

An exploration of children's experiences of national assessment in schools: how do national assessments influence children's identities?

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

Signature..... Julie Elizabeth Price

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Abstract

The impact of test anxiety on children's wellbeing is of increasing concern to educationalists (National Union of Teachers/Exam Factories, 2015). In addition, the impact of SATs on children's well-being is currently at the heart of much media interest (refer to articles in *The Guardian* 30.4.17 and *The Independent* 1.5.17). Despite a growing research base, the focus has been largely on the experiences of secondary or college students, and has primarily been investigated using quantitative approaches. The aim of the current study was to develop an understanding of the emotional impact of national assessment on primary aged children, and to explore how the construction of children's identities might relate to these experiences.

Initially twelve children from two schools were identified with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) on the basis of them representing a range of social backgrounds, and emotional and cognitive abilities. A total of eleven children were interviewed twice. The data from five children from year six and a child from year two were then further analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Four superordinate themes emerged from analysis, each with a number of subordinate themes. The theme 'Support from others' illustrates the way in which the children's learning was situated within a social context, from which testing created a rupture, as described in the theme 'Tests create anxiety'. Children described a tendency to keep negative feelings about testing to themselves, creating a split between the private and the public self. Performance in tests informed children's sense of value, beyond the confines of the target ability ('Self-evaluation from feedback'). The theme 'Who I want to become' captures a process of negotiation as children became immersed in reflection on their identities, negotiating a compromise between self-evaluation on the basis of the tests and possible future selves.

Due to the research method and size of this study, implications from the results have to be treated cautiously. However, it would seem advantageous for schools to address the potential negative effects of testing on emotional well-

being, identity and aspiration. Suggested ways of achieving this are increased opportunities for children to express their private anxieties with regard to testing, including discussion with adults in non- teaching roles, and specific interventions that promote well-being and self-esteem in relation to test anxiety and the implications of results. In addition, policy and practice should consider ways to minimise the rupture to learning created by testing.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Researcher background: values and experience

1.1.1 How personal history and interest has informed my research

During my training to become an educational psychologist I reflected a great deal on my own experience of school. At school, I was good at English and sport. My main hobbies as a child were reading and gymnastics, the latter of which took up a significant amount of my time outside of school. My school reports normally read along the lines of 'Julie always tries her hardest however she is not academic, she excels in sport and creative subjects'. I believe that gymnastics taught me a lot; it taught me how to be focused, patient and determined. When I left school, I passed just enough GCSEs to obtain a place on an A level course; I studied subjects that really interested me: English literature, sociology and psychology. For the first time, I achieved high grades in my work and was taught in psychology by a teacher who recognised my ability. I have since worked as a nurse and teacher, and am completing my third degree. I am sure that my teachers in primary and secondary school would have been surprised by these achievements.

When I studied education as part of my A level sociology course I began to make sense of my learning experiences. I learnt that there are many social and interactional influences that can impact on a person at this point in their life, including the expectations held of a person by others and the expectations a person holds of themselves. I have carried this experience with me in my work and feel that I have always held a strong sense of value around the importance of equality of opportunity. I believe that this is reflected in my research theme, which aims to explore national assessment and its relationship with identity.

1.1.2 How professional experience has informed my research

My first career was as a mental health nurse. Through my experience working with adults I developed a profound understanding of the significance of context and systems in understanding and supporting individuals who were experiencing psychological distress. It often felt to me that the impact of social issues, relationships and past experiences were underestimated or neglected, working in a system where there was a tendency for distress to be viewed as situated within the person, and somewhat detached from social context. Later, following a change of career, I began working in the Student Services department of a further education college. My role was to provide course advice and guidance to young people and adults. I also began to gain experience teaching psychology, and completed a PGCE. I have always viewed education very positively, as an institution with the potential to empower people both intellectually and economically. Therefore, the path to educational psychology reflected a natural progression for me as a career option, since its focus lies in promoting equality of opportunity.

Within my work I have always valued and applied psychological knowledge eclectically. For example, although experience has taught me to value the influence of context, I also believe that structuralist approaches can offer important insights and understandings with regards to understanding the self. Psychodynamic and humanistic concepts and principles have been and continue to be particularly influential in informing my practice. For example, the concepts of humanistic theory are central to informing my working relationships with others; the value placed on presenting an honest and genuine self in facilitating trust, and the implicit belief that others have the potential for change. In relation to psychodynamic theory, concepts such as countertransference and defence mechanisms provide a useful understanding of emotional states, behaviour and relationships. I have found this to be invaluable within the context of both consultation work and individual assessment.

For this study, however, I believed that a social constructionist perspective would offer the most appropriate context for addressing my research question,

which highlights the dynamic interaction between the self and the school environment.

1.2 Current educational context and debate: background to national assessment

Rice and Dulfer (2014) discuss research related to the advantages and disadvantages of national assessment. For example, advantages include Sloane and Kelly's (2003) argument that students may possess a clearer understanding of their knowledge and potential as a result of testing which motivates them to work harder. Those such as Jones (2007), define high stakes testing as being standardised tests that are used for high stakes decisions. It is argued that greater consistency in relation to curriculum may be achieved across schools as a consequence of high stakes testing. However, the impact of testing on children represents a current political debate within education. This is reflected in the recently published research commissioned by the National Union of Teachers entitled 'Exam Factories' (Hutchings 2015). The report is critical of the English education system, deeming it to be damaging to both staff and pupils. Two of the concerns highlighted by the report include the assertion that the education system denies pupils access to a balanced curriculum, and secondly, contributes to increased levels of stress/mental health issues and disaffection amongst pupils as a result of pressure linked to testing and increased awareness of failure at a younger age. The report recommends an urgent review of the current system.

In 2014 The National Association of Head Teachers published a report recommending a system wide review and evaluation of the assessment process. The report cites the work of Alison Peacock, head teacher of Wroxham School. Testing has not been used for ten years at this school, and the school has experienced three consecutive outstanding Ofsted reviews. This is attributed to the listening culture where the primary dialogue relates to child and family focused discourse relating to how best to support children. Peacock argues that the absence of levels creates space for a quality curriculum based on learning that is focused around the needs of the individual. Integral to this is

the process of formative feedback. This example is a useful one in that it demonstrates a successful example of an alternative system to that of the testing culture associated with the national curriculum.

1.2.1 Emotional well-being in schools

To date approaches promoting emotional well-being in schools have included the Targeting Mental Health in Schools programme (TaMHS) and Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). Recent recommendations include Weare (2015) who suggests that increases in emotional difficulties amongst children and young people are increasingly related to social media/cyberbullying and 'attachment disorder'. Weare (2015, p5) identifies the climate and ethos of schools as:

“one of the key determinants of well-being and mental health in schools”.

There is no discussion directly related to stress and testing. However, Weare argues that addressing the social and emotional well-being of pupils serves as an essential pre-cursor to achievement. Weare also highlights the issue of staff stress, and the statistic that 80% of teachers have reported feeling anxious, stressed and depressed at work. Weare argues that staff stress may be linked to targets, standards and inspections, and suggests that schools in general can mediate the impact of this through staff development and counselling.

Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires and O'Connor (2006) in their review of the functions and contribution of educational psychologists (EPs) in England and Wales, discuss the distinctive role of the EP's contribution within multi-agency settings, for example joint working with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other health professionals. It was acknowledged that EPs were well positioned to coordinate agencies and to function as 'a bridge between school and community'. This report highlighted the evolving role of the EP. In the recent 2016 publication by the Department for Education entitled 'Mental health and behaviour in schools', however, there is minimal reference to the role of the EP. In relation to addressing mental health in schools, the document discusses risk factors and resilience, evidence based

interventions, and the role of associated professionals/agencies. Amongst school related risk factors the role of relationships, bullying and discrimination are referred to. There exists an absence within this wellbeing discourse, for considering the potential role of stress in relation to national assessment. This highlights the need for further research in relation to enhancing knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the education system may influence children's wellbeing and identities. In addition, further research could help to create narrative space for acknowledging the vital role that educational psychologists play in addressing wellbeing in schools.

1.3 Theoretical background: The social self

Holstein and Gubrium (2000, p4) point out that the concept of the individual self is a relatively recent one in western history. For example, as Foucault (1977) argues, it is within the last few centuries in Western Europe that the view of self as an individualised phenomenon emerged as a response to scientific and juridical developments. The concept of the individualised self has therefore been linked with a discourse related to the scientific method. Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) for example suggest there exists an assumption that the notion of natural development (or modernism) represents a form of natural progression securely anchored by knowledge acquired through empirical observation. Social sciences alongside 'hard' sciences have also been grounded in modernist assumptions. However, there is now increased awareness amongst social scientists that a positivist discourse may serve as a mask for elitist, racist and sexist agendas within the research arena.

Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) argue that feminist approaches to research have begun to challenge 'scientism' and address the relationship between knowledge generating practices and power. For example, such approaches have placed emphasis on reflexive issues and the value of experience, and in terms of whose experience is validated through the research process (this will be further discussed within the chapter headed 'methodology'). Those such as Kuhn (1962) have stressed the way in which existing paradigms can maintain dominance in the arena of scientific research, with researchers reluctant to acknowledge findings that are not consistent with an existing

paradigm. Kuhn's argument is of value in considering the themes of interest for psychological researchers; for example, in terms of the value placed upon approaches to psychology, through themes deemed to be of interest to us as psychologists and researchers, and through the subsequent choices we make related to research and methodology. McGhee (2001) suggests that within psychology there is a division between constructionist and positivist psychologists in relation to what constitutes truth and reality; this represents a debate around epistemology, raising the question of what kind of knowledge is possible within psychology.

Potter and Wetherall (1987) argue that within psychology structuralist perspectives are reliant upon realist assumptions, which they argue are problematic in terms of their assumption that self exists as a distinct entity, manifest either as a form of 'inner' self or represented externally as behaviour. In contrast, social constructivism asserts that the concept of self is inextricably linked with language and discourse. Hence, the study of self should essentially be concerned with how the self is theorised and constructed, rather than as a focus on 'self as entity'. Burr (1995) comments that many of the assumptions implicit within social constructionist theory are historically well established within the field of sociology, and emphasises the overlap of knowledge between social sciences, humanities and literary criticism. Burr links social constructionism with postmodernism, which represents a rejection of structuralist perspectives. Central to postmodernist theory is Derrida's (1974,1978,1981) concept of deconstruction, an argument that western thought is based on 'binary opposition'. Binary opposition is inherent within the structure of language, and stresses the way in which one term will always be given more value than its opposite. Binary opposition is also integral to ideology, where the illusion is given that one value is greater than the other. Burr provides an example of this as the individualism/society dualism. This dualism is evident within cultural narratives which it may be argued, tend to regard the self as a detached and self-contained entity.

1.3.1 Symbolic Interactionist Theory and Identity

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

Thomas, W.I. (1923).

Symbolic interactionism is defined by Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) as representing one of three branches of interpretative sociology. This approach broadly reflects the action perspective that was developed by Weber (1964), a challenge to the positivistic tradition inherent within sociology. Interpretative perspectives, namely symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, are concerned with understanding social interaction and the construction of meaning.

Within the field of symbolic interactionism theorists have explored the interrelationship between the self and the social world. Lemert and Branaman (1997) identify Goffman (1922-82) as the first within this field to raise questions with regards to the social construction of the self. Whilst Mead (1913) identified two aspects of the self, the 'I' and the 'me'. Mead defined the 'me' as the attitudes of others that we have internalized and the 'I' as representing the more spontaneous aspects of self. The 'me' is open to modification through social context, interaction, dialogue. This is consistent with the understanding of self advocated by Cooley (1902), who defined the self as essentially social. Cooley's concept of the 'looking glass self' stresses that self-awareness emerges directly through the individual's interaction with the social world.

Those such as Becker (1952) and Nash (1976) in their work related to labelling theory have demonstrated the social processes through which individuals are defined as different. Once an individual is construed or labelled as different (deviant) research demonstrates that there is a tendency for people to view themselves and for them to be viewed by others, accordingly. For example, Merton (1948) discussed the way in which false statements of a situation may result in self-fulfilling expectations, so that individuals act in a way that fulfils the expectations placed on them by others. This has been documented empirically through the research of Rosenhan (1973) and Rosenthal (1968) who have explored the impact of expectations on the interpretation of behaviour. The implications of such research are that the labels placed on others can

profoundly influence the way in which they are perceived. This in turn, impacts on a person's self-perception and hence self-expectations, which can contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton 1948).

According to Cohen and Manion (1994) symbolic interactionist models, which focus on the meaning derived through interactions between individuals, are well suited to studying the nature of interactions found within schools. Meighan and Siraj- Blatchford (2003) point out that one of the difficulties associated with such an approach however is that the impact of wider social influences such as race, gender and class could remain understated. They argue that social structures and the inequalities of power that may be associated with such structures and processes must be recognised.

Phenomenology, an alternative interpretative perspective, seeks to understand how individuals view the world and their position within it. Hammersley and Woods (1976) point out that the movement:

'is concerned with the knowledge and assumptions which must be possessed and acted upon by people in order for the social world to exist'.

Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) point out that phenomenology aims to reveal the knowledge that may not always exist at the level of conscious awareness, but which may be implicitly embedded within the context of everyday life. This perspective is therefore concerned with how people define their world, and the focus lies within with the exploration of meaning attached to knowledge and reality. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) point out, phenomenology is concerned with understanding the experience of being human; that is, it provides guidance about how to explore and understand lived experience. In this sense, phenomenology may focus initially on the individual, and seek to link knowing and meaning with wider social and cultural understanding and influence in the broadest sense. Phenomenology is discussed further in relation to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) under the section heading 'Methodological and theoretical approach'.

1.3.2 Possible Selves Research

Definition of possible selves stresses the dynamic, temporal and integrative aspects of identity (Wai-Ling Packard and Conway 2006). The theme of 'possible selves' explores the impact of social interaction on an individual's conceptualisation of how their future sense of identity could emerge. Markus and Nurius (1986) explore the concept of 'possible selves' and define possible selves in terms of an individual's perception/s of who they could become, who they are afraid they might become and who they would like to become. Possible selves represent the cognitive and evaluative aspect of self-perception. Although possible selves are very much individual, it is argued that they exist as social constructs. Markus and Nurius (1986) state:

“An individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences”.

Dunkel and Kerpelman (2006) argue that concepts of possible selves can have powerful consequences as they may either serve to buffer the self from negative influences, facilitating a sense of agency, or alternatively, when burdened by negative possible selves, people may fail to take appropriate actions and, therefore, suffer. Dunkel and Kerpelman argue that possible selves are 'co-owned and controlled; they are socially contingent and conditioned'. A fundamental issue concerning the influence of possible selves is whether or not others validate, threaten or ignore these selves. It is argued that the social world is often instrumental in constructing possible selves, and what happens as a consequence. Whilst they stress the importance of both self agency and social determination, Dunkel and Kerpelman emphasise that possible selves have the potential to have powerful influence on both educational and career outcomes. The concept of possible selves is particularly relevant to this piece of research, since it represents a social construct with the potential to influence conceptualisation of future identity. This is also consistent with symbolic

interactionist themes discussed above with regards to the impact of expectations and social interaction on identity.

1.4 Purpose of the study

Cultural discourses tend to construct the self as a detached and self-contained entity, viewing the self as somewhat detached from the interactions and systems within which it is positioned. This is evident in the language that permeates quantitative studies in relation to test anxiety; for example, there is reference to measuring 'prevalence', which implies a medical model, alongside frameworks such as the 'appraisal' model, which serve to position understandings of anxiety within the person (this is further illustrated within the literature review). Such discourse appears less evident within qualitative studies, where the aim is to access and understand individual experience.

To date there has been very little qualitative research that has sought to understand the experiences of primary children and national assessment. This study adopted a phenomenological approach to gain insight into the 'lived experiences' of primary aged children. The study is particularly relevant to the current political climate, where there has recently been considerable debate surrounding curriculum and national assessment.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction to literature review

This literature review begins with an exploration of studies that have adopted methods consistent with quantitative methodology, in the form of questionnaires completed by students or teachers. Putwain (2012), who has published extensively within this field, acknowledges that within the field of test anxiety there exists a tradition that leans towards quantitative research. Putwain explores this assertion in greater detail following a review of questionnaire based research to date. I have then reviewed qualitative research, that which aims to gain a deeper understanding of subjective pupil experience. I have attempted to compare the studies, which are then discussed firstly in terms of their contribution to our understanding of pupil experience and the assessment process; and secondly, in terms of positioning this piece of research. I acknowledge that the research presented in this literature review may not be exhaustive; however, I have attempted to locate and refer to studies that I perceive to be the most relevant. Some studies have been included from other countries, and it is acknowledged that care needs to be taken in terms of extrapolating findings from different educational systems that are situated within different cultures.

2.1.1 Literature search

Studies have focused on both trait and state understandings of anxiety. For the purposes of this research, one example has been included where a trait model is implied, however in general, I confined studies to those that adopted a state based understanding of anxiety. A literature search was initially carried out in 2015 using Google Scholar and various search engines linked to Exeter University's electronic library. The following search terms were used: test; assessment; Standard Assessment Tests (SATs); anxiety. Numerous papers were retrieved. Updated literature searches were carried out between January and June 2017 following consultation with a librarian, who recommended the most appropriate search engines for my research area. In addition, a further search was carried out in August 2017 using the terms 'children's experiences, testing', using the British Education Index and Google Scholar. Further papers

were retrieved from the BEI. Please refer to tables in Appendix N regarding updated searches. In addition, references were pursued from research papers.

2.2 Quantitative research

2.2.1 Questionnaire with primary pupils

Several studies which have explored the concept of test anxiety have utilised questionnaires as a method of data collection. For example, Connor's (2001 and 2003) studies used teacher questionnaires. Connor (2001) attempts to describe the potential pressure upon pupils and to assess the prevalence of stress from a sample of schools. The study included twenty-five children from fifteen schools, from key stages one and two, who were identified by school staff around test times as exhibiting signs of stress that they felt were beyond a typical and acceptable level. School staff were asked to report any parental concerns regarding signs of anxiety as a means of identifying children. It is acknowledged however that the estimate of children affected may be an inaccurate one, since some children may not express anxiety overtly. It was also reported that fourteen parents reported behavioural signs of stress in their children to teachers, however only two of these cases were also identified by teachers. This discrepancy suggests that there is a significant issue associated with the validity of teacher assessment of pupil anxiety. Indeed, Connor acknowledges a limitation of the studies in terms of their reliance on the subjective reports of teachers. It is possible that the children identified may have reflected those children who teachers were more likely to have felt concerned about in terms of presenting behaviour management or achievement concerns. Children who may have disengaged through withdrawn or reserved behaviour could have presented as less of an immediate concern to teachers and therefore may have been less likely to be identified. The study also briefly references reports from schools regarding worries that emerged from several children, which included; fear of failing to achieve as well as others, and fear that poor performance would affect the group they would be placed in. The study concluded by acknowledging that children as young as seven years can experience signs of stress and should be monitored.

In terms of assessing the number of children affected by stress and in terms of understanding the nature and severity of pupil stress, there are significant issues associated with the validity of the study. In addition, Connor's studies do not directly access the subjective experience of children, since they sought to interpret children's experience indirectly through the perspective of adults. Research has documented the difficulties associated with adults accessing and interpreting children's experiences (Ritala-Koskinen 1994, Butler and Green 2007).

2.2.2 Self-report questionnaire with primary pupils

In contrast to Connor's studies which used teacher questionnaires, other studies have sought to understand pupil experience of anxiety through asking pupils to complete self-report questionnaires. For example, in the USA, Segool, Carlson, Goforth, Von der Embse and Barterian (2013) used the Children's Test Anxiety Scale (CTAS) and the test anxiety subscale of the Behaviour Assessment Scale for Children, with 335 children aged 8-11 years, to explore differences in anxiety between high-stakes and low-stakes testing. Significantly more anxiety was reported in relation to high-stakes standardized achievement testing in comparison to class room testing. In a German correlational study, Lohbeck, Nitkowski and Petermann (2016) used a modified version of the German Self-Description questionnaire alongside a subscale of trait anxiety from the Anxiety Questionnaire for Students, and sought to address predictors of test anxiety in 192 children aged between 7-11 years. Predictors of test anxiety were being female, or having a low academic self-concept. Limitations are acknowledged by the researchers as the sample being small in terms of making generalisations, and caution that correlation does not imply causal relationship. A limitation of these studies is that they were conducted outside the UK, therefore it is problematic to extrapolate findings to other cultures and populations.

2.2.3 Self-report questionnaire with secondary pupils

Putwain (2007) aimed to address the lack of research within the UK in relation to features and prevalence of test related anxiety. The Test Anxiety Inventory was used to gather data on test anxiety and demographic variables from 1,348 secondary students from seven schools in the north of England using self-report

questionnaires. Following statistical analysis, gender, ethnic and economic background were found to predict variation in anxiety scores. A strength of this study is that a large sample of students was used, and schools were selected with the aim of representing local demography.

Locker and Cropley (2004) in a UK study aimed explored anxiety, affect and self-esteem amongst secondary students prior to national assessments. A total of 520 students participated from four kinds of different schools, and completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, the Children's Depression Inventory, the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Students were given self-report questionnaires at two intervals preceding exams. The researchers concluded that ethos, type of school and gender (females displayed increased negative affect within the two all-girls schools, one of which was a grammar and one an independent school) were significant variables in relation to test anxiety. It was found that there were no significant differences between the school years, and no gender difference in the mixed school that participated. This study emphasises the impact of school ethos/culture and gender on students' experience of anxiety. A study by Putwain and Daly (2014) also explored gender differences within a sample of 2435 students from eleven English secondary schools, using the Revised Test Anxiety Questionnaire and the Friedben Test Anxiety Scale (FTAS). A gender difference in test anxiety scores was found, with girls scoring more highly than boys.

In an American study, Von Der Embse and Hasson (2012) explored the prevalence of test anxiety and socioeconomic status amongst secondary students aged 15-16 years from two different schools, urban and suburban. The researchers used the 'FTAS' (Friedman and Bandas-Jacob 2997) test anxiety scale, and found that test anxiety contributed negatively to performance on high stakes tests. Amongst the findings there was no significant difference between suburban and urban schools, similar rates of text anxiety existed regardless. However, it is argued that high stakes testing and related anxiety could hold 'differential significance' for students who are women, from ethnic minority backgrounds, or who have disability. Hodge and Elliott (1997) in Australia, used

the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the General Health Questionnaire, the Adolescent Coping Scale, and the Self-Description Questionnaire, to explore exam stress and internal/external variables amongst 445 students in their final two years of secondary school. The researchers identified 'anxiety proneness' as significant, followed by lesser influences such as lower socio-economic status, self-confidence, self-concept and coping perception. A limitation of this study is that it stresses a view of anxiety as being situated within the person (for example discussion of personality traits and anxiety 'proneness') which would therefore imply that environmental issues are of lesser significance.

2.2.4 Evaluation of the use of self-report measures

In relation to studies that have utilised self-report questionnaires, many restrictions have been documented surrounding this method as a research tool. For example, Meltzoff (1998) argues that with the Likert scale some respondents tend to gravitate towards central responses when they feel obligated to complete the scale, whereas for other respondents this may reflect how they genuinely feel. A further issue with Likert scales is that respondents are forced to tick a box when in fact none of the boxes may represent an accurate reflection of how they feel. Anderson and Strupp (1996) stress the potential effects of social desirability when completing questionnaires relating to emotional or psychological difficulties. Such considerations suggest that validity can be compromised in relation to participant responses. In addition, Myers and Winters (2002) argue that rating scales fail to consider contextual influences that are widely acknowledged for children and adolescents, for example differences in behaviour across contexts such as home and school.

Putwain (2007) initiates a dialogue that deconstructs the dominant discourse associated with test anxiety research, and argues that such research assumes that test anxiety is an objective, consistent and measurable construct, defined by a quantitative approach to research. Quantification is reflected in the employment of self-report questionnaires aimed at measuring anxiety. Putwain cites Hart's (1998) argument that over time a *modus operandi* may develop within research areas which means that alternative approaches to addressing research questions are inadequately represented. Furthermore, Putwain argues

that assumptions regarding the experience of stress fail to consider the pupil's subjective interpretation of experience, which could in the case of test related anxiety include effects in relation to self-esteem, sense of self-efficacy, and other negative affect such as anger or depression. This theme is addressed by Reay and Wiliam (1999, p344) who point out that in relation to national assessment;

“there is virtually no literature which engages with students’ perspectives”

Reay and Wiliam argue that there exists a silence surrounding children's experiences which may result in the assumption that children's experiences are either an accepted consequence of testing, or, that such assessment has minimal impact on children's subjective identities.

Questionnaire based research is therefore limited in what it reveals regarding our understanding of an individual's subjective experience of assessment/testing, since self-report questionnaires consist of closed-end responses, and there are many issues surrounding the validity of self-report data. In addition, there appears to be little research that has been carried out in relation to primary children in the UK. In contrast, amongst secondary pupils, there are a greater number of studies that have been carried out both within and outside the UK.

2.3 Qualitative research

2.3.1 Focus group with primary pupils

Putwain, Connors, Woods and Nicholson (2012), aimed to explore the experiences of impending SATs amongst a small sample of year six children. An appraisal model of stress, i.e. one which views anxiety as a response to individual interpretation of a stimulus was adopted. Grounded theory was used as a method of analysis and two overlapping themes were identified; *‘attitudes and feelings towards forthcoming SATs’* and *‘the pressure of forthcoming SATs’*. The researchers found a diversity in terms of pupil experience; for

example, pressure did not always result in negative outcome, some children described their experiences as challenging rather than threatening. When appraisals resulted in pupils finding SATs challenging or threatening the following were found to be of significance: peer friendships, children's perceptions of their competence in SATs subjects, the utility value associated with subjects, the high stakes context, threats related to negative self-worth judgements from self and others. The study therefore also highlights the role of protective factors which may increase children's resilience to anxiety, such as the role of peer relationships and friendships. The researchers argue that some pupils have internalised a belief that self-worth reflects educational achievement. It was reported that children were '*deeply concerned about the measurable component of their learning*'. The researchers concluded that the data partly confirms the assertion that pupils' identities as learners are defined through attainment, since attainment was linked with self-worth judgements. For example, high stakes testing increases the risk to self-esteem; unfamiliarity increases risk associated with competence beliefs, which in turn are linked to increased risk of failure and the perception of tests as threatening.

Concerns were also expressed by pupils regarding future educational consequences associated with performance in SATs, and links were made between educational performance and future job prospects, for example obtaining a '*good job*' in life.

The appraisal model of stress, used as a model for the above study, views anxiety as a consequence of individual differences in the perception of anxiety. This is consistent with a cognitive behavioural understanding of anxiety, which would assert that thought patterns (for example catastrophizing and self-deprecating thoughts) govern feelings and behaviour (Beck 1976). One of the implications associated with this understanding of anxiety is that it situates the difficulty within the individual, who is perceived to be an autonomous agent. This suggests a detached view of the person and social context. This could be problematic in terms of understanding and appreciating contextual influence on the person, for example social, cultural and political influences such as the impact of the school system and teacher/parent/peer relationships. Social

constructionist theorists would argue that the self cannot be understood in terms of detachment from social context (Wetherall and Maybin 1996).

2.3.2 Evaluation of focus groups

A strength of studies that utilise focus groups is that focus groups are thought to provide a context less artificial than an interview, since they facilitate discussion within a socially supportive context (Marshall and Rossman 2006). In contrast to studies that have utilised questionnaires, focus groups enable a more in-depth expression of views and experiences surrounding pupil experience. As Robson (2002) comments, focus groups can empower individuals to make their own contribution, whilst stimulated and encouraged by the contribution of others in the group. A disadvantage of the focus group is that within a focus group comprised of peers, social desirability could be a compounding issue. For example, some children may feel more comfortable than others expressing their views, thoughts and feelings within this context, and may be more dominant in their contribution than others. Such limitations are acknowledged by Putwain et al (2012).

2.3.3 Interviews with primary pupils

Keddie's (2016) UK study carried out interviews and classroom observations with five high achieving students in years five and six over a two-month period from a single school in London. The study aimed to explore the impact of neoliberal discourses, i.e. the focus on competition and individuality in relation to school experience, on children's perceptions of their worth as students, and their understanding of the future. Therefore, in contrast to other studies discussed, this study was not explicitly focused on test anxiety. The sample of participants also differ from other studies in that the year five and six children here are described as 'high fliers'. Therefore, these children do not represent the range of diversity characteristic of a typical classroom. Keddie concluded that all children were acutely aware of the significance of educational outcomes to their future lives in terms of material advantage. Therefore, similarly to the findings of Putwain et al (2012) the children in this study were aware of possible future outcomes in relation to educational achievement. In addition, a 'good student' was perceived to be good at complying with the expectations of examiners, applying themselves and succeeding. Keddie suggests that

neoliberal discourses have become naturalised, and are integrated into a discourse related to what constitutes being both a good student and a good citizen. There is the suggestion here that academic success is equated with positive self-evaluation, further suggesting a moral aspect of evaluation. This would be consistent with the findings of Reay and Wiliam (1999), and Hall, Collins, Benjamin, Nind and Sheehy (2004), where pupils were found to make comments that equated educational evaluation with personal evaluation (discussed further below).

Keddie's study utilised concepts related to 'neoliberalism' at the outset of the research to frame her analysis, and states that data was analysed with reference to these concepts and relevant literature. Researcher expectations may therefore have guided interpretation/analysis of data. Keddie does not offer any further information with regards to use of a specific method of data analysis, therefore the process of analysis is not fully transparent. Keddie comments that she spent two months observing and interviewing pupils, '*getting to know these students informally..*'. During prolonged periods of involvement, there is increased risk of validity being threatened by researcher bias (Robson 2002). In addition, in relation to studies which utilise overt observation, it is important to consider that it is difficult to rule out social desirability on behalf of those being observed. However, it might also be considered that where observation is used as one method amongst other methods of data collection, this may enable triangulation to take place in relation to strengthening validity associated with interpretation.

In the study by Hall et al (2004), researchers observed year six children and interviewed both teachers and pupils. This research focused on exploring inclusion/exclusion within the classroom within the context of assessment/SATs. In relation to analysis of data, it is stated that audio and video recordings were shared within the team, and interpretation took place within a context of regular meetings. It is unclear whether any model of analysis was used to structure analysis.

Hall et al found that teacher pedagogy was teacher directed to the extent that attempts made by children to attach meaning to text based on aspects of their

own life were rejected or ignored. Consequently, the diversity of children's lives outside of school were denied. It was found that lesson objectives were structured around tasks rather than what would be learnt, so that focus appeared to be on teaching the test rather than developing skills related to a subject. 'Teacher talk' was found to comprise of a 'tightly controlled framework' consisting of orders that were followed mechanistically by pupils. It was observed that children who were unable to model correct answers were repeatedly ignored. Hall et al argue that such conditions allow some children to 'exclude themselves from the classroom'. It was concluded that children's identities as learners and as people were influenced by their experiences. For instance, SATs levels equated to what kind of person you could be; for example, being a good person. In the following quote, children inform the interviewer that pupils are allotted booster classes, which are unfair in the way they help children achieve success, since those in lower groups receive less days:

"Nita: Good people have four days and the level 2s should have four days".

Yasmin: Some of us have got four days and some of us have two days.

Nita: And the people that's not good enough like me should have

Yasmin: (overlaps): She means like the level 2s should have four days and the levels 1 and 4 should have two days. I just go two days and so does Nita.

There is the implication that being in a top group may also mean being a good person. Here there is suggestion that evaluation of performance is equated with evaluation of the person, and hence, there is a moral dimension to such evaluation. Children were acutely aware of the fact that those in the top set were provided with opportunities to learn more, and that this represented an unfair system. Therefore, children's identifications as people, not just learners, were actively constructed through their experience of the assessment process and how they were positioned by teachers in relation to SATs. Hall et al

conclude that pedagogic processes impacted on children's learning and behaviour, and could be defined as inclusionary or exclusionary.

In relation to data analysis, the act of interpretation is acknowledged by the researchers as a subjective process, initially mediated through the data collection process. However, the findings offer detailed insight into the interactive processes taking place within the two schools, suggesting the need for further research with regards to the potential impact of the school system on pupils' self-esteem and identities both as learners and as people.

Reay and Wiliam (1999) used focus groups, observations and interviews in a London primary school where pupils' achievement was generally below the national average, and explored the impact of curricular changes on a group of year six children during the term leading up to SATs. Children were found to have a clear understanding of the impact of testing on the curriculum, and complained about the restrictive subjects they were forced to complete above more creative subjects such as PE or technology. It was also found that children were forced to adjust from the collaborative working style they had been used to, to a culture that was individualist and competitive, resulting in confusion and distress regarding whether they could help one another. It was concluded that teachers appeared to be altering their practice because of pressures associated with Ofsted. Reay and Wiliam suggest that the children shared the experience that the event '*reveals something intrinsic about themselves as learners*'. As the following quotation illustrates, and consistent with the findings of Hall et al (2004) children appeared acutely aware of the potential implications of test findings, which impacted on their sense of self-worth, and their identities as learners:

"Hannah: I'm really scared about the SATs. Mrs O'Brien (a teacher at the school) came and talked to us about our spelling and I'm no good at spelling and David (the class teacher) is giving us times tables tests every morning and I'm hopeless at times tables so I'm frightened I'll do the SATs and I'll be a nothing".

This comment suggests that Hannah's anxiety is not simply related to fear of a negative learner identity; there is also a sense in which Hannah's comment appears to reflect an existential anxiety in relation to who she is as a person. Reay and Williams comment that despite Hannah being good at problem solving, writing, art and dancing, these qualities are irrelevant; Hannah constructs herself as a failure.

Reay and William's research used focus groups and interviews to explore children's views and experiences of national assessment. Disadvantages of these methods are associated with researcher interpretation and potential bias. In relation to analysis of data, the authors describe a process whereby researchers shared data and met regularly to discuss interpretations. It is unclear however what kind of data analysis was used.

in their book entitled '*What Pupils Say*', Pollard, Triggs, Broadfoot, Osborn and McNess (2000) present the findings of a longitudinal study. The study aims to provide insight into the experiences of pupils aged between 5-11 years, following the introduction of the national curriculum and its' assessment processes. The research utilises observations and interviews with participants, and an additional strategy was used at one point to elicit feelings at each stage of the SATs. For example following SATs children were asked to draw a cartoon story of their experience. Seven themes are presented reflecting a 'thematically based' analysis of data. In addition, data is also integrated into case study accounts. In relation to themes, two themes appear pertinent to my study; pupil perspectives on assessment, and pupil perspectives on standardized assessment.

In relation to wellbeing and confidence, feelings of anxiety, tension and uncertainty were reported in anticipation of assessment, sometimes acutely. Some pupils considered high achievers were reported to appear more confident during the test period, whilst others, particularly low achievers, experienced difficulty or were unable to cope. In relation to identity, it was found that pupils became less positive regarding assessment interactions, which were perceived to reveal weakness and could potentially expose them to ridicule/humiliation. At

the end of SATs, it was concluded that children appeared clearer than previously regarding who they described as being 'bright' and who was 'thick'. Pupils became less confident in self- assessment and more likely to perceive success or failure as related to innate characteristics. Assessment was '*intimately associated*' with the development of children as learners and people, and it was felt that teachers' day to day evaluations were instrumental in constructing learning identities. These findings would appear consistent with the findings of Reay and William (1999), completed a year previously, and the findings of Hall et al (2004), slightly later, as these studies also concluded that pupil's identities as learners and as individuals were constructed by pedagogy and the assessment process.

Pollard et al comment that for years five and six interviews were selectively transcribed. However, it is unclear how decisions were made regarding which transcripts were considered appropriate for analysis. Data analysis was completed using computer programmes, which were also changed during the study. The researchers are not explicit about why they changed their research tool, and it is also unclear what kind of model of data analysis was used.

