ‘mentor’ and ‘mentee’ took on emergent processes of personal development and discovery for all involved.

Indeed, democratic processes remove the traditional roles (and relative statuses) of teacher and student, allowing for students to co-mentor each other, and staff. Of vital importance is the relationship between mentor and student, although, as Colley (2003) points out, “informal relationships are entered into voluntarily, while planned relationships are orchestrated by more artificial means” (p.42). The type of relationship that could be developed in compulsory education is different in every case, but, as demonstrated by Pete and Adrian at Weldale school, particular approaches work well with particular students. A knowledge of individuals and the circumstances of opportunity that empower broader, more positive identity and agency meanings is crucial in this approach. Pete and Adrian knew Weldale students well, particularly those in year 11, enabling them both to engender more reciprocal, co-operative relationships even within a school system that did not always appreciate or support their efforts. In an FE system with the *purpose* of learning and teaching processes of social inclusion through democratic methods, mentoring relationships could be taken so much further and be so much more effective.

### **6.10 Difficulties of a practical social inclusion approach**

Sandlin and colleagues (2011) suggest that historically, the ‘public’ in public pedagogy refers to “an idealized outcome of educational activity: the production of a public

aligned in terms of values and collective identity” (Sandlin and colleagues, 2011: 342). Whilst it is idealistic to assume that all members of communities will be similarly invested in the aims and processes of social inclusion, those in public service positions could be expected to support this endeavour.

Insecure funding and “potential for conflicts of interest with statutory agencies who provide funding” (DoH, 2001: 46) are reasons why this type of FE course may not be accepted. More importantly though, the re-evaluation of educational purpose and methods required for a practical social inclusion approach, is huge. However, this is not reason enough for it not to be considered.

The geographical area in which students access further education is a further difficulty. This approach would be most effective if students’ existing social connections and relationships could be built on in their local area. However, currently there are many reasons why students attend schools and colleges that are not local to their homes. These include funding policy for out-of-area placements; lack of choice about place of education; the ‘fight’ for appropriate education placements; lack of suitable pre-school, primary school, secondary school and college placements in the locality; fear of accessing the local community (often due to previous personal experience). For example, due to lack of local placements, Chris Hoy had taken a 50 mile round trip to school since he was four years old. Similarly, Ivy, Joey and Lieb had an 80 mile round trip to Weldale School when there was a similar school in their area, just four miles from Lieb’s home. Zane and John both chose not to attend their local colleges for fear of association with the perpetrators of bullying experienced in primary school. These situations jeopardise opportunities to build and develop acquaintances, friendships and “civic friendship[s]” (Reinders, 2002: 3) necessary for social inclusion, and impact, seriously, on students’ lives. Small wonder that so many students told me they had no friends near their homes. How can identity and agency meanings be situated and linked with places and people where students’ adult lives will take place, if their schooling has happened in a different area? Viewed through this lens, the disadvantages to identity and agency of non-local education are significant, and the advantages of dispersed education in students’ *local* communities become apparent.

My suggested approach to education is based on the premiss that increased social interactions offer increased circumstances of opportunity for broader, more positive identity and agency negotiations. However, what if increased social interactions produced increased *negative* identity and agency meanings? Democratic processes and the use of teaching staff as mentors should guard against this as activities and training can be suited to student confidence and skills. Through accessing civic and municipal social spaces at first, the students could expect a civil response at least. Knowledge of their own rights as members of the public may equip students with both confidence and information to embolden them.

Given that young people with learning disability labels are vulnerable to being taken advantage of, to power-differentials, to breaches of trust, to other people's poor or dangerous behaviour, how should this be taken into consideration? In the library example, Callum may 'make friends' with John, meeting him in social situations. Maybe this would not happen, yet despite the knowledge that lack of social relationships lead to isolation in people with learning disability labels (Martin and colleagues, 2011: 25) opportunities for social interactions are often limited on the basis of 'safety' and 'risk'. The skills required to assess risk cannot be learned in a (relatively) risk-free environment. Regardless of whether John and Callum became friends, making a social relationship with Callum would offer John, and his tutors, the opportunity to discuss both acquaintance-ship and friendship. Appropriate behaviour for relationships in different places and with different people could be discussed. Role-play, similar to the imaginative agency shown by Wolverine and Anthony, could be used to discuss appropriate and inappropriate responses, to form strategies for taking social relationships to different levels, or for declining this. This approach, in a safe environment, could enable both improvisation of identity and agency, and decisions about how (not) to behave. Although this would not position students as non-vulnerable to others' inappropriate behaviour, it would prepare them for making informed decisions about their own lives, potentially equipping them with important risk-assessment skills. Despite obvious and understandable parental worries about young people participating in society, I would argue that it is riskier for individuals to 'be in' society without such discussion and practice, than to do so with support. This particular approach to social inclusion, through an understanding of individual rights, and specifically siting identity



and agency meanings in social environments and linking them with particular known people should make social participation less risky than *not* addressing the risk.

#### Ethical interruption 8.

Challenging the label of 'vulnerable'.

The term 'vulnerable' is usually used as an adjective, an essentialist attribute associated with individuals who 'are' 'at risk'. Worse, 'vulnerable' is used as a rationale, implicitly legitimising poor and often dangerous behaviour against individuals associated with the word. Unqualified use of the word 'vulnerable' is in itself essentialist, negating both opportunity and responsibility to challenge power relations. I have resolved never to use the word 'vulnerable' without explicitly describing what a person, or group of people, is vulnerable *to*. This ethical and political decision helps to more clearly recognise the powerful social, political and economic structures of discrimination acting against individuals and groups routinely labelled as 'vulnerable'. So, a child may be 'vulnerable to social predators'. Women may be 'vulnerable to effects of a patriarchal society'. Disabled people may be 'vulnerable to discrimination, misunderstanding, violence, humiliation, hate-crime'. This approach clearly locates both 'problem' and 'solution' within external socio-political forces rather than accepting that an individual 'is' 'vulnerable'.

Further potential difficulties with a practical inclusion course include controversial issues in citizenship teaching (Wales and Clarke, 2005). It is inevitable that, given free reign in choosing social activities to access there may be conflict between what students and teachers consider a valuable life. The limits of dispersed education are fluid but important. For example, could teaching staff, or 'mentors for social inclusion' (Colley, 2003), be expected to support an (appropriately aged) student to go on a date, 'get drunk' in a pub, spend the night with a partner, access sex workers, buy (and use) 'legal highs' or contraception? It may be argued that sexual relationships and legal

drug/alcohol use are an important part of non-disabled youth culture, in which case learning disabled students may wish to, and have the right to, gain access to social sites in which these may happen. However, although democratic processes would provide discussion and knowledge about such things, it could hardly be expected that, because it had been voted for as a theoretical right, teaching staff should support and supervise the use of something they personally found dangerous or immoral. Such ethical and moral dilemmas are inevitable in an emergent curriculum in which the rights and wishes of students are taken seriously. I understand though, that this presents a potential problem for colleges and college staff. However, assuming that learning disabled students may access these situations on their own at this time of their lives, it is important that this too is supported and (in theoretical terms at least) considered part of 'education'.

### **6.11 Successful examples of similar projects**

Many many influences have brought me to the position of reimagining further education as a site of social justice, as a place where students can be repositioned as 'knowing' trainers in their communities, of 'teaching' as well as 'learning' social inclusion.

Visiting Aiden at college and observing him as a committed, interested student, part of a class group and learning environment made me consider what the National Citizenship Project had offered that school did not. *Social processes* of co-designing and producing the music festival as part of a team seemed to have allowed Aiden to understand himself as "able to do things, on his own and ... cope on his own" (140107\_interview\_Libby). Observing the change in my own children through their participation in a democratic school, where students and teachers take equal part in deciding school rules, hiring staff, and setting expectations was also influential. I became interested in the *processes* of learning as 'outcomes' themselves.

Post-college services sometimes take a community-based approach, such as the Greenside Studio described by Lawson and Black (2013) addressing work-, vocational- and functional-skills in a community setting. However, it is unusual for compulsory education to take such an approach. However, at Risinghill, (introduced above), a radically different approach was taken, and, as with my reimagining of further education, the *processes* of learning also produced the *aim* of education:

Our approach needed to reflect to children a picture of themselves as thinkers and learners that would in consequence enhance self-esteem. We wanted them to feel empowered, effective decision makers and proud of their achievements (Clements and colleagues, 2010: 21).

Similarly, Mencap and ENABLE Scotland's Inspire Me project involved training young people with learning disability labels as 'young ambassadors', to take part in community impact projects and change negative social attitudes towards people with learning disability labels. Launched in 2011 Inspire Me aimed to support 20,000 14 – 25 year olds, and their families and carers in promoting community participation and delivering training in communities. It's six month programmes trained young people as learning disability consultants and trainers, providing skills and experience useful for employment. For individuals involved, the project boosted their confidence and was "life changing" (Mencap and ENABLE, 2015). A particularly useful element of this project is that of role models, something I felt was lacking in the transition from Weldale School to college and beyond. Inspire Me trained young people to be both trainers and role models for others, demonstrating identity possibilities and effecting social change through both teaching and example.

In this chapter, in contrast to the courses available to Weldale students, I have reimagined foundation level FE as an opportunity for political and social change, for social inclusion, for broader, more positive identity and agency negotiations. I have discussed how development and maintenance of social processes could equip both students and other members of their communities with skills and knowledge to 'enact' social inclusion. Through developing these processes in both individual students and members of communities, reciprocal identity and agency meanings can be linked to broader social sites and with increased numbers of particular people. In the 'doing' of such processes social capital can be generated, and students repositioned as valuable members of their communities.

## 7 Conclusion

This thesis has covered a wide range of aspects of identity and agency in transition from special school to further education college. I have incorporated student experience, academic literature and theory, my own research processes, and, in reimagining FE, like Wolverine and Anthony, imaginary scenarios. Throughout, circumstances of opportunity that enable broader, more positive identity and agency meanings have been paramount.

The original contributions to knowledge made by this thesis are situated within, and contribute to, understandings of researcher subjectivities and what may constitute knowledge, of post-qualitative methodologies, of learning disability politics and education, of the socially-relational processes of identity and agency negotiation. Contributions to knowledge are both empirically and theoretically based, drawing together theory from broad areas and approaches.

Specific contribution to knowledge is through ethnographic detail examining how identity and agency meanings may be generated within the particular environments of school and college, are negotiated through talk and action, are performative and come into being through social processes. I evoke identities as complexly and fluidly negotiated in relation to learning disability labels, normalised meanings sometimes challenged or rewritten. This thesis contributes to feminist discussion of agency as complex, through introducing the concepts of ordering and disordering agency, and evoking situations in which *both* may be observed at the same time. It also challenges the idea that agency equals activity, by showing how projected agency, in the form of imagined situations or role-play, may bring about choices of *non-action*. By defining agency as both action and non-action, both being deliberate and effortful, I challenge accepted understandings that might have positioned some students as ‘non-agentic’.

Through viewing transition as a time of opportunity, I have shown how limbic, un-timetabled situations may enable ‘circumstances of opportunity’, supporting innovative, improvised, emergent, and transgressive identity and agency meaning negotiation. Transition necessitates thought and discussion about past, future and present identities in different environments, and I contribute to knowledge by applying Emirbayer and

Mische's (1998) model of agency to identities in (times of) transition. I have discussed identities and agency separately, then brought both together to consider how the two concepts are interlinked. Through an ethnographic understanding of student experiences in transition, this thesis identifies a link between identity and agency meanings, particular people and social sites. Transition, a time of forwards projection, opens spaces, circumstances of opportunity in which broader, more positive identity and agency meanings may be negotiated. However, this research shows that transition from school to college (and beyond) appears not to support such processes as it could, instead reproducing previous identity positions. I reimagine foundation level further education becoming itself an effective transition, between school education and social inclusion. Through building and maintaining social inclusion processes, the 'practical social inclusion' approach I develop in chapter six, offers both skills and circumstances of opportunity in which adult identities and agency may be linked to and situated within students' communities. This thesis contributes uniquely in suggesting the bringing together of overtly political and participatory democratic processes, with the capability approach, in further education, and in introducing 'dispersed' education as a potential for teaching both individuals and communities the skills required for social inclusion, whilst also *bringing about* social inclusion. Potentially, this approach could be useful for many marginalised young people in further education.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes to post-qualitative writing and an understanding of post-coding analysis 'methods', as well as the role of analytical reflexivity in understanding not only the positioning of researcher subjectivity, but also why other positions are not taken up. I view my own research processes as an ethical project of subjectification, one reflected in reimagined foundation level further education. The thesis contributes to understandings of what it means to undertake empirical research and deconstructive thinking at the same time, causing insecure and problematic ontological and epistemological situations. I have described in detail the processes involved in constantly realigning thought and action under these circumstances and in doing so contribute to reflexive and post-qualitative 'knowledge'.

Through contributing to post-qualitative *writing*, this thesis also contributes to the *language* of post-qualitative 'analysis'. On first reading Holbrook and Pourchier's (2014) description of the grandmother kneading the dough, knowing instinctively

through experience when it has been kneaded enough, I became aware that I was writing in a similar way. I hope that my own use of writing to describe thinking processes that transcend language, contributes in a comparable way, and may have a similar effect on the reader as Holbrook and Pourchier's writing had on me. That is, an understanding that the bringing together of metaphor, personally experienced situations, reflection, and non-academic resources, to form a personal narrative, a linear and written 'representation' of non-linear, intellectual, embodied, and 'felt' processes can be not only a provocation to thinking differently, but also a moving experience.

An unexpected sub-theme, woven through this research is that of (in)visability, being obscured, hidden. This sub-theme is multiply relevant in the context of learning disability labels. The word 'invisible' is used about transition from school to college (Heslop and Abbott, 2007; Hudson, 2006), level one college students (Atkins, 2009), and the FE sector (Hodgson, 2015) itself. Whitaker (2004) describes people with mild to moderate learning disability labels as "hidden" (p.142). Parents of Weldale students worry that, when college courses finish, services, as well as their own sons and daughters will become 'invisible'.

