Becoming a speech and language therapist: 
A qualitative exploration of the experiences of male speech and language therapy students and early career professionals

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Abstract

At present there are approximately 13,000 registered speech and language therapists, the majority of these are female. The current ratio of male to female professionals in the United Kingdom stands at 3:100. A decade ago, the figure stood at 1.9% (Sheridan 1999), indicating that in recent years, the number of male professionals has been gradually rising, however, this figure remains low in comparison to other professions within the health and education sectors. Previous research has offered explanations for the lack of diversity in the profession (Greenwood et al 2006, McAllister and Neve 2005), citing poor remuneration, employment opportunities and knowledge base of the profession; this has resulted in few men choosing to enter the profession. In addition, it means that male students are likely to find themselves as the sole male in a cohort of students. The minority status that such a position entails is thought to lead to negative consequences, reduced motivation and feelings of isolation (Boyd and Hewlett 2001).

This research examined the everyday lived experiences of being a male student speech and language therapist in order to develop an understanding of how they constructed their professional identity and to ascertain whether their gender identity influences this journey.

Twelve male speech and language therapy students and early career professionals were interviewed with a semi-structured format through a variety of mediums. The participants shared their stories and experiences of being a speech and language therapy student in both the university and clinical settings.

The participants shared their experiences of isolation and of dealing with the assumptions that other professionals made about their position within the speech and language therapy profession and these experiences were reported to have had an effect on both their training and their positioning within the wider profession.
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List of abbreviations, annotations and terminology

ASHA; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

CPD; Continuing Professional Development

‘cos; word used by participants as an abbreviated version of because

Mid-year; term given to the middle section of a pre-registration programme, could relate to 1-2 years depending on the overall length of the programme

Mid-programme: term given to participants current status within the programme, if the participant has completed one year of their pre-registration training, but still has at least 12 months remaining.

NHS; National Health Service

RCSLT : Royal College of Speech and Language therapist

Significance/significant: of importance to the individual

SLT: speech and language therapy

Speech Pathology; Preferred name for the profession of speech and language therapy in the USA and Australia

Work-based placement; placement in a clinical/health or education setting

Transcription annotations

…….; indicates a participants pause in speaking

[] ; authors addition to the participants words
Speech and language therapy is an allied health profession; the therapist’s primary aim is to work with individuals of all ages with speech, language, communication or swallowing difficulties.

At present there are around 13,000 registered speech and language therapists within the United Kingdom; three percent are male (Blendell, 2009). A decade ago, as reported by Sheridan (1999) the figure stood at 1.9%, indicating that in recent years, the number of male professionals has been gradually rising. In comparison, in both the United States of America and Australia the number of male speech and language therapist/pathologists stands at approximately five percent (American Speech-Language and Hearing Association 2009, Blundell 2009).

In contrast, in similar professions, such as teaching and nursing, the number of registered male professionals in the United Kingdom stands at twenty-five and nine percent respectively (General Teaching Council, 2012, Nursing and Midwifery Council for England, 2011). Previous research with members of these professions has suggested that a male professional is likely to feel isolated, and face difficulties in the workplace through receiving stereotypical comments, and experience discrimination from colleagues and other professionals (Milligan, 2001, Skelton, 2007). Therefore this author suggests that, as the number of male speech and language therapists is appreciably smaller than in the teaching and nursing profession, a sole male student is likely to experience these difficulties to a greater magnitude, which could influence the student’s ability to develop their professional identity.

This thesis explores the experiences of male speech and language therapy students during their journey to becoming a qualified practitioner. This chapter aims to set out the various contexts, literature, policy and personal, in which the research and thesis are situated.

1.1. Literature context

To date there has been a limited number of research studies on speech and language therapy professionals. These studies have either focussed on small geographical areas or with participants gathered through convenience sampling methods. Collectively they have focussed on the factors that encourage and discourage men from entering the profession, the effects of gender on their working experiences and the knowledge of speech and language therapy as a profession within the public arena. They have demonstrated that there remains a cultural stereotyping of both men and the profession, which are not congruent, and that the male individual is likely to face isolation throughout his pre-registration training and professional career (Greenwood et al., 2006, McAllister and Neve, 2005, Boyd and Hewlett, 2001). Consequently, the literature in chapter two addresses a broad scope outside of the profession of speech and language therapy for comparison and critique. It utilises research from comparative professions such as teaching and nursing, as well as literature from gender
studies, higher education and professional studies. The literature review also addresses the concepts of identity development, and the impact of being a minority figure, as this is viewed as influencing an individual’s motivation, ability and determination to become that qualified practitioner.