2.3.4 Interviews with secondary pupils

Putwain's (2009) study aimed to explore young people's experiences around testing/school. Thirty- four key stage four students were interviewed from six secondary schools in the north of England. Students were selected following their completion of a self-report questionnaire, and students who were viewed to have a tendency to perceive exams as stressful were selected. Therefore, this sample was not representative of a typical classroom sample, and there was also a gender imbalance since few males compared to females participated. The interviews aimed to explore antecedents, consequences and subjective experience of key stage four exam stress. The data was analysed using grounded theory. The findings indicated that stress was linked to three key factors: motivation to achieve and fear of failure; the wider educational context which included practices and policies that were pursued by teachers and schools; and lastly, exam anxiety was linked to the time periods both prior to and during examinations. It is noted that given the age of such students, they are able to engage in highly reflective discussions with researchers in relation to

their views and experiences. For example, one student challenged teacher attempts to motivate students by raising esteem through a focus on performance. The student explained that the valuing of esteem through academic performance by teachers and parents positioned those students who valued alternatives, or who did not have high academic ability, as 'failures'. There are parallels here with the work of Reay and Wiliam, Hall et al and Pollard et al, in terms of their discussions concerning the role of pedagogy and curriculum in positioning students' identities.

In a further research paper relating to the 2009 study, Putwain (2011) aimed to further understand the subjective experience of exam stress in a group of students as they prepared for GCSEs. Key factors identified included significance of GCSEs, self-worth, pressure from others, and aspirations. Eight aspects of exam stress were identified by researchers, including; anticipation of failure, value attached to academic achievement, poor competence beliefs, pre-disposition to view events as threatening, workload, unfavoured assessment formats, viewing ability as fixed or incremental. Putwain concludes that similarly to Denscombe's (2010) findings, exam stress may exist independently of 'personal pre-disposition'. The model used for analysis of data within the study is not made explicit, other than to state that analysis was structured around several extracts, and labelled in relation to central themes. This suggests that researcher bias could have been an issue, since it is unclear how the extracts were selected.

Denscombe (2000) conducted a study with secondary students in the East Midlands of England, which was comprised of questionnaire, focus group and interview methods. Ten interviews took place from five schools, and the interviews took the format of one researcher and two same sex participants. Therefore, social desirability/feeling inhibited could have been an issue when interviewing two students together. Researchers attempted to identify students representing a range of attitudes and experiences, and teachers then selected those they thought would best engage. The method of analysis for the focus groups and interview data is neither stated or discussed, therefore the process of analysis is not a fully transparent one. Initially the focus of the study concerned whether young people's attitudes to taking risks was influenced by

critical incidents in their lives. However, an emergent theme in the research was the students' preoccupation with stress and emotional wellbeing, and in particular, their experience related to GCSEs. The study identified a range of stressors, for example: GCSEs introduced a new experience in terms of course work pressures; there was additional pressure from teachers who were viewed as stress amplifiers; GCSEs were viewed as a measure of the person, and enabled comparisons to be made between self and others. Denscombe suggests that GCSE stress links to 'the social conditions of late modernity'. For example, there was found to be a tendency to view GCSEs from an individualist/instrumental perspective, which stresses the need to perform well, to enable progression into work or education, which has an associated impact on self-worth and identity. Here there are parallels with Keddie's findings, and those studies which stress the association between performance, self-esteem and identity (for example Putwain et al 2012, Reay and William 1999 and Hall et al 2004).

Power's (unpublished) UK study used interviews to explore students' experiences of exams and what is effective in supporting them. Nine students aged 15-17 years who were taking public exams in secondary and further education participated. In addition, two members of staff were interviewed. The participants were identified by the SENCo for an EP intervention, as a result of having reported signs of stress in relation to exams. Therefore, the sample was not representative of a typical class of students. A case study approach was adopted and IPA was used as a method of analysis, to explore the experience of exam stress in secondary students. Five interviews were transcribed and the remaining four were partly transcribed. It is unclear how the decision was made regarding which interviews were selected for full transcription. Three interlinked key concepts were identified including the stress cycle; grades, expectations and identity; resiliency and coping. Those who coped best were those who utilised a range of coping skills alongside key attachment figures. Power concluded a difference between students who perceived their identity as an achiever as dependent on exam grades, and who experienced more stress during the exam period, and students who perceived grades as being 'separate' from them. It was also concluded, in congruence with Putwain (2009) and

Denscombe (2000), that social conditions were important in determining students' perceptions of the importance of exams.

2.4 Summary of literature review

Both quantitative and qualitative research studies have been conducted with primary and secondary pupils concerning their experiences related to testing. However, there are two significant issues related to research carried out to date. Firstly, there appear to be few studies carried out with primary pupils in comparison to secondary aged pupils. Some of the research I encountered was conducted outside the UK, therefore within different cultural and social contexts. Whilst the findings from secondary studies are important in their contribution from a developmental perspective, it would be inappropriate to generalise from the experiences of secondary pupils in terms of representing the experiences of younger children. However, it would be interesting to compare such findings alongside the findings from further research carried out with primary children.

Secondly, research has tended to focus on the self-report questionnaire as the main method of data collection. When reviewing quantitative and qualitative studies, it is evident that the self-report questionnaire is limited in terms of the insight and understanding it provides regarding children's subjective experience of testing. Quantitative research does provide us with an indication of how test related anxiety can manifest in children, for example this is seen in Connors studies (2001,2003). Such studies also provide a degree of insight regarding how social factors may exert influence. For example, in relation to primary children, gender is highlighted as a risk factor in Lohbeck's study, however this constitutes only one study which took place within a different culture. Therefore, the need exists for further UK based research to further explore such findings amongst primary samples. A number of secondary studies however have also emphasised gender as a risk factor, alongside school culture, socio-economic status, ethnicity and disability (Hodge and Elliott 1997, Putwain 2007, Locker and Cropley 2004 and Von Der Embse 2012). With regards to the aim of some of these studies to assess the 'prevalence' of anxiety through questionnaires, this may be regarded as problematic, due to issues surrounding the validity of questionnaire responses, and in relation to samples of children being identified

by others.

Qualitative studies provide us with a more in-depth understanding of the impact of testing on pupils, since the methods that have been utilised, including focus groups and interviews, facilitate the expression of views and experiences in greater detail. For example, qualitative research provides an understanding of how assessment influences children on a more profound level in relation to the construction of identity. Despite the small, divergent nature of these samples, similarities emerge amongst the findings. For example, Putwain et al (2012) conclude that their research partly supports the contention that children's identities become defined by attainment. This is consistent with Putwain's (2009) study concerning adolescents (2009). Such findings mirror those of Reay and Wiliam (1999), Hall et al (2004) and Pollard et al (2000) who also concluded that the testing process was instrumental in constructing identity. Furthermore, as Hall et al and Reay and Wiliam suggest, attainment was also found to encompass a moral dimension, in that the children associated performing well with 'being a good person'. The studies by Hall et al, Reay and Wiliam and Pollard et al utilised more than one method of data collection, therefore a strength of these studies is that they enabled findings to be triangulated. However, a weakness of these studies is that the method of analysis used is unclear, and this obscures transparency in relation to the research process. Qualitative studies with secondary students appear more explicit in their conclusions concerning the impact of classroom culture and assessment on pupils. Putwain (2011) concludes that exam stress may exist independently of '*personal disposition*' whilst Denscombe (2010), Keddie (2016), and Power (unpublished) all conclude that social and cultural milieu are profound in their influence upon self-esteem and identity.

It can be concluded that there exists a lack of research related to primary children's experiences of national assessment. Although small and diverse samples make it problematic to make generalisations from qualitative research, there are similarities in findings from studies carried out to date, which serve to triangulate some of the themes that have emerged in relation to testing and the construction of identity. One of the weaknesses of the qualitative studies reviewed in this section is that with the exception of Putwain et al (2012), the

researchers have not been explicit with regards to the methods of analysis used, beyond implying that the themes have been discussed amongst and identified by researchers. Therefore, the process of analysis has not been a fully transparent one, and this prevents the reader from being able to fully evaluate credibility regarding the findings.

2.5 Research aims

The research aim was to explore the way in which the process of national assessment informs children's sense of identity. Phase one of this study aimed to explore children's experiences of school and assessment, whilst phase two aimed to explore how testing might inform learning identities, self-perceptions, and aspirations for the future. This study examined these themes through the following research aims and questions, which were used to explore the experiences of a small number of children.

Phase 1 aim:

- To explore children's experiences of national tests in school

Research questions:

- Are the children aware of taking tests in school? If so, what do children think about having to sit tests?
- What are their feelings about the tests?
- If they experience negative feelings about tests, how do they cope with these feelings?
- What is this experience of stress like for them? Is this experience qualitatively different to other times when they have felt stressed?
- Do they recognise whether those around them are aware of how they feel?
- If /when they feel stressed do they feel supported by others?
- How does they make connections between their emotional states and the tests?

Phase 2 aim:

- To explore how testing may inform these children's learning identity and self-perceptions.
- To explore how testing may inform children's future identities.

Research questions:

- What do they come to know or learn about themselves through their experience of school?
- What do they come to know or learn about themselves through their experience of assessment?
- In what ways do experiences of school in year six reflect their expectations of what they can achieve in the future?
- In what ways do they view tests as influencing their future? How does this impact on identity and self-perception?
- Do they view themselves as able to influence their academic achievements and careers?

3 Methodological and theoretical approach

3.1 Qualitative approaches and epistemology: selecting a research method

When I selected a research method, I reflected carefully on my own epistemological position, since I am aware that as a psychologist, this position is central to informing the decisions that we make as researchers, governing our topics of study and the methodology that we adopt. As McGhee (2001) points out, epistemological position influences research methodology, which within the field of psychology, has in the past been heavily restricted by the focus on logical positivism. For this study, methods of analysis were considered that would be consistent with my position as a psychologist who favours a social constructionist or post-structuralist position. As Burr (1995) points out, such positions stress the dynamic role of language and meaning in structuring our experiences as individuals. For example, language is structured by 'discourses', where meaning is dependent upon context. Burr argues that within this context, structuralism and post-structuralism have become of interest to those interested in themes related to identity, self, power relations, and social/personal change. The relationship between discourse and power has been long documented by those such as Foucault (1972, 1976) who highlight the relationship between language and power. Consequently, this prompted me to reflect further on the emphasis that social constructionism and post-structuralist theories place upon the constructed nature of knowledge and realities.

In relation to the construction of memory, and hence discourse and history, Connerton (1989) discusses the way in which individuals and groups construct identities through the transmission of shared pasts, which are based on social conventions and practices. Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (2002) have argued that social groups within society have differing relations to power, in terms of making their memories and meanings central and defining. Therefore, those social groups perceived as marginalised, have less capacity to project their own narratives into wider awareness or to influence dominant narratives. Therefore, the voices of some groups in society, such as those who possess less power, may be invisible. Children are an example of a group who may be deemed to

have less power, and hence, less voice within society. This is illustrated through Burman's (2008) discussion of childhood and dependency, where, it is argued, debates in relation to the nature of the child, have played a central role in relation to the way the state regulates citizens. For example, Burman discusses arguments that suggest political motivations may exist for viewing childhood as a period of dependency and helplessness.

Approaches to research that are linked to discursive and narrative psychology, would seek to deconstruct experiences in terms of the shared cultural norms that guide and represent them. Whilst such an approach would appear a consistent response to my post-structuralist position as a researcher, I considered that such an approach might also neglect to appreciate children's individual interpretations of the world. Feminist critical theory (Showalter 1979), argues for the importance of creating narrative space where those who possess less power can articulate their experiences, and hence construct their histories. Within this context, the personal voice has the potential to become a political one. This is consistent with Banister et al's (1994) assertion that feminist methodological interventions focus on experience, and emphasise the significance of whose experience is represented and validated. In this sense, feminist approaches have been linked to emancipatory and transformative goals. Feminist methodology is also linked to post-structuralist thought since, as a form of critical theory, it stresses the centrality of language, discourse and power in relation to the research process (Banister et al 1994). IPA as an approach may be considered an appropriate method within this context, since it can offer those with less power a medium through which to articulate and voice their experience. Through the research process, there is therefore, the potential for the experiences/narratives of those who may be considered marginalised, to be projected into the wider public arena.

I reflected that a tension existed between my desire to deconstruct discourse and to identify where particular meanings are privileged, and my desire to give voice to individual meaning and experience. In this research, I have chosen the latter as being more pertinent to my research question. As a result, I considered that a phenomenological approach would be best suited to my desire to give

voice to individual meaning and experience. For this reason, I chose Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an approach.

Howitt (2016) suggests that the main concern of IPA relates to how individuals' experience phenomena, and the subsequent psychological interpretations concerning their experiences. Howitt recognises four theoretical influences as fundamental to informing IPA: phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and idiography. Howitt argues that the significance of symbolic interactionist theory, lies in its emphasis on the dynamic interaction between the social world and the person. Interactions revolve around a process of interpretation between social actors, who treat each other as 'symbolic objects'. Therefore, central to this theory is the idea that self develops through communication and interaction. Howitt's concept of 'fore-conceptions', i.e. a person's prior knowledge associated with being in the world, illustrates the way in which a person's account of their experience reflects an essentially social self, embodied within the meanings constructed through social interaction. Theoretical influences upon IPA are further discussed below under the section on IPA and theoretical background.

According to Smith et al (2009), IPA is an approach to qualitative and experiential psychology that has its origins in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. IPA explores in detail, human lived experience, enabling this experience to be represented in its own terms, as opposed to predefined categories. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p32) summarise IPA as follows;

“IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience. And it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to pre-defined category systems”.

This quote further highlights the explicit emphasis within IPA with regards to reflexivity, transparency, and the role of the researcher. These concepts are emphasised by Banister et al (1994) as central to feminist conceptions of research and methodology. One of my intentions in the discussion, was to

contextualise these individual experiences within the culture of school and education. In doing so, I aimed to utilise social constructionist perspectives of knowledge. It could be argued that IPA neither fits strictly with a social constructionist or positivist position, in that whilst it suggests people have different experiences of the world, it does not acknowledge that particular interpretations are privileged.

3.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: theoretical background

In discussing the theoretical influences on IPA, Smith et al (2009) discuss the way in which IPA constitutes an idiographic, as opposed to a nomothetic approach. For example, there is focus on detail and depth of analysis in IPA, in relation to understanding how phenomena have been understood from a particular perspective or context. A focus on the individual may later progress to generalisations being made concerning the phenomena of interest, whilst simultaneously acknowledging similarities and differences on an individual level.

Within phenomenology, Husserl's (1927) emphasis on reflexivity is central to understanding the process of IPA. Husserl argued that we need to adopt a reflexive position by stepping outside our 'natural attitude', and adopting a 'phenomenological attitude', to examine everyday experience. Through the process of reflection, we connect with subjective experiences, since we become conscious of them. Husserl referred to a reflexive process called 'bracketing', to describe the process whereby we put aside our taken for granted immersion in everyday life and focus on what we are perceiving in the world. Smith et al (2009) suggest that the concept of bracketing is significant for the IPA researcher who must be aware of the way in which scientific constructs require bracketing, since they can serve as a barrier/bias for accessing others' experience. Similarly, the researcher's own knowledge, values and expectations may also serve as a barrier to accessing the subjective experience of another, and need to be bracketed where appropriate. The work of Husserl was further developed by those such as Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Sartre, who emphasised the role of interpretation, stressing the uniqueness of each persons' experience in relation to their position to the world (Smith et al 2009).

In relation to hermeneutics, Howitt (2016) discusses Heidegger's idea that the interpretation of any text is influenced by the person who carries out the interpretation. Smith (2004) used the term 'double hermeneutics' to refer to the process whereby the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant's attempts to make sense of the world. It is acknowledged that the participant's interpretation reflects their experiences of their being within the world, and Howitt uses the term 'fore-conceptions' to refer to the person's prior knowledge associated with their being in the world. Therefore, the researcher attempts to understand the participant's account of their experiences from a critical and reflexive position. Smith et al (2009) discuss the concept of the 'hermeneutic cycle', a concept which stresses a dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, on a multitude of levels, and characterised by a non-linear style of thought. Smith et al argue that this cycle is a helpful way to approach method within IPA, and reflects the way that researchers may move back and forth between a range of different ways of examining data.

3.1.2 Critique of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Hardy and Hobbs (2017) point out that due to its idiographic focus, IPA is time consuming, therefore normally a small number of cases are studied. Smith et al (2009) suggest a sample size of between four to ten interviews for professional doctorates and discuss the time-consuming nature of qualitative research. An advantage of having a small sample is that this facilitates the in-depth immersion within the data that is required of IPA.

Howitt (2016) points out that interpretation is not a straightforward process; for example, the progression from the narrative account to the psychological interpretation can often present as a difficult one, despite having a well-defined process to follow. This raises the issue of subjectivity in relation to interpreter response, and the likelihood that different researchers may 'make sense' of what is presented to them in different ways.

Murray and Holmes (2013) point out that the aim of phenomenological approaches is to represent 'lived experience', though this is not a straightforward process. For example, there may exist the assumption that the

account or narrative given by a person is a direct account of 'lived experience'. Any account or narrative is always transformed by time and reflection. Murray and Holmes suggest that the self does not exist as it once did when it initially experienced the phenomena. This is particularly the case if the experience was traumatic, since the person is likely to have processed and reworked the experience in the interim. If one adopts a psychoanalytic perspective, the impact of defence mechanisms could be seen to result in the narrative given of an account being significantly modified to the extent that the initial experience has been mediated or censored.

Various methodological approaches were considered regarding data analysis for this study. For instance, Hardy and Majors (2017) highlight the range of narrative approaches available for qualitative research, and comment that narrative approaches can be organised into various methodologies that reflect the researcher's philosophical position. For example, social constructionist researchers may utilise techniques related to discursive psychology, for example discourse analysis and conversational analysis. I reflected that the key focus of discursive techniques would be upon language and meaning within a wider cultural context, and that there would be less focus on how meaning is interpreted and constructed by the individual. Hardy and Majors comment that alternative narrative approaches utilise semi-structured interview methods, and give examples of grounded theory, a social constructionist approach, and IPA, a phenomenological approach situated within a critical realist position. I considered the use of grounded theory, however decided that this was not a suitable method for this study since it seeks to construct an explanatory, theoretical account (Smith et al 2009). As there is little qualitative research carried out in relation to this age group and topic, I decided that a phenomenological approach such as IPA would be more appropriate, as the focus would be on articulating children's experiences. Further future research might then utilise grounded theory to construct a theoretical account of these experiences. An alternative phenomenological approach was also considered, for example the approach outlined by Giorgi and Giorgi (2008). This approach is described by Smith et al (2009) as descriptive rather than interpretative, and one which aims to identify commonality of experience. This contrasts with the IPA approach, which is

interpretative, and through the concept of the double hermeneutic, acknowledges the role of interpretation and hence researcher reflexivity in the research process. In addition, IPA seeks to illustrate both commonality and diversity of experience. I therefore felt that IPA would offer the most suitable approach for data analysis, since it focuses upon individual experience in relation to a particular phenomena, emphasises the role of interpretation and reflexivity, whilst acknowledging both commonality and diversity of experience.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Overview of recruitment

A Likert scale questionnaire designed to measure the value placed on assessment versus learning was given to nine schools within the catchment area of the EPS where I was on placement as a trainee Educational Psychologist. Following this, two schools were identified as having contrasting views, and both agreed to participate further in the study. I met with the SENCo at each school and six children from each school were identified to take part, including three children from years 1/2 and three from year six. Following this, eleven children (one child was unwell) were interviewed on two occasions; immediately prior to the summer holidays and during the Autumn term. The interviews generated a large amount of data, too much to analyse within the research time frame. Data from a total of six of the children, five from year six and one from year two were analysed using IPA, and the findings were written up using a theme led approach.

3.2.2 Selection of schools to participate through questionnaire

The schools that participated in this study were selected from the catchment area of the educational psychology service where I was on placement as a trainee educational psychologist. The two schools who participated in this study are based in an area described by the 2011 census archives as having a larger proportion of people born in England (95.4%) than in the surrounding borough and the north east of England in general (Office of National Statistics archives).

As part of the initial design, selection of schools and participants was completed through use of a Likert scale (see Appendix A) which aimed to identify the school's orientation to assessment and testing. The aim of this was to use the Likert scale to enable comparison to be made across schools in relation to potential differences in school values and ethos. This aspect of the study however became impractical over time and was not further pursued. The process that was completed however, is outlined below.

Within the questionnaire, school values were to be indicated by whether the school prioritised assessment above learning, or learning above assessment (Appendix A). Schools were contacted that had been rated either 'outstanding' or 'good' by Ofsted. The initial aim had been to contact schools rated as either 'outstanding' or 'in need of improvement' with the aim of making comparisons of findings across the schools. However, there was only one school rated as 'in need of improvement', and I was advised not to contact them by the service in which I was based, as there was a problematic relationship between the service and the school. Twelve schools known to the educational psychology Service were approached and invited to take part in the study.

I emailed head teachers and deputy head teachers initially inviting them to participate, and I attached an information sheet concerning the study (see Appendix H). The following week I telephoned those schools I had not heard back from. Nine schools agreed to participate and complete the questionnaire. To facilitate engagement, I made appointments over the telephone to visit the head teachers and deputy head teachers to complete the questionnaires. I explained that the process of completing the questionnaire would take approximately ten minutes, and all agreed. I then visited each school, met with the relevant staff privately, and asked them to complete the questionnaire while I waited. Each questionnaire had been numbered at the top of the page, and staff were advised that this number corresponded with a list I kept in a separate notebook, in order that two schools could later be selected and invited to participate further in the study. The staff were informed that I was the only person who had access to this information alongside my research supervisors.

After I had gathered the questionnaire data I examined this by 'eyeballing' the

questionnaires, and this allowed me to select the two schools (numbered two and eight) that demonstrated the greatest contrast in their responses to questionnaire item. This contrast in responses related most significantly to two questionnaire items, numbers one and four. For question one, these schools selected different responses to the question 'What is the highest priority when assessing practice in this school?' School number two, selected the response 'Promoting interest and motivation to learn has more priority than attainment in national assessment'. In contrast, school number eight, selected the response 'Attainment in national assessment has the same priority as promoting interest and motivation to learn'. In response to question four, 'To what extent do you feel the school's summative assessment results (raw performance data) reflect the quality of the school?'; on a Likert scale where 1 represented 'not at all' and 7 represented 'completely', school number two gave a rating of two, and school number eight gave a rating of seven. In addition, a lesser difference was detected in the school's responses to question three which was rated on a continuum graded 1-7: 'The results of assessments in this school are most helpful for': 'understanding children's learning needs' (1) and 'providing information about the effectiveness of teaching' (7). School number two rated two, and school number eight rated 3.5. This data and selection interpretation was discussed with my supervisors who agreed with my interpretation and decision.

Therefore, in summary, two schools with contrasting views participated in the study. The most notable differences were that one school gave equal priority to attainment in national assessment and promoting interest and learning, with a view that assessment completely reflects the quality of the school. In contrast, the second school viewed promoting interest and motivation to learn as having more value than national assessment, and held a strong view that school assessment does not reflect the quality of the school.

One of the schools that participated was a school in which I worked as a trainee. I telephoned both schools, and both agreed to participate. Appointments were made with the SENCOs to visit and discuss selection of the children who would be invited to participate further in the study by taking part in semi-structured interviews. The SENCOs were provided with the information

sheets and consent forms for both parents and children (see Appendices I, J and K) which were emailed to them. Dates were arranged over the telephone for me to return and initiate the interviews.

3.2.3 Selection of participants

Discussions took place with the SENCo at each school and we identified children together. I explained that I hoped to recruit children who differed in cognitive, social and emotional characteristics. It was anticipated that some participants would withdraw from the study. In each school, we identified the following:

- Six children in total; three year six and three year one/two children who had taken/retaken the phonics test. This data is summarised in Table 1 below.
- A child within each year range considered to be a high, average and low achiever.
- A varied range of characteristics were discussed in relation to cognitive, social and emotional difference; this resulted in a sample with a range of characteristics. For example; an adopted child who had previously been a looked after child; a child with a physical health problem; a child who had accessed portage; two children who had in the past accessed Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Staff were advised that if they had difficulties gaining consent, it was acceptable to use their discretion in approaching alternative families.

The table below depicts the details of the children who participated in the study: all children except child twelve, who withdrew due to illness, were interviewed.

Table 1: Table showing the characteristics of all the children who were interviewed

Numerical identifier for each child	Gender	Background characteristics	Year at start of study	School	School progress
1	M		6	A	Achieved standard in all areas.
2	F	Past involvement with CAMHS	6	A	Achieved standard in maths and reading.
3	F		6	A	Achieved standard in all areas.
4	M	Social and emotional issues.	2	A	Passed re-sit phonics
5	F		2	A	Passed re-sit phonics.
6	M	Cystic Fibrosis	1	A	Passed phonics
7	M		6	B	Achieved standard in all areas.
8	F	Adopted child, previously LAC. Previously accessed Portage Service.	6	B	Achieved standard in all areas.
9	M	Past involvement with CAMHS.	6	B	Achieved standard in SPAG and maths.
10	M		1	B	Passed phonics
11	M		1	B	Passed phonics
12	F		2	B	Passed re-sit phonics

Table notes

2016 year 6 SATS: Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar, reading and maths.
Standard met = scaled score of 100 or above.

School A prioritised assessment over learning. School B prioritised learning over assessment.

3.3 Interviews

3.3.1 Interview schedules

I planned the interview dates with staff, and the dates fell immediately prior to the summer holidays. I advised both members of staff that if they experienced difficulties gaining consent and obtaining participants, that it was acceptable for them to use their discretion in approaching alternative children/parents for consent to participate. There were some difficulties obtaining consent from parents. Therefore, some of the children who participated represented the children who were initially identified and others were selected by the SENCo as alternatives. One participant became ill prior to the interviews commencing, and was therefore withdrawn from the study, therefore eleven children participated in the study.

Three children from an additional school participated in a trial prior to the second interviews. This school had also participated in the questionnaire, and it was also a school that I worked with as a trainee. I selected the school based on ease of access; for example, the school was a small one located close to the base, and my relationship with the head who was also the SENCo, was such that I could rapidly arrange to visit and trial my questions there. The SENCo and myself identified four children; two from year two and two from year six, considered to be average or high achievers. When I visited, consent had been returned for three of these children to participate.

All children except for the children involved in the trial were interviewed twice. The second interviews were arranged during the Autumn term of 2016, once the children who had transitioned had been allowed time to settle into their new schools. Eleven interviews were carried out in November, and one was carried out in early December.

3.3.2 Phase one pre-interview preparation:

The aim of this activity was to promote general wellbeing and to serve as a protective function if the interviews caused any degree of stress to the children. All children agreed to participate in this activity.

- Preparation involved selecting six icebreaker questions from a tool I regularly utilise when working with children in schools that could be answered whilst playing 'get to know you Jenga'. Each person takes a turn at Jenga, turns over a 'get to know you question', and both answer the question (the questions used are listed under interview procedure). Adults model appropriate responses to the questions. The aim of this activity was to aid rapport building and enable the children to feel comfortable in my presence.
- A well-being activity was planned called 'The Helping Hand'; this activity was designed to prompt children to reflect on who they could talk to if they felt worried or had had a difficult day, and encouraged them to identify what activities aid relaxation and distraction. I completed this exercise with each child, so that the nature of the activity and appropriate responses were modelled to the child, with the aim of normalising the theme of emotional wellbeing.
- There was a participatory element to the research: I prepared laminated cards in different colours, which consisted of a question asking how the child would like to engage with me and a choice of different activities were presented on different coloured cards (see Appendix D).
- There was a time lapse of approximately 45 minutes between completion of the pre-interview activity and the interview.

3.3.3 The semi-structured interview: design of interviews

Smith et al (2009) recommend the semi-structured interview method for IPA, and point out that an interview schedule characterised by open ended questions will facilitate an environment that is conducive to participants feeling comfortable to talk at length. According to Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), two of the functions of interviews are to explore subjective meaning and to explore themes that may be too complex to investigate through quantitative methods. Whilst Mishler (1986) points out that semi-structured interviews may help to voice perspectives not known or documented, and can

hence empower marginalised groups by providing validation and publication of their views.

3.3.4 Design and preparation of interviews

For both sets of interviews and for both age groups, tables were constructed consisting of open ended questions (see Appendix B). Each interview table consisted of questions, each question followed by a prompt, a further prompt, then contingent prompts. As I constructed the interview questions they were discussed with my research supervisors, and I also discussed the questions at intervals with two friends who were both primary teachers, and sought their views with regards to making the questions accessible for the children.

There was insufficient time to trial the questions with the children prior to the first interviews taking place. Prior to the second interviews taking place, I trialled the questions with the aim of checking whether the children could access the questions. The interviews for the trial school/children were conducted according to the procedure below for phase one interview, however the children were given the questions (slightly modified) for time two interview. This data was audio recorded however it was not analysed.

I prepared a checklist for each interview with each child (see Appendix C). I recorded the child's preferences (for example engagement activities) on the checklist. The purpose of the checklist was to ensure that I did not forget any important points for discussion with each child. The checklist also enabled me to remember personal details such as pets/ interests/family details that would facilitate rapport for when I met with the child again.

3.3.5 Overview of interview procedure

The initial plan of this study was to compare emergent themes from data from each school, in order to make cross- school comparison. However, once I began analysing data, it became apparent that it would be impractical in terms of time to analyse twenty-two interviews using IPA. I discussed with my supervisors that since the younger children had been unable to access the questions satisfactorily, it would seem more appropriate to focus data analysis on the year six children, however I also included the one year two child who

had accessed the questions well, and whose data had already been analysed. Following analysis of the year two child and five out of six of the year six children, it became impractical to spend any further time on IPA analysis, and following a review of the data from the final year six child, I reflected that a point of saturation had been reached with regards to emergent themes. Data from such a small sample of children would not allow for any meaningful comparison of findings to be made across the two schools. I also made the decision that a theme led rather than case study approach to writing up IPA findings would be most appropriate.

3.3.6 Interview procedure: interview one (summer interview)

I met each child for approximately twenty minutes and carried out an icebreaker and wellbeing activity; these activities were not audio- recorded. After I had met with all the children for their icebreaker sessions, I began the interviews starting with the child I had seen first.

The procedure was as follows:

- I introduced myself to the child and checked with the child that they understood why I was there. I thanked the child for agreeing to participate and for helping me with my study. I showed the child the consent forms and we checked together that the consent form was signed by both the child and parent (see Appendix I).
- I reminded the child that they were free to change their mind about participating in the study at any time, and that no-one would be cross or upset with them if they did. I explained that I was interested in their views and opinions, and that there were no right or wrong answers.
- I suggested to the child that we agreed on a signal they could give if they were finding a question tricky or did not wish to answer (thumbs down or 'pass'). I recorded the child's preference on their checklist.
- I explained to the child that the interviews would be recorded to prevent me from forgetting what they told me, as their views were important. I explained that nobody else would be listening to the recordings, and that they would be deleted once the research was finished. I showed the Dictaphone to the child.

- I explained to the child that their identity would be protected, and that when I wrote my study up or if it was published, names of children would be changed.
- I explained to the child that what we talked about would be kept private; however, if they said anything that might make me feel worried about either them or another person, then I would need to talk to a member of teaching staff regarding this.
- I asked the child if there was anything that they felt unsure about or wanted to ask.
- I suggested that we play 'get to know you Jenga', and all children agreed. We took it in turns to turn over a question which we then both answered, after taking a turn at the game. The questions were as follows:

- Who do you live with?
- Do you play a sport?
- If you were an animal what would you be?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters?
- What is your favourite thing to do at the weekend?
- What makes you feel really happy?

After the session, I made notes on each child's checklist of some of their responses.

- Following the icebreaker game, the 'Helping Hand' well-being activity was completed with each child. Each child was asked to choose a felt pen and then draw around their hand, whilst I modelled the activity. I explained that we had to write in the middle section of the hand all the things that we like to do that help us feel relaxed or happy. By the fingers and thumb, we could then write the names of anybody that we would speak to if feeling worried or upset about something. I explained that this could include families, teachers and friends for example.
- Following this I presented the child with a card which read: 'what would be the best way for you to talk to me about school?'
- I then placed a series of cards underneath with the following printed

on, which I read out one by one:

- Sit and talk
 - Play Jenga and answer questions about school
 - Do some colouring while we talk
 - Talk while doing a drawing about school
 - Use a poster to answer questions about school
- The child was asked to select their preferred activity and I recorded this on their checklist. The child was advised that they could tell me if they wished to have a change of activity at any point during the interview. I then advised the child that we would meet again later during the morning to talk further, and they returned to their class.
 - The children were then interviewed in the same order I had met with them as above. I placed colouring sheets, pens, paper etc. onto the table for children to use, for example if they wished to change activity. I informed the child when I was turning the Dictaphone on/off.
 - On two occasions, I informed children at the end of the interview that I would need to speak to teaching staff due to things that they had said to me during conversation that had caused me to feel a degree of concern over their well-being. On both occasions, the children agreed with me doing this.

3.3.7 Procedure interview two (Autumn interview)

For year two/three children the interview table was reviewed and reformulated to make the questions more accessible. In addition, laminated resources which consisted of visual images were prepared for all children to facilitate access and understanding of questions (see Appendix D).

When I met with each child during the Autumn for the second interview, I assessed whether the child appeared comfortable/relaxed, and initiated appropriate rapport building conversation to make them feel at ease. I asked the child whether they would like to use the same activity whilst we talked or a different one, and I again left materials out on the table for children to use. I introduced the additional option of Gruffalo puzzles for the younger children, and withdrew the poster option for the older children, since this had not worked

very well previously. I reminded the children of the signal that they could utilise, their right to withdraw, and confidentiality issues. I advised the children of when I was turning the Dictaphone on/off. At the end of the interview the children were again thanked for participating in the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Data analysis procedures

All interviews were audio recorded and saved as encrypted documents. The children were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. These names were chosen by the researcher. It is acknowledged with hindsight, that it may have been empowering for the children to have chosen the names themselves.

I transcribed the data gathered from the time one interviews myself. Due to time constraints, I enlisted the help of an agency to transcribe the time two interviews. The style of transcription utilised by the agency was referred to as 'semi-verbatim transcription'; this meant that every word was transcribed, excluding prompts made by the interviewer such as 'umm, yeah, okay'. All filler words were used including false starts and repetitions so that all dialogue was retained. In addition, pauses of three seconds or above were noted.

3.4.2 Step by step procedure for IPA:

- I carried out data analysis by following the step by step guidelines for IPA analysis published in Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) guide to interpretative phenomenological analysis. The steps taken were as follows: Reading and re-reading: during this phase I read and re-read the transcript, whilst listening to the audio-recording at least once. I made notes of my own observations and responses in my journal, and this allowed me to bracket these thoughts in order that they could be put aside while I focused further on the text.
- Initial notetaking: this stage was the most time consuming and involved observation and note making on three different levels: descriptive comments, whereby key words, phases or explanations were recorded; Linguistic comments, where notes were made regarding the way in which

the content and meaning were conveyed. For example, repetition, tone, pauses. Finally, conceptual comments, which were interpretative, or interrogative in form. A table was constructed for each transcript as suggested by Smith et al, to facilitate and record this process.

- Developing emergent themes: the focus shifted to the notes made, with reference also made to the original transcript. In this stage themes were developed, which were expressed as grounded phrases reflecting the essence of the narrative, at the same time linked to the conceptual.
- Searching for connections across emergent themes: the themes were typed up and cut out, each on a separate piece of paper. Using floor space, the themes were moved around. Themes which represented similar understandings were placed together, and themes that appeared as opposites, were placed at opposite ends. I then moved onto the process of abstraction, where superordinate themes were constructed as a response to the clusters of themes that emerged.
- Compiling transcript extracts: lists of extracts were compiled for emergent themes: these were used for locating extracts when writing the results section, and also to compile lists of supporting extracts for themes (see Appendix G).