Similarly, the lack of teaching about the social-model of disability renders their own socio-political context 'invisible' to many young people with learning disability labels. Atkins (2009) insists that the broader contexts in which vocational education happens, must be made 'visible' in order that the failings of the current approach be understood. Neo-liberal language of 'choice' in FE 'obscures' the lack of choice for students with learning disability labels. Central to my own post-structural lens is the imperative of making visible social processes, power differentials and discourses which position individuals and groups of people. Yet, my own understandings of my environments and my influence on/over them have been both obscured and made visible by my changing beliefs and ontological understandings. What I described as 'no theory' on starting my research was later 'revealed' as 'invisible theory' (see 2.1.1), or undeconstructed deficit thinking. As my personal and ontological perspectives changed throughout the research, different approaches and understandings became visible to me. Making social processes visible, disturbing thought that renders particular situations invisible or hidden, is important. By illuminating the workings of power, circumstances of opportunity can be engineered, and processes of transgression, of subverting powerful

discourses can be imagined. When power relations and processes remain unseen and invisible, such opportunities cannot emerge.

A further sub-theme is that of ‘emergence’, of improvised behaviour in circumstances of opportunity. The unpredictable nature of emergent processes enables possibility thinking, building on, as opposed to reproducing what has come before. Emergent processes are also intrinsic in the ‘practical social inclusion’ course in reimagined FE. Emergent processes have also been fundamental in my own ethical project, in the experience of undertaking research, in challenging my own ‘common-sense’ assumptions, and in writing this thesis. These emergent, deconstructive processes have had a profound effect on how I view myself, my ‘place(s)’ in society, and myself as a researcher. I feel that some of my values and beliefs have been fundamentally challenged through the research process. Some beliefs, unrecognised yet hugely influential, could not withstand the challenge processes. Others remain, becoming stronger, consolidated through challenge. I believe that the research process and the thinking processes associated with it have made me a less judgemental, more generous thinker. It is a process I have hugely enjoyed, and one that continues to pervade every aspect of my life.

The students who took part in this research have now left college and are navigating a very different transition, one that many parents already worried about whilst their children were still at Weldale School. Further research is urgently needed as “too little is known about the destinations of learners once they leave post-16 provision, particularly once they reach the age of 19 or 20” (Ofsted, 2011: 8). It is important to know if there are useful and appropriate placements for young people to move on to, or whether, as voiced by so many Weldale parents, they are considered “the major sources of support” (Aston and colleagues, 2005: xi) and very little is available (Martin and colleagues, 2011: 5). Such data is currently largely unavailable. However, more than ‘just’ data about destinations and support, it is important, for me, personally, to know how *adult* identities and agency opportunities are experienced by the Weldale students who so generously included me in their lives for so many months. For me, and, I hope, for readers of this thesis, they are individuals, people for whom there should be opportunities, people with important and useful skills and knowledge, people who have something to contribute and must be taken seriously as members of society. Now that I

have been introduced to research it is something that I want to continue. Certainly, I intend to publish the students' stories with the intention of making their experiences more broadly understood. I hope to find a possibility of re-contacting the 21 students, to find out what happened next. Stepping into the realms of imagined futures, an ideal scenario would be if I were to facilitate the employment of the now adult Weldale students, on a pilot project, designing and mentoring a 'practical social inclusion' course in a further education college...

Paramount in this thesis is the disability studies approach that learning disability labels, and resulting life circumstances, are political. Whilst frequently disheartening, this knowledge itself provides circumstances of opportunity. If the multiple social processes that (re)produce power inequity are exposed and understood, they can also be changed. Inequalities are (re)produced through "the continuous reweaving of the social fabric" (Plagens, 2011: 58), yet these processes themselves offer opportunity for changing how the social fabric is woven, for challenging inequalities and for strengthening empowerment processes. Drawing on Dewey's (1897) understanding of education, I view social inclusion as the "continuing reconstruction of experience [...] the process and the goal [of social inclusion][...] are one and the same thing" (online). If, as this suggests social inclusion is achieved in the 'doing', changing social processes may change 'society'. Through an understanding of identity and agency meanings as linked with particular people and situated in particular social sites, it is possible to engineer circumstances in which as yet unknown possibilities may emerge. This prospect fills me with hope.



## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Appendix 1 – Data collection methods

<b>Data collection calendar</b>						
	<b>Autumn term 2012</b>	<b>Spring term 2013</b>	<b>Summer term 2013</b>	<b>Autumn term 2013</b>	<b>Spring term 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Days in school	16	8	15			39
Days in college	2	5	1	6	6	20
Student interviews	3	13	10	10	15	51
Parent/ carer interviews		2	9	4	13	28
School staff interviews		7	13			20
College staff interviews		1	2	4	2	9

<b>Visits to the different colleges</b>		
<b>College</b>	<b>Before transition</b>	<b>After transition</b>
Farnton	1 day visit with Weldale School	2 day visits
		Observation and student interviews
Greenbridge		1 day visit
		Student interviews
		1 staff interview
Ponymead	1 day visit with Weldale	2 day visits
	1 individual visit. Interview with course leader	Observation and student interviews
Ridgewell	1 day visit with Weldale	2 day visits
		Observation and student interviews
		1 interview with head of foundation learning
		2 interviews with course leaders
Townwood	1 induction day with Weldale students	2 day visits
	1 individual visit. Interview with head of foundation learning	Observation and student interviews
	1 individual visit. Interview with course leaders	2 interviews with head of foundation learning
		1 phone interview with course leader

## 8.2 Appendix 2 – Ethical approval

### Certificate of ethical research approval DISSERTATION/THESIS

Your student no: 600051379

---

**Title of your project:**

The experience of transition from special school to mainstream further education for students classified as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD), with particular focus on identity and self-concept.

**Brief description of your research project:**

This research will follow students who have been classified as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD) as they make the transition from special education to post-compulsory mainstream further education college. Current education policy promotes inclusion for students with learning difficulties. Although the Children Act 1989 stipulates that the views of young people with learning difficulties should be sought, there is currently no research that asks those most affected (i.e., the students themselves) what the experience of this transition is really like. A particular focus will be to try and understand the effect such a transition has on meanings of identity and self-concept. The research will happen in two types of location, the first being a special school and the second being mainstream further education colleges. The special school will identify school-leavers classified as having MLD to be invited to be participants in the research. The research methodology is ethnographically informed and will aim to place the lived experience of the students within a social, family and policy background. The research is being funded through an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) studentship.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

There are two groups of participants. The first group will be the students themselves who will be 14 years old and above. The second group will be school and college teachers and lecturers, other professionals associated with education and special educational needs, (for example, careers advisors, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Inclusion co-ordinator (INCO)), students' parents and carers, other family members and friends. All students will attend a school for pupils with complex needs ranging from moderate to severe learning difficulties and associated conditions such as physical disabilities, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and language problems, autism and sensory impairments. Participants will be drawn from years 10 and 11. Participant numbers are expected to be between six and 12 case studies.

**Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:**

- a) **informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

Initial informed consent will be sought from all participants. Although the students will be aged 14 and above, consent will also be sought from headteachers and the students' parents/carers as well as from the students themselves. The school has indicated that their usual method is to ask parents to sign forms to *disallow* consent, meaning that no contact

from parents indicates that consent is given. In terms of such implicit consent, the wishes of the school have to be taken into account as they feel that changing the system for this project may cause confusion, both with this project consent and with their own future consent forms. Students will be asked to sign a consent form themselves to agree to participating. All participants will be given a written outline of the research methods and purpose and will have time to consider whether to agree to be part of the research. All school staff will be notified that the research is taking place. (Copies of the information sheets and consent forms to be used are attached.) However, after initial consent is gained, following the ESRC Research Ethics Framework, process consent will be considered throughout the research study. This will take the form of checking that participants are happy to be approached at any particular time, in particular places, and that they are happy with the research process in general. This is particularly important as ethnographic research involves repeated and ongoing points of contact in the participants' naturalistic environment. In particular, participants with MLD will be given the time and support that they need to make their own decisions about informed consent. In line with BERA guidelines participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from participation at any time. This ranges from choosing not to answer a particular question or attend a particular meeting, to complete withdrawal from the research project. Participants will be informed that should they withdraw completely, information gained about or from them will not be used in the research.

Because of the low level of literacy in parents of students with moderate learning difficulties the parents consent form has been kept deliberately straight forward. The school will be asked to confirm that consent forms meet the expected level of literacy.

**b) anonymity and confidentiality**

Every effort will be made to anonymise the information gained from this research. Where appropriate pseudonyms will be used and educational establishments will be described only in general terms.

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

Data collection:

Data collection is to follow an ethnographic approach involving participant observation, informal interviews and discussion. Following from observation of the students in their educational (and if appropriate, home) settings, particular themes may emerge. Small focus groups may be set up to further discuss these themes. Ethnography seeks to understand a situation from the point of view of the participant and as such aims to change the naturalistic setting as little as possible. Participants will have the chance to become used to and get to know the researcher before informal interviews and discussions begin. Participants will have some choice over where and when discussions take place, as well as how long they are. Although the interviewer will have a topic in mind, the participants can steer the conversation by discussing those issues that they feel are most important to them. In addition to these methods participants will be asked to keep a 'diary' type record of their last weeks in school and their first weeks at college. The 'diaries' may include a range of media such as writing, drawings, photos, poems etc. Participants may choose their own medium so that no pressure is felt to produce any 'work' they may not feel comfortable with.

However, although every effort will be made not to cause harm, detriment or stress, the themes of transition, identity and self-concept are potentially upsetting and intensely personal. The researcher is experienced in a counselling role and has considerable professional experience of discussing 'difficult' subjects with individuals and groups (both with and without learning difficulties). Calling on this experience and using sensitivity and tact should reduce potential stress. Additionally, it is possible that asking students and staff to explain their decisions, choices and actions could be interpreted as questioning or criticism of individuals or protocol/policy. However, all communications will be undertaken with the underlying premise of respect for others.

Data analysis:

Transcriptions will be made from audio data, observation records and field notes. Analysis will be based on Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory. NVivo may also be used at this stage. All data will be held securely (see below).

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

Secure storage: All data will be safely held, available only to the researcher and will be destroyed when no longer needed. Digital data will be encrypted (zip files with password-only access), only available to the researcher with user-name and password. Paper data will be kept locked in a secure building and only be available to the researcher.

Special ethical considerations for participants with special needs:

Young adults with MLD are likely to be able to understand the aim of the research and understand the implications. Time will be set aside throughout the research process to confirm that this is the case. While many ethical considerations are similar whether or not participants have SEN, issues of ownership, power and exploitation can be more pertinent when considered within the situations of people with MLD. This is one reason for the use of process consent and the choice of ethnography which can be considered a relatively 'gentle' methodology. Ethnography involves co-constructing meaning so the researcher constantly checks that her perception and understanding of a situation is similar to that of the participant. This is important in terms of students with MLD being mis-represented by other, more powerful groups, such as academic researchers. The researcher is particularly aware of these ethical issues and will consider ethics and inequalities of power throughout the research process. The researcher has considerable professional and personal experience of communicating with young people with a range of learning difficulties and believes that this method of co-constructing data will suit the intellectual/communication needs of participants very well. In addition, the views of teachers and significant others will be sought and taken into account regarding individuals' needs and wishes.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

Currently there are no exceptional factors that can be anticipated. However, should students divulge information that suggests they may be at risk of serious harm, the school and university guidelines for such circumstances will be followed.

---

***This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.***

***N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor***

---

**This project has been approved for the period: April 2012 until: July 2013**

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: April 2011

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Hagen S ..... date: 23-3-12 .....

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

---

GSE unique approval reference:..... 7/11/12/44 .....

Signed: Sabah Fadi ..... date: 16/4/2012 .....  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

---

This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: April 2011

### 8.3 Appendix 3 – Information and consent forms

#### Student information form

My name is Ana Douglas. I am a student at Exeter University. I am doing a research project and I want to find out how it feels to move from school to college. To find this out I need to talk to students who have nearly finished school and are planning to go to college, like you. If you would like to help me with my project (which is called a PhD) I would come to your school, get to know you and see what your school life is like. Then when you move to college I would do the same there. I would want to talk to you about what it is like being at school and college, as well as being there with you.

I would also want to know what some other people think about your school and college experience so I would talk to your teachers. If you agree to it I might talk to your family and friends too, but I would ask you first.

Before you decide whether you want to help me with my research there are some important things you need to know.

- 1) You don't have to help me if you don't want to.
- 2) If you say yes you can change your mind later and I won't use any of the information you have told me in my project.
- 3) I won't use your name in my project and won't tell anyone where you live or which school or college you go to.
- 4) The information I get from watching, listening and asking will only be used to write my research project, but this may include articles for researcher magazines or books.
- 5) I will often check that you are happy with the way the project is going and the way I am doing things. I would like you to tell me if there is anything about my research that you feel uncomfortable with.
- 6) You can contact me by email at (removed) or phone me on (removed) if you want to talk to me about my research.
- 7) You can ask me any questions, but if you would like to talk to my supervisor (university teacher) about my research you can contact Hazel Lawson at (removed) or email (removed). She knows me and knows about my project and can answer any of your questions.

### **Student consent form**

I understand about the research project and what the information will be used for. I understand my rights as written above. I agree to take part in the research project.

Signature (student)

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature (researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

You can keep one copy of this agreement and I will keep the other one to remind us of what we agreed.

### **Information sheet for parents and guardians**

Dear parent or carer,

My name is Ana Douglas and I am a research student at Exeter University.

Over the next months I will be doing some research in your child's school and I would like to ask your permission to include your child in the project.

#### **What is the research about?**

I would like to find out how it feels to move from special school to mainstream college. Your child is being asked to be part of this study because they are soon going to make this move. There is not yet any research that asks the students themselves about this transition.

#### **How will the research affect my child?**

I will sit in the school classes and watch daily school life. I may take some notes or ask some questions about how your child experiences their school day. If you and your child agree I will talk to your child and their teachers about how they experience school life. I will do the same when they move to college. If you are also happy to take part I would like to talk to you about how your child feels about going to college. Your child may be asked to keep a type of diary if they choose, or to take part in discussions with other students from their school.

**What will happen to the information?**

The information will be used for my PhD project and possibly for publications resulting from this. No real names will be used and no information will be gathered from any student who does not want to be part of the project. I won't name the school or colleges. Information will be locked away and only available to me. Once it is no longer needed the information will be safely destroyed. Even if you and your child agree to be part of the study, you can change your mind later at any stage. You do not have to agree to being part of the project.

