

Literacy barriers to learning and learner experiences

Submitted by Susan Patricia Pollock to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Educational, Child & Community Psychology, May 2017.

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Signature: Susan Pollock

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Abstract

This research is in two phases. The aim of phase one was to explore the school experiences of learners identified as having literacy barriers to learning. Learners were in Year 8 (age 12-13) at the start of the research and Year 9 (age 13-14) by its conclusion. A case study design and the participatory method of 'photovoice' was used to elicit and foreground students' views and experiences. To date there has been little research in this field using participatory methods. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Findings suggest that the student photographers' (N=4) were keen to share both their positive and negative experiences of school and in particular the importance they placed on relationships with peers and key staff.

The aim of phase two was to use students' photos, which were developed into individual 'experience boards', as a tool to facilitate staff reflections on practice. Three discussion groups (N=7) were held and data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings were viewed and discussed using the framework of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Staff showed a high level of empathy and a desire to interpret and reflect on the photos. The constructs of feeling safe and secure were significant themes across all discussion groups. Furthermore, the lack of photos explicitly about learning challenged staff beliefs about student experiences and enabled them to acknowledge the importance the student photographers placed on these constructs. The use of photovoice stimulated reflection and is likely to have aided staff to better understand student experiences.

There are implications for educational psychology practice in relation to taking a more holistic view of understanding and supporting learners with literacy difficulties and also the use of 'photovoice' to elicit and foreground student views and experiences as part of consultation or at a more systemic level.

1. Introduction

Psychological exploration of literacy difficulties has traditionally focused on cognitive and neural processes along with the effectiveness of literacy interventions (Anderson, 2009; Burden, 2005; Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick, 2011). In a comprehensive review of the literature, Lopes (2012) found that the vast majority of research had been written in medical and psychological journals with a particular emphasis on neuropsychological approaches. In contrast, there has been little interest in the experiences of those with literacy difficulties (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002a; Nalavany, Carawan & Rennick, 2011). Research exploring the school experiences of those identified as having literacy difficulties contributes to a more holistic understanding of their needs and has the potential to impact how learners are supported.

The experiences of learners with literacy barriers to learning have often been researched in relation to their social and emotional wellbeing and the linked concepts of self-perception and self-esteem (Riddick, 2010). Research has focused on how learners experience reading activities (Anderson, 2009), their peer relationships (Ingesson, 2007) and the comparisons learners make with their peers (Marsh, 2006). Relationships with staff and the extent to which these relationships support positive school experiences have also been found to be crucial (Humphrey, 2003).

The school experiences of learners have implications for school policies and teaching and learning practices. Eliciting and sharing the experiences of students with staff has the potential to enable them to gain a greater insight into what matters to students, how they learn, and so facilitate changes in practice. Within educational psychology this is believed to be a central part of the process of consultation (Beaver, 2011; Harding & Atkinson, 2009). It is also enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The article states that all children have the right to participate in decision making processes about their lives. This has had a significant influence on government legislation and policy in the United Kingdom, which is now embedded in the Children and Families Act (2014). This states that children, young people (CYP) and their families should be supported through a person-centred approach.

Within the field of research Hill et al (2016) have shown that a wealth of methods can be used to engage learners in sharing their school experiences. While Leeson (2014) has provided evidence that CYP views can be authentically sought and represented in relation to difficult and emotive subjects. In her research she chose to explore the experiences of children in the care of the state. The research cited above provides sufficient evidence to support the exploration of the experiences of learners who experience literacy barriers to learning in this way.

1.1 Significance for educational psychology practice

Jama and Dugdale (2012) state that one in six adults in the UK struggle with their literacy skills. Struggling with literacy is defined as having a reading capacity when an adult which is below that of an average eleven year old. Since the best practice report 'Improving standards in literacy: A shared responsibility' (2013) there has been a spotlight on school literacy policy development;

The case for promoting literacy across the secondary curriculum is urgent and essential. Too many pupils still emerge from our schools without the confident and secure literacy skills they need to thrive as adults. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Education recently reported that literacy is a huge issue for the nation, our society and our economy, not just for schools. (OFSTED, 2013, p. 6 -7).

The number of CYP who experience literacy barriers to learning and the impact this is likely to have on their future therefore makes this area pertinent to educational psychology practice. Furthermore, educational psychologists (EPs) are well placed to look at this issue holistically, drawing together multiple psychological models. They are also able to work at a number of levels, for example, supporting whole school approaches through teacher development and training and through individual casework (Wagner, 2008).

As has already been stated, EPs also have an important role in foregrounding and eliciting young peoples' views as part of the process of consultation (Beaver, 2011; Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Facilitating the views, values and beliefs of CYP about their lives and what they want for the future can begin to help involved adults reflect on how they are choosing to interact with and support those in their care. Including authentic and meaningful views of learners and their families is also now a key feature of the

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (CoP) (2014) in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Furthermore, EPs are well placed to support schools, parents and carers to understand the value and importance of this process as it links with better outcomes for learners, school self-evaluation and improvement (Bourke & Loveridge, 2016).

1.2 Personal significance of the research topic

A consideration of potential areas of interest for my thesis began at the end of year one of the professional doctorate course to become an EP. When writing a reflective essay about my experiences and key learning from the year I decided to introduce some quotes from educational psychology reports that had been written about me as a child. I believe doing so added depth to my reflections and supported the arguments I was trying to make. I have also chosen to include one quote as part of the introduction to this research:

‘However, there are indications of increased distress when she is called upon to read which extends to her home, so that secondary emotional problems are more likely to occur’ (Private EP report, 1986).

In my reflective essay I wondered how my experience of literacy barriers to learning had affected my sense of self as a learner, as a secondary school teacher and as a trainee EP. I began to read research that explored the influence of literacy difficulties on learner identity (Burden, 2005) and on the professional identity of teachers (Glazzard & Dale, 2013 & 2015).

In sharing this information my aim is to be open and honest about the impact it has had not only on my choice of area for exploration, but on how I have decided to carry out the research and the influence I will have had on the process and outcomes of it (Etherington, 2004).

Furthermore, as a trainee EP I have also found that literacy difficulties often form a component of the concerns that a school or parents bring to an initial consultation meeting. They are frequently concerned about academic progress and meeting expected levels. Coupled with this there are often concerns about self-esteem, motivation and the impact that difficulties are having on the learner’s engagement and enjoyment of school.

The decision to explore the experiences of those identified as having literacy barriers to learning therefore stems from both a personal and professional interest.

1.3 Overall Aims

The overall aim of this research was to explore the experiences of learners identified as having literacy barriers to learning using participatory methods. It was hoped that sharing the findings with school staff would facilitate discussion and reflection on practice.

Therefore, the current research was conducted as two linked studies. The first phase of the research explored learner experiences using the participatory method of photovoice and developed student photographers' work into experience boards. The second phase used students' photovoice work to facilitate staff discussion groups. The research took place in one school in the South West of England. A qualitative design was used for both phases of the research.

1.5 Outline of chapters

This thesis is divided into eleven chapters. Chapter two explores relevant literature in relation to the experience of literacy barriers to learning. A number of theoretical models are explored as well as research analysing the school experiences of learners. The methodology of the research is outlined in chapter three. This includes an exploration of the methodological orientation and the rationale for my role within the research. An overview of the case study approach used in phase one and the thematic analysis of across both phases is included. Chapters four to nine detail the main body of the research and present the findings of each phase. The findings of phase one and two are considered in relation to the research questions and pertinent psychological theories. Phase two utilises Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs to consider staff participants' responses to the students' experience boards. Chapter ten brings together the findings of phase one and two of the research. Significant themes are commented on and examined in relation to other research. The strengths and limitations of the research are considered and further directions for research are outlined. Finally, chapter eleven concludes with personal reflections and implications for educational psychology practice.

2. Literature Review

This literature review provides an outline of relevant literature in relation to the school experiences of those identified as having literacy barriers to learning. A number of themes are explored including, peer and adult relationships and learners' sense of belonging. Much information in this area has been gained from exploring learner self-perceptions and so this literature is also covered along with relevant psychological models. A number of methodological limitations of research are highlighted with regards to a possible gap in existing knowledge. Next the use of student experiences within educational psychology practice and teacher professional development is briefly explored. Finally, areas for further research are identified.

Literature was identified primarily through the British Education Index and Google Scholar using the following search terms; self-concept, learner identity, dyslexia, literacy difficulties, literacy barriers to learning, school experiences and student voice. An examination of references from articles which were repeatedly referenced was also added to this process.

2.1 Definition of terms

2.1.1 Literacy barriers to learning

There is much public, professional and academic debate about how literacy barriers to learning can be defined. Traditionally this has been focused around the term dyslexia (Gibbs, 2015; Snowling, 2015). The widely quoted Rose report definition starts with the following sentence; 'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling'(Rose, 2009, p. 10). The definition is then qualified by five further bullet points, thus illustrating the difficulty in identifying a concise and agreed definition. Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) question whether there is a difference between those 'diagnosed' with dyslexia and those who Elliott (2015, p. 36) describes as 'garden variety poor readers'. Part of the foundation for their argument is that there is no difference between the best way to intervene and support these groups.

Research exploring the experience of literacy barriers to learning uses a wide variety of definitions. Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick (2011) use participants who self-identify as having dyslexia. While in their research about the 'psycho-social functioning' of those

identified with dyslexia Terras, Thompson and Minnis (2009) use the discrepancy model to identify participants. This model suggests that dyslexia can be identified by finding a discrepancy between intelligence quotient (IQ) and reading ability, with dyslexia usually being diagnosed when IQ is in the typical range and reading is a struggle. This definition is in stark contrast to the Rose report (2009) which was written in the same year. It identifies that learners with a range of intellectual abilities can experience literacy difficulties. This inconsistency illustrates the difficulty researchers and educational practitioners face when trying to define literacy barriers to learning.

Within educational psychology literacy barriers to learning are often viewed within a socio-cultural framework (Burden, 2008). Hall (2003, p.134) writes 'A socio-cultural perspective on reading shifts the emphasis from the individual *per se* [italics in original text] to the social and cultural context in which literacy occurs'. Reading and writing are seen as culturally valued tools and perceived difficulties in acquiring these tools is likely to have an impact on the way an individual sees themselves and how others perceive them. Therefore, within a socio-cultural framework reading is viewed more broadly. Gibbs states 'Reading is power', 'Reading is a miracle' and 'Reading is a puzzle' (2015, p. 32).

I have chosen to use a broad understanding of the term which acknowledges the socio-cultural context of learning to read and write as well as the current debate about the usefulness of the term dyslexia to discriminate between different groups of poor readers and writers (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014). I use the terms literacy difficulties or literacy barriers to learning interchangeably to identify learners, and only use the term dyslexia when this has been used as a descriptor within the literature to which I am referring.

2.1.2 Learner experiences

The experiences of learners with literacy barriers to learning have often been researched in relation to their social and emotional wellbeing and the linked concepts of self-perception and self-esteem (Riddick, 2010). Self-perceptions can broadly be described as the thoughts and feelings a person has about themselves. In early research Cooley (1912, cited in Burden, 2005) coined the term 'the looking glass self' to illustrate how a person's sense of self is shaped by their perception of how others see

them. This illustrates the influence of social interaction and experiences on the formation of self-perceptions. It is further supported by the work of Erikson (1959) who suggests that our experiences have a significant impact on our attitudes towards ourselves. In more recent years Craven and Marsh (2008) have identified the impact of peer relationships and comparisons on learner self-perceptions.

Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) and Humphrey and Mullins (2002a) describe the construct of self-esteem as made of two types of judgments; how worthy a person feels of respect from others and their feelings of confidence to face different life and school experiences.

It should be noted that Craven and Marsh (2008, p.104) describe the study of self-perceptions as 'fraught with controversy.' This may be in part due to the abundance of terms that can be used to describe the self, for example, self-concept, self-perceptions, self-worth and self-awareness. Research that has sought to understand the psychological processes that underpin self-concept often uses terms interchangeably, for example, Riddick (2010) uses the terms self-esteem, self-concept and academic self-concept interchangeably. In his meta-analysis of research investigating the self-concept of children with learning difficulties Zeleke (2004) states that terms have often been used as distinct constructs and synonymously. This can make comparing findings difficult.

2.2 Psychological models with implications for learner experiences

A number of different psychological models can be used to explore the relationship between literacy barriers to learning and learner self-esteem and self-perceptions. These concepts can be considered as having an association with learners' school experiences.

2.2.1 Marsh's multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept

Marsh's (2006) multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept is highly cited and generally accepted as having robust explanatory power (Burden 2008; Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002a; Riddick, 2010). Marsh has built on the model of Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) which states that self-concept is part of a multidimensional and hierarchical construct. General self-concept sits at the top; this is then divided into academic and non-academic self-concept. The academic section of

the hierarchy can then be split further into different domains. Craven and Marsh (2008) call these domains physical, mathematics/academic and verbal/academic.

The model provides evidence of the relationship between achievement and self-concept development by way of a reciprocal effects model which suggests that experience of prior positive academic achievements create a virtuous circle in the development of a positive self-concept. Hence, repeated experiences of failure in one or more domains will impact self-concept in those domains, but not necessarily general self-concept. As Frederickson and Jacobs (2001) state, this sits well with understandings of literacy difficulties. Indeed, the British Psychological Society definition of dyslexia states that 'the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities' (1999, p. 5) suggesting that there has been significant failure to respond to classroom intervention to ameliorate difficulties. Although the model does not have a significant focus on the self-concept of those with literacy barriers to learning, it does give an insightful and well established overview of the cognitive processes underlying self-concept.

Within this perspective there is a high degree of research evidence, which is outlined below, that the experience of literacy difficulties negatively impact self-concept. However, findings generally support Marsh's (2006) model which states that it is academic self-concept and not a more general sense of self that is affected. This is confirmed by Zeleke's (2004) widely cited meta-analysis of research. Marsh (2006) suggests this is because self-concept is relatively stable at the top of the hierarchical model. As aspects of self-concept become more specific or specialised they are more context dependent and have a reciprocal relationship with other domains.

Much British research evidence to support the model comes from work of Humphrey and his colleagues (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002a). Other commentators such as Frederickson and Jacobs (2001) have found that primary children identified with literacy difficulties have lower perceived 'scholastic competence' than their peers but not significantly lower global self-worth. In a more recent study Terras, Thompson and Minnis (2009) came to a similar conclusion. They also found that if CYP experience encouraging and supportive attitudes from parents towards their difficulties this had a positive impact on their global self-worth. Unfortunately this research had a small and

unrepresentative sample. This is because the sample was gathered from parents who had taken their children to a private dyslexia assessment centre. It is quite probable that these parents were highly motivated to support their children and had the funds to independently seek advice for them.

Marsh's (1990 & 2006) model is not without criticism. Kelly and Norwich (2004) suggest that Marsh's (1990) well established and validated 'Self-Description Questionnaire', which was developed out of his model, does not provide scope for idiosyncratic or contradictory self-perceptions. Riddick (2010) also suggests that there is still uncertainty about the development of self-concept and how it changes as children reach adolescence. Indeed, Ingesson (2007) found that CYP with literacy difficulties often have most difficulty with their sense of self between the ages of seven and thirteen and that as they get older and experience more choice over their educational future their self-concept becomes more positive.

There is also some research that supports a more global relationship between literacy difficulties and self-concept. In their small scale research using semi-structured interviews with teenagers, Glazzard (2010) found that students who had a diagnosis of dyslexia had significant negative feelings linked to low self-esteem. These included feeling stupid, isolated and disappointed in their own abilities. Such findings are similar to the early work of Riddick (1999, cited in Riddick, 2010) and Humphrey (2003) and are supported by the more recent work of Casserly (2013) in Ireland. This research is contradictory of many studies in this area because of the finding of a more global relationship between literacy difficulties and self-concept. It is important to remain aware that the disparity exists and that it may, in part, be the influence of the variety of definitions of literacy difficulties, methods used, sample differences and the settings that research took place in.

2.2.2 Attributional models

Due to their learning experiences those with literacy barriers to learning are believed to develop maladaptive attributional styles which impact motivation and engagement with learning (Burden & Burdett, 2005). The models of locus of control (Rotter, 1954, cited in Burden 2005) and learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978, cited in Burden, 2005) have been widely used in research in this field (Burden, 2005; Casserly,

2013; Glazzard & Dale, 2010). Locus of control refers to whether a person believes they have control over their life or if it is ruled by external factors. In summing up their research findings Frederickson and Jacobs (2001) hypothesise that children with dyslexia perceived success or failure in a task to be outside their control. A possible limitation of their research is that there were more boys in the group identified as having dyslexia. Although they identify this gender imbalance as characteristic of the general population of those with dyslexia, it may mean their findings are more transferable to boys than girls.

Learned helplessness refers to when continued experiences of failure lead a person to believe that whatever they do will not make a difference. Casserly (2013) found that while two thirds of children were able to persist with literacy based tasks on return to mainstream settings after time in specialist settings, one third of learners continued to feel overwhelmed by tasks and believed they were incapable of meeting the learning demands of the mainstream setting.

2.2.3 Personal construct psychology

The work of George Kelly and personal construct psychology (cited in Riddick 2010, p. 39) has been used to explore how young people with literacy difficulties might experience the world. Beaver (2011) provides the example of the construct of good reader to poor reader. In a culture where literacy is valued a young person is more likely to want to see themselves as a good reader. However, if their experience is that they are struggling to make expected progress then this may cause tension between their view of themselves and evidence in the world. Using the 'laddering technique' Humphrey and Mullins (2002b) found that learners with literacy difficulties were significantly more likely to link 'good at reading' with 'intelligence' than control groups. They suggest that this perceived relationship has significant implications for how learners see themselves and experience learning situations.

Beaver (2011) suggests it is likely that the dissonance learners experience leads to distress which they may try to resolve. The learner may accept the poor reader identity. However, in doing so they might reduce the value of the construct, for example by stating that they do not enjoy reading and it is not important to them or their future. Taking this stance involves developing a position that is contradictory to modern education and is likely to cause friction in the school environment. Another

option is to incorporate the new construct more totally and accept the poor reader, and hence 'low intelligence' construct. This may impact core constructs such as 'good person versus bad person'. Indeed, Thomson and Hartley (1980) found that dyslexic learners were more likely to relate 'good at reading' with 'happiness' than their peers. Therefore, the good reader construction was linked to core constructs more in those identified as experiencing literacy difficulties.

2.3 Contextual influences on learner experiences

2.3.1 Peer relationships and comparisons

Ingesson (2007) used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of dyslexic students attending mainstream schools in Sweden. She found that students expressed feelings of being different from their peers and that these were at their most evident and negative between the ages of seven and thirteen when peer relationships are becoming more important. Humphrey (2003) suggests that children first start to compare themselves to their peers at the age of eight as they become more self-aware of similarities and differences with their peers. The impact of social comparison on learners' school experiences fits neatly with Marsh's (2006) 'big fish little pond' hypothesis. It suggests that students compare their performance with their peers and this information is used to help form their academic self-concept.

Research suggests that students who attend mainstream settings have more negative experiences than their counterparts who attend special schools or special resourced provision (Casserly 2013; Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001; Humphrey, 2002). It is for this reason that Casserly (2013) suggests that learner self-concept may be context specific, and therefore experience dependent. This is because it is likely that there is a greater range of academic ability in a mainstream school for whom children who experience literacy difficulties can compare themselves.

This experience of difference often leads to feelings of embarrassment and shame and students try to hide their difficulties from others in their school setting (Burden 2005). Anderson (2009) uses Goffman's notion of 'image management tactics', (cited in Anderson 2009, p. 85) to investigate how learners experienced silent reading sessions in a primary school when they were forced to engage with texts which they could not access. She identifies four different positions that readers can take. These range from

the interested reader (can read and wants to read) to the disinterested disabler (does not want to read and can't read). Disablers often give the appearance of reading even if they are struggling or unmotivated to do so. She notes that readers who want to read but are unable to do so often experience the highest levels of distress and frustration.

In most research involving young people with literacy difficulties the experience of feeling 'stupid' and 'thick' is at the fore. Kelly and Norwich (2004) found this to be the most prevalent in mainstream settings with 24% of participants describing themselves in this way. However, they also identified a strong rejection of these informal labels. The findings of Kelly and Norwich (2004) are supported by Humphrey and his colleagues (Armstrong & Humphrey, 2009; Humphrey, 2002 & 2003; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002a) who found that students often believed themselves to be less intelligent than their peers. In interviews with students Glazzard (2010) found that CYP felt isolated and left out because they were unable to access the work being set.

Research also suggests significant levels of bullying are experienced by students who have been identified as experiencing literacy barriers to learning. Both Glazzard (2010) and Humphrey and Mullins (2002a) found that 50% of learners experienced bullying at school. This was described as verbal and/or physical abuse. The nearly ten year gap in when the research was undertaken and the similar findings suggest that this is a consistent experience across time. Research also often cites more bullying in mainstream schools (Kelly & Norwich, 2004).

2.3.2 Relationships with staff and school belonging

Using a life history approach Glazzard and Dale (2015) suggest that relationships with significant adults at school have a substantial impact on learners' school experiences. In their research 'Kitty' found that staff tended to focus on supporting her development of the technical elements of reading and writing. This focus tended to limit her scope for creativity and emphasised her learning barriers as opposed to her strengths.

Again, research suggests that there are differences between the experiences of learners in mainstream and special schools. In mainstream settings teachers are often described as less empathic and as positioning learners as lazy (Glazzard, 2010). This is often coupled with student perceptions of being misunderstood by teachers (Glazzard 2010; Humphrey & Mullins 2002a & 2002b). Glazzard (2010) found that in mainstream

settings there was often an over use of writing being used as the main record of learning outcomes. This led to participants perceiving the support they received from staff in two different ways. Some support was practical, for example, adapting and differentiating the curriculum to reduce the writing or reading load. Other support was of a more relational and emotional nature. Students described appreciating it when staff took the time to find out about them as individuals and 'checked in' with them during learning tasks.

Both Humphrey (2003) and Lawrence (2006) draw on the work of Rogers (1951) when considering how best to meet the emotional needs of learners with literacy difficulties. The work of Rogers (1951) places relationships as the heart of learning in relation to the interactions between counsellors and their clients. He emphasises the qualities of acceptance, genuineness and empathy. In relation to empathy Rogers (1975) demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between the level of empathy shown to a learner and their school attainment. This is supported by the more recent research of Ireson and Hallam (2005). They argue that students with a greater degree of 'relatedness' to school often achieve higher levels of attainment than their peers. This feeling is in part developed through positive relationships with key adults at school.

Learners' experiences with peers and school staff have an influence on their sense of belonging. Dukynaite and Duddite (2017) define a sense of belonging as the extent to which community members feel accepted, respected, involved and supported. Having a sense of belonging is deemed to be a protective factor and linked to positive social, emotional and academic outcomes for learners (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan & Shochet, 2013). Research outlined suggests that students which literacy barriers to learning may not always experience a sense of belonging and therefore often feel excluded by their struggle to competently use the socially valued tools of reading and writing (Tobbell & Lawton, 2005).

2.4 The influences of dominant discourses on learner experiences

Burr (2006) states that dominant discourses are a 'frame of references, a conceptual backcloth against which our utterances can be interpreted' (p. 66). Therefore, these discourses influence how we experience, interpret and position ourselves in a learning context. In his research about the learning histories of students identified as dyslexic, Pollak states;

Social processes and practices play a key role in forming a person's experience and behaviour, and language and discourse are central to those practices (2005, p. 25).

Pollak (2005) identifies four main historical models of dyslexia which could be identified as key discourses. The first is a medical model which classifies dyslexia as a biological deficit. This is highlighted as a dominant discourse by the review of literature carried out by Lopes (2012). Next he identifies the discrepancy model which Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) suggest is still deeply embedded in the understanding of the general public as well as educational settings. He refers to the third model as one that privileges 'brain specialism' and the distinctive strengths and weaknesses individuals may have. This discourse is embedded in more modern rhetoric about reclaiming a positive identity in reaction to 'neurotypical' stereotypes. Finally, Pollak (2005) makes reference to a syndrome model which highlights dyslexia as a pattern of difficulties that are usually found together.

Evans (2014) identifies another powerful discourse in his research about the professional identity of student nurses which is echoed in much research that involves CYP. This is the relationship between having literacy barriers to learning and being 'stupid'. He cites a Daily Express headline from 2001 'Dyslexic nurses gave out pills by colour' as a prime example of how this discourse is played out (Evans, 2014, p. 362). In this context he explores how student nurses position themselves and are positioned by others along a continuum from 'embracers' to 'resistors' of their dyslexic identity.

The use of diagnostic labels is also a discourse which could be added to the four key discourses identified by Pollak (2005). Evans (2014) research points to one possible negative consequence of the label: the relationship between the label of dyslexia and cultural discourses around being 'stupid'. Riddick (2000) offers a framework to use when considering the impact of labels. She suggests considering what the label means to various social groups, its relationship with other labels, the context in which it is applied, who owns or applies the label, the purpose of the label and the history associated with it. In doing so she agrees with Snowling (2015) and Glazzard and Dale (2013) that labels can be empowering, can engender a greater understanding of the self and can help to narrate a more positive future. She disputes Goffman's (1968) 'Notes on a Stigmatised Self' thesis by suggesting that stigmatisation is a result of visual

differences, in this case struggling to read or write as opposed to the label itself. However, Riddick's (2000) framework could be seen to underplay the powerful dynamics often involved in labelling. Many would acknowledge that labels tend to provide a 'within person' identification of the problem and hence the solution must be to change the individual (Tobbell & Lawthom, 2005). This echoes a social model understanding of labels. Indeed, Gibbs and Elliott, (2014) found that the use of the term dyslexia influenced teachers professional positioning of themselves and their perceived ability to support students. The label dyslexia reduced their belief that they could intervene and make a difference.

These examples of discourses are not exhaustive, but help to provide a context in which the process of learning to read and write takes place. They also broaden the lens through which learner experiences can be viewed and understood and in doing so provide a legitimate addition to models which focus primarily on psychological processes.

2.5 Ways of exploring the school experiences of learners with literacy difficulties

Much research looking specifically at the experiences of CYP who experience literacy difficulties has focused on the related concepts of self-esteem and self-concept.

2.5.1 Questionnaires

Marsh's (1990) well-established and validated 'Self-Description Questionnaire' (SDQ) which is underpinned by a hierarchal and multidimensional conceptualisation of self-concept has been used in much research investigating CYP school experiences and self-perceptions (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002a; Ireson & Hallam, 2005). The SDQ is a 76 item Likert questionnaire which assesses non-academic, academic and general self-concept. In relation to an exploration of self-perceptions Kelly and Norwich (2004) remain sceptical of multidimensional questionnaires as they direct responses into a linear scale. Self-perceptions are therefore identified as high or low. They found that young peoples' understanding of themselves were not just multidimensional but also often contradictory. In relation to an exploration of the experience of literacy difficulties the SDQ has a relatively small component which focuses on literacy. This is called the 'verbal' scale and students are asked to rate their skills and abilities in English and reading. Figure one illustrates some of the questions that can be found in this section

of the questionnaire. It could be argued that these questions are rather broad and therefore are less able to provide nuanced, detailed and individual understandings of the experiences of those with literacy barriers to learning.

- I am hopeless in English classes
- Work in English classes is easy for me
- I learn things quickly in most school subjects
- I do things as well as most people

Figure 1: Questions from the Self-Description Questionnaire

2.5.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews offer researchers the opportunity of more open-ended exploration and therefore the potential to gain a more holistic understanding of learners' perceptions and experiences (Kelly & Norwich, 2004). However, questions have often been directive and problem saturated. Figure two illustrates some of the questions that have been asked.

- Cassery, 2013
- Do you have difficulties with your work, and what are the difficulties?
 - Do you think you are as clever as other kids in your class?
- Glazzard, 2010
- What did you find difficult to learn at school because of your dyslexia?
 - Can you think of any experiences you have had where a member of your peer group made a negative comment because of your special educational needs?
- Ingesson, 2007
- To what degree have your reading and writing difficulties influenced your self-esteem in a negative way?

Figure 2: A sample of interview question in previous research

These types of questions are likely to have predisposed participants to answer in a particular way. Burden and Burdett's (2007) open ended question 'If you were to imagine dyslexia as some kind of 'thing' or picture in your mind, how would you describe it?' provides more scope for participants to structure their answer in a more

individual and potentially positive way. It should be noted that theirs is one of the few pieces of research in which CYP gave more positive comments about their experience of school and literacy difficulties. A limitation of this study identified by Burden and Burdett (2007) and other authors (Armstrong & Humphrey, 2009) is that it was carried out in a specialist and high performing residential boys school primarily attended by middle class pupils with supportive parents. It is likely that these contextual factors also had an impact on students' perceptions. However, the research provides evidence that asking more open and exploratory questions often generates more nuanced and individual responses.

2.5.3 Other methods

Burden and Burdett (2005 & 2007) question whether there is something missing from the research outlined above, namely the voices of young people. Although part of a broader argument, Shakespeare and Watson (1998) identify three problems with existing literature on what they call 'disabled childhood.' They state that research is usually carried by those who are 'non-disabled', by adults discussing children and where 'disability is defined as a problem, within a model which is individualistic and medicalised.' It would be wrong to suggest that all research undertaken to date could be criticised in this way. There is a growing body of work that explores the experiences of adults (Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick, 2011) and how literacy difficulties influence the professional experiences of teachers (Glazzard & Dale, 2013 & 2015) and nurses (Evans, 2014). However, there is little research which elicits student voices in a similar way. A notable exception is Burden and Burdett's (2005 & 2007) use of metaphor to elicit student voices. These criticisms suggest that there is a potential gap in the literature in the way CYP experiences of literacy difficulties could be explored. This is also supported by Burden and Burdett (2005) who suggest that more than one approach is needed to gain a clearer understanding of learners' experiences of literacy barriers to learning.

2.6 Student experiences and student voice

The rights of CYP to have a say in decisions about their lives is recognised in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The article states that all children have the right to participate in decision making processes about their lives. This has had a significant influence on government legislation and policy in the United

Kingdom; for example, *Every Child Matters* (2003) which includes the importance of participation, the *Children Act* (2004) which highlights the importance of seeking the views of CYP and the more recent *Children and Families Act* (2014) which embeds this practice in law through a person-centred approach to supporting children and their families.