Raw data had been gathered from twenty- two interviews, and length of the interviews ranged from the shortest which was fourteen minutes, to the longest which was fifty minutes. Once I had begun the process of IPA analysis, it became apparent that this process was more time consuming than anticipated. Most of the younger children (except one), were unable to access the interviews satisfactorily. Therefore a decision was made to focus on analysing the data from the year six children, however the data from the younger child who had accessed the questions well and which had already been analysed, would be included. Five out of six of the year six children's interviews were analysed. A review of the transcript of the final year six participant did not reveal any additional themes. Therefore, I decided that a point of saturation had been reached with regards to emergent themes.

In relation to the presentation of results for IPA, Smith et al (2009) comment that the 'most orderly sequence' is to discuss each theme in turn, and present

evidence from each participant to support this. However, an individual case analysis approach can also be adopted. I felt that the typical method of presenting IPA, i.e. theme led, to be the most appropriate approach for presenting the results section, since it appeared to me that commonalities were emerging through the process of analysis. Examples of individual transcripts can be seen in the appendices.

Below is a revised table summarising the children whose data was analysed using IPA: this sample differs from the planned sample of children since the majority of pupils are year six, and there is also a gender imbalance in that there are more female than male participants.

Table 2: Table showing the characteristics of the children whose interviews were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Numerical identifier for each child	Gender	Background characteristics	Year at start of study	School	School progress
1	M		6	A	Achieved standard in all areas.
2	F	Past involvement with CAMHS	6	A	Achieved standard in maths and reading.
3	F		6	A	Achieved standard in all areas.
5	F		2	A	Passed re-sit phonics.
8	F	Adopted child, previously LAC. Previously accessed Portage Service.	6	B	Achieved standard all areas.
9	M	Past involvement with CAMHS.	6	B	Achieved standard in SPAG and maths.

Table notes

2016 year 6 SATS: Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar, reading and maths.
Standard met = scaled score of 100 or above.

School A prioritised assessment over learning. School B prioritised learning over assessment.

Regarding the characteristics of this sample of children: two of the children represented here were reported to have had CAMHS involvement in the past; one child had accessed Portage, the home visiting service for children with special educational need, and had previously been looked after and later adopted. I have maintained anonymity regarding the children's names in the above table, in order to help prevent any expectations that may be associated with the children's histories when reading the results section.

Since the time constraints associated with IPA analysis were greater than anticipated, the number of participants whose data I had analysed was not sufficient to facilitate comparison across the two schools. Given the

commonalities observed amongst the emergent data, I felt it would be appropriate to write/interpret the findings in typical IPA format, i.e. theme led, which I anticipated would best reflect the emergent themes across the data.

3.5 Ethical issues

Ethical approval for this study was obtained on 19th April 2016 (see Appendix E). In addition, permission to carry out the study was sought from one of the senior managers of the council within which the EPS was situated.

The BPS guidelines (2010, 2009) were used as a reference point for this study. Ethical considerations in relation to informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, data protection, and protection from harm, were adhered to and have been discussed within the section on procedure.

3.6 Research quality: overview

Regarding validity and the use of IPA, I referred to two frameworks during my research. Both Smith et al (2009) and Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) recommend guidelines by Yardley (2000, 2008) and Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) as useful frameworks for practice. Elliott et al's (1999) recommendations highlight the importance of the researcher acknowledging their own theoretical position and expectations, and argue that this is particularly important in relation to the influence of personal values and assumptions upon the research context. Banister et al (1994) highlight the role of 'personal reflexivity' in relation to research, stating that this:

'reveals, rather than conceals, the level of personal involvement and engagement'.

To adopt this position is to acknowledge the position of the researcher as central to the construction of knowledge, by encouraging the researcher to critically reflect on their practice. Banister et al (1994) argue that reflexivity aims to acknowledge the conditions under which the research is produced, stressing a need for self-awareness and reflection on behalf of the researcher. Within my

research, I have practised reflexivity firstly through reflecting upon and acknowledging my own interests, experiences and values within the introduction section. In addition, as suggested by Banister et al, I completed a reflective diary throughout the research process, with the aim of maintaining reflexivity. Excerpts from this diary have been included in Appendix F.

Smith et al (2009) in their discussion of Yardley's (2000) guidelines for assessing the quality of qualitative research, reflect on 'sensitivity to context'. This includes care taken over the collection of data for example. For instance, the quality of the interview, including rapport building, empathy and sensitivity to power differentials. In addition, ensuring the participants are comfortable and paying close attention to what participants are telling you as a researcher contributes to 'commitment and rigour'. Following my experiences, I am skilled at establishing rapport with people, and am aware that being able to establish good rapport with others enables them to feel relaxed and empowered. Under these circumstances, others are increasingly likely to feel safe to trust and respond authentically. My interview process incorporated a 'get to know you' activity and a well-being activity. I engaged fully with these activities with the children whilst modelling appropriate responses, thereby communicating to the children that I respected and valued them and their views as individuals, whilst enabling them to glimpse me also as a person. In addition, to an extent, I attempted to address the power differential between myself and the children through offering them an element of choice in relation to how they preferred to engage with the research process.

It is argued by Yardley (2000), that sensitivity to context is further enhanced through sensitivity to raw data, which should include in the write up a significant number of extracts in support of assertions made. This provides participants with a voice and in addition, enables others to assess the credibility of interpretation. Within my research, I have included appropriate extracts within the results section, and compiled lists of supporting extracts (see Appendix G).

During the planning stage of my research it was anticipated that a member check would take place following analysis of data. Unfortunately, due to

practical constraints, this was not feasible. In relation to member checks and IPA, Larkin and Thompson (2011) comment:

“Member-checking may be appropriate for single case designs, where the interpretation offered can be traced back to one person’s account. For designs with multiple participants, the combined effects of amalgamation of accounts, interpretation by the researcher and the passage of time, can make member checking counterproductive.”

It is pointed out that peer validation offers an alternative to member checking. In relation to this study, my supervisors have fulfilled this role to an extent by checking some of the transcript analyses that I completed. Hardy and Hobbs (2017) also stress the role of supervision for IPA since this functions as a ‘credibility check’.

Denscombe (1998) suggests that validity can be increased through checking for consistency of themes as they emerge across a multitude of interviews. As the children were interviewed twice, this enabled me to observe a degree of consistency over time, across the children’s responses.

Sarantakos (1997) suggests that ecological validity can be promoted where a study is carried out in the natural environment of the participants. All participants in this study were interviewed in school, therefore it is hoped that this context was conducive to facilitating discussion related to school.

Finally Elliot et al (1999) stress the importance of grounding the understanding in the data. Appendices L and M provide examples of transcripts and the researcher's analysis, thereby providing the transparency necessary to allow the reader to examine the process and the opportunity to identify alternative understandings.

4 Findings: summary

Within the findings section, the themes will be presented as they emerged from the step by step process of IPA described in the methodology section (see table three below). In relation to the research questions, many of the themes are relevant to more than one research question, and tables four and five present a summary of this. Within the discussion section, the research questions from phase one and phase two will be discussed in relation to the themes; to avoid repetition, only those themes most pertinent to the research questions for each phase have been discussed.

The data for the year two child has been included within the analysis for the year six children. I made the decision that this data was valuable, since this child had accessed the questions well, in a similar way to the year six children. The main difference was that within one of her interviews this child did not appear to find the support of teachers/school as beneficial to her learning as the year six children had described.

Table 3: Summary of superordinate and subordinate themes

Support from others	Tests create anxiety	Self- evaluation from feedback	Who I want to become
Testing threatens friendships	Understanding the purpose of testing	Seeing my ability	Achieving my best
Learning through relationships	Tests make me doubt myself	Judging how good I am	I become through wanting and working
Interaction helps me as a learner	I keep my anxieties to myself	Knowing where I am in relation to others	Seeing different options
Disruption to learning relationship			Being what I value
Responsibility for Learning			

Once IPA analysis had been completed, the subordinate themes were linked to the research questions as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Summary of subordinate themes and relationship to phase 1 research aims/questions.

Phase 1/interview 1 Aim	RQs	Subordinate themes
To explore children's experience of national tests in school.	Are children aware of taking tests in school? If so what do they think about having to take tests?	Understanding the purpose of testing
	What are children's feelings about the tests?	Tests make me doubt myself I keep my anxieties to myself
	How do they make connections between their emotional state and the tests?	Tests make me doubt myself I keep my anxieties to myself Achieving my best Judging how good I am Seeing my ability
	If they are experiencing negative feelings, how do they cope with them?	I keep my anxieties to myself
	What is the experience of stress like for them?	Tests make me doubt myself Disruption to learning relationship I keep my feelings to myself
	Are those around them aware of how they feel?	Testing threatens friendships Learning through relationships Interaction helps me as a learner
	If/when stressed do they feel supported?	Testing threatens friendships Disruption to learning relationships I keep my feelings to myself

Table 5: Summary of subordinate themes and relationship to phase 2 research aims/questions.

Phase 2 interview 2 Aims	RQs	Subordinate themes
To explore how testing may inform children's learning identity and self-perceptions.	What do children come to know/learn about themselves through their experience of school?	Learning through relationships Responsibility for change Interaction helps me as a learner Testing threatens friendships Disruption to learning relationship Tests make me doubt myself
	What do children come to know/learn about themselves through their experience of assessment?	Knowing where I am in relation to others Judging how good I am
To explore what implications children may perceive tests to have for their future	In what ways do children's experiences of school in year six influence expectations of what they can achieve in the future?	Achieving my best Responsibility for learning I become through wanting and working Seeing different options Becoming what I value
	In what ways do children view tests as influencing their future? How does this impact on identity and self-perception?	Achieving my best Responsibility for learning I become through wanting and working Seeing different options Becoming what I value
	Do children see themselves as able to influence their academic achievements and career?	Achieving my best Responsibility for learning I become through wanting and working Seeing different options Becoming what I value

4.1 Support from others

4.1.1 Testing threatens friendships

All children said that friends were important, and them being trustworthy and reliable were mentioned by some of them. For example, Lydia comments in relation to how she anticipates friendships to be in future: (p10 A (autumn))

Lydia: I think they would be, like, almost the same. Like, still the same group of friend- because – I dunno. I just have a feeling. [Chuckles].

Interviewer: And tell me what do you like about your group of friends that you would like to stay the same?

Lydia: I can, like, trust them and, we don't really argue.

Children appeared to value other children who they viewed as trusting and reliable, and some talked about wanting these friendships to endure for the future. For example, the value placed on friends being reliable and trustworthy is also emphasised in the extract below from Zak: (p14 A)

Interviewer: And would you have friends in the future?

Zak: I might have the same (inaudible) now.

Interviewer: And why would that be important?

Zak: So that you- you could count on them when you need a job doing. So you don't, like, get- ask a stranger or something.

Two of the children, Katie and Zak, suggest through their comments that you know that people are not friends when they are 'nasty'. For example, this is reflected in Katie's response to being asked what she does not like about school: (p1 S (summer))

Katie: (pause) I don't like (pause) I don't like it when (pause) some people talk about me but and I don't know what they're talking about me; I don't like it then... er, erm, I don't like people being nasty to me (pause) but that's it really.

This suggests that children are aware of conversations amongst other children that are negative, and as a result they may feel the need to keep knowledge about themselves private within their friendship groups. For example, this is illustrated with referenced to Zak's comments (p7 summer):

Interviewer: And what do you think about other people knowing how you've done?

Zak: If they, don't tell anyone else I'm alright with it but if they tell people I don't want to know, I'm like angry and I don't want em to tell em.

Zak's comment suggests that telling personal information to children outside friendships circles could result in vulnerability, and the risk that others could be nasty/unkind. Zak's view however contrasts with Thomas's view: (p7 S)

Interviewer: Okay. What do you think about other people knowing how well you've done in tests?

Thomas: erm, I think it's good cause then you can, (pause) cause if they're stuck and they need help then they can look up to you and know that you'll help them.

Interviewer: Okay.

Thomas: If they need it (pause) and if you can.

Interviewer: So, it feels that perhaps you might, is what you're saying that you might help each other?

Thomas: Yeah

Interviewer: if you're finding it hard?

Thomas: Yeah.

Thomas explains that he thinks it is helpful to tell others how you have performed in tests since this enables people to help each other.

Comments suggest that trust and reliability are valued in friendships, and that care needs to be taken with regards to disclosing information outside of friendship groups. Conflicting views were expressed about what you should tell peers however, as friends might be able to offer each other support with school work.

4.1.2 Learning through relationships

All children commented that teachers help with learning. For example, Thomas comments: (p9-11 A)

Interviewer: How do they help you? (teachers)

Thomas: They can help you by – if you don't understand it, they can make it clearer for you.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that, how do they do it?

Thomas: I mean, just – (sighs) they can do an .. n- normally, you get the info-information from, like, a PowerPoint. (Inaudible) they'll split it up and, like, put it

into a (inaudible) or something. So, it's clearer for you to see.

Thomas explains that if you do not understand something in school, teachers know how to help by making it clearer for you, and they can do this by splitting the information up. Thomas further comments that teachers and parents can offer help by: (p19-20 A)

Thomas: 'Cause they can give you ideas of what to do or they can – they can, like, help you – like, point you in the right direction to getting the answer.

Teachers help by giving you different ideas and pointing you in the right direction, but not telling you the answer. This is also commented on by Katie: (p18-19 A):

Interviewer: ...If you're finding something difficult, what does your teacher or teaching assistant do to help you?
Katie: (Sighs) – (pause) – they help us figure out the answer, they help us – they – they just give us a clue, they – if we got the spelling wrong, they'll write it down or – but if you're on red table – well, I'm on green table. If you're on red table, it has to be (inaudible) and that means you have to find the spelling by yourself. On – in a dictionary. But if you're on green and blue, you- you have to just write it out, what's on the side.

Katie is also aware that teachers help by giving clues, rather than telling the answer. In addition, Katie is aware that teachers support children by organising children into different tables according to ability. There is also awareness that teachers help learning through repetition, i.e. getting children to write things out. Thomas comments that one of the ways teachers help with learning is by getting children to work together: (p9-11 A)

Interviewer: And are there any other ways that they help you? (teachers)

Thomas: They can – they can – they work together. So, that means you can get, like, better – more knowledge out of it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Thomas: 'Cause if you're working together and you've each got different ideas..

Interviewer: Do you mean in pairs or groups?

Thomas explains that completing a task becomes easier if it is done with others, as opposed to being done alone. When discussing how the teaching assistant helped her and a friend cope with feelings before a test, Ellie comments: (p20 summer)

Ellie: Then Miss B helped me and H cope with it cause H was like really scared because (pause) he doesn't like doing reading.

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: And everything, so like (long pause) she helped me and H like.

Interviewer: How did she help you?

Ellie: Like (pause) erm (pause) she would like sometimes whenever we were doing our Big Maths after we'd do a phonics Bingo, like a rhyming Bingo.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: Like it was fun like being competitive trying to win.

Ellie is aware that the TA helped her and H deal with difficult feelings leading up to a test through making learning in a subject that they both found difficult fun, by turning it into a game that they enjoyed. Ellie also comments: (p2-3 summer)

Ellie: Miss B mainly helps me (teaching assistant).

Interviewer: Who does?

Ellie: Miss B because she helps me, E, F, G and H. But she mainly helps H and me like she takes us out to do like erm, our Big Maths, everybody does it, but like we get help with it.

Ellie is aware that some children in school get more help than others, and she is aware that both she and H are taken out of the class and receive more help within the small group that Miss B supports. Whilst describing her teacher, Rachel comments: (p1 summer)

Rachel: She's, really nice, she's very kind and (pause)

Interviewer: How does she help you in school?

Rachel: Well erm, like, whenever, like, you put your hand up she comes straight to you and then like, she's not like 'ah yeah you c' like, erm, even though sometimes you she sometimes has to do it over and over again she doesn't get frustrated that she has to say it over and again, she's like, yeah (laughs).

Rachel understands that her teacher responds to need, and can offer help when she asks for it. In addition, she understands that it could be frustrating for a

teacher to have to repeat explanations however she sees that her teacher does not get frustrated by this. During a discussion about how she coped with stress related to SATs (this theme is discussed in further detail under section Tests Create Anxiety) Rachel comments: (p10 summer)

Interviewer: How was your teacher able to help?

Rachel: (pause) Well erm she just erm (pause) she sat down with me, and then we got to talk for about ten minutes I think it was and then erm, like because we were we could tell them anything.

Rachel understands that one of the ways in which teachers help to reduce anxiety is by sitting down with you on a 1:1 basis and allowing you to talk. Rachel seems to understand that teachers help by being approachable and available, thereby providing support in relation to things you might be worried about.

In addition to an awareness of how teachers can help, knowing who to approach is important. This is highlighted by Ellie when she talks about the teaching assistant (p2-3 summer):

Ellie... I don't really like I do trust Miss X but Miss B is like really nice cause like she sits near on the table I sit at I can just tell her anything.

This suggests that for Ellie, proximity to the teaching assistant might be important in enabling her to feel the level of trust that would enable Ellie to 'tell her anything'. With regards to teacher-pupil relations, Lydia makes the following comment: (p3-4 autumn)

Interviewer: What are the teachers like and how do they help you?

Lydia: They're nice. And I feel like if you like the teacher then they'll be more helpful to you as well. So

Interviewer: And can you tell me more about how they help you?

Lydia: Well, if, like, you're stuck or something, they'll try and help you by explaining it a bit better to you. Like, one on one. So, it's better.

Interviewer: Anything else they do?

(pause) – I don't – (whispers) that's basically it.

Lydia is aware that attitude towards teachers could influence how helpful teachers are. Consequently, a negative view of a teacher could have a negative

impact on how helpful the teacher is. Children also spoke about other sources of support in school. For example, Rachel spoke about further help available in primary school: (p14 summer):

Interviewer:...and is there anything that you find difficult or tricky about school? So we may have touched a bit on that.

Rachel: (Pause) erm, not, a lot, just a little bit of, erm, like, a little bit of maths, but because I've got help by my maths tutor and then Mrs X with the after school club (pause), then, yeah.

Rachel speaks about maths as an area of school work that she experiences some difficulty with; however, her emphasis on 'a little bit' suggests that she feels supported by the help that she describes. When talking about the help available in secondary school, Rachel comments: (p3 autumn)

Rachel:...But there's also this thing called (X)Teams. So, like, if you need any problems, like some big problems; if you're getting bullied; if you are, like, really struggling with the work and the teachers have told you it's something; or maybe (coughs), like, you're sad about something, then they're there to help you as well.

Rachel's comments suggest an awareness that there may be things children either feel unable to talk to the class teacher about, or feel the class teacher may not be able to help with. Rachel is also aware, as with Ellie, that there is a need to discriminate who is the best person to approach for help.

Children described a variety of ways in which teachers help them in school; for example, by making work clearer and guiding them towards the answer rather than telling them, and by encouraging children to work in groups. Attributes that children perceived to be helpful included teachers being approachable and patient, and providing time to talk.

4.1.3 Disruption to learning relationship

In relation to preparing for and sitting SATs, the children described conditions that appeared different to their day to day experience of classroom learning, suggesting less opportunity for interaction with peers and teachers. For

example, Ellie comments on the difference between topic tests and SATs: (P6-7 summer):

Interviewer: Do children sit tests in your school?

Ellie: Erm, not usually, in year well like start of topic tests and end it's like so they know how much we already know about that topic we're starting

Interviewer: Uh ha

Ellie: (pause) but it's not like oh you can't like copy we can copy but it's just like cheating ourselves

Interviewer: Uh ha

Ellie: so nobody really copies like we're not separated tables or anything like we would in the SATs.

Ellie contrasts the context of topic tests with that of SATs, where she describes a formal, exam like process, suggesting little opportunity for interaction with others, as their might be during non-SATs classroom activities. With further regard to the context of SATs, Rachel commented on the number of practice tests that she completed prior to her SATs (p1-2 summer):

Interviewer: Okay. What do you not like about school?

Rachel: (pause) erm (pause) nothing really, it's just that, erm, before the SATS, there were erm, kind of like, we did three to four tests a day; each day until SATs, like, I know that we needed to get practice but I think it was just a bit too much.

Rachel's comment suggests an intensity associated with the experience of SATs preparation, which results in her feeling that this is an aspect of school life that she dislikes, and which she feels is inappropriate. This comment suggests a learning context that is both pressured and detached from that of everyday classroom learning. A sense of isolation in relation to the experience of SATs is reflected in Ellie's comment (p7 summer):

Ellie: .. in the SATs I got taken over the support cabin over there on the field to get extra time.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: Like I could have extra time to answer the questions.

Ellie again describes exam like conditions, and explains how she was taken to what she appears to describe as an isolated area to complete her SATs. This suggests a learning context where Ellie is detached from the people and location she is familiar with. In relation to preparation for and sitting SATs,

children described an experience characterised by a detachment from the familiar, everyday social context of learning. The context described was a more formal, intense, and isolated experience.

In relation to teachers, one child, the youngest in the study, made the following comments: (Katie p29 autumn)

Interviewer: And can you tell me a bit more about what you would be doing? (*in the future*)

Katie: I would be helping people.. [Pause] – I'll help people do SATs.

Interviewer: How would you help them?

Katie: I'll help them by seeing some questions and telling them answers. Instead of them- letting them work by their selves and do it. Teachers are cruel (lowers voice/interruption as someone enters the room).

This comment suggests that Katie is aware of a contrast that occurs between classroom learning and testing, where in relation to testing, teachers do not help children. Katie's comment that teachers are 'cruel', suggests that for Katie, testing creates a climate whereby she perceives that teachers deliberately inflict suffering upon children.

4.1.4 Interaction helps me as a learner

All children commented that families help with learning. Children acknowledged that parents help in different ways, when they are available. For example, Thomas commented (p47 autumn):

Interviewer: And is – and is there anyone or anything around you that you think might help?

Thomas: My parents. 'Cause they're gonna, like – they help- they help me out whenever they can. And also, my brother and sister 'cause I know they'll be there for me whenever I need them.

Thomas acknowledges that his parents help 'whenever they can'. Thomas does not make a direct reference to why his parents are not always available to help him, however in other parts of the interview he comments that his mum is 'always cleaning' and dad works. In contrast, he has two younger siblings who are available when he needs them. Katie comments in relation to her family (p10 autumn):

Katie:... Mummy and Daddy can't read with me because I have to do it when I get straight home when Mummy's not there because she's still at work. But Daddy works at home. But Daddy has to – Daddy's still working....

Interviewer: So, at Nanna's house, Nanna helps you?

Katie: Yes. Because Nanna doesn't do anything. She might cook some tea.

Katie is also aware of the limits with regards to how much her parents can help her. In contrast, it appears that her Nanna has more time available to help. Similarly, Ellie comments on why her parents are unable to help her with school work; her mum is unable to help her, and her dad is normally working (p5 S).

Ellie: I'm bad at spelling but my mam is dyslexic so it's like I can't really go ask my mam to help me it's hard for her to spell to and half the time my dad's not home because he's at work...

Ellie is aware that to help with school work parents must have skills that will enable them to help, and they must also have time available to help. When explaining how teachers and parents help, Thomas comments with regards to his parents (p19-20 autumn):

Interviewer:... Can you tell me more about how they can help you?

Thomas: 'Cause they can give you ideas of what to do or they can – they can, like, help you – like, point you in the right direction to getting the answer.

Thomas explains that adults help children by giving them ideas or by guiding but not telling. Thomas views learning as an active process. The extent to which children feel they require support from parents however appears to vary. For example, Katie comments (p9-10 autumn):

Interviewer: ..Can you tell me what it's like when the teacher sits down with you and helps you with your phonics or helps you to read?

Katie: It's – nobody really helps me to read but my nanna does. She reads with me at home.

Interviewer: So, does she – she does some reading with you does she?

Katie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Katie: Like, she helps me sound out words if they're not there. And she helps me sound out words. And sometimes I get too fast and say words that what are not there. And she tells me that in – they're wrong.

Katie is aware that her nanna knows how to help her. Katie also talks about how her nanna and mum help her to learn her spellings (p2 autumn):

Katie: We don't get a chance to practice them at school. We have to practice them at home. So, I practice with my nanna and Mummy.

Interviewer: And- and do the teachers check to see if you've learnt them?

Katie: No, they don't. They just – they just said 'I hope you learnt them'.

Interviewer: So, is what you're trying to tell me, that you'd like a bit more time to practice before you learn new ones?

Katie: Yeah.

Katie is aware that learning is not always checked and tested in school.

Children also spoke about parents offering help in practical ways. For example, Lydia describes how her parents might help her in response to how she has done in tests (p9 summer):

Interviewer: Okay. In what ways might it affect how your parents think about you do you think? Depending on how you've done?

Lydia: Erm (pause) I don't think there's any, I don't think they'll be like, I don't think they'll be angry or anything but I just, they'll like help me to do better in my next one like they'll give me worksheets that they've made or find a website..

Lydia explains that her parents would help by not becoming angry about her results and instead they would respond by offering practical support. This suggests that Lydia views an accepting approach from her parents reassuring. When talking about the importance of doing your best in school and how families help, Thomas described how, in addition to offering practical support, his family offer emotional support: (p49-50 autumn)

Interviewer: And do they help in any other kinds of ways?

Thomas: It can be, like, mentally. So, if I'm, you know, suffering from stress or that, they can just help me by being there.

Interviewer: And what do they do when they're- being there, do you think, that helps?

Thomas: I don't really know how to explain it.

Interviewer: That's alright. So, do they do anything that helps you do you think?

Thomas: Just 'cause they look after me.

Interviewer: How do they do that, do you think?

Thomas: I don't really know how to explain it.

Interviewer: So, is there anything in particular that they do or say perhaps?

Thomas: They're saying, like, kind things, you know? And if I'm upset or something, they can help me sort it out.

Thomas understands that his family supports him on an emotional level by simply talking to him and reassuring him. Children also commented on how parents offer support and encouragement, by telling them that they are doing well. For example, Ellie commented: (p6 summer)

Interviewer: Okay. Does anybody else tell you that you're doing good?

Ellie: My mam.

Ellie is aware that although her mum is unable to help her with her work on a practical level, she can help by providing encouragement.

It was acknowledged that parents are not always available nor do they always have the ability to help. Siblings and grandparents were also cited as forms of support. Children commented that parents could offer support in a variety of different ways including practical and emotional support, and through an accepting approach.

4.1.5 Responsibility for learning

All children commented that it is important to ask for help if you are finding school work difficult. For example, Lydia comments: (p11-12 summer)

Lydia:...Like sometimes (pause) in maths I sometimes like can't get my head around the something that we're doing but it's once I like once I get extra help then I know what it means.

Interviewer: Okay. Erm, where would the extra help come from usually?

Lydia: Er if I was stuck then I'd just ask my maths teacher who's like the opposite class room to ours and then erm she would just like help me and maybe if I was

struggling she'd give an extra work sheet to help me and or like I'd sit with her and work through it.

This suggests an awareness that asking for help from teachers will result in them helping you to work out the best way to help you to become 'unstuck', and this could be through a process of working through the task together. Thomas commented: (p18-19 autumn)

Interviewer: Is it important to get help in school?
Thomas: Yeah. 'Cause if you're struggling and you don't know what to do, if you don't get help, you're never gonna learn how to do it. So, you're not actually moving forward.

Thomas's comment suggests that if you do not ask for help when you are struggling, you will remain stuck, and this will prevent you from moving forward. This is highlighted further poignantly, in Katie's extract: (p24-25 autumn)

Interviewer:...Do you think it's important to get help in school?
Katie: It is. Because if you don't get help, how should – you won't know the answer when you get older..
Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?
Katie: I don't know really how to tell more about it.
Interviewer: Well, how come it's important?
Katie: How it's important? It's important. How is it? How is it? Because when you're older and you're- and the kids ask you a question and if it is the same question, you won't know it and say 'I'm sorry, I don't know it but..' or if you remembered it, you could've just write it on a piece of paper. But you won't know it because you- if you've forgotten, it would be okay. But if you never knew because you never ask the teacher to help you, you can't tell a child. And the child's then 'you won't know anything'.

Katie's comment suggests that if somebody asks you a question as an adult and you have simply forgotten the answer, then you can be reminded of it, and this is okay. However; if you are unable to answer because you failed to ask for help and therefore failed to learn it, then you will remain in a state of not knowing, which is negative, because the opportunity to ask for help has gone. During conversation about how to achieve long term goals, Thomas commented on the importance of 'doing your best': Thomas p45-6 autumn:

Interviewer:...what might help you to get there, to be- to get a good- a job that will buy a house?

Thomas: By doing my best and sa-saving up.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about doing your best in school? How come that's important?

Thomas: I think it's important 'cause if you're not achieving your best, you're not sh-you're not actually doing your best. So, you're not gonna be able to get as far.

Thomas's comments suggest that effort in school is important, since it will affect how you feel about yourself and what you believe you can achieve. Ellie comments however, that there are circumstances around school that can hinder her from learning: (p5-6 autumn):

Interviewer:...How are you- how do you feel you're getting on with your school work?

Ellie: I think I'm getting on good. It's only, like, homework that's hard. Because I don't really have access to a laptop or a computer. So, I go to a homework club. And then there's the library but I don't really go there because then normally when I get in from lessons, there's no computers left.

Interviewer: Do you need computers for your homework?

Ellie: Yeah because it's all online.

Ellie is aware that she experiences difficulty completing her homework due to a lack of resources, which other children may have access to.

Children acknowledged different ways in which they play an active role in their learning. For example, all agreed that it is important to ask for help if you need it. Asking for help results in teachers offering guidance and assisting you to move forward. There may be implications for not asking for help, in that you may remain stuck, in a position of not knowing. One child also mentioned difficulties accessing online homework which serves as a barrier to her doing her work.

4.2 Tests create anxiety

4.2.1 Understanding the purpose of testing

Most children showed an understanding that tests in school serve a purpose.

For example, Thomas comments: (p3 summer):

I: Okay; so what kind of tests do children do?

Child: Like, SA you're got SATs and then the tests in year 2, and then in every year you've got like end of term tests or when you go up to the next year so they know like how good you are ... erm, just to see how you've improved.

Thomas's comment shows that he understands that the purpose of tests is to demonstrate improvement. In addition, tests are also a measure of 'how good you are' (this theme will be further explored under the section on self-evaluation from feed-back). Following his move to secondary school Thomas comments: (p13 autumn)

Interviewer: What kind of tests do young people sit?

Thomas: Well, you have tests. Like, so a mathematics test, you can have one, like, every two weeks or so. Just to make – to see, you know, like, you're doing well. You can make sure that you don't need to be moved down or something, into a easy route, to make the work easy for you.

Thomas's comment emphasises the importance of tests is to identify whether you are in the right group; however, his comments suggest that it is more important to make sure that the work is not too difficult for you. In relation to the differing nature of tests, Ellie comments: (p6-7 summer)

Interviewer: Do children sit tests in your school?

Ellie: Erm, not usually, in year well like start of topic tests and end it's like so they know how much we already know about that topic we're starting

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: (pause) but it's not like oh you can't like copy we can copy bit it's just like cheating ourselves.

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: So nobody really copies like we're not separated tables or anything like we would in the SATs.

Ellie's comments appear to reflect an understanding that some tests are less serious and some are more serious than others. For example, SATs appear to

be more serious, since the tables are separated out. Following transition to secondary school Ellie comments: (p7-8 autumn)

Interviewer: And you – and you think it (*the test*) will affect..?

Ellie: It affects the grade, basically.

Interviewer: And what do you mean when you say the grade? For?

Ellie: Because when (inaudible) stickers with our grade on it and our target grade. That assessment will affect the grade that goes on there.

Ellie comments that tests act as a bench mark to what a person already knows, and determine targets for improvement. She is acknowledging that there will be different targets for different children.

Following transition to secondary school, Lydia points out that tests help prepare you for exams: (p4-5 autumn)

Interviewer: And do you know why you had to do them (*tests*)?

Lydia: So, that we can be ready for (inaudible) GCSEs in year eleven.

Interviewer: And are there any other kind of tests that you might need to do, do you feel, while you're in secondary school?

Interviewer: I think it's just, like, exams like that. Like, just preparing you for GCSEs.

Therefore, it seems that Lydia views tests in secondary school as preparation for future exams. For her the tests culminate in GCSEs, so there is a long-term purpose of accumulating practice in tests. It seems however, that some children appear confused or uncertain about the test system. For example, Zak comments: (p3-4 summer)

Interviewer:Do children sit tests in your school?

Zak: What does that mean?

Interviewer: Erm, so a test is where you have to sit down and answer questions, a little bit like an exam. Have you had to sit some SATs?

Zak: Yeah we've done SATs.

Interviewer: Okay so did you have to take some tests?

Zak: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay and do you know why you had to do that?

Zak: I don't know; I think it's every year six has to do tests.

Zak, a year six child, initially appeared unclear about what a test is when asked whether children sit tests in school. It is possible that Zak was confused by the

language used in terms of 'sitting a test'. Zak's comments further suggest that he is unclear about the purpose of SATs; for example, he is aware that tests are mandatory in year six, however he is unclear as to the purpose of these tests.

The children's comments suggest that there are different understandings regarding the purpose of tests. For example; tests assess improvement, tests make sure that the work is not too difficult for you, and tests prepare you for future tests/exams. In addition, it is recognised that some tests are more serious than others.

4.2.2 Tests make me doubt myself

Most children described some anxiety prior to sitting tests. For example:

Thomas stated: (p4-5 summer)

Interviewer:.....How did you feel during the time before you sat the test?

Thomas: erm, a little nervous.

And shortly after:

Thomas:If there's a test you sometimes feel nervous cause you don't know how hard it's gonna be.

Interviewer: So, have I got this right? You wouldn't normally feel nervous in school?

Thomas: No.

Interviewer: But more when you've got tests?

Thomas: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So it feels a bit different when you've got a test?

Thomas: Yeah.

Thomas's comments suggest that school feels different during test times, and what contributes to feelings of anxiety is uncertainty around how difficult a test is going to be. Another reason for anxiety relates to fear of 'doing badly'. For example, this is illustrated by comments made by Zak: (p5-6 summer)

Interviewer: Okay; and how did you feel during the time before you sat the test?

Zak: I felt alright and a bit nervous.

Interviewer: Okay.

Zak: To see if I was gonna to do alright or do bad.

Zak proceeded to talk about how he kept his feelings to himself, and then: (p5-6 summer)

Interviewer: Okay. Were these feelings different to how you normally feel in lessons?

Zak: Sometimes, but sometimes not.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. In what ways might they be different?

Zak: So in like a test, a maths test it would be like (pause) I'm scared cause I could do something bad; but in normal maths I'm like I'm easy at this I can really do it quickly.

Zak's comments suggest an awareness that his emotional state has an impact on how he performs. Ellie's comments also highlight that learning and work are more difficult during test times. For example: (p10 summer)

Interviewer:...What do you think taking a test tells you about yourself?

Ellie: (pause) it I don't know that cause the tests are really stressful cause like (pause) you have to remember this in order to do one question (pause) and like I'm horrible at remembering things.

Ellie's comments highlight the way in which aspects of the self can make work more difficult. For example, for Ellie, tests rely on memory; since Ellie articulates that she is bad at remembering, this contributes to her feeling very stressed at such times. There were also comments that lessons outside test times are different. For example, in response to being asked about how lessons outside of test times feel, Ellie comments: (p22 summer)

Ellie: They feel really different like (pause)

Interviewer: What's different about them?

Ellie: More happy.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: Like it's easier

Ellie's comments suggest that lessons outside of test times feel happier and more relaxed because they are less pressured, so the work feels easier.