If you would like to ask questions about the research please contact me or my supervisor:

Ana Douglas email: (removed) tel: (removed)

Dr Hazel Lawson email: (removed) tel: (removed)

If you are happy to take part in a short interview please sign the consent form.  
Many thanks,

This informed consent form is for parents and guardians of students invited to participate in the research study about transition from school to college.

I understand that I am being asked to take part in an individual interview.

I have read the information sheet explaining this research study.

I understand that:

- participation is voluntary and I, and/or my child am able to withdraw participation at any time.
- any information gathered during the research process will be used for doctoral thesis (which may include resulting publications).
- all information will be anonymised and every effort taken to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.
- interviews may be recorded.

I am happy to take part in an interview for this research.

Signature of parent/guardian of participant

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Information for school and college staff**

My name is Ana Douglas and I am a PhD student at the Graduate School of Education, Exeter University.

Over the next months I will be doing some research in (name removed), so we are likely to meet. I think it is important that you know why I am in your school and what I will be doing.

### **What is the research about?**

I am interested in exploring how transition from special school to mainstream further education college feels for the students. Although there is lots of research into both types of education, when it comes to the transition no-one has asked the most important people, the students themselves. I am interested in issues of identity and self-concept and how the move may effect these. The research is funded by an Economic and Social Research council (ESRC) studentship.

### **How will the research be done?**

I am planning to 'shadow' Year 11 students as they finish their schooling here and as they start their college lives. This type of research is called ethnography and it involves trying to understand the world from the point of view of the students. This may involve talking to others who know them well, but mostly involves observation and informal discussion with the students. I like ethnography because I feel it to be a gentle approach that should hopefully allow me to represent the students own voices and experiences in a way that other research methods would not.

### **How will this effect the school?**

Ideally I would be in a purely observational role, but I know how busy schools are so am happy to be an extra pair of hands when needed. I will take notes so I can remember how the day is structured, how the students react to different situations and how they seem to understand their worlds. However, I am not a teacher myself and I will not be 'assessing' teaching. My aim is to understand how the students view themselves and how the school they are in affects this. Should you wish to, you are welcome to see the notes I make. In addition to observation, students may be asked to keep

a 'diary' in whatever form they wish. They may also be asked to be part of a focus group with their peers from the same school. I may also talk to parents and other family or friends to try to build up an idea of students' wider lives. If you teach Year 11 and are happy to take part, it would be helpful to me if you could sometimes answer questions, or maybe take part in an informal interview. The questions I would ask would be about your understanding of the students' approach to activities or situations and interviews would be pre-arranged at a time to suit you. Although my presence alone will obviously make your working day slightly different, I will try to be as unobtrusive as possible and to arrange any conversations so that they do not affect teaching time. I know that you are all very busy people and do appreciate the chance to sit in on the lessons and watch.

### **What will happen to the research?**

The information I gather will be used for my PhD thesis and possibly for publications resulting from this. No information will be gathered about students who have not given their consent to be part of the project. All participants will be given a pseudonym and where their situation or character are described this will be only in the broadest terms. Neither the school or colleges will be named or described in detail. Every effort will be made to keep information anonymous and data will be securely held and available only to me. It will be safely destroyed once it is no longer needed.

I would be more than happy for you to ask questions or comment on my approach at any time. Although I have experience of working with young people with learning difficulties (in the NHS and in supported employment) as I mentioned, I am not a teacher, so if at any time you feel I have not understood what happens in your school, let me know. If you have comments or questions that you would prefer to address to my supervisors at the university this is also fine.

Please contact us at:

Ana Douglas email: (removed) tel: (removed)

Dr Hazel Lawson email: (removed) tel: (removed)

Professor Brahm Norwich email: (removed)

## 8.4 Appendix 4 – Students, parents and school staff

<u>Students, parents/ carers and class tutors</u>		
<b>Student</b>	<b>Parents'/ carer's name *</b>	<b>Class tutor</b>
Adam		Pete
Aiden	Libby	Pete
Amber	Dawn and Stuart	Ivor
Andy	Erica	Ivor
Anthony	Sonia	Ivor
Cameron		Pete
Chris Hoy	Nancy	Ivor
Dave	Maggie	Pete
Eddie Stobart	Marcus and Felicity	Ivor
Gerrard		Ivor
Ivy	Ellie	Pete
Joey	Catrina	Ivor
John	Nat and Mike	Pete
Ken	Diane	Pete
Lewis	Tracey and Kev	Ivor
Lieb	Julia	Ivor
Michael	Joy	Pete
Scott	Gareth	Pete
Tall Man	Mark	Ivor
Wolverine		Ivor
Zane	Tina	Pete
* Names of parents/ carers interviewed.		

Continued on next page

School staff – names and roles	
School staff names	Role in school
Adrian	Deputy head/ transition
Bethany	Head
Claire	Teacher
Donna	Teacher
Ivor	Year 11 tutor
Joanna	Teaching assistant
Jenny	Teacher
Martin	Pastoral support
Natasha	Teacher
Pamela	Teaching assistant
Pete	Year 11 tutor
Robert	Teaching assistant
Rosalie	Teacher
Ross	Teacher
Sadie	Teaching assistant
Tessa	Teaching assistant
Tricia	Teacher

## 8.5 Appendix 5 – College courses

College courses attended							
Student	College	Course name	Course level	Days per week	Travel distance	Closest college	Other choices available
Adam	Townwood	Vocational studies	Foundation	4	15m	no	Work skills then ICT
Aiden	Ridgewell	Sports and health	Level 1	3	16m	yes	Skills for living
Amber	Townwood	Life skills	Foundation	4	2m	yes	None
Andy	Townwood	Life skills	Foundation	4	2m	yes	None
Anthony	Ridgewell	Life skills	Foundation	5	10m	yes	None
Cameron	Greenbridge	Life skills	Foundation	5	25m	no	None
Chris Hoy	Ponymead	Vocational skills/ horticulture	Foundation	4	25m	no	None
Dave	Townwood	Vocational skills	Foundation	4	15m	no	Agricultural course
Eddie Stobart	Farnton	Life skills/ vocational	Foundation	3	38m	no	None
Gerrard	Ridgewell	Life skills	Foundation	5	7m	yes	None
Ivy	Ponymead	Vocational skills/ childcare	Foundation	4	27m	no	None
Joey	Ponymead	Vocational skills/ animal care	Foundation	4	27m	no	None
John	Townwood	Business studies	Level 1	3	15m	no	Other level 1 courses
Ken	Townwood	Vocational studies	Foundation	4	2m	yes	None
Lewis	Farnton	Life skills/ vocational	Foundation	3	23m	no	None
Lieb	Greenbridge	Life skills	Foundation	5	Residential	no	None
Continued on next page							

<b>Student</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Course name</b>	<b>Course level</b>	<b>Days per week</b>	<b>Travel distance</b>	<b>Closest college</b>	<b>Other choices available</b>
Michael	Townwood	ICT	Level 1	3	23m	no	Other level 1 courses
Scott	Riverlee	Life skills/ vocational	Foundation	--	3m	yes	None
Tall Man	Farmton	Life skills/ vocational	Foundation	3	33m	no	None
Wolverine	Townwood	Life skills	Foundation	4	24m	yes	None
Zane	Townwood	Creative media	Level 1	3	16m	no	Other level 1 courses

## 9 Bibliography

- Abbott, David. (2013) Who Says What, Where, Why and How? Doing Real-World Research with Disabled Children, Young People and Family Members in Curran, Tillie and Runswick-Cole, Katherine (eds) *Disabled Children's Childhood Studies: Critical Approaches in a Global Context* New York: Palgrave MacMillan
- Abbott, David and Heslop, Pauline (2009) Out of sight, out of mind? Transition for young people with learning difficulties in out-of-area residential special schools and colleges *British Journal of Special Education*, 36 (1), 45-54
- Abbott, Suzanne and McConkey, Roy (2006) The barriers to social inclusion as perceived by people with intellectual disabilities *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 10, 275 – 287
- Abrahams, Roger, D. (1986) Ordinary and Extraordinary Experience In Turner, Victor W. and Bruner, Edward M. (eds) *The Anthropology of Experience* Illinois, USA: University of Illinois Press
- Adair, Jennifer Keys (2014) Agency and Expanding Capabilities in Early Grade Classrooms: What It Could mean for Young Children *Harvard Educational Review* 84 (2) 217 - 278
- Ahearn, Laura (2001) Language and Agency *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30, 109 - 137
- Allan, Julie (1999) *Actively seeking inclusion: Pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools* London: Falmer
- Allan, Julie (ed) (2003) *Inclusion, Participation and Democracy: What is the Purpose?* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Allan, Julie (2008) *Rethinking Inclusive Education: the Philosophers of Difference in Practice* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer
- Allan, Julie (2011) Complicating, not explicating: Taking up philosophy in learning disability research *Learning Disability Quarterly* 34 (2) 153 – 161
- Allan, Julie., Brown, Sally., and Riddell, Sheila (1998) Permission to speak? Theorising special education inside the classroom in Clark, Catherine., Dyson, Alan, and Milward, Alan (eds) *Theorising Special Education* London: Routledge
- Allan, Julie and Catts, Ralph (2014) Schools, social capital and space *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44 (2), 217–228
- Allan, Tim., Dalgleish, Karl., Hedland, Kirsten., Latimer, Kathleen., and Thorpe, Laura (2011b) *Foundation Learning National Evaluation* London: Department for Education
- Allen, Louisa (2009) 'Caught in the act': ethics committee review and researching the sexual culture of schools *Qualitative Research* 9 (4) 395 - 410
- Alvesson, Mats and Willmott, Hugh (2002) Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual *Journal of Management Studies* 39 (5) 619 – 644
- Apple, Michael W. (1999) Rhetorical Reforms: Markets, Standards and Inequality *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 1 (2) 6 - 18
- Apple, Michael W. (2010) Whose Markets, Whose Knowledge? in Sadovnik, Alan R. (ed) *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader* New York: Routledge

- Archer, Margaret (1988) *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Argyris, Chris and Schön, Donald A. (1974) *Theory in Practice. Increasing professional effectiveness* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Ashby, Christine (2010) The trouble with normal: the struggle for meaningful access for middle school students with developmental disability labels *Disability and Society* 25 (3) 345 - 358
- Aspis, Simone (1997) Self-advocacy for People with Learning Difficulties: does it have a future? *Disability and Society* 12 (4) 647 - 654
- Aston, Jane., Dewson, Sara., Loukas, George., and Dyson, Alan (2005) *Post-16 Transitions: a Longitudinal Study of Young People with Special Educational Needs (Wave Three)* Institute for Employment Studies
- Atkins, Liz (2008) Travelling hopefully: an exploration of the limited possibilities for Level 1 students in the English further education system *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 13 (2) 195 - 204
- Atkins, Liz (2009) *Invisible Students, Impossible Dreams: experiencing vocational education 14-19* London: Trentham Books Limited
- Baldwin, Neil and Clarke, Malcolm (2015) *Marvellous. Neil Baldwin – My Story* London: John Blake Publishing
- Ball, Stephen., Macrae, Sheila., and Maguire, Meg (1999) Young lives, diverse choices and imagined futures in an education and training market *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 3 (3) 195 – 224
- Banks, Anna (1998) Some People Would Say I Tell Lies in Banks, Anna and Banks, Stephen P. (eds) *Fiction and Social Research. By Ice or Fire* London: AltaMira Press
- Barnes, Colin (1991) *Disabled people in Britain and discrimination. A Case for Anti discrimination Legislation* London: Hurst and Co
- Barnes, Colin (1999) Disability Studies: new or not so new direction? *Disability and Society* 14 (4) 577 – 580
- Baron, Stephen., Riddell, Sheila., and Wilson, Alastair (1999) The Secret of Eternal Youth: Identity, risk and learning difficulties *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20 (4) 483 – 499
- Barton, Len (1993) Labels, markets and inclusive education in Visser, John and Upton, Graham (eds) *Special Education in Britain after Warnock* London: David Fulton
- Bauman, Zygmunt (2004) *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bay-Cheng, Laina Y. (2012) Recovering Empowerment: De-personalizing and Re-politicizing Adolescent Female Sexuality *Sex Roles* 66 (11) 713 – 717
- Bay-Cheng, Laina Y. (2015) The Agency Line: A Neoliberal Metric for Appraising Young Women's Sexuality *Sex Roles* 73, 279 – 291
- Bayliss, Phil and Thoma, Theodisia (2008) Towards a relational ethics in (special) education in Kozłowska, A., Kahn, R., Kozuh, B., Kington, A., Mazgon, J. (eds) (2008) *The role of Theory and Research in Educational Practice* Grand Forks: The College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota.