Gersch, Lipscombe, Stoyles and Caputi (2014) state that as well as a legal obligation; there is also a moral and pragmatic need for including CYP in decisions about their lives. Morally, it seems only right to include people in decisions about their lives, especially if CYP are viewed as active agents (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Morrow & Richards, 1996), with the capacity to engage in interactions about emotionally difficult times in their lives (Leeson, 2014), and big philosophical questions (Gersch, Lipscombe, Stoyles & Caputi, 2014). Pragmatically, Gersch, Lipscombe, Stoyles and Caputi (2014) state that change is more likely to happen if those involved play a part in decision making. Furthermore, CYP often have useful and pertinent information to share (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000).

Lundy (2007) states 'I would argue that Article 12 is one of the most widely cited yet commonly misunderstood of all the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (p. 930). She believes greater critique of the term is needed and that it is often applied too liberally to practices in education and research. Lundy's (2007) model of voice aims to conceptualise the meaning of the article more fully. The model is four dimensional. The first two dimensions include providing a safe and inclusive space in which student voices can be facilitated. The next two dimensions involve ensuring that appropriate audiences listen to and act on what has been shared. CYP should be involved in the decision making processes of all dimensions. Lundy's (2007) model links with earlier attempts to problematize the notion of student voice. Hart's (1992) ladder of participation clearly shows how student voice work can often be tokenistic.

Lundy (2007) suggests that there are a number of reasons why the article is misunderstood and therefore inaccurately conceptualised. Firstly adults often do not believe that children have the capacity to meaningfully share their experiences, views and beliefs. Next, she outlines that it is believed that giving CYP this opportunity will

allow them control and therefore undermine authority. This view is shared by the findings of Bragg's (2007a) research in which children observed the teaching practice of primary school teachers. She found that some teachers saw this as a threat to their professional identity. Finally, there is often a view within education that student voice activities take too much time and effort which would be better directed towards teaching and learning directly. Furthermore, Bragg (2007c) suggests student voice work has the potential to be turned on its head and used as a way to meet school improvement goals and as a form of social control.

2.7 The role of educational psychology

Bragg (2007b) states that eliciting the voices of CYP is a legal obligation for all professionals who work with them. This is supported by many within the educational psychology profession (Beaver, 2011; Ingram, 2013, Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000), with Ingram (2013) suggesting that 'EP's have claimed a central role in representing and advocating for children's views' (p.335). Although this role is claimed as central in recent literature, Howarth (2013) found that that there was little research into CYP views of the statutory process. Furthermore, Noble (2003) suggests that the views and experiences of CYP with special educational needs are rarely asked for and were often listened to in a tokenistic manner.

Harding and Atkinson (2009) found that the predominant method used by EPs to elicit the voices of CYP was direct questioning; although other techniques developed from personal construct and solution focused psychology were also used. This finding is inconsistent with the predominant and long held view in educational psychology that for genuine and authentic voice to be elicited appropriate tools and approaches are needed (Gersch, 1996). However, a limitation of this study in relation to making generalisations from its findings is its small scale sample. Views were only collected from a sample of EPs in one particular local authority.

The literature outlined above suggests that EP involvement in eliciting CYP voices has focused on those identified as having special educational needs and at an individual level as part of the process of consultation or statutory assessment. Criticisms of student voice practices in general outlined by Lundy (2007), Hart (1992) and Bragg (2007c) are likely to be pertinent to the practices of EPs and their conceptualisation of student voice.

2.8 Summary

Evidence is provided for the school experiences of learners, in particular the impact of their relationships with peers and staff, experience of support and accessing the curriculum. Findings suggest that in mainstream settings CYP appear to make negative comparisons with their peers, often find work difficult to access and sometimes do not feel understood by school staff. Psychological models which have implications for the learner experiences of those identified as having literacy difficulties are also explored. These models seek to explain how learner school experiences influence self-esteem and how CYP see themselves as learners.

Methodological limitations of research using standardised questionnaires and interviews have been identified. Standardised questionnaires tend to elicit findings which are rather broad and abstract and therefore provide little scope for more nuanced and individual exploration of CYP school experiences. Interviews schedules have tended to predispose participants to answer in a particular way.

The role of the EP in eliciting and foregrounding the views and experiences of CYP has been explored in relation to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is highlighted that Article 12 is not as straightforward or easily adhered to as might be thought. Furthermore, although EPs have claimed a central role in eliciting authentic CYP voices and experiences, practice has not always met this standard. There are legal, ethical and pragmatic reasons why involving CYP in discussions about their school experiences is beneficial.

2.9 Evidence that further investigation would be beneficial and contributions to practice

A review of the literature suggests that much research into literacy barriers to learning has focused on neuropsychological causes and interventions (Lopes, 2012). In relation to these areas, investigation of the experiences of those identified as having literacy barriers to learning is a relatively small field. In addition, there are some methodological limitations of research in this field as well as limited research which investigates the individual experiences of CYP with literacy barriers to learning. The work of Burden and Burdett (2005) is a notable exception. Furthermore, Burden and Burdett (2005) suggest that there is space to investigate learner experiences in a variety of ways.

The current research attempts to add to the existing body of knowledge by using exploratory and participatory methods to investigate learner experiences in context. This will enable questions to be asked differently and support learners to give more individual accounts of their experiences.

Taking this approach will add to the current knowledge of how EPs could support CYP, their families and staff at school by helping to provide a more holistic understanding of literacy barriers to learning. This is particularly pertinent to educational psychology practice because of the significant numbers of learners who are likely to experience difficulty in gaining the skills to read and write (Jama & Dugdale, 2012). This experience is likely to impact their belief in themselves as being able to complete certain tasks (Casserly, 2013). Research also suggests an impact on motivation to engage in learning activities (Burden & Burdett, 2005).

EPs claim a pivotal role in eliciting and foregrounding the experiences and views of CYP (Beaver, 2011). There is also evidence to suggest that within educational psychology practice appropriate tools and approaches have not always been used (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). This research aims to contribute to the current body of research by using the participatory method of photovoice. Exploring a variety of ways of eliciting and sharing student experiences and views is vital for the profession if it continues to seek a role in this area. Furthermore, exploring and evaluating tools EPs can use at individual, group and systemic levels is an ethical as well as legal obligation.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research aims, questions and design for each phase. It then goes on to explain the methodological orientation of the research and consider the ethical implications.

3.1 Research aims and questions

Phase one aims

- To explore the social and learning experiences of a group of students with literacy barriers to learning.

Phase one research questions

1. What are the social and learning experiences of students with literacy barriers to learning?
2. Can photovoice enhance our understanding of students' school experiences?

Phase two aims

- To use students' photovoice work to stimulate staff discussions and reflections about the experiences of students with literacy barriers to learning.

Phase two research questions

3. What are staff reflections on students' photos?

3. 2 Methodological orientation

This piece of research could be described as taking a social constructionism approach. This is an exploratory piece of research that aimed to explore the school experiences of learners with literacy difficulties and then consider the influence that sharing their experiences had on staff. I have used the term social constructionism as a 'sensitizing concept' which indicates the general direction that the research has taken (Schwandt, 1998). This is in line with Burr (2006) who states that there is no one feature or principle that could identify a social constructionism approach.

The current research falls within the interpretivist philosophical position. Within this position our experiences of the world are seen as socially constructed. This leads to an epistemological position which views meaning as constructed between people and

being historically and socially contingent (Burr, 2006). This position also acknowledges the impact of the researcher on the research and the relationship between the researcher and participants (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Therefore, understandings were constructed between myself and the participants involved.

3.2.1 My role within the research

Etherington (2004, p. 31) describes a reflexive researcher as one with the capacity to 'acknowledge how their experiences and contexts inform the process and outcomes of inquiry.' Being a reflexive researcher can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. It may mean being open to and aware of subjective bias in the collection and interpretation of data. It could also be the primary method by which the researcher explores a particular topic, such as in the case of autoethnography (Smith, 1999). Within this piece of research I have chosen to share my position as someone who has been identified as experiencing literacy barriers to learning.

Behar (1996) states 'We ask for revelations from others but we reveal little or nothing about ourselves; we make others vulnerable but we ourselves remain invulnerable' (p. 273). Allowing ourselves into the research process therefore has the capacity to reduce the power differential between the researcher and the researched and opens space for collaboration, curiosity and learning. Reflexivity also offers the possibility of being more open to and transparent about our own biases, blind spots and possible distortions. Therefore, the researcher is given scope to acknowledge and explore their influence on the kind of data that is collected, how it is interpreted and any conclusions that are made. This process should increase the trustworthiness and credibility of any conclusions, implications or recommendations (McGhee, 2001).

Punch (2002) also states that taking a reflexive position is important when working with children. She suggests that researchers should 'critically reflect not only on their role and their assumptions, but also on the choice of methods and their application' (p. 323).

3.3 School Context

This research took place in one school located in the south west of England on the outskirts of a growing town. It converted to academy status in 2011. Ofsted regard it as a school that is larger than most secondary schools. It has a 6th form and Special

Resource Provision (SRP) for students who have been identified as having autistic spectrum condition (ASC). There are relatively few students from ethnic minorities and the proportion of students identified as having SEN is below the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals or Pupil Premium (PP) is below average at 27.4%.

The school is situated within the local authority in which I was a second and third year trainee EP. I contacted all secondary schools in the area in March 2016 via email outlining my research and attaching a brief overview (Appendix 1). Only one school responded to my request.

3.4 Participant recruitment

3.4.1 Phase one: The student photographers

The rationale for working with secondary students was linked to the review of the literature. Most research in this area has been done with teenage learners. The results of the pilot study with a year six student also supported this decision. He found the act of taking photographs and then talking about them difficult (please see section 4.2 Photovoice pilot).

A convenience sample was used to identify students to take part. In consultation with the SENCo it was decided that only students who she believed would be keen to take part and share their experiences were approached. All four participants attended a small group literacy intervention once a week and were assisted by LSAs (Learning Support Assistant) during core English and Maths lessons. Two students used laptops and speech recognition software during lessons to record their work and attended a lunch time session with a member of staff to print off their work. All participants also had access to and used a social space at lunch and break which was staffed and managed by an adult. All students were boys. At the start of the research students were in Year 8 (aged 12-13). They were in Year 9 (aged 13-14) by its conclusion. Table one provides descriptive data about the students who took part.

Table 1: Descriptive information for student photographers

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Year group at beginning of research	Descriptive information
Harry	Male	White British	Y8	Uses the staffed recreational room during break and lunch Receives a literacy intervention Uses laptop in lessons for written work
Sidney	Male	White British	Y8	Uses the staffed recreational room during break and lunch Receives a literacy intervention Is a child looked after (CLA)
Rick	Male	White British	Y8	Uses the staffed recreational room during break and lunch Receives a literacy intervention
Sam	Male	White British	Y8	Uses the staffed recreational room during break and lunch Receives a literacy intervention Uses laptop in lessons for written work Has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

3.4.2 Phase two: The staff participants

Phase two was launched by a whole staff presentation on 1st September 2016 about the research. The presentation lasted approximately 15 minutes and covered what had taken place with students, why this might be relevant to staff, including the findings of some applicable research, and finally how staff could take part in phase two (See Appendix 2 for PowerPoint slides used).

Seven staff chose to take part in phase two out of a staff body of approximately 145 people. Appendix three provides demographic and basic background information for those who chose to take part as well as an overview of their reflections written at the end of discussion groups. Participants' ages ranged from the late twenties to 60 while years spent working in education ran from 1 to 18 years. The participants had a variety of teaching and non-teaching roles including; lead LSA for Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), Literacy Coordinator, Pupil Premium Coordinator, Transition Coordinator, teacher of History and LSA responsible for self-esteem interventions. There was one male participant.

3.5 Phase one design

The aim of phase one was to explore the social and learning experiences of a group of students with literacy barriers to learning.

3.5.1 A case study approach

Yin (2014) defines a case study as an inquiry that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident' (p. 16).

A case study design was chosen for a number of reasons. As illustrated by Yin's (2014) definition, context is seen as important within this approach. In the current research, the experiences of the student photographers took place between people within a particular context. The primary research question was to explore the student photographers' learning and social experiences. Flyvbjerg (2011) suggests that 'case studies often contain a substantial element of narrative' (p. 7). This is because they enable the researcher to explore the complexities and contradictions of real life, generating rich and detailed data. Many believe that stories are the way we experience and make sense of our lives (Mishler, 1986).

Yin (2014) describes case studies as having a flexible design that can embrace a variety of different epistemological positions and data collection methods. Baxter and Jacks (2008) state that case studies can enable the researcher to highlight the importance of human experience as subjective and therefore acknowledge multiple ways of knowing and experiencing the world.

Baxter and Jacks (2008) also state that case studies provide the flexibility to move away from the objectivity of the researcher position, so changing the relationship between the researcher and researched. Within this new relationship both parties learn and change as a result of the research process. This relational view acknowledges the difficulties of achieving an objective researcher position and the possible impact this has on findings and generalisability. Therefore, a case study approach sits comfortably within the epistemological orientation of the current research.

The review of the literature identified that there has been little research into the experiences of CYP identified as having literacy barriers to learning using this approach. Tellis-James and Fox (2016, p. 336) suggest that by asking participants to share their

views and experiences in an accessible way that is 'right' for them, researchers often get different answers. They found that past research has often positioned CYP identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) negatively and without the resources to cope. By asking participants to construct stories about their future selves the researchers were able to identify resilience factors and resources that participants identified and used. This is supported by the work of Hunter (2010). She made a deliberate choice not to frame her work around childhood sexual abuse, but early sexual experiences. She believes this elicited different data from other research in this area.

Finally, I believed that this approach would foreground the experiences of those involved. This was important in the current research because the aim in phase one was to elicit the experiences and views of learners. I also believed this approach would support the aim of phase two which was to engage school staff with the experiences and views of students experiencing literacy barriers to learning.

Flyvbjerg (2011) identifies a number of misconceptions that can undermine how case study research is viewed. These include that it is difficult to generalise from case studies, that case studies are only useful as pilots or to generate hypotheses for further research and that they generally tend to produce more concrete knowledge which Flyvbjerg (2011) states is often undervalued in comparison with theoretical knowledge.

Yin (2014) identifies a number of different case study designs. The current research utilised an exploratory design with four embedded case studies. To adhere to the principles of a case study design, data gathered for each case were kept together and analysed to produce an experience board containing the individual experiences of each participant (Appendix 5). Ensuring that cases are kept whole is a key feature of a case study design (Yin, 2014). Each case study was then used to make a single case within one school context. This allowed for the exploration of multiple perspectives and experiences while also constructing themes across the case studies.

3.5.2 Photovoice

There are a number of ways that photography can be used in research. Rose (2012) believes that there is often confusion between the methods of photo-elicitation and Photovoice. She describes photo-elicitation as simply introducing photographs into a

research interview. These photographs do not necessarily need to be taken by participants. In contrast, Photovoice emerged out of action research with marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The method was developed by Wang and Burris (1994 & 1997) in the field of health education and promotion. Wang and Burris (1997) state that they were influenced by feminist theory and its emphasis on subjective experience. They envisage three main attributes of photovoice research. These are that it enables participants to reflect on facets of their own identity and experiences; it promotes dialogue about important issues within a community and facilitates other members of the community, preferably policy makers, to better understand the experiences of photographers.

Photovoice is therefore often described as forming part of a participatory and action research approach. Rose (2012) states, 'The point of action research is not just to study something, but to engage research participants in a process of social learning, analysis and empowerment, in the hope of eventually changing the social situation itself' (p. 305). It is a method which puts the production into the hands of participants and enables participants to choose how they wish to represent themselves and their experiences (Luttrell, 2010).

Photovoice was the primary method of data collection for phase one of the research. This was because it linked with the research aim to elicit the experiences of learners with literacy barriers to learning. This method was also chosen because of its accessibility. Both Aldridge (2007) and Luttrell (2010) share the joy and excitement that participants experience when given cameras to capture their worlds. Hill (2014) adds that interviews are not always accessible for some participants; they can feel intimidating and abstract. Adding photos provides 'tangible prompts' and also takes the focus away from the participants. Aldridge (2007) found that giving cameras to participants emphasized their capacity rather than their incapacity and was effective in increasing levels of participation. Booth and Booth (2003) believe this is because photovoice emphasises action over cognition. However, Punch (2002) cautions that researchers should not assume that some methods are more accessible than others.

I was also keen to find a method that opened up and explored learner perspectives in more detail. This is supported by the work of Shohel (2012). He interviewed

Bangladeshi children moving from informal village schools to formal education.

Traditional interviews yielded very brief and superficial answers. The introduction of photos into later interviews generated deeper and richer understandings of children's transition experiences.

Within the current research student photographers' photovoice work was developed into individual experience boards. These are outlined in sections 3.7 and 4.3.2.

Possible limitations with the use of photovoice are identified in both phases of the research and the overall discussion chapter.

3.5.3 An overview of the data collection process

Appendix four shows an overview of the meetings that I had with students, when they took place and their purpose. The overview uses the concept of a six term year, therefore, the meetings with students started in term five of the academic year 2015/16 when students were in Year 8 and continued into term five of the academic year 2016/17 when students were in Year 9. Each meeting was planned by organising ideas into a PowerPoint presentation which was printed off and brought to the meeting. This enabled me to have a clear outline of what I wanted to achieve. I was also able to use knowledge gained from previous meetings to plan forthcoming ones, for example, activities that needed to be completed. Therefore, the PowerPoint became a working document. I met with students for approximately 25 minutes twice a week during term six of the academic year 2015/16. I then met with them on five separate occasions during the academic year 2016/17. All sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. Further information about what took place during meetings can be found in section 4.3.

3.6 Phase two design

The aim of phase two was to engage school staff with the experiences and views of students experiencing literacy barriers to learning by sharing their photovoice work and experience boards. Further to this I wanted to explore the influence that sharing students' experiences might have on staff. Although individual interviews could have been used, I was aware of the time constraints in undertaking repeated trips to the school and the pressure this might put the SENCo under to help organise such meetings. Therefore, I arranged to meet staff in groups. One advantage of meeting with staff in groups was that it allowed staff with varying roles and responsibilities to

explore the students' work together and so share ideas and construct their interpretations together (Robson, 2002).

3.6.1 Focused conversations

Clough and Nutbrown's (2002) concept of 'focused conversations' was used to engage staff in discussion groups around students' work. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) describe focused conversations as more flexible than traditional focus groups as they allow for more researcher input and interaction with participants. They suggest that focused conversations can foster empathy and commonality of experience if those taking part are willing to open up. Furthermore, Clough and Nutbrown (2002) suggest that focused conversations are a useful research tool when members of the group are familiar with each other, when there is a pre-agreed topic to be discussed which is of shared experience, knowledge and interest, and where the researcher can take the role of a process facilitator or 'caretaker.'

This method of meeting with staff and discussing students' work also allowed for what Luttrell (2010, p. 225) describes as 'intersubjective' interpretation. This means the meanings of photos can be multiple, shared and contested. This view is shared by Bach (2007) who states that 'the meaning of the photograph is constructed by the maker and the viewer, both of whom carry their social position and interests to the photographic act' (p. 291). Therefore, I felt confident that this method of data collection would meet my research aim to engage staff in thoughtful and reflective debate about students' experiences of school as well as offering further interpretations of students' work.

Staff were recruited to take part through a whole staff presentation which formed part of the SEN component of their continuous professional development (CPD). Seven staff were able to take part. Not all staff were available at the same time so three separate discussion groups were held. All discussion groups met once and were audio recorded and transcribed.

3.7 Data analysis for phase one and two

Thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the data across both phases of the research. This method was chosen because of its flexibility. It can be aligned with most theoretical and epistemological perspectives. There is also a variety of ways that thematic analysis can be used and applied. Thematic analysis is

described as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting on patterns or themes within data, with themes being identified as capturing something important about the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2013) put forward a six phase recursive process of analysis. This begins with the researcher immersing themselves in the data, and then the data is coded. They describe this as more than just reducing the data, but an active process of analysis. Intertwined is a search for themes. Themes are described as 'a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 121). Furthermore, themes do not 'emerge' from the data, but are constructed by the researcher. Themes and codes must then be reviewed for consistency. Finally themes are named, written up and contextualised with relevant literature.

Within phase one data were analysed inductively, therefore the themes identified link strongly to the data itself in the first instance. This approach was chosen because of the participatory nature of the research and desire to foreground the student photographers' experiences. However, it is acknowledged that the researcher cannot ever hope to fully untangle themselves from their theoretical and epistemological position (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were analysed at a semantic level in relation to participants' social and learning experiences of school. Some interpretation at the latent level was made in relation to how participants saw themselves as learners.

In keeping with thematic analysis principles there was a recursive process of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Understandings became richer by returning to the photos and typed transcription on multiple occasions (Bach, 2007). This took place with the student participants themselves as well as within the data familiarisation and coding processes. Throughout the research process I was able to meet with the participants on many occasions. This enabled us to look at and discuss their photos in a variety of ways, for example, through organising and sorting activities, adding post-its with captions as well as group discussions.

An important principle of a case study approach is keeping cases whole (Yin, 2014). This is also a feature of much photovoice research (Aldridge, 2007). To adhere to this principle experience boards (Appendix 5) were created for each participant. This enabled all the data that were generated for each participant to be presented together.

Data included participants' top six photos which had been labelled using post-it notes, transcriptions from research meetings and initial interpretations. Initial interpretations were written in the first person using some of the words and phrases used by the student photographers. This was done to try and capture their experiences in a clear and understandable way. It also enabled them to give immediate feedback about the statements and change or amend them. This was envisaged as a process of co-construction. Data were shared with the student photographers as a group, and their feedback about their own experience boards was gained on two separate occasions (Booth & Booth, 2003). From this analysis each experience board was written up to include the most pertinent photos and quotes that best illustrated each participant. Alternative experiences were also explored by looking at photos that participants chose not to use (Luttrell, 2010). In line with the embedded case study design the interpretations from each experience board were then analysed to identify any overlapping themes that ran through the entire case.

What Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as a theoretical, deductive or 'top-down' form of thematic analysis was used to analysis the data from phase two of the research. This was because I was looking specifically at whether engagement with the students' experience boards led to staff reflections. Analysis took place at the semantic level. The findings are discussed and interpreted using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs framework.

3.8 Ethics

Ethical approval was gained from the University of Exeter's Social Sciences and International Studies (SSIS) Ethics Committee in April 2016 (Appendix 6). Guidance was followed from the British Educational Research Association (2011) and the British Psychological Association's Code of Ethics for Human Research (2010).

As a trainee educational psychologist I am in receipt of an up to date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. I also have a Level two Child Protection qualification.

3.8.1 Ethical considerations in phase one

The concept of process consent (Smythe & Murray, 2000) was adhered to throughout the research. Initial consent was gained at the start of the research process in a meeting with the student participants. A consent form was discussed and signed during

this meeting. The consent form was made as user friendly as possible by using the SMOG (simplified measure of gobbledygook) scale from the National Literacy Trust. Relevant pictures were added to support the understanding of key concepts.

Consent was revisited on a number of occasions throughout the research:

- During early meetings group ground rules and guidelines for taking photos were discussed and established. This is identified by Rogers and Ludhra (2011) as an important part of negotiating roles and gaining informed consent. Photo one and photo two show the spider diagrams that were generated through discussions.
- Students used red dots to identify photos they did not give consent to use as part of the research process.
- Experience boards were shared with students on two consecutive days. Students were given the opportunity to read through their transcripts and all initial interpretations that had been identified. Amendments and corrections were made.
- Students were invited to a 'celebrating success' session in May 2017. During the session they were able to comment on and make amendments to the photo report that they and staff would receive.

Confidentiality and identifiability were outlined in the consent forms that went to students, their parents and the school. Students chose their own pseudonyms. However, it was discussed that they might be identifiable within the school community, especially as their work was to be shared with staff. The concept of identifiability was also discussed during the group ground rules and guidelines for taking photos meeting. Therefore, it was agreed that students should try not to take photos of other people or identifiable features of the school. However, as evidenced by photo one, there was some flexibility with the use of 'selfies'. Therefore, the student photographers did take some photos of themselves. All identifiable features, including faces, school logos and names were electronically obscured from photos used in the research.

Disposable cameras were chosen in part because of ethical considerations in relation to the sharing of images outside their research purpose. The school leadership team were concerned that participants might take photos not relevant to the project and then share them with peers. This would have been considerably easier if participants had used their own phones or school iPads. The use of disposable cameras therefore gave

some more control of the images. I was able to develop and check them before sharing them with participants. This method reduced concerns that school staff had about the research project. It was also agreed that the aim of the research and procedures for taking photos would be shared with staff during a scheduled briefing meeting. All staff therefore were aware of the days that student participants would be taking photos and where they would be going.

Within research using photos there can often be tensions around copyright and ownership (Rose, 2012). This was a particular concern of school staff at the start of the research process. It was agreed that the photos could only be used as part of the research and that ownership would be triadic. Therefore, any decision regarding their use in the research would need to be agreed by the head teacher, the student participants and myself.

Consideration was given to how to be aware of and reduce power differentials during this phase of the research. Rogers and Ludhra (2011) suggest that it is essential to engage in reflective processes when considering ethical dilemmas when working with CYP in research. Therefore, I kept a reflective journal throughout the research process and reflected after each session I spent with the participants. Participatory methods were also chosen to reduce power differentials. In choosing to work in this way I adhere to the view that Punch (2002) takes of working with CYP;

Research with children is potentially different from research with adults mainly because of adult perceptions of children and children's marginalised position in adult society but least because children are inherently different' (2002, p. 321).

This view is supported by the work of Morrow and Richards (1996) and Christensen and Prout (2002) who see CYP as having the potential to be active agents in research.

Gallagher, Haywood, Jones and Milne (2010) have found that reducing power differentials can be difficult to achieve. Compliance to adult requests is seen as good behaviour and actively encouraged in schools. Therefore, student participants may not always feel they can question the researcher. Furthermore, Gallagher, Haywood, Jones and Milne (2010) also found that CYP were not always motivated to be more involved in

the research process; for example, the more abstract tasks of analysing and interpreting data.

I also worked hard to reduce power differentials by making time to develop trusting relationships with participants (Green 2012) and showing a willingness to be led by their agendas at times (Leeson, 2014). This was achievable because of the continuous and prolonged amount of time spent with students over a period of approximately one year. I therefore also had to be aware of the importance of ending the research relationship. At the end of term six (July 2016) when a considerable amount of time had been spent with students they all received individual cards thanking them for taking part, noting their contributions to the research and reminding them that I would see them again the following September. To end the research project all students were invited to a 'celebrating success' session (May 2017).

3.8.2 Ethical considerations in phase two

All staff who chose to take part in phase two of the research completed a consent form (Appendix 9). This was emailed to them before the discussion group took place; a proforma showing the questions likely to be asked was also attached. Informed consent was discussed at the start of each discussion group and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, including the right to withdraw their contribution to the discussion group once it had been transcribed. Transcripts were emailed to all participants for them to check and make amendments. No participants chose to amend what had been transcribed.

All data were stored securely on a password protected laptop. Participant names were all replaced with corresponding letters and numbers. A cross referencing system linking participants' names and their identifying letter and number combination was created and stored securely in line with the data protection law. All quotes used were screened for any identifying features which might have compromised anonymity, such as location and names.

A copy of the final photo report was shared with the head teacher and SENCo. Staff involved in the discussion groups was asked if they would like a copy.

3.9 A diagrammatic overview of the research

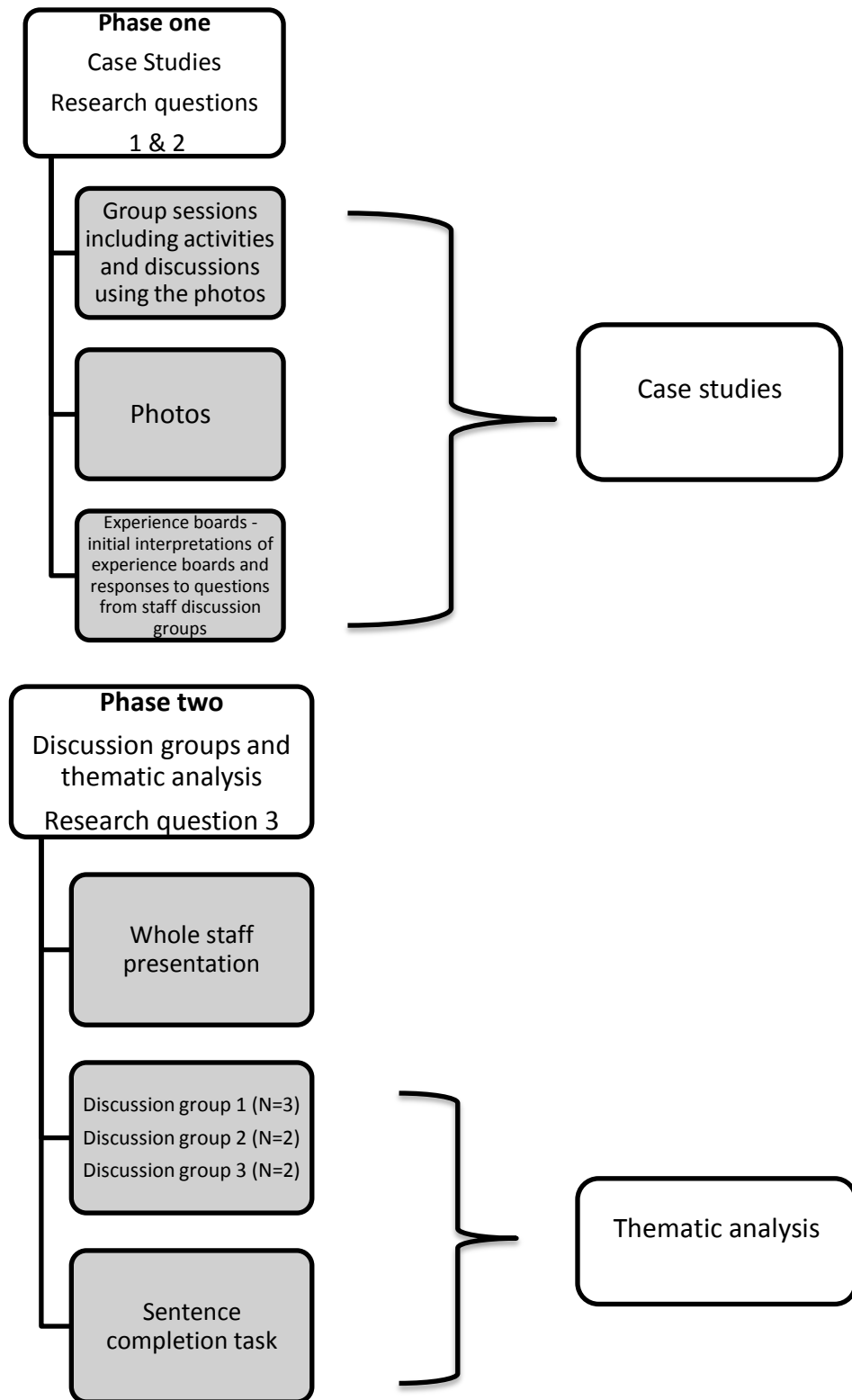


Figure 3: A diagrammatic overview of the research

Phase One

4. Method

4.1 Research questions

1. What are the social and learning experiences of students with literacy barriers to learning?
2. Can photovoice enhance our understanding of students' school experiences?