Rachel commented on the public accountability aspect of SATs. When asked whether test results would affect what happens in secondary school, Rachel commented: (p12 summer)

Rachel: (pause) No, I don't think it really matters if I passed or not but it would, just, feel good if you passed; I was doing about (pause) about 15-20 tests a week (pause) til the actual SATs and then (pause) like just passing it would be feeling like 'thank goodness' where if you fail like it wouldn't matter cause it wouldn't go to the government but, like, you wouldn't be that relieved because you've done all that work and then you get to it you haven't passed and it would just feel (pause, then quietly) not that good.

There appears to be some ambivalence for Rachel around the importance of SATs; for example, although Rachel's comments suggest she is aware that the results of practice tests will not be made public, passing practice tests is important since this will result in feelings of relief. This suggests that the amount of preparation done for tests creates a pressure which is relieved by passing or gaining good results. Failing tests will result in negative feelings.

Comments described feelings of anxiety before tests; examples of reasons for this anxiety include uncertainty over the level of difficulty and fear of performing poorly. There was an awareness that emotional state can impact on performance, and an awareness that personal attributes such as 'poor memory', could also impact upon performance.

4.2.3 I keep my anxieties to myself

Three children talked about how they kept feelings to themselves around test times. For others, it appeared there may have been some distancing of themselves from how they felt, which will be further explored below. It is important to consider that children were being asked to reflect on private feelings, and may not have felt comfortable to be fully open with somebody they had recently met. It was noted that in general, children appeared visibly more relaxed on the second occasion they met with me.

In relation to feeling nervous prior to SATs Zak commented: (p5-6 summer)

Interviewer:...how did you cope when you felt like that?
Zak: (pause) I was alright but (pause) I kept it (pause) a secret so I didn't get no-one else worried (pause) in their test.

Interviewer: You didn't want to worry other people?

Zak: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you tell anybody like adults?

Zak: (pause) no because after the test I was alright (quietly) so I didn't need to.

Zak's pauses may be interpreted as tentative, suggesting that he may prefer to manage his emotions by not sharing them with others. Elsewhere in Zak's narrative there is some contradiction, since he names adults that he would talk to if worried. It is possible that this may have been a response to the well-being activity that was completed before the interviews. It is also possible that children discriminate what they choose to tell adults when worried. This uncertainty is evident within Thomas's narrative. For example Thomas states in response to feeling nervous prior to SATs: (p4-5 summer)

Interviewer: Did you tell anyone? (background noise as game is sorted and put together)

Thomas: About what?

Interviewer: Did you tell anyone about feeling nervous or worried?

Thomas: No, not really. (unclear comment).

Interviewer: You told your mum?

Thomas: A little bit. When I was feeling a little bit nervous. Just a little bit.

Thomas's repetition of 'just a little bit' suggests that he did not share his feelings fully with his mum. Thomas also appears tentative when discussing this, which is reflected in his pauses. Thomas's comments suggest that he may be uncertain about discussing tests, and so he discloses a little, in order to assess the response from his mum. Later in his narrative Thomas also talks about how his family support him when he feels stressed. However, it is not possible to know how open Thomas is with regards to his feelings. Thomas's comments about keeping feelings to himself appear consistent with his prior comments: (p4-5 summer)

Interviewer: What did you do when you felt like that? (*nervous*) How did you cope with it?

Thomas: erm (pause). I just (pause) got on with it and (pause) and, if I could do other tests I could, do the SATs.

Here Thomas explains that when he felt nervous he coped by reminding himself of previous successes with tests. It might be significant to reflect that this

confidence may have been derived from positive past experiences. Children talked in general about different ways that they cope when feeling stressed. For example, Ellie comments when talking about feeling worried prior to tests: (p18-19 summer)

Interviewer: ..So (pause) what did you do at this time when you were feeling like this how did you cope with it?

Ellie: (Pause) erm (pause) if I could find my mam and if she was busy like if I could find her like at home I would just like go to my room or like read or like (pause) make some loom bands or like go on YouTube just to like YouTube you can get lost in YouTube sometimes like as a (inaudible comment) you can like watch every video you see (pause)

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: So they're like funny videos that like get your mind off it cause you're laughing

Ellie's comments suggest she is aware that when she feels stressed approaching her mum may be helpful. However, if nobody is available Ellie is aware that distraction activities help her to take her mind off her worries. In school, children talked about approaching teachers to discuss their worries. For example, Rachel comments: (p10-11 summer)

Interviewer: Okay, so it helped telling your mum and it helped telling your teacher.

Rachel: Yeah.

Interviewer: How was your teacher able to help?

Rachel: (pause) Well erm she just erm (pause) she sat down with me, and then we got to talk for about ten minutes I think it was and then erm, like because we were we could tell them anything.

Rachel's comment suggests that having time on an individual basis to talk to her teacher helped, however she does not articulate how this helped. This suggests that talking to the teacher may have been helpful in terms of providing reassurance for Rachel. Ellie comments on the importance of privacy in terms of approaching teachers to talk: (p30-31 summer)

Interviewer: Okay. If you were worried how would I know for example?

Ellie: I'd tell you.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: But not like around other people. I'd like (pause)

ask you to go out private and tell you.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: That's what Miss B does if you're like feeling worried..

Ellie is aware that feelings around tests are private, and that people's responses to tests are personal. Ellie knows that it is helpful to speak to teachers, and knows who is approachable. This suggests that anxiety around tests might not be a conversation that occurs or is acceptable within classes or amongst peers. Thomas's comments suggest that it might be helpful to tell others how you have done in tests: (p7 summer)

Interviewer: Okay. What do you think about other people knowing how well you've done in tests?

Thomas: erm, I think it's good cause then you can, (pause) cause if they're stuck and they need help then they can look up to you and know that you'll help them.

Interviewer: Okay.

Thomas: If they need it (pause) and if you can.

Interviewer: So, it feels that perhaps you might, is what you're saying that you might help each other?

Thomas: Yeah

Interviewer: if you're finding it hard?

Thomas: Yeah.

Thomas's comments suggest that if children know how others have done in tests, they are able to assess who might be able to help them. It therefore seems acceptable to know how people have done in tests, but not to talk about how people feel about the tests.

Children described coping with worries in different ways; for example, some prefer to keep feelings to their selves, others chose to talk to parents or teachers. Reflection on past performance was one method of reassuring the self, and distraction activities was another technique for coping with worry. It was also acknowledged that telling peers results to enable people to help each other might also be beneficial.

4.3 Self- evaluation from feedback

4.3.1 Seeing my ability

All children could identify what they were good at, and anything that they felt they were not so good at. For example, Thomas (p1-2 summer)

Thomas: I'm good at, maths, and ICT, history, erm,
(pause) science.
Interviewer: ..And is there anything that you're not so good at?
Thomas: er, not really....
Interviewer: and how do you know you're good at these things?
Thomas: cause I enjoy them and I get good marks.

For Thomas, enjoyment and achievement inform him that he is good at these subjects. Others identified what subjects they were good at in school by making comparisons. For example, Zak: (p2 summer)

Interviewer:... so, what are you good at?
Zak: I'm good at maths (pause) and I'm not that good at (pause) spellings.
Interviewer: Okay. And how do you know these things?
Zak: Because when I..when I'm.. when I'm doing maths, er, on the next day I look at the back and I nearly get all of them right but when I'm doing spelling, I I sometimes get them all wrong.

Zak is aware that teachers give him different comments for different subjects, and comparison of feedback enables him to evaluate what he is good at. Lydia comments: (p1-2 summer)

Lydia:... I'm like, good at like (pause) geography and history and topic work and stuff.
Interviewer: Okay, how do you know that you're good at these things?
Lydia: Cause like I'm in the top groups and I get like higher marks than the others.

For Lydia, comparing her marks and progress alongside others enables her to identify what she is good at. In contrast, Ellie comments: (p5 summer)

Ellie:reading is difficult cause like year five sometimes or year fours come up to like dark red and dark blue books which are the top ones and mainly all

my class except for me, H and I think J aren't on there yet.

Ellie describes reading as a difficulty with reference to a comparison between hers and others reading levels, since she is aware that she reads easier books than the others. Katie comments in relation to what she is good at: (p4 autumn)

Interviewer:... And can you tell me a bit more about being good at art? How do you know that you're good at it?

Katie: Because Mummy and Daddy say it to me.

Katie's comment here concerning what she is good at has come from what her parents have told her. Some children also mentioned interests such as sports that they were good at. For example, Thomas: (p31-32 autumn)

Interviewer:...are those things that you're good at?

Thomas: Yeah, I'm good at karate.

Interviewer: How do you know you're good at karate?

Thomas: 'Cause I'm a black belt.

Achieving a black belt is for Thomas, a tangible symbol of skill mastery, and a sign that he has achieved a high standard in this sport. Use of 'I'm' also suggests that being a black belt has become an aspect of Thomas's identity, and suggests a link between achieving and becoming. Children's comments suggest that they develop an awareness of what they are good at in a variety of different ways; for example, feedback from teachers, making comparisons between feedback from different subjects, enjoyment and achievement, comparison of self with others, feedback from parents, and symbols of achievement such as in sport.

4.3.2 Judging how good I am

Rachel made the following comment when asked about what taking a test might tell you about yourself: (p13 summer)

Rachel: (pause) erm (pause) well, whenever I do it, and like I keep thinking about the scores like, what's it gonna be, and then, at the end, of the test, when I get to know the erm question it knows that, erm, I know what it's like, like how good I am or, something like that.

Rachel's comment suggests that she is preoccupied during the test with the outcome of her performance. Rachel's comments also suggest that the process of completing a test is a direct measure of self-evaluation. Katie comments: (p4-5 summer)

Interviewer:....What do you think that tests tell teachers?

Katie: I think they tell them how, how good am I, how rubbish am I, and how not good am I and (pause) and, just how, how I do it because some people do it different ways than mine.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. And what do you think tests would tell your parents or your families about you?

Katie: How good am I how rubbish am I (pause) how if I'm not concentrating if I am concentrating.

Interviewer: Okay. And what do you think tests tell you about yourself?

Child: (pause) oh the same as my parents.

Katie's reference to tests telling self and others how 'good' or how 'rubbish' she is, suggest that she views tests as a measure of self-worth. At the same time, however Katie recognises that whether she is concentrating is important, and she also reflects that the way in which she approaches tasks might be important. For example, Katie's comments demonstrate she is aware that there are different ways of approaching tasks. Therefore, Katie is aware that testing is a complex process, since there are aspects that she can control, such as her approach or state, and there are aspects that she cannot control, such as the assessment of her knowledge. Ellie, when asked about what tests tell you about yourself, commented that a test could tell her she is not good at spelling, which is not a good thing: (p11-12 summer)

Ellie: Cause then you like feel bad that you can't do something that everybody else can (pause) like if you don't pass it's like saying 'Oh well I can't do this and other people can do it'.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ellie: Like you want to feel like you can do it.

Interviewer: Yes.

Ellie: Like everybody else can.

Ellie's comments suggest that failing a test results in feelings of being different to others and as a result negative feelings are evoked, resulting in a feeling of exclusion. In contrast to Ellie, Zak comments: (p4 summer)

Interviewer: Okay; what do you think taking a test might tell your parents about you or your family?

Zak: (Pause) that I've been doing good in school for one thing but not as good, for the other.

Interviewer: Okay and what do you think taking a test might tell you about yourself?

That I'm good at one thing and not good at another; and I could change how I do on the thing I've failed.

Zak has an awareness that tests inform others about progress in different subject areas. Zak's comment suggests an awareness that he believes he has the potential to change his performance in an area where he has failed, for example by learning from his mistakes. Therefore, this suggests that for Zak, there is a sense that tests serve to promote self- reflection and learning.

Thomas made the following comments when asked about why children sit tests and what tests tell others about the self: (p2-3 summer)

Interviewer: Okay. So what have you had to do so far?

Thomas: erm, SATS and just the tests every year.

Interviewer: And do you know why you've had to do them?

Thomas: erm, just to see how you've improved.

Interviewer: Okay (pause/takes a turn). What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? So, for example your teachers?

Thomas: like, how you respond to pressure.

Thomas comments that the purpose of tests is to assess improvement. In addition, tests assess a personal attribute, in terms of how pupils cope under stress. The comments suggest that children view tests as a measure of self-evaluation, linked to knowledge of how 'good' a person is. There exists an awareness that testing is a complex process, for example there are aspects of testing a person can have control over, such as their approach, and aspects that a person has no control over, such as the assessment of ability. Testing may result in feelings of difference and exclusion for some pupils if they do not perform well.

It has been difficult to differentiate this theme from the subordinate theme 'What I'm good at'. However, within this theme the main emphasis is on feedback within school. All the children had a clear idea about how feedback from school informs both self and others. References were made by some of the children

with regards to tests being a measure of 'how good you are'. With hindsight, it would have been beneficial to further explore some of these comments with the children. Some of the children appear to conceptualise themselves using the bipolar construct of good or bad/rubbish. It might be interesting to further explore with individual children at which end of the continuum their focus lies.

4.3.3 Knowing where I am in relation to others

In response to what tests tell teachers, Lydia comments: (p5 summer)

Interviewer:... What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? So, for example what would it tell your teachers do you think?

Lydia: Like they'll know how we're getting on and if we understand what they're teaching us.

For Lydia, tests enable teachers to evaluate children's understanding of what is being taught. Thomas comments: (p13 autumn)

Interviewer: What kind of tests do young people sit?

Thomas: Well, you have tests. Like, so a mathematics test, you can have one, like, every two weeks or so. Just to make – to see, you know, like, you're doing well. You can make sure that you don't need to be moved down or something, into a easy route, to make the work easy for you.

Thomas's comments suggest that the role of tests is to help evaluate whether the work is at the right level, or whether the work is too difficult. The emphasis appears to be on the role of testing as supportive, in that it aims to evaluate whether a person is doing well and coping with the work. When asked about how performance in tests will affect how you do in secondary school, Ellie made the following comment with regards to ability grouping: (p23 summer)

Ellie: Like (pause) like if say the questions they made ridiculously hard then like say maths and I'm good at maths

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: And like they put me in like say the bottom set, I'd be able to do the work really easily. It would be easier.

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: and like when I was sup like when I was supposed to be in a higher group it would like change like, then If I'm in a lower group I would like start thinking that I can

like stop doing the work I used to do because I'm in a lower group.

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: Like sort of like if I'm doing really well at say reading and then I'm say put in a bottom group I think that I don't have to be good at reading then because they work's easier.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Ellie: But you don't really want that to happen.

Interviewer: Uh ha.

Ellie: Cause then you start like (pause) not doing as well (pause) as you use to.

Ellie's comments suggest firstly that she is aware that performance in tests may not accurately reflect the level a person can work at. Secondly, Ellie is aware that the consequences of test results are that a person could be moved to a lower group. Therefore, based on test performance, a person could be placed in a lower group where the work would be less challenging. Ellie's comment indicates that consequently, she believes she would work at the level of the group in which she has been placed.

Katie made the following comments when asked about whether she had sat any tests in school: (p4-5 summer)

Interviewer: Okay, why did you have to do them?

Katie: Because then Mr X and Miss X can see, erm, if I can move up or not and see, erm, if I'm good or not.

Interviewer: Okay. So when you say 'move up' can you tell me more about that?

Katie: Move up is like move up the colours because some colours are higher what I am, erm, yellow, orange, and red are higher than mine (pause)

Interviewer: Okay

Katie: but only blue is the lowest, blue is the lowest and blue is next to me, cause I'm green what's the second lowest.

For Katie, test results determine whether you are good enough to 'move up'. Whereas Thomas appears to view the process of tests and the possibility of moving down as an evaluative process to check that the work is not too difficult for you, Katie's perception appears to be that moving down is an undesirable outcome; she is acutely aware of where she is positioned in the colour hierarchy, one up from the lowest colour. As with Ellie, Katie is also aware of

how expectations in relation to school work differ depending on how you are grouped: (p18-19 autumn)

Interviewer: If you're finding something difficult, what does your teacher or teaching assistant do to help you?

Katie: [Sighs] – [pause] – they help us figure out the answer, they help us- they- they just give us a clue, they – if we got the spelling wrong, they'll write it down or – but if you're on red table – well, I'm on green table. If you're on red table, it has to be [inaudible, 20:57] and that means you have to find the spelling by yourself. On – in a dictionary. But if you're on green and blue, you- you have to just write it out, what's on the side.

Katie is also aware that there are differing expectations placed on children regarding what is required of them depending on where they have been placed in the hierarchy of ability, and Katie is aware of what the expectations are of both herself and others. The comments suggest that tests may serve different purposes including helping teachers to check children's understanding and checking that the work is at the right level for pupils. There was some awareness that tests might not be an accurate reflection of ability. Children are aware of both where they are positioned in the hierarchy in relation to ability grouping, and in terms of the expectations placed on them, and may work to the standard expected of them when placed in a particular group.

4.4 Who I want to become

4.4.1 Achieving my best

All children commented that progress and results in school affect the future. For example, Thomas comments: (p20-21 autumn)

Interviewer: Do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?

Thomas: Yeah. Because when you're getting grades, you can't actually do – if you want to really do a – you want to do, like, a certain job, like, become a doctor, you're gonna need science degrees and that. And if you don't get them, you can't actually become it.

Interviewer: So, how you're doing in school will affect -

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: And can you tell me how come that's important to you?

Child: I think it's important because, like, if you're not doing well, you can't actually achieve your best. And if you – so, like, when – if you're not achieving, you get best, you can't get the best grades. So, you might not be able to do your best in the future and get what you – to do what you want to do.

Thomas's comments suggest he is aware that school progress influences future career prospects, and he makes the point that poor progress is associated with a person not fulfilling their potential in future. Thomas's comments also seem to imply that a person has some control over their progress and outcome in school. This belief is also reflected in the comments made by the children, including Thomas, that it is important to ask for help in school. Ellie makes the following comments: (p12-13 autumn)

Ellie: Because if you want to get a nice and good job, you have to do well, in school. Like, if, say, you want to be a teacher, like I do, you have to be good i-in primary – not so much in primary. You have to do good in your SATs – not so much in SATs because you can improve in secondary. You have to get en- good grades for your exam and then ...

Interviewer: Which exams?

Ellie: I think it's just the GCSEs. And then you can al- you also have to do an [inaudible, 17:07] – I don't know what to – what is before university? Is it college before university?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ellie: Yeah, you have to do good in college. You have to do good in secondary to go to college. Then you have to do good in college to go to university.

Ellie is aware that to obtain a 'good job' you need to do well in school, although she appears confused about which exams might be most important for this. However, Ellie's comments suggest she understands that to obtain a good job, you must 'do good' over a prolonged period. In contrast to Thomas, Ellie reflects that aspects of her school performance she might not have control over. For example: (p21 autumn)

Interviewer: So, the things that you've talked about that you'd like to be doing, Ellie, when you're older, do you think it'll be difficult for you to achieve these things?

Ellie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Ellie: 'Cause it would be hard 'cause of my spelling, to be a teacher. But if I'm – 'cause if I'm just, like, a nursery teacher or something, I don't really have to be able to spell that well.

Ellie is aware that her future career goals may be hampered by a perceived weakness in her ability. Consequently, she is considering an inferior option, to be 'just' a nursery teacher instead.

All the children are aware that school progress impacts on the future in terms of what job they will be able to do. Some of the children viewed poor performance as being within the control of the individual, whilst another referred to a perceived weakness having the potential to hamper her progress.

4.4.2 I become through wanting and working

All the children had an idea of what kind of job they aspire to do when they are older. Most appeared aware that career outcome is linked to school progress, as previously explored. Thomas comments (p20-21 autumn):

Interviewer: Do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?

Thomas: Yeah. Because when you're getting grades, you can't actually do – if you want to really do a – you want to do, like, a certain job, like, become a doctor, you're gonna need science degrees and that. And if you don't get them, you can't actually become it.

When talking about a future career Thomas describes this as a process of 'becoming', which suggests that developing a career reflects a form of personal development. Katie comments: (p33-34 autumn)

Katie: [Inaudible]. I want to be – I might be a dancer or singer or a teacher. I don't know yet.
Interviewer: How does someone get to be a dancer or a singer or a teacher?
Katie: You have to work very hard. But first you have to make up your mind. Then you have to work very hard. Or if you don't make up your mind and you get the wrong job, how you would, you know ...

Katie is aware at a young age (year two) that career choice involves a process of decision making, followed by hard work towards a desired goal. Katie is also aware that indecision or making the wrong choice could be an issue. Lydia comments: (p6 autumn)

Interviewer: And do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?
Lydia: Yeah. Because if you don't do as well in your exams, then you might not get as good job- like, a good job as much as you wanted to. So, you might not get the job that you wanted to in the first place.
Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?
Lydia: 'Cause if you, like, wanted to have a certain job for like, ages [inaudible, 07:24], then you might not be able to get it if you don't do well in your exams.

Lydia comments on how performance may prevent you from achieving your first choice of job, and her comments also suggest that there is a significant lapse of time between deciding on a job and finally realising this ambition.

4.4.3 Seeing different options

During a discussion about hobbies Lydia comments: (p10-11 autumn)

Interviewer:... And so, do you think you'd do those things at weekends or ...
Lydia: Well, it depends. 'Cause if I don't – if I'm, like, not a teacher then I'd probably just be a coach. Hmm. Yeah.

Lydia reflects that if she is unable to pursue her desired job, she has an alternative. The alternative is a career in a sport that she has learnt since

young. Ellie's comments further illustrate this process taking place, when discussing her future: (p21 autumn)

Ellie: 'Cause it would be hard 'cause of my spelling, to be a teacher. But if I'm – 'cause if I'm just, like, a nursery teacher or something, I don't really have to be able to spell that well. 'Cause I- I like working with – 'cause I have – you know, and I have cousins and everything. So, I – I would – I am good with X (names child) and everything. So, I can, like, handle [inaudible, 29:08] big tantrums 'cause X (sister) has them, X (cousin) has them. X (cousin) is one.

Ellie believes that a perceived weakness may prevent a person from achieving their ideal job and therefore she has reflected on the need to negotiate a compromise. Both Ellie and Lydia's use of 'just' suggests they may view their alternative as an inferior outcome. Ellie reflects on her experience of dealing with small children, and this experience appears to provide her with reassurance that becoming a nursery teacher might be a realistic option for her. Experience therefore seems to provide reassurance in relation to skills and confidence within a particular area, which might be valuable in relation to a job. This is also relevant to Lydia's comment about coaching, i.e. it is an area in which she has developed skills and knowledge over time. Similarly, when asked what he would wish for in future, Zak comments: (p19 autumn)

Zak: Well, like, it would be so I could be a footballer. So, I- I don't, like, stop wanting to be a footballer.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why that's important for you?

Zak: Because if you want to be a di- if you want to get a different job, you might not be able to because you might not, like, know as much as you should be- should know, to get that job. So, you've got to stick with one job for your whole life so, you- you might get the job.

Zak's comments suggest that acquiring knowledge takes time, therefore working towards goals takes time. Determination and commitment when working towards a desired goal are also important. Amongst the year six children, all commented in response to the magic wand question, that they would wish to have their desired career choice. This suggests that career choice is of high significance for children in terms of thoughts about the future.

Ellie reflects in some detail about the role of personal attributes in relation to career choice. For example: (p14 autumn)

Interviewer: What kind of person do you think you'll be?

Ellie: A nice person.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Ellie: [Pause] – well, you have to be nice to be a teacher anyway. Because if you're not a nice teacher, nobody's gonna like you.... because if you're really kind, everybody's gonna like you as a teacher. And, like, you – I would have to, like – you would have to help them. Like, help the students. So, you would have to have patience as well.

Interviewer: [Pause] – and how come patience is important?

Ellie: Because if you're not patient at all and somebody is- is trying to work something out and you're getting very impatient, that's not gonna help their learning. If you're gonna be a teacher, that's not gonna help them.

Ellie is aware that personal qualities are required to become a teacher, and she can reflect on the kind of person she would like to become, and how this would be consistent with the attributes required to become a teacher. For example, Ellie comments that she would like to be a nice person; she then comments that teachers are nice, and expands on this with further attributes of what it is to be a 'nice' person, for example being kind and patient. Ellie's comments also reflect her value system, for example helping children to learn is important; to do good as a teacher, you must also have the right attributes to help children to learn. Values are also reflected in Rachel's comments about becoming an author, when she talks about what she would wish for in the future: (p14 autumn)

Rachel:.... And erm – like, being an author would mean a lot to me as well. So ...

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more?

Rachel: [Pause] – I don't know really.

Interviewer: About why you'd like to be a writer?

Rachel: Like, some people enjoy reading and sometimes if I do, like, a small piece of writing then they might be able to be, like – [pause] – like – right, so [chuckles] if I wrote a story and then if I give it to my friends, then they could be like 'oh, that's good' or something like that. And then if, like, I write stories for the whole world to see, basically, then I'm making everyone happy. Yeah, I'd rather bring that.

Rachel's comments suggest she appreciates that work can benefit the self since it instils confidence, and it can also benefit others, in terms of making people happy.

The comments suggest that the children are aware that identification of a career goal is a complex process that occurs over time, and it is possible that performance in school could thwart career aspirations. It is evident that some of the children are involved in a process of reflection; negotiating their position in terms of what they would ideally like to do, and what they might do as an alternative if they are unsuccessful in this pursuit. Personal attributes and values appear to be closely linked to job choice.

4.4.4 Becoming what I value

All year six children when asked what they would wish for in the future answered that they would wish for their ideal job. When asked further about what job the children wanted to do, most of their discussions related to jobs as meaningful, and they referred to values that were important to them. For example: Ellie commented: (p23 autumn)

Interviewer:... if we had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future, what would it be?

Ellie: Probably – I think probably to become a teacher because that – 'cause then everybody will find somebody they like, they love. But you don't always get the opportunity to be a teacher and make a difference.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Ellie: Because teachers make a big difference to children. 'Cause, like, if you're not a good teacher when they're younger and you don't help them, they won't learn. But if you're a nice teacher and good, they will learn and then that will affect their future.

Ellie's ideal job is one where she will be able to make a positive impact on children, and her comments suggest that to be an effective teacher, personal attributes as well as ability are required. When asked about what sort of person she would like to be in future Ellie immediately links this to becoming a teacher: (p13 autumn)

Interviewer: What kind of person do you think you'll be?

Ellie: A nice person.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Ellie: [Pause] – well, you have to be nice to be a teacher anyway. Because if you're not a nice teacher, nobody's gonna like you.... if you're really kind, everybody's gonna like you as a teacher.. you would have to have patience as well.

Interviewer: [Pause] – and how come patience is important?

Ellie: Because if you're not patient at all and somebody is- is trying to work something out and you're getting very impatient, that's not gonna help their learning. If you're gonna be a teacher, that's not gonna help them.

Ellie's comments about her ideal future self appear interwoven with those of her ideal job. Being a 'nice' and a 'good' teacher, might also suggest a link between being good and being capable.

5 Discussion

5.1 Overview of discussion

This study utilised a qualitative approach to explore the views and experiences of primary aged children, since to date little qualitative research has been carried out exploring the views and experiences of this population, and I was unable to locate any studies that had used IPA. The key findings from this study are as follows:

- Learning is situated within a social context and tests create a rupture to the relationships, routine and environment that children are familiar with.
- Children described experience emotional stress in relation to assessment. Some children described a tendency to keep negative feelings regarding tests to themselves, creating a split between the private and the public self.
- Tests informs self-evaluation.
- A process of negotiation and compromise was captured as children reflected on test performance in school and potential future identities.

EPs are ideally positioned to facilitate discussion regarding the above through use of consultation skills, and to assist school staff to reflect on ways in which children can be both empowered and supported. Implications of the findings for EP practice can be summarised as follows:

- Ways to minimise the rupture created by testing.
- How to support the emotional well-being of individual or groups of children, for example through psychoeducation and also empowering children through collaborative working.
- The potential impact of performance on identity and self-esteem, including the use of language related to testing.

This study utilised a phenomenological approach to explore children's experience, and the findings are situated within the wider social and cultural context of assessment and education. The aim is for this study to provide primary aged children with a voice that can be projected into the existing

dialogue regarding national assessment. It is hoped that this will stimulate and support further discussion and research to further inform a critical analysis of the testing system in England.

5.2 Structure of discussion

Within this section a summary of the findings is provided, followed by a discussion of the emergent themes with reference to the research questions in each phase. As previously stated, it is important to consider that some of the emergent themes are relevant to both phases of the research. To avoid repetition, I have discussed only those themes most pertinent to each research question. The way in which the findings support and contribute to existing knowledge will be discussed. Strengths and limitations of the study will then be explored, alongside implications and recommendations for practice and further research.

5.3 Discussion of phases one and two in relation to existing literature.

The aim of phase one, was to explore the children's experiences of national tests in schools. The literature review revealed a lack of qualitative research, particularly in relation to primary aged children's experience of testing. The aims of the second part of the study, were to explore how testing might inform children's learning identity and self-perception, and to explore what implications children may perceive tests to have for their future. Many of the emergent themes were found to answer aims from both parts of the study. It may be helpful for the reader to refer to the table summary of superordinate and subordinate themes.

5.4 Summary of findings for phase one

The findings of this study indicate that children were aware of taking tests in school, and that they possessed an understanding that tests serve a purpose. Consistent with previous research, the children in this study clearly described emotional stress in relation to their experiences of testing. In addition, this study found that there was a tendency for some children to keep their feelings private.

The reasons for test anxiety and the way in which children in the study managed their stress are further addressed.

5.5 Discussion of findings for phase one.

The research questions will be presented in turn and the findings discussed in relation to each.

Phase one aim: to explore children's experience of national tests in school.

Research question:

Are these children aware of taking tests in school? If so what do they think about having to take tests?

The theme '*Understanding the purpose of testing*', demonstrates that children were aware of what kind of tests they are expected to take in school. Children understood that some tests in school were more serious than others, and that tests had consequences for ability grouping in school, as well as long term career and lifestyles. This was evident within the narrative of the youngest child, from year two, who appeared fully aware of SATs, and the potential impact of these tests on a person's learning experience and identity. A year six child commented unfavourably on the number of tests she had had to take on a daily/weekly basis during the period prior to SATs. Different explanations were given by children with regards to the purpose of testing. For example, tests assess whether a person has improved, and whether a person is in the right ability group. On occasions, when children were asked about what tests they had to take and why they had to take them, there was some uncertainty or confusion regarding the test system. Children therefore appeared to understand how they are tested and the consequences of these tests. However, children appeared less sure about how tests differed and the timings associated with tests. Therefore, the children understood the purpose of the tests, but were unclear regarding the sequence and relative importance of the tests. I concluded that in general, children were acutely insightful with regards to the process of testing and the potential implications, both present and future. This conclusion appears consistent with existing literature. For example, Putwain et al (2012) concluded that year six children demonstrated a 'sophisticated'

understanding of the national curriculum and SATs. Whilst Keddie (2016) also reported that children discussed their academic ability and reputation as students with direct reference to measures such as SATs, and therefore demonstrated a comprehensive awareness of the system. Pollard et al (2000) however comment in relation to pupil perspectives, that pupils were 'aware of assessment only as a summative activity', when commenting on their own and others work, and suggests that pupils had internalised the assessment discourse from teachers' language. The children in this study, in contrast, demonstrated more than an awareness of SATs as a summative assessment. For example, the children were aware of both short and long- term effects of performance in tests in relation to ability grouping, career outcome and lifestyle. The children in my study appeared to view the process of national assessment as both summative and formative, since it prompted wider reflection on the self and identity. This is consistent with the findings of Reay and William (1999) who comment that children demonstrated 'unease' and 'discomfort' in relation to what SATs might convey of their learning identity.

In relation to the question 'what do they think about taking tests', this did not appear as an emergent theme within the study. One explanation could be that testing was embedded within the children's experiences of school to the extent that it was not questioned in any depth.

Research questions:

What are their feelings about the tests?

How do they make connections between their emotional state and the tests?

Feelings related to tests are evident within the themes '*Tests make me doubt myself*' and '*I keep my anxieties to myself*'. All except one of the children in my study reported feelings of anxiety in relation to test times. Such feelings were described by the children as 'nervous', 'scared', or 'stressed'. Two children in my study commented on children being in tears during practice SATs. Similar descriptions of feeling nervous, scared or panicky were reported by the children in Putwain's (2012) study, however feelings were not explored in any further depth. Reay and William (1999) provide extracts from focus groups/interviews with children from their study who describe panicking, worrying and feeling

scared. However, their study does not explore the emotional impact of SATs beyond this, and the focus is primarily on self-evaluation and pedagogy. The finding that children experience distress is also consistent with research that has utilised self-report measures. For example, Segool et al (2013), found that amongst 8-11 year olds in the US, pupils reported significantly more test anxiety in relation to high stakes testing versus classroom testing on two measures of test anxiety. Whilst the teachers in Connor's (2001) study reported tearfulness and general distress, rocking, thumb-sucking and reassurance-seeking amongst the behaviours they observed in children.

Existing studies have not explored children's emotional experiences to testing beyond surface descriptions of anxiety. For example, anxiety associated with performance fear is evident within the study by Pollard et al (2000) when children were asked to draw cartoon stories of their SATs experiences. Within the study, the researchers also recounted comments made by pupils. However, none of the themes specifically explored the children's emotional experiences related to SATs in depth. This study in contrast, explored in further depth, children's emotional experiences of testing.

In relation to making connections between emotional states and tests, the children in this study demonstrated a degree of awareness with regards to the thoughts underlying their anxieties. Children in this study commented that they felt worried due to feeling uncertain about the level of difficulty of the tests, alongside fear of poor performance. Fear of failure is also echoed in the studies by Reay and William (1999) and Hall et al (2004). Some children in my study also commented that their emotional state or personal attributes could impede their performance in tests, suggesting that children are aware that performance in tests may be influenced by a complex interaction between what they can and cannot exert control over. For example, one child spoke about having a poor memory during tests which results in her feeling stressed; another child commented that whether she is concentrating might be significant. In addition, another child commented that a subject he is good at is more difficult during a test, due to anxiety over performance. Therefore, the children demonstrated self-awareness and the ability to reflect in relation to the impact of emotional influences on the process of testing.

Research questions:

*Do they recognise whether those around them are aware of how they feel?
If they are experience negative feelings about tests, how do children cope with
these feelings?*

*What is the experience of stress like for them? If/when they feel stressed do they
feel supported by others?*

Through the theme 'I keep my anxieties to myself', this study explores children's experience of testing in greater depth. This is reflected in the theme '*I keep my anxieties to myself*'. When the children were asked whether they had told anybody about test related worries, some of the children talked about keeping their worries to themselves, and/or, articulated reluctance or unwillingness to tell adults how they felt. For example, one child talked about keeping worries 'secret' so that he did not worry others, whilst another commented that she did not tell her parents how she felt, and instead sought physical comfort from them. With further regards to how children coped, some reference was made of talking to teachers or parents who could offer reassurance and support. However, it is difficult to know the extent to which the children disclosed their worries under such circumstances, and subsequently, the extent to which adults were aware of the extent of children's worries. It is difficult to assess therefore, from the children's responses, the extent to which they felt supported by others. Children also described other ways in which they coped with their worries, for instance through distraction activities such as watching You Tube, making Loom Bands or reading. One child commented on reminding himself of past successes in tests.

The children's responses indicate that they viewed feelings related to tests as private, and this was illustrated through comments made by the children in relation to discussing feelings around tests with teachers on an individual basis, or as one child explained, 'in private'. This demonstrates that the children have internalised their experiences of testing in a manner which is highly personal; hence, the reluctance to speak openly, or fully about such feelings. It is probable that children's expectations concerning the nature of support available to them mediates whether they choose to disclose their feelings. Therefore, some children are cautious about exposing their private self to others. This

study reveals that amongst some children a distinction was created between the private and the public self. This is further reflected in the vulnerability that may ensue as a consequence of peers outside of one's trusted friendship group knowing a person's test results, as seen in the theme '*Testing threatens friendships*'. Consequently, this study expands on existing literature by providing a greater understanding with regards to how children experience and manage emotions related to testing.