Beart, Suzie (2005) 'I won't think of meself as a learning disability. But I have': social identity and self-advocacy *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 33, 128 – 131

Beart Suzie., Hardy Gillian., and Buchan Linda (2005) How People with Intellectual Disabilities View Their Social Identity: A Review of the Literature *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability* 18, 47 – 56

Beech, Nic (2011) Liminality and the practices of identity reconstruction *Human Relations* 64 (2) 285 – 302

Beech, Nic., MacIntosh, Robert., and McInnes, Peter (2008) Identity Work: Processes and Dynamics of Identity Formations *International Journal of Public Administration* 31 (9) 957 – 970

Behr, Edward (1985) *Anyone here been raped and speaks English? A Foreign Correspondent's Life Between the Lines* Los Angeles, USA: New English Library

Bell, Currer (1847) *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* London: Smith, Elder and Co

Bell, Nancy (2008) Ethics in child research: rights, reason and responsibilities *Children's Geographies*, 6 (1), 7 – 20

Bell, Nancy and Members of the Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society (2008) Research ethics code of practice: summary version *Children's Geographies*, 6 (1) 95 – 108

Bennett, Alan (2005) *Untold Stories* London: Faber and Faber

BERA (British Educational Research Association) (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A2xnp.5/Bera/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http://free.yudu.com/item/details/2023387/Bera> [12 December 2016]

Beresford, Peter (2011) Are personal budgets necessary empowering for service users? If not, what's it all about? *Research, Policy and Planning* 29 (1) 37 – 43

Bernstein, Richard J. (2002) *Radical Evil. A Philosophical Interrogation* Cambridge: Polity Press

Bevan, Robert (2003) Another way on? A search for an alternative path into learning for people with a learning difficulty or disability *British Journal of Special Education* 30 (2) 100 – 106

Biesta, Gert (2009) Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21, 33 – 46

Biesta, Gert (2010) *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* London: Paradigm

Biesta, Gert (2011) The Ignorant Citizen: Mouffe, Rancière, and the Subject of Democratic Education *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, 141 – 153

Biesta, Gert (2012a) Becoming public: public pedagogy, citizenship and the public sphere *Social and Cultural Geography* 13 (7) 683 – 697

Biesta, Gert (2012b) Becoming world-wise: an educational perspective on the rhetorical curriculum *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44 (6) 815 – 826

Biesta, Gert., Lawy, Robert., and Kelly, Narcie (2009) Understanding young people's citizenship

learning in everyday life. The role of contexts, relationships and dispositions *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 4 (1) 5 – 24

Biesta, Gert and Osberg, Deborah (2008) The emergent curriculum: navigating a complex course between unguided learning and planned enculturation *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40 (3) 313 – 328

Björnsdóttir, Kristín and Traustadóttir, Rannveig (2010) Stuck in the land of disability? The intersection of learning difficulties, class, gender and religion *Disability and Society* 25 (1) 49 – 62

Black, Alison and Lawson, Hazel (2016) Purposes of education for young people with severe learning difficulties: exploring a vocational teaching resource – ‘A stepping stone to...’ what? *Cambridge Journal of Education* 1 – 20

Blommaert, Jan (2015) Dialogues with Ethnography. Notes on classics and how I read them [https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/upload/f8fc43f0-80cd-455b-aedf-b3e1d6720285\\_TPCS\\_138-Blommaert.pdf](https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/upload/f8fc43f0-80cd-455b-aedf-b3e1d6720285_TPCS_138-Blommaert.pdf) [12 December 2016]

Bochner, Arthur (2000) Criteria Against Ourselves *Qualitative Inquiry* 6 (2) 266 - 272

Bochner, Arthur and Ellis, Carolyn (eds) (2016) *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* Oxon: Routledge

Booth, Tim and Booth, Wendy (1994) *Parenting under pressure: Mothers and fathers with learning difficulties* Buckingham: Open University Press

Bott, Esther (2010) Favourites and others: reflexivity and the shaping of subjectivities and data in qualitative research *Qualitative Research* 10, 159 - 183

Braathe, Hans Jørgen and Solomon, Yvette (2015) Choosing mathematics: the narrative of the self as a site of agency *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 89, 151 – 166

Braidotti, Rosi (2001) *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* Cambridge: Polity Press

Brinkmann, Svend. (2012) *Qualitative Inquiry in Everyday Life. Working with Everyday Materials* London: Sage

Brinkmann, Svend (2014) Doing Without Data *Qualitative Inquiry* 20 (6) 720 – 725

Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) The forms of capital in Richardson, John (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* New York: Greenwood

Brown, Jennifer., Dodd, Karen., and Vetere, Arlene (2009) I am a normal man: a narrative analysis of the accounts of older people with Down’s syndrome who lived in institutionalised settings *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 38, 217 – 224

Brown, Lorraine and Watson, Pamela (2010) Understanding the experiences of female doctoral students *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 34 (3) 385 – 404

Brummans, Boris H. J. M. and Vásquez Consuelo (2016) A Two-Step Teaching Strategy for Coping With Textualization Fever in Ethnography *Qualitative Inquiry* 22, 119 – 124

Bryman, Alan (2008) *Social Research Methods* (third edition) New York: Oxford University Press

- Burgess, Robert G. (1991) Sponsors, Gatekeepers, Members, and Friends. Access in Educational Settings in Shaffir, William B., and Stebbins, Robert A. (eds) *Experiencing Fieldwork: an Inside View of Qualitative Research* California and London: Sage Publications
- Burke, Anne., McMillan, Jane., Cummins, Lorraine., Thompson, Agnes., Forsyth, Watson., McLellan, James., Snow, Linda., Fraser, Anne., Fraser, Mary., Fulton, Charity., McCrindle, Elizabeth., Gillies, Lorraine., Lefort, Shelley., Miller, Gail., Whitehall, John., Wilson, John., and Wright, David (2003) Setting up participatory research: a discussion of the initial stages *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32, 65 - 69
- Burman, Erica and Maclure, Maggie (2005) Deconstruction as a Method of Research in Somekh, Bridget and Lewin, Cathy (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* London: Sage
- Burton, Diana (2015) Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools in England *Educational futures* 7 (1) 76 – 91
- Burton Mark (1990) *Caught in the Competence Trap: A Review of Provision for Adults with Moderate Learning Disabilities* North Western Regional Health Authority: Advisory Group for Learning Disability Service, Manchester
- Burton, Mark and Kagan, Carolyn (2006) Decoding valuing people *Disability and Society* 21, 299 – 313
- Butler, Judith (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press
- Butler, Judith (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* New York: Routledge
- Bühler-Niederberger, Doris (2011) *Lebensphase Kindheit. Theoretische Ansätze, Akteure und Handlungsräume [Early Childhood. Theoretical Approaches, Actors and their Agency]* Weinheim: Juventa
- Bühler-Niederberger, Doris and Schwittek, Jessica (2014) Young children in Kyrgyzstan: Agency in tight hierarchical structures *Childhood* 21 (4) 502 – 516
- Calkins, Karl F., Beckmann, Cynthia., Gotto, George., Jackson, Laura., McCarthy, Krystle., Peterson, Jana., Heller, Tamar., Collins, Sheila (2012) *Advising through self-determination – an information guide for advisors* University of Missouri, Kansas: National Gateway to Self-Determination
- Callero, Peter (2003) *The Political Self: Identity Resources for Radical Democracy* in Burke, Peter J., Owens, Timothy J., Serpe, Richard and Thoits, Peggy A. *Advances in Identity Theory and Research* New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum
- Callero, Peter (2014) Self, Identity, and Social Inequality in McLeod, Jane D., Lawler, Edward J., and Schwalbe, Michael (eds) *Handbook of the Social Psychology of Inequality* London: Springer
- Campbell, Colin (2009) Distinguishing the Power of Agency from Agentic Power: A Note on Weber and the “Black Box” of Personal Agency *Sociological Theory* 27 (4) 407 - 418
- Campbell, Kumari Fiona A. (2008) Exploring internalized ableism using critical race theory *Disability and Society* 23 (2) 151 – 162
- Campbell, Kumari Fiona (2012) Stalking Ableism: Using Disability to Expose ‘Able’ Narcissism in Goodley, Dan., Hughes, Bill., and Davis, Lennard (eds) *Disability and Social Theory* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

- Cantle, Ted (2008) *Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race and Diversity* New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- CQC (Care Quality Commission) (2011) *Review of compliance CQC*  
[http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1-116865865\\_castlebeck\\_care\\_teesdale\\_ltd\\_1-138702193\\_winterbourne\\_view\\_roc\\_20110517\\_201107183026.pdf](http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1-116865865_castlebeck_care_teesdale_ltd_1-138702193_winterbourne_view_roc_20110517_201107183026.pdf) [12 December 2016]
- Carpenter, Barry and Morgan, Hazel (2002) *Count Us In: The report of the committee of inquiry into meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning disabilities* London: Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities
- Carter, Erik, W., Boehm, Thomas, L., Biggs, Elizabeth, E., Annandale, Naomi, H., Taylor, Courtney, E., Look, Aimee, K., and Liu, Rosemary, Y. (2015) Known for My Strengths: Positive Traits of Transition-Age Youth With Intellectual Disability and/or Autism *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 40 (2) 101 – 119
- Carter, Susan (2014) The methodology of magpies *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 37 (2) 125 - 136
- Carter, Susan., Blumenstein, Marion., and Cook, Catherine (2013) Different for women? The challenges of doctoral studies *Teaching in Higher Education* 18 (4) 339 – 351
- Cast, Alicia, D., and Burke, Peter, J. (2002) A Theory of Self-Esteem *Social Forces* 80 (3) 1041 – 1068
- Caton, Sue, and Kagan, Carolyn (2006) Tracking Post-school Destinations of Young People with Mild Intellectual Disabilities: The Problem of Attrition *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 19, 143 – 152
- Caton, Sue and Kagan, Carolyn (2007) Comparing transition expectations of young people with moderate learning disabilities with other vulnerable youth and with their non-disabled counterparts *Disability and Society* 22 (5) 473 – 488
- Chadderton, Charlotte (2012) Problematising the role of the white researcher in social justice research *Ethnography and Education* 7 (3) 363 – 380
- Charmaz, Kathy (2006) *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* London: Sage
- Christiansen, Pia and Prout, Alison (2002) Working with ethical symmetry in social research with children *Childhood* 9 (4) 477 – 97
- Claire, Hilary (2001) (ed) *Teaching Citizenship in Primary Schools* Exeter: Learning Matters
- Clark, Alex and Hirst, Michael (1989) Disability in adulthood: ten year follow up of young people with disabilities *Disability, Handicap, and Society* 4, 271 – 283
- Clarke, Adele (2009) Getting Lost and Found and Lost and Found and Lost Again with Patti Lather *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30 (1) 212 – 221
- Clegg, Jennifer (2004) Practice in focus: A hermeneutic approach to research ethics *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32, 186 – 190
- Clegg, Sue (2005) Evidence-based practice in educational research: a critical realist critique of systematic review *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 26 (3) 415 – 428

- Clements, John., Hardy, Julia and Lord, Stephanie (2010) *Transition or Transformation? Helping young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders set out on a hopeful road towards their adult lives* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Clifford, James (1983) On Ethnographic Authority *Representations* 2, 118 - 146
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto (1992) *The End(s) of Ethnography* London: Sage
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto (2009) The New Empiricism. Affect and Sociological Method *European Journal of Social Theory* 12 (1) 43-61
- Clough, Peter (2002) *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research* Berkshire: Open University Press
- Coffey, Amanda and Atkinson, Paul (1996) *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies* London: Sage
- Coffey, Julia and Farrugia, David (2014) Unpacking the Black Box: The Problem of Agency in the Sociology of Youth *Journal of Youth Studies* 17, 461 – 474
- Cohen, Jennifer L. (2008): ‘That’s not treating you as a professional’: teachers constructing complex professional identities through talk *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 14 (2) 79 - 93
- Coleman, James S. (1988) Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital *The American Journal of Sociology* 94 Supplement S95 – S120
- Colley, Helen (2003) *Mentoring for Social Inclusion: A Critical Approach to Nurturing Mentor Relationships* London: RoutledgeFalmer
- Collinson, David L. (2003) Identities and Insecurities. Selves at Work *Organization* 10 (3) 527 – 547
- Connor, David, J., and Linder Berman, Diane (2016) A Mother’s Knowledge: The Value of Narrating Dis/Ability in Education *European Scientific Journal* 1857 - 7431
- Corker, Marian (1998) Disability Discourse in a Postmodern World in Shakespeare, Tom (ed) *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives* London: Continuum
- Corker, Marian & French, Sally (1999) Reclaiming discourse in disability studies in Corker, Marion and French, Sally (eds) *Disability Discourse* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Coutinho, Martha J., and Oswald, Donald P. (2005) State variation in gender disproportionality in special education: Findings and recommendations *Remedial and Special Education* 26 (1) 7 - 15
- Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140, 139 - 167
- Cruz, Cindy (2011) LGBTQ street youth talk back: a meditation on resistance and witnessing *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 24 (5) 547 - 558
- CSIE (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education) *inclusive education and international human rights instruments*  
<http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/human-rights.shtml> [12 December 2016]
- Cullen, Mairi Ann; Lindsay Geoff and Dockrell, Julie E. (2009) The role of the Connexions service in supporting the transition from school to post-16 education, employment training and work for young

- people with a history of specific speech and language difficulties or learning difficulties *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 9 (2) 100 - 112
- Cumming, Tamara (2015) Challenges of 'thinking differently' with rhizoanalytic approaches: a reflexive account *International Journal of Research and Method in education* 38 (2) 137 – 148
- Cummins, Robert A., and Lau, Anna L. D. (2003) Community integration or community exposure? A review and discussion in relation to people with an intellectual disability *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 16, 145 - 157
- Czarniawska, Barbara (1997) *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Das, Raju J. (2004) Social capital and poverty of the wage-labour class: problems with the social capital theory *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29 (1) 27 - 45
- David, Miriam., Edwards, Rosalind., and Alldred, Pam (2001) Children and School-based Research: 'informed consent' or 'educated consent'? *British Educational Research Journal* 27 (3) 347 – 365
- Davies, Bronwen., Browne, Jenny., Gannon, Suzanne., Honan, Eileen., Laws, Cath., Mueller-Rockstroh, Babette, and Bendix Petersen, Eva (2004) The Ambivalent Practices of Reflexivity *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (3) 360 – 89
- Davies, Charlotte Aull and Jenkins, Richard (1997) 'She Has Different Fits to Me': How people with learning difficulties see themselves *Disability and Society* 12 (1) 95 - 110
- Davis, John and Watson, Nick (2002) Countering stereotypes of disability: disabled children and resistance in Corker, Marion and Shakespeare, Tom (eds) *Disability/postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory* London: Continuum
- Daymon, Christine and Holloway, Immy (2002) *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications* London: Routledge
- Dee, Lesley (2006) *Improving Transition Planning for Young People with Special Educational Needs* Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press
- Dee, Lesley and Corbett, Jenny (1994) Individual rights in further education: Lost, stolen or strayed? *British Educational Research Journal* 20 (3) 319 – 325
- Deech, Baroness (2016) *Commenting on The Equality Act 2010: the impact on disabled people* <http://www.independentliving.co.uk/government-failing-disabled-people/> [13 December 2016]
- Delamont, Sara (2003) *Feminist Sociology* London: Sage
- DeMaree, Kenneth, G., Petty, Richard, E., and Strunk, Daniel, R. (2010) Self-Esteem Accessibility as Attitude Strength: On the Durability and Impactfulness of Accessible Self-Esteem *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 628 - 641
- Denzin, Norman K. (1994) The Politics of Evidence in Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvanna S. (eds) *Handbook of qualitative research* Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage
- Dewey, John (1897) My pedagogic creed *The School Journal* 54 (3) 77 - 80
- Dewey, John (1916) *Democracy and Education* New York: Macmillan
- De Winter, Micha (1997) *Children as Fellow Citizens: participation and commitment* Abingdon: Oxford Medical Press