4.2 Photovoice pilot

The method of photovoice was piloted in March 2016 with a Year 6 (aged 10-11) student as part of his preparation for secondary school. A disposable camera was used so as to ensure that I had control over the processing and sharing of images. The table below shows a typed extract from my research journal about what worked and some of the problems encountered.

Table 2: A typed extract from my research journal written after the photovoice pilot

What went well	Problems/concerns
Developing guidelines for the use of the camera together (between the researcher and participant)	Poor quality of photographs – need better quality cameras?
Use of prepared questions to scaffold ideas	Photographer training needed – finger over the lens for most photos. Only 2 came out!
Use of disposable cameras 1) Makes it a slow process to take a photo. You have to concentrate on what you are doing and can't take lots of photos at once.	How useful were the images? What do they tell me about a student's experiences of school?
	Difficult to generate much discussion – was this because it was an individual task? A group might generate more ideas. Was this also influenced by his age, might secondary school learners be better?

As a result of the pilot the following decisions were made;

- The method would be more suitable for students in secondary school
- Training in using disposable cameras was essential

- A group dynamic would possibly aid the generation of photos and subsequent discussions

4.3 Stages of data collection and analysis

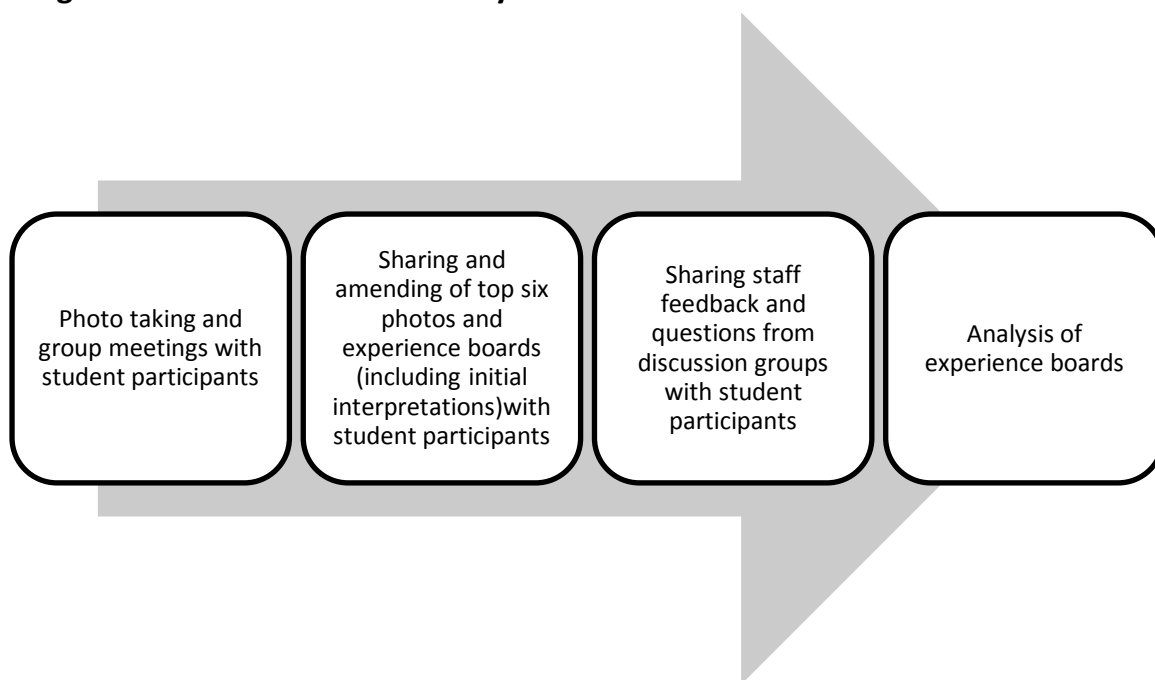


Figure 4: An overview of the stages of phase one

4.3.1 Research meetings with student photographers

The majority of research meetings took place during term six of the academic year 2015/2016. Meetings took place during mentoring and assemblies because the school no longer has a morning registration or tutor time. Students have mentor sessions (which are like tutor time, but with a smaller group) during a 25 minute lunch time slot three times a week. During the other two sessions students attend assembly and then do a club of their choice. I liaised with the Mentor Coordinator (this person is responsible for having an overview of mentor sessions and assemblies) to ensure students did not miss any praise or house assemblies.

The information below outlines in more detail what happened in sessions.

The first meeting with students involved sharing the purpose of the research and gaining consent. The SENCo was also invited to the meeting to explain the research and its implications. To help them consider what taking part might mean students completed a reflection sheet (Appendix 7). Written responses to the question ‘why do you want to take part?’ included ‘So I can open up and miss assembly’, ‘because I want

to post my opinion in school' and 'because I think it is important for sharing your feelings' (the spelling of some words has been altered for clarity). With the support of the SENCo the consent form was read and discussed (Appendix 8). In the next few sessions group ground rules and guidelines for taking photographs were established. Photos one and two show the spider diagrams that were generated through discussions. Students also began to think about their pseudonyms.

During these sessions it was explained that all sessions would be recorded. The recording device was then put in the centre of the group during each session. Participants took it in turns to take charge of the recorder and ensure everyone was aware that recording had started. They were also charged with labelling the start of the recording with the date and names of all those involved. Participants were made aware that all recordings would be transcribed and that they would have the opportunity to review the transcription at a later date.

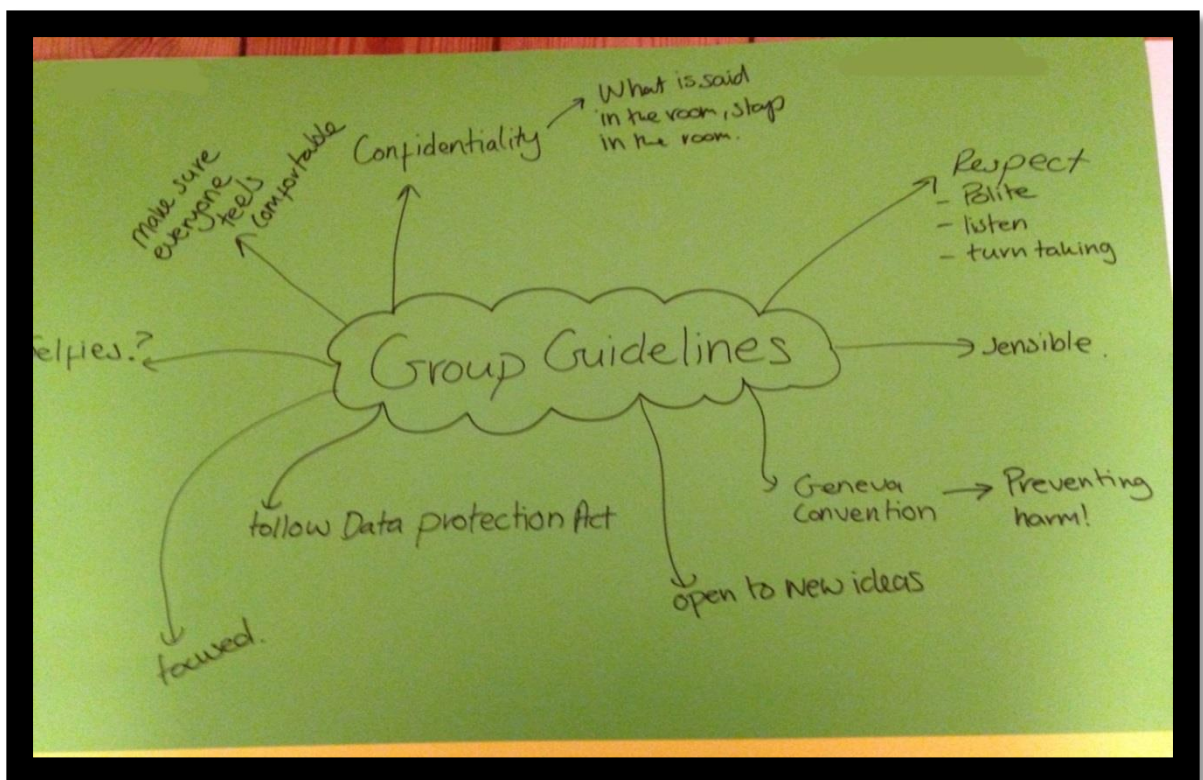


Photo 1: Group Guidelines

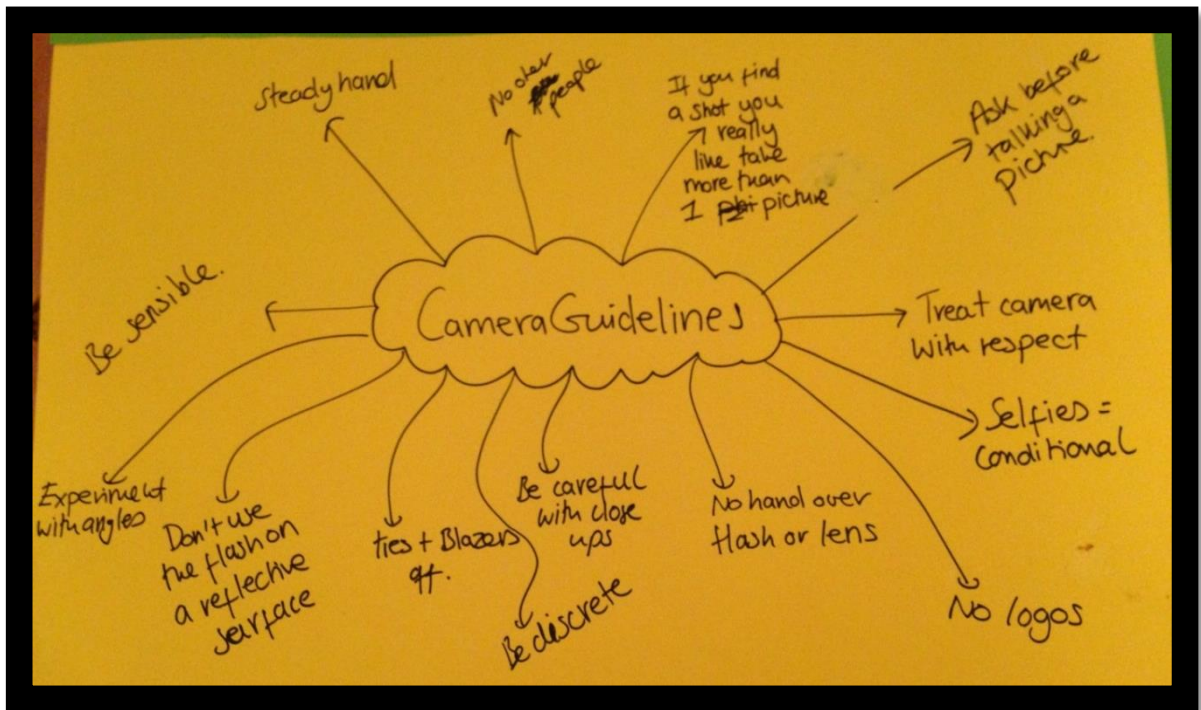


Photo 2: Camera usage guidelines

Next there was a practice session. This was an opportunity to see how the disposable cameras worked and to experiment with how to use the cameras. Photos were then developed and given back to students in the meeting the following day to discuss. This was also used as an opportunity to ask students to rank and explain their top three photos from the practice session, an activity they would be asked to do as part of the main body of the research. The practice session also gave participants the opportunity to experiment with how they might represent different aspects of their school experiences. Participants were able to discuss how they might like to represent their thoughts and feelings as well as activities they took part in at school. During this session the stimulus question was also shared with the students. This question was 'Take 10 or more photographs of anything that would help others to understand your experience of school and/or learning.' This is in line with the work of Booth and Booth (2003) and Hill (2014) who provided one simple question for their participants to consider in relation to taking their photos.

The next two meetings were spent taking photos around the school. I had attended a staff morning briefing to outline the aims of the project and explain to staff which days students would be out with cameras. The students had identified where they wanted to go and staff were emailed in advance to check that this would be convenient.

The remainder of the meetings in term six were spent working with the printed photos. The activities that students were asked to do during these meetings included getting rid of 'dud' photos. This included blurred photos, multiple photos of the same subject and ones they could not remember their reason for taking them. Students used post-it notes with thought and speech bubbles to label the photos along with green arrows and yellow stars to highlight important features.

Next students were asked to pick and rank their top six photos in relation to the stimulus question. They were asked to organise the photos into a triangle shape, with the photos they viewed as the most important at the top or apex of the triangle. This method of working with the photos was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, asking students to distinguish and select a top number of photos is common practice within photovoice research, especially when many photos may have been taken (Aldridge, 2007; Luttrell, 2010). Secondly, this task is also similar to the diamond nine activity evaluated by Hill, Croydon, Greathead, Kenny, Yates and Pellicano (2016) as part of their investigation into participatory methods with student researchers. Such activities aim to facilitate reflection on experiences in a meaningful and active way.

After students ranked their photos the decisions they made were discussed as a group. Questions developed from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) question types were used to facilitate the process (Appendix 10). Many of these questions are similar to those of Aldridge, (2007), Hill (2014) and Luttrell (2010) who also used photovoice.

The next meetings took place the following academic year, during terms one and two of Year nine. As part of the co-construction of initial interpretations and process consent, students' experience boards were shared with them during a group session. A final meeting was held to bring the research project to an end and celebrate the students' achievements and participation. At this meeting I was also able to share staff response to the experience boards and gain feedback from the questions they wanted to ask the students.

4.3.2 Interpretation of the data

All group meetings were recorded and the recordings from each session were transcribed. An attempt was made to transcribe sessions as soon as possible after they had taken place. What was said was directly transcribed onto a word document.

Within the transcription each student photographers' spoken contributions are written in a different colour so as to differentiate the speaker. A key is provided. Appendix eleven provides an example of a transcribed session. Initial thoughts and reflections were made after each meeting and written up in a research journal. This process enabled considerable familiarisation with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Individual experience boards were developed to keep the data for each case together (Yin 2014) and to synthesise data from multiple sources. These sources included students' top six photo choices, any post-it notes that students had used to add titles or extra information to their photos, other photos that had been spoken about during meetings, transcription and reflections from my research journal.

The student participants' top six photos were placed at the centre of each experience board as they underpinned all transcribed discussions. The transcription of each participant was placed on their particular experience board. This was done using blue tack to enable the movement of transcription in relation to the photos and the statements that the student participants made. This process took place over a number of consecutive days and enabled initial interpretations to develop by moving and grouping text. Initial interpretations were written in the first person using some of the words and phrases used by the student photographers. They were written on post-it thought bubbles to enable their movement or removal from the experience boards. Appendix five shows each experience board.

As part of the co-construction process experience boards were shared with the student photographers during a number of group sessions. This enabled participants to reflect on the contents of their individual experience board and consider if it had captured their most salient experiences. Some additional information was added at this point to reflect the comments which were made. The feedback participants gave is explored in more detail in the discussion section of phase one.

After the co-construction meetings initial interpretations on the individual experience boards were reviewed and refined. As part of the embedded case study design, initial interpretations from each experience board were analysed as part of one context specific case (Yin 2014). Overlapping themes that were evident across all experience boards are identified in Table five.

5. Findings

Findings are presented as case study summaries with themes that link to the research questions. Participants' comments from all meetings have been collated to create a personal narrative for their photos. Questions that I asked can be seen at times to clarify and support meaning.

Each case study includes the participants' top six photos and relevant quotes. Tables three and four provide written examples of how photos and student participant conversations were synthesised to develop initial interpretations. All identifying features have been digitally obscured or removed from photos. All quotes from meetings are in italics. Participants can be identified by their pseudonyms. I have used the letters SP, to identify myself. Any identifying names or places have been replaced with *****. Bracketed information is used to contextualise quotes.

All the participants included the Pit Stop in their top six photos. The Pit Stop is a social space to which students with special educational needs have access. It is a room that students can use during break and lunch time. A member of staff is always present during these times. Some students also attend interventions in the Pit Stop.

Table 3: An example of the relationship between photos, quotes and interpretations for Harry's experience board

HARRY		
Photo(s)	Supporting Quotes	Interpretation
Stairs	<p><i>Well it was like a picture in my mind. It was like the step thing, different things...uh, I think it was a ladder where like, you had to put this in your writing. And it was like stages going up (when trying to visualise something he wanted to take a picture of during the practice session)...</i></p> <p><i>This picture (the stairs) means to me, as you go up the school, um, there is always a dilemma, but you climb your way to success... I just think because you go through different, seven, eight and nine, and you work your way up...</i></p> <p><i>There is always barriers, but you can work through them.</i></p> <p><i>Miss, did you know I have been struggling with time quite a lot. For four years straight I have been practising the time and now I have mastered it. It has taken ages trying to do it... I started from Year 3 and carried on in Year 4 and then</i></p>	I want to be successful, but sometimes school can be hard

	<i>when I got to Year 6 I managed to do it... It took me a long time though.</i>	
Photo(s)	Supporting Quotes	Interpretation
The sensory room	<i>And then I put 'Enter the quiet zone, peaceful area' (labelling the Sensory room)... (Speaking quietly) because it's a sign for, it's a sign for the way some people are that I don't like very much. Very noisy environment... I put that it's a calming place and relaxing to calm down and it helps me think about my feelings.</i>	Sometimes I need help at school with my worries
The door of the Pit Stop	Pit Stop door was labelled with 'safe area'. <i>SP: Are there any photos that you would have liked to take but could not?</i> <i>Harry: The Pit Stop ones</i>	
The SENCo's office	The SENCo's office was labelled 'Quick action: This picture means to speak to someone if have worries'.	
Harry's feelings about taking photos	<i>Um, scary cause, um... I felt a bit insecure, I was quite (difficult to hear what he is saying due to others talking)</i> <i>SP: Ok</i> <i>Harry: Then after that I (again difficult to hear what he is saying due to others talking)</i> <i>SP: Ok, so it felt uncomfortable?</i> <i>Harry: Well I was not really uncomfortable but it was not comfortable. I felt a bit, Whoa! Taking it all in....</i>	
Reflections from research journal	Thoughtful and quiet – contributions to guideline and camera usage sessions - what is said in the room stays in the room, being respectful. Sometimes spoken over by other students. Harry seen on two separate occasions when visiting the school (not meeting with students). He was in the Pit Stop with Mrs **** on both occasions and visibly upset. Harry gave the impression that he had thought about the photos he wanted to take before the session.	

Table 4: An example of the relationship between photos, quotes and initial themes for Sam's experience board

Sam		
Photo(s)	Supporting Quotes	Interpretation
Pit Stop Manager	<p><i>Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager, seen in Sam's top picture) definitely..... Ah, because without Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager) and Miss *** (An LSA who had left) I would probably not be able to deal with school..... And she will make something like, when she knows you have not had a good time, she will make something serious into something funny, so like, and she will always see the best in people.</i></p> <p><i>Because in Year 7 she was like the one that boosted my confidence. Stuff like that... We would just sit down in like, in lessons and just talk over a cup of juice and a biscuit.... She'd take me out. We like, I remember I used to love it. She left and worked at a different school... We did all sorts, we did anything from social skills and spelling practice to reading practice to conversations, to anything... I don't know, cause me and her just have this like, thing. I don't know what it is to be honest, but it was really nice that she came back because I have not seen her for ages. Cause she came back at the end of Year 7 but I was, I can't remember what I was doing, I was ill or something, but I did not get to see her. So that is the first time I have seen her since the end of Year 7. Which is really nice because she came in again. So yeah, it was really nice to see her and say how is it going type thing. That's why I asked **** to invite her to the picnic on Monday.</i></p>	Having positive relationships with adults helps me learn and enjoy school
The SENCo's Office	<p><i>Uh, that is Miss****'s desk...(SENCo) I probably picked that one purely for the fact that...um...purely for the fact that, I don't know, cause like when I was in Year 7 there was an incident on the bus between me and ****, a Year 8 person, and, I did not think, like Miss *** was not here then, because it was this year...wait did I say Year 7?... Yeah, and Miss *** had left and I can't remember, I think it was when Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager) had her operation or something so it was pretty, and I did not feel comfortable going to the LSAs at that time... but there's this new one now that I find it easier to speak to... So I went to her (indicating the SENCo) about it.</i></p> <p><i>It reminds me that, even though Miss *** is not here and if Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager) is out for some reason there is still someone... Like the LSAs, although they are friends and stuff like that, they can't really do much in the fact that they can't go up to someone and say...um...they are there just to</i></p>	

	<i>help you or a group of people, they can't really go and...yeah, but Miss **** (SENCo) has the power to go and call the two people together and say....</i>	
Photo(s)	Supporting Quotes	Interpretation
Group photo of student photographers	<p><i>Um, I wanted to put that without friends, then like without them, school, like, it would be really hard without friends.</i></p> <p><i>I think that mine shows that without friends and different coping strategies, school, it would not be an option type thing. And without the need, like what Harry and Rick were saying, at my school I had a place called the Den and like, and I used to, and it's a bit like the Pit Stop, there was only me. And like a coping strategy might be something simple like using a laptop, like because I have been given a laptop ever since I was in Year 5, no Year 4, sorry. And, without those and friends school would be very...</i></p> <p><i>Harry: Traumatized...</i></p> <p><i>Sam: Yeah, I agree with that.</i></p>	Having friends helps me get through school
Sam's creation of a positive and negative top 6 photos	<p><i>So all of here things are good things. Are we allowed to take pictures of things that have got maybe something negative to do with it....?</i></p> <p><i>Um, CC TV at school. I gave it this title because it is CC TV and it's at school!.. On the thought bubble I put 'this can be intimidating on a bad day' and on the yellow speech bubble it says 'bad incident with CC TV'.</i></p> <p><i>And this one is like, it reminds me that school is like caging you in (fence), things like that. And that is saying school is so big...that is similar coming across to that one (school fields). And that one is saying that sometimes we are not a person, we are labelled as if....(folders).</i></p> <p><i>No...well it is, but I had Accelerated Reading, because it is not fair. Because when I started I had to...because I was reading books with green paper and all that and I was struggling because we were not allowed any help on the start test, and so I did really poorly and it was like coming up with suggestions to read the Gruffalo and Will it float or sink...</i></p> <p><i>SP: It's really difficult when we don't do well at something and we tried really hard isn't it!</i></p> <p><i>Sam: It's a bit off putting because...</i></p> <p><i>Sidney: It's not inspiring.</i></p>	School can be positive and negative
Sam's feelings about taking photos	<p><i>And also at the same time helpful, because it was nice to know someone was like, trying to get other peoples' opinions, because, I'm just saying, the teachers all, 'how is that' type thing. So it was useful if I had to say one word.</i></p> <p><i>Uh, I think it would be a 10 as well. Because it is something different and we</i></p>	

	<i>never usually get to do it in school. Which was really exciting. And secondly it was cool using the camera things...</i>
Reflections from research journal	During the first meeting Sam shared that he wanted to show the 'positive and negatives' of school. It appeared that Sam had spent some time out of sessions considering what he wanted to take pictures of.

5.1 Sidney



Photo 3: Sidney's top six photos

I learn best with my buddies.

Sidney: Because me and Sam are good working buddies.

SP: So you work well together?

Sidney: Yep

Sidney: Because it presents our friends and how we are feeling...

Very early on in the process of organising and interpreting his photos Sidney identified the importance of friendship to him at school. This is illustrated by his decision to put a photo illustrating friendship at the top of his pyramid of photos. The photo was taken

during the practice meeting. Sidney had to retrieve it from the practice photos that had been stored separately to the ones he had taken as part of the data collection phase. The meetings happened several weeks apart, therefore he must have remembered this particular photo well. He also chose to reflect on the importance of friendship to him when asked to evaluate the research (Appendix 12).

The photo also demonstrates that Sidney equated positive learning experiences with experiences where he was able to work with his friends. The quotes suggest he was unable to articulate exactly why this is, but it appears to be related to how this makes him feel. In the original photo both participants are smiling.

Pit Stop helps me feel safe and happy at school

*Sidney: Um, I put 'Pit Stop is helpful' because Miss ***** (Pit Stop Manager) helps us quite a lot.....Um, she gives us like,she talks to us if we are having trouble or if we don't feel very good or 100% sure...*

Sidney: (points at Pit Stop photo)...Because it is a very nice place. Social, loud and joyful.

These remarks are supported by his response to being asked what it was like taking the photos. Sidney shared that his favourite place to take photos was the Pit Stop. Sidney chose to put his photo of the Pit Stop door near the apex of his top six. The Pit Stop is identified as a place where he feels comfortable and where he can be himself. He also identified the Pit Stop as a place where he could go and get support from adults at school.

I get help to learn

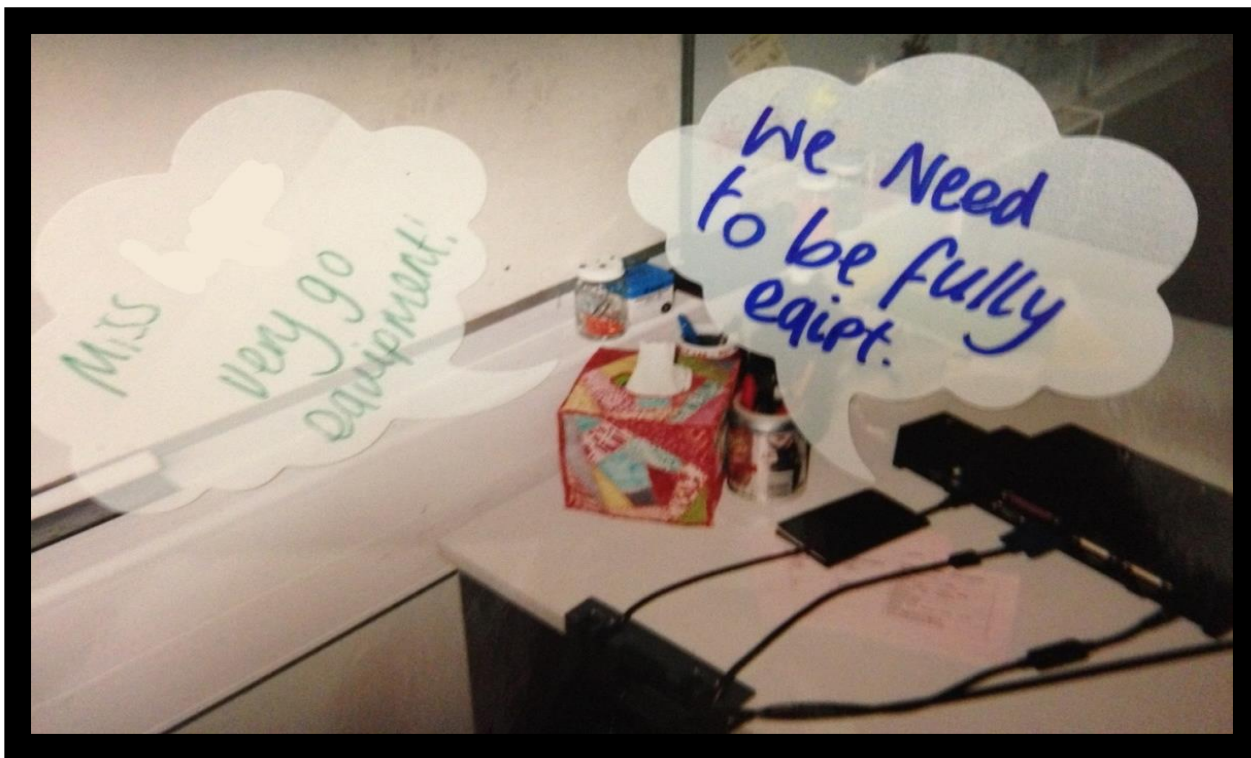


Photo 4: Sidney's labelled photo of equipment made available to students in one teacher's classroom

Sidney identified a number of aspects of school that helped him to learn. Two of his top six photos identified equipment in a particular teacher's classrooms. Next to one of these pictures he wrote 'We need to be fully equipped'.

As well as the general support that all students receive, Sidney also identified himself as someone who needed extra help or support at school. After viewing his experience board for the first time Sidney spent some time reflecting on the kind of support he had received at primary and secondary school. This appeared to include support in lessons to access the curriculum as well as support to help him manage his emotions.

Sidney identified that at secondary school there are many learners with a variety of needs. It seems likely that he identified himself as one of these people.

Sidney: It's like there is lots of people with different types of needs and so there is going to have to be loads more LSAs and people that support young people that have needs.