5.6 Summary of findings phase two

The findings illustrate that amongst this group of children testing creates a rupture in children's learning environment, routine, relationships and interactions. The experience of testing contrasts with the child's usual experience of learning, which takes place within a social context where adults facilitate the process of knowing. A process is described whereby the child is isolated from their familiar learning context and judged on an individual basis. The language used by the children suggests that self-worth is equated with test performance. In addition, phase two captures a process whereby children consider future identities linked to their feedback from testing. This demonstrates that both learning and future identities are influenced by experiences of testing. A process of negotiation was captured as the children reflected and discussed their possible futures. For example, it was found that the aspirations of some children were negotiated downwards, as a consequence of their feedback from school. Theoretically, it is possible that the reverse could happen, however this was not found amongst the children in this study. Therefore, testing influences identity, in terms of both that derived from the current situation, i.e. a learner with responsibilities and moral values, and that which is projected into the future, most notably in terms of a career.

Aim: to explore how testing may inform these children's learning through identity and self-perceptions.

Research question:

What do they come to know/learn about themselves through their experience of school?

5.7 Discussion of findings phase two

In relation to learning in school, within the theme '*Learning through relationships*', children commented on how teachers facilitate problem solving by guiding them towards, rather than telling them, the answer. In addition, one child spoke about the way teachers promoted group working as a method of aiding collaborative problem solving. Another child commented on the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the child and the adult, commenting that if you behave positively towards the teacher, they will behave more positively towards you. Through the theme '*Responsibility for learning*', the role of the child as active in the learning process was emphasised. For example, all children agreed that it is important to ask for help if you need it. With further reference to how relationships help learning, the theme '*Interaction helps me as a learner*', illustrates the way families offered children support on a practical and emotional level. Consequently, these themes summarise the ways in which learning for these primary children has been heavily embedded within the supportive context of adult interactions and relationships. In addition, the influence of peer relationships is commented on by one of the children in my study, who spoke about the value of children helping each other. Reay and Wiliam's (1999) comment on the shift from the collaborative and mutually supportive group work that the children in their study had been used to, towards the individualist and competitive style of working characteristic of SATs. For example, children spoke about not being allowed to help each other as they had previously been able to do, and one child became quite distressed about this. Within this study, the theme '*Testing threatens friendships*', also highlights the potentially disruptive impact of testing on peer relationships. Children appeared acutely aware that tests can result in vulnerability, and consequently, they commented that disclosure of test results were confined to trusted friends.

In contrast to the above, the theme '*Disruption to learning relationship*' summarises the way in which the children's experiences of tests and test preparation imposed a dramatic contrast to the everyday learning experiences the children were used to. For example, exam conditions were described, including changes to the normal routine, and one child referred to being taken away to 'the building in the field' for additional time. This change of routine to exam like conditions, in contrast to the 'the informality of the classroom

environment', was acknowledged in Putwain et al's (2012) study. In addition, feelings associated with being 'under pressure' were related to performance demands and the potential for negative self-evaluation. One of the children in my study commented that he believed that tests inform teachers how children respond to pressure. This is consistent with the comment of another child within the theme '*Tests make me doubt myself*', when she commented that lessons outside of test times were happier and easier. Therefore, testing can be viewed to represent a rupture from what is familiar to children with regards to relationships and interactions, routine and the physical environment. The children were detached from the social milieu of learning with which they were familiar.

Research question:

What do they come to know/learn about themselves through their experience of assessment?

In '*Knowing where I am in relation to others*', children described the process of testing as influential in determining the level of difficulty of work set, and the ability group that a person is placed in. References were made to the possibility of being 'moved down', depending on performance. Two girls within my study, demonstrated an acute awareness of their position within school ability groupings. The youngest child made references to her positioning within a hierarchy, i.e. one up from the bottom, and was fully aware of the different expectations placed upon her in comparison to others. The year six girl also described the way in which testing determines the expectations of a person in school, and commented that ability grouping may not accurately reflect a person's ability. As a result, a person may work accordingly, i.e. to the level of the group (the experiences of these girls are further explored in the paragraph below). Pollard et al's longitudinal qualitative study of primary children's experience of the national curriculum and assessment (2000), found that children were aware of ability grouping by attainment and commented that pupils were grouped in relation to how 'brainy/clever/dumb/thick' they were. The children were also aware, as in my study, that ability grouping defined how much help or support children required. The children in Keddie's (2016) study were also acutely aware of their ability positioning in comparison to others.

In relation to what children come to learn of themselves through their experience of testing, the theme '*Judging how good I am*', explores how feedback from tests influences children's self-perceptions. Many comments were made in relation to tests being a measure of self-evaluation. Whilst these comments could be construed to suggest that the children were referring to their competence within subjects, the language used by the children suggests that this feedback had been internalised by the children in an intrinsic sense. This is evident in relation to the detrimental impact on self-esteem that was manifest within the narratives of the two girls referred to within the previous paragraph. For example, the youngest child (year two) repeatedly commented that tests tell the self and others 'how good am I, how rubbish am I'. In addition, comments made within the narrative of one of the year six girls, indicate that she was experiencing a strong sense of exclusion within school. The language used by the children could suggest that morality, or being a good person, is linked with attainment. For example, in general, the children's language suggests that they are confused or unclear regarding the distinction between being good in terms of their ability, and being good in a moral sense. This could be further compounded by adults, who perhaps do not make this distinction explicit. Alternatively, the children's language could indicate that self-worth is linked to performance.

Existing research also illustrates that testing informs self-evaluation in children. For example, the comments made by one of the children in Reay and Wiliam's (1999) study illustrates this well when she commented that she feared she would take the SATs and 'I'll be a nothing'. Reay and Wiliam argue that children's identities as learners and people were being constructed through the testing process. Pollard et al (2000) assert that for many children the testing process (SATs) was closely linked to children's sense of themselves as both learners and people. Whilst Putwain et al (2012) comment that their findings suggest some pupils internalised the belief that educational achievement is equated with self-worth. In relation to future identity, Dunkel and Kerpelman (2006) in their discussion regarding possible selves, stress the way in which possible selves are socially contingent and conditioned. This is relevant to the evaluative aspect of identity linked with test performance, whereby children internalise feedback from performance in an intrinsic sense.

To return to the year six child in my study who described strong feelings of exclusion (for example this child described feelings of difference in relation to being unable to do what others can do), such experiences were explored in the qualitative study by Hall et al (2004) who examined children and teachers experiences in relation to inclusion/exclusion, linked to testing culture. Hall et al comment in their research on the way that testing and teacher dominated pedagogy defined the school day for year six children, asserting dominance over alternative styles of learning. It was concluded, that lessons can exclude pupils who are unable to work at the required pace during test periods, and who are unable to relate to the competitive and demanding nature of lessons. Children were evaluated depending on how they complied with teachers' perceptions of SATs related demands, and teachers believed that children were free agents in determining their positions within such a context. This discussion is consistent with the symbolic interactionist position on labelling and deviance. For example, Pfuhl (1986) argues that the deviant (or different) self arises as a result of the way people imagine how they are perceived/judged by others, which in turn elicits an emotional response, resulting in the internalisation of others' views of them. Consequently, a person develops a negative self-concept which reflects the view of others. Goffman (1963), in discussing stigmatising reactions of others, argues that the individual is acutely aware of what other's view as their failing. Consequently, possible outcomes include self-ambivalence, negative self-perception and self-loathing.

Research questions:

In what ways do their experiences of school in year six influence expectations of what they can achieve in future?

In what ways do they view tests as influencing their future? How does this impact on identity and self-perception?

Do children see themselves as able to influence their academic achievements and career?

In relation to the theme '*Achieving my best*', all the children in my study commented that school progress and performance in tests determines the future in relation to job/career prospects. This is consistent with findings from Keddie's (2016) interviews with high achieving children, who were acutely

aware of the relationship between education, future employment and material benefits. Therefore, educational achievement was linked with economic security. Keddie links the emphasis on performativity as heightened due to the children's status as high achievers. The children in the study by Putwain et al (2012) also equated obtaining a good education with getting a good job in life. The language used by the children within my study, for example to 'become a doctor' or 'be a teacher', suggests an existential link between achievement and becoming. For example, the children viewed career choice as a state of 'being', and feedback from school was viewed as instrumental in determining such states of being. Within the themes '*Achieving my best*' and '*Responsibility for learning*', it is evident that the children believe they possess a degree of influence and responsibility in relation to longer term outcomes. For example, in relation to the importance of asking for help. One child also commented that children talking, copying others work and 'not trying to think about it yourself', as factors having negative outcomes on test performance. However, there was also recognition by the children that there were aspects of school performance that they did not have control over, for example one child spoke of her perceived weakness in spelling. There seemed to be a consensus that performance in tests was important in determining whether a person would obtain a 'good' or 'nice' job, or the job they were capable of. There was also an awareness that jobs influence salary and hence, lifestyle.

In terms of future identity, obtaining the ideal job/career was referred to by all year six children when asked what they would wish for in future. This was reflected in the theme '*Becoming what I value*'. The children's comments indicated an awareness that career choice is a process that evolves over a prolonged period. This was evident within the narrative of the year two child, who informed me that 'first you have to make up your mind', and then you must work 'very hard'. Similarly, the narrative of one of the year six boys tells us that he believes that obtaining your ideal job may involve a process of acquiring knowledge over the course of a person's life span.

It was evident through the themes '*Achieving my best*', '*I become through wanting and working*' and '*Seeing different options*', that the children were immersed within a dynamic process of negotiating and constructing their identities. For example, the first two themes stress that recognition of a career

aspiration is a goal that is worked towards over time. Within the theme '*Seeing different options*', the process of negotiating identity is made explicit. What appears significant here, is the emphasis placed on personal values, which interlink choice of career with identity. For example, one of the year six children comments on the personal attributes required to become a teacher. This girl reflects that in future she would like to be a 'nice' person, to be 'kind' and 'patient', and comments that these traits are important to become an effective teacher. Another child talks about wanting to be a kind and helpful person, and to make people happy, and links this to wanting to become a teacher and a writer. Therefore, self-knowledge, values and aspirations are closely linked. This may also be considered relevant to the theme discussed earlier, in relation to children's tendency to confuse ability and morality. For example, if a child has internalised a belief that they are 'rubbish' because of poor performance and/or ability grouping, their self-perception is likely to influence what sort of job they feel is suitable for them. For example, they might perceive that they are unsuitable for jobs that require goodness, helpfulness or kindness.

In considering their ideal careers, some of the children reflected and considered alternative options, in case they were unable to achieve their ideal career. For example, two children commented that if they could not achieve their ideal career they would be an alternative, and used the language 'I would just be..'. The use of 'just be' suggests an inferior option. In relation to the alternative option, both these girls discussed options that reflected knowledge and skills that they had accumulated outside of school. For example, one suggested she could become a skating coach, the other a nursery teacher, since she had experience of helping care for young children within her family. Therefore, if they failed in academic requirements for their ideal jobs, they had non-school related experience that they were confident they could utilise. The narrative of another child also suggested that he was considering an alternative option to an ideal career, however this was not made explicit. For example, this boy spoke about what kind of school success is required for a person to become a doctor. He later talks himself about wanting to become a vet. The process captured within this study, i.e. of children considering future identities in relation to feedback from testing, is absent from other studies. This finding expands on existing research by exploring children's thoughts about the future in greater depth, and from this it is evident that the children project their current learning

identities into possible future states of being. The process appears consistent with theory related to possible selves literature. For example, Wai-Ling Packard and Conway (2006) stress the dynamic, temporal and integrative aspects of identity, which are captured through this process of negotiation. Whilst Stryker (1968,1984) argues that identities continually seek validation, and the most significant behaviour lies within the process of confirming identities. In this context, ability grouping and test feedback might be construed as instrumental to this process. Within the narratives of the children in this study, current and future identities are captured and appear to be interwoven. This seems consistent with comments by Markus and Nurius (1986), that apart from providing future incentive, possible selves provide an evaluative and interpretative context in relation to the current self.

5.8 Contribution to knowledge:

5.8.1 Phase one: contribution to knowledge

Amongst this group of children, this study confirms findings from existing literature, that testing results in anxiety. This study extends the finding and provides a new understanding and insight in terms of the reasons for this anxiety. Since SATs are prepared for and sat on an individual basis, this detaches the child from the experience of learning that normally occurs within a social milieu. Consequently, there is a tendency for children to manage their feelings by projecting them into a private self, which is detached from a public sense of self. This split could be seen to mirror the rupture that SATs present to children's usual learning experiences.

5.8.2 Phase two: contribution to knowledge

The findings of this study demonstrate that for this group of children a rupture in their familiar learning environment and relationships represents a sharp contrast to the culture associated with national assessment that they are presented with. The language used by the children in this study suggests that self-worth may be equated with performance. In addition, testing represents a process whereby children are sorted, which results in some being stigmatised. Test results are considered as the children negotiate their view of their future identities. A process of reflection is captured as children consider the options that might be

available to them depending on how they feel they have been progressing in school assessments.

5.9 Strengths of the study: quality issues revisited

Willig (2013) points out that criteria for evaluating qualitative research tend to reflect the authors preferred methodological approaches, and that we should be critical with regards to assessing the appropriateness of evaluation criteria. In relation to IPA, Smith et al (2009) suggest that the criteria outlined by Elliott et al (1999) and Yardley (2000, 2008) offer a broad approach which they consider to be appropriate for IPA.

Within my study I attempted to adopt a reflexive position as a researcher, whereby I was continually mindful of my position as both a researcher in possession of views, values and experiences. I maintained a reflective journal throughout the process (see Appendix F), which encouraged me to think critically and remain mindful of my position. For example, when I had completed my first interview with a child, writing in this journal during the children's break time prompted me to reflect on how I needed to maintain an objective and non-evaluative position when responding to children's comments. As Elliott et al (1999) point out the process whereby the researcher discloses their own values and assumptions enables the reader to both interpret the analysis themselves, and to consider alternative interpretations.

Yardley's (2000) concept of 'sensitivity to context' was previously discussed within the methodology section. Yardley highlights the importance of attention to power differentials. I addressed the issue of power to some extent by reminding the children that participation was voluntary, reminding them of their right to withdraw/to signal if they did not wish to respond, and through offering them a choice of activities in relation to engaging with the interview process. Therefore, I aimed to offer children elements of choice, to promote respect in relation to the researcher-participant relationship, and to promote empowerment. I believe that this, combined with my interpersonal skills, contributed to the quality of the interviews by facilitating a safe, contained space for children to reflect on their experiences. According to Smith et al (2009), Yardley's emphasis on personal commitment to a high-quality interview, constitutes 'commitment and rigour'. I noticed that on the second occasion that I met with the children, they appeared

significantly more relaxed. I was aware that I was also more relaxed, since I was familiar with the process. Therefore, I feel that meeting participants on more than one occasion was beneficial to promoting validity, since if people are relaxed, and if rapport/trust has been established, they are more likely to respond in an authentic manner. In addition, this is also consistent with Denscombe's (1998) assertion that multiple interviews allow researchers opportunities to observe for consistency of themes across interviews.

Smith et al (209) argue that sensitivity to context in relation to the data or raw material, is the most important aspect regarding this criterion. Within my study this is illustrated through frequent reference to verbatim extracts, and through the compilation of tables of supporting extracts in relation to themes. Whilst immersed within IPA analysis, I consciously used the children's own words wherever possible, and I constructed the titles for the emergent themes in the first person. In addition, I discussed some of my initial analyses with my research supervisor to check for plausibility in terms of my interpretation.

This study utilised IPA, a method of analysis which aims to capture insight into participants' lived experience, whilst recognising that the researcher's own world view becomes implicated within this. As Willig (2013) points out, what matters to IPA is *how* participants experience events; it therefore represents a relativist epistemology, whilst at the same time acknowledging that meanings attributed to events arise through social interaction. Therefore, IPA is consistent with my own values as a psychologist in that it recognises that people's experiences of the world are different, and that differences are mediated by social processes.

An interesting observation was that on the second occasion I met with the children, I often felt surprised on seeing them at how young they appeared, since this contrasted with the narratives I held in my mind. This suggested to me that children are likely to be far more perceptive and insightful in terms of their understanding and interpretation of the social world, than adults, including myself, may often give them credit for. Those such as Butler and Green (2007) highlight the difficulties associated with adult assumptions regarding children's views. The assumptions held of children by adults may therefore serve as a barrier to understanding and acknowledging children's experiences, and to being in tune with how best to offer support. This might be considered pertinent

in relation to Burman's (2008) assertions that cultural constructions of children exist which promote images of passivity and dependency. Therefore, in my approach, I adopted a respectful position towards children. In addition, I quickly learnt that children's knowledge and understanding was at times more complex than they could verbally articulate. Therefore, I endeavoured to be patient whilst they were responding to questions; I re-framed questions where needed, and sought clarification from the children when I was unsure of what they were trying to convey.

5.10 Limitations of this study

It is important to acknowledge that the research process has been influenced by my own values, experiences and interpretations as a researcher. As a consequence, there may exist alternative interpretations with regards to the data analysis, findings and interpretation of this study. It is therefore acknowledged that this study represents one possible construction or possible 'truth' amongst others.

In relation to IPA, Murray and Holmes' argument that the representation of 'lived experience' is a problematic one is significant. Since an emergent theme within this study links to the role of emotion and testing, it is possible that the children's accounts of how they felt at such times could have been either exaggerated, understated or modified, depending on the impact of these experiences on the psyche.

It is acknowledged that during the year in which this study took place, there were changes related to the assessment and scoring processes for SATs. Therefore, this study was situated within a year where this change could have impacted upon school staff and practice. In addition, it is important to consider that understanding in terms of findings of the study, is localised to a sample of children within a geographical area, at a particular time. However, despite these considerations, the results from this study are consistent with existing research in key ways. For example, the findings of this study are consistent in terms of identifying test related anxiety as an issue amongst this sample of primary children. In addition, this study suggests some reasons for this anxiety, in that testing leads to a rupture in the normal learning process, and creates a greater dissonance between public and private selves.

There are limits with regards to the extent to which you can generalise the findings of qualitative research. In this study those limits are defined by the similarity of conditions in which the research was carried out in comparison to other contexts. The extent to which the current findings agree with existing research does indicate that many of the themes identified might be found more generally in other children and schools. To confirm this however, some of the concepts in this study could be operationalised, so that quantitative investigations could be conducted using representative samples. This would enable the generalisability of the findings to be tested.

In relation to the design of the study, practical constraints meant that the study did not progress as initially planned. The plan at the beginning of the study was to meet with twelve children on four occasions which was an overly ambitious one given the time-consuming nature of IPA studies.

Difficulties arose in relation to interviewing younger children who participated in the study. I found that children varied developmentally, in terms of their ability to engage with the interview process. One of the younger children engaged particularly well with the interview process, therefore a decision was made when narrowing down data to include her data amongst the year six data, as it had already been transcribed. This prompted me to question the problematic nature of interviewing children, since IPA requires an interview of sufficient depth for analysis (Smith et al 2009). In addition, I found that some of the year six children were more elaborate in their discussion than others, which on occasions made interpretation more challenging.

The first set of interviews were transcribed by myself, whilst the second set of interviews were transcribed by an agency. Therefore, there was some inconsistency in this respect. However, having interviewed the children already, their voices and stories felt familiar to me, and the initial process of IPA, i.e. the initial reading of the transcript whilst listening to the audio recordings, enabled me to experience a continued feeling of connection and immersion with the data and narratives.

School staff tended to provide me with very tight time schedules regarding my interviews with the children. As a novice researcher, this created a sense of uncertainty, particularly during the first interviews, when I was yet to benefit from experience. On occasions, I felt unsure with regards to how long I should

allow children to continue to talk, and when I should intervene. Meeting the children twice enabled me to obtain a much greater depth and richness of understanding.

Once immersed within the process of IPA analysis, I felt acutely aware of my position as a researcher, with an underlying set of expectations regarding what I was anticipating from the children's responses. I attempted to counteract this and reduce bias firstly, by completing a journal of my thoughts and impressions for reflection; and secondly, by attempting to preserve, within my comments on the IPA tables, the children's responses using their own words.

Due to practical constraints, the rapport building sessions were implemented as short meetings with the children the same day as the phase one interviews. I would have preferred that I had been able to carry out these meetings on separate days as originally planned, which would have allowed more time for children to adjust to the research process and to feel comfortable talking to me.

There were times when as a researcher, I experienced some role confusion. For example, two of the children appeared to find our meetings reassuring, and appeared to view me as a source of help and support. On the second occasion that I met with the youngest child, upon entering the room, she immediately informed me that she was finding year three difficult, and that she could not get her number '5' the right way around. This resulted in me briefly talking through a visual strategy with her, which appeared to reassure her and allowed her to focus with me on the interview. Therefore, I reflected, in this situation, that it was justifiable to use my skills briefly to alleviate this child's anxiety and to promote engagement with the research process.

5.11 Areas for further research

Further qualitative research could aim to expand on the findings of this study. Ideally methods of analysis such as IPA and narrative techniques would help to voice primary children's experiences, and to situate such experiences within the wider cultural discourses which construct and frame them.

Teachers' perspectives on ruptures to learning could be further explored, alongside their opinions on how to minimise the impact of these ruptures. Longitudinal case studies aimed at exploring children's experiences through their time in school and as they progress into adulthood would help to further

assess the influence of testing culture on the emergence of learning and future identities over time. For example, further understanding could be sought with regards to understanding the processes through which tests and results feed into the child's negotiated identity and ideas about their future self.

Research should be undertaken that aims to identify schools that show good SATs outcomes whilst minimising test-orientated culture. Qualitative research may then be used to look at the processes and narratives within the school that allow achievement of such goals, with the aim that this could inform practice in a more widespread sense.

One of the children in this study commented on her experience of taking large numbers of practice tests prior to SATs; this could create a steep anxiety curve. Further research could be useful in terms of identifying different school approaches regarding preparation for SATS. For example, comparing schools where anxiety levels are expected to peak near to test times, and those where there is a plateau throughout the year. It may be helpful to compare children's experiences across different contexts, with a view to understanding how this impacts on well-being and performance.

5.12 Implications for policy, practice and educational psychologists

5.12.1 Implications for practice

It is important to consider ways in which the impact of ruptures created by testing can be minimised. For example, keeping things as familiar as possible in relation to the school environment, the language used to introduce tests, and the format around testing. In addition, making children take numerous practice tests might not be conducive to their emotional states and hence, to performance. It is difficult to envisage however, how the rupture in relation to the interactions and social relationships which support primary children, could be counteracted.

Within school children may benefit from increased opportunities to express their views and opinions. This may also help educators to understand how groups of children can best be supported through the process of assessment. Such

opportunities would empower children by offering them a collaborative role in exploring and understanding their experiences, which may result in increased feelings of agency. Opportunities for such collaboration might be achieved through using activities such as circle time, or focus groups to help normalise discussions related to feelings and experiences related to testing.

The findings of this research suggest that to help counteract potentially damaging effects of testing on emotional well-being and hence learning and future identity, it would be advantageous for primary aged children to have increased opportunities for activities related to promoting their self-esteem and well-being in school.

Some of the children in my study were enthusiastic about talking to me regarding their experiences and two children asked when I would be returning to see them again. The youngest child previously discussed, commented that she perceived me visiting as being 'helpful' to her. Children appeared to value being able to talk about and reflect on their experiences. This suggests that a non-judgemental relationship with an adult who is detached from the classroom environment, may be emotionally containing for a primary aged child in school. Children may therefore, benefit from an adult who is detached from a teaching role, for example pastoral staff or counsellors, offering such support. It is important to consider that these individual opportunities to talk are important as there may be a tendency for children to view their feelings as 'private'.

Therefore, further opportunities to support children in articulating and expressing their feelings would be beneficial, for example opportunities to talk about their experiences both on an individual basis and as a group.

Whilst working with the children in my study I observed that the children appeared to enjoy completing the well-being activity, therefore such a tool could be utilised in school for initiating dialogues with children in relation to their feelings and experiences related to testing. Well-being activities can help to normalise feelings and experiences, and encourage children to identify and develop coping strategies and resilience.

Further interventions such as narrative techniques might be beneficial in supporting children on an emotional level. For example, such an approach could be incorporated into English/literacy sessions, and could offer opportunities for normalising emotions and experiences related to testing. This

may also provide a safe vehicle whereby the child can express their views and feelings, and enable opportunities for school staff to sensitively assess whether there is a need for support in relation to well-being, or to gauge the needs of a group of children.

It is important for educators to be aware that there may be a tendency for primary children to confuse 'being good' with regards to performance, with 'being good' in a moral, intrinsic sense. Therefore, care needs to be taken in relation to the language used regarding performance and testing. For example, it should be made clear to children that testing is a measure of their performance at a particular time. However, this tendency could reflect a confusion associated with development, in which children may struggle to understand the influence of context on the meaning of language. Those such as Dweck (2006), have argued that children should be praised for displaying resilience and effort in addressing learning tasks, which contributes to the development of a 'growth mindset'. The implication being that educators should focus on praising effort equally or more so than outcome.

5.12.2 Implications for policy

This study contributes to existing research which raises questions regarding the impact of SATs testing on the well-being of children. A significant source of anxiety for the children in this study relates to the rupture created by tests to the children's familiar environment, routines and relationships. This suggests that testing policy should be evaluated and revised in order to address how best to minimise ruptures to children's learning experiences. There is a need to consider how the distinction between learning and testing can be minimised, so that testing is carried out informally, and incorporated into the curriculum as far as possible. For example, in relation to routines, physical environment, language and staff need to be kept as normal as possible. Therefore, assessment policy for primary school children should incorporate guidelines that reflect this.

Schools would benefit from funding to provide additional resources in the form of counsellors and pastoral staff who are able to offer children opportunities to talk about their feelings and experiences in relation to testing. Children must be

offered opportunities to speak with such staff on an individual basis in private if they choose.

Additional time and teacher resources should be made available within the curriculum to incorporate activities aimed at supporting children's wellbeing and self-esteem. For example, activities such as circle time, where feelings and experiences around testing can be shared and normalised.

5.12.3 Implications for educational psychologists

EPs are ideally positioned to utilise consultation skills, which could facilitate a joint approach to addressing issues in school and also a systemic view of the ethos of the school and the testing culture. However, the difficulties associated with this, are that the testing regime in schools exists as a consequence of national policies that focus on the performance of schools, with the intention of improving quality. This approach to enhancing quality, regardless of any merits, is not one that may be changed by the intervention of EPs. However, EPs could be viewed as a source of support and containment for teaching staff, and through use of consultation, could assist teaching staff to implement supportive strategies for children.

Through consultation work with school staff, EPs could help to facilitate reflection and problem solving in relation to minimising the rupture to children's learning.

EPs could be instrumental in helping to facilitate the views and experiences of children in schools. As a consequence, this would help schools to understand the views and experience of groups of children, and provide further insight into how best to support children, and thereby enable them to feel empowered.

EPs could offer support to school staff in implementing supportive interventions discussed in the previous section. For example, implementing interventions aimed at promoting well-being, emotional resilience and coping.

School staff may also benefit from psychoeducation in relation to emotional literacy and anxiety, and EPs would be ideally positioned to provide this.

Appendices

Appendix A:	Questionnaires for school selection
Appendix B:	Interview tables for children
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Appendix M:	Example of transcripts and IPA analysis
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Appendix A: Questionnaires for school selection

5) Is there a marking policy at your school?

- i) Please circle: Yes/No
ii) To what extent do you think teachers apply it?

1
Never

2
Sometimes

3
Always

6) The following are formative styles of assessment;

- i) Please tick those that are applied in school:
 Revisiting learning objectives at the end of a lesson
 Self-assessment
 Peer marking
 Teacher comments which require pupils to respond

ii) How often are the methods of assessment listed above used? Please circle the number that is closest to your views about school:

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

7) To what extent do you feel teachers are able to provide personalised feedback to children which allows space for children to respond? (eg scale 1-3).

1
Never

2
Sometimes

3
Always

8) Do you think that children read teachers' comments?

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

9) To what extent do you feel pupils apply teacher comments in order to improve their learning?

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

Questionnaire for schools: An exploration of children's experiences of national assessment in schools

Select one of the options for each question for what applies most to your school

1) What is the highest priority when assessing practice in this school?

(read the 3 options and only then circle the number that is closest to your views about the school)

i. Attainment in national assessment has more priority than promoting interest and motivation to learn

ii. Attainment in national assessment has the same priority as promoting interest and motivation to learn

iii. Promoting interest and motivation to learn has more priority than attainment in national assessment

For the following questions please circle the number that is closest to your views about the school:

2) To what extent are children consulted about their learning?

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 On every issue 7

3) The results of assessment in this school are most helpful for:

1 Understanding children's learning needs 2 3 4 5 6 7 Providing information about the effectiveness of teaching

4) To what extent do you feel the school's summative assessment results (raw performance data) reflect the quality of the school?

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely

5) Is there a marking policy at your school?

i) Please circle: Yes/No

ii) To what extent do you think teachers apply it?

1
Never

2
Sometimes

3
Always

6) The following are formative styles of assessment;

i) Please tick those that are applied in school:

Revisiting learning objectives at the end of a lesson

Self-assessment

Peer marking

Teacher comments which require pupils to respond

ii) How often are the methods of assessment listed above used? Please circle the number that is closest to your views about school:

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

7) To what extent do you feel teachers are able to provide personalised feedback to children which allows space for children to respond?

1
Never

2
Sometimes

3
Always

8) Do you think that children read teachers' comments?

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

9) To what extent do you feel pupils apply teacher comments in order to improve their learning?

1
Never

2
Seldom

3
sometimes

4
Often

5
Always

Thank you for completing the above questionnaire. If you have any comments that you would like to add in relation to assessment please use the space below.

Appendix B: Interview tables for children

Table of questions for years 1 and 2 (summer)			
	Question 1	Prompt	Further prompt
Identity	What do you like about school? What don't you like about school?	Do you have many friends in school?	Who is your teacher? What is s/he like? How does s/he help you in school?
	What are you good at? What are you not so good at?	How do you know this?	Who tells you this?
	How are you getting on at school?	How do you know this?	Who has told you this?
	Do children take tests in your school?	What kind of tests do children do?	Have you had to take any tests? What did you have to do and why did you have to do this?
	What do you think tests tell teachers?	What do tests tell your parents/family about you?	What do tests tell you about yourself?
	What do you think about having to take tests?	How does it feel when you get the results of a test?	
	Before you take a test does the teacher do anything to help?	What does the teacher do to help?	Does this help? How does it help?
	Can you remember how you felt before you took a test?	If relevant: What did you do when you felt like this? Did anything help?	Did you tell anyone how you felt? Who did you tell? Were they able to help?

	Are these feelings different to how you normally feel at school?	If relevant: how are they different?	
Future self	How well did you do in the test? will it affect your future?	What do your teachers think? What do your parents think?	What do you think about yourself?
	Does anyone else get to know how well you've done in a test?	If relevant: how do other people get to find out?	What do you think about this?
Well-being	Is there anything you find tricky about school?	Do you ever feel worried about school? If you were worried how would I know? (i.e. what does this look like).	Are school worries different to other worries? How come they're different?
	What would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?	Do you tell anyone when you are worried? For example your friends, family or teacher?	Would they know if you were worried? How would they know? Would they be able to do anything to help?
	If I had a magic wand is there anything you would like me to change about school?	For example: Timetables Teachers Subjects Tests Friends Breaks/lunch time	

Table of questions for year 6 (summer)			
Themes	Question 1	Prompt	Further prompt
Identity	What do you like/dislike about school?	Do you have many friends in school?	Who is your teacher? What is s/he like? How does s/he help you in school?
	What do you like doing when you're not in school?	Do you see people from your class outside of school?	Do you feel part of a group? (small group or a large group?)
	What are you good at? What are you not so good at/what do you find difficult?	How do you know this?	Who tells you this?
	What is your favourite thing to learn about?	Have you always enjoyed that subject or has it changed?	Did you like doing other subjects when you were younger?
	How do you feel your progress in school was this year?	How do you know this?	Who has told you this?
	Do children sit tests in your school?	What kind of tests do children do?	Have you had to take any tests? What did you have to do and why did you have to do this?
	What do you think taking a test tells other people about you; for example your teachers?	What do you think taking a test tells your parents/family about you?	What does taking a test tell you about yourself?
	How do you feel about having to take tests?	How do you feel about getting the results of a test?	
	As a test gets nearer do the teachers do anything to help you prepare for it?	How do teachers help you to prepare for a test?	Did this help you to get ready for the test?

	How did you feel during the time before you sat the test?	If relevant: What did you do when you felt like this?/ How did you cope?	Did you tell anyone that you felt like this?/ Who did you tell/Were they able to help?
	Were these feelings any different to how you would normally feel in lesson time?	In what ways were they different?	
Future self	Depending on whether you do well or not so well in a test, how might this affect how you do in secondary school?	In what ways might it affect how your parents think about you? In what ways might it affect what your teachers think about you?	In what ways might it affect how you feel/think about yourself?
	Is how well you have done in tests kept private or do other people know?	If relevant: how do other people know?	What do you think about other people knowing how well you have done in tests?
Well-being	Is there anything you find tricky about school?	Do you ever feel worried about school? If you were worried how would I know? (i.e. what does this look like).	Are school worries different to other worries? How come they're different?

	What would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?	Do you share your worries with anyone? For example your friends, family or teacher?	How would they know if you were worried? Would they be able to do anything to help?
	If I had a magic wand is there anything you would like me to change about school?	For example: Timetables Teachers Subjects Tests Friends Breaks/lunch time	

Table of questions for years 1 and 2 (autumn)				
	Question 1	Prompt	Further prompt	Contingent prompts
Identity 1	A What's your favourite subject at school?	B What is it you like about this? Is it something you're good at it?	C Are there any subjects you're not so good at or don't like in school?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
2	What are you good at?	Do you have any hobbies? What do you like to do at weekends?	Do you see people from school after school or at weekends?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?

3	Who is your teacher?	What is s/he like?	Does your teacher help you? How do they help?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
4	Do you get on with everyone in your class?	Do children sometimes not get on?	Do people include you in their games?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
5	Can you tell me what's it like when the teacher sits down with you and helps you with your phonics or helps you to read?	Can you remember what you do in phonics? For example can you remember the actions/sounds? Give example, eg ch- ch-ch	What's it like? is it easy or hard?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example?

		(check they understand it's about reading)		*How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
6	Do you think it's a good thing for children to learn about phonics and reading?	How will it help you when you are grown up?	What might you want to read when you are grown up? Prompts: Eg Books/magazines/newspaper Computers Menu Letters signs Bills	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
7	When the teacher/your parents write comments in your reading journal/record what does that tell the teacher? Or: Does the reading record help the teacher or does it make no difference? How does it help the teacher?	When your teacher writes comments on your work or in your reading journal, what do you think about this? Or Is the reading record/journal a good thing or does it make no difference?	Does it help you or does it make no difference?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?

8	What does your teacher/TA do to help you if you're finding something difficult?	How has school helped you with phonics/reading?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
Well-being 9	Do you know what worrying is? (if not give simple explanation).	When you feel worried or sad what do you do? Does it help or make no difference?	Do you tell anybody? For example your friends, family or teacher? Would they be able to do anything to help? How would it make you feel telling somebody?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
10	Do you ever feel worried if the teacher asks you to count 1-20 or asks you to read/do phonics/sounds?			*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example?