- DfE (Department for Education) (2011) *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*  
<http://webarhive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingdownload/green-paper-sen.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- DfE (Department for Education) (2014) Children and Families Act 2014  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted> [13 December 2016]
- DfE (Department for Education) (2016) *Special educational needs in England: January 2016*  
 London: Department for Education
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (1997) *Excellence for all children: Meeting Special Educational Needs* London: DfEE Publications
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2000a) *Connexions: The Best Start in Life for Every Young Person* London: DfEE Publications
- DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2000b) Learning and Skills Act  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/21/contents> [13 December 2016]
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2001) *Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice*  
 London: DfES <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES%200581%20200MIG2228.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2003a) Every Child Matters. London: The Stationery Office
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2003b) *Data collection by type of special educational needs* London: DfES.
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2005a) *Data Collection by Type of Special Educational Need* London: DfES
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2005b) Education and Skills white paper (2005)  
 Norwich: HMSO <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2005-white-paper-14-19-education-and-skills.pdf> [13 December 2016]
- DfES (2008) *Education and Skills Act 2008* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents> [13 December 2016]
- DoH (Department of Health) (2001) *Valuing People: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st Century* London: The Stationery Office
- DoH/ DfE (Department of Health/ Department for Education) (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years* London: Department for Education
- Doloriert, Clair and Sambrook, Sally (2009) Ethical confessions of the 'I' of autoethnography: a student's dilemma *Journal of Qualitative Research in Organization and Management: An International Journal* 1(1) 27 - 45
- Done, Elizabeth J. and Knowler, Helen (2011) (Re)writing reflective practice with Deleuze, Guattari and feminist poststructuralism *Reflective Practice* 12 (6) 841 – 852
- Doney, Jonathan (2015) 'That Would Be An Ecumenical Matter'. Contextualizing the Adoption of the Study of World Religions in English Religious Education Using 'Statement Archaeology', a Systematic

- Operationalization of Foucault's Historical Method' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Exeter)
- Douglas, Ana (2013) Still Me, But More So: Changing Subjectivity through the Research Process in Lee, Elsa., Blackmore, Chloe., and Seal, Emma (eds) *Research Journeys: a Collection of Narratives of the Doctoral Experience* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
- Dove, Adrian (1971) *The Chitling Test*  
[http://psychotron.org.uk/resources/issues/A2\\_AQA\\_issues\\_chitlingtest.pdf](http://psychotron.org.uk/resources/issues/A2_AQA_issues_chitlingtest.pdf)  
 [12 December 2016]
- Duits, Linda and Van Zoonen, Liesbet (2007) Who's afraid of Female Agency? A Rejoinder to Gill  
*European Journal of Women's Studies* 14 (2) 161 - 170
- Dyson, Alan (2002) Special needs, disability and social inclusion - the end of a beautiful friendship? in Norwich, Brahm (ed) *Disability, disadvantage, inclusion and social inclusion* Tamworth: NASEN
- Ellis, Carolyn (1999) "Heartful autoethnography" *Qualitative Health Research* 9 (5) 669 - 683
- Ellis, Carolyn (2004) *The Ethnographic I: a Methodological novel about Autoethnography* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press
- Ellis, Carolyn (2009) *Revision: Autoethnographic Reflections on Life and Work (Writing Lives: Ethnographic Narratives)* London: Routledge
- Ellis, Carolyn and Bochner, Arthur P. (1996) *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press
- Ellis, Carolyn and Bochner, Arthur P. (2000) Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvanna S. (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Ellis, Carolyn S. and Bochner, Arthur P. (2006) Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography An Autopsy  
*Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35 (4) 429 - 449
- Emerson, Robert M., Fretz, Rachel I., and Shaw, Linda L. (2001) Participant Observation and Fieldnotes in Atkinson, Paul., Coffey, Amanda., Delamont, Sara., Lofland, John and Lofland, Lyn (eds) *Handbook of Ethnography* London: Sage
- Emerson, Eric and Hatton, Chris (2008) *People with Learning Disabilities in England* Centre for Disability Research Lancaster: Lancaster University
- Emirbayer, Mustafa and Mische, Ann (1998) What is Agency? *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (4) 962 - 1023
- Emond, Ruth (2005) Ethnographic research methods with children and young people in Greene, Shiela and Hogan, Diane (eds) *Researching Children's Experiences: Approaches and Methods* London: Sage Publications
- Erikson, Erik (1959) *Identity and the Life Cycle: selected papers* New York: International Universities Press
- ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) (2015) *ESRC Framework for research ethics*  
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/>  
 [112 December 2016]



- Eteläpelto, Anneli., Vähäsantanen, Katja., Hökkä, Päivi and Paloniemi, Susanna (2013) What is agency? Conceptualizing professional agency at work *Educational Research Review* 10, 45 – 65
- Etherington, Kim (2004) *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher Using Our Selves in Research* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Evans, Jennifer and Lunt, Ingrid (2002) Inclusive education: are there limits? *European Journal of special Education* 17 (1) 1 - 14
- Evans, Karen (2007) Concepts of bounded agency in education, work, and the personal lives of young adults *International Journal of Psychology* 42 (2) 85 - 93
- Evers, Jeanine C. and van Staa, AnneLoes (2010) Qualitative Analysis in Case Study in Mills, Albert J., Durepos, Gabrielle., and Wiebe, Elden (eds) *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Farrell, Michael (2006) *The Effective Teacher's Guide to Moderate, Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties: Practical Strategies* London: Routledge
- Fendler, Lynn (2006) Why Generalisability is not Generalisable *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40 (4) 437 - 449
- Fendler, Lynn (2010) *Michel Foucault* London: Bloomsbury Academic
- Fergusson, Ann and Lawson, Hazel (2003) *Access to Citizenship Curriculum planning and practical activities for pupils with learning difficulties* London: David Fulton Publishers
- Finkelstein, Victor (1980) *Attitudes and Disabled People: Issues for Discussion* New York: World Rehabilitation Fund
- Finkelstein, Victor (1981) To deny or not to deny disability in Brechin, Ann (ed) *Handicap in a Social World* Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton
- Fiske, John (1991) Writing ethnographies: Contribution to a dialogue *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (3) 330 - 335
- Fletcher-Campbell, Felicity (2005) Moderate learning difficulties in Lewis, Anne and Norwich, Brahm (eds) *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for inclusion* Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* New York: Vintage Books
- Foucault, Michel (1978) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will To Knowledge* New York: Vintage Books
- Foucault, Michel (1982) The Subject and Power in Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Rabinow, Paul (eds) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* Oxon: Routledge
- Foucault, Michel (1984) On the Genealogy of Ethics: An overview of work in progress in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *The Foucault Reader* New York: Pantheon
- Foucault, Michel (1986) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self* New York: Vintage
- Foucault, Michel (1988) Technologies of the Self in Martin, Luther H., Gutman, Huck., and Hutton, Patrick H.(eds) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* London: Tavistock
- Foucault, Michel (1989) *The Birth of the Clinic* London: Routledge

- Foucault, Michel (1991) *Space, Knowledge, and Power* in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought* London: Penguin Books
- Foucault, Michel (1992) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* London: Penguin
- Foucault, Michel (1994a) *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984 Volume 1* Rabinow, Paul (ed) New York: The New Press
- Foucault, Michel (1994b) A Preface to Transgression in Faubion, James D. (ed) *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 volume 2* London: Penguin
- Foucault, Michel (2000a) The ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of freedom in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *Ethics subjectivity and Truth The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954 – 1984* London: Penguin Books
- Foucault, Michel (2000b) Foucault in Faubion, James D. (ed) *Michel Foucault, Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984* New York: The New Press
- Foucault, Michel (2002) The Subject and Power in Faubion, James D. (ed) *Michel Foucault, Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984 Volume 3* London: Penguin
- Foucault, Michel (2011) *The Courage of the Truth (The Government of Self and Others II) Lectures at the Collège de France 1983 – 1984* Gros, Frédéric (ed) translated by Graham Burchell Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Fox, Alison and Allan, Julie (2013) Doing reflexivity: moments of unbecoming and becoming *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 37 (1) 101 - 112
- Francis, Becky (2002) Relativism, Realism, and Feminism: An analysis of some theoretical tensions in research on gender identity *Journal of Gender Studies* 11 (1) 39 - 54
- Franklin, Suzie and Sanderson, Helen (2014) (eds) *Personalisation in Practice: Supporting Young People with Disabilities through the Transition to Adulthood* London: Jessica Kingsley
- Fujiura Glen T. (2002) Continuum of Intellectual Disability: Demographic Evidence for the “Forgotten Generation” *Mental Retardation* 41, 420 – 429
- Fukuyama, Francis (1995) *Trust: the social virtues and the creation of prosperity* London: Hamish Gardens
- Gale, Patrick (2007) *Notes From An Exhibition* London: HarperCollins
- Gale, Patrick (2008) *Meet the author* Exeter Central Library
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie (2001) *Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies Center for Women Policy Studies* <http://www.centerwomenpolicy.org/pdfs/DIS2.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- Geertz, Clifford (1988) *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author* Stanford, CA:Stanford University Press
- Geertz, Clifford (2000) *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture* in Geertz, Clifford (ed) *The Interpretation of Cultures* New York: Basic Books
- Gibbs, Graham (2007) *Analyzing Qualitative Data (Qualitative Research Kit)* London: Sage

- Giddens, Anthony (1984) *The Structuration of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* Cambridge: Polity Press
- Gifford, Clive and Knott, Fiona (2016) The effect of diagnostic label on care staff's perceptions of cause of challenging behaviour in individuals with learning disabilities *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* [online] Available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bld.12171/pdf> [14 October 2016]
- Gilchrist, Alison., Bowles, Mel., and Wetherell, Margaret (2010) *Identities and Social Action: Connecting Communities for a Change* Swindon: ESRC
- Gillborn, David and Youdell, Deborah (2000) *Rationing Education: policy, practice, reform and equity* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Gillman Maureen., Heyman, Bob., and Swain, John (2000) What's in a name? The implications of diagnosis for people with learning difficulties and their family carers *Disability and Society* 15, 389 – 409
- Glasby, Jon and Littlechild, Rosemary (2016) *Direct Payments and personal budgets. Putting personalisation into practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) Bristol: Policy Press
- Glassman, Michael and Patton, Rikki (2014) Capability Through Participatory Democracy: Sen, Freire, and Dewey *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 46 (12) 1353 - 1365
- Gobo, Giampietro (2008) *Doing Ethnography* London: Sage
- Goffman, Erving (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* New York: Anchor Books
- Goffman, Erving (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* New York: Simon and Schuster
- Goodley, Dan (2000) *Self-advocacy in lives of people with learning difficulties: The politics of resilience* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press
- Goodley, Dan (2001) 'Learning Difficulties', the Social Model of Disability and Impairment: Challenging epistemologies *Disability and Society* 16 (2) 207 - 231
- Goodley, Dan (2011) *Disability Studies. An Interdisciplinary Introduction* London: Sage
- Goodley, Dan (2014) *Dis/ability studies. Theorising disablism and ableism* Oxon: Routledge
- Goodley, Dan and Lawthom, Rebecca (2005) Epistemological journeys in participatory action research: alliances between community psychology and disability studies *Disability and Society* 20 (2) 135 - 151
- Goodley, Dan and Lawthom, Rebecca (2008) In defence of disability studies: a response to Forshaw (2007) 'In defence of psychology: a reply to Goodley and Lawthom (2005)' *Disability and Society* 23 (2) 191 – 192
- Goodley, Dan., Lawthom, Rebecca., and Runswick-Cole, Katherine (2014) Dis/ability and austerity: beyond work and slow death *Disability and Society* 29 (6) 980 - 984
- Goodley, Dan and Rapley, Mark (2002) Changing the Subject: postmodernity and people with learning difficulties in Corker, Marian and Shakespeare, Tom (eds) *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory* London: Continuum

- Gordon, Tuula., Holland, Janet., Lahelma, Elina., and Thomson, Rachel (2008) Young female citizens in education: emotions, resources and agency *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 16 (2) 177 - 191
- Gottschalk, Simon (1998) Postmodern Sensibilities and Ethnographic Possibilities in Banks, Anna and Banks, Stephen P. (eds) *Fiction and Social Research* London: AltaMira Press
- Gough, David (2007) Weight of evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence in Furlong, John and Oancea, Alis (eds) Applied and Practice-based Research. Special Edition of *Research Papers in Education* 22 (2) 213 – 228
- Gray, David E. (2004) *Doing research in the real world* London: Sage
- Gray, Hilary (2007) Diversity, inclusion and education: the educational needs of children from severely disadvantaged socio-cultural groups in Europe in Verma, Gajendra, K., Bagley, Christopher, R., and Jha, Madan Mohan (eds) *International Perspectives on Educational diversity and Inclusion: Studies from America, Europe and India* Oxon: Routledge
- Grbich, Carol (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* London: Sage
- Greene, Jennifer C. (2013) On rhizomes, lines of flight, mangles, and other assemblages *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26 (6) 749 – 758
- Griffiths, Morwenna (1993) Self-Identity and Self-Esteem: Achieving Equality in Education *Oxford Review of Education* 19 (3) 301 – 317
- Griffiths, Morwenna (1995) *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity* London: Routledge.
- Griffiths, Morwenna (1998) *Being naughty: a play for justice?* Inaugural lecture, Nottingham Trent University [www.morwennagriffiths.eu/Philosophy.htm](http://www.morwennagriffiths.eu/Philosophy.htm) [12 December 2016]]
- Grootaert, Christiaan, and van Bastelaer, Thierry (2001) *Understanding and Measuring Social Capital: A Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations from the Social Capital Initiative* Washington, DC: The World Bank <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOCIALCAPITAL/Resources/Social-Capital-Initiative-Working-Paper-Series/SCI-WPS-24.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- Guillemin, Marilys and Gillam, Lynn (2004) Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in *Research Qualitative Inquiry* 10, 261 - 280
- Hague, Gill., Thiara, Ravi K., and Mullender, Audrey (2011) Disabled Women, Domestic Violence and Social Care: The Risk of Isolation, Vulnerability and Neglect *British Journal of Social Work* 4 (1) 148 - 165
- Hall, Edward (2005). The entangled geographies of social exclusion/inclusion for people with learning disabilities *Health and Place* 11, 107 – 115
- Hall, Stuart (1996) Who Needs Identity? in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity* London: Sage Publications
- Hall, Stuart (1997) (ed) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* London: Sage Publications
- Hammersley, Martyn (2007) The issue of quality in qualitative research *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 30 (3) 287 – 305
- Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* London: Routledge