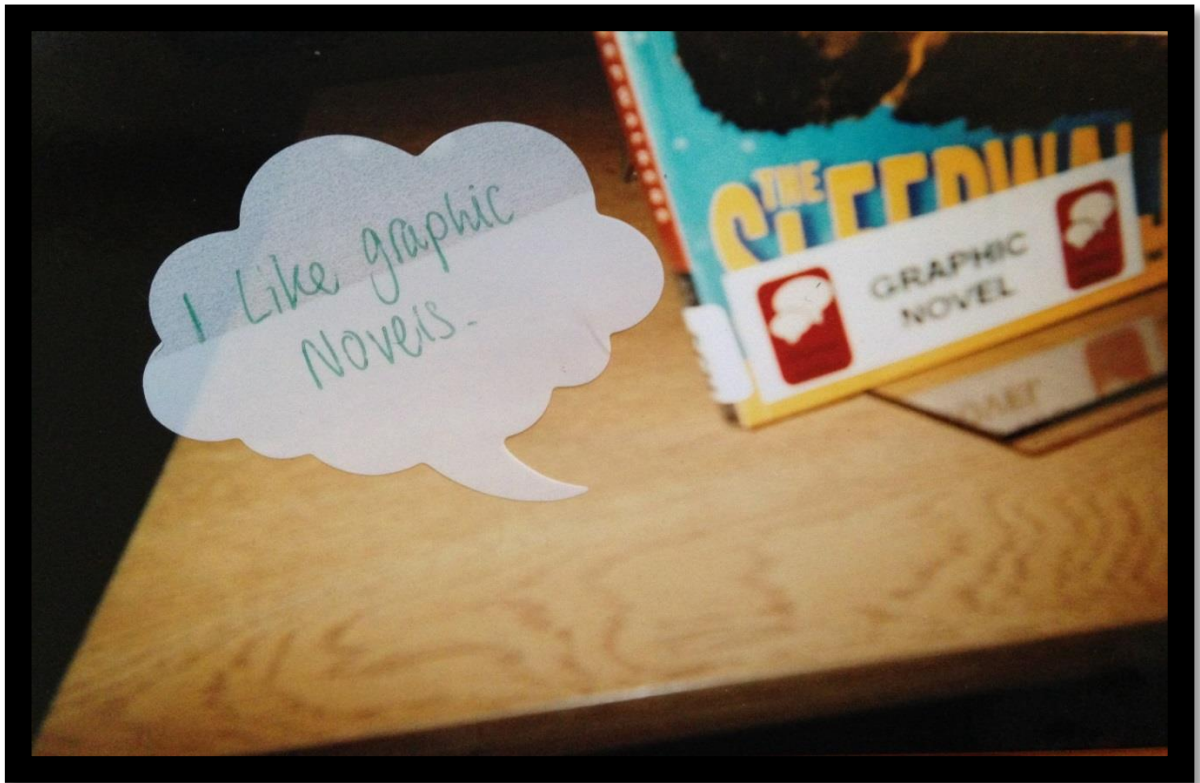


Photo 5: A photo taken by Sidney in the library

Sidney was the only student to include a photo of a book as part of his experience of school. It should be noted that this did not form part of his top six, but was added to his experience board after he referred to it in a meeting.

Sidney also identified the library as a place where learning happened. In one of his top six photos the librarian is holding up a bag that is used as part of the Accelerated Reading Programme. The bag contains prizes that students receive each time they move up a level in the programme. The placement of the picture and the positive caption about the librarian (who ran the Accelerated Reading Programme) suggest that Sidney enjoyed and valued this literacy intervention.

5.2 Sam



Photo 6: Sam's top six photos

Having positive relationships with adults helps me learn and enjoy school

*Sam: Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager, seen in Sam's top photo) definitely..... Ah, because without Miss *** (Pit Stop Manager) and Miss *** (an LSA who had left) I would probably not be able to deal with school..... And she will make something like, when she knows you have not had a good time, she will make something serious into something funny, so like, and she will always see the best in people.*

Relationships with support staff featured heavily in discussions that Sam had about his experience board. He chose to place a photo of the Pit Stop Manager at the top of his pyramid of photos. He identified support staff as people who he knew would be there for him and who he could talk to if he had a problem. He identified them as people who had had a significant impact on his confidence levels at school. This appeared to be because they had spent time getting to know him as well as supporting him with his learning. He identified simple activities such as sitting and having a cup of juice and a biscuit with an LSA as well as receiving individual support with social skills, spelling and reading.

The importance Sam placed on relationships with staff was illustrated by his sadness that a particular member of staff had left the school and his excitement that she would be returning for a visit.

Sam chose to include a photo of the SENCo's office on the second row of his top six. He did not highlight the importance of any other teaching staff. Many of his comments suggest that he chose who to talk to depending on their role. The SENCo was seen as a member of staff with the authority to reprimand students as well as repair relationships. LSAs were seen not to have the authority to do this.

Having friends helps me get through school



Photo 7: The student research participants

Sam: Um, I wanted to put that without friends, then like without them, school, like, it would be really hard without friends.... I think that mine shows that without friends and different coping strategies school, it would not be an option type thing.

Sam also identified friendships with peers as another important aspect of his school experience. Friends were identified along with other 'coping strategies' that appeared to make school more bearable. The other coping strategies that Sam spoke about included the use of the Pit Stop and having a lap top in lessons to write up his work. It

is interesting that he did not differentiate between learning and social 'coping strategies'. It is clear that without these strategies Sam would find school difficult to manage.

School can be positive and negative



Photo 8: Sam's top six negative photos

From the first moment I met Sam he was keen to point out that school could be both a positive and negative place. When asked to choose his top six photos Sam created two photo pyramids, one with positive photos and one with negative photos. I asked Sam to combine these together to generate his final top six.

Sam placed the CC TV camera at the top of his negative top six photos. He described the camera as intimidating and also spoke at length about an incident that had been caught on CC TV. Although he had not been directly involved, he still appeared upset about what had happened.

Many of the pictures in Sam's negative top six had symbolic meanings. He chose the fence to describe a feeling of being 'caged in' and the fields to show that school could

feel like a very big and intimidating place. The folders were used to represent that he sometimes did not feel like an individual.

Sam did not choose to put a picture of the library in his top six selection. However, he did choose to include a picture of the literacy intervention room (Photo 6 second row, right hand side). He talked positively about the support he received. However, he had a clear recollection of his first Accelerated Reading session;

Sam: ...Because when I started I had to...because I was reading books with green paper and all that and I was struggling because we were not allowed any help on the start test, and so I did really poorly and it was like coming up with suggestions to read the Gruffalo and Will it float or sink...

Sam: It's a bit off putting because...

Sidney: It's not inspiring.

This quote points towards Sam's feelings of frustration and embarrassment about his literacy difficulties. This is because books that the base line testing indicated were suitable were well below those appropriate for his chronological age. Sidney's interjection hints at the impact that the perception of failure might have on a learner's motivation when faced with a literacy based task. It also suggests that it is not motivating to be given tasks that may be ability appropriate, but not age appropriate.

Sam originally shared that during Year 8 he did not attend assembly or mentoring sessions. This was because he found it loud and overwhelming. It is interesting that by the time he saw his experience board in Year 9 this situation had changed. Therefore, although Sam's original feeling about assembly had been negative, over the year he had developed the confidence and strategies to enable him to attend in Year 9.

5.3 Harry



Photo 9: Harry's top six photos

Harry chose not to display his top six photos in a pyramid shape. He had ideas right from the start about how he wanted to show his experiences of school.

I want to be successful, but sometimes school can be hard

Harry: This picture (the stairs) means to me, as you go up the school, um, there is always a dilemma, but you climb your way to success... I just think because you go through different, seven, eight and nine, and you work your way up... There is always barriers, but you can work through them.

Harry spoke on a number of different occasions about his desire to be successful at school. This is epitomized by the photo he took of the stairs and his caption 'key to success.' The photo, caption and Harry's words suggest that he had a desire to succeed, but that he had experienced a number of barriers or hurdles. Becoming successful at school is a 'climb' and hard work. It would appear not to come easily to Harry.

A particular barrier that Harry spoke in detail about was learning to tell the time and the helpfulness of different types of clocks. This is highlighted by the inclusion of what Harry described as an 'unhelpful clock' in his photo pyramid. Sam's top six contains a photo of a clock described as helpful. The quote below illustrates Harry's struggle and the hard work he had to put in to master telling the time.

Harry: Miss, did you know I have been struggling with time quite a lot. For four years straight I have been practising the time and now I have mastered it. It has taken ages trying to do it... I started from Year 3 and carried on in Year 4 and then when I got to Year 6 I managed to do it... It took me a long time though.

Sometimes I need help at school with my worries

Harry: And then I put 'Enter the quiet zone, peaceful area' (labelling the Sensory room)... (speaking quietly) because it's a sign for, it's a sign for the way some people are that I don't like very much. Very noisy environment... I put that it's a calming place and relaxing to calm down and it helps me think about my feelings.

Harry included three photos that illustrated how he was helped at school to manage his worries. These were the photos of the sensory room (top left hand side), the door of the Pit Stop and the SENCo's office (right hand side). Harry labelled his picture of the SENCo's office with the statement 'Quick action: This picture means to speak to someone if have worries'. He labelled the Pit Stop door as a 'safe area'.

Harry's inclusion of three photos linked to his belief that he needed help to manage his worries suggest this represents a significant indicator of Harry's school experience. It seems possible that overcoming these worries is an emotional barrier to his 'climb' to success.

5.4 Rick

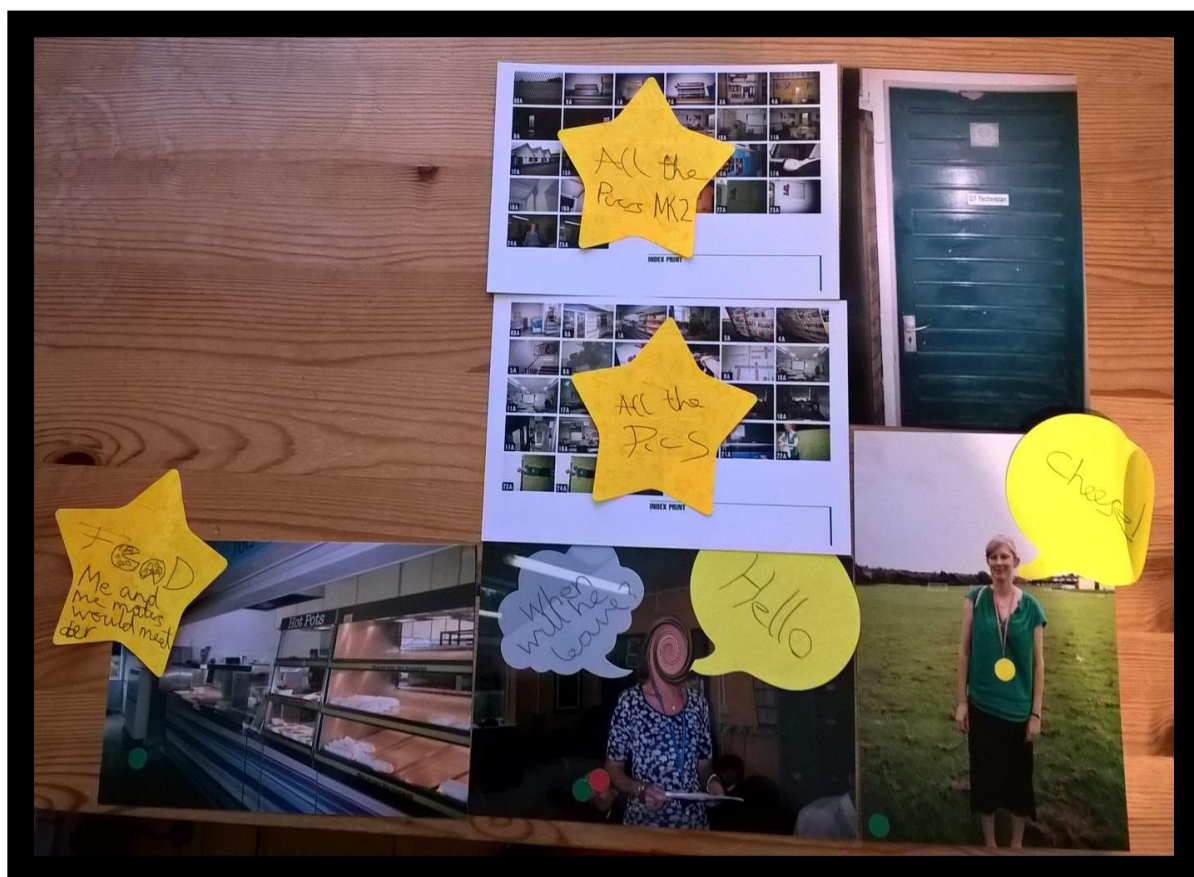


Photo 10: Rick's top six photos

Meeting up with friends is important to me

Rick: This one will be called 'Food' because it is a picture of food... It's not particularly about the food. It's about the location, because in Year 7 I would meet my friends in the dinner hall.

Rick: These photos, um, like, there is the one in the cafeteria and it's kind of like showing that I have become a bit more lonely because I don't meet my friends much. But at the same time with the Pit Stop I have made more friends.

Having social time and a laugh with his peers appeared important to Rick throughout the project. He often made comments that were intended to make others laugh and he liked to be at the centre of things. His statements suggest that as he has progressed through school some of his early friendships have disappeared and he has become more reliant on the Pit Stop to meet new friends.

I get on better with some adults than others

*Rick: The DT man... Because I visit *** (Design and Technology technician) and we chat.*

SP: So how come you took a photo of me?

Rick: Because you helped me.... And it was a high quality pic.

SP: Ah, so you have not necessarily picked it because of what it shows about your experiences, you have...

Rick: What! I have! That's just a coincidence.

In discussion about his photo of the Pit Stop Manager;

Rick: Unless you are naughty, then you get holy hell fire rained down on you!

*SP: Ok, from Miss**** (Pit Stop Manager)?*

Rick: Yeah.

Rick's relationships with adults were mixed. He had strong opinions about those that he did and did not get on with. His comments about the Pit Stop Manager highlight his rather individual take on situations. The other student photographers had a different recollection of the event that Rick described and his interpretation caused much debate.

The quotes also illustrate that Rick was not always sure why he had taken some of his photos. He took the most photos of any participant, using two disposable cameras with 24 exposures in each. He chose to use the photos which showed all of the exposures per film as part of his top six. This also suggests that he found it difficult to discriminate between his photos.

I am a more independent learner now

Rick: But like I have become a lot more independent with my work. I am not sure if that is for better or worse.... Because some things I have gone down in, since I have become more independent.

When Rick spoke about becoming more independent he linked this to receiving less support from adults in the classroom and moving up to a higher set in some subjects. These changes meant that he believed he was not always doing as well as he had done in the past. This may account for his reasoning that he was not sure if this was a positive change.

5.5 Alternative experiences



Photo 11: Literacy and learning photos



Photo 12: 'Behaviour and Standards'

In asking the participants to discriminate between their photos and pick a top six to illustrate their experience of school a number of choices had to be made. Discarded photos fell into two distinct groups. Photo eleven groups together those which illustrate literacy based aspects of learning. Photos were mainly taken in the library, and English classrooms, as well as one picture of the literacy intervention room. Of particular note are the photos linked to the literacy intervention students spoke about (Accelerated Reader display and prize bag).

Photo twelve groups together photos that were mainly taken in the 'Behaviour and Standards' room. My impression was that the students were intrigued and perhaps a bit fearful of this room. The chance to visit as part of the research, and hence not because of a negative incident appeared to provide an opportunity to explore the room. I later found out that the room was used to investigate minor infringements of school rules and for writing statements about incidents. Staff in phase two described it as a bit like a police station.

Although participants made decisions to take these photos they were not chosen to represent their experiences of school. This suggests that at this point in the participants' school careers they were not significant features of their school experiences. In relation to the current research this is particularly pertinent in relation to the photos of the literacy based aspects of learning.

5.6 Summary of experience boards

Although participants' experience boards were analysed separately, a number of subtle overlaps can be seen between initial themes and therefore how participants constructed their experiences of school. The most common themes were friendship, support and relationships with adults at school. These themes are explored in greater detail in relation to the research question.

Table 5: Summary of experience boards showing initial interpretations per experience board and overlapping themes

Name	Initial interpretations	Overlapping themes
Sidney	I learn best with my buddies. Pit Stop helps me feel safe and happy at school	Friendships Support/ Relationships with adults at school

	I get help to learn	Learning
Name	Interpretations	Overlapping themes
Sam	<p>Having positive relationships with adults helps me learn and enjoy school</p> <p>Having friends helps me get through school</p> <p>School can be positive and negative</p>	<p>Support/Relationships with adults at school/Learning</p> <p>Friendship</p> <p>Barriers and supports</p>
Harry	<p>I want to be successful, but sometimes school can be hard</p> <p>Sometimes I need help at school with my worries</p>	<p>Barriers and supports</p> <p>Support/Relationships with adults at school</p>
Rick	<p>Meeting up with friends is important to me</p> <p>I get on better with some adults than others</p> <p>I am a more independent learner now</p>	<p>Friendships</p> <p>Relationships with adults at school</p> <p>Learning</p>

6. Discussion

This discussion section examines the findings in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. Reflections about the process of carrying out phase one, including methodological limitations are also explored. Links to phase two of the research are outlined.

6.1 RQ1: What are the social and learning experiences of students with literacy barriers to learning?

Participants' social experiences with peers and staff were significant themes across the experience boards. Within this context the experience boards suggest an inextricable link between participants' social and learning experiences highlighting the importance of the affective or social and emotional aspects of learning (Casserly, 2013; Glazzard, 2010).

6.1.1 Social experiences with peers

All participants, with the exception of Harry, appeared to value relationships with peers as part of their school experience. Humphrey (2003) suggests this is not unusual as after parents/carers peers are often the most significant others in teenagers' lives. Peers were seen to provide social support and be a positive aspect of participants' school experience. This is particularly evident in Sam and Sidney's photos and Sam's assertion that having friends enabled him to cope and get through school. This finding is supported by Ingesson (2007) who found that literacy difficulties did not affect relationships with peers for the majority of those involved in her study, although 17% said it had influenced their relationships 'quite a lot' or 'very much'.

Most research in this area seeks to consider the impact of social comparison in relation to peer relationships (Marsh, 2006; Glazzard 2010; Kelly & Norwich, 2004). In relation to the current research it is interesting that participants chose to socialise with others who used the Pit Stop most of the time. The exception to this was Rick, who had met friends in the canteen in the past, although this practice had tailed off as he moved from Year 7 to Year 8. Possible reasons for participants' choice to socialise with others who used the Pit Stop could be linked to favourable comparisons with peers or perhaps with concerns about bullying. A number of research studies (Ingesson, 2007; Glazzard, 2010) have found that students who experience literacy barriers to learning are at risk of bullying. This is often due to accusations of being 'thick' or 'stupid' (Kelly & Norwich,

2004). In the current research participants did not mention bullying as part of the initial research process. However, it was considered in response to the question 'what about school would you put in room 101?' that had been put forward by staff who had viewed the experience boards.

6.1.2 Social experiences with adults

A significant theme for all participants was their relationships with adults at school. The majority of these relationships were with support staff. The Pit Stop manager, LSAs, librarian and the DT technician were all photographed or discussed. The SENCo was the most referred to member of teaching staff, although Sidney also mentioned his PHSE teacher. Lawrence (2006) suggests that forming positive relationships with school staff aids learning. This is supported by the work of Rogers (1951) who believed that effective counsellors must establish warm relationships with clients. This is achieved by developing the qualities of acceptance, genuineness and empathy. These qualities can clearly be seen in the descriptions that participants gave about support staff.

The concept of relatedness can also be used to understand participants' relationships with adults at school. Ireson and Hallam (2005) argue that relatedness builds an important foundation for student engagement and the development of autonomous learners. They believe that relationships with significant adults are likely to contribute to feelings of being valued and supported. Therefore, they argue that affective aspects of learning influence motivation, enthusiasm for learning and participation. Although their research focused on the role of the teacher, Humphrey (2003) suggests it is often more realistic for support staff to develop these relationships because teaching staff are often under pressure to get through curriculum content and prepare for examinations.

Adults at school were not always seen as helpful as highlighted by Rick's photo and comments about the Pit Stop Manager. It should be noted his peers were not in agreement with his sentiments. There were no photos relating to teaching staff and few were mentioned during meetings. It may be that staff often did not have the time to develop these relationships or that the participants simply spent more time with support staff in and out of lessons. In relation to the deployment of LSAs in primary schools Webster (2015) notes that children with special educational needs are likely to spend more time with support rather than teaching staff. Some research in this area has also found that staff attitudes to those with literacy difficulties can be negative as

learners are perceived to be lazy or lack motivation (Humphrey, 2002; Glazzard, 2010). Rick's inclusion of a photo of me rather than staff may also be telling. However, it should be noted that this might be due to wanting to please the adult researcher (Kelly and Norwich, 2004).

Participants' experience boards indicate that relationships, whether with peers or adults formed a crucial part of their school experience, and that these relationships were often supportive, valued and affirming. These relationships enabled the student photographers to feel that school could be a 'safe place' and that adults and their peers were there to support them during tough times.

6.1.3 Support

The support students received at school was strongly present across all experience boards, with the exception of Rick's. Support was generally viewed positively and took a variety of forms. This included explicit support with social skills through intervention, literacy interventions, in class support and more ad hoc and informal help. Support was generally presented as being given by support staff, although the photos of the SENCo's office suggest that she was also considered a member of staff who could offer support. Participants often described themselves as needing help or support with their learning. Kelly and Norwich (2004) note that receiving help was seen as a 'neutral descriptor' which participants often used to describe their special educational needs. It may be that describing oneself as requiring help or support is more positive and affirming than other self-descriptors. It also mirrors much of the language used today in relation to the Special Educational Needs CoP (2014) and is therefore the type of language most likely to be used by staff supporting the participants.

6.1.4 Learning experiences

One of the most descriptive and emotive photos in relation to learning is Sidney's photo called 'The best learning'. It is unclear what the 'best' learning meant to Sidney, but it is likely that he found learning with his friends more engaging and motivating than other types of learning activities. He may also have felt more able to take risks or make mistakes in these settings. These observations are supported by research into the affective nature of learning (Ireson & Hallam, 2005). Pollard and Filer (2007) also suggest that social influences on learning expand as young people develop into

adolescence. They highlight the 'strong and sustained influence of social relationships on learning' (Pollard & Filer, 2007, p. 444).

As someone who spent a reasonable amount of time with participants over a period of one year, I was left with the underlying impression that learning could be hard and effortful, so hence the need for support. This is particularly clear in Harry's experience board, which contains three out of six photos that relate to supporting his emotional wellbeing and Sam's comments about the Accelerated Reading Intervention. Riddick (2010) writes that those with literacy barriers to learning often experience feelings of disappointment and frustration as well as feeling ashamed or fed-up at their inability to complete a task often perceived as needing only a basic level of skill by other learners or teachers.

The absence, omission or exclusion of photos that relate explicitly to learning in the participants' top six collections (as evidenced by photo 11) could be used to support the theory that participants often found learning hard; or maybe it just did not register as an important aspect of their school experience. Photo eleven shows a number of literacy and learning related photos including the library, literacy intervention room, classrooms and classroom displays. The photos could also be used to consider the place of literacy based activities in the participants' school experiences. If reading offers little pleasure and is linked to negative experiences and feelings it is unlikely to be something that learners would wish to dwell on. Sidney was the only participant to have a book as part of his experience board. His preference seemed to be for graphic novels which often have less dense text in them and so are more accessible.

6.1.5 Learners' experiences and self-perceptions

Although not a direct aim of the current research, learners' photos and discussions about their experiences enable some reflection on how they saw themselves as learners within their school context. The data generated by this research were rich with meaning but also confusing. The statements made by students suggest that they saw themselves as learners who needed support with certain aspects of learning and with managing their emotions. There appear to be some elements of learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978, cited in Burden, 2005) in some of their beliefs. For some of the participants, particularly Harry and Sam there appeared to be a reliance on staff to manage situations for them and a dependence on support staff in lessons.

This is supported by the work of Casserly (2013) who found that on return to mainstream schools after receiving specialist support one third of learners continued to feel overwhelmed by tasks and believed they were incapable of meeting the learning demands of the mainstream setting. It could be that these learners had the most significant difficulties accessing the curriculum due to their literacy difficulties. In the current research Sam was the only student with an EHCP and Harry presented as the most vulnerable student.

Harry's photo of the school stairway perhaps provides the most compelling and visceral evidence of how some participants saw themselves as learners. This is supported by comments made about overcoming barriers or doing 'OK' even though they had difficulties. The picture that is painted is supported by the work of Burden and Burdett (2007, p. 79) who asked learners 'If you were to imagine dyslexia as some kind of 'thing' or picture in your mind, how would you describe it?'. Answers were rich in meaning, with approximately 40% of learners using metaphors with barriers or obstacles that could be overcome. Burden and Burdett (2007) hypothesize that these remarks were possibly influenced by the school ethos. A significant criticism of their research is that it was undertaken in a specialist and high performing residential boys' school primarily attended by middle class boys with supportive parents. It seems likely that the combined influence of attending a specialist school and the cultural capital of parents would have had a significant impact on the boys learning experiences and how they saw themselves as learners.

There are also some overlaps with the work of Kelly and Norwich (2004) who found that the self-perceptions of learners identified as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD) at mainstream schools were identified as mixed and often contradictory as opposed to purely positive or negative. They suggest that this way of considering learner self-perceptions is supported by post-structuralist and feminist theories. Research undertaken which is influenced by these theories often uses more naturalistic methods of data collection similar to those used in the current research. It is therefore likely that the more naturalistic method of data collection enabled participants to share more nuanced and contradictory experiences of school and therefore insights into their self-perceptions.

Lawrence (2006) argues for the significant impact that teachers and support staff can have on supporting positive self-perceptions. In the current research elements of this can be seen in participants' generally positive portrayal of those who supported them. It may be that participants' narratives about surmountable barriers are rooted in the messages they received from staff and parents or carers. Terras, Thompson and Minnis (2009) also point to the impact of parents, although this is beyond the scope of the current research.

Developing self-understanding of learning needs and strengths is seen as a positive learning attribute by Terras, Thompson and Minnis (2009). In adult research Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick (2011) advocate a risk and resilience framework, with learners' self-awareness and ability to recognise strengths and how to seek support as significant resilience factors. Within educational psychology this is supported by the work of Roffey (2015). Therefore, that participants appeared to be developing a sense of themselves as learners who had particular learning needs, but also coping strategies, such as their friendships and knowledge of where and who to seek support from could be conceived of positively.

Previous research in this area suggests that gaining an insight into how students see themselves as learners is complex (Burden 2008; Zeleke 2004). In relation to the present research, Rogers and Ludhra (2011) suggest that young people are rarely asked to consider and reflect on their own experiences and how these may influence how they see themselves. Furthermore, involvement in the research project is likely to have shaped how participants viewed themselves as learners; for example, Harry's comments suggest he may have felt overwhelmed at times. I also reflected that the students were quiet and calm in the first session with the photos after having so much energy during previous activities. I wonder if they had felt overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of photographs and their potential meanings. Smythe and Murray (2000) state that 'Research that engages with young people's narrative and lived experiences can be overpowering and emotionally intrusive' (p. 322).

The current research supports claims that the self-perceptions of those with literacy barriers to learning can be positive and aspirational while also being contradictory. In the current research student participants did acknowledge their difficulties or barriers.

This is perhaps to be expected as Burden (2008) suggests a need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of experiences and backgrounds of learners.

6.2 RQ2: Can photovoice enhance our understanding of students' experiences of school?

The use of cameras was generally viewed by participants as a fun and exciting experience. Rick's comments suggest that he felt privileged and special because he had been able to take part in the research. These views are in contrast to Harry's words which suggest he may have felt overwhelmed at times. Excitement at taking photos is supported by the work of Luttrell (2010) and Hill (2014). I would also agree with Aldridge (2007) that introducing cameras into the research process enhanced participation and emphasized capacity as opposed to participants' literacy difficulties. Furthermore, the open stimulus question, along with the use of cameras to answer it enabled participants to have considerable choice over how they wanted to represent themselves. The work of Leeson (2014) suggests that this is likely to have enabled participants to explore complex and potentially difficult emotions in relation to their literacy barriers to learning. In doing so rich data was generated in relation to participants' experiences of school.

There are also a number of methodological limitations with using cameras to capture participants' worlds. There were some photos they wished to take but were unable to do so. These included the isolation room (an internal exclusion room) and certain classrooms. This is likely to have impacted on top six choices and therefore later analysis of the data. During the two photo taking sessions there were times I felt I was on a tour of the school. I reflected that I found myself summarising and restating the stimulus question regularly in an attempt to get everyone back on task. Punch (2002) raises concerns about the influence of time of day and season in her research with children in Bolivia. I wonder if participants would have chosen to take photos of the field if the research had taken place in winter when the field was out of bounds. Finally, some participants' comments hinted that they were unsure as to why they had taken some photos. This was perhaps particularly demonstrated by Rick's choice to include the photos which showed all the exposures per film as part of his top six.

While accepting these methodological limitations I believe that the use of photovoice offers an authentic and robust way of eliciting students' experiences and views about school.

6.3 Strengths and limitations of phase one

Both methodological considerations and my own reflections have been considered in this section.

Rick's inclusion of a photo of me made me consider his understanding of the project. At face value his reasoning made sense. I was an adult who had taken the time to get to know him and listen to his concerns. However, it is also clear that at times all participants were keen to please me and also present a particular image of themselves (Kelly and Norwich, 2004).

Rick also made some interesting comments when presented with his experience board for the first time. He appeared to have forgotten some of the comments he had made during the research process. He therefore seemed quite shocked by some of his statements and stated that they '*felt out of context*'. This information was added to Rick's experience board. It should therefore be noted that the experience boards developed rich pictures but also decontextualized some statements.

Throughout the research process I found it difficult to 'bracket off' my own difficulties with reading and spelling from the participants. It was obvious and apparent when I was in situations when I had to read or write, and exasperated by having to do this under time pressures. The excerpt below, taken from a meeting with participants, highlights the practicalities of trying to do this.

I am now talking to someone else, can't make this out as Rick is closest to the recorder ☹... I am down with Harry working out how to spell 'successful'. Some discussion with Sidney and Sam about how to do this. I have to write it on a post-it. I write it with a 'c' to start with and am then not sure if double 'c' and double 's'.

It could be that witnessing an adult struggle to spell helped to normalise participants' own difficulties. This is likely to have influenced how they perceived themselves as learners. The inclusion of the researcher is seen as useful and even advantageous in

some traditions (Etherington, 2004; Rogers & Ludhra, 2011). However, it also opens the researcher up to claims of bias and short sightedness.

After sharing the experience boards with participants I reflected that I felt relieved to hear Sam state that I had '*really managed to get him.*' In some research participants have shared that although they recognised the interpretation, it was not how they saw themselves (Smythe & Murray, 2000). This feedback helped me to feel confident that I had captured something authentic.

When working with young people consideration of the inevitable influence of power imbalances is important (Luttrell, 2010). The current research utilized a number of participatory research methods and participants were also able to witness my own struggles with reading and writing. However, I was still an adult researcher, who used to be a teacher and who participants referred to as 'Miss'. There were also times during the research process when time was tight and I had to be quite process orientated to get things done.

A methodological limitation of this research was the use of convenience sampling. One reason for the SENCo's choice of participants was her belief that all would engage in the project. This was beneficial in that participants were exceptionally good at attending meetings. However, the findings could not be said to be representative of all students experiencing literacy difficulties at the school.

These reflections on the process of carrying out phase one of the research project highlight possible limitations and strengths and therefore must be considered when judging the findings.