				*How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
11	Do you think it's important to get help in school?			*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
12	If I had a magic wand is there anything you would like me to change about school?	For example is there anything you would like to be different such as: Subjects Teachers Answering questions/doing tests/exams Reading in class Friends Lunch time/playtime		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
Future self 13	Icebreaker activity: use of	What would the world be like?	What would school be like?	*Can you explain

	images (time machines): If we had a time machine that could take us forward in time/into the future, what do you think would be happening in the world?		Would it be different? What/how would it be different?	this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
14	What do you want to be when you grow up?	What kind of job do you think you'll be doing?	How does someone get to be a *****? What kind of job wouldn't you want to do? (Use visuals). How come you wouldn't want to do this? Prompts: eg Not very interesting; Too hard; Role specific eg Being outdoors/indoors	How could you become a *****? Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
15	If you forwarded yourself in time to the future when you are grown up what do you think you will be doing?	Where would you be living? What kind of house would it be? Would you be living alone or	Is there anywhere you wouldn't want to live?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an

	<p>Use visual prompts or ask child to draw a picture if needed to facilitate the discussion: Eg could you draw me a picture of you when you are grown up? Refer to further prompts:</p>	<p>with anyone else? Would you be married? Would you have children?</p> <p>What would you be doing at the weekends? What would your hobbies be?</p> <p>Would you have friends? What would they be like?</p> <p>Is there anything you would not like to do in the future?</p>		<p>example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?</p>
16	<p>How will coming to school help you when you're older?</p>	<p>For example, in school you learn to read; what would you need to read if you were at a restaurant/getting a train?</p>	<p>What about getting a job?</p>	<p>*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?</p>
17	<p>How important is it to do well in school work?</p>	<p>For example will it affect what job you will do when you are older? where you will</p>		<p>*Can you explain this to me a bit more?</p>

		live, who you will live with?		*Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
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Table of questions for year 7 (autumn)				
Themes	Questions	Prompts	Further prompts	Contingent prompts
Identity	How are things going at your new school?	What do you like about secondary school? What don't you like about secondary school?	How is your new school similar and how is it different from X? (primary)	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? How come this is important to you?
	Have you made new friends? Have you many friends?	What are your friends like? Do you see them outside school?	Do you feel part of a group?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? How come this is important to you?
	What are you good at in school? What are you not so good at?	How many teachers/ subjects do you have?	What are the teachers like and how do they help you?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? How come this is important to you?
	How are you getting on with your school work?	How do you know this?	Has anybody told you this?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? How come this is important to you?

	Do young people sit tests (or exams) in secondary school?	What kind of tests do you and other young people sit?	When do people sit these tests?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? How come this is important to you?
Future self	How important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?	Is it important to get help in school? Who can help you? How would they be able to help?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
		Do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
	Imagine you go forward in time to when you have left school and are aged 20. What do you hope to be doing at this time?	What will you be like when you are older?/ What kind of person will you be? What do you hope you won't be doing when you are older?	How come this is important to you? Does this worry you?	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is

	(Use visual prompts if necessary)	<p>For example: Jobs/ living arrangements/ relationships</p> <p>What kind of person would you not want to be?</p>	How come this worries you?	<p>important to you?</p> <p>*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?</p>
	Will you have a job?	What kind of job would you want to be doing?	Is there any kind of job that you don't want to do?	<p>*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?</p>
	Where would you be living?	What kind of house would you be living in? where would it be?	Is there anywhere you don't want to live?	<p>*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?</p>

	Would you be living alone or with anyone else?	Will you be married? Do you think you will have children?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
	Would you have friends?	What would they be like?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
	What would your hobbies be?	What would you do at weekends?		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you?
		Do you think it will be difficult for you to achieve these things? (or) What might stop you from doing these things?	What do you think might help you to achieve these things? Is there anyone or anything that	*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this?

			you think might help you?	*How come this is important to you? *How come this is important to you?
	(If appropriate): If I had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future what would it be?	Prompts: Friends/Family/relationships Houses/place to live Job/hobbies Health Happiness Holidays Possessions/Money		*Can you explain this to me a bit more? *Can you give me an example? *How come you think this? *How come this is important to you? *How come this is important to you?

Appendix C: Interview checklist

Date:

School:

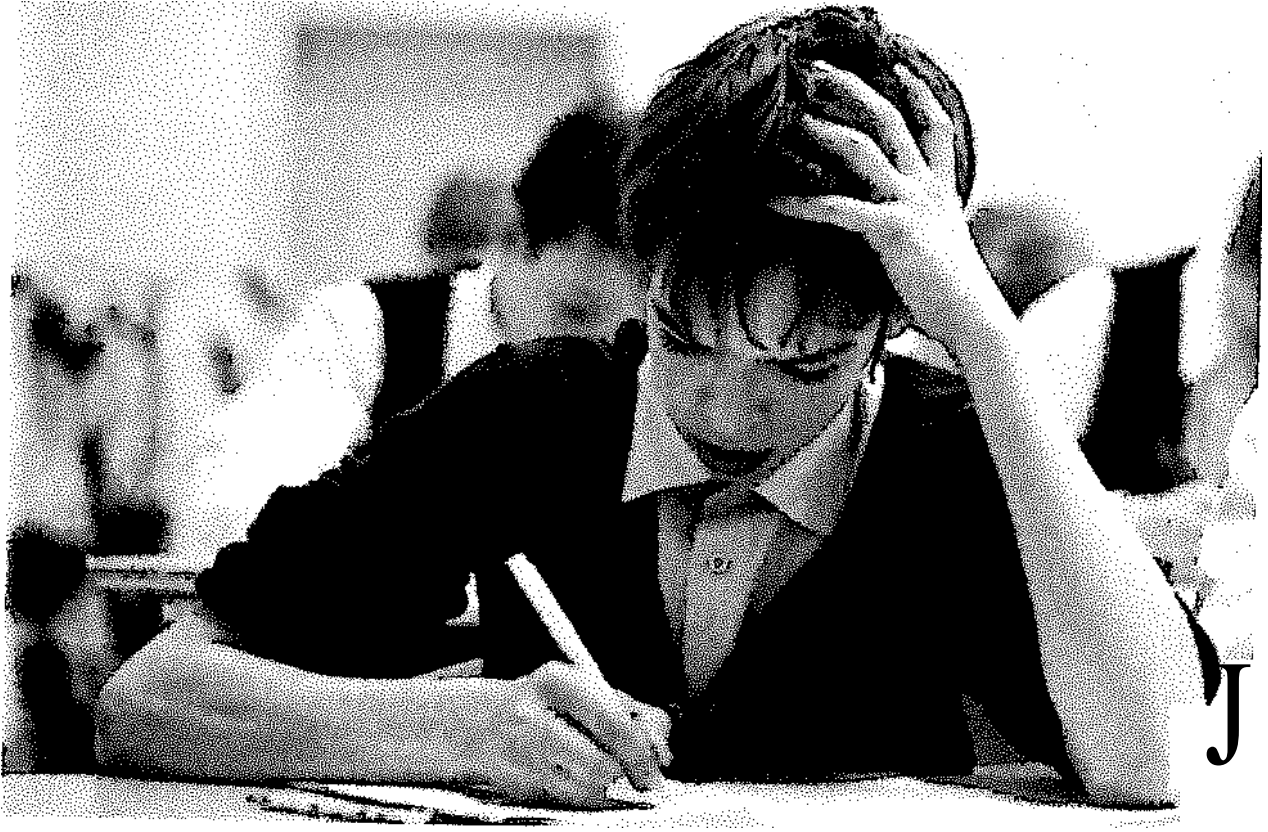
Child's ref:

- Consent form and assent form both signed
- Right to withdraw/verbal reminder to child
- Confidentiality discussion: risk, anonymity
- Agree on signal with child: thumbs down or 'pass':
- Preferred method of engaging:
- Discuss Dictaphone
- Any other information

Appendix D:

Visual resources to support interviews including questions for activity choice





J



What do you like about school?

What don't you like about school?

How are you getting on at school?

Do children take tests in your school?

What do you think tests tell teachers?

I am good at...
I am not so good at...

All About Me in school years

1&2

What do you think about having to take tests?

Are these feelings different to how you normally feel at school?

Can you remember how you felt before you took a test?

Before you take a test does the teacher do anything to help?

**All about me
in school
years 1&2**

How well did you do in the test? Will it affect your future?

Does anyone else get to know how well you've done in a test?

Is there anything you find tricky about school?

If I had a magic wand is there anything you would like me to change about school?

What would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?

All About Me in school year 6

What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? For example, your teachers?

How do you feel about having to take tests?

As a test gets nearer do the teachers do anything to help you prepare?

Do children sit tests in your school?

How did you feel during the time before you sat the test?

How are you getting on at school?

What do you like about school?
What do you dislike about school?

I am good at...
I am not so good at..

Were these feelings any different to how you would normally feel in lesson time?

Appendix E: Ethical approval

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Graduate School of Education

Title of Project: An exploration of children's experiences of national assessment in school: how do national assessments influence children's identities?

Research Team Member(s): Julie Price

Project Contact Point: jep218@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisor: Brahm Norwich; Margie Tunbridge

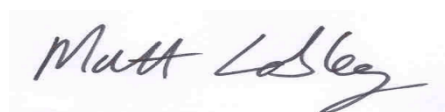
This project has been approved for the period

From: 19th April 2016
To: 30th August 2017

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201516-079

Signature:

Date: 19th April 2016



(Matt Loble, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)

Appendix F: Extracts from reflexive journal

Extracts taken from research journal

13.2.16

Planning my research, I feel apprehensive, as working with primary aged children still feels relatively new to me, and I am aware that I am still developing my confidence in working with this age group. I am acutely aware that I possess expectations as a researcher; I recognise that I need to remain self-aware and reflective as far as possible regarding my interactions and interpretations when working with the children and their data. Due to my limited experience with primary aged children, I think I am fairly open minded, as I don't have particular expectations. I think I am flexible and responsive to their needs, as I plan and attempt to engage them in the research process. I feel enthusiastic about using IPA as a method of analysis, and am excited about what will emerge. I am optimistic that IPA as an interpretative process will help me to capture some insight into the nature of the children's experiences.

7.7.16

Following the first interview it was break time; I immediately played back the audio recording for a few minutes and realised, that on one occasion, I had called the child by the wrong name. I believe this occurred as a result of a teacher who, a few minutes prior to the interview, had very assertively attempted to have a discussion with me regarding another child at the school, and this had distracted me. I recognise that I will need to be extremely assertive with this school on future visits, and not engage in any discussions regarding other children until the interviews are complete. I also recognised that the prompt lists I had created were beneficial and kept me focused.

8.7.16

I must resist the pressure to rush when gathering interview data. The data needs to be gathered carefully and thoughtfully. I will need to be assertive with schools and not allow them to pressure me into fitting the interviews into rigid timescales. For example, yesterday it was suggested that I split an interview up as twenty minutes before lunch and ten minutes after. I stated however that I would prefer to return after lunch and complete the interview without interruption. This has also been challenging for me in terms of looking after my

own physical and emotional state. The additional days spent commuting are extremely tiring. Whilst I might be able to squash several interviews into one day, I recognise that splitting the interviews over two days in the week will result in better quality interviews.

15.7.16

Today I interviewed a year six child who talked a lot, and had a tendency to digress. This presented a dilemma in terms of the extent to which I should allow him to continue to talk, and when I should interrupt and re-focus him on the research questions. I made the decision to allow him to continue, and re-focused him towards the end. This meant that the interview was significantly longer than expected. This may present a challenge in terms of transcription and analysis.

10.11.16

Following the trial interviews, I have come to realise quite profoundly, how dramatically different young children are; one has been able to access the questions very well, however the others have struggled immensely. The question for me, is how best to mediate for these young children. Do I need to do more specific prompting around their own areas of interest? What visual materials can I utilise to further support the process?

18.11.16

Child X became very anxious after disclosing a family bereavement during the interview. I allowed X time to ventilate her feelings without further probing her. X informed me that she tends to 'bottle feelings up' at home and school. We talked through the Helping Hand activity, reflecting on potential areas of support for X. I used handouts to talk through calm breathing exercises and some distraction techniques, and encouraged X to reflect on what kind of activities help to distract her at home if she feels worried or upset. X agreed that it would be helpful for me to speak to school staff to facilitate pastoral support in school. This made me reflect on the containing role I was offering these children, in terms of providing them with space to talk about their feelings, views and experiences.

23.4.16

Went for a coffee and had a discussion with a friend today. We talked about the direction my research is taking, as the timing doesn't seem to be going to plan. Time feels such a big and significant issue. K, who has just completed a landscape gardening MA, commented on the way research can take on 'a life of its own'. K suggested that perhaps I needed to re-consider my aims in a reflective way, and suggested drawing a tree and using this as an analogy for my ideas. I went home and did this, and found that using a visual analogy was really useful in reinforcing to me where I felt stuck and what I needed to do next. I also later had a useful conversation with R, my partner, who also commented on the way in which it is a common experience for research not to go to plan, however that the important thing is to reflect and justify the steps that you take. It is helpful to speak to other people about their journeys. Often, I feel out of my depth, and worried about the study not going to plan. I think I also need to remain mindful of the principles of qualitative research.

February 2017

From the starting point of our research, we were encouraged to acknowledge our own position as researchers, and to reflect, as far as consciously possible, on our underlying interests and motivations, and how this has influenced our research interest. In addition, and something I have found more challenging, is that we were encouraged to critically consider the use of writing in the first person for qualitative research. Although I wrote in the first person for my English MA, psychology feels very different, and this doesn't feel natural to me. However, I think this is mainly because it is not something I have been encouraged to do in psychology before. I think however, that writing in the first person is consistent with an approach which values a reflexive position.

20/7/16

Reflection on transcription: over the weekend I began a transcription for a year two child. I felt that I began to gain a much deeper sense of this child's experience. It was, on one level, what I had known and responded to during the interview. However, listening to the audio recording added greater depth and richness to what she was saying; possibly due in part, because I wasn't distracted by having to focus on the questions and manage the interaction.

Although this child is young, and this was evident through her language, I believe she possessed a sophisticated understanding that she did not always have the language to express. I began to notice the drop in her tone of voice when she described feeling nervous, and how she gets her words muddled sometimes, and realised I hadn't been fully aware of all these cues during the interview. This child was good at telling me directly when she did not understand a question, and I realised that she was able to understand if I could make the question accessible by re-framing it.

I reflected (in action) that the questions weren't always pitched at the right level, however it was difficult to address this in action.

I have reflected that I need to take care not to ask children leading questions whilst trying to mediate questions.

17.12.16 (re IPA).

Have been reading Smith et al, re the hermeneutic cycle. A pattern of back and forth through the process is described, and this is what I feel I am doing now with child 5. Emergent themes are close to the text, which is perhaps good for a first analysis.

January 2017.

These children possess an understanding and insight into their environment that I am at times quite shocked to discover, since this is far beyond what I had expected. When I returned in the Autumn to interview the children for the second time, my initial reaction was, on several occasions, surprise at how young each child appeared in relation to their narrative I held in my head.

The children have really opened up to me during the interview process; how can I learn from this in my work? I realise that I have been quite responsive to each child and how they wished to talk and engage. This is a less structured approach, where children are given more time to talk freely.

I am aware working with the transcripts, of the pressure created by time, and that I was not always able to allow children as much time to talk as I would have liked. There are occasions where I perhaps should have allowed conversations to continue, and not have been so worried about trying to get answers for all questions.

I have realised with dissatisfaction, that I made assumptions in my questions that I now consider to be inappropriate; for example, asking children questions about whether they think they will get married and have children. I recognise, ironically, that because I am not married and have chosen not to have children, this is not the cultural norm. I realise this from the responses I receive from others. I recognise therefore that I am in some sense unconventional, and in writing the questions, I made the assumptions that getting married and having children would automatically be what others would aspire to.

I have drastically under-estimated the time -consuming nature of IPA. I will need to further discuss this with my supervisors.

February 2017:

In attending to descriptive comments (IPA), I am taking care not to use adjectives in my comments which might change the meaning of the text. It is best to try to utilise the children's own words to preserve meaning. When writing emergent themes, I have erred on the side of caution, and made them as close to the text as possible.

April 2017

Interpreting the results is very challenging, and I have been feeling very stuck with this process. I think there are some parallels with the process of 'showing' and 'telling' in relation to English; more showing is needed, since the extracts in IPA provide validation for the researcher's interpretation. The interpretation aspect of qualitative research is challenging.

May 2017

I feel very pleased with my findings. IPA is an exciting, emergent process. However, nothing could have prepared me for how time consuming every aspect of this process is.

Appendix G:

Tables of supporting extracts for IPA themes

Supporting extracts: Testing threatens friendships		
Participant	Page reference	Extract
Zak	P2 S	<p>Interviewer:.. Do you feel part of a group?</p> <p>Zak: Er, yeah. Because there's, like, five or six friends that always stay together and I'm a part of it. So..</p> <p>Interviewer: And when do you – do you, sort of, spend time with them at-at breaks?</p> <p>Zak: And at the start of the days. I- I go to where they go at the start of the day, and find them.</p>
Thomas	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer: can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>Thomas: Well, 'cause – me and my friend, we've kinda found, like, we stick together and we'd up-basically stand up for each other.</p> <p>Interviewer: And are they new friends that you've met here?</p> <p>Thomas: Yeah</p> <p>Interviewer: And can you tell me a- what- more about why that's important for you?</p> <p>Thomas: I think it's important 'cause if I hadn't met them, I'd just be, like, basically alone.</p>
Ellie	P2 A	<p><i>Describes new friend:</i></p> <p>Ellie: She, is like – she likes the same things as me and we're just really close friends. I went to her house once because I've only known her since I've started coming here. We meet up [inaudible, 02:56] and before school to talk.</p>
Lydia	P10 A	<p>Interviewer: And tell me what do you like about your group of friends that</p>

		<p>you would like to stay the same? (<i>in future</i>)</p> <p>Lydia: I can, like, trust them and, we don't really argue.</p>
Katie	P42 A	<p>Katie: ..my best friends, you know best friends? Best friends are for whatever. You- what- you're gonna be your best friends forever. But friends are not. Because friends are just normal friends.</p>
Rachel	P10 A	<p><i>Discussion of friendships when older</i></p> <p>Rachel: I wouldn't like to have the friends who, like, always lie to me. 'Cause I've had them in the past.</p>
Lydia	P10 S	<p>Interviewer:.. So do other people normally know how you've done or</p> <p>Lydia: Er usually yes just my friends I don't like tell the whole class I just tell some of my friends.</p>
Rachel	P13 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay. What do you think about other people knowing how well you've done in tests?</p> <p>Rachel: (Pause) erm, well as I passed all of them, erm, like if there's because there are a few people who haven't passed all of them.</p>
Ellie	P28 S	<p>Ellie: If I've passed (<i>tests</i>) it would be okay if like I say it to like my friends like my three friends.</p> <p>Interviewer: Uh ha.</p> <p>Ellie: But like say I don't really want to say like (pause) my score (pause) because like then people might think that I can't do what they can.</p>

Supporting extracts: Learning through relationships

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Katie	P5-6 A	<p><i>Discussion re how teachers help:</i> Katie: They, like- they don't give us the clue – they don't give us the answer. Just give us a clue to what the answer is. And ... Interviewer: And what happens then? Katie: And then we find it because it gets easier for us.</p>
Zak	P5 A	<p>Zak... if you don't get something right, you- you go and ask them (<i>teachers</i>) and they'll s- they'll, like, help you try and get them right. Interviewer: How do they help you? By telling you some stuff about what it is but not telling you all of it.</p>
Ellie	P4-5 A	<p>Ellie: A lot of the teachers are nice... the spelling they help you with because what they do is they ha- we all have spelling walls where they write it down on a spelling wall or write it in your book. You write it out three or four times and then you write what mistake you did. And if you keep making that mistake, they'll hel- 'cause my science teacher is now making a sign- or a word test for us. A spelling test for us. So, then we don't keep making the same mistakes.</p>
Lydia	P7-8 S	<p><i>Discussion re test preparation:</i> Interviewer: Okay (pause). And as a test gets nearer do the teachers do anything to help you</p>

		<p>prepare or get ready for it?</p> <p>Lydia: Erm, they'll like give out like extra sheets if you're struggling with something or they'll like erm, put something that you're struggling they put it in the homework, something like that like if someone's struggling with something.....if everyone's struggling with the same subject they'll do it in the lessons more..</p>
Lydia	P11-12 S	<p><i>With reference to things that are difficult:</i></p> <p>Lydia: Er if I was stuck then I'd just ask my maths teacher who's like the opposite class room to ours and then erm she would just like help me and maybe if I was struggling she'd give me an extra work sheet to help me or like I'd sit with her and work through it.</p>
Zak	P5 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay. As a test gets nearer do the teachers do anything to help you prepare for it?</p> <p>Zak: Yeah they do. They do like when it was like SATs they done more SPAG and more maths and more literacy; everyday.</p>
Zak	P1 S	<p><i>Discussion re how teacher helps:</i></p> <p>Zak: She helps me, so if I have a problem outside or something she tells me what's happened and then she gets to people who are being like nasty</p> <p>Interviewer: Uh hum.</p> <p>Zak: er until and sometimes they get in detention or something.</p>

Ellie	P32-33 S	<p>Interviewer:... what would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?</p> <p>Ellie: If, I was like feeling sad I'd like tell Miss B cause she can understand me more than Miss X can. Miss J has like twenty nine other people to worry about.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay.</p> <p>Ellie: Not just me; but Miss B does still have to worry about four of us but like she can like take us out and talk to us..</p>
Ellie	P31 S	<p><i>With reference to a family issue:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: But you talked to the teachers about it did you?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah and then they sort of helped me.</p>
Ellie	P11 A	<p>Interviewer:...so, is it important to get help in school?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Ellie: 'Cause you can get help for lots of things. 'Cause in this building, we have Miss X, who's normally in her office and area. I-if – because she's, like, the bully- s-so, she, like, controls – if you're getting bullied or something, you would go there and then she'd help you and stop it. Then they can help – you can get help with your homework.</p> <p>Interviewer: Who helps with that?</p> <p>Ellie: You can go to homework club.</p>
Lydia	P5-6 A	<p><i>With reference to asking for help in school:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: Who can help you and how would they be able to help?</p>

		<p>Lydia: Well, every year has, like, a year team. So, there's, like, the head of year and then all of, like, the assistants. And you can just go to them in their office and then they'll help you by, like, getting to explain stuff. And, like, if there's anything you're worried about then they'll help you..</p>
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Supporting extracts: Interaction helps me as a learner		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Zak	P8A	<p>Interviewer: Okay, who can help you and how would they be able to help?</p> <p>Zak: The teacher would be able to help you because they'll be able to tell you some stuff about what it is. Other students will be able to help you. And your parents will be able to help you about it as well.</p> <p>Interviewer: And how can your parents help you?</p> <p>Zak: They- they can, like, tell you some parts of what it is. But not tell you everything.</p> <p>And how come it's important not to tell you everything?</p> <p>So you can still learn some stuff as well.</p>
Zak	P18 A	<p>Interviewer: Thank you. Is there anyone or anything that you think might help you to achieve those things? (re future goals)</p> <p>Zak: Friends might be able to help you.. Like, tell you some good things you'll be able to do, to try and become a footballer.</p> <p>Interviewer: And is there any-anyone else that might be able to help or anything else?</p> <p>Zak: Teachers and pa- and your parents.</p> <p>Interviewer: How could they help?</p> <p>Zak: Like, the teachers could make you better at it and your parents are, like, always watch you play.</p>
Thomas	P8 S	<p>Interviewer: Do you think you would share your worries with anyone? Like your friends or family or teachers?</p>

		Thomas: erm, maybe my mum or dad.
Rachel p10 S		Interviewer: Okay; and did you tell anyone how you were feeling at the time? (re SATs) Rachel: Erm I told Mrs X (teacher) we had a chat, and then I told my mam, and she was a bit, like (pause) then she helped a bit with homework and that's why I got the maths tutor.
Ellie	P19 S	Interviewer: Okay. So (pause) what did you do at this time when you were feeling like this how did you cope with it? Ellie: (Pause) erm (pause) if I could find my mam..
Lydia	P12 S	Interviewer: Okay. If you were worried how do you think I would know or how would other people know? Lydia: I would probably tell my mam or dad and then if like it was worrying them as well they'd probably talk to the school.
Rachel	P14 S	Interviewer: Okay. (Pause). What would you do if you were feeling worried or sad do you think? Rachel: Erm, I don't know what I would do but if I was feeling worried about school I think I would tell my mam, and then she would probably maybe inform the teachers..
Katie	P4 A	Interviewer:..And can you tell me a bit more about being good at art? How do you know that you're good at art? Katie: Because Mummy and Daddy say it to me.
Katie	P23 A	Katie:Mummy and Daddy were impressed with me because we had

		<p>to- to write – can I show on the back?</p> <p>Interviewer: Course you can.</p> <p>Katie: So, we had to forward it like that. Or if you want to do it in a triangle... And then I got it correct and- and we – and the teacher used it as a example. So, Mummy and Daddy were, like- said 'well done' and stuff.</p>
Thomas	P6 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay. So do you think it would affect how well you do in secondary school? (how you perform in tests)</p> <p>Thomas: Not really.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay..(pause). In what ways might it affect how your parents think about you?</p> <p>Thomas: .. They'll still like you no matter what happens.</p>
Zak	P8 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay that's fine. What would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?</p> <p>Zak: Er, tell my friends and tell my parents and my teachers.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay. How would they know if you were worried?</p> <p>Zak: I would tell them.</p> <p>Interviewer: And would they be able to do anything to help?</p> <p>Zak: Er, sometimes not all the time.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay. (Pause) what do you think they might do that might help?</p> <p>Zak: Like, say (inaudible word) to me if they be nasty to me say just walk away and don't listen.</p>

		<p>Interviewer: Okay so they might give you some advice? Zak: Yes.</p>
Rachel	P9 A	<p>Interviewer: So, could you tell me a bit more about wh-why being close to your family is important for you? Rachel: 'Cause they mean a lot to me and, like, if I'm sad or happy or something, they'll always do something about it. [Coughs] – erm, and they always teach me stuff. So, when I'm older, I'd probably still need them. So, I can still ask them, like – or the phone's okay. But I'd rather, like, see them.</p>

Supporting extracts: Disruption to learning relationship		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Rachel	P13 S	<p>Interviewer:... Is how well you've done in tests kept private or do other people know? Rachel: Erm, well, erm as I said earlier when it was just like the practice tests Mrs X asked 'do you want it read out or do you want to come round' erm and then when it was the SATs results we had to go to a different room.</p>
Rachel	P7-8 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay, and as a test gets nearer do the</p>

		<p>teachers do anything to help you prepare for it? Rachel: ...they normally do is like, they (pause) teach us, stuff, but like they teach us stuff normally (laughs), but like they teach us a bit more in one day Interviewer: okay Rachel: But then, erm, sometimes they're like, erm because they know that we might get stressed, then they think that okay lets erm like do not that much and just like focus on one thing. Interviewer: Uh ha. So does it sort of depend on how you're finding a topic or a task? Rachel: Yeah. Interviewer: Okay; and does this help you to get ready for the test? Rachel: Yeah; because if we just did one thing in each day we might not get to all of the things so if we do a few things in one day; whereas I remember we had to do 42 things in 11 days before SATs</p>
Rachel	P12 S	<p><i>Re discussion on whether SATs results influence transition to secondary school:</i> Interviewer: Okay, that's alright. So do you think it might affect what happens when you go to your next school?.. Rachel: (pause) No, I don't think it really matters if I passed or not but it would, just, feel good if you passed; I was doing about (pause) about 15-20 tests a week (pause) til the actual SATs and then (pause) like just passing it</p>

		would be feeling like 'thank goodness' where if you fail like it wouldn't matter cause it wouldn't go to the government but, like, you wouldn't be that relieved because you've done all that work and then you get to it you haven't passed and it would just feel (pause, then quietly) not that good.
Thomas	P3 S	Interviewer: Okay (pause/takes a turn). What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? So, for example your teachers? Thomas: like, how you respond to pressure.
Ellie	P21-22 S	Interviewer: What about your lessons that are not to do with around test times how do they feel do they feel any different? Ellie: They feel really different like (pause) Interviewer: What's different about them? Ellie: More happy. Interviewer: Okay Ellie: Like it's easier (pause).

Supporting extracts: Responsibility for Learning

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Ellie	P29-30 S	Interviewer: ..Is there anything you find tricky about school? Ellie: Reading writing, like the reading I can read like I like picking books and everything but like lots of the words are really hard so I have to ask for help.
Lydia	P5 A	Interviewer: And do you think it's important to get help in school? Lydia: Yeah. If you need it then just ask and then

		<p>you'll get the help that you need.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>Lydia: 'Cause if you're stuck on something then it's better to ask. 'Cause otherwise you won't get things right and you won't be able to do well in your exams.</p>
Rachel	P5 A	<p>Interviewer: [Pause] – do you think it's important to get help in school?</p> <p>Rachel: Yeah. Very. You're struggling with something, then you've just got to, tell someone.</p>
Zak	P7-8 A	<p>Interviewer: Do you think it's important to get help in school?</p> <p>Zak: Sometimes. Like, if you're not going – if you don't know what something is, you- you'll need help. But if you do know what something is, you won't need help.</p>
Katie	P4-5 S	<p>Interviewer:... And what do you think tests would tell your parents or your families about you?</p> <p>Katie: ... if I'm not concentrating if I am concentrating.</p>
Zak	P5 A	<p><i>Re discussion on how you know you are doing well:</i></p> <p>Zak: Because – because in, like, every subject I'm top group. And- and I always listen to a teacher.</p>
Ellie	P6-7 S	<p>Interviewer: Do children sit tests in your school?</p> <p>Ellie:... so they know how much we already know about that topic we're starting</p> <p>Interviewer: Uh ha</p> <p>Ellie: (pause) but it's not like oh you can't like copy we can copy but it's just like cheating ourselves.</p>

Ellie	P2 A	<p>How is your new school similar and how is it different to your primary school?</p> <p>Ellie:....it's different because you have to know your way around. The teachers don't really baby you. And, like, if you haven't done your homework, if you've forgot to put your PE kit in your bag, you can't blame it on your mum for forgetting to tell you. It's your responsibility.</p>
Rachel	P1 A	<p>Rachel: The thing which I like about secondary school is that maybe because, like – you know, like, you have to go round to your classes by yourself?</p> <p>Interviewer:...Hmm-hmm.</p> <p>Rachel: Like, it's also, like, getting practice when we're, like, older and we have to get things ready for ourselves when we're older.</p>

Supporting extracts: Judging how good I am		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Katie	P4 S	<p><i>Re SATs:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: Okay, why did you have to do them?</p> <p>Katie: Because then Mr P and Miss X can see, erm, if I can move up or not and see, erm, if I'm good or not.</p>
Rachel	P4-5 S	<p>Interviewer: And do you know why you have to do tests?</p> <p>Rachel: Yeah I think it's, erm, well for them tests that was just for a practice but for each of the like at the end of each (pause) like year, then we get assessed tests and (pause) erm I think it's just for the other teachers know how good we are or bad we are.</p>
Lydia	P4 S	<p>Interviewer: So what kind of tests do children do?</p> <p>Lydia: In years 2 and 6 we've had SATS obviously and then erm, if we do a science topic then we have a star topic to see how much we know about the subject and what the teachers need to teach us then at the end we'll have the end of topic test which is where they know how much we've improved from the last test.</p>
Zak	P5-6 A	<p>Interviewer: So, do people sit- sit tests or exams? Do you have to take tests or exams?</p>

		Yeah, sometimes. Like, at the end of the half-term, you- you've got to take a test to see i- what you've got right and wrong about the subject.
Rachel	P4 A	Interviewer: And do young people sit tests or exams in secondary school? Rachel: Erm, [Pause] – well, we do sit tests but we don't, like – they're not supposed to be, like, any big tests. They're just supposed to be, like, are you in the right set? And if you get, like, lower than average in- for set one, two or three then you'll have to move up or down.
Rachel	P4-5 S	<i>Re SATs:</i> Interviewer: What did you have to do? Rachel: Erm (pause) like (pause) I think it was just like practice tests, like, even though because the curriculum has changed since last year to this year, we were just like trying to have a feel of what the tests were but like we couldn't get the correct standard (pause) like to get a level 6, because it's a different year but, like, yeah (laughs).

Supporting extracts: Test make me doubt myself

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Ellie	P30 S	Interviewer: Okay; so do you ever feel worried about school X? Ellie: (pause) nnn sometimes but only like in tests.
Ellie	P12 S	Interviewer: Okay. So how do you feel about having to take tests X? Ellie: I don't like them (pause) cause they're really hard and like you get really stressed (pause) like if they're like SATs or GCSEs but like start of topic tests it's okay because you haven't done it before.
Katie	P7 S	Interviewer: Can you remember how you felt before you took a test Katie?..... Katie: I felt, nervous. Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me a bit more? Katie: erm, I felt nervous and I didn't really know I could do it and I didn't think I could do it (pause), but, after all I could do it in the end.
Katie	P5 S	Interviewer:... What do you think about having to take tests? Katie: Sometimes I think I can't do them, sometimes I think if I, sometimes when I think I can't do them I get them by sometimes when I think I can do them I get them wrong. Interviewer: Okay. Katie: It's a problem for me.

Rachel	P9-10 S	<p>Interviewer:... And how did you feel during the time before you sat your tests this year?</p> <p>Rachel: Erm (pause) well, erm (pause) I felt a bit stressed but some people were ending up in tears, when they did the mock SATs. Erm, and, also I was a like quite a lot nervous to tell the truth; erm then (pause) it was, like, but now that I just realise it's only for governments what the year 6s and it's a new curriculum and X our head teacher says it's ridiculous what the government has done, so don't think about SATs they don't matter, they purposely did this, to make it more pressuring, and (pause) then that made me feel a bit more (pause) like happier, I guess.</p>
Katie	P22 A	<p>Interviewer:... And do you ever feel worried if the teacher asks you to count to, say for example, from one to twenty or asks you to read or do your sounds?</p> <p>Katie: When I do my – when I do my – you know when we do exams? I- I- I don't really – I started to get scared because I always think I get bad. And then I only do because I'm- because – because if you put your [inaudible, 24:54] the wrong way round, you're still – you'll get a cross for a mark</p>

Ellie	P13-14 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay. How do you feel about getting the results of a test?</p> <p>Ellie: I don't like em cause if they're not good I feel like bad cause like I haven't done good.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay.</p> <p>Ellie: And like nobody really likes that feeling of like (pause) failing a test like (pause) not doing good at something everybody else can do (pause) cause I'm probably not gonna want to know my SATs things..</p>
Lydia	P6 S	<p>Interviewer:.. And how do you feel about getting the results of a test?</p> <p>Lydia: Erm (pause) well, it depends really like if it's like a big test then sometimes erm, I want to do well I like want to have a good score but if it's like a smaller test then I know that I just have to improve for the next test, if there's another test.</p>
Katie	P6 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay, okay. How does it feel when you get the results of a test?</p> <p>Katie: Sometimes when I get them all wrong I feel sad and sometimes when I get them all right I feel happy.</p>
Rachel	P6 S	<p>Interviewer: ..And how do you feel about getting the results of a test?</p> <p>Rachel: Well a little bit nervous when they're say and Mrs X normally says 'do you want it read out or do you want to come' but if it's a test I think I've done good on I'll say read</p>

		out (pause) and normally the results, are over than half; it's very very rare that I get under than half. And then I feel quite happy.
Ellie	P31-32 S	<p>Interviewer:.. Are school worries different to other worries?</p> <p>Ellie: Yes, really different.</p> <p>Interviewer: How come they're different?</p> <p>Ellie: Cause if I'm worried about like going home and not (pause) being able to play say on my ipad cause I've been naughty at school that's a completely different worry to being worried about tests (pause) like cause tests are just horrible.</p>

Supporting extracts: I keep my anxieties to myself		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Katie	P22 A	<p>Interviewer: So, Katie, when you feel worried or sad, what do you do?</p> <p>Katie: I tell – I don't- I don't tell Mummy and Daddy. I just ask for a cuddle off Mummy and Daddy.</p> <p>And does it help or does it make no difference?</p> <p>It makes no difference but it makes me feel a lot – it makes me feel a lot safer.</p> <p>And do you tell anybody at school, like your teachers or friends?</p> <p>Me- no.</p>
Thomas	P8 S	<p>Interviewer: .. What do you think that you might do if you were feeling worried or sad?</p> <p>Thomas: erm, read a book or play a bit of lego.</p> <p>Interviewer: So, something to take your mind off of it?</p> <p>Thomas: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you think you would share your worries with anyone? Like your friends or family or teachers?</p> <p>Thomas: erm, maybe my mum or dad.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay. And would they know if you were worried?</p> <p>Thomas: No (barely audible).</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay.</p> <p>Thomas: unless I told them.</p>
Ellie	P21 S	<i>RE feeling stressed around test times:</i>

		<p>Interviewer: so are these feelings any different to how you would normally feel in lesson time?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay.</p> <p>Ellie: Cause at home I'd be really really stressed but then at school I would still be stressed but (pause) like I'd be like more occupied with my work than being stressed, cause at home if you have nothing to do</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay</p> <p>Ellie: you can worry about it.</p>
Rachel	P11 A	<p>Interviewer: And can you tell me.. why reading is important as a hobby for you?</p> <p>Rachel: [Coughs] like, I don't know. It's like – reading, I would describe, is like a television in your head, where you're watching something. And then you can say, like, kind of like hi and bye to the characters in the book and if there's any problems about the outside world you can read a book and then you're, like, in another world. And then you can have a- have the adventures with them. And, if I feel sad or something then I can read a book and then – yeah.</p>
Ellie	P32 S	<p>Interviewer: ...what would you do if you were feeling worried or sad?</p> <p>Ellie: If, I was like feeling sad I'd like tell Miss B cause she can</p>

		understand me more than Miss X can. Miss J has like twenty nine other people to worry about.
Lydia	P12 S	Interviewer: Okay. And do you ever feel worried about school? Lydia: (pause) no, not really, no (very quietly). Interviewer: Okay. If you were worried how do you think I would know or how would other people know? Lydia: I would probably tell my mam or dad and then if like it was worrying them as well they'd probably talk to the school.
Rachel	P10 S	Interviewer: Okay; and did you tell anyone how you were feeling at the time? Rachel: Erm I told Mrs X (teacher) we had a chat, and then I told my mam, and she was a bit, like (pause) then she helped a bit with homework and that's why I got the maths tutor.