- Hammersley, Martyn and Traianou, Anna (2014) Foucault and Research Ethics: On the Autonomy of the Researcher *Qualitative Inquiry* 20 (3) 227 – 238
- Hanham, Derry (2003) Participation and responsible action for all students – the crucial ingredient for success *Teaching Citizenship* 5
- Harmeling, Susan S. (2011) Re-storying an entrepreneurial identity: education, experience and self-narrative *Education and Training* 53 (8/9) 741 - 749
- Hatton, Nicola (2009) The labeling effect: drama, mental health and learning disability *Research In Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 14 (1) 91 - 95.
- Haynes, Kathryn (2011) Tensions in (re)presenting the self in reflexive autoethnographical research *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 6 (2) 134 - 149
- Heath, Sue., Charles, Vikki., Crow, Graham., and Wiles, Rose (2007) Informed consent, gatekeepers and go-betweens: negotiating consent in child- and youth-orientated institutions *British Educational Research Journal* 33 (3) 403–417
- Hehir, Thomas (2002) Eliminating Ableism in Education *Harvard Educational Review* 72 (1) 1 – 32
- Hemmings, Colin., and Bouras, Nick (2016) (eds) *Psychiatric and Behavioural Disorders in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hernandez-Martinez, Paul., Williams, Julian., Black, Laura., Davis, Pauline., Pampaka, Maria., and Wake, Geoff (2011) Students' views on their transition from school to college mathematics: rethinking 'transition' as an issue of identity *Research in Mathematics Education* 13 (2) 119 - 130
- Heslop Pauline and Abbott David (2007) School's out: pathways for young people with intellectual disabilities from out-of-area residential schools or colleges *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 51, 489 – 96
- Heslop, Pauline., Abbott, David., Johnson L., and Mallett, R. (2002) Bridging the Divide at Transition. What happens for young people with learning difficulties and their families? Bristol: Norah Fry Research Centre
- Heylighen, Francis., Cilliers, Paul., and Gershenson, Carlos (2007) Complexity and Philosophy in Bogg, Jan and Geyer, Robert (eds) *Complexity, Science and Society* Oxford: Radcliffe Publishers
- Hickey-Moody, Anna (2015) Carbon fibre masculinity *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 20 (1) 139 - 153
- Hickey-Moody, Anna., Savage, Glenn C., and Windle, Joel (2010) Pedagogy writ large: public, popular and cultural pedagogies in motion *Critical Studies in Education* 51 (3) 227 - 236
- Hill, Malcolm (2005) Ethical Considerations in Researching Children's Experiences in Greene, Sheila and Hogan, Diane (eds) *Researching children's experience: Approaches and Methods* London: Sage
- Hjörne, Eva and Saljö, Roger (2004) There is something about Julia: Symptoms, categories and the process of invoking ADHD in the Swedish school: A case study *Journal of Language Identity and Education* 3 (1) 1 – 24
- HMSO (Her Majesty's Stationery Office) (1981) *Education Act 1981* London: HMSO
- HMSO (Her Majesty's Stationery Office) (1993) *Education Act 1993* London: HMSO

- Hodgson, Ann (ed) (2015) *The Coming of Age for FE? Reflections on the past and future role of further education colleges in England* London: Institute of Education Press
- Holbrook, Teri and Pourchier, Nicole M. (2014) Collage as Analysis: Remixing in the Crisis of Doubt *Qualitative Inquiry* 20 (6) 754 – 763
- Holland, Dorothy., Skinner, Debra., Lachicotte, William Jr., and Cain, Carol (1998) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* USA: Harvard University Press
- Holliday, Adrian (2007) *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research* (Second edition) London:Sage
- Hopkins, Peter (2008) Ethical issues in research with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children *Children's Geographies* 6 (1) 37 – 48
- Horne, Sharon and Zimmer-Gembeck, Melanie J. (2005) Female Sexual Subjectivity and Well-Being: Comparing Late Adolescents With Different Sexual Experiences *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 2 (3) 25 - 40
- Horton, John (2008) A 'sense of failure'? Everydayness and research ethics *Children's Geographies* 6 (4) 363 – 383
- HSCIC (Health and Social Care Information Centre) (2015) *Learning Disability Census Report* <http://content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB19428/ld-census-initial-sep.15-rep.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- Hudson, Bob (2006) Making and missing connections: learning disability services and the transition from adolescence to adulthood *Disability and Society* 21 (1) 47 - 60
- Huf, Christina (2013) Children's agency during transition to formal schooling *Ethnography and Education* 8 (1) 61 - 76
- Hunt, Matthew O. (2003) Identities and Inequalities. Exploring Links Between Self and Stratification Processes in Burke, Peter J., Owens, Timothy J., Serpe, Richard and Thoits, Peggy A. *Advances in Identity Theory and Research* New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers
- Ibarra, Herminia, and Petriglieri, Jennifer L. (2010) Identity work and play *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 23 (1) 10 - 25
- Iganski, Paul (2008) *'Hate Crime' and the City* Bristol: The Policy Press
- Jackson, Alecia Y. and Mazzei, Lisa A. (2012) *Thinking with Theory in qualitative Research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives* London: Routledge
- Jahnukainen, Markku (2001) Two models for preventing students with special needs from dropping out of education in Finland *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 16 (3) 245 - 258
- Johnston, Craig E. (2011) 'The other side of the bridge: a study of social capital in further education provision for young disabled people' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brunel University) <http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/5190> [12 December 2016]
- Johnstone, David (1995) *Further Opportunities: learning difficulties and disabilities in further education* London: Cassell
- Juel Jacobsen, Alice (2014) Vignettes of interviews to enhance an ethnographic account *Ethnography and Education* 9 (1) 35 - 50

- Kaehne, Axel and Beyer, Stephen (2009) Views of professionals on aims and outcomes of transition for young people with learning disabilities *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 37, 138 – 144
- Kelly, Berni (2005) ‘Chocolate ... makes you autism’: impairment, disability and childhood identities *Disability and Society* 20 (3) 261 – 275
- Kennedy, Helena (1997) Learning Works Widening Participation in Further Education Coventry: Further Education Funding Council
- Kerr, David (2000) An international comparison in Lawton, Denis., Cairns, Jo., and Gardner, Roy *Education for Citizenship* London: Continuum
- Kiernan, Chris (1999) Participation in Research by People with Learning Disability: Origins and Issues *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 27, 43 - 47
- King, Elizabeth (2013) *Can Development Interventions Help Post-conflict Communities Build Social Cohesion? The Case of the Liberia Millennium Villages. CIGI-AI Discussion Paper No. 9. Africa Initiative Discussion Paper Series* Africa Initiative and The Centre for International Governance Innovation <http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/can-development-interventions-help-post-conflict-communities-build-social-cohesion-the-case-of-the-liberia-millennium-villages/> [12 December 2016]
- Kipling, Rudyard (2007) *A Collection of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories* London: Walker Books
- Kofoed, Jette and Ringrose, Jessica (2012) Travelling and sticky affects: Exploring teens and sexualized cyberbullying through a Butlerian-Deleuzian-Guattarian lens *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 33 (1) 5 – 20
- Kunitz, Stanley (2002) "The Layers" from *The Collected Poems of Stanley Kunitz* New York: W. W. Norton and Company
- Langsdorf, Lenore (2009) “Engaging the Real is Not What it Used to Be” On Patti Lather's *Getting Lost* on the Way to “a Less Comfortable Social Science”, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30 (1) 197 - 203
- Lather, Patti (1996) Troubling clarity: the politics of accessible language *Harvard Educational Review* 66 (3) 525 – 545
- Lather, Patti (1999) Naked Methodology: Researching the Lives of Women with HIV/AIDS in Clarke, Adele E., and Olesen, Virginia L. (eds) *Revisioning Women, Health and Healing* New York: Routledge
- Lather, Patti (2006) Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: teaching research in education as a wild profusion *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19 (1) 35 - 57
- Lather, Patti (2007) *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts Toward a Double(d) Science* Albany: State University of New York Press
- Lather, Patti and St. Pierre, Elizabeth (2013) Post-qualitative research *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26 (6) 629 - 633
- Lawson, Hazel (2010) Beyond tokenism? Participation and ‘voice’ for pupils with significant learning difficulties in Rose, Richard (ed) *Confronting Obstacles to Inclusion – International Responses to Developing Inclusive Schools* London: Routledge
- Lawson, Hazel and Black, Alison (2013) The Greenside Studio: A classroom in the community. Research Project Report

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/staffprofiles/Greensideproject.pdf> [13 December 2016]

Lawson, Hazel., Waite, Sue., and Robertson, Christopher (2005) Distinctiveness of curriculum provision at 14 to 16 for students with learning difficulties: opportunities and challenge *British Journal of Special Education* 32 (1) 12 – 20

Lawy, Robert (2003) Transformation of Person, Identity and Understanding: a case study *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24 (3) 331 – 345

Lawy, Robert and Biesta, Gert (2006) Citizenship-as-Practice: The Educational Implications of an Inclusive and Relational Understanding of Citizenship *British Journal of Educational Studies* 54 (1) 34 – 50

Leece, Janet and Bornat, Joanna (2006) (eds) *Developments in Direct Payments* Bristol: Policy Press

Leitch, Sandy (2006) *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills, Final Report* Norwich: HMSO

Leonard, Rosemary and Onyx, Jenny (2004) *Social Capital and Community Building: Spinning Straw into Gold* London: Janus Publishing Company

Lewis, Ann and Porter, Jill (2004) Interviewing children and young people with learning disabilities: guidelines for researchers and multi-professional practice *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32, 191 – 197

Lincoln, Yvanna S. (1995) Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research *Qualitative Inquiry* September 1995 1 (3) 275 - 289

Lorde, Audre (1984) *Sister Outsider* California: Crossing Press

Lugones, Maria (1989) Playfulness, "World"-Traveling, And Loving Perception' in Garry, Ann and Pearsall, Marilyn (eds) *Women, Knowledge and Reality* London: Routledge

MacAllister, James (2016) What should Educational Institutions be for? *British Journal of Educational Studies* 64 (3) 375 – 391

MacLure, Maggie (2006) The bone in the throat: some uncertain thoughts on baroque method *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19 (6) 729 – 745

MacLure, Maggie (2010a) *Qualitative inquiry: where are the ruins?* Keynote presentation to the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, University of Auckland, 6-9 December 2010 <http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/respapers/nzareRuins.pdf> [12 December 2016]

MacLure, Maggie (2010b) The offence of theory *Journal of Education Policy* 25 (2) 277-286

Major, Brenda and O'Brien, Laurie T. (2005) The Social Psychology of Stigma *Annual Review of Psychology* 56 (1) 393 - 421

Mallett, Oliver and Wapshott, Robert (2012) Mediating ambiguity: narrative identity and knowledge workers *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28 (1) 16 – 26

Malone, Susan (2003) Ethics at home: informed consent in your own backyard *Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (6) 797 – 815



- Marcia, James, E. (1966) Development and validation of ego-identity status *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (5) 551 – 558
- Marcia, James, E. (1980) Identity in adolescence *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* 9 (11) 159 - 187
- Marcussen, Kristen (2006) Identities, Self-Esteem, and Psychological Distress: An Application of Identity-Discrepancy Theory *Sociological Perspectives* 49 (1) 1 - 24
- Markham, Annette (2012) Fabrication as ethical practice *Information, Communication and Society* 15, 334 - 353
- Marks, Deborah (1999) *Disability: Controversial Debates and Psychosocial Perspectives* London: Routledge
- Martin, Kerry., Hart, Ruth., White, Richard., and Sharp, Caroline (2011) *Young People with Special Educational Needs/Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Research into Planning for Adult Life and Services* (LG Group Research Report) Slough: NFER
- Martin, Priscilla (1992) Chaucer and Feminism: A Magpie View in Dor, Juliette (ed) *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck* Liege: University of Liege Press
- Martin, Sandra L., Ray, Neepa., Sotres-Alvarez, Daniela., Kupper, Lawrence L., Moracco, Kathryn E., Dickens, Pamela A., Scandlin, Donna., Gizlice, Ziya (2006) Physical and Sexual Assault of Women with Disabilities *Violence Against Women* 12, 823 – 837
- Martinez, Paul (2001) *Improving student retention and achievement What do we know and what do we need to find out?* London: Learning and Skills Development Agency
- Marvellous* (2014) [film] UK: BBC
- Masson, Judith (2004) The Legal Context in Fraser, Sandy., Lewis, Vicky., Ding, Sharon., Kellett, Mary., and Robinson, Chris (eds) *Doing Research with Children and Young People* London: Thousand Oaks
- Mazzei, Lisa A. (2004) Silent Listeners: Deconstructive Practices in Discourse-Based Research *Educational Researcher* 33 (2) 26 - 34
- Mazzei, Lisa A. (2013) Materialist mappings of knowing in being: researchers constituted in the production of knowledge *Gender and Education* 25 (6) 776 – 785
- McAdams, Dan P., Josselson, Ruthellen., and Lieblich, Amia (eds) (2006) *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative* Washington: American Psychological Association
- McDougal, Janette., Evans, Jan., and Baldwin, Patricia (2010) The Importance of Self-Determination to Perceived Quality of Life for Youth and Young Adults with Chronic Conditions and Disabilities *Remedial and Special Education* 31, 252 - 261
- McGonigal, James., Doherty, Robert., Allan, Julie., Mills, Sarah., Catts, Ralph., Redford, Morag., McDonald, Andy., Mott, Jane., and Buckley, Christine (2007) Social capital, social inclusion and changing school contexts: a Scottish perspective *British Journal of Educational Studies* 55 (1) 77 - 94
- McGregor, Glenda (2009) Educating for (whose) success? Schooling in an age of neo-liberalism *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 30 (3) 345 – 358