6.4 Links with phase two

The findings from phase one, in the form of participants' top six choices and experience boards were used to engage interested staff in discussion groups. Schratz and Steiner-Loffler (1998) argue that photos help teachers gain access to learner experiences and can be a powerful instrument for change. The aim of much research using photovoice is to engage those in a position to facilitate change to take action (Booth & Booth, 2003; Luttrell, 2010). Therefore, using students' photos in this way is consistent with other research.

Phase Two

7. Method

7.1 Research question

3. What are staff reflections on students' photos?

7.2 Stages of data collection and analysis

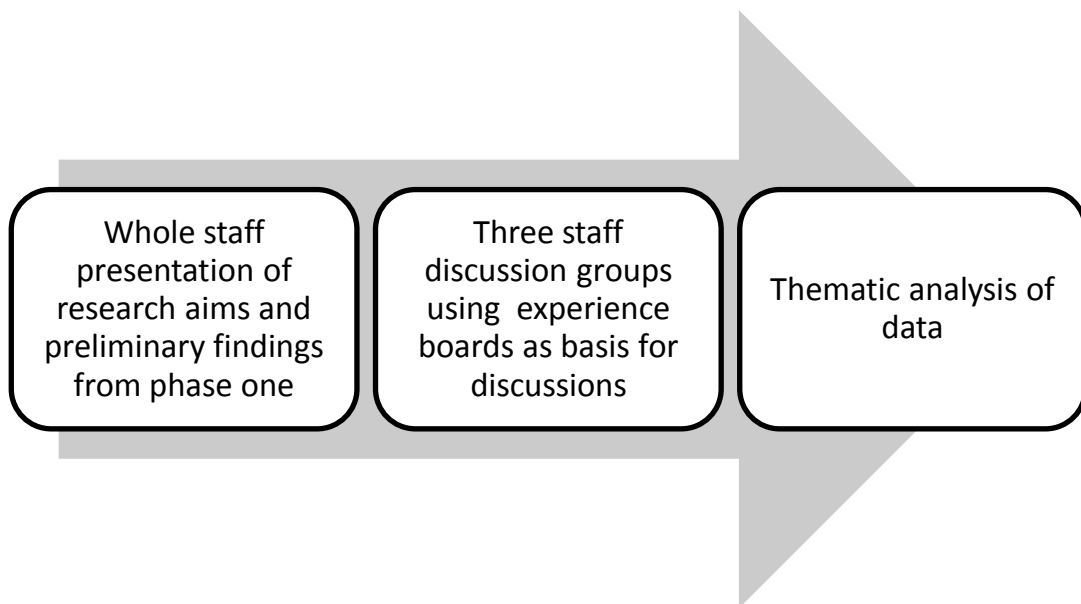


Figure 5: An overview of the stages of phase two

7.2.1 Staff discussion groups

Not all staff that were able to take part were available at the same time so three separate discussion groups were held. Participants were able to pick from a number of dates that would suit them best. All discussion groups met once. The first discussion group contained three participants while the second and third contained two participants each. I met participants after school in the Pit Stop and provided light refreshments.

Finch and Lewis's (2003) 'Stages of a Focus Group' was adapted to provide a framework for the discussion groups. This involved setting the scene by reintroducing the purpose of the group, discussing confidentiality, consent and ethics and making introductions. All participants were asked to read through and sign a consent form (Appendix 9). A prompt sheet which highlighted the key question that students were asked and

questions that I aimed to ask during the discussion was also provided. There was also space on the prompt sheet for participants to note down any reflections they had and questions they would like to ask the student photographers (Appendix 13).

The first half of each session involved sharing and discussing students' top six photos. These were anonymised and staff were not given any other information about the students apart from their identification as experiencing literacy difficulties. Parker and Tritter (2006) state that the role of the researcher during this phase is to encourage in-depth discussion by asking open-ended questions and enabling all members of the group to contribute. Therefore, I tried to facilitate discussions and answer questions about photos. Not all of the photos were immediately recognisable to staff and therefore some clarification was needed; for example, some staff did not recognise the sensory room. Once this had been done students' experience boards which included interpretations were shared. The photos which students chose not to use as part of their top six selection were also shared (Photos 11 & 12). Staff were given some time to discuss and reflect before two further questions were asked (please see table six for an outline of all questions asked). The aim of these questions was to stimulate reflection about the implications and impact of sharing the experience boards with a variety of audiences. This is a technique often used in personal construct psychology (Beaver, 2011) and solution focused questioning (Kahn, 2000) to enable people to envisage how they might change by depersonalising the questions. These questions also helped to draw the group discussions to an end. All discussion groups were recorded and transcribed.

Table 6: Questions used in the discussion groups

<p>Introductory questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me what you think of the pictures? • How do students' views and experiences of school relate to your own as a member of staff? • What ideas shared in this session might have implications for practice? • What aspects of your practice will remain the same? • What reflections do you have about what has been shared? • What questions might you ask the photographers?
<p>Follow up questions for the experience boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think the experience boards would influence the practice of;

Follow up questions for the experience boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Primary teachers b. The senior leadership team c. Colleagues in your team d. Staff in an 'ideal' school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact do you think the experience boards would have if we put them up in; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The staffroom b. The playground
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In January 2017 all staff participants were contacted individually by email. Attached to the email was a transcription of their discussion group session and a document with a variety of sentence starters (Appendix 14). Participants were asked to check if they were happy with the transcripts and also complete up to four sentences. The questions aimed to capture any further reflections or changes staff may have made since viewing the photos and experience boards. Of the seven participants only two completed the sentence completion activity.

7.2.2 Interpretation of staff discussion groups

Thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the data collected in phase two. All discussion group recordings were transcribed. I recorded my reflections during this process as well as directly after each session (see appendix 15 for an example of transcription). Data were analysed deductively in relation to the research questions. Table seven provides an example of how data were analysed and coded.

Table 7: An example of how data were analysed and coded

Data	Subtheme	Theme
<i>I am not getting any sense of what they feel about literacy</i>	Literacy	Omissions
<i>Is it because they are not interested in them (books), or they don't like them so reject them?</i>		
<i>But there are not many classrooms, which is quite... um....</i>	Objects of learning	
<i>I thought they would take something about their work, or books, and they have not done anything like that. Which is really interesting about what makes their school experience.</i>		

<p><i>But none of their lessons made it either... maybe that is not an important part of their school experience. That is so interesting isn't it?</i></p> <p><i>And they are doing this about what helps the learning, but there is nothing of the learning!</i></p> <p><i>What happens in lessons has to be done, but what happens outside of lessons is their experience.</i></p>		
Data	Subtheme	Theme
<p><i>Most of the stuff they have taken photos of are of support staff. I think that would be fantastic to remind teachers of how valuable our support staff are. And make them realise how much we and the students appreciate that.</i></p> <p><i>Safe place; that safe environment is such a big village. The Pit Stop is like their home base.</i></p> <p><i>I think the place of safety is really important isn't it?</i></p>	Support staff	Feeling safe
<p><i>And I think resources, pens and pencils and things like that are actually really key. And I think that we... because we strive for independence and we get them ready for work we do an awful lot on 'have you got your pencil case' and that is an instant C1 C2 (consequence 1/2)... but actually...</i></p>	Equipment	
<p><i>And I genuinely think that is an ethos around school, that is massively there and positive.</i></p> <p><i>It's not like a hidden secret world that people need support of any kind, emotional or academic.</i></p>	School ethos (only explicit in discussion group 3)	

Data were analysed and coded separately for each discussion group before combining the data from all three groups. As with phase one, data were coded manually using colour coded transcriptions and large pieces of paper to visually map out themes.

Codes were grouped into themes and sub-themes using mind maps using the research question as an overall heading. The photos thirteen and fourteen provide an example of how this was achieved for discussion group two.

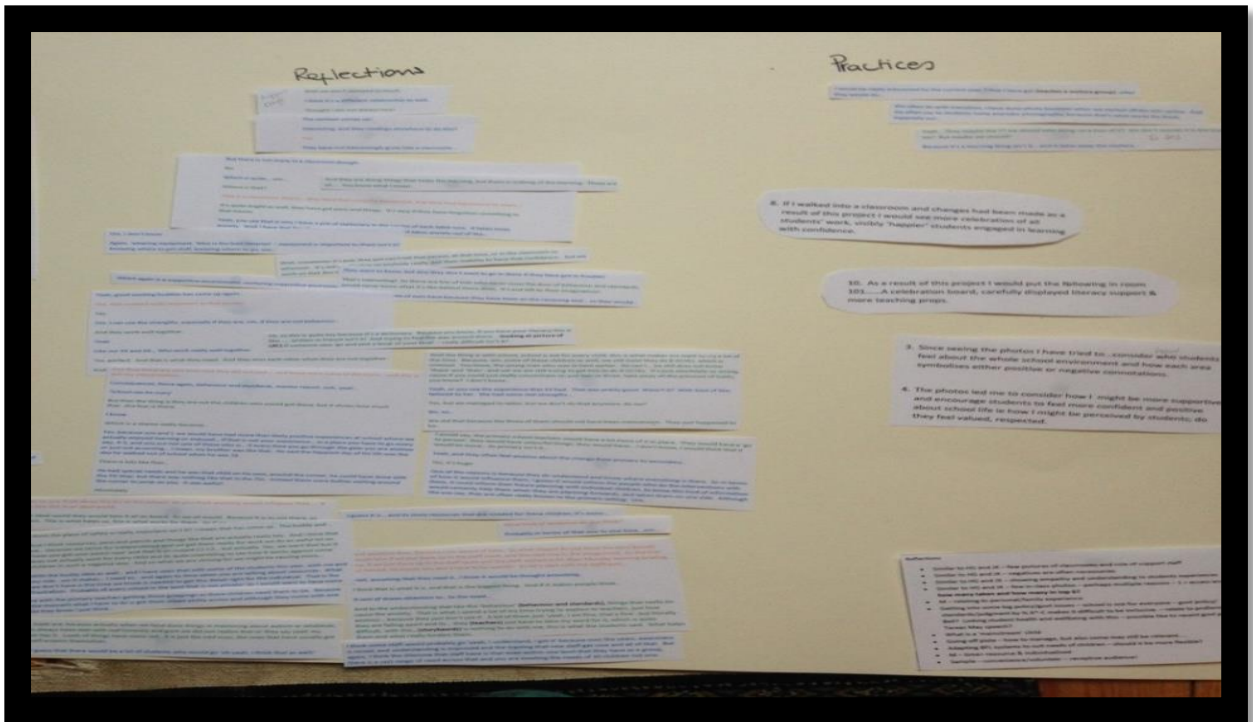


Photo 13: Initial sorting using the research question as a broad heading

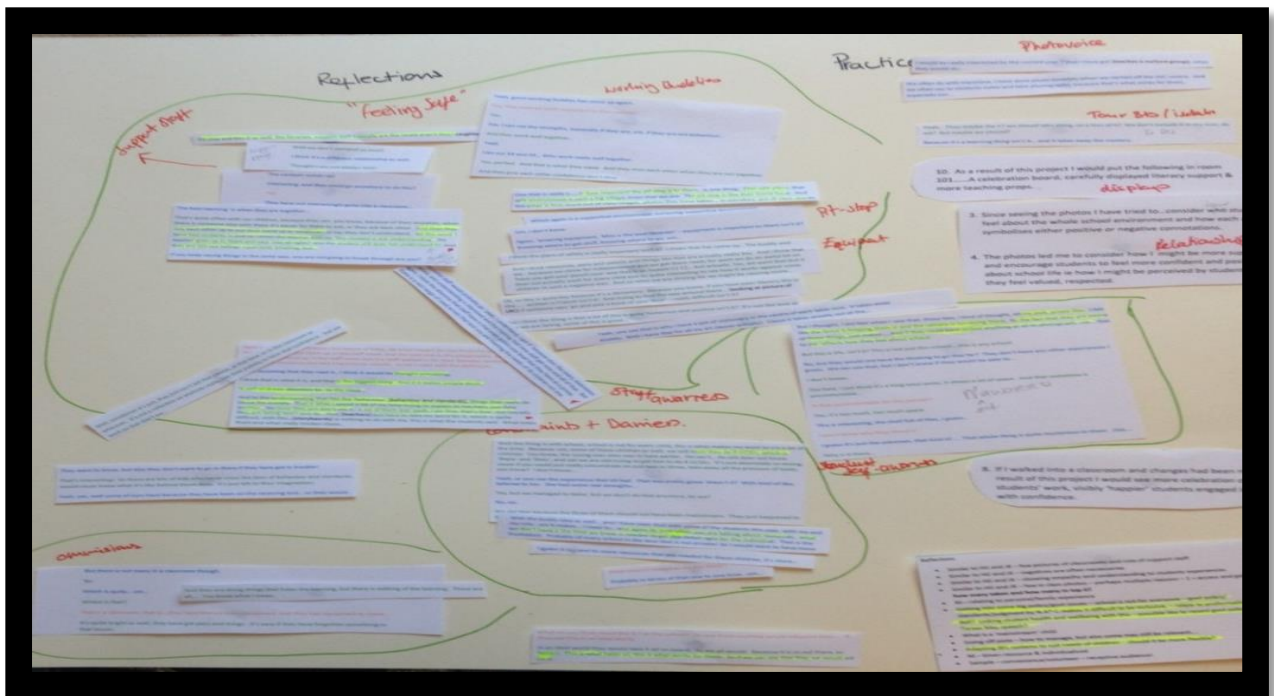


Photo 14: Initial coding

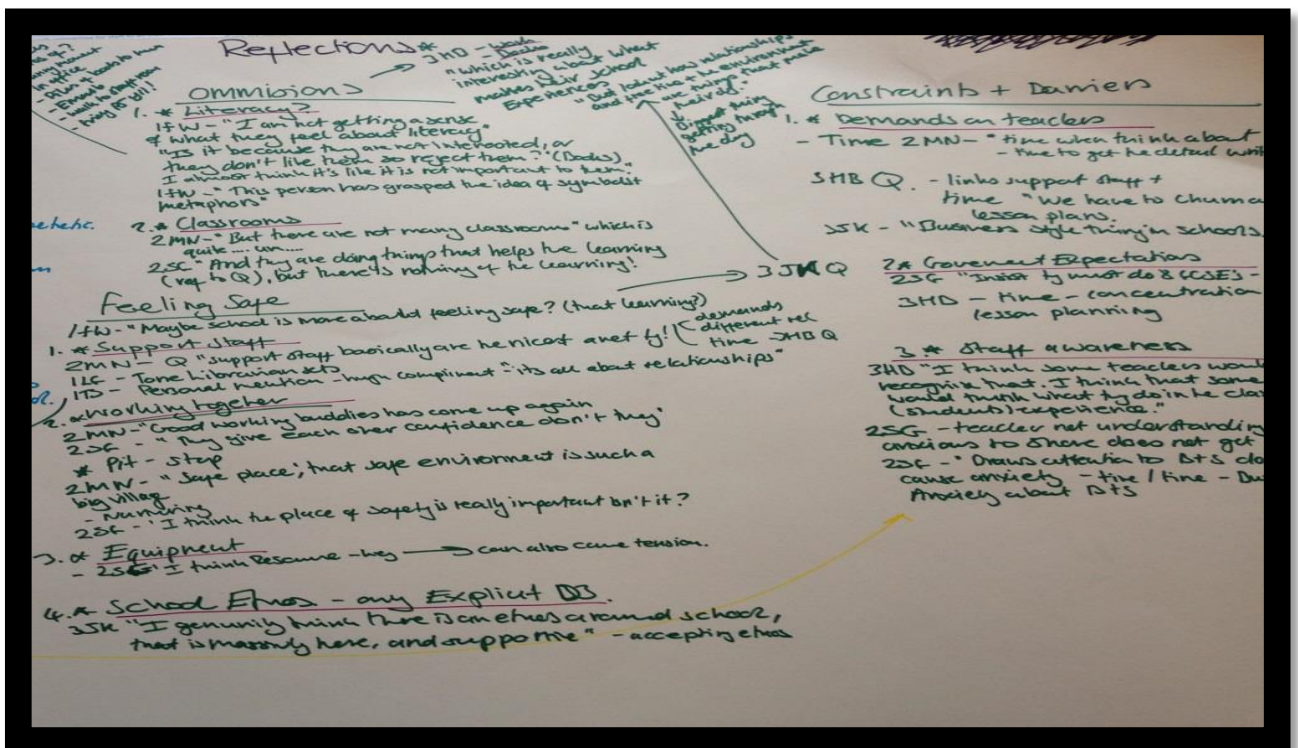


Photo 15: An overview of the themes across the three discussion groups

8. Findings

This section details the findings from the three discussion groups. Participants' reflections are grouped under five broad themes which developed through thematic analysis. All staff reflected on what they had seen and began to consider the implications for their own practice. Conversations often took a tangent away from the photos towards much broader school issues. The following themes were identified; omissions, feeling safe at school, constraints and barriers to potential change, practical implications for practice and reaffirming ways of thinking. A number of subthemes are identified within each broad theme.

All quotes from discussion groups are in italics. Participants can be identified by a number and letter (Please see key below). The number refers to the discussion group and the letter refers to the participant. Bracketed information is used to contextualise quotes.

Key

1 – Discussion group 1

2 – Discussion group 2

3 – Discussion group 3

Letter – Indicates an individual participant

8.2 RQ3: What are staff reflections on students' photos?

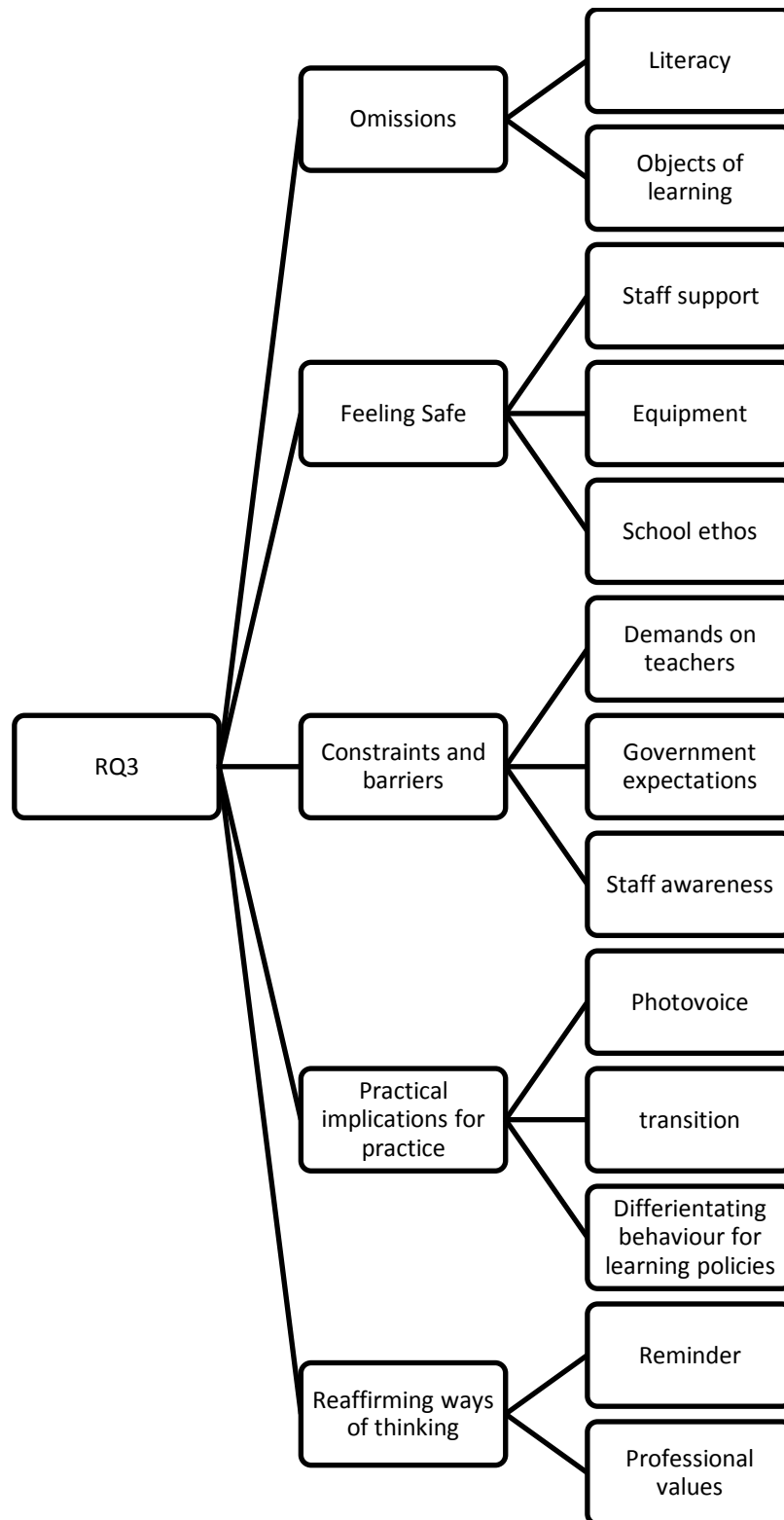


Figure 6: Visual representation of themes and subthemes for research question three

8.2.1 Omissions

The Literacy Coordinator in discussion group one showed the most powerful reaction to the lack of photos about literacy. It seems likely that this reaction was linked to her role as the champion for literacy development within the school. Discussions around the lack of photos that included explicit links to literacy led to debates about why this might be so.

1F: I am not getting any sense of what they feel about literacy!

1F: Is it because they are not interested in them (books), or they don't like them so reject them?

Only one member of staff recognised the reward bag used in the Accelerated Reading intervention programme, which could be interpreted as an overt link to the student photographers' literacy experiences. However, it is interesting to note that students' use of symbolism and metaphor were commented on by staff, in particular in relation to the photo of the stairs, row of folders and fence.

All staff commented on the lack of photos explicitly linked to learning and the objects of learning. They were generally surprised and intrigued by this lack as it represented a disconnection with their role as educators. A number of reflective statements were made about what students valued about their school experiences. Furthermore, a clear distinction was often made between learning and social aspects of school. The implication seemed to be that these experiences were not linked.

3H: I thought they would take something about their work, or books, and they have not done anything like that. Which is really interesting about what makes their school experience

2S: And they are doing things that helps the learning? But there is nothing of the learning!

What students had chosen and had not chosen to take photos of led one teacher to reflect on what she might take photos of if given a camera. She considered how she would represent a funny moment in the office, piles of books to mark, emails, the Monday morning walk to the staffroom and Year 11 period five on a Friday afternoon!

What she related in some ways mirrors the choices of the photographers in its apparent lack of photos relating to teaching and learning.

8.2.2 Feeling safe

Some staff made a connection between what students chose not to take photos of and what they did.

1F: Maybe school is more about feeling safe?

3H: But look how relationships and free time and the environment are the things that make their day. That's just what it proves...

Analysis of the conversations identified five main elements that enabled the student photographers to feel safe. These included access to support staff and a safe space, access to equipment, being able to work together and the school ethos. The school ethos was only explicitly discussed in discussion group three.

Comments about the important contribution that support staff made were usually made by teaching staff. Discussions generally emphasised the different roles and relationships that support staff were able to develop with students.

3H: Most of the stuff they have taken photos of are of support staff. I think that would be fantastic to remind teachers of how valuable our support staff are. And make them realise how much we and the students appreciate that. Because without them these students will get lost in the system because we have to churn out lesson plans... and that is our job! But their job is to help them thrive....

Intertwined with the importance of support staff was the safe and nurturing environment they helped to create for students.

2M: Safe place; that safe environment is such a big village. The Pit Stop is like their home base.

Students' photos showing equipment were commented on in all discussion groups. Discussions ranged from how teachers providing equipment created order and helped classrooms run smoothly to the tension that coming to a lesson unequipped might cause for students.

2S: And I think resources, pens and pencils and things like that are actually really key. And I think that we... because we strive for independence and we get them ready for work we do an awful lot on 'have you got your pencil case' and that is an instant C1 C2 (consequence 1/2)... but actually...

The school ethos was only discussed explicitly in discussion group three. The staff in this discussion group made a clear link between what they described as a school ethos of acceptance and students' feelings of being safe.

3J: And I genuinely think that is an ethos around school, that is massively there and positive.

8.2.3 Constraints and barriers

All discussion groups identified and reflected on constraints and barriers that could potentially hinder changes that might take place after viewing the experience boards. Within this broad theme three subthemes were identified; the demands placed on teachers, government expectations and staff awareness.

A number of teachers reflected on the practical demands placed on them and therefore the lack of time they had to reflect on practice. Comments such as 'we have to churn out lesson plans' and 'you think about exam questions and marking' were also supported by the teacher who reflected on the photos she might take. Her photo choices suggest the practical and emotional demands that are placed on teachers.

The comment below suggests that the participant had reflected on the importance the student placed on working with his friends and related it to her role as Transition Coordinator. She believed there was more she could do if she had the time.

2M: With the buddy idea as well... and I have seen that with some of the students this year, with me and my role... um it makes... I need to... and again it's time when you are talking about resources. What we don't have is the time we know is needed to get this detail right for the individual. That is the frustration, probably of every school in the land that is not private! So I would want to have more time with the primary teachers getting those groupings as these children need them to be.

Some comments reflected how demands on teachers and students were influenced by government policy. Participant experiences of academisation were also highlighted as a barrier to change.

2S: Well the thing is with school, school is not for every child, this is what makes me want to cry a lot of the time. Because, um, some of these children as well, we still insist they do 8 GCSEs, which is criminal.

The final subtheme identified was that some staff lacked awareness of students' experiences, even when a member of support staff acted as an intermediary.

2S: And to the understanding that like the 'behaviour' (behaviour and standards), things that really do cause the anxiety. That is what I spend a lot of my time trying to explain to teachers, just how anxious... because they (teachers) just don't see it. A lot of them (students) just 'yeah, I am fine, that's fine', but literally they are falling apart and its... they (teachers) just have to take my word for it, which is quite difficult, with this... (experience boards) is nothing to do with me, this is what the students said. What helps them and what really hinders them.

8.2.4 Practical implications for practice

Staff identified and reflected on a number of practical implications for their own or whole school practices. A number of staff wondered about using photovoice with the young people they worked with, such as in mentoring and with particular groups such as a nurture group or with students transitioning to secondary school.

There was also a lot discussion about the implications for transition. A number of staff felt that the isolation room and the 'Behaviour and Standards' room should be incorporated into tours for Year 6 students. It was felt that this would take away the mystery of the rooms and provide reassurance.

These discussions often grew out of the participants' initial reactions to the photos and their reflections and interpretations of the experience boards, which appeared to enable them to empathise with the student photographers.

1L: The thing is, if they are Pit Stop children that will be intimidating, but for some children that might be a good thing. That they need that (agreement noises from others). But it is not the same for everyone is it...

3H: That if you step over the line, you know, we are going to help you.

Although not explicitly discussed, the concept of differentiating behaviour for learning policies was implied on several occasions. Differentiating behaviour for learning policies means making them more adaptive and flexible to the needs and responses of the learners they have been put in place to support.

8.2.5 Reaffirming ways of thinking about professional values and relationships

For many staff there appeared to be a relationship between their initial responses, later reflections, and then consideration of their own and others' professional practice. This theme was most difficult to conceptualise, but perhaps the most extensive. It related to reflections on their own thinking that staff identified. These were often at a more abstract level and related to their own values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Often these reflections related to the interpretations that staff made about the student photographers' desire for positive and nurturing relationships and thus the need to feel safe at school. It appeared to be a reminder to staff that these things were important.

3H: I think for some staff it would be a really nice eye opening reminder about what students feel. And how we can have an impact and how little things have an impact. And sometimes you forget that. You think about exam questions and marking them... but actually the relationships and the environment has just as much impact.

3J: It's being reminded about it all the time, as a human being as well as a teacher. I know myself I am dismissive of these smaller things, sometimes just pig headedness, because you just think 'get on with it'...you know, 'pick yourself up' and... but also just having that constant reminder, I think that would be good for anybody. In a roundabout positive way. Just to remind yourself of these small things all the time. It does make a difference.

One member of staff used the sentence completion task to reflect on her professional practice.

The photos led me to consider.... how I might be more supportive and encourage students to feel more confident and positive about school life i.e. how I might be perceived by students; do they feel valued, respected.

These reflective comments made by staff point towards a reaffirming of their professional identity as those who nurture and support young people to develop as citizens as well as learners.

9. Discussion

The findings of this phase are viewed and discussed using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The model provides a holistic approach to learning which links our social and emotional needs with learning and psychological growth. Maslow (1943) suggests that what he describes as the lower order needs of feeling safe, having a sense of belonging and positive relationships must be met before an individual can engage in the higher order activities of thinking and learning.

The model is not without criticism. Korman, Greenhaus and Badin (1977) state that there is little empirical evidence to support the model. They raise particular concerns around the assumption that lower needs in the hierarchy must be met before higher ones can be achieved. They are also critical of Maslow's (1943) conceptualisation of self-actualisation. However, in more recent research using a longitudinal cross cultural study Tay and Diener (2011) conclude that human needs are universal and that people tend to achieve basic and safety needs before others.

9.1 Physiological needs

Maslow (1943) describes physiological needs as the most basic but fundamental needs to ensure survival, for example the need for food, water and shelter. These needs were not discussed within any of the discussion groups. This would suggest the experience boards provided no evidence that these needs were not being met.

9.2 Safety needs

Maslow (1943) describes safety needs as a sense of shelter or protection, order and stability. In relation to children he perceived that this related to a strong desire for routine (p. 377). The constructs of feeling safe and secure were significant themes across all of the discussion groups. Staff identified a number of features of school that enabled the student photographers to feel safe. These included having access to equipment in the classroom if they had forgotten their own, thereby reducing the likelihood of negative consequences. Staff also discussed the importance of the support and care received from support staff and a school ethos of acceptance.

Many participants made a clear link between the omission of photos explicitly about learning and the students' strong desire to feel safe at school. This appeared to be quite shocking to some staff. In their research which adapted the Lesson Study method

of teacher development to include opportunities for student input. Messiou and Ainscow (2015) found that students' views did stimulate reflection and new ways of thinking. In a later paper (Messiou, Ainscow, Echeita, Goldrick, Hope, Paes, Sandoval, Simon, & Vitorino, 2016) they concluded that involving students in teacher development could support staff to be more sensitive to diversity, and stimulate professional discussion and experimentation. However, they acknowledge that collaboration among staff is needed to achieve this and that providing the flexibility to enable staff to meet can be difficult to achieve. They also state that 'Learning from differences is likely to be challenging of the status quo within a school' (Messiou et al. 2016, p. 59). Staff responses suggest that the lack of photos explicitly about learning did challenge staff beliefs and lead participants to acknowledge the student photographers' strong desire to feel safe at school.