Supporting extracts: Seeing my ability

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Lydia	P2 A	Interviewer: And tell me about what you're good at in school. Lydia: I like PE and my teacher- my PE teacher said I have a artistic body

		for dance [chuckles]. And I like English and, erm, I like technology as well. 'cause I like – I like the food technology part 'cause I like cooking..
Lydia	P3 S	<i>Discussion re knowledge of being good at things:</i> Researcher: how do you know you're good at these things? Lydia: Cause like I'm in top groups and I get like higher marks than the others. Interviewer: Okay, and so who tells you that? Lydia: Erm our teachers just give us like our marks and then we all of our friends like confer, like, we ask each other's scores so I just and I think I understand everything as well.
Lydia	P2 A	Interviewer: And what are you not so good at? Lydia: Well, I don't think I'm very good at maths but I think that's just 'cause I don't like it. So, I don't know.
Ellie	P3 A	Interviewer: ..and what are you not so good at? Ellie: Probably, I think, science I'm okay at but I don't know what – [sighs] the thing that I'm not so good, it's mainly English. Even though I can write really good and everything, it's the spelling and the grammar. And my teacher's, like, always 'Ellie, you have to put commas' and everything. When I can't because they're hard.
Ellie	P4 S	Interviewer: So how do you know when you're doing well in maths?

		Ellie: There's ticks in my books and smileys like a little smiling face.
Ellie	P8-9 S	Discussion around SATs: Ellie: I still don't know what a verb is.
Ellie	P3 A	Interviewer: And what are you good at in school? Ellie: My ICT teacher was saying about moving me up to the next group.
Katie	P1 A	Interviewer: And are there subjects at school that you're not so good at or don't like? Katie: I'm not so good at [pause] spellings. Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that? Katie: Spelling? It's because spellings, you have to learn them all the time and you don't get enough time to practice...
Rachel	P4 A	Rachel: The reason why I think I'm, like, getting okay with it (school) is that either I don't have to put my hand up and I know what to do straight away and I'm not bad at it, or maybe if, like, when next time the lesson is and then the teachers have marked your work and put whatever comment they've put, like – like, maybe, 'we need some help' or maybe 'well done', you know, like – that can also tell me that I'm doing okay with it as well.
Rachel	P2 S	Interviewer:.. and what are you good at at school? Rachel: (pause) erm (pause) I think English. Interviewer: Okay; and how do you know that you're good at it?

		Rachel: (pause) because when the teacher comments she's like, fantastic vocabulary, well done, and like sometimes writes in my maths, like good try, whereas in my English it's like nearly all perfect.
Rachel	P3-4 S	Interviewer: ...And how do you find out when you are good at something at school do you think? Rachel: Erm, for one, erm if I don't need to put my hand up or need reminding and for two the comments in my book.
Zak	P4 S	Interviewer: That's alright. Can you tell me a bit about being good at maths? How do you know that you're good at maths? Zak: Because I'm in the top group...I'm in the top group at maths. And – [pause] – and normally get everything right. Interviewer: And how do you know that you're not so good at French? [Pause] – b-because, like, all the stuff I- I do in it, I normally get wrong. And there's spelling mistakes.
Zak	P2 S	Interviewer: Okay. And how do you know these things? Zak: Because when I pla when I'm on ma when I'm doing maths, er, on the next day I look at the back and I nearly get all of them right but when I'm doing spelling, I I sometimes get them all wrong.
Zak	P15 A	Interviewer: And tell me about football. How are you getting on with football?

		<p>Zak: I'm doing alright. I don't play for a team yet but I hope to soon.</p> <p>Interviewer: And how do you know that you're doing alright with it?</p> <p>Zak: Because fr- a lot of my friends are saying that I'm- been doing alright on Wednesday. Because I was really fast and I scored quite a lot of goals on Wednesday.</p>
Lydia	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer: What- what do you think you'll be like when you're older? Or what ...</p> <p>Lydia: [Pause] – I think – I like, like, little kids. So, I might – I like, like, nursery kids. So, I might be a teacher for, like, nursery.</p> <p>Interviewer: And how come this is important to you?</p> <p>Lydia: Well, because I like little kids and erm I like school. So, I like the subjects that I can teach.</p>
Ellie	P21 A	<p><i>Re discussion around future ambition:</i></p> <p>Interviewer:do you think it'll be difficult for you to achieve these things?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Ellie: 'Cause it would be hard 'cause of my spelling, to be a teacher. But if I'm – 'cause if I'm just, like, a nursery teacher or something, I don't really have to be able to spell that well. 'Cause I- I like working with – 'cause I have – you know, and I have cousins and everything. So, I – I would – I am good with X (names child) and everything. So, I can, like,</p>

		handle [inaudible, 29:08] big tantrums...
Lydia	P9 A	Interviewer:... And what kind of hobbies do you think that you might like to do when you're older?.. Lydia: I already do figure skating. So ... Interviewer: Oh, of course. You do lots of that, don't you? Lydia: I'd like to keep that up. And then – or another job would be, like, a coach. A skating coach as well.

Supporting extracts: Judging how good I am		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Rachel	P5 S	Interviewer: And do you know why you have to do tests? Rachel:...I think it's just for the other teachers know how good we are or bad we are...
Rachel	P11 S	<i>Re performance in tests:</i> Interviewer: Okay. And do you think it affects how you think about yourself? Rachel: (Pause) erm (pause) like (pause) yes and no; erm, no because, erm, like some people

		think, it's just tests it doesn't matter (pause) erm, and that but yes for me, because, like this will be like the result, like am I average or am I good or not very good; or something like that.
Katie	P4-5 S	<i>Re SATS:</i> Interviewer: Okay, why did you have to do them? Katie: Because then Mr X and Miss X can see, erm, if I can move up or not and see, erm, if I'm good or not.
Ellie	P26-27 S	Interviewer: Okay. In what ways might it affect how you think about yourself? Ellie: (pause) it like I might think that I'm a bit like (pause) I can't do what other people can do and like (pause) and that I don't really feel like I can do what they can do (pause) even though I can.
Katie	P5-6 S	Interviewer:.... What do you think about having to take tests? Katie: Sometimes I think I can't do them, sometimes I think if I, sometimes when I think I can't do them I get them by sometimes when I think I can do them I get them wrong. Interviewer: Okay. Katie: It's a problem for me.
Zak	P3 S	Interviewer:... What do you think that taking a test tells other people about you? Zak: So, if I get if I don't like pass, in like reading or literacy that means I'm not as good in reading or literacy as I am in maths.
Lydia	P5 S	Interviewer: Okay. And what do you think taking a

		<p>test might tell you about yourself?</p> <p>Lydia: that you're improving from the last test you've ever done (inaudible comment) that you know you're improving or something.</p>
Thomas	P3 S	<p>Interviewer: Okay. And what does taking a test tell you about yourself do you think?</p> <p>Thomas: erm, (pause) that I can do it, and that I can do others. And if I can do like some of them I can do others.</p>
Zak	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about doing bad in tests?</p> <p>Zak: So, if you're just talking and stuff, not really – and just, like, copying people's answers and- and not trying to think about it yourself, you might get them wrong and you might not, like, get a high score on them.</p>

Supporting extracts: Knowing where I am in relation to others

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Ellie	P9 S	Interviewer: Okay. What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? Ellie: How good I am at that thing. Interviewer: Okay. So tell me a bit more what does it tell your teachers? Ellie: Like what books I should be on like what maths group I should be in and stuff like that.
Ellie	P8 A	Interviewer: So, your targets can get changed then, depending on how you do? Ellie: Yeah. Because my target in my books – I've got my book in here. It's in this folder... this kind of book. Because I'm not a high reader. I- this one's a two point six. So, it's, like, this kind of book. [Pause] – 'cause we have our own library. It's like, this kind of book. I like these kind of books. 'Cause they're, like – they've got pictures in it and they're not boring.
Rachel	P4 A	Interviewer: And do young people sit tests or exams in secondary school? Rachel: Erm, [Pause] – well, we do sit tests but we don't, like – they're not supposed to be, like, any big tests. They're just supposed to be, like, are you in the right set? And if you get, like, lower than average in- for set one, two or three then you'll have to move up or down.
Zak	P4 A	Interviewer: Okay and what do you think it tells teachers? (<i>taking a test</i>)

		Zak: That you might need some more work on one thing than a different thing that you've passed..
Zak	P5 S	Interviewer: So, do people sit- sit tests or exams? Do you have to take tests or exams? Zak: Yeah, sometimes. Like, at the end of the half-term, you- you've got to take a test to see i- what you've got right and wrong about the subject.

Supporting extracts: Achieving my best

Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Katie	P9-10 S	<i>Re how test outcomes affect the future:</i> Katie: I think it will affect like, how good am I and, how rubbish am I and whatever, and it will affect (pause) how what I do and stuff like that. Interviewer: Could you tell me more about that? Katie: No, I don't really know.

		<p>Interviewer: So when you say it will affect how you do or what you do, do you mean in school or outside?</p> <p>Katie: Yeah (quickly). Inside school and outside school, both.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay, can you think of any ways it might affect that?</p> <p>Katie: Don't really know.</p>
Zak	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about doing bad in tests?</p> <p>Zak: So, if you're just talking and stuff, not really – and just, like, copying people's answers and- and not trying to think about it yourself, you might get them wrong and you might not, like, get a high score on them.</p> <p>Interviewer: And what would happen then?</p> <p>Zak: That means you might move down in- in the school and you might not be able to go to college or university.</p>
Zak	P17 A	<p><i>Re discussion about achieving future goals:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: Is there anything else that might stop you?</p> <p>Zak: If you don't do well in, like, tests and stuff.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you – can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>Zak: 'Cause if you don't get a good grade, you might not be able to become a footballer.</p>
Thomas	P17 A	<p>Interviewer: How come better results is important, do you think? Is it- is it important?</p> <p>Thomas: Yeah, it is. 'Cause it's make – if you keep getting better</p>

		results, it means you can get further in- when you get older.
Zak	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer: .. how important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?</p> <p>Zak: Because if you do good at it, you might get a good job.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Zak: So, if you get a bad – if you did bad in, like, the test- with me tests, something bad might happen. Like, when you're older, you might not get a better job as you could.</p>
Ellie	P10 A	<p>Interviewer: How important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?</p> <p>Ellie: It's important because then if you don't do well, you're not gonna – that can affect what you do in the future. Like, if you want to go on to, say, university – 'cause I want to, because I want to be a teacher. And then that would be affected if I didn't- if I didn't, do well.</p>
Lydia	P5 A	<p>Interviewer: .. how important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?</p> <p>Lydia: I think it's very important because if you don't do well in, like, your GCSEs, then you might not get, like, a good job when you're older and you might not get into a good college.</p>
Rachel	P5 A	<p>Interviewer: And do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?</p> <p>Rachel: Yeah.</p>

		<p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>Rachel: Because – [coughs] [pause] – a bit which I said before, why I think it’s, like, if you – like, if you do well in school and, like, you stay in school, then you can pass your GCSEs which’ll mean you have a good job and earn lots of money to get a brighter future.</p>
Zak	P8-9	<p>Interviewer: ... do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?</p> <p>Zak: Yeah, it does. Because – [pause] – if you don’t do as well, you might not earn as much money or not get a good job. And it’s just what I think.</p>

Supporting extracts: I become through wanting and working		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Ellie	P12-13 A	<p>Interviewer: ... you were saying that you think that how you do in school affects what you- how you do in the future?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that, Ellie?</p> <p>Ellie: Because if you want to get a nice and good job, you have to do well, in school. Like, if, say, you want to be a teacher, like I do, you have to be good i- in primary – not so much</p>

		<p>in primary. You have to do good in your SATs – not so much in SATs because you can improve in secondary. You have to get en- good grades for your exam and then ...</p> <p>Interviewer: Which exams?</p> <p>Ellie: I think it's just the GCSEs. And then you can al- you also have to do an [inaudible, 17:07] – I don't know what to – what is before university? Is it college before university?</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes.</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah, you have to do good in college. You have to do good in secondary to go to college. Then you have to do good in college to go to university.</p>
Ellie	P21 A	<p>Interviewer: So, the things that you've talked about that you'd like to be doing, do you think it'll be difficult for you to achieve these things?</p> <p>Ellie: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Ellie: 'Cause it would be hard 'cause of my spelling, to be a teacher.</p>
Zak	P6-7 A	<p>Interviewer:.. how important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?</p> <p>Zak: Because if you do good at it, you might get a good job.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Zak: So, if you get a bad – if you did bad in, like, the test- with me tests, something bad might</p>

		happen. Like, when you're older, you might not get a better job as you could.
Katie	P12-13 A	Interviewer: do you think it's a good thing for children to learn about phonics and reading? Katie: Yeah. Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that? Katie: Because if you learn about phonics and reading, then you know a lot of things. Even though if you want to be a hairdresser when you're older, you still- you still need to learn how to write and stuff.
Lydia	P6-7 A	Interviewer: What- what do you think you'll be like when you're older?.. Ellie: [Pause] – I think – I like, like, little kids. So, I might – I like, like, nursery kids. So, I might be a teacher for, like, nursery. And how come this is important to you? Well, because I like little kids and erm I like school. So, I like the subjects that I can teach.
Lydia	P10-11 A	<i>Re discussion of career options:</i> Lydia:.. if I'm, like, not a teacher then I'd probably just be a coach. Hmm. Yeah. And can you tell me more about that? Because, like, I've been skating since I was six and I don't really just want to stop. So, I'll probably keep skating competitively for a bit and then just go into coaching a bit.

Zak	P15-16 A	<p>Interviewer:...When you're older, what sorts of things do you think you might do for hobbies..?</p> <p>Zak: Playing football.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Zak: Just like now, I go, like, to football training on Saturdays. And, like, get better at it for when I'm older.</p> <p>Interviewer: And why would you like to be doing that as a hobby?</p> <p>Zak: So – [pause] – so, like, you know, that's something you liked when you're younger. So, you could get more better than you are now.</p> <p>Interviewer: So, it sounds as though you'll be doing quite a bit of football.</p> <p>Zak: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: So, you'd want to do it for a career and you'd want to do it as a hobby?</p> <p>Zak: Yeah.</p>
Zak	P18-19 A	<p>Interviewer:... If I had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future, what would it be?</p> <p>Zak: Well, like, it would be so I could be a footballer. So, I- I don't, like, stop wanting to be a footballer.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me why that's important for you?</p> <p>Zak: Because if you want to be a di- if you want to get a different job, you might not be able to because you might not, like, know as much as you should be- should know, to</p>

		<p>get that job. So, you've got to stick with one job for your whole life so, you- you might get the job.</p> <p>Interviewer: So, are you saying that what you know is important?</p> <p>Zak: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: [Pause] – so-so, for you, football is important.</p> <p>Zak: Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: And you know a lot about football.</p> <p>Zak: Yeah.</p>
Rachel	P13 A	<p><i>Discussion re overcoming difficulties with story writing:</i></p> <p>Rachel: ..I do write stories now. Just practicing... but sometimes it is hard writing stories. And then when you overcome that, then you can just get along. And then it'll be easy. And then another [inaudible, 25:34] comes, someone can help you and ...</p> <p>Do you mean when you're at school or when you're writing outside the school? When you're writing at school and at home.</p>
Rachel	P14 A	<p>Interviewer:.. If I had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future, what would it be?</p> <p>[Pause] – there's two things really. But probably to have a family and to be happy and to be an author.</p>

Supporting extracts: Seeing different options		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Thomas	P20-21 A	<p>Interviewer: Do you think how you do in school affects how you do in future?</p> <p>Thomas: Yeah. Because when you're getting grades, you can't actually do – if you want to really do a – you want to do, like, a certain job, like, become a doctor, you're gonna need science degrees and that. And if you don't get them, you can't actually become it.</p>
Thomas	P25-26 A	<p><i>Re discussion of future choices:</i></p> <p>Thomas: I might be interested in being a vet 'cause I like, you know, helping animals and that.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about why that's important for you?</p> <p>Interviewer: It's important for me 'cause you can – you're helping to save animals' lives. And, I</p>

		<p>mean, we've had two dogs. One of them has died from old age.. And I just want to help, you know, animals so they don't [inaudible, 10:32], you know, get bad illnesses that can't be cured.</p>
Katie	P33-34 A	<p><i>Discussion about future career:</i> Katie:. I want to be – I might be a dancer or singer or a teacher. I don't know yet. Interviewer: How does someone get to be a dancer or a singer or a teacher? Katie: You have to work very hard. But first you have to make up your mind. Then you have to work very hard.</p>
Katie	P46 A	<p>Interviewer:... is how you do in school, is it important? Will it – I mean, will it help you when you're older for when you want to get a job or for where you live? Katie: Yes. Because if you want to be a tu- if you want – because you need a lot of money. Because if you want to be a teacher, you have to learn a lot. And if you want a house, well probably we would just live in our same house because we like our house, when I'm older. Probably we'll just live in the same house. But- but if people want to do- want- wanted to be a teacher and they wanted to move house, they'll have to be a</p>

		teacher first, then move house. Because they need, like, that money.
Ellie	P14 A	<p><i>Talking about the future:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: What kind of person do you think you'll be?</p> <p>Ellie: A nice person.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>Ellie: [Pause] – well, you have to be nice to be a teacher anyway. Because if you're not a nice teacher, nobody's gonna like you. 'Cause I don't really like a geography teacher..because if you're really kind, everybody's gonna like you as a teacher. And, like, you – I would have to, like – you would have to help them. Like, help the students. So, you would have to have patience as well.</p> <p>Interviewer:: [Pause] – and how come patience is important?</p> <p>Ellie: Because if you're not patient at all and somebody is- is trying to work something out and you're getting very impatient, that's not gonna help their learning. If you're gonna be a teacher, that's not gonna help them.</p>
Rachel	P6 A	<p>Interviewer:..what does a person need to do to be a teacher, do you think? Or how does a person become a teacher?</p> <p>[Coughs] well, I think they need to pass their GCSEs, go to a college and uni.</p>

		Erm, and then just be a good person, I guess.
Rachel	P6 A	<p>Interviewer:... tell me more about why it would be important to be a teacher?</p> <p>Rachel: Yeah. 'Cause – [coughs] – like, you can be with them for the whole year and then erm, if it's, like, younger years, then you can still see them when they're in highers. Where if, like, you're a supply teacher, then you can only see them one day. Right, we might come again just in case the teacher's ill or – yeah.</p>
Ellie	P23-24 A	<p>Interviewer: if we had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future, what would it be?</p> <p>Ellie: Probably – I think probably to become a teacher because that – 'cause then everybody will find somebody they like, they love. But you don't always get the opportunity to be a teacher and make a difference.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Ellie: Because teachers make a big difference to children. 'Cause, like, if you're not a good teacher when they're younger and you don't help them, they won't learn. But if you're a nice teacher and good, they will learn and then that will affect their future.</p>

Supporting extracts: Becoming what I value		
Participant name	Page reference	Extract
Rachel	P8 A	<p>Researcher...what will you be like when you're older, do you think? What kind of person will you be, would you like to be?</p> <p>Rachel: Erm I'd like to be a kind and helpful person and- and make people happy.</p>
Rachel	P14 A	<p><i>On why she wants to become a writer:</i></p> <p>Researcher: Like, some people enjoy reading and sometimes if I do, like, a small piece of writing then they might be able to be, like – [pause] – like – right, so [chuckles] if I wrote a story and then if I give it to my friends, then they could be like 'oh, that's good' or something like that. And then if, like, I write stories for the whole world to see, basically, then I'm making everyone happy. Yeah, I'd rather bring that.</p>
Katie	P13 A	<p>Katie: When I grow up, I want to be a teacher. So, I want to help kids learning to read and stuff.</p>
Lydia	P10-11 A	<p>Interviewer: ..And so, do you think you'd do those things at weekends or ...</p>

		<p>Lydia: Well, it depends. 'Cause if I don't – if I'm, like, not a teacher then I'd probably just be a coach. Hmm. Yeah.</p> <p>Interviewer: And can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Lydia Because, like, I've been skating since I was six and I don't really just want to stop. So, I'll probably keep skating competitively for a bit and then just go into coaching a bit.</p> <p>Interviewer: And can you tell me why the coaching might be important to you?</p> <p>Lydia: Because it's still doing what I love but, like, helping someone else find that they love it too.</p>
Thomas	P25-26 A	<p>Thomas: I might be interested in being a vet 'cause I like, you know, helping animals and that.</p> <p>Interviewer: Can you tell me more about why that's important for you?</p> <p>Thomas: It's important for me 'cause you can – you're helping to save animals' lives....And I just want to help, you know, animals so they don't [inaudible, 10:32], you know, get bad illnesses that can't be cured...</p>

Appendix H: Information for schools

Research study: An exploration of children's experiences of national assessment in schools: how do national assessments influence children's identities?

Information for schools

About the study

My name is Julie Price and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist. I am looking for schools to take part in my study which aims to explore children's experiences of national assessment. I would like to invite you to take part in the first phase of my study, which involves seeking the views of head teachers with regards to assessment processes. If you would like to take part please could you complete the attached questionnaire, it should take no longer than 5-10 minutes. The questionnaire will be anonymised and only myself and my research supervisors will have access to this information.

Two schools will then be selected and invited to take part in the second phase of the study, which will involve selecting six children from each school to participate in four short semi-structured interviews. It is anticipated that the interviews will take between 20-45 minutes; this is to allow for the flexible use of icebreaker activities to enable children to feel relaxed. The children will be selected from years 1/2 (children sitting phonics assessment this summer) and year 6, who have recently completed national assessment. The interviews will be informal in nature and there will be a participatory element, in that the first interview will seek to gain the views of how children feel best able to engage with the research process. The interviews will seek to explore children's views of school and their self-perceptions. The aim is to interview the children twice before the end of the summer term, once in September and then a final interview at a later date to check with the children that I have accurately understood their views and experiences.

I am interested in this area of research firstly because there exists a small amount of research which details children's experiences in this area. Secondly, I feel it is important that children are provided with the opportunity to express their views and experiences of education.

Benefits and risks

It is hoped that the findings of this research will be beneficial to our understanding of schooling and education, and how these systems can best support children. For example in relation to influencing educational policy, supporting inclusive practice, and fostering children's self-esteem and well-being in terms of their immediate and longer term futures.

It is acknowledged that talking about school could be difficult for some children. Children will be encouraged to feel at ease with the research process. The use of icebreaker activities such as games and also a well-being activity will be used. The right of a child not to participate in any aspect of the research will be respected, and I will agree with each child a signal that they can use if they do not wish to participate in an activity or answer a question. Children will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any point in the study.

Further information

For further information, my contact details are as follows:

Julie Price, Trainee Educational Psychologist: jep218@exeter.ac.uk or by telephone: 01642 527110 (Engagement and Learning Team).

Additionally, you can contact my research supervisors as follows:

Brahm Norwich, Professor of Educational Psychology and Special Education Needs at the University of Exeter: B.Norwich@exeter.ac.uk or telephone: 01392 724805.

Margie Tunbridge, Deputy Programme Director and Academic and Professional Tutor at the University of Exeter: M.A.Tunbridge@exeter.ac.uk or telephone: 01392 725983.

Appendix I:
Information for parents and consent forms

Research study: An exploration of children's experiences of national assessment in schools: how do national assessments influence children's identities?

Information for parents

About the researcher

My name is Julie Price and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist. I would like to invite your child to take part in a study which forms part of my doctoral training programme. I have detailed below further information about the study which I hope will be helpful. If you agree to your child taking part then you will need to complete and return the enclosed consent form. Your child will also need to agree to take part and sign the assent form for children. Younger children or children who find reading difficult may require an adult to read this to them. If you require any further information or are unsure of anything, my details and those of my research supervisors are listed at the end of this information sheet. You can contact myself or my supervisors at any point if you have any questions or concerns.

About the study

Your child is being invited to take part in a study aimed at exploring the views and experiences of children in school years where they are currently undertaking national assessment. This will include children who are either in years 1 or 2 for phonics test and children in year 6 for national assessment. I am interested in this area of research firstly because there exists a small amount of research which details children's experiences in this area. Secondly, I feel it is important that children are provided with the opportunity to express their views and experiences of education.

What does the study involve?

A small number of children from two schools are being invited to participate in the study. This will involve meeting with the children on several occasions and talking to them about their views and experiences.

There will be a participatory aspect to the research; I will talk to the children about how they would most feel comfortable to talk with me. For example whether they are comfortable to just sit and talk, or whether they would prefer to talk whilst doing an activity such as drawing or playing games.

The interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of analysis. The information will be stored safely and destroyed following completion of the research. Arrangements will be made to provide feedback regarding the findings of the research at a later date. The children will receive a small voucher as a token of appreciation for taking part in the study.

Time commitment

The researcher will meet with each child four times. It is anticipated that the first two interviews will take place before the end of the summer term. All the children in the sample will then be interviewed for the third time in the autumn term of 2016. Following analysis of the children's feedback, a fourth meeting will be arranged at a later date. The purpose of this meeting is to enable me to check with the children that I have accurately understood their views and experiences.

It is anticipated that the interviews will take between 20-45 minutes each; this allows for the flexible use of icebreaker activities to enable children to feel

relaxed. I will discuss with the school when the interviews are best to take place in order to minimise disruption to school work.

Participants' rights

Participation is voluntary and children have the right to stop their participation in the study at any time without explanation, and also the right to ask that any data supplied up to that point be destroyed.

Confidentiality/anonymity

Confidentiality will be maintained by keeping a separate list of names and addresses linked to the children's feedback by a numerical reference. Data will be stored and analysed on the Exeter University U Drive, and also stored on either an encrypted external hard drive or memory stick as approved by Exeter University. Data will be securely destroyed by August 2017.

Children will be made aware that if there is any concern regarding risk of harm to a child or another person then I will need to speak to a member of school staff regarding this.

In the write up of the research and if there follows any publication of the research, then children's names will be changed so that their identities are protected.

Benefits and risks

It is hoped that the findings of this research will be beneficial to our understanding of schooling and education, and how these systems can best support children. For example in relation to influencing educational policy, supporting inclusive practice, and fostering children's self-esteem and well-being in terms of their immediate and longer term futures.

It is acknowledged that talking about school could be difficult for some children. Children will be encouraged to feel at ease with the research process. The use of icebreaker activities such as games and also a well-being activity will be used. The right of a child not to participate in any aspect of the research will be respected, and I will agree with each child a signal that they can use if they do not wish to participate in an activity or answer a question. Children will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any point in the study.

Further information

For further information my contact details are as follows:

Julie Price, Trainee Educational Psychologist: jep218@exeter.ac.uk or by telephone: 01642 527110 (Engagement and Learning Team).

Additionally you can contact my research supervisors as follows:

Brahm Norwich, Professor of Educational Psychology and Special Education Needs at the University of Exeter: B.Norwich@exeter.ac.uk or telephone: 01392 724805.

Margie Tunbridge, Deputy Programme Director and Academic and Professional Tutor at the University of Exeter: M.A.Tunbridge@exeter.ac.uk or telephone: 01392 725983.

Research study: An exploration of children's experiences of national testing in schools
Parental consent form

Study: An exploration of children's experiences of national testing in schools

Researcher: Julie Price

Organisation: University of Exeter

I have been provided with the information sheet with regards to the above study and I provide consent for the researcher Julie Price to work with my child:

Signed.....

.....

Printed

name.....

.....

Date.....

.....

Research study: An exploration of children's experiences of national testing in schools
Children's assent form

I have read the children's information sheet (or had this read to me). I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them. I agree to take part in the above study. I understand that I can change my mind at any time if I decide I no longer wish to take part.

Print
name.....
.....

Signature.....
.....

Date.....
.....

Appendix J: Information for year six children

Project on children's views about School

Information for children in year 6

About the study

My name is Julie and I am carrying out a research study. A research study is when you ask questions and try to find out more about something. I would like to ask for your help with my study. I would like to ask you some questions to find out your views about school. I will be talking to other children to.

Why is the study being done?

The study is being done because I would like to find out more about how school is for children in years 1, 2 and 6. I hope that the study will help us to find out more about how we can help children in school, as school is an important time in a person's life.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

I will be speaking to children in years 1, 2 and 6, and one of your teachers has agreed that I can invite you to take part.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part and no one will be upset if you decide not to take part. Also if you decide to take part and then change your mind then this is also fine, no one will be cross.

What will happen if you agree to take part?

If you agree to take part in my study then I will come and talk to you at school four times. I will make our meetings fun, and I will talk to you about how you would like the meetings to be. For example you might like to do some drawings or play some games while we talk.

Keeping things private

If I am worried about you or someone else I will need to tell one of your teachers.

After the study I will write about the findings for others to read. However I will protect your identity and your real name will not be included in anything I write.

Sharing the findings

After the study is finished I will write to you and tell you about my findings.

Will it be hard?

Talking about school can sometimes be a bit tricky. At the start we will decide together on a signal that you can give me if you decide you don't want to answer a question or take part in an activity. For example you could say 'pass' or show me thumbs down.

Do you get anything for taking part in the study?

At the end of the study I will give you a small voucher to say thank you for taking part.

What if I have any questions?

You could talk to your parents or teachers if you have any questions. You and your parents can also get in touch with me or my teachers at my university if you are not sure about anything. I have given your parents these details.

Thank you!

Appendix K: Information for years one/two children

Project on children's views about School

Information for children in years 1 and 2

About the study

My name is Julie and I am doing a project. I would like to ask for your help with my project. I would like to ask you some questions about school. I will be talking to other children to.

Why is the project being done?

I am doing the project because I want to find out about how school is for children, and the best ways to make children happy at school.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

I will be talking to quite a few children, and one of your teachers has agreed that I can invite you to take part.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part and no one will be upset or cross if you decide not to. Also if you decide to take part and then change your mind this is okay to, no one will be cross or upset.

What will happen if you agree to take part?

If you agree to take part I will come and talk to you at school four times. When I visit I will make it fun, and I will ask you how you would like the visits to be. For example you might like to do some drawings or colouring, or play some games while we talk.

Keeping things private

If I am worried about you or someone else I will need to tell one of your teachers.

After the study I will write about the findings for others to read. However I will protect your identity and your real name will not be included in anything I write.

Sharing the findings

After the project is finished I will write to you and tell you about my findings.

Will it be hard?

Talking about school can sometimes be tricky. If it feels tricky you can let me know by giving me the thumbs down or by saying 'pass'.

Do you get anything for taking part in the study?

At the end of the study I will give you a small voucher to say thank you for taking part.

What if I have any questions?

You could talk to your parents or teachers. Also, you and your parents can speak to me or my teachers at the university about this. I have let your parents know how to do this.

Thank you!