- McKinlay, Alan (2010) Performativity and the Politics of Identity: Putting Butler to Work *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 21 (3) 232 – 42
- McLaughlan, Robert G., and Kirkpatrick, Denise (2004) Online roleplay: design for active learning *European Journal of Engineering Education* 29 (4) 477 – 490
- McNamara, Niamh., Stevenson, Clifford., and Muldoon, Orla T. (2013) Community identity as resource and context: A mixed method investigation of coping and collective action in a disadvantaged community *European Journal of Social Psychology* 43, 393 – 403
- McNamee, Michael (2001) Introduction: Whose Ethics, Which Research? *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35 (3) 309 - 327
- McNay, Lois (2000) *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* Cambridge: Polity Press
- McWhorter, Ladelle (2005) Foreward in Tremain, Shelley (ed) *Foucault and the Government of Disability* USA: University of Michigan Press
- Mead, George Herbert (1934) *Mind, self and society* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Melton, Gary and Stanley, Barbara (1996) Research involving special populations in Stanley, Barbara and Sieber, Joan (eds) *Research Ethics: a Psychological approach* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
- Mencap (2007) *Death by indifference. Following up the Treat me right! report* <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-06/DBIreport.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- Mencap (2012) *Death by indifference: 74 deaths and counting A progress report 5 years on* <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-08/Death%20by%20Indifference%20-%2074%20deaths%20and%20counting.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- Mencap and ENABLE (2015) *Mencap and Enable Scotland's Inspire Me project* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLz5Xk2ylB4> [12 December 2016]
- Milchman, Alan and Rosenberg, Alan (2011) Michel Foucault: An Ethical Politics of Care of Self and Others in Zuckert, Catherine H. (ed) *Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Authors and Arguments* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Mills, C. Wright (1959) *The Sociological Imagination* New York: Oxford University Press
- Milner, Paul and Kelly, Berni (2009) Community participation and inclusion: People with disabilities defining their place *Disability and Society* 24, 47 – 62
- Minow, Martha (1985) Learning to live with the dilemma of difference: bilingual and special education in Bartlett, Katherine T. and Wegner, Judith Welch (eds) *Children with special needs* New Jersey, USA: Transaction Books
- Minow, Martha (1990) *Making all the difference: inclusion, exclusion and American law* Ithaca: Cronell University Press
- Mitchell, Anna., Clegg, Jennifer., and Furniss, Frederick (2006) Exploring the Meaning of Trauma with Adults with Intellectual Disabilities *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 19, 131 – 142

- Mittler, Peter (2007) Education: The Missing Link at Transition *Learning Disability Review* 12 (2) 14 - 21
- Moore, Darren Andrew (2011) 'Hard to reach? Young people's experiences and understandings of the post-16 transition' (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Exeter University)
- Morrow, Virginia (2008) Ethical dilemmas in research with children and young people about their social environments *Children's Geographies* 6 (1) 49 – 61
- Murphy, Elizabeth., Clegg, Jennifer., and Almack, Kathryn (2011) Constructing Adulthood in Discussions About the Futures of Young People With Moderate-Profound Intellectual Disabilities *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 24, 61 – 73
- Näre, Lena (2014) Agency as Capabilities: Ukrainian Women's narrative of Social Change and Mobility *Women's Studies International Forum* 47, 223 – 231
- Nemerowicz, Gloria and Rosi, Eugene (1997) *Education for Leadership and Social Responsibility* London: The Falmer Press
- NHS England (2015) *Independent review of deaths of people with a Learning Disability or Mental Health problem in contact with Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust April 2011 to March 2015* NHS England
- NHS England (2016) *Stopping Over-Medication of People with Learning Disabilities* NHS England
- NHS England (online) *People with a learning disability to design 'quality checks' for NHS services* <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2016/05/quality-checks/> [12 December 2016]
- Nicholl, Katherine., Fejes, Andreas., Olson, Maria., Dahlstedt, Magnus., and Biesta, Gert (2013) Opening discourses of citizenship education: a theorization with Foucault *Journal of Education Policy* 28 (6) 828 – 846
- Nind, Melanie (2008) Learning difficulties and social class: exploring the intersection through family narratives *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 18 (2) 87 - 98
- Nind, Melanie., Flewitt, Rosie., and Payler, Jane (2010) The social experience of early childhood for children with learning disabilities: inclusion, competence and agency *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 31 (6) 653 - 670
- Norwich, Brahm (1993) Ideological dilemmas in special needs education: practitioners views *Oxford Review of Education* 19 (4) 527 - 545
- Norwich, Brahm (2004) Moderate learning difficulties and inclusion: the end of a category? Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, 16-18 September 2004
- Norwich, Brahm, (2014) How does the capability approach address current issues in special educational needs, disability and inclusive education field? *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 14 (1) 16 - 21
- Norwich, Brahm and Kelly, Narcie (2004) Pupils' views on inclusion: moderate learning difficulties and bullying in mainstream and special schools *British Educational Research Journal* 30 (1) 43 – 65
- Norwich, Brahm., Ylonen, Annamari., and Gwerman-Jones, Ruth (2014) Moderate learning difficulties: searching for clarity and understanding *Research Papers in Education* 29 (1) 1 - 19

- Nunkoosing, Karl and Haydon-Laurelut, Mark (2012) *Intellectual Disability Trouble: Foucault and Goffman on 'Challenging Behaviour'* in Goodley, Dan., Hughes, Bill., and Davis, Lennard (eds) *Disability and Social Theory* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Nussbaum, Martha (1986) *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck And Ethics In Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* Cambridge: Cambridge University press
- Nussbaum, Martha (2000) *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Nussbaum, Martha (2001) *Upheavals of Thought* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Nussbaum, Martha (2003) Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice *Feminist Economics* 9 (2) 33
- Nussbaum, Martha (2011) *Creating Capabilities The Human Development Approach* Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press
- O'Brien, Leigh M. (2006) Being bent over backward: A mother and teacher educator challenges the positioning of her daughter with disabilities *Disability Studies Quarterly* 26 (2) [online] available at: <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/676/853> (accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2016)
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) (2010) *The special educational needs and disability review. A statement is not enough* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-and-disability-review> [12 December 2016]
- Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) (2011) *Progression post-16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities* [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417543/Progression\\_post-16\\_for\\_learners\\_with\\_learning\\_difficulties\\_andor\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417543/Progression_post-16_for_learners_with_learning_difficulties_andor_disabilities.pdf) [12 December 2016]
- O'Leary, Stephen (2011) 'Hidden voices': an exploratory single case study into the multiple worlds of a 15 year old young man with autism' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Exeter)
- Oliver, Mike (1990) *The Politics of Disablement* Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Oliver, Mike (1996) *Understanding disability: from theory to practice* Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Olli, Johanna., Tanja Vehkakoski., and Salanterä, Sanna (2012) Facilitating and hindering factors in the realization of disabled children's agency in institutional contexts: literature review *Disability and Society* 27 (6) 793 - 807
- Onyx, Jenny and Bullen, Paul (2000) Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 36 (1) 23 – 43
- O'Reilly, Karen (2005) *Ethnographic Methods* Abingdon: Routledge
- Osberg, Deborah and Biesta, Gert (2007) Beyond Presence: Epistemological and Pedagogical Implications of 'Strong' Emergence *Interchange* 38 (1) 31 - 51
- Osmo, Rujla and Landau, Ruth (2006) The Role of Ethical Theories in Decision Making by Social Workers *Social Work Education* 25 (8) 863 - 876
- People First *People First a voice for people with learning difficulties* [online] Available at: <http://peoplefirstltd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Past-Work-and-Campaigns.pdf> Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016

- People First (online) <http://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/> [13 December 2016]
- Pillow, Wanda S. (2006) Exposed Methodology: The Body as a Deconstructive Practice in Nagy Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Leavy, Patricia (eds) *Emergent Methods in Social Research* London: Sage
- Pink, Sarah (2001) *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, media and Representation in Research* London: Sage
- Plagens, Gregory K. (2011) Social Capital and Education: Implications for Student and School Performance *Education and Culture* 27 (1) 40 - 64
- Plummer, Ken (2011) Critical Humanism and Queer Theory: Living With the Tensions in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, 4<sup>th</sup> edition* California: Sage
- Porter, Judith, R., and Washington, Robert, E. (1993) Minority Identity and Self-Esteem *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 139 – 161
- Preckel, Franciz., Niepel, Christoph., Schneider, Marian., and Brunner, Martin (2013) Self-concept in adolescence: A longitudinal study on reciprocal effects of self-perceptions in academic and social domains *Journal of Adolescence* 36 1165 - 1175
- Pring, John (2005) Why it Took so Long to Expose the Abusing Regime at Longcare *Journal of Adult Protection* 7 (1) 15 - 23
- Priyadharshini, Esther and Watson, Jacqueline (2012) Between Aspiration and Achievement: structure and agency in young migrant lives *Power and Education* 4 (2) 150 - 161
- Prout, Alan and James, Allison (1997) A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems in James, Allison and Prout, Alan (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* London: RoutledgeFalmer
- Putnam, Robert D. (1995) Bowling alone: America's declining social capital *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1) 65 – 78
- Putnam, Robert D. (2000) *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community* New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks
- QCDA (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) (2010) *Personalising the curriculum for 14-25s with learning difficulties* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100209094419/http://www.qcda.gov.uk/13986.aspx> [12 December 2016]
- Ramazanoğlu, Caroline, and Holland, Janet (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* London: Sage
- Rapley, Mark (2004) *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* Cambridge: University Press
- Reeve, Donna (2002) Negotiating Psycho-emotional Dimensions of Disability and their Influence on Identity Constructions *Disability and Society* 17 (5) 493 - 508
- Reinders, J. (2002) The good life for citizens with intellectual disability *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 46 (1) 1 – 5
- Renold, Emma (2005) *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities: Exploring Children's Gender and Sexual*

*Relations in the Primary School* London: Routledge-Falmer

Richardson, Laurel (1994) Writing: A Method of Inquiry in Denzin, Norman and Lincoln, Yvanna (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing

Richardson, Laurel (2000) Skirting a Pleated Text: De-Disciplining an Academic Life in St. Pierre, Elizabeth A. (ed) *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education* London: Routledge

Richardson, Laurel (2001) Getting personal: Writing-stories *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 14 (1) 33 - 38

Richardson, Laurel (2002) Writing Sociology *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies* 2, 414 – 422

Riddell, Sheila (2005) Special educational needs and procedural justice in England and Scotland in Vincent, Carol (ed) *Social Justice, Education and Identity* Abingdon, Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer

Riddell, Shiela., Baron, Stephen., and Wilson, Alastair (1999) Social capital and people with learning difficulties *Studies in the Education of Adults* 31 (1) 49 - 65

Riddell, Sheila., Baron, Stephen., and Wilson, Alastair (2001) The Significance of the Learning Society for Women and Men with Learning Difficulties *Gender and Education* 13 (1) 57 – 73

Riddell, Sheila and Weedon, Elisabet (2014) Disabled students in higher education: Discourses of disability and the negotiation of identity *International Journal of Educational Research* 63, 38 – 46

Ringrose, Jessica (2007) Troubling agency and ‘choice’: A psychosocial analysis of students’ negotiations of Black Feminist ‘intersectionality’ discourses in Women’s Studies *Women’s Studies International Forum* 30, 264 - 278

Ringrose, Jessica and Renold, Emma (2014) “F\*\*k Rape!”: Exploring Affective Intensities in a Feminist Research Assemblage *Qualitative Inquiry* 20 (6) 772 - 780

Rix, Jonathan (2006) Does it matter what we call them? Labelling people on the basis of notions of intellect *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics* 3 (4) 22 – 28

Rix, Jonathan (2007) Labels of opportunity - A response to Carson and Rowley *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics* 4 (3) 25 – 27

Roberts, Laura Weiss and Roberts, Brian (1999) Psychiatric research ethics: an overview of evolving guidelines and current ethical dilemmas in the study of mental illness *Biological Psychiatry* 46, 1025 - 1038

Robson, Jocelyn (1999) Outsider on the Inside: a first-person account of the research process in a further education college *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 4 (1) 75 - 86

Roets, Griet., Adams, Marie., and van Hove, Geert (2006) Challenging the monologue about silent sterilization: implications for self-advocacy *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 34 (3) 167 – 174

Rose, Dan (1990) *Living the Ethnographic Life* London: Sage

Rose, Gillian (1997) Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (3) 305 - 320

Ross, Alistair (2014) *Understanding the constructions of identities by young new Europeans: kaleidoscopic selves* Abingdon: Routledge

- Ross Epp, Juanita and Watkinson, Ailsa M. (eds) (1996) *Systemic Violence: How Schools Hurt Children* Abingdon: Falmer Press
- Roulstone, Alan., Thomas, Pam., Balderston, Susie (2011) Between hate and vulnerability: unpacking the British criminal justice system's construction of disablist hate crime *Disability and Society* 26 (3) 351 - 364
- Royal College of Psychiatrists (2016) *Psychotropic drug prescribing for people with intellectual disability, mental health problems and/or behaviours that challenge: practice guidelines* London: Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Runswick-Cole, Katherine (2011) Time to end the bias towards inclusive education? *British Journal of Special Education* 38 (3) 112 – 119
- Rydzewska, Ewelina (2012) Destination unknown? Transition to adulthood for people with autism spectrum disorders *British Journal of Special Education* 39 (2) 87 – 93
- Sandlin, Jennifer A., O'Malley, Michael P., and Burdick, Jake (2011) Mapping the Complexity of Public Pedagogy Scholarship 1894 – 2010 *Review of Educational Research* 81 (3) 338 - 375
- Sarang, Srikant (2005) The conditions and consequences of professional discourse studies *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 2 (3) 371 - 394
- Sandlin, Jennifer A., Schultz, Brian D., and Burdick, Jake (eds) (2010) *Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning Beyond Schooling* London: Routledge
- Schmader, Toni and Block, Katharina (2015) Engendering Identity: Toward a Clearer Conceptualization of Gender as a Social Identity *Sex Roles* 73 (11) 474 - 480
- Scior, Katrina and Werner, Shirli (2015) *Changing Attitudes to Learning Disability: A review of the evidence* Mencap [https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-8/Attitudes\\_Changing\\_Report.pdf](https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-8/Attitudes_Changing_Report.pdf) [12 December 2016]
- Scott, Joan W. (1992) "Experience" in Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan W. (eds) *Feminists Theorize the Political* New York: Routledge
- Scott, Judith K., Wishart, Jennifer G., and Bowyer, Debra J. (2006) Do current consent and confidentiality requirements impede or enhance research with children with learning disabilities? *Disability and Society* 21 (3) 273 – 287
- Segall, Avner (2001): Critical ethnography and the invocation of voice: From the field/in the field - single exposure, double standard? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 14 (4) 579 - 592
- Sen, Amartya (1979) *Equality of What? The Tanner Lecture on Human Values* [http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/s/sen80.pdf](http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/s/sen80.pdf) [12 December 2016]
- Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom* New York: Anchor Books
- Sen, Amartya (2004) Elements of a Theory of Human Rights *Philosophy of Public Affairs* 32 (4) 315 – 356
- Shacklock, Geoffrey and Smyth, John (1998) (eds) *Being Reflexive in Critical Educational and Social Research* London: Falmer Press
- Shakespeare, Tom (2016) *Who Cares About Independence?* BBC Radio 4. 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07v36ks#play> [12 December 2016]