Participants' initial responses, particularly to photos which they viewed as 'negative' suggest a growing awareness of students' perceptions of school and need to feel safe. Students' photos of the CCTV camera, the field and 'Behaviour and Standards' room captured the imagination of staff across all three discussion groups. The word 'bleak' was used in discussion groups one and three. Responses were often intuitive and empathetic and led on to deeper reflection about the experiences of the student photographers as well as possible ways to mediate student experiences. The comments of staff participants suggest that parts of the school which they saw as preserving order and routine and so supporting the smooth running of the school were seen by the student photographers in a more negative way. These comments are in line with Luttrell (2010) who found that students' photos reframed adult conversations and opened up often overlooked topics for discussion.

In their research investigating how staff respond to student views about learning Bourke and Loveridge (2016) found that staff tended to view students' feedback through their own 'teacher lens'. This lens was influenced by their philosophies about teaching and learning, the curriculum, policy expectations and accountability. A 'teacher lens' can also be seen in the participants' views in the current research. In particular views about the purpose of the 'Behaviour and Standards' room and the omission of photos explicitly about learning portray a discontinuum between staff and students. It could be suggested that this is to be expected. However, increased staff

awareness about this disparity and reflection about the impact it has on student levels of anxiety, engagement and motivation would be profitable. This is perhaps particularly pertinent in the light of research which suggests that motivation has a significant influence on attainment (Burden, 2008).

Many ideas were generated from staff discussion around the student photographers' need to feel safe. These often related to whole school changes, such as differentiating behaviour for learning policies. This was never stated explicitly, but many participants spoke of the different needs of the students within the school community.

9.3 Relationship needs

Maslow (1943) describes relationship needs as the desire for love and affection and a sense of belonging within a family and community. Within a school setting this relates to feeling accepted by peers and adults and having a sense of belonging as a member of the school community.

Within the current research feeling safe and developing positive relationships with adults were highly linked in the discussions by participants. The Pit Stop was described as providing a nurturing 'home base' and although a physical place, participants appeared to be describing the feeling of being safe that students gained from developing relationships with the staff who ran the room.

Teaching staff in particular commented on the different relationships that support staff were able to develop with students. As has already been noted in phase one of this research Ireson and Hallam (2005) suggest that developing positive relationships with staff contribute to feelings of being valued and supported and impact student motivation and participation. This finding sits well within Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs.

For many staff engaging with the experience boards led to reflections about their own relationships with students and what the student photographers in particular valued about school. This appeared to tap into their professional values as teachers and support staff. In particular it seemed to reaffirm their tacit knowledge that developing relationships was an important part of being a member of staff, and that the 'little' things they did were noticed and valued. Developing reflective practice as part of teacher development has become increasingly valued (Hebert, 2015). The work of

Schön (1983) suggests that professional roles, such as teaching are more than applying 'technical rationality'. Therefore, there is more to being a teacher than having good subject knowledge and using pedagogical knowledge of teaching and learning to secure progress for those in the classroom. Many participants in the current research appeared to have reflected on the importance of the more affective aspects of learning for students, such as developing positive relationships with staff and working with 'buddies'.

9.4 Self-esteem needs

Maslow (1943) describes esteem needs as the desire people have to experience a high evaluation of themselves, with satisfaction of this leading to feelings of self-confidence and self-worth (p. 382).

Engaging with the experience boards led a number of staff to reflect on the impact that their behaviour and attitudes had on the students they taught and supported; questioning whether students felt valued and respected by their actions. It also led to reflections about the 'little things' they did that they believed made a difference to students.

Maslow (1943) hypothesised that if esteem needs were not met people would be left feeling inferior and helpless. Within the current research two themes stand out that would contribute to these feelings or beliefs. Some participants reflected that not all staff appeared to be aware of the degree of worry and anxiety students experienced in relation to getting consequences for lack of equipment or homework. Staff described as 'unaware' of their influence on learners are unlikely to be able to understand or meet the esteem needs of such learners.

Participants who were teaching staff also commented on the demands placed upon teachers, for example, marking books, lesson planning and preparing students for national tests. There was a belief that this had the potential to reduce their capacity to develop supportive and trusting relationships with students and thus be in a position to meet their esteem needs.

9.5 Self-actualisation needs

Maslow (1968) describes the term self-actualisation as desire for self-fulfilment and personal growth. Within an educational setting this would relate to students having a

desire to be all they are capable of becoming and being facilitated to do this by others in the school community.

This has implications for the way staff envisage their roles within schools. As has already been suggested some staff made comments that showed they saw themselves in this way. However, possible constraints and barriers to fulfilling this role were also discussed. These have been explored in relation to learners esteem needs, however the nature of the framework means they would also be relevant at this level. This is because school staff play a crucial role in supporting learners to grow and develop the capacity to become independent and creative learners.

Staff were asked if viewing the photos and reflecting on their content had implications for practice. It should be noted that they were never explicitly asked about what might prevent them from altering their practice. However, they identified a number of constraints and barriers that they believed would hinder them. Some of these relate to what Bourke and Loveridge (2016) refer to as the 'teacher lens'; for example, the pressures placed on school staff to cover curriculum content, prepare for national examinations and achieve students' expected grades. Ball (2003) believes these pressures are endemic within education. He cites the increasing pressure on teachers in relation to league tables, national tests and inspections. He describes this as the 'terrors of performativity' which can lead to teacher 'ontological insecurity' and so the diminishing of inclusive practices as focus is directed away from values (Ball 2003, p.271). It is likely that these pressures impede the ability of staff to facilitate steps towards learner self-actualisation.

In an attempt to further explore participant reflections in a less time consuming way all participants were sent a sentence completion task and asked to complete approximately four out of ten sentences. The task aimed to capture any further reflections, changes in thinking or practice. Only two participants returned the sentence completion task. The task was sent out approximately two to three months after the discussion groups took place. This attrition rate could have been a result of the time lag or the less intrinsically appealing nature of completing a written task. However, it could also indicate a linkage to the constraints and barriers the participants discussed or perhaps a dwindling interest or commitment to the research.

9.6 Using photovoice to stimulate reflection

Beaver (2011) suggests that 'discussing issues with parents and teachers, especially when supported with information of the child's world and perception, can lead to insights which will promote change within the system' (p.209). Photovoice is one method that can be used to try and foreground students' experiences of the world and their views about their place within it. A number of research studies have successfully used photovoice to enable adults to gain an understanding of young people's worlds. Luttrell's (2010, p. 224) work provoked a 'need to know more stance' among school staff about the home and school experiences of 'working class immigrant' children in America. While Hill's (2014) work illuminated the different experiences of learners that had been identified as having Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) led to a more individualised views of what might support them. The findings of the current research support those of previous research in this area. All staff developed a greater awareness of the experiences of the student photographers. They showed empathy and a desire to interpret and reflect on what was in front of them. They also appeared to develop a greater understanding of what students valued and what had the potential to cause anxiety. It could be that the visceral experience of engaging with the photos and experience boards was supportive of this process.

As has been outlined in phase one of the current research, photovoice is not without methodological limitations. There were some photos student photographers wished to take but were unable to do so. These included the isolation room and certain classrooms. This is likely to have impacted on staff interpretations. Indeed, the omission of photos containing the objects of learning was often commented on by staff. However, it should also be noted that photo eleven does show a number of photos which students chose not to use which contain the objects of learning, such as dictionaries and classroom displays.

Photovoice is a labour intensive way of gaining student experiences and views. In the current school climate this would certainly have an impact on its use. This is one drawback which is often cited for a lack of student involvement in decisions about their lives (Lundy, 2007). There would need to be significant buy in from those in the senior leadership team to ensure its effectiveness. The current research used disposable cameras to gain ethical approval and to contain school staff anxiety about students

being 'let loose' with cameras around school. However, modern technology such as iPads would be a more cost effective way of taking images once the practice of photovoice had been embedded within a school.

While accepting these methodological limitations I believe that the use of photovoice offers an active and visceral way for staff to engage with the experiences and view of students. It is likely to work particularly well with students who might not actively share their voices in other forums such as student councils or with groups of students who have not engaged with activities in the past which have sought to share their views.

9.7 Strengths and limitations of phase two

Both methodological considerations and my own reflections have been considered in this section.

A methodological consideration of this research is the use of convenience sampling. All staff who attended the whole school professional development session were invited to take part in the research. However, in the end only seven members of staff took part. A number of staff were interested after the initial presentation, but did not follow this interest up with further contact. The SENCo had wanted to take part, but had to attend an emergency child protection meeting. The manager of the Pit Stop replaced her. This caused an interesting dynamic because the student photographers had taken photos of her and commented on the Pit Stop.

There are a number of relative benefits to the sample. A variety of staff with different roles and responsibilities chose to take part. This included teaching and non-teaching staff who often had different experiences of working with learners. This variety helped to generate lively debate. Also, the rationale for the research was to undertake a context specific study because there is little research into learner experiences that takes this stance. Usefulness could be considered in the influence that taking part had on the student photographers and staff. Furthermore, there is scope for the transferability of themes from the research as a springboard for discussion in the current and other educational contexts (McGhee, 2001).

In this context a possible limitation is the small size of the sample. If more staff had chosen to take part this would have widened the debate within the school about the experiences of learners identified as having literacy barriers to learning. Furthermore, only one male member of staff took part and no staff from the senior leadership team chose to take part. There was therefore scope for a broader range of staff to take part.

Throughout phase two of the research I reflected on the extent to which my interpretation of students' experience boards may have influenced the thinking of staff in the discussion groups and also how their interpretations may have influenced my own thinking. There is some inevitability in this and it could be considered part of the hermeneutic nature of much qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). However, some checks and balances were put into place to increase transparency:

- Experience boards already included my interpretations by the time staff saw them.
- All student photographers shared that their experience boards captured something authentic about their experiences of school. Amendments to experience boards were made where there were inconsistencies between my interpretations and students' experiences.
- Some support was given to staff to interpret the photos, for example, to identify the sensory room and the SENCo's office. An attempt was made to offer neutral explanations and reflect back staff interpretations to help them clarify their thinking.

The candid and lively discussions that staff engaged in were a particular strength of phase two of the research. Clough and Nutbrown's (2002) concept of 'focused conversations' did appear to foster empathy for student photographers, support the sharing of experiences and views and generate a variety of meanings for the photos. This links with Luttrell's (2010) notion of 'intersubjectivity' when photos are viewed by different audiences. Therefore, there was scope for multiple, shared and contested meanings to be generated and discussed in the groups. This contributed to the richness and depth of the research.

These reflections on the process of carrying out phase two of the research highlight possible limitations and strengths and therefore must be considered when judging the findings.

10. Overall discussion

10.1 Learner experiences

The current research findings illustrate the variety, complexity and often contradictory experiences of CYP identified as having literacy barriers to learning. Predominant themes relate to the importance student participants placed on friendships inside and outside of the classroom setting. The experience of nurturing and affirming relationships with adults were valued in their own right as well as the different types of support that student participants identified as receiving throughout their school careers. Finally, the experience boards illustrate that the student participants viewed their experiences in both positive and negative ways.

The experiences that the student participants most highly valued were often associated with relational aspects of their school lives. They identified relationships with friends at the Pit Stop and their supportive role when learning. They also identified the support they received in lessons and from individual LSAs with whom they came to form strong attachments.

Students also identified a number of negative aspects of their school experiences. The focus of some student participants on their need for support suggests that they saw themselves as learners that needed adult intervention to be successful and that learning was often a hard and effortful experience. Furthermore, some learning activities were identified as 'uninspiring' if they had to be differentiated to such a degree that they became unappealing and less motivating for learners. In describing such a situation Sam hinted at his feelings of frustration and embarrassment. Furthermore, having worries and concerns were also identified as more negative aspects of school. Again, this is highlighted by the student participants' perceptions that adults were needed to talk to about their worries and that the Pit Stop was required as a 'Safe Place'. However, these more negative experiences were embedded within the student photographers' narratives about their needs being met and their feelings of being supported and cared for.

The current research provides an addition to investigation in this area. As has been suggested in the literature review much research which illuminates the experiences of students with literacy barriers to learning has come from research investigating their

social and emotional wellbeing and the linked concepts of self-perception and self-esteem. Findings have generally highlighted that learners, especially in mainstream settings, tend to have predominantly negative school experiences. I have argued these findings may have been influenced by the use of a variety of methods used to carry out the research. Further consideration of these differences are made in the strengths and limitations section of this chapter. This is of particular relevance because the current research was undertaken in a qualitatively different way to most research exploring the experiences of learners with literacy barriers to learning. It is worth noting that Kelly and Norwich (2004) suggest that using more naturalistic approaches to understanding learner experiences is supported by post-structuralist and feminist research. Learner experiences are therefore context specific and constructed within social interactions.

10.2 The omission of literacy photos

A significant theme that runs through both phases of the research is the omission of photos explicitly about learning and in particular literacy aspects of learning. This highlighted a discontinuum between staff and students. Staff appear to have expected more photos that would portray students' learning experiences, while the students' interpretation of the stimulus question led them to jettison these photos from their final top six selection, as evidenced by photo eleven.

The omissions could be used to support the theory that the student photographers often found learning hard. Personal construct psychology (Beaver, 2011) suggests that if a learner does not wish to accept a potentially negative construct, for example, poor reader or poor learner, they may well reduce the value of the construct. The choices students made about what photos best represented their experiences of school could be interpreted in this way. Furthermore, research carried out by Thompson and Hartley (1980) which was also based on the principles of personal construct psychology suggests that learners with literacy difficulties often make distinct links between their difficulties and core constructs such as being a happy, good or intelligent person. This could provide another reason for the student participants' omission of more learning based photos.

A contrasting theory for the omission could be that social experiences were more at the front of students' minds and that these experience ran across a variety of learning and

non-learning contexts. This theory is supported by the work of Pollard (2001) who was interested in the social context of learning. Although he worked with primary children his theory is likely to remain relevant.

Staff initial reactions to the photos and then their growing awareness of the disparity between how they and the students saw school were a significant catalyst for reflection. Staff were able to consider and reflect upon aspects of school which the student photographers found anxiety provoking, demotivating and alienating. It is likely that if ongoing work was able to take place with staff then reflections from the initial research could be used to further augment reflective discussion with implications for practice. In particular, finding ways to share with staff the impact that these experiences can have on student motivation and attainment would be beneficial.

10.3 The context of learners' experiences

The student photographers were open about their experiences of receiving support and often described themselves as needing help or support. As has been suggested this is a more positive self-descriptor than others that could be used. It could be that the learners' positive experiences of support enabled them to be 'embracers' as opposed to 'resistors' of their identities as students with literary barriers to learning (Evans, 2014). The current research findings point to a number of reasons why this might be so.

Firstly, according to Marsh's (2006) 'big fish little pond' hypothesis students were able to make favourable comparisons with other students who used the Pit Stop. Secondly, what staff in phase two of the research described as a positive and accepting school ethos is also likely to have had an impact on the 'embracer' self-description of the student photographers. Within the research carried out by Burden and Burdett (2007) they identify an encouraging and inclusive school ethos as a significant contributory factor to more positive school experiences and therefore learners who saw themselves as capable and able to experience success in learning contexts.

Within the current research there are some caveats to the influence of the school ethos on student experiences. Staff and student interpretations of a 'positive' school ethos are likely to be quite different. Furthermore, the statements were made by a small number of staff. However, they are in general supported by student experiences of school. Furthermore, another similarity with the Burden and Burdett (2007) study is

the make-up of the school population. It is worth noting that the percentage of students receiving free school meals is low in comparison to national averages and that the school is considered to be high performing. Therefore, it is possible that participants' experiences of learning could have influenced by other home or contextual factors, such as supportive parents/carers.

Finally, it could be that the student photographers' experiences were influenced by the discourses of school staff. Staff participants within phase two of the research generally tended to describe students as those with difficulties or who were more vulnerable. This language is in line with language used within Special Educational Needs CoP (2014).

10.4 The impact of social and emotional aspects of learning

A significant theme which runs across both phases of this research is the frame student photos placed around social and emotional aspects of learning. This is perhaps most powerfully evoked by Sidney's photo called 'The best learning'.



Photo 16: 'The best learning'

Interpretation of the photo suggests that the best learning happens with friends and that Sidney found learning with his friends more engaging and motivating. He may also have felt more able to take risks or make mistakes in these settings. There is a significant amount of research that points to the impact of social and emotional aspects of learning on positive academic and pro-social outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg,

Shellinger, Dymnicki, and Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, Pollard and Filer (2007) suggest that relationships with peers and staff become more significant as learners reach secondary school. Therefore, they are inextricably linked with learning experiences.

Student photographers' relationships with staff were strongly evident in many of the experience boards. All of the experience boards made reference to the Pit Stop which is a staffed space that students identified as having special educational needs are able to access at break and lunch time. It seems likely that their draw to this place was in part due to the support they received from staff. This is highlighted by photo twenty and student participants' comments about support staff in particular.

Roffey (2015) suggests the feeling that someone cares about you, has high expectations for you, and that you have a sense of connectedness with, are strong protective factors which can have a positive impact on wellbeing and academic progress. This view is supported by the research of Ireson and Hallam (2005). They argue that these protective factors increase student engagement and the development of autonomous learners because relationships with significant adults are likely to contribute to feelings of being valued and supported.

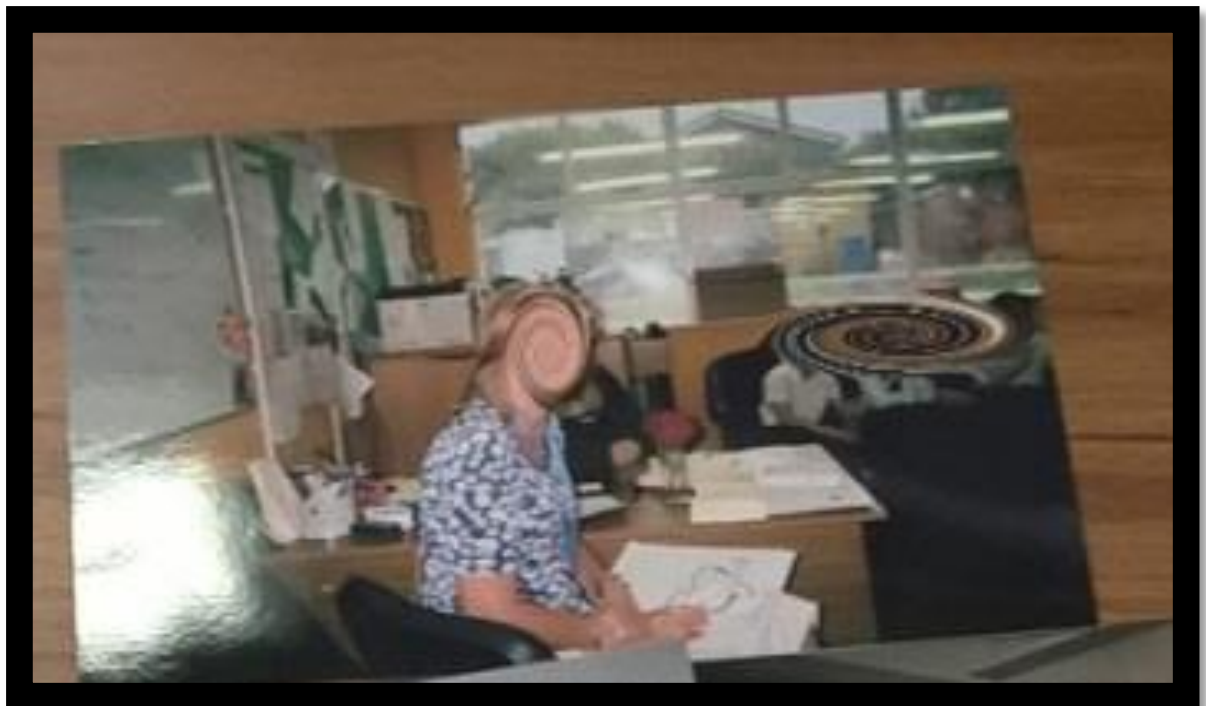


Photo 17: The Pit Stop Manager at her desk in the Pit Stop

Teaching staff who took part in phase two of the research also identified the significant role of support staff. Linked to this, they identified a number of barriers to teaching staff being able to fulfil this role. However, many staff responded most powerfully to the significance that the student photographers placed on having a feeling of relatedness and connection. It seems likely that this knowledge supported reflection about how they could best support learners. Indeed, for some it seemed to reaffirm their tacit knowledge that this was an important part of their role, and that the 'little' things they did were noticed and valued.

Within educational psychology the relationship between learning, relationships and emotions has been reinforced by Roffey (2015). She suggests that EPs are well placed to engage staff in conversations about the influence of affective aspects of learning at individual casework, group and whole school levels.

10.5 A holistic understanding of students experiencing literacy barriers to learning

One of the reasons for this research was to contribute to a more holistic understanding of those described as having literacy barriers to learning. Psychological exploration has traditionally focused on cognitive and neural processes along with the effectiveness of literacy interventions (Anderson, 2009; Burden, 2005; Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Therefore, exploration of the experiences of learners contributes to a broader understanding of this area of difficulty that many CYP experience.

Acknowledging a more holistic understanding of literacy difficulties has implications for intervention. Therefore, as well as providing learners with evidence informed literacy interventions, other forms of intervention which support learners social and emotional wellbeing are important. This is supported by the early research of Lawrence (2006). Using a design which involved student participants being put into a number of different experimental groups, he found that students who were able to have regular individual sessions with a school counsellor made more reading progress than those who received a literacy intervention as measured by a pre and post intervention assessment. Furthermore, MacKay (2008) found that getting primary school children to make bold declarations about their intention to read and ability to do so resulted in gains in their

early literacy skills as measured by school assessment. There were also positive changes in attitude to reading and beliefs about becoming a 'good' reader.

The use of resilience models has been advocated by research in relation to literacy barriers to learning (Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick, 2011; Terras, Thompson and Minnis, 2009) and within educational psychology practice (Roffey, 2015). These models suggest that supporting learners and those in systems around them to identify their strengths and develop self-knowledge, while also considering protective factors within the system, has significant benefits for learner motivation and self-belief. Within the current research learners were able to identify a number of protective factors. They identified these as having positive relationships with peers and staff and knowledge of where and from whom to seek support.

These interventions suggest that a focus beyond literacy development and towards valuing the experience of literacy difficulties would be beneficial. They also indicate that taking a more holistic approach to learning to read and write can result in substantial dividends for learners and school communities. However, Lawrence (2006) suggests that there is often resistance within school communities to taking a more holistic view of supporting reading development. Therefore, there is a place for educational psychology involvement in facilitating conversations informed by psychological research which supports this approach.

10.6 Strengths and limitations of the research

Methodological reflections are made in relation to; the samples used in both phase one and two of the research project, the limitations of photovoice, the desire to ask questions differently and the lack of a psychological model to frame phase one of the research. These reflections have implications for the trustworthiness and credibility of the conclusions of this research and any implications for educational psychology practice that are advocated (McGhee, 2001).

10.6.1. Samples

Convenience samples were used for phases one and two of the research. Phase one consisted of a small group of four boys all in the same year group. There were some strengths in this set up. The boys quickly formed a cohesive group and developed strong and mutually sustaining relationships. The group became a safe place to share

with an easy and relaxed atmosphere. This sometimes led to discussions which were a little off topic, for example, Rick's fascination with the Geneva Convention. However, it also enabled space for sensitivity, for example Sam's reflections about his reading assessment and the support he received from other participants while recounting this incident. It is therefore likely that the small group supported the generation of rich data.

Perhaps a larger group with a mix of gender and age groups would have yielded different results. Furthermore, identifying groups of learners as having literacy difficulties for research groups is identified as a limitation of much research in this area (Zelege, 2004). In the current research the criteria were broad. All participants were involved in an ongoing literacy intervention. It should be noted that throughout the research all participants self-identified as experiencing literacy difficulties. However, this was not part of the original criteria used to identify them. Finally, as Kelly and Norwich (2004) suggest, identification as having a special educational need does not make a homogeneous group of those who share the label. It is likely that the participants all had different literacy levels and experiences and were influenced by many circumstances outside the parameters of the current research.

Phase two also had a small, mainly female sample. Furthermore, all the participants chose to take part, suggesting some kind of personal or professional interest in the research. After the initial recruitment presentation to staff in September 2016 one member of staff suggested that each department should send a representative to the discussion groups. Although this would have increased numbers and potentially the range of people involved, I was concerned about the logistics of organisation and also the commitment of those who were selected to attend from each department. Although the suggestion was interesting, it was politely declined. The nature of the sample has implications for the findings. It is likely that participants were more open to engaging in reflection than other staff within the school community who did not choose to take part.

10.6.2 Strengths and limitations of photovoice

The photos that were taken in phase one of the research project form the foundations of the research and link phase one and two together. At the onset of this research I

believed that photovoice would aid the elicitation of students' school experiences. Although the method is not without limitations, the findings suggest that the method was fun and accessible for the students involved. Their commitment to the research project suggests that the method did increase participation, and emphasise the capacity of those involved and not their barriers to learning. In doing so it is possible the method contributed to the more positive and affirming, yet realistic views participants had of themselves as learners. Elderton, Clarke, Jones and Stacey (2014) suggest that when problem-saturated stories dominate, experiences are negatively impacted. Therefore, the method of photovoice could have supported the generation of more positive stories about the photographers school experiences.

I also believed that the photos would stimulate reflection and potentially facilitate discussions around practice in the members of school staff who viewed them. Schratz and Steiner-Loffler (1998, p. 236) suggest that photos carry 'heavy cultural meaning' and can be a powerful instrument for change. This view is also supported by the work of Wang and Burris (1997). The photos proved to be provoking and stimulated lively and reflective debates among staff. Significantly many staff showed a high level of empathy in their comments and reflections. They also began to think more holistically about the school experiences of the student photographers and some acknowledged the discontinuum between student and staff experiences. This would suggest that photovoice is a useful tool to engage staff in reflective conversations.

These assertions support the applicability of photovoice to the aims of the current research. However, a number of limitations were outlined in phase one and phase two. These are consistent with other research that has used this method. Hill (2014) describes the difficulty in negotiating what can be in photos. The consent of others is needed if they are in the photos and in some instances locations should not be recognisable. This can limit the scope of the images that can be taken. Both Hill (2014) and Luttrell (2010) identify that participants had wanted to take photos of events, places and people but that they were unable to do so. In her research, Punch (2002) identifies that certain photos were context dependent. Furthermore, she considered whether the children involved took photos that they thought the researcher wanted them to rather than what was important to them. Booth and Booth (2003) found that although participants felt comfortable sharing their photos with others involved, they

did not want to do so with a wider audience. This had significant implications for their research as the aim was to share the images and impact policy decisions.

Within the current research supporting the participants to sort and organise their photos was a difficult task. This was because so many photos had been taken, for example Rick took 48 photos in total. It is possible that by asking student photographers to discard blurred photos, multiple photos of the same subject and ones they could not remember their reason for taking, some data was lost. However, there was a need to find a purposeful full way to reduce the data to a manageable size for the participants to work with. It is likely that if iPads had been used this process would have happened more in the moment as the student participants would have had more immediate access to the photos they had taken.

Participants were also asked to pick and rank their top six photos. Asking students to distinguish and select a top number of photos is common practice within photovoice research, especially when many photos have been taken (Aldridge, 2007; Luttrell, 2010). This task is also similar to the diamond nine activity evaluated by Hill et al (2016) as part of their investigation into participatory methods with student researchers. They conclude that the benefits of the method are that it facilitates reflection on experiences, is an active form of communication where the young person is not the focus of the discussion, and so reduces feelings of anxiety. They also believe it can reduce power imbalances because young people can take an active role in decision making. A possible limitation is that high levels of reasoning ability are needed; therefore some participants might find it difficult to explain their choices.

The selection process in the current research aided student photographers to gather their thoughts and provide reasons for their choices. The activity enabled Harry to share that he valued all his photos equally; hence he chose to display them in a circle. However, Rick found this process difficult. In choosing the two photos that showed all the developed negatives he had taken, he in essence did not make many selection decisions. This had implications for the interpretations I was able to make about his experience board.

The examples above illustrate that although this had been envisaged as a pyramid ranking activity similar to a diamond nine, the participants interpreted the activity in a

variety of ways. Making space for participants to follow their own agenda increased the participatory nature of the research (Leeson, 2014). However, it also reduced the ability to make comparisons between the participants' work. This limitation highlights the difficult balance between seeking to be participatory and adding to a body of psychological knowledge. This is a theme throughout the research.

Finally, although there was much discussion at the outset of the project about trying not to take photos of other people, some photos of people did creep into the research. This was in part at the insistence of the student photographers and the generosity of the staff member involved (Pit Stop Manager). Other staff who the participants wanted to include were referred to via objects that represented them, for example, the Design and Technology technician (door) and the SENCo (office). The inclusion of one member of staff and a photo of myself could bias the data. Perhaps the student photographers would have like to take photos of other staff. However, it was not apparent during my time with them. Furthermore, not all student photographers chose to include photos of the Pit Stop manager, myself or themselves. This was a decision on their part as all had opportunities to do so.

10.6.3 Asking a different question

A review of the literature found that the experiences of learners identified as having literacy barriers to learning had been explored in a variety of ways. However, each method has particular limitations. Research using questionnaires predominantly uses Marsh's (1990) 'Self-Description Questionnaire' (SDQ). The questionnaire has high levels of validity and reliability (Marsh 1990 & 2006)), however, it has a relatively small focus on literacy. Furthermore, questions are rather broad and so are unlikely to provide a detailed and nuanced picture of learner experiences in this area. This is supported by Kelly and Norwich (2004) who suggest the SDQ reduces participants' capacity to provide idiosyncratic responses. Interviews using semi-structured interview schedules have offered more flexibility but questions have often been directive and problem saturated. These types of questions may have predisposed participants to answer in a particular way. Therefore, asking more open questions seemed applicable. Finding a different way to ask questions about the experience of having literacy barriers to learning therefore came in part from a review of the literature.

I was also strongly influenced by the research of Burden and Burdett (2007), Hunter (2010) and Tellis-James & Fox (2016). They all appear to have been able to ask open questions that elicited in-depth and complex answers. In the case of Hunter (2010) and Tellis-James & Fox (2016) this had been achieved when working with sensitive topics. Therefore, the desire to frame the question differently grew. Instead of asking participants in phase one to directly tell me about their difficulties I asked them to share their experiences of school and learning. Participatory methods were chosen to further enable the question to be asked differently.