Appendix L: Example of transcript and IPA analysis

Original Transcript: child 1 (7.7.16)	Exploratory comments	Interpretative comments	Emergent themes
<p>I: These are the questions, so we can work through them, and I've got a copy here, so we can work through them as we play the game, so you can just talk as you're ready. So the first one is what do you like or dislike about school?</p> <p>Child: I like the, I like the lessons, cause they're not too hard, and not too easy.</p> <p>I: Okay, that sounds good. And which lessons in particular do you like?</p> <p>Child: maths and history.</p> <p>I: Okay. And are there any that you don't like? Or anything you don't like about school?</p> <p>Child: Not really (quietly).</p> <p>I: That sounds really positive. And who are your friends in school?</p> <p>Child: X, X, X and X.</p> <p>I: Okay. Shall we start this? (refers to game) I'll take one. And who is your teacher?</p> <p>Child: Miss X</p> <p>I: And what's she like?</p> <p>Child: She's nice</p> <p>I: Does she help you in school?</p>	<p>Tells me the lessons are pitched at the right level for him.</p> <p>Tells me which lessons he likes and states 'not really' anything he dislikes.</p> <p>Lists several friends <i>without hesitation</i>.</p> <p>Describes teacher as 'nice'.</p>	<p><u>This is highly significant to a child's experience of school; are the lessons within their Z of PD?</u></p> <p><i>Sounds confident, relaxed in tone.</i></p> <p>Answering without hesitation suggests confidence in what he says.</p>	<p>Perceives lessons as accessible.</p>

<p>Child: Yeah. I: That's good. Okay. My turn. Okay, we'll turn that over (ref question cards). So what are you good at and what are you not so good at? Child: I'm good at, maths, and ICT, history, erm, (pause) science. I: Okay. That sounds good. And is there anything that you're not so good at? Child: er, not really. I: So you're good at, remind me, history.. Child: maths, ICT and science. I: and how do you know you're good at these things? Child: cause I enjoy them and I get good marks. I: Okay. That sounds very positive. Is there anyone that tells you that? Child: erm, the teacher, like when she marks your, books. (pause, taking turns with Jenga). I: So, this one is a little like we've been talking about. How are you getting on at school? Child: Well. I: How do you know?</p>	<p>Able to tell me confidently what he is good at; lists maths, ICT, history and science.</p> <p>(quietly) When asked to clarify lists maths, ICT and science.</p> <p>Tells me that he knows he is good at these subjects because he enjoys them and gets good mark, <i>without hesitation</i>. Teacher's marking tells him that he is good.</p> <p>Tells me that he is getting on 'well' at school without hesitation; knows this because he enjoys it and it's fun.</p>	<p><i>There is some hesitation/pause before adding science, more pronounced. Hesitation may suggest uncertainty.</i></p> <p><u>Again the focus is on doing well and enjoying lessons, suggesting the lessons are pitched at the right level.</u></p> <p><i>Repetition of 'enjoy'. Fun.</i></p>	<p>Confidence in knowing what likes/dislikes/ what good at.??</p> <p>Enjoyment of subjects and good marks indicates being good at them.</p> <p>Good progress in school is linked with enjoyment and fun.</p>
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<p>Child: Cause I enjoy it and (pause) it's fun. I: It's fun. That sounds positive. Okay (pause/takes a turn). And do children sit tests in your school? Child: Yeah. I: Okay; so what kind of tests do children do? Child: Like, SA you're got SATs and then the tests in year 2, and then in every year you've got like end of term tests or when you go up to the next year so they know like how good you are I: (interjects) Okay so you have them every year? Child: Yeah. I: Okay. So what have you had to do so far? Child: erm, SATS and just the tests every year. I: And do you know why you've had to do them? Child: erm, just to see how you've improved. I: Okay (pause/takes a turn). What do you think taking a test tells other people about you? So, for example your teachers? Child: like, how you respond to pressure.</p>	<p>Knowledge of tests in school; lists SATs/year 2 tests, then end of term tests. Tests tell school 'how good you are'.</p> <p>Tells me that experience with tests to date includes SATs and end of term/year tests.</p> <p>Tells me that these tests are to see how you have improved.</p> <p>Tests tell others such as teachers how you respond to pressure. <i>My tone, surprise? Impact on him?</i></p> <p>Unsure what tests tell family/parents.</p>	<p><i>Some repetition/hesitation when mentions SATs; what does this mean? Goes to mention this first then remembers they are not the only tests??</i></p> <p>Academic evaluation implies personal evaluation. '<u>How good you are</u>': does this imply a sense of general evaluation of self on behalf of the school; does academic evaluation reflect an evaluation of the self in general that becomes internalised? or is this something intrinsic to him? <i>Use of 'just' is interesting, as though so used to sitting tests..?</i></p>	<p>Knowledge of tests and SATs.</p> <p>Test results inform teachers how good you are.</p> <p>Tests demonstrate improvement.</p> <p>Tests show teachers how you respond to pressure.</p> <p>Success in tests affirms confidence in own ability and in subsequent tests.</p>
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<p>I: Okay. What do you think taking a test tells your parents or your family about you? Child: I don't really know. I: Okay. And what does taking a test tell you about yourself do you think? Child: erm, (pause) that I can do it, and that I can do others. And if I can do like some of them I can do others. I: Okay (pause, taking a turn). That sounds positive. (pause). So how do you feel about having to take tests? Child: Alright. I: Okay. And how do you feel about getting the results of a test? Child: Alright. I: Okay (pause, takes a turn). Whoops, it's getting tricky now isn't it? (laughs). As a test gets nearer do the teachers do anything to help you prepare for it? Child: They sort of like, get you to do like, a bit of extra work so you can (pause) so it helps you to do the tests. I: Okay. So they set you some extra work. Did you feel that this</p>	<p>Tests tell him that he 'can do it', and can do others. If he can do some he can do others.</p> <p><i>Meaning of 'alright'?</i></p> <p><i>Said very quietly.</i></p> <p>Teachers set extra work as tests get nearer to help you to do the tests.</p>	<p><u>What is this experience like?</u> <u>How does it feel? His perception is that tests are meant to create 'pressure'; what possible ways might a child respond to pressure?</u> <u>Is this 'pressure' reflected in the tone of his wider narrative?</u></p> <p><u>Does practice and experience with tests increase confidence? Would this be the case for some or all children? What if your experience is not that you can do it?</u></p> <p><i>Tone sounds downbeat.</i> States feels '<i>alright</i>' about taking a test. Language: what does this suggest? Repetition of 'alright' with no elaboration, very quietly. Does this reflect reluctance to talk or difficulty articulating or talking about it?</p>	<p>Teachers help with tests by setting extra work.</p> <p>Tests create feelings of nervousness.</p>
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<p>helped you to get ready for the test? Child: (hesitation) Yeah. I: (takes a turn, laughs) I might be a bit stuck now (loud noise/ Jenga collapses). Thank you. Okay. We can talk as we put it back together again. How did you feel during the time before you sat the test? Child: erm, a little nervous. I: A bit nervous, okay. What did you do when you felt like that? How did you cope with it? Child: erm (pause). I just (pause) got on with it and (pause) and, if I could do other tests I could, do the SATs. I: Did you tell anyone? (background noise as game is sorted and put together) Child: About what? I: Did you tell anyone about feeling nervous or worried? Child: No, not really. (unclear comment). I: You told your mum? Child: A little bit. When I was feeling a little bit nervous. Just a little bit. I: Was your mum able to help at all? Child: Yeah. (noise from blocks).</p>	<p>States that he felt 'a little nervous' during the time before he sat the test.</p> <p>Talks about how coped with feeling nervous; just got on with it and thought that if he could do other tests he could do the SATs.</p> <p>I refocus him when he asks 'about what?'</p> <p>States that he didn't really tell anyone how he felt, then says that he told his mum 'a little bit'. <i>Repetition of a 'little bit';</i> how much did he share with mum? States that mum was able to help, does not expand.</p> <p>Seems to have lost focus: discrepancy in response, I clarify with him that he doesn't normally feel nervous in lesson time. <i>Sounds more certain of his answers here/more conviction in tone.</i></p>	<p><i>Some hesitation and change of direction with sentence. Difficulty articulating thoughts?</i> Tone? responds 'yeah', no elaboration.</p> <p>Pauses when asked how coped with feeling nervous; time to think? feeling uncomfortable? Repetition of previous comment (?) that if he could do other tests he could do SATs. Implies that SATs are more important or more challenging?. Has he distanced himself when I re-focus him? Unclear comment follows.</p> <p>Question may have been leading.</p> <p>Responds 'yeah' without elaboration. Interviewer did not pursue. Tone?</p>	<p>Confidence derived from reflection on previous success in tests.</p> <p>Coped with tests by getting on with it.</p> <p>Kept feelings of being nervous/worried to self.</p> <p>Confided in a parent a little bit re test related worry.</p> <p>Tests create anxiety because you don't know how hard the test is going to be.</p>
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<p>I: Okay. So, were these feelings any different to how you would normally feel in lesson time? Child: Not really. I: So you'd perhaps feel nervous normally in lesson time? Child: Not really. If there's a test you sometimes feel nervous cause you don't know how hard it's gonna be. I: So, have I got this right? You wouldn't normally feel nervous in school? Child: No. I: But more when you've got tests? Child: Yeah. I: Okay. So it feels a bit different when you've got a test? Child: Yeah. I: I wonder what might be different about it? (pause. Someone takes a turn). I suppose it's a particular time of the year isn't it that comes? Child: Yeah. (exhales, audibly) I: Okay. So the next one, is depending on whether you do well or not so well in a test how might this affect how you do in secondary school?</p>	<p>Uncertainty over how hard the test will be makes him feel nervous.</p> <p>Feels nervous when has to do tests, and this feels different to how school normally is.</p> <p><i>Exhales loudly; hard to talk about?</i> Researcher makes a comment to try to elicit what might be different about when taking tests; child's response is silent.</p> <p>If you don't do well in SATs you might be placed in lower classes in secondary school. Impact of this is that this will be easier for you, and also if you fail you'll have to take SATs again in year 7.</p>	<p><i>Loss of focus; what does this suggest? Is it stressful to think and talk about tests? Or difficulty talking about the personal with a stranger? Or is he someone that doesn't normally talk about feelings, or is this a recurrent theme that there is a sense of private self around school/tests and self??</i></p> <p><i>Does not respond to my cue/suggestion to expand on answer beyond 'yeah'. Exhales audibly when I suggest that particular times of year might feel different. Does the researcher avoid directly questioning the child because she picks up on the child's</i></p>	<p>School feels different during a test period as it creates nervous feelings.</p> <p>SATS impact on streaming in secondary school.</p> <p>Failure of SATs may result in re-sits when you go to secondary school.</p> <p>Parents will still like you regardless of your performance in SATs.</p>
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<p>Child: Well if you like don't do well in your SATs you might get put into a lower class in secondary school. I: Okay. Child: Which is easier for you to do, and if you fail you'll have to take SATs again in secondary school, year seven. I: Okay. So do you think it would affect how well you do in secondary school? Child: Not really. I: Okay (pause). Shall we play again? (pause). In what ways might it affect how your parents think about you? Child: (pause) I should manage to get this. They'll still like you no matter what happens. I: And in what ways might it affect what your teachers think about you? Child: I don't think it affects it much. I: Okay. And in what ways might it affect how you feel or think about yourself? Child: erm (pause) it doesn't really affect me cause, even if I don't do well, people have bad days.</p>	<p><i>Is there some avoidance here?</i></p> <p>Tells me that parents will still like you 'no matter what happens' in relation to tests.</p> <p>States that he doesn't think it affects what teachers think about you much.</p> <p>Acknowledges that test performance can be context dependent. Perception of self; if doesn't do well knows that people have bad days.</p> <p>Children decide whether or not to tell others about their test results.</p>	<p>avoidance/reluctance? (Where?)</p> <p><u>How would this feel? The prospect of having to move to a new school and resit a test that you failed from primary? Would you worry about feeling different?</u> <i>Repeated use of 'not really'.</i></p> <p><u>'no matter what happens'.</u> <u>Does this suggest there could be significant consequences to not doing well; what might they be?</u> <u>Concept of unconditional regard in relationships.</u> <i>Doesn't affect what teachers think about you much; is this inconsistent with what his narrative implies?</i></p> <p>Acknowledges impact of context on performance, eg influenced by individual differences/ 'bad days', suggests role of mood/emotion on performance.</p>	<p>Uncertainty around the outcome and consequences of SATs.</p> <p>People have bad days which can affect performance in tests.</p> <p>Performance can be influenced by 'having a bad day'.</p> <p>Children have control over whether others know their results.</p> <p>Children help each other.</p> <p>Children trust each other for help with SATs.</p>
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<p>I: Okay. That sounds positive (background noise/someone takes a turn). So, is how well you've done in tests kept private or do other people know? Child: erm, you can keep it private if you want or you can tell other people. I: Okay. Child: So, you get given the test back and then (pause) if you want to you can tell other people, or everyone. I: So they would only know if you told them? Child: Yeah. I: Okay. What do you think about other people knowing how well you've done in tests? Child: erm, I think it's good cause then you can, (pause) cause if they're stuck and they need help then they can look up to you and know that you'll help them. I: Okay. Child: If they need it (pause) and if you can. I: So, it feels that perhaps you might, is what you're saying that you might help each other? Child: Yeah</p>	<p>Describes the process of being able to help his peers if they are stuck; being looked up to.</p> <p>Adds that this depends if they need help and if you are in a position to help.</p> <p>Helping each other/peer support is important</p> <p><i>Not really</i></p> <p>I push him further and he replies 'no'. Barely audible response.</p>	<p>Children have <i>control</i> over whether others know about their test results.</p> <p><i>Hesitation</i> when reflecting on the choice of whether to tell other people; what might the implications be? <u>What might the implications be between those that tell others and those who choose not to tell? Eg is there the assumption you haven't done well?</u></p> <p><u>Recognises that he may be in a position to help peers; stresses the importance of peer support.</u></p> <p><i>Raised tone.</i></p> <p><i>Changes direction here in his response.</i></p>	<p>You may or may not be able to help others.</p> <p>Adults would not know if he was worried.</p> <p>School worries are similar to other worries.</p>
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<p>I: if you're finding it hard? Child: Yeah. I: Okay (pause). Is there anything you find tricky about school? Child: Not really. I: (noise/someone takes a turn). Not anything that you find difficult? Child: No (barely audible). I: Okay. Do you ever feel worried about school? Child: No I: If you were worried how would I know? Child: erm, I don't really know (laughs). I: how would your mum know or your teacher do you think? Child: I don't think they would. I: They wouldn't? Child: No. I: And do you think school worries might be different to other kinds of worries? Child: Not really. I: Oaky. (pause/noise re game). What do you think that you might do if you were feeling worried or sad? Child: erm, read a book or play a bit of lego.</p>	<p>Adults would not know if he was worried. I push him again to clarify.</p> <p>Does not feel school worries are different to other worries.</p> <p>He relates what he would do if worried or sad, possibly reflecting on the well-being exercise.</p> <p><i>Quiet, less certain.</i></p> <p>Tells me that he may share worries with parents.</p>	<p><i>Response to is there anything you find tricky is 'not really'.</i></p> <p><i>Is 'not really' an evasive/negative/ uncertain response? In what other contexts does he use this?</i></p>	<p>Use of distraction strategies to deal with worries.</p> <p>May share worries with a parent.</p> <p>Others would not know about being worried unless told.</p>
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Appendix M: Example of transcript and IPA analysis

Child 3 autumn	Descriptive comments	Interpretative comments	Emergent themes
<p>I ... eighteenth of November. So, Lydia, how are things going at your new school?</p> <p>R Good, yeah.</p> <p>I Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>R It's different 'cause it's, like, really big. And, like, the lesson – or the lessons are just the same really but – [pause] – like, the teachers are just the same as well, so ...</p> <p>I And is there anything you don't like about secondary school?</p> <p>R (pause) No.</p> <p>I And how is your new school similar and how is it different from your old school?</p> <p>R It's different because it's a lot bigger, like I said. And there's a lot more people in it. And the- there's, like, more teachers and more- like, older kids. 'Cause, like, in primary, we were, like, the oldest. And now we're, like, the youngest.</p> <p>I Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p> <p>R So, like, we – in primary, we were, like – it feels like the older kids, like, think of us as</p>	<p>Secondary school is different because it is much bigger.</p> <p>Tells me there's nothing she doesn't like about secondary school.</p> <p>School is different because it's bigger; there are more teachers, more kids.</p> <p>Previously she was the eldest, is now the youngest.</p>	<p><i>Pause/hesitation here; does this suggest uncertainty?</i></p> <p><u>What does this feel like?</u> <u>Reading/listening it gives me a feeling of insignificance.</u></p> <p><u>Empathy; anticipates that in primary she was one of the elder</u></p>	<p>Only difference between schools is size</p> <p>Transition from being eldest to youngest students</p>

<p>year twos, like the younger ones. [Whispers] so, yeah.</p> <p>I Have you made new friends?</p> <p>R Yeah.</p> <p>I And what are your friends like?</p> <p>R They're nice. [Whispers] yeah.</p> <p>I Do you see them outside of school?</p> <p>R Yeah. [Whispers] a bit.</p> <p>I And do you feel part of a group?</p> <p>R A bit, yeah. We have, like, a little group of friends.</p> <p>I And tell me about what you're good at in school.</p> <p>R I like PE and my teacher- my PE teacher said I have a artistic body for dance [chuckles]. And I like English and, erm, I like technology as well. 'cause I like – I like the food technology part 'cause I like cooking. [Whispers] yeah.</p> <p>I And when you say you like English, is that- is it – are you good at English?</p> <p>R I think so [chuckles]. Yeah.</p>	<p>Has made new friends who are nice.</p> <p>Sometimes sees friends outside school.</p> <p>Belongs to part of a circle of friends.</p> <p>Good at/likes PE, dance, English, technology, food technology.</p> <p>Dance teacher told her she is artistic.</p> <p>Seems uncertain whether she is good at English.</p>	<p>ones; <u>here the older kids perhaps see her as she would have seen year 2s?/s as the younger ones?</u> <i>Whispers; does this suggests she feels daunted?</i></p> <p><u>Appears to be integrated within a small group of friends.</u></p> <p>Good at and likes appear to be interlinked; <i>repetition of 'I like'.</i></p> <p><i>Teacher informed her she is artistic; lists dance as a subject she is good at.</i></p> <p><u>Is she being modest?</u></p>	<p>Making new friends</p> <p>Belongs to group of friends</p> <p>View of self is informed by subjects liked.</p> <p>Liking particular subjects is equated with doing well.</p>
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<p>I And what are you not so good at?</p>			
<p>R Well, I don't think I'm very good at maths but I think that's just 'cause I don't like it. So, I don't know.</p>	<p>Doesn't think she is very good at maths; thinks this is because she doesn't like it.</p>	<p><u>Links being good at a subject with liking it.</u></p>	<p>View of self is informed by subjects liked.</p>
<p>I And how many teachers and subjects do you have?</p>			
<p>R Quite a lot. [Pause] – fi- it's five periods a day, obviously. So, five lessons. But that's not really much different from primary apart from on the- like, on the afternoons, we only really do one subject in primary. Or just a little bit of something. And it's like we do the same thing every week. So, it's a bit different.</p>	<p>There are quite a lot of teachers and subjects. Different to primary as there you only study one subject in the afternoons.</p>		
<p>I What are the teachers like and how do they help you?</p>	<p>In primary do the same thing each week.</p>	<p><u>Less predictable in secondary?</u></p>	<p>Secondary curriculum is less predictable.</p>
<p>R They're nice. And I feel like if you like the teacher then they'll be more helpful to you as well. So ...</p>	<p>Teachers are 'nice'. Liking the teachers will result in them being more helpful.</p>	<p><u>Liking teachers will benefit you.</u></p> <p><u>Focus on the nature of relationships.</u></p>	<p>Liking the teacher means they will be more helpful</p>
<p>I And can you tell me more about how they help you?</p>			
<p>R Well, if, like, you're stuck or something, they'll try and help you by explaining it a bit better to you. Like, one on one. So, it's better.</p>	<p>Teachers help by trying to explain better on a 1:1 basis.</p>	<p><u>Confidence in teachers' ability to help.</u></p>	<p>Understanding of how teachers help.</p>
<p>I Anything else that they do?</p>			
<p>R [Pause] – I don't – [whispers] that's basically it.</p>			
<p>I That's fine, thank you. And how do you feel</p>			

<p>R that you're getting on with your school work? I think I'm doing well. I was put in, like, altogether as, like, top set on everything apart from maths and technology. But they were just based on, like, science grades for that and stuff. So, it wasn't really a true reflection, sort of, for technology. So, I think I'm doing okay.</p>	<p>Thinks she is doing well as she was placed in top set for everything apart from maths and technology.</p>	<p><u>Has her perception of maths changed?</u> <u>Liking of a subject is linked to perceived ability.</u></p>	<p>Streaming influences self-evaluation.</p>
<p>I And do young people sit tests or exams in secondary school?</p>			
<p>R We did a maths exam the other week. And I think I did quite well. But I only just missed going up to the next set. Like, by a couple of marks. So yeah, there's that. And we did a history exam [inaudible, 04:40] [whispers] something else. I can't [inaudible, 04:44] we did. [Normal] We've done an English sort of exam as well.</p>	<p>Tells me she did well in a maths exam.</p>	<p><i>Has begun to refer to tests as exams.</i> <u>How does this make her feel about taking them?</u> <u>Has this changed?</u> <u>Just missed being moved up in maths; has this then impacted on her liking of the subject and her perceived ability?</u></p>	<p>Change in test related terminology.</p>
<p>I And do you know why you had to do them?</p>			
<p>R So, that we can be ready for [inaudible, 04:53] GCSEs in year eleven.</p>	<p>Believes the reason for tests/exams is to prepare them for GCSEs.</p>	<p>Knowledge of GCSEs.</p>	<p>Exams in secondary school are preparation for GCSE.</p>
<p>I And are there any other kind of tests that you might need to do, do you feel, while you're in secondary school?</p>			
<p>R I think it's just, like, exams like that. Like,</p>	<p>GCSEs are the main exams in secondary school.</p>		<p>Exams prepare you for GCSEs.</p>

<p>just preparing you for GCSEs.</p>			
<p>I And when do people sit the tests normally?</p>	<p>Misunderstanding?</p>		
<p>R Erm, just, like, when – or just, like, erm, anywhere. I mean [chuckles] anytime. ‘Cause when the teacher just gives you it and then you’ve got to ...</p>			
<p>I So, is it each year, do you think? After, perhaps ...</p>			
<p>R I think for the maths exams you do one every term. And then you might move up at different times. Or move down.</p>	<p>Termly maths exams. Exams determine whether you ‘move up’ or ‘move down’.</p>	<p><i>Language has changed as she continues to refer to tests as exams.</i></p>	
<p>I [Pause] – how important do you think it is to do well in secondary school?</p>		<p>Tests are used to stream students; they determine whether you will need to change set.</p>	<p>Exams are used for streaming.</p>
<p>R I think it’s very important because if you don’t do well in, like, your GCSEs, then you might not get, like, a good job when you’re older and you might not get into a good college.</p>	<p>It is very important to do well in secondary school because this will determine whether you get a good job or get into college.</p>	<p><u>Secondary school progress is equated with future life outcomes.</u></p>	<p>Poor GCSEs lead to less desirable job.</p>
<p>I And do you think it’s important to get help in school?</p>			<p>Poor GCSE lead to less desirable college</p>
<p>R Yeah. If you need it then just ask and then you’ll get the help that you need.</p>	<p>If you need help you must ask.</p>	<p><u>Asking for help will result in you getting the help you need.</u></p>	<p>Responsibility for seeking help.</p>
<p>I Can you tell me a bit more about that?</p>			<p>Help is available.</p>

<p>R 'Cause if you're stuck on something then it's better to ask. 'Cause otherwise you won't get things right and you won't be able to do well in your exams.</p>	<p>If you don't ask for help this will impact on your ability to get things right and your progress in exams.</p>	<p><u>Personal responsibility: asking for help will determine long term outcomes, eg exams.</u></p>	<p>Importance of asking for help.</p> <p>Need to get things right to do well in exams.</p>
<p>I Who can help you and how would they be able to help?</p> <p>R Well, every year has, like, a year team. So, there's, like, the head of year and then all of, like, the assistants. And you can just go to them in their office and then they'll help you by, like, getting to explain stuff. And, like, if there's anything you're worried about then they'll help you [inaudible, 06:54].</p>	<p>Knowledge of heads of year and assistants who can offer help.</p>	<p><u>Knowledge of who to approach for help.</u></p> <p><u>Confident that others will be able to help.</u></p>	<p>Knowledge of who can offer help.</p> <p>Confidence that others can help with school work.</p> <p>Confidence that others can help with worries.</p>
<p>I And do you think how you do in school affects how you do in the future?</p> <p>R Yeah. Because if you don't do as well in your exams, then you might not get as good job-like, a good job as much as you wanted to. So, you might not get the job that you wanted to in the first place.</p>	<p>Exam performance will impact on the job you are able to do.</p>	<p><u>Poor exam performance will impact on whether you can get the kind of good job that you would want.</u></p>	<p>Exams will influence desired job outcome.</p> <p>Obtaining the job you want is important.</p>
<p>I Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>R 'Cause if you, like, wanted to have a certain job for like, ages [inaudible, 07:24], then you might not be able to get it if</p>	<p>Exam performance will impact on whether you can get the job that you want.</p>	<p><u>Exams determine future work/life outcomes.</u></p>	<p>Jobs are identified and worked towards over time.</p>

<p>you don't do well in your exams.</p>		<p><u>Exams could result in disappointment.</u></p>	<p>Exams are part of working towards a job</p>
<p>I Imagine you go forward in time to when you've left school and you're aged twenty. What do you hope to be doing [whispers] at that time?</p>			
<p>R I'm not sure 'cause I like – I'm – [pause] – I don't know.</p>	<p>Change of tone/unsure</p>	<p>Repetition of 'I' reinforces uncertainty.</p>	<p>Uncertainty over the future.</p>
<p>I What- what do you think you'll be like when you're older? Or what ...</p>			
<p>R [Pause] – I think – I like, like, little kids. So, I might – I like, like, nursery kids. So, I might be a teacher for, like, nursery.</p>	<p>Likes little children, might become a teacher.</p>	<p><u>Interest, eg children may determine career outcome.</u></p>	<p>Job ideas influenced by current likes.</p>
<p>I And how come this is important to you?</p>			
<p>R Well, because I like little kids and erm I like school. So, I like the subjects that I can teach.</p>	<p>Likes the subjects that she could teach, i.e. children and school.</p>	<p><u>Liking of subjects reflects confidence in those subjects for the future.</u></p>	<p>Liking subjects determines future choices.</p>
<p>I And having a look at these, are there any other jobs that you think you might like to do or that you think you wouldn't want to do? Can you see them all?</p>			<p>Liking subjects provides clarity about goals.</p>
<p>R [Pause] – I don't think so. Not really (quietly).</p>			
<p>I And is there anything- any kind of job off the top of your head that you think you definitely wouldn't want to do?</p>			

<p>R [Pause] – I think, like – [pause] – it sounds a bit sexist but, like, men’s work. Because it’s too hard work [chuckles].</p>	<p>Wouldn’t like to be doing ‘men’s work’ i.e. physical work such as builder or plumber would be too hard work.</p>	<p>Job involving physical work are hard work. Aware of gendered assumption in speech content.</p> <p><i>Is this a nervous laugh?</i></p>	<p>Men’s work is too hard.</p> <p>Men’s work is undesirable.</p>
<p>I Can you tell me more about that?</p>			
<p>R Just ‘cause it’s too hard work and I like – well, I do like a challenge but I like, like, school subjects. So, I’d like to be a teacher.</p>	<p>Men’s jobs would feel ‘too hard work’. Likes a challenge. Likes subjects related to school.</p>	<p>Likes school subjects, likes challenges. Would like to be a teacher. <u>Is what she is saying that she would prefer to have a job that is more academic?</u></p>	
<p>I And when you say men’s work, what kind of things are you thinking of? What kind of jobs?</p>			
<p>R Like, builder or a plumber or something like that.</p>	<p>Undesirable jobs.</p>		<p>Men’s work equates with physical work.</p>
<p>I So, kind of physical jobs?</p>			
<p>R Yeah.</p>			
<p>I Yeah. So, they would feel a bit ...</p>			
<p>R [Pause] – like – [pause] – too much, I guess. But not that much. Like – like ...</p>		<p><i>Finds it difficult to articulate.</i></p>	
<p>I But it’s like the kind of – that kind of job you wouldn’t really want to do?</p>			
<p>R Yeah.</p>			
<p>I And when you’re older, what kind of house do you think you would want to live in and where would you want to live?</p>			

<p>R I don't know. I mean, I like big houses. But I don't know why. And I like cities. So [inaudible, 10:27] maybe. Or I like the country. So, I'm not sure.</p>	<p>Likes big houses and cities, or the country.</p>	<p><u>Has some idea of what she would like in the future in terms of size of house, city or countryside.</u></p>	<p>Uncertainty about where she might live in the future</p>
<p>I Can you tell me more about why you think you might like to be in a big house or a city?</p>			
<p>R I guess I just like space and, like, the environment and stuff. So ...</p>	<p>Likes space and the environment.</p>		<p>Ideas about personal living conditions in the future</p>
<p>I But maybe- but maybe being in the countryside as well would be alright?</p>			
<p>R Yeah.</p>			
<p>I What might be nice about that, do you think?</p>			
<p>R 'Cause I like, like, er, like nature and things like that.</p>	<p>Being in the countryside would also be nice as she likes nature.</p>		
<p>I And do you think you would be living with anybody?</p>			
<p>R Hmm, well, I don't know (quietly).</p>			<p>Unsure about relationships and family in the future</p>
<p>I Have you had any thoughts about whether you might want to be married or have children?</p>			
<p>R I don't know.</p>			
<p>I That's alright. And what kind of hobbies do you think that you might like to do when you're older? That's just got some ideas on it.</p>			

<p>R I already do figure skating. So ...</p>	<p>Does figure skating, would like to keep this up in the future.</p>	<p><u>Significance of maintaining existing hobby, sport.</u></p>	<p>Important to maintain interests.</p>
<p>I Oh, of course. You do lots of that, don't you?</p>			
<p>R I'd like to keep that up. And then – or another job would be, like, a coach. A skating coach as well.</p>		<p><u>A job option could be a skating coach. Is this because she has cemented confidence in her skills within this sport?</u></p>	<p>Current interests may lead to a career.</p>
<p>I That sounds good. And just going back to what you were saying about where you want to live, is there anywhere that you really wouldn't want to live?</p>		<p><u>What else do people learn from sport?</u></p>	
<p>R No, I don't think so. [Whispers] [inaudible, 11:59].</p>			
<p>I And what about friends? Would you have friends in the future?</p>			
<p>R Yeah.</p>			
<p>I And what would they be like?</p>			
<p>R I think they would be, like, almost the same. Like, still the same group of friend-because – I dunno. I just have a feeling. [Chuckles].</p>	<p>Would like friends in the future to be almost the same as now.</p>		
<p>I And tell me what do you like about your group of friends that you would like to stay the same?</p>			<p>Importance of maintaining friendships.</p>

<p>R I can, like, trust them and, we don't really argue. [Whispers] [inaudible, 12:34].</p>	<p>Being able to trust friends is important.</p> <p>Not arguing with friends is important.</p>	<p><u>Significance of whispering?</u></p>	<p>Importance of trust in friendships.</p> <p>Importance of not arguing with friends.</p>
<p>I And – so, we've talked about what your hobbies would be. So, just remind me. So, you said about your figure skating and you said you'd like to be a ski instructor as well, was it?</p>			
<p>R No, a skating – like a coach.</p>			
<p>I Ice- ice skating coach?</p>			
<p>R Yeah. [Inaudible, 12:52].</p>			
<p>I Sorry. It must have been because I was partly looking at this as well [chuckles]. And so, do you think you'd do those things at weekends or ...</p>			
<p>R Well, it depends. 'Cause if I don't – if I'm, like, not a teacher then I'd probably just be a coach. Hmm. Yeah.</p>	<p>Career options either teacher or a skating coach.</p>	<p><u>Career options reflect things that she likes and knows she is good at.</u></p>	<p>Career possibilities reflect areas of interest, skill and knowledge.</p>
<p>I And can you tell me more about that?</p>	<p>Began skating aged six, doesn't want to stop.</p> <p>Skates competitively.</p>	<p><u>Skating is physical. Why would a physical job feel hard/undesirable?</u></p>	
<p>R Because, like, I've been skating since I was six and I don't really just want to stop. So, I'll probably keep skating competitively</p>			<p>Interests give one clear occupational pathway</p>

<p>I for a bit and then just go into coaching a bit. And can you tell me why the coaching might be important to you?</p>			
<p>R Because it's still doing what I love but, like, helping someone else find that they love it too.</p>	<p>Coaching would be maintaining an interest in something she loves.</p>	<p><u>Coaching feels like something that is tangible for her to consider.</u></p>	<p>Job is more meaningful if I feel passionate about it.</p>
	<p>Coaching would be helping others to learn to love the sport.</p>	<p><u>Familiarity and confidence in a practical skill outside school.</u></p>	<p>Passing the passion for activity onto others.</p>
<p>I [Pause] – do you think it would be difficult for you to achieve these things?</p>			
<p>R I don't think that it'd be that hard. 'Cause if I have my mind set on something then I'll try and do it.</p>	<p>Describes herself as determined once she has a goal.</p>	<p><u>Individual responsibility for achieving goals</u></p>	<p>Determination is important.</p>
<p>I And what do you think might help you to achieve these things?</p>			
<p>R If I, like, do well in school and I get good grades and stuff. And then I'll be able to.</p>	<p>Believes that getting good grades in school will help her to achieve her goals.</p>	<p><u>Good grades will enable achievement of future goals.</u></p>	<p>Good grades enable achievement of goals.</p>
<p>I And- and what might stop you from doing these things?</p>			
<p>R [Whispers] I don't know.</p>			<p>Lack of knowledge regarding barriers to future goals.</p>
<p>I That's alright. So, is there anyone or anything that you can think- think of that might h-help you?</p>			
<p>R Well, my mum and dad and just all my family and my friends.</p>	<p>Parents, family and friends will help her to achieve her goals.</p>	<p>Family and friends will assist in the achievement of goals.</p>	<p>Support from family and friends to achieve goals.</p>
<p>I Can you tell me more about that?</p>			

<p>R 'Cause, like, my mum – well, my whole family are, like- and my friends are really supportive.</p>	<p>Family and friends are very supportive.</p>	<p>Importance of familial/peer support in relation to achieving future goals.</p>	<p>Support from family and friends to achieve goals.</p>
<p>I [Pause] – If I had a magic wand and you could wish for anything in the future what would it be?</p>	<p>Would wish for the job she wants; either a teacher or a skating coach.</p>	<p><u>The most important thing she could wish for is to do the job she wants to do.</u></p>	<p>Desired job outcome is the most important future goal.</p>
<p>R I think getting the job I want. Like, either being a teacher or a coach.</p>	<p>Would wish for the job she wants; either a teacher or a skating coach.</p>	<p><u>The most important thing she could wish for is to do the job she wants to do.</u></p>	<p>Desired job outcome is the most important future goal.</p>
<p>I So, you've talked a bit about how those – like, especially with the coaching, how that's keeping something that you love alive, isn't it?</p>			
<p>R [Whispers] yeah.</p>			
<p>I So, I guess that's thinking a little bit about what- what you might like to be like when you're older?</p>	<p>Interviewer loses focus.</p>		
<p>R Yeah.</p>			
<p>I I've got some prompts as well for anything else that you think might be important. So, friends, family, relationships, houses, places to live, jobs and hobbies, health, happiness, holidays, possessions or money. Is there anything else that you could think that you would wish for?</p>			
<p>R Hmm – [pause] – [whispers] I don't know.</p>			
<p>I That's alright. Thank you. Thank you, I'm just gonna stop the tape.</p>			

Appendix N: Literature search strategy and criteria

<p>I: So, something to take your mind off of it? Child: Yeah. I: Do you think you would share your worries with anyone? Like your friends or family or teachers? Child: erm, maybe my mum or dad. I: Okay. And would they know if you were worried? Child: No (barely audible). I: Okay. Child: unless I told them. I: Unless you told them, okay. If I had a magic wand is there anything that you would want me to change about school? Child: No. I: You can't think of anything? (silence). Okay. (takes turn, game falls). Interviewer: (Pause) If I had a magic wand is there anything you would want me to change about school? Child: No not really.</p>	<p>I forget to use prompts.</p>	<p><i>Use of 'maybe' link with uncertainty of narrative and other language?</i></p> <p><i>Quite definite in this answer, no, yet spoken Very quietly. Supports this with 'unless I told them'.</i></p> <p><i>Again uncertainty in language? (maybe)</i></p> <p><i>Contrasts with a definite 'no' in other places.</i></p>	
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Tables summarising updated literature searches between January and June 2017

Below is a summary of the searches carried out following discussion with a librarian, regarding the most appropriate search engines for my research theme. The search method was varied slightly across the tables and resulted in the following:

	Education Research Complete	ProQuest sociology	Psychology and Behavioural Sciences	Psyc ARTICLES	Psych INFO
test* or exam* or assessment* or SATS And college or school And pupil* or students* or child* And anx* or stress* or distress And mental health or well-being And self or narrative	250	194	132 Numerous retrieved	200. Repeated search -narrative, 44. Two papers retrieved.	4768

Search terms: Test* or assessment* or SATS and:	Education Research Complete	ProQuest Sociology	PsycARTICLES	PsycINFO	Psychology and Behavioural Sciences	Web of Science
college or school	4177	0	33319	136747	753	1,372,309
pupil* or student* or child*	8990	0	85384	304531	2710	1,993,262
anx* or stress* or distress	858	0	91210	177928	762	1,608,252
mental health or wellbeing	161	0	1471	5529	210	1,182,719
self or narrative	1,876	0	7614	1095747	842	1,221,054

Search terms (June 2017)	Education Research Complete	ProQuest sociology	PsycARTICLES	PsycINFO	Psychology and Behavioural Sciences	Web of Science	Google Scholar
(Test* or assessment* or SATS) and (college or school) and (pupil* or student* or child*) and (anx* or stress* or distress or mental health or wellbeing) and (self or narrative)	66	5	1	2	26	18	2,650
As above minus college							4,080

Search terms	Google Scholar (from 2016)
SATS and anxiety	8,460
SATS anxiety school (since 2016)	656
SATS anxiety pupil identity identities (since 2016)	1890
SATS anxiety pupil (since 2016)	236 (two relevant found)

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