- Shakespeare, Tom and Watson, Nick (2001) The social model of disability: An outdated ideology? *Research in Social Science and Disability* 2, 9 - 28
- Shapiro, Joseph P. (1993) *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* New York: Times Books
- Shaw, Bart., Bernardes, Eleanor., Trethewey, Anna., and Menzies, Loic (2016) *Special educational needs and their links to poverty* Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/special-educational-needs-and-their-links-poverty> [12 ~December 2016]
- Sheehan, Rory., Hassiotis, Angela., Walters, Kate., Osborn, David., Strydom, André., and Horsfall, Laura (2015) Mental illness, challenging behaviour, and psychotropic drug prescribing in people with intellectual disability: UK population based cohort study *British Medical Journal* 351 (8023) 12 - 20
- Siegel, Daniel J. (2007) *The Mindful Brain: reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being* New York: W. W. Norton and Company
- Sikes, Pat (2006) On dodgy ground? Problematics and ethics in educational research *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 29 (1) 105 - 117
- Sime, Daniela (2008) Ethical and methodological issues in engaging young people living in poverty with participatory research methods *Children's Geographies* 6 (1) 63 - 78
- Skeggs, Beverley (2002) Techniques for Telling the Reflexive Self in May, Tim (ed) *Qualitative Research in Action* London: Sage
- Skills Commission (2016) *Going Places: Innovation in Further Education and Skills* London: Policy Connect
- Slee, Roger (1998) The politics of theorising special education in Clark, Catherine., Dyson, Alan., and Millward, Alan (eds) *Theorising Special Education* Oxon: Routledge
- Sloper, Patricia., Beecham, Jennifer., Clarke, Susan., Franklin, Anita., Moran, Nicola., and Cusworth, Linda. (2010) *Models of Multi-agency Services for Transition to Adult Services for Disabled Young People and Those with Complex Health Needs: Impact and Costs* York: Social Policy Research Unit <http://php.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/1888/> [12 December 2016]
- Smidt, Andy., Balandin, Susan., Reed, Vicki., and Sigafoos, Jeff (2007) A Communication Training Programme for Residential Staff Working with Adults with Challenging Behaviour: Pilot Data on Intervention Effects *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 20 (1) 16 - 29
- Smith, Diane L. (2008) Disability, Gender and Intimate Partner Violence: Relationships from the Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System *Sex and Disability* 26 15 - 28
- Somers, Margaret S. (1994) The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach *Theory and Society* 23 (5) 605 - 649
- Speedy, Jane., Bainton, Dave., Bridges, Nell., Brown, Tony., Brown, Laurinda., Martin, Viv., Sakellariadis, Artemi., Williams, Susan., and Wilson, Sue (2010) Encountering "Gerald": Experiments With Meandering Methodologies and Experiences Beyond Our "Selves" in a Collaborative Writing Group *Qualitative Inquiry* 16 (10) 894 – 901
- Spencer, Grace and Doull, Marion (2015) Examining concepts of power and agency in research with young people *Journal of Youth Studies* 18 (7) 900 – 913
- Spradely, James P. (1980) *Participant Observation* California, USA: Wadsworth



- Spry, Tami (2006) *Performing Autoethnography. An Embodied Methodological Praxis* in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Leavy, Patricia (eds) *Emergent Methods in Social Research* London: Sage
- Steiner, Linda (2009) *Feminist media ethics* in Wilkins, Lee and Christians, Clifford G. (eds) *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics* New York: Routledge
- St.Pierre, Elizabeth A. (2011) *Post qualitative research: The critique and the coming after* in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvanna S. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry* (4th edition) California: Sage
- Strømstad, Marit (2003) 'They believe that they participate... but': Democracy and inclusion in Norwegian schools in Allan, Julie (ed) (2003) *Inclusion, Participation and Democracy: What is the Purpose?* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Tajfel, Henri (1981) *Human groups and social categories: Studies in Social Psychology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Taylor, Steven J. (2000) "You're not a retard, you're just wise" Disability, Social Identity, and Family Networks *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 29, 58 – 92
- Taylor, Steven J. and Bogdan, Robert (1989) On accepting relationships between people with mental retardation and non-disabled people: Towards an understanding of acceptance *Disability, Handicap and Society* 4, 21 – 36
- Teague, Laura (2014) Subjectivity, Agency and Political Pedagogy in the Primary School *Global Studies of Childhood* 4 (1) 3 - 10
- Terzi, Lorella (2005) Beyond the Dilemma of Difference: the Capability Approach to disability and special Educational Needs *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 39 (3) 443 - 459
- Terzi, Lorella (2008) *Justice and equality in education: a capability perspective on disability and special educational needs* London: Continuum
- The London Feminist Salon Collective (2004) The problematization of agency in postmodern theory: as feminist educational researchers, where do we go from here? *Gender and Education* 16 (1) 25 - 33
- Thiara, Ravi K., Hague, Gill., and Mullender, Audrey (2011) Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence *Disability and Society* 26 (6) 757 - 771
- Thomas, Carol (1998) Parents and Family: Disabled Women's Stories about their Childhood Experiences in Robinson, Carol and Stalker, Kirsten (eds) *Growing Up With Disability* London: Jessica Kingsley
- Thomas, Carol (1999) *Female Forms: Experiencing and Understanding Disability* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Thomas, Carol (2003) *Defining a Theoretical Agenda for Disability Studies* Disability Studies: Theory, Policy and Practice. Inaugural Conference of the Disability Studies Association [http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference\\_archive/2003/papers/thomas2003.pdf](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2003/papers/thomas2003.pdf) [12 December 2016]
- Thomas, Jim (1993) *Doing Critical Ethnography (Qualitative Research Methods)* London: Sage Publications

- Tomlinson, Jennifer., Muzio, Daniel., Webley, Lisa., and Duff, Liz (2013) Structure, agency and career strategies of white women and black and minority ethnic individuals in the legal profession *Human Relations* 66 (2) 245 – 269
- Tomlinson, John (1996) *Inclusive Learning: Report of the Further Education Funding Council Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee* Coventry: Further Education Funding Council
- Tomlinson, Sally (2016) Special education and minority ethnic young people in England: continuing issues *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 37 (4) 513 - 528
- Thomson, Pat and Gunter, Helen (2011) Inside, outside, upside down: the fluidity of academic researcher 'identity' in working with/in school *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 34 (1) 17 – 30
- Timko, Alix, C., England, Erica, L., Herbert, James, D., and Forman, Evan, M. (2010) The Implicit Relational Assessment Procedure as a Measure of Self-Esteem *The Psychological Record* 60 679 - 698
- Tracy, Sarah J. (2010) Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research *Qualitative Inquiry* 16 (10) 837 – 851
- Traustadóttir, Rannveig (2006) Disability and gender: Introduction to the special issue *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 8 (2/3) 81 – 84
- Tremain, Shelley (ed) (2005) *Foucault and the Government of Disability* USA: University of Michigan Press
- Townley, Barbara (1995) Beyond Good and Evil: Depth and Division in the Management of Human Resources in McKinlay, Alan and Starkey, Ken (eds) *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory: From Panopticon to Technologies of Self* London: Sage
- Tuffrey-Wijne, Irene., Bernal, Jane., and Hollins, Sheila (2008) Doing research on people with learning disabilities, cancer and dying: ethics, possibilities and pitfalls *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 36, 185 – 190
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (1994) *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000984/098427eo.pdf> [12 December 2016]
- United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* New York and Geneva: United Nations <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> [12 December 2016]
- United Nations (2006) *Convention of Rights of Persons With Disabilities*  
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/monitoring-and-promoting-un-treaties/un-convention-rights-persons-disabilities> [12 December 2016]
- Van Asselt, Danae., Buchanan, Angus., and Peterson, Sunila (2015) Enablers and barriers of social inclusion for young adults with intellectual disability: A multidimensional view *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 40 (1) 37 - 48
- Vandekinderen, Caroline., Roets, Griet., and van Hove, Geert (2014) Untangling the Nonrecyclable Citizen: a Critical Reconceptualization of Responsibility in Recovery *Qualitative Health Research* 24 (10) 1418 - 1430
- Van Maanen, John (2011) *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Second Edition) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

- Vlachou, Anastasia (1997) *Struggles for Inclusive Education* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Wagaman, Alex M. (2016) Self-definition as resistance: Understanding identities among LGBTQ emerging adults *Journal of LGBT Youth* 13 (3) 207 - 230
- Wales, Jenny and Clarke, Paul (2005) *Learning Citizenship: Practical teaching strategies for secondary schools* London: RoutledgeFalmer
- Waller, Tim (2010) 'Let's throw that big stick in the river': an exploration of gender in the construction of shared narratives around outdoor spaces *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 18 (4) 527 - 542
- Walmsley, Jan (1998) Research Ethics *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 26 (4) 126 – 127
- Walmsley, Jan (2001) Normalisation, Emancipatory Research and Inclusive Research in Learning Disability *Disability and Society* 16 (2) 187 – 205
- Waltz, Mitzi (2005) Reading case studies of people with autistic spectrum disorders: a cultural studies approach to issues of disability representation *Disability and Society* 20 (4) 421-435
- Waltz, Mitzi (2007) The relationship of ethics to quality: a particular case of research in autism *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 30 (3) 353 – 361
- Warland, Jane and Smith, Morgan (2012) Using online roleplay in undergraduate midwifery education: A case-study *Nurse Education in Practice* 12 (5) 279 - 283
- Warnock Committee (1978) *Special Educational Needs: the Warnock Report* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office
- Warnock, Mary (2005) *Special Educational needs: a new look* London: Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain
- Watling, Rob (2002) The analysis of Qualitative data in Coleman, Marianne and Briggs, Ann R. J. (eds) *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management* London: Paul Chapman
- Watson, Nick (2002) Well, I Know this is Going to Sound Very Strange to You, But I Don't See Myself as a Disabled Person: Identity and disability *Disability and Society* 17 (5) 509 - 527
- Webster, Stephen., Bowers, Louise., Mann, Ruth., and Marshall, William (2005) Developing Empathy in Sexual Offenders: The Value of Offence Re-Enactments *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* 17 (1) 63 – 77
- Wehmeyer, Michael L., and Schwartz, Michelle (2001) Disproportionate Representation of Males in Special Education Services: Biology, Behavior, or Bias? *Education and Treatment of Children* 24 (1) 28 - 45
- Westling Allodi, Mara (2002) Children's Experiences of School: narratives of Swedish children with and without learning difficulties *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 46 (2) 181 - 205
- Whitaker, Simon (2004) Hidden learning disability *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32, 139 - 143
- Whitaker, Simon (2013) *Intellectual disability. An inability to cope with an intellectually demanding world* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- White, Richard (2014) Foucault on the Care of the Self as an Ethical Project and a Spiritual Goal *Human Studies* 37, 489 - 504

- White, Robert, and Wyn, Johanna (2008) *Youth and Society* (2nd edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Winkler, Ingo (2014) Being me whilst learning Danish. A story of narrative identity work during the process of learning a foreign language *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 9 (4) 290 – 307
- Wodak, Ruth (2012) Language, power and identity *Language Teaching* 45, 215 - 233
- Wolfe, Peter (1999) *Understanding Alan Bennett* South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press
- Wolfensberger, Wolf (1972) *Normalization The Principle of Normalization on Human Service* Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation
- Wolfensberger, Wolf., Nirje, Bengt., Olshansky, Simon., Perske, Robert., and Roos, Philip (1972) *Normalization: The Principle of Normalization in Human Services* Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation
- Worrell, Bill (1988) *People First: advice for advisors* Ontario: National People First Project
- Wright, Anne-Marie (2006) Provision for students with learning difficulties in general colleges of further education – have we been going round in circles? *British Journal of Special Education* 33 (1) 33 – 39
- Yardley, Lucy (2000) Dilemmas in Qualitative Health Research *Psychology and Health* 15, 215 – 228
- Yee, Wan Ching and Andrews, Jane (2006) Professional researcher or a ‘good guest’? Ethical dilemmas involved in researching children and families in the home setting *Educational Review* 58 (4) 397 - 413
- Yeung, Polly., Passmore, Anne., and Packer, Tanya (2012) Examining Citizenship Participation in Young Australian Adults: A Structural Equation Analysis *Journal of Youth Studies* 15 (1) 73 – 98
- Yin, Robert K. (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* California: Sage
- Youdell, Deborah (2006) Subjectivation and performative politics—Butler thinking Althusser and Foucault: intelligibility, agency and the raced-nationed-religioned subjects of education *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (4) 511 – 528
- Young, Iris Marion (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Young, Iris Marion (2002) ‘Foreward’ in Shakespeare, Tom and Corker, Marion (eds) *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory Continuum*: London
- Young, Michael (2011) The return to subjects: A sociological perspective on the UK coalition government's approach to the 14–19 curriculum *Curriculum Journal* 22, 265 – 278