Critical to any piece of research is whether the methods meet the aims of the research. I have argued that photovoice was successful in eliciting and foregrounding the views and experiences of CYP and then engaging staff in reflection. However, it is worth considering if it provided the in-depth insight into learner experiences that I had hoped for. The breadth of the question and the degree of student choice may have at times taken the research on a tangent away from the focus of literacy difficulties. It is likely that the inclusion of other methods, for example personal construct psychology, may have provided further insights into learner's experiences. Weidberg (2017) used personal construct psychology to gain an insight into the experience of children of prisoners. The pictures and labels that CYP gave them tell a convincing story. However, I was at pains to reduce the level of written work that was expected of participants in phase one of the research. Although some participants labelled their work with titles, Sam found this particularly challenging and chose not to label his photos. These reflections illustrate the challenge of trying to be participatory and to use appropriate methods while also gaining insight and adding to a body of psychological knowledge.

10.6.4 The use of psychological models to frame research

Psychological models could be described as frameworks through which to view the world. Each has its own strengths and limitations. Within phase two of the research I believe Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a useful aid to understand the findings. However, I accept that other models may have produced a slightly different view of the findings.

When considering phase one I struggled to identify a model or theory of learner experiences that I felt comfortable using. Therefore, a number of different theories have been used to consider the findings. These include Marsh's (2006) 'big fish little

pond' model, personal construct psychology and attributional theories. However, what does underpin phase one of the research is a commitment to exploring and prioritising the student photographers' experiences and stories.

10.7 Ethical considerations

The two frequently used and related terms of 'giving voice' and 'student voice' are considered in relation to the current research.

10.7.1 'Giving voice'

The concept of 'giving voice' is often claimed by qualitative researchers (Meehan, 2016). Within both participatory approaches (Rogers & Ludhra, 2011) and visual methodologies (Luttrell, 2010) the term is widely used. However, Byrne (2017) questions the meaningfulness, honesty and authenticity of some research.

Participants' experiences are filtered through the lens of the researcher and the theory they have applied. In some research participants have shared that although they recognise the interpretation, it was not how they saw themselves (Smythe & Murray, 2000). Smythe and Murray (2000) refer to this as narrative ownership. If a narrative, or in the case of the current research, an experience board, is shared with multiple audiences then the participants own meaning making can be lost and other more powerful narratives might take over. This view is shared by Bach (2007) who suggests that researchers have a responsibility to consider the implications of making what may be private public, and how what is produced by participants may be interpreted over time. Many of these concerns are summed up by Bragg's pithy observation;

'Finding, discovering, or being given a voice, as if we can simply access their authentic core being. What they say depends on what they are asked, how they are asked it, 'who' they are invited to speak as in responding; and then, in turn, on the values and assumptions of the researcher or audience interpreting their 'voices'.

(Bragg, 2007b p. 33)

Throughout this research I have tried to be mindful about claiming to give voice. The term 'eliciting and foregrounding student photographers' experiences and views' has generally been used. The comment Sam shared that I had '*really managed to get him*', and the other student photographers positive responses to their experience boards provides some support for the authenticity or trustworthiness of interpretations.

10.7.2 'Student voice'

The concept of student voice is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1989). However, this does not make adherence to it simple or straightforward. Lundy (2007) suggests that CYP should be involved in all four dimensions of her student voice model. This is not the case in the current research. Phase one of this research focused on eliciting student experiences and views which were then used in phase two to stimulate reflection. Therefore, CYP were most heavily involved in phase one of the research but not phase two. Furthermore, it could be suggested that I came to the project with particular research questions in mind (Rogers & Ludhra, 2011) and a particular theoretical lens (Smythe & Murray, 2000) thus further reducing the participatory nature of this research.

Student voice within the current research probably relates more to the spirit of the declaration and to the professional requirement of those working with CYP to endeavour to do all they can to engage them in meaningful dialogue about what is important to them. In relation to Hart's (1992) ladder analogy, the current research sits between the statements 'children consulted and informed' and 'adult initiated and shared decisions with children'. Appendix twelve illustrates the feedback gained from student photographs on this issue. The feedback under the heading 'I did not have my say when...' relates to process elements of the research, malfunctions of the cameras and the exclusion of quotes which were not relevant to the research. The students felt they had been able to have their say in how they presented their photos and what they took photos off. They also provided valuable comments about how to improve the photo report, for instance, by adding a glossary of key words. The photo report is unable to be added as an appendix because of the nature of the commercial programme used to create it.

Finally, there are a number of relative strengths in this research which relate to undertaking research in the spirit of participation and collaboration. Rogers and Ludhra (2011) suggest that research should address what matters to young people; that young people should have a say in how they are represented, that there should be opportunities for collaborative working and that research findings should be disseminated in an accessible way. There is evidence that these suggestions have been adhered to in the current research.

10.8 Further directions for research

10.8.1 Phase one

The research findings suggest that exploring other collaborative and participatory methods, perhaps with students as researchers, would be worthwhile. In particular using these methods to further investigate the impact of learner experiences on attainment would add depth to the field.

It might be profitable to have further exploration of the way different groups of students; for example, different year groups, or those identified with a variety of special educational needs, view their social and learning experiences of school.

10.8.2 Phase two

Longitudinal research that is able to capture what happens after staff engage with student experiences would be useful. This would also be a useful next step in evaluating the usefulness of photovoice.

Action research involving staff and students working together to carry out small scale projects that relate to whole school, individual teacher or student council areas for development would be interesting. The school improvement plan in the school where the current research took place offers a number of possibilities; for example, improving attendance, improving the quality of teaching and learning and curriculum development. However, there are ethical considerations that must be taken into account when considering working in this way with young people as co-researchers. Bragg (2007c) suggests that working in this way to meet school improvement goals could be seen as a form of control and that students could be encouraged to take on too much responsibility for their own development and learning.

11. Conclusions

11.1 Implications for educational psychology

- EPs are well placed to support schools to understand the holistic nature of many barriers to learning. Therefore, they have a role in engaging staff at all levels of the school community in conversations about the influence that learner experiences have on motivation and attainment and also the relationship between learning, relationships and emotions.
- Photovoice is a legitimate educational psychology tool to support individuals or groups of CYP share their experiences and views about their own lives. It also has the potential facilitate reflection in adults who support CYP.

11.1.1 Phase one

The research findings suggest that eliciting individuals' experiences of school is worthwhile and can contribute to a more holistic understanding of their strengths and potential barriers to progress. This has implications for the way students with literacy barriers to learning can be supported in schools. As well as evidence informed literacy interventions, EPs are well placed to explore with school staff and parents the impact of students' experiences and the impact these are likely to have on their motivation and attainment. Individual or group interventions can then be put into place and monitored. More importantly, the impact of the school ethos on students' experiences is worth exploring with staff.

EPs are also well placed to elicit the views and experiences of CYP because of their psychological skills and knowledge as well as neutral position in schools (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Harding and Atkinson (2009) found that the predominant method used by EPs was direct questioning, although other techniques developed from personal construct psychology were also used. Photovoice is therefore a method that could be added to the EP tool kit. Although labour intensive, it has the potential to provide a rich and authentic picture of student experiences and views. It also supports a more resilience based or solution focused framework as in the current research participants identified many positive factors that helped them learn and feel safe at school. It may be particularly appropriate at times of transition as a way to engage learners in discussions about what they believe they want and need for the future. Transition, in particular the move into further education is highlighted in the Special

Educational Needs CoP (2014) as a time when learner engagement is particularly vital for success. It may also be a useful technique to use with students who have not engaged with other opportunities to gather their experiences and views.

There are also implications for EP practice at group and organisational levels. The findings highlight the importance of social and emotional aspects of learning. An American study by Durlak et al (2011) illustrates that schools that engage in evidence based social and emotional learning programmes have improved academic results as well as other pro-social outcomes. EPs are well placed to support schools explore such programmes and adapt them to their local context. Furthermore, the findings suggest that approaches such as Circle of Friends or Peer Mentoring may also be beneficial because of the significant protective factor that feeling supported and understood by friends with similar needs seemed to provide.

Finally, EPs also have the skills to deliver training on the benefits and methods of eliciting student views and experiences. In this context there is potential for photovoice to be used in a variety of ways within schools, including as part of transition to further education, annual reviews and as part of student council activities.

11.1.2 Phase two

The research findings suggest that staff did respond positively to the use of photovoice as a vehicle for reflection and considering change in relation to their own and whole school practices. Furthermore, they were enabled to engage with a more holistic view of students' strengths and potential barriers to progress. This process enabled them to consider other mediating factors which had been previously overlooked or down played, such as the influence that affective aspects of learning had on feeling safe and motivated to learn (Cameron, 2006). This has implications for how photovoice could be used as part of the process of consultation.

The research also provides some insights into how reflecting with school staff looks in a real world school setting. EPs are well placed to facilitate this process because of their psychological knowledge and skills in consultation (Wagner, 2008). Working with groups of staff in this way significantly broadens the role of the EP, taking them away from the cycle of individual case work and into a more preventative sphere of practice (Wagner, 2000).

11.2 Reflections on my personal and professional journey

Throughout this project I often considered whether the choice of photovoice was appropriate to my research aims and if the photos would yield data which was suitable and in-depth. I was often asked 'Why are you using photovoice?' Self-doubt only really set in when I began to look at the piles of photos in front of me on my living room floor. How would I make sense of them in a way that honoured the photographers and their experiences? I felt overwhelmed. My understanding is that this is a common feeling when working with qualitative data. Bach (2007) writes that she would need time to think and often took long walks with her dog! I too found that time to think out in the fresh air was helpful when I hit a brick wall in my thinking. Despite the limitations of the method and my own struggles with it, I strongly believe that it helped questions to be asked differently and did meet the requirements of the research aims.

I have somewhat of a personal interest in the experience of literacy barriers to learning which I shared at the beginning of the thesis. My understanding is that sharing this information sits comfortably within a social constructionist framework (Etherington, 2004). In sharing information about themselves researchers aim to enable a greater level of transparency and openness. It may also help to reduce power differentials between the researcher and participants. Behar (1996) believes that asking others to share while remaining closed or 'invulnerable' ourselves is dishonest, and that sharing can enable the research process.

I only spoke once about my own difficulties and how this had influenced the topic of my research in the introductory session with the student photographers. They brought it up on one other occasion in which I tried hard to give neutral responses while also acknowledging that having literacy difficulties can sometimes make learning hard.

However, there were numerous occasions when the student photographers witnessed me thinking how I might spell a word, jot it down on paper or write it on my phone to get the correct spelling. While undertaking phase one of the research I considered whether witnessing an adult struggle to spell helped to normalise participants' own difficulties. It is possible this may have influenced how the student photographers interpreted their own photos and experiences.

I believe it would have been disingenuous not to share my personal interest and problematic to 'hide' my difficulties. Many researchers would probably claim a personal as well as professional interest in a particular area or issue. The degree to which this strengthens or weakens the research is to some extent dependent on how convincing the narrative is and position of the reader.

What has grown out of this research is a passion for two connected areas of educational psychology practice which are unrelated to the experience of literacy difficulties. It is a moral and ethical obligation to use appropriate tools and methods to elicit the experiences and opinions of CYP. This is in itself often an affirming and beneficial act. Furthermore, sharing these insights with parents/carers and other involved professionals also has the potential to promote change within the system (Beaver, 2011).

11.3 Final comments

The current research findings suggest that in this particular context and at this particular point in time the student photographers had a range of experiences, both positive and negative and that these experiences were highly influenced by their relationships with adults and peers. The findings are likely to have been influenced by the participatory method of data collection, the small sample size and researcher openness about literacy difficulties. This finding has significance for utilising further participatory methods to explore learner experiences and therefore adds to the small body of research in this area.

The current research findings support the view that photovoice is an appropriate tool to elicit the experiences and views of students and engage staff in reflective conversations.

There are implications for educational psychology practice in relation to sharing with staff and parents the holistic nature of experiencing literacy barriers to learning. Furthermore, there is evidence that photovoice is a legitimate addition to the EP tool kit for both foregrounding student views and experiences and as a reflective tool for staff and parents.

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Literacy barriers to learning, learner experiences and self-perceptions

A brief outline of the research project

This research project aims to explore the school experiences of young people with literacy barriers to learning and to use these experiences as a springboard for staff development about literacy difficulties. An action research method called 'Photovoice' will be used. It involves participants taking photographs of things that are important to them. It is hoped that putting the production into the hands of students will position them as active agents in the research process and enable their voices to have an impact on staff understandings of literacy difficulties.

Potential advantages for the school

- Student voice is an important part of school self-evaluation and improvement. It is also a key feature of the new SEND Code of Practice (CoP) legislation (2014). This research offers a unique way to engage students in sharing their views. **The method could be adapted by the school to explore other important issues.**
- The new CoP states that all teachers are teachers of SEND students and responsible for their progress. **The research offers secondary staff the opportunity to explore the impact of literacy difficulties on student motivation, agency and sense of self. These are important factors that mediate learning and student progress.**
- Since the 2013 Ofsted report *Best practice in literacy: A shared responsibility* there has been a spotlight on school literacy policy development as illustrated by Michael Cladingbowl (Ofsted's Director of Schools Policy, 2013), 'Improving standards of literacy must be a priority for all our schools, as it is instrumental in helping children in every subject. Many pupils are still emerging from school without the confidence and secure literacy skills they need to thrive as adults, the case to improve standards of literacy across the whole curriculum is urgent'. **This research offers a psychological way of considering literacy which is not focused on skills development, but rather takes a more holistic view of how young people learn.**

Ethical implications

This research will be authorised by the University of Exeter Research Ethics Board and meet all ethical requirements. If you chose to take part you will receive an ethics information and consent sheet.

Needs of the researcher

- Support in identifying approximately six student participants.
- Access to rooms and ICT facilities for the student participants to meet with me on a regular basis over a four to six week period.
- Administrative support to organise a whole staff or small group CPD session.

Appendix 2: Staff presentation PowerPoint slides

<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER</p> <h3>Sharing my ideas so far....</h3> <p>Literacy difficulties, learning and Identity: What are learners experiences and stories?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has she been doing? • Why is this relevant to me? • What does the research say? • How can I take part? 	<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER What has she been doing?</p> <p>A working model adapted from Lundy (2007)</p>								
<p>The Ladder of Participation</p> <p>Eight levels of young people's participation. The ladder metaphor is borrowed from Sherry Arnstein (1989); the categories are from Roger Hart.</p>	<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER Why is this relevant to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New legislation (2014) Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years • What is the experience of literacy difficulties at school? What does the literature say? • How can I support success... 								
	<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER Why is this relevant to me?</p> <p>The experience of literacy difficulties: What does the literature say?</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Humphreys & Mullins (2002)</th> <th>Burden & Burdett (2007)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Students in a range of settings experience real challenges to their self-esteem, leading to negative self-development;</td> <td>Barriers to learning seen as surmountable;</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Learned helplessness • External locus of control </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often feelings of self-efficacy (belief) • Internal locus of control and a commitment to effort </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Humphreys & Mullins (2002)	Burden & Burdett (2007)	Students in a range of settings experience real challenges to their self-esteem, leading to negative self-development;	Barriers to learning seen as surmountable ;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Learned helplessness • External locus of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often feelings of self-efficacy (belief) • Internal locus of control and a commitment to effort 		
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Students in a range of settings experience real challenges to their self-esteem, leading to negative self-development;	Barriers to learning seen as surmountable ;								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Learned helplessness • External locus of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often feelings of self-efficacy (belief) • Internal locus of control and a commitment to effort 								
<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER How can I support success.....</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Cognition</th> <th>Affect (emotions/feelings)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>There is a significant relationship between working memory and attainment (Gathercole and Alloway, 2008)</td> <td>'One of the most exciting discoveries in educational psychology in recent times has been the finding that people's levels of achievement are influenced by how they feel about themselves' (Lawrence, 1996)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>'Although considerable weight has been placed on the influenced of measured intelligence on learning, most educationalists would agree that a far more important part is played by motivation' (Burden, 2008)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Cognition	Affect (emotions/feelings)	There is a significant relationship between working memory and attainment (Gathercole and Alloway, 2008)	'One of the most exciting discoveries in educational psychology in recent times has been the finding that people's levels of achievement are influenced by how they feel about themselves ' (Lawrence, 1996)		'Although considerable weight has been placed on the influenced of measured intelligence on learning , most educationalists would agree that a far more important part is played by motivation ' (Burden, 2008)	<p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER Key messages or a surface reading?</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td> <p>Feeling safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People</i> and relationships • Support to understand and learn • <i>Places</i> - Feeling safe, supported and understood <p>Anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Places</i> – Isolation and Standards • <i>People</i> – not being understood/having someone to talk to/listen </td> <td>50% students = aspirations/learning/moving up...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<p>Feeling safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People</i> and relationships • Support to understand and learn • <i>Places</i> - Feeling safe, supported and understood <p>Anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Places</i> – Isolation and Standards • <i>People</i> – not being understood/having someone to talk to/listen 	50% students = aspirations/learning/moving up...
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How can I take part? (What will this involve!)

45 minute discussion group and opportunity to look at research team pictures – open to all staff

- Tell me what you **think** of the pictures?
- How do students' views and experiences of school **relate** to your own as a member of staff?
- What **reflections** do you have about what has been shared?
- What ideas shared in this session have **implications for practice**?
- What aspects of your practice will **remain the same**?
- What **questions** might you ask the photographers?

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Appendix 3: Demographic information for phase two participants

Initials	Discussion group	Gender	Age range	Years working in education	Roles	Questions for student photographers	Overview of Reflections
SX	2	F	51-60	17	Lead LSA for ASC		Inclusion of behaviour and standards. How can we clarify the unknown?
LX	1	F	51-60	18	LSA, Lead LSA for SpLD		Images showing positive (people to see, places to go) and negative A desire for order Symbolic images Depressing environment to me
FX	1	F	51-60	15	Teacher of English/Literacy coordinator	What from school would you put in room 101?	Photos don't link explicitly with literacy Lots of pictures showing positive experiences Images are often symbolic
HX	3	F	31-40	10	Teacher of History and Politics Pupil Premium coordinator	Why did you not take any pictures of your work or lessons?	The impact of the physical environment on learners Single events that can impact a student
MX	2	F	51-60	13	Transition coordinator/ recruitment Teacher of Art and Technology Middle system leader programme		Interesting how many pictures are from out of class Behaviour and standards pictures interesting – 'what is happening in behaviour and standards?' Consider allowing Y6 tour into behaviour and standards as part of induction tour?
TX	1	F	41-50	1	LSA, doing some self-esteem interventions	What from school would you put in room 101?	Pictures chosen reflect safe places/ people are important Bleak images of behaviour and standards Symbolic pictures
GX	1	M	20-30	8	Teacher of History and Politics	Have you seen this as a helpful exercise to explore your learning?	Photos give an interesting account of student's experiences – the focus in on anything but lessons and work books

Appendix 4: Plan of activities undertaken with phase one participants

Academic Year 2015/16

When	Activity	Outcome	Key questions	Resources
Term 5	<p><i>Intro meeting with students 1</i> Susan (SPP) input Student discussion and Q&A Students complete reflection forms</p> <p>The 'research team' includes myself and the four student participants.</p>	<p>Students able to decide whether they would like to take part. Students reflect on what taking part might mean to them.</p>	<p>What does it mean to take part in a piece of research?</p> <p>Do students understand the process?</p>	<p>Parental consent form Student reflection sheet PowerPoint (PP) Pseudonym sheet Student consent form</p>
Term 6 Week 1 9&10 June 1.40-2.15pm	<p><i>Research meetings 1/2</i> Recap – what are we all doing here! Getting to know each other activity Generate team and camera use guidelines - pairs or threes then feedback to the team Practice using a disposable camera(Q Take a picture that shows xxxxxx) – pairs or threes then feedback to the team</p> <p>Take a photo of the research team! Put next meeting in planners</p>	<p>Research team feel comfortable with each other Agreed research team and camera guidelines Research team aware of the strengths and limitations of disposable cameras</p>	<p>What are the practice photos like?</p> <p>What do we like about them?</p> <p>How could we improve them?</p>	<p>Large paper Coloured pens X3 disposable cameras Resources for getting to know you activity</p> <p>Recorder</p>
Term 6 Week 2 16-17June 1.40-2.15pm	<p><i>Research meetings 3/4</i> Recap – share pictures from camera training SPP input – Key Questions... pairs or threes then feedback to the team SPP to note down ideas and places that research</p>	<p>Research team have a good understanding of what they will take pictures of and why</p>	<p>What can we take pictures of that show your experiences of school? What does this photo</p>	<p>Photos from the previous session Large paper Coloured pens Research meeting 3/4</p>

	team want to visit Put next meeting in planners		tell others about me? How can photos show emotions and thoughts? What areas of school do I want to take photos in?	PP Plan of school? Recorder
When	Activity	Outcome	Key questions	Resources
SPP to attend Monday Morning Briefing Date: 20.06.16				
Term 6 Week 3 23-24 June 1.40-2.15pm	<i>Research meetings 5/6</i> Recap and reflection Team out and about taking photos Team reflection activity – what went well, anything pleased with, how would they improve for next session Thermometer check in SPP to take photos Put next meeting in planners	Photos Reflections		Disposable cameras with laminated tags! Research team camera guidelines Recorder
Term 6 Week 4 Exeter 30Jun-1July &	<i>Research meetings 7/8</i> Recap and reflection SPP input Time looking at own photos on own – adding thought bubbles, titles & ranking Group sharing and discussion Reflection and thermometer check in Put next meeting in planners		Would you like any photos copied for you to keep? Any photos that you wish you had taken but could/did not?	Developed photos Thought clouds and other post-its Coloured pens Recorder
When	Activity	Outcome	Key questions	Resources

Term 6 Week 5 7-8July 1.40-2.15pm	<p><i>Research meetings 9/10</i> Reflecting on photos</p> <p>Introducing staff training – SPP to share ideas and get feedback</p>		Who should we invite to the celebrating success session?	
Term 6 Week 6 1 hour during PE	<p><i>Research meetings 11/12</i> Recap and reflection Discussion and key questions about photos – group discussion Discussion – how can we share your work? Who to invite to celebrating success session?</p> <p><i>Celebrating success</i> SPP cards – three good things for each research team member Share how team will receive further feedback – Photo book after CPD session Any questions? What to do if have further questions</p>		<p>How are we going to use your work?</p> <p>What key questions need to go on the staff info sheet about their training?</p> <p>Who should we invite to the celebrating success session?</p>	<p>Photos</p> <p>Coloured pens and large paper Recorder Maude the Camel</p> <p>Cards</p>

Academic Year 2016/17

When	Activity	Outcome	Key questions	Resources
1 st September 2016	Presentation of research to whole staff	Engage staff in research process Recruit staff to take part	Shared at end of PowerPoint	PowerPoint
9 th September 2016	Checking with student participants if ok to share top 6 photos with staff Share feedback from whole staff presentation Ask further questions about photos	Students feel comfortable and confident to share photos		Laminated top 6 photos PowerPoint
3 rd & 4 th November 2016	Checking experience board interpretations with student participants		What do you think of your experience board? How would you change or alter it? What do you think your photos say about your experience of school and learning? What do you think your photos say about having literacy difficulties?	PowerPoint Experience boards
May 2017	Celebrating! Share draft photo report for checking Share staff questions for students Share Harts level of participation line			PowerPoint Photo report Harts line Food and drink

Appendix 5: Individual experience boards for Sam, Sidney, Harry and Rick

Sam LHS

Key

All experience boards have been split into left hand side (LHS) and right hand side (RHS)

H, any picture you would have liked to taken but couldn't or didn't?
Probably Mr C... room (was on the original list, but we never made it there), Miss W... room.
Mr ... was?
ICT
And Miss W...
IT and she's my mentor.

What was it like taking the photographs then?
Well, at the time anxious, because I know that I
whilst I was doing it

... does not matter. And um, and also at the same time
... trying to get other people's opinion
Uh, I think it would be a 10 as well. Because it is som
do it in the school. Which was really exciting. And s

School can be
positive and
negative - good
and bad

Yeh, ah, if we can isolation, because isolation is negative to me...
Um, remember your title is meant to show something about your experience of learning...
Is it a good thing? Or a bad thing?
Its up to you
So all the things are good things. Are we allowed to take pictures of things that have got maybe
something negative to do this...
Yes, absolutely...
Like corridors, or...
Its like if B said I am taking a picture of this because of behaviour and standards and its because I
have had a bad experience, I could not go and say to everyone 'Oh guess what, B has had a bad
experience' type of thing.
So all of these photos are good things, apart from the dictionary.

What was this one?
Uh, that was Miss K's desk
Ah... how come you have got that one?
I probably picked that one purely for the fact that...
cause like when I was in Y7 there was this incident on the bus betwe
did I say Y7?
I think you said... Ooh! don't know...
You'll hear it in the thing. Yeh, and Miss U...
when Miss G had her operation or something, or
going to the USA's at the time, but there's a
Oh, that's good...
So I went and to her about it.

So... if we show each other respect, what does that actually look like?
That's an abstract noun... (difficult to hear what he is saying)
I get confused between 9s and Ps.

Are you dyslexic?
I probably would not call myself that, but that's what other people might call me, yeh
But I mean that's what...
So you are dyslexic?
Yeh, people might say that
So its super hard to learn that sort of thing (languages)
I found it hard
Yes, I find it hard
But not everyone does...
Languages is like a gruelling task where I would probably rather do some other thing. I was going
to say something but I am worried that you someone would take it too seriously.
Ok, maybe hold onto it if that is what you are thinking
What do like people say then? Because I am not overly keen on like, that, so I didn't know...
I tell people that I have, well I experiment with different things.
Meaning?
Sometimes I say I am not a very good speller, sometimes I... because I am not very good at maths
either...
That's called dycalculia
Sometimes I say... I have literacy barriers to learning... so
I mix it up!
I am bad at soelling, maths and reading

What does
it mean to be
dyslexic?

And then this one, the sensory room, w
fourth best room, in the whole school.
Ok
Because it is like a place you can go to if you are
Right
And stuff like that. Yeh.

I like this
room, but I
have not ac
been that
many t

I would say the only thing you could say about it is that I wish he would just move a bit faster,
which I mean,
No, I wish that as well

Who is purple?
D
How can he say he finds it hard if he does not have it? Maybe I

That's the treat bag
Is that not linked to that? (Points at picture of literacy intervention)
No... well it is, but I had Accelerated Reading because it is not fair. Because when I started I had
to... because I was reading books with green paper and all that and I was struggling because we
were not allowed any help on the start test, and so I did really poorly and it was like coming up
with suggestions to read the 'Gruffalo' and 'Will it float or sink'....
It's really difficult when we don't do well at something and we try hard isn't it!
It's a bit off putting because...
It's not inspiring...

And languages...
How come we are focusing on what we are bad at?
I would rather jump of blue block, no red block than do languages
I would probably rather do languages!
Yeh...
Yeh...
That's your personal opinion...

Sam RHS

...school, it would not be
...ing, at my school I had a
...op there was only me. And
...like because I have been given a
...ends school would be very...

So how come you would have included Mrs L...?
Because it Y7 she was like the one that boosted my confidence. Stuff like that.

We would just sit down in like in lessons and just talk over a cup of juice and a biscuit.
She'd take me out. We like, I remember I used to love it, she left and worked at a different school
now.

Um, we did all sorts, we did anything from social skills to spelling practice to reading practice to
conversations, to anything.
I don't know, cause me and her just have this like, thing, I don't know what it is to be honest, but
it was really nice that she came back because I had not seen her for ages. Cause she came back at
the end of Y7 but I was, I can't remember what I was doing, I was ill or something, but I didn't get
to see her. So that is the first time I have seen her since the end of Y7. Which is really nice
because she came in again, so yeh, it was really nice to see her and say how is it going type thing.
That's why I told B to invite her to the picnic on Monday.

I prefer the, the friend LSA because when you like, you can like, so to
were stuck you would not necessarily say, or like there's like three LSA
M? me and him have quite a lot of fun together in lessons, sometimes
Miss Dal, and I think there is one more, but I can't... is there one more?
the ones that have most recently joined. And there are others ones who
is a good lesson and sometimes there's a yeh...

One good, one bad, so this would be the good one
Ok
I liked that one because it reminds me how even though sometimes
bad, it reminds, its like just saying that people are there to help.

I need
feel that
understand
before I o
on and lo

So if you had to pick a top one out of your top 6 what would it be?
G definitely
she is going to go at the top?
without Miss G and Miss L... I probably would not be ab
like, when she knows you have not had a good time, she will ms
thing like funny so like, and she will always see the best in people.

Having positive
relationships
with adults that
work with me
is important

What do you mean here where it says I don't go to assembly, because I do.
Do you? Where does it say that?
Here
Remember you said that last year.
I never went to assembly in Y8.
Put last year against it
That is a good idea
I went twice, but I did not like assembly in Y8. It was far too loud.
It's still loud now...
Yeh, but I am a little bit more used to it now so I choose to go.

I never go to assembly.
Miss, can I tell you a fun fact?
Yes! And then I need to hear about...

...spend any time at lunch time or break time out of this room.

Neither do I!
Yes you do!

Cause I don't like the rest of the school
Neither do I
Because people just argue and fight
None of my friends argue and fight!
A, A, B sometimes wont come in here and D sometimes will come in here
I always come in here, but I always go out and see how my friends are d
I'm curious H
And A, he will either be in here or just outside, so if something happens,
Really close?
Besides I am curious
We are like a family, a pack
At lunch time So Miss, I have a confession to make, I know B and D are
mentoring, I have like an SEN intervention, so I don't know

School
intimid
Someti

Learning
should be
friendly

I don't know, because if you look at that clock they are like, they are quite harsh
up there, like I just don't really get it. But like that one, where you have the num
outside, it just looks more friendly.

That's in SO3 as well. You can see because the clock, and you can see the boarder.

I was going to take a picture of ... can I just say a few things? I was going to take a picture of silver
block.
Where is that?
That's the white building with three triangles. It's the ASC SEN building. The I am going to take a
picture of Pitstop, behaviour and standards

I have put

CTV and its at school!
...se to take that picture?
...n a bad day' and on the yellow say bubble
...op! is like caging you in, things like that. And that's
...ming across to this one. And that one is saying that
...velled as if...
Ok, so the labelled folders?

...s, then like without
...es we like... Ah, I



I did not
like assembly in
Y8 because it was
too loud. But her
know it is ok.

Sidney LHS

...try to not be annoying, or something like that... and I like to be annoying, or something like that, so I am going to say, difficulties... learning...

I like reading and enjoy literacy intervention



Pit stop helps me feel safe at school

Ok, what about you? What was it like for you taking pictures?
I felt excited
Ok, how come?
An uncontrollable...
An uncontrollable excitement!
You're always uncontrollable!
Ok, tell me more about that?
Well, was just excited to take pictures.
Which bit was your best bit for taking pictures?
Um... Pit Stop!

Well, this one is 'Miss D' in the best librarian, and this is the books... I like graphic novels... And Miss H... amazing equipment and this is Pitstop is the best.
Could you share one picture that shows something really important to you about school?
Points at pitstop photo?... Because it is a very nice place. Social, loud and joyful.

Um, she gives us like... she talks, she talks to us if we are having trouble or if we don't feel very good or 100% sure.

Pit Stop is helpful

Lets go to... is there a photo that you would like to share with a title?
Uh, I put 'Pit Stop is helpful' because Miss G helps us quite a lot.
How does she help you?

Pit stop is important to me

she always said, she always gives me these feelings slips so if I am like angry I just stick it up, used to have a big ball of blue tack to play with in lessons, and if I needed a rest from one of my... I would like, either fiddle with it or just black out something. Not black out, but like close my eyes and think of something else.
like what we did in the Den

Primary school

Ms C gave me these cards to help me in lessons
In primary I had this other teacher thing, it's called Miss C, she goes to XXX now I think and she used to give me handwriting and reading lessons.

...are just bad,

Yes, lots of people find reading hard.
I find reading hard because of my disabilities, but I am still ok I suppose.

It says here you are dyslexic (to SP)
That's what people used to say about me, yes I am dyslexic, but not in a very big way

Ah, no, Miss M... was actually helping me and... and her room is actually quite detailed with Mathematics.



...are things I thought might take pictures of at the start

...probably some school bags

...one of the work books, like text books...

...a picture of the clock

...ure of the clock and the white board.

Sidney
RHS

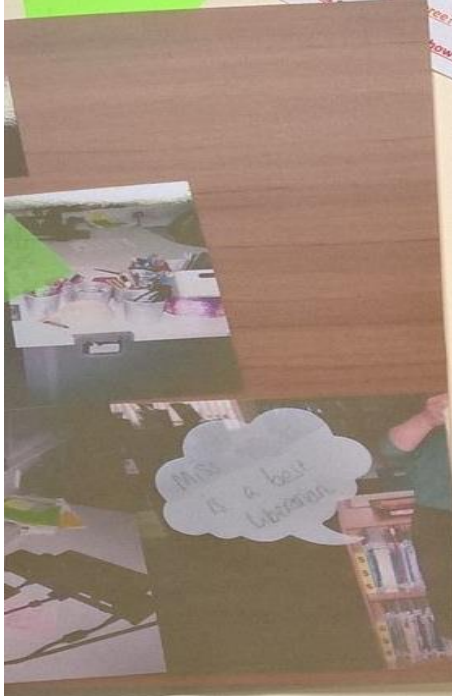
I learn best
with my
buddies

They make
me feel safe
and valued

best learning? How come the best learning happens
working buddies.

How come those are your buddies?
Because it presents

How we are feeling.



Right, any pictures?

Well, maybe Miss G... (D over talking counting down to 1pm, so difficult to
helps quite a lot of people. And maybe PHSE with Mr ~~Care~~ and Miss ~~W~~

Ok, how come PSHE?

Because I like PSHE

What do you like about it?

Its interesting and the teacher is fun

I w
be are
fun per
school

I have two important questions I want to ask you. My questions number one is what do you
your photos say about your experiences of school and learning?

That I am getting more help than I used to. Well, in primary school I only had about, I only had
LSA's with me all the time and one was for my reading and understanding the words and my other
LSA was just there to support me if I ever got stuck on anything or did not understand the words
what the stuff is about and the third one was just to like see, an LSA that always goes around. A
for this, in secondary school I get, it's like there is lots of people with different types of needs and
there is going to have to be loads more LSAs and people that support young people that have ne

Wow!

And I used a lap top most of my years in primary school.

Do you use a lap top now?

No, which is a bit...

How come?

Because as B and H use a laptop for their needs. I don't know why, but I find it easier, I don't know
why, but in primary school I could not really write anything really, so then I used a laptop most of the
time.

uds?

r does not have a meaning.

you?

I don't
always say alot,
but there is alot
going on in
my head.

I am going to start with A, what do you think Miss G would say about your pictures?

Probably, like...

What might she say about the ones you picked? Do you think she would agree or disagree?

I think she would agree

ing pictures and all that and videoing, and sometimes I get a bit tired.

u get tired?

s is just making me tired you know, writing it down...

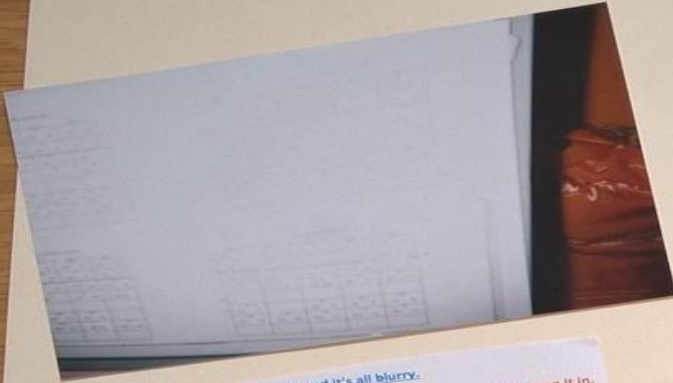
hen there are lots of ideas in your head you get tired?

for me to remember. Thank you for sharing that.

Oh, loads...!! Yes! Where do you want me to start! Its what I tell you
about you is you have a tendency to be silly and most of your behav
be there. And so it just, you know, there is a real good lovely sens
little that is so easy that he takes over.

Yeh, cause there is a time and a place to be silly

Harry LHS



I really wanted to take a picture of that and it's all blurry.
What is it? Ah... it's your timetable? I would say if it is important to you keep it in.
Some of these I don't even know why I have taken them!

Sometimes I need help to feel calm and relaxed at school

Well, uh, there is a sensory room in silver block

And then I put, enter the quiet zone, peaceful area.
How come you have put that?
(very hesitant and quiet) Because it's a sign for the way some people are that I don't like very much... Very noisy environment.

Quiet court is not that quite though...
Anything else you would like to say about your pictures, just for the time being?
I put it's a calming place and relaxing to calm down and it helps me think about my feelings

And that's the... Which room is that?
The sensory room

What do you think Mrs G would say about your pictures B?
The notices
How come you recon ~~the~~ would pick the notices?
Because it is something that everyone uses sometimes and then they know what they are doing

Ok, so the notices help people know what they are doing

Harry

Where is my tree? Miss I have lost my
I remember you taking it. Maybe it did
Umh...
That tree had a real serious meaning.

Did you want to add anything B?
There is always barriers, but you can

Picture of tree did not come out

There is not too much, less than my

B, what was it like for you?
Um, scary cause, um. I felt a bit insecure, I was quite (d
Ok
Then after that (difficult to hear what he says)
Ok, so it felt uncomfortable?
Well I was not really uncomfortable but like but it was
In...
It's a bit of a different thing to do isn't it

Harry RHS

Miss, did you know I have been struggling with time quite a lot. For four years straight I have been practicing the time and now I have mastered it. It has taken ages trying to do it.

But you have done it! You really persisted then didn't you
I started from year three and carried on in y4 and then when I got to year Y6 I managed to do it.

That's great!
It took me a long time though
Yeh, time can be difficult I think and some things just take longer don't they? It's good that you kept going with it.

Because everyone accepts each other.

Are there any photo's B, that you wish you had taken but couldn't, we could not take them?

I like to know what is happening at school

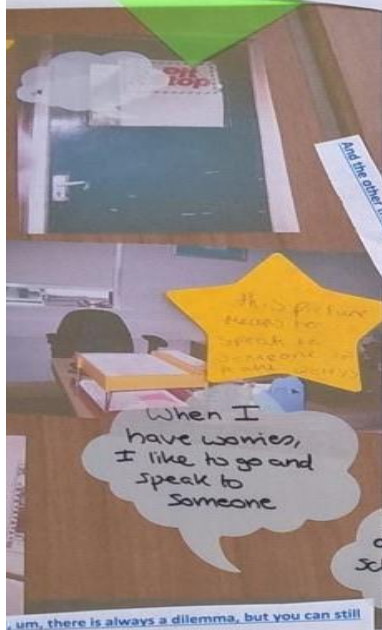
Pit Stop ones

How come?

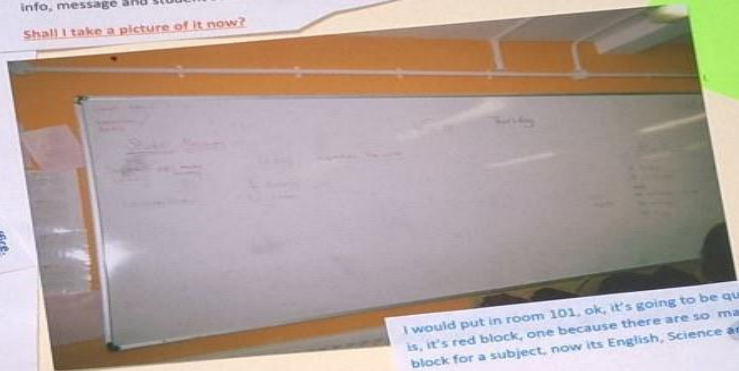
Cause, I was not really thinking it at the time here, but I kind of am now.

I wanted to take that picture too, of everyone... (points to large white board. This has important info, message and student session times on it)

Shall I take a picture of it now?



And the other thing was Miss K's office.



I would put in room 101, ok, it's going to be quite crazy with this idea... I is, it's red block, one because there are so many stairs, two is mixed now block for a subject, now its English, Science and maths

And PSHE

Plus, also in that building it comes to me that there are loads of accid

When I have worries, I like to go and speak to someone

I want to do well at school, but sometimes I worry

um, there is always a dilemma, but you can still

you go through different, 7, 8 and 9, you work your way up...

in my mind, it was like this step thing, steps, different things...uh, I think e, you had to put this in your writing. And it was like stages going up

We could take a picture of the head teacher...

I would love to know your interpretation of taking that picture...

is good because it had the focus and it shows, um, the amount as the time goes past you gain more knowledge...

n't miss language studies

In y9 it's horrible (language studies)

Respectfully

Rick LHS

I know what a dud is... were meant to go off, but they were, got taken but they didn't really work.

What about the ones that I do want to use?
 Could you organise them any way you like?
 When you say anyway you like, what do you mean? What would be that best way?
 That's for you to think about...
 I quite like these, but they are kind of duds...
 Are they duds if you quite like them?
 Look at how many I had got!

I thought I could take a picture of the... you know the big fence outside, but like making sure that fence is there and pointing...
 Ok...
 Because you know I feel a bit trapped here at school.
 Ok
 And I was also going to take a picture of places like where I go when I am lonely or upset or just a bit...

I have thought of a way to organise them... I have got a um... Duds, ones that I like but are not really useable, ones that centre around people, we've got outdoors and you've got indoors.
 He knows what to say... I can say lots of things, but whether they are related or whether I know what I am saying... There are moments where, I am surprised about what comes out of my mouth as everyone else.
 I am the resident chatter box

I know this probably won't happen, but do we have to answer the questions?
 No, that's a really good question. You can say I don't want to answer that one.
 What if we just go 'I don't want to answer that, I don't want to answer that, I don't want to answer that'?

Sometimes I talk a lot, but I also think a lot too

What do you mean I have a unique sense of humour?
 Do you agree or disagree?
 I don't know...
 It's individual to you
 But everyone has their own sense of humour
 Would you like to change that one?
 I don't mind, if you think I have got a unique sense of humour
 How would you describe your sense of humour?
 I don't know, humours!
 We can think about it and we can come back to it...

This one will be called 'Food' because it is a picture of food.
 What does the food mean to you and your experience of school?
 It's not particularly about the food, (whispering, I must have indicated that he was talking loudly) it's about the location, because in Y7 I would meet my friends in the dinner hall.
 Whispering so that, that's what's important? Maybe more than the food?
 Whispering yeh, but... On the picture screen Miss, it's not about going ugh. It's about the work that went into it.
 You have explained that picture really well about why that place is important to you. And it does not seem that it's about the food, it seems it's about something else...
 Yeh, but... it is about the food, because if the food was not there, none of us would go there
 Ok
 I will name this one 'the royal branania and all who sail on her'

Language studies is the worst! It's absolutely horrible
 Disagreement noises, not sure from who
 Why is language studies the worst?
 You can go and die in hell.
 What is language studies?

I have strong opinions

Meeting up with friends is important to me

What's wrong with dictionaries?

Anyone else, what do your photos show about your experiences of school and learning?
 I am not sure that all the stuff I tried to do is in here. But like I have become a lot more independent with my work. I am not sure if it is for better or for worse.
 Ok. Why are you saying that then?
 Because some things I have gone down in, since I have become more independent. Because back in primary I had a laptop for some lesson, or um...

You are good at Maths (to D)
 No I am not
 You are a set above me
 But it is a mixed set, there are really good people and some people who could be in bottom set. So I am in a mixed set group, and I am at the bottom end of that.

We used to do that didn't
 Or a person that you know
 Writes for you
 A scribe?
 Or even a LSA, that's it!
 D, sorry to interrupt, but what
 Oh that was, um, I want to say
 It might have been, I am not sure
 And you got that little rock if you
 Yeh, I got one
 Yeh, that was the... it had loads of
 Because they helped us, um, build
 kind of what to say it's called the



Rick RHS

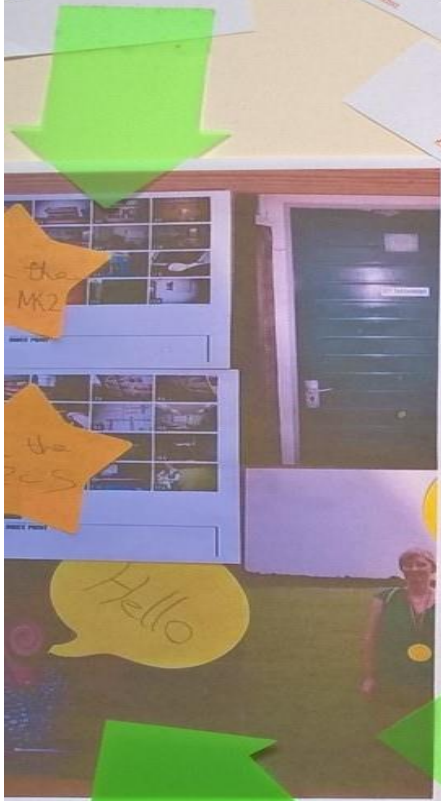
m not
s sure
t me)
ices)

my mind, that is higher up now, out done by food.

out arrows to what I think is important.

le.
xplain why that one is at the top?

se



get holy hell fire rained down on you.

n down on me

se you came in said something rude and just walked

use I was saying ... how dick king tools are good,

It kind of feels weird going back to this, last year

The DT man
We took a picture of his door, didn't we?
Yes!
Did it come out?
I don't think it did, but...but yeh it did
But you did not choose it... its not one of your top 6? I think you should swap it for one of these
I think I can swap it. I will do it for the one with the blurry thumb. Cause there are two of you and there are only one of these. They are each unique little snow flakes
Ok, so how come that door was important?
Because I visit John and we chat... We have a little chit chat, bit of gossip, gos. Whatever the hip young kids are calling it these days.
Ok...

The DT man listens to me

I get on better with some people school than others

any picture that you would like to take, but didn't?
I would have like to have taken picture of John's office
John is?



(To D) So how come you have a picture of me?
Because you helped me
Ok, so instead of having...
And that was a high quality pic
Ah, so you have not necessarily picked it because of what it shows about your experiences, you have
What, I have! That's just coincidence.
Ok, so maybe it should, maybe the title should reflect why you have taken the picture.

Sometimes I know I get on teachers' nerves

So, I am really interested in this one... about what it felt like going ar pictures.
I... felt...um, a bit... I felt, I felt like a bit, guilty at one point
Ah, ok
Cause all my friends have to go to lessons and I no lesson.
Well it was mentoring?
Well, no one in our mentor group likes mentoring so, so actually I th
And I felt special because I have been

I am not sure what some of the context is for this!

I found it a ... 10 was great? I found it a 10.
How come D?
Because we got to experiment with what we could do

Appendix 6: University of Exeter's Social Sciences and International Studies (SSIS) Ethical Approval Form



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Amory Building
Rennet Drive
Exeter UK, EX4 4RJ

www.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Graduate School of Education

Title of Project: Literacy, Learning and Identity: What are Children's Experiences or Stories?

Research Team Member(s): Susan Pollock

Project Contact Point: spp203@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisors: Tim Maxwell; Shirley Larkin

This project has been approved for the period

From: 19th April 2016

To: 1st July 2017

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201516-086

Signature:

Date: 19th April 2016

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Matt Lobley'.

(Matt Lobley, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)



Research reflection sheet

Name:

Mentor Group:

Why do I want to take part?

Am I **OK sharing** my thoughts and feelings?

I am ok sharing my **story** of learning at school?

What **question** do I still need to ask?

•

•



YOUNG PERSON CONSENT FORM

What is the title of the Research Project?

Literacy barriers to learning, learner experiences and self-perceptions

What do I have to do to be involved?

- Come to research meetings during Term 6. These will take place during assemblies and mentoring.
- Discuss your thoughts and feelings about school and how you learn.
- Take photos of things in school that show others your experience of school.
- Be aware that I might take photos during the research.
- Be aware that some of your photos and ideas will be shared with teachers as part of their training.



Who should I see if I have any worries?

- SENCo – Mrs KXXXX
- Mentor Coordinator – Mr KXXXX

What important information do I need to know?

- I can leave the research project if I feel unhappy or worried.
- I can say I don't want the photos I took or information about me used.
- I will choose a fake name so that people do not know who I am in the research project.
- I understand that the research team and the researcher must keep information confidential, unless I or the researcher has worries. Then I should share these with an adult at school.



.....

(Signature of young person)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of young person)

S. Pollock

.....

(Signature of researcher)

.....

(Date)

Susan Pollock

.....

(Printed name of researcher)



DISCUSSION GROUP CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project

Literacy barriers to learning, learner experiences and self-perceptions

Details of Project

This research project is split into two parts. Part 1 aims to explore the school experiences of young people with literacy barriers to learning. A participatory method called 'Photovoice' will be used. It involves participants taking photographs of things at school that are important to them. It is hoped that putting the production into the hands of students will position them as active agents in the research process.

Part 2 aims to use students' photographs as a springboard for staff development about literacy difficulties. This should enable their voices to have an impact on staff understandings of literacy difficulties. Staff will be invited to a discussion group to explore and reflect on the photographs students have taken.

This research project forms part of my qualification to become an Educational Psychologist.

Key questions that will be considered during the discussion group;

- How do students' views and experiences of school **relate** to your own as a member of staff?
- What ideas shared in this session might have **implications for practice**?
- What **reflections** do you have about what has been shared?

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Recordings of the discussion group and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). All data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act. All information will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of individuals' names or the school.

Data Protection Notice

Information staff provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation. All data will be stored on a password protected laptop and deleted at the end of the project. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

Contact Details

For further information about the research, please contact:

Name: Susan Pollock

Postal address: c/o Dr Xxxxxxx, Hxxxxx , University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Telephone: xxxxxxxxx (work mobile)

Email: spp203@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns or questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Dr Xxxxx (Academic and Professional Tutor, Educational Psychology Doctorate Training programme) xxxxxx@exeter.ac.uk

Dr Xxxxx (Senior Lecture, Graduate School of Education) xxxxxx@exeter.ac.uk

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information held about me;
- any information will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- all information I provide will be treated as confidential;
- the researcher will make every effort to preserve anonymity.

.....

(Signature)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name)

S. Pollock

.....

(Signature of researcher)

.....

(Date)

Susan Pollock

.....

(Printed name of researcher)

Please keep one copy of the consent form; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Appendix 10: Questions adapted from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) to discuss photos

Question type	Ideas
Descriptive	How come you took this photo? What does your picture show? Is your attention drawn to any particular area of the photo? What three words would you use to describe this photo?
Feelings/thinking	How did you feel when you took the photo? How does the photo make you feel? How does the photo represent your thoughts?
Narrative	What titles would you give your photos? Explain the titles you have given your photos How come you chose those titles? Which photos do you like the best? How come? What did you hope to capture?
Structural	What was it like taking your photos? Are there any photos you wish you could have taken but could not? Would you take the same photos again? How come? What makes a good photo?
Contrast	What would be the opposite of what your picture shows?
Circular	What would x (someone at home/someone at school) say about your photo(s)? How would you explain this photo to x?
Comparative	How are your photos similar to each other? How are your photos different from each other? How are your photos similar to anyone else's photos? How are your photos different from other people's photos?
Prompts	Can you tell me more about that? What else?
Probes	How come?

Group discussion questions types, adapted from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 60)

Note: Those highlighted indicate the questions I was able to ask.

Appendix 11: Transcription extract phase one

How come you guys like that one? (one with extra info to support telling the time)

Because it helps me.

Because it is easier to read.

Miss, did you know I have been struggling with time quite a lot. For four years straight I have been practicing the time and now I have mastered it. It has taken ages trying to do it.

But you have done it! You really persisted then didn't you.

I started from year three and carried on in year four and then when I got to year six I managed to do it.

That's great!

It took me a long time though.

OK, I have another question to ask.... What do you think your photos say about your experiences of school and learning?

That I am getting more help than I used to. Well, in primary school I only had about, I only had three LSAs with me all the time and one was for my reading and understanding the words and my other LSA was just there to support me if I ever got stuck on anything or did not understand the words, or what the stuff is about and the third one was just to like see, an LSA that always goes around. And for this, in secondary school I get, it's like there is lots of people with different types of needs and so there is going to have to be loads more LSAs and people that support young people that have needs.

Wow!

And I used a lap top most of my years in primary school.

Do you use a lap top now?

No, which is a bit...

How come?

Because as B and H use a laptop for their needs. I don't know why, but I find it easier, I don't know why, but in primary school I could not really write anything really, so then I used a laptop most of the time.

You get a laptop if, they tell you to write and if you are quicker at typing than writing you get one and it is also to do with funding as well.

I think....., cause I have seen your handwriting...

I know, it's quite neat

It's quite neat.....

<u>Key</u>
Susan
Rick
Sam
Sidney
Harry

In primary I had this other teacher thing, it's called Miss C, she goes to XXX now I think and she used to give me handwriting and reading lessons.

Anyone else, what do your photos show about your experiences of school and learning?

I am not sure that all the stuff I tried to do is in here. But like I have become a lot more independent with my work. I am not sure if it is for better or for worse.

Ok. Why are you saying that?

Because some things I have gone down in, since I have become more independent. Because back in primary I had a laptop for some lesson, or um..

We used to do that didn't we.

Or a person that you know.

Writes for you.

A scribe?

Or even a LSA, that's it!

D, sorry to interrupt, but what was that place, that we both used to go, that quiet place?

Oh that was, um, I want to say the sanctuary?

It might have been, I am not sure

And you got that little rock if you had been in there for long enough

Yeh, I got one.

Yeh, that was the... it had loads of pillows.

Because they helped us, um, build our self-esteem up a bit.

I kind of what to say it's called the sanctuary or something.

What do you think your photos say about your experience of school?

These photos, um, like, there is one about the cafeteria and its kind of like showing that I have become a bit more lonely because I don't meet my friends as much. But at the same time with Pit Stop I have made more friends.

Because everyone accepts each other.

Can I say mine now?

Yes

I think that mine shows that without friends and different coping strategies school, it would not be an option type thing. And without the need, like what B and D were saying, at my school I had a place called the Den and like, and I used to, and it's a bit like the Pit Stop there was only me. And like a coping strategy might be something simple like using a laptop, like because I have been

given a laptop ever since I was in Y5, no Y4, sorry. And, without those and friends school would be very....

Traumatised..

Yeh, I agree with that

Did you want to add anything B?

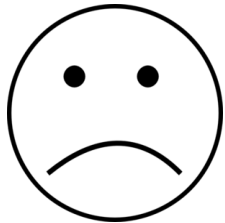
There is always barriers, but you can work through them

Mrs C, she always said, she always gives me these feelings slips so if I am like angry I just stick it up, and I used to have a big ball of blue tack to play with in lessons, and if I needed a rest from one of my lessons I would like, either fiddle with it or just black out something. Not black out, but like close my eyes and think of something else.

That's like what we did in the Den

And Mrs C gave me these cards to help me in lessons

How far do you think you have had your say in this project?



Harry Sidney
Rick Sam



I did not have my say when...

Sam - I could not use lots of different coloured dots to show which photos I wanted to keep and which I wanted to remain private
 Harry – the picture of the tree did not come out
 Sidney – I could not use the coloured dots I wanted
 Rick – I could not have my 'Darth Vader' quote used!

I had my say when...

Sam - When I had two lots of top six photos – positive and negative
 Harry – I thought and organised my photos for the research in my own way
 Sidney – 'Me and Sam are good working buddies'
 Rick – We had to abide by the Geneva Convention

Discussion Group: Information and Demographic Sheet

Key questions

Students:

- Take 10 or more photographs of anything that would **help others to understand your experience of school and/or learning**.

Staff:

- Tell me what you **think** of the pictures?
- How do students' views and experiences of school **relate** to your own as a member of staff?
- What ideas shared in this session might have **implications for practice**?
- What aspects of your practice will **remain the same**?
- What **reflections** do you have about what has been shared?
- What **questions** might you ask the photographers?
- How do you think the storyboards would influence the practice of;
 - a. Primary teachers
 - b. The senior leadership team
 - c. Colleagues in your team
 - d. Staff in an 'ideal' school
 - e.
- What impact do you think the storyboards would have if we put them up in;
 - a. The staffroom
 - b. The playground

Demographic information

Gender:

Age:

20-30		31-40	
41-50		51-60	
61-70			

Role(s) at school:

Years spent working in education:

Reflections

Exploring change sentence starters

It has been a while since we met and you had a chance to view the students' photos. I would like to explore your reflections about this process.

Below are a number of sentence starters. **Please read them through and complete the ones that most interest you. Around four (or more!) would be great!**

Sentence starters

1. Since seeing the photos one thought I have had is...
2. I have discussed the photos with..... They thought...
3. Since seeing the photos I have tried to...
4. The photos led me to consider...
5. The photos confirmed my belief that...
6. The most unexpected thing about the photos was...
7. One unanticipated outcome of seeing the photos is...
8. If I walked into a classroom and changes had been made as a result of this project I would see...
9. If I had a pot of money to support making changes as a result of this project I would...
10. As a result of this project I would put the following in room 101...

Appendix 15: Transcription extract phase two

Discussion group 3 19.11.16

So what impact do you think the experience boards would have if we put them up in the staffroom, the playground.

So if we put the experience boards up in the staff room and the staff walked in for the Monday morning briefing

I would love to see it

I think people would love to see it, but I also think... I think it would have more impact in other places than the staffroom.

What other places would you put it?

Do you mean if you had a copy in every department office?

Yeah...

In the staffroom not everyone professionally likes each other so to have a cohesive....

All you want to do is go in there, do your bit and get out

But if this was up in each faculty office, because obviously they are know our staffrooms. So if we get rid of the staffroom idea and think of faculty staffrooms. It would be great because as you said you would talk with people who have likeminded ideas because you are in the same subject and curriculum area. So you could see... I could see from a maths point of view they would like certain things. But from my point of view, you would appreciate other things.

But also as you say, its like having displays up on the wall. Its something that subconsciously goes in, and you start to think and look at it. Even the messages on the wall you were looking at the other day...

But even just in terms of people's reactions, would they react or would they be dismissive... like I think people would, be interested in seeing it, definitely. What students experiences are and be surprised by some of it..

What do you recon they would be surprised by?

Um, I don't know, I guess, how a single negative experience can, without reassurance, affect the rest of their school year, or two years. Things like, I can see why they field is vast and terrifying, but I don't think all staff could maybe see that. I can see that our ability to record using CCTV, and you just walk by and don't know that it is there is really horrible for some students. But for some staff I think some of that would be quite eye opening.

And what they see is positive, you can see why they like the stationary, and the little bits, the colourful little bits. I think for some staff it would be a really nice eye opening reminder about what students feel. And how we can have an impact and how little things have an impact. And sometimes you forget that. You think about exam questions and marking them... but actually the relationships and the environment has just as much impact.

Key
SP = Orange
HX = Blue
JX = Green

Its being reminded about it all the time, as a human being as well as a teacher. I know myself I am dismissive of these smaller things, sometimes just pig headedness, because you just think get on with it...you know, pick yourself up and... but also just having that constant reminder, I think that would be good for anybody. In a roundabout positive way. Just to remind yourself of these small things all the time. It does make a difference.

Most of the stuff they have taken photos of are of support staff. I think that would be fantastic to remind teachers of how valuable our support staff are. And make them realise how much we and the students appreciate that. Because without them these students will get lost in the system because we have to churn out lesson plans... and that is our job! But their job is to help them thrive....

If you put that up, there are lots of students, not just students with vulnerable; it depends what you mean by vulnerable, so many students, like your normal students, that use people like behaviour and standards, or have massive contact with behaviour and standards, and they don't fear them, they realise they need them and its part of the process of getting them through school. It would be interesting to see, you said put it on the playground... I don't think they would be dismissive at all. I think they would need to be directed about it. What it is, the existential nature of some of this stuff as well, is quite difficult for us to grasp, or get your head around, and think about what you are really looking at and why its, but for them to have a bit of direction on that, for them to see... I think they would.. you would get a lot of comments. And I would genuinely be open and honest.

I think you would get a lot of discussion from the students and it would make them think; what are my positives? What are my negatives? What would I take a photo of? I could see it would just... they would just start thinking for themselves about what makes their school experience. What is nice is that none of it is their work. None of it is their writing...

I thought they would take something about their work, or books, and they have not done anything like that. Which is really interesting about what makes their school experience.

Reflections

- Developing the conversation, putting people at ease.
- PP's = keen to do well for me- influencing their responses?
- PP's = clear both have had pastoral roles
- Proud of school and its achievements – perhaps more so than other discussion groups.
- Thinking about impact throughout... and how they could change their practice...
- HX = knows about star reading test and prize bag, only member of staff to know this...
- Level of explanation I had to do about the some photos – sensory room
- Described as vulnerable learners a lot – influence of me, photos, knowledge of pit stop use...?
- Impact of standards, top down pressures