1.2. Current health policy context

At present I am a senior lecturer on a speech and language therapy programme, and responsible for overseeing the recruitment, selection and admissions process to the programme. I have also been a member of a working party which developed a policy for the promotion of equal opportunities for all onto health profession programmes in the South West of England (NHS SouthWest 2009). These roles led me to assess the policies and procedures relating to recruitment to the local speech and language therapy pre-registration programme.

This review enabled the identification of potential discriminatory practices, and the increase in the number of activities designed to target under-represented groups, for example, men, individuals from non-white ethnic groups and individuals from non-traditional student backgrounds and increase their awareness of the profession and process to qualification. As part of this review it was noted that male students were a notable minority within the student cohorts, which appeared to have two possible causes, the first being the low number of male applicants to the programmes and secondly the higher attrition rate amongst the male students in comparison to their female peers. Although it is important to recognise that the low number of male students skews the attrition percentage, the underlying antecedents to this attrition have yet to be researched.

In the SouthWest region the universities collaboratively provide forums to encourage men to enter health and education professions. These forums include the provision of activity sessions in which male adolescent individuals are able to participate in practices relating to each profession with members of the profession. As a female practitioner, I felt that the promotion of the profession to male individuals was not a suitable activity for myself. This decision was based on the premise that the adolescent boys would prefer to see a male practitioner, who could be identified as a prototype or role model for the profession, and who was able to demonstrate that a man could become a health professional without compromising their masculinity. Additionally, as the number of male speech and language therapy students was comparatively low, I thought the students would benefit from working collectively with other male students from different healthcare programmes; consequently, the small group of male students on our programme completed the activity. The sessions themselves are short introductions to the practices of the profession, designed to engage the interest of adolescent individuals, some of whom may be considering a career in the health sector. The content tends to focus on the scientific basis of working with complex clients, as the students managing the sessions suggested that these would appeal to male adolescents. Whilst the quality of these sessions remained good and the feedback from the participants positive (Turpin 2010, Aimhigher SouthWest 2007) the number of males applying and successfully gaining a place on the programme remained extremely low.

A review of these sessions, with the male students who had delivered them, indicated that
whilst the knowledge of the profession had increased amongst the targeted students and schools, the core role and practices of the profession continued not to appeal.

1.3. Personal context

During my working practice, I had a number of conversations with the students within my programme and ascertained that whilst the opportunities for learning were viewed as non-discriminatory, the experiences of the pre-registration professional training programme differed between the male and female students.

One conversation in particular, which took place during a session preparing mid programme students for their forthcoming work-based placement, stood out. The placement preparation session was designed to enable the students to identify their personal difficulties in relation to the placement and in small groups develop contingency plans and solutions to overcome the problems. One male student in the group identified his problem as ‘not wanting to be viewed as a unicorn again’. He shared that he had a number of experiences on previous work-based placements where he had been introduced as the ‘male speech and language therapy student’, unlike his female peers, where their gender had not been labelled. He was then often scrutinised about his reasons for joining the profession, which were often judged either in relation to his perceived sexuality or as a preference to be surrounded by potential female partners. He had met discrimination, accusations of only wanting to be a manager and being paraded around departments, as he was distinctly different from his peers and the qualified practitioners in the work-based environments. As a lecturer and health practitioner, I was somewhat dismayed to hear this story, but as a researcher, curious to find out whether these experiences were shared by other male speech and language therapy students.

1.4. Research focus

The focus of this research developed from three aspects; firstly, from the informal conversations it became apparent that the experiences of the male students differed from the female students. Secondly, previous research has identified a number of factors that discourage men from entering the profession, but has not addressed the factors that encourage men to enter and remain in the profession. Finally, research with male students and qualified practitioners from other professions has enabled them to voice their experiences and views in relation to being minority practitioners, but this has not been the case in speech and language therapy.

Therefore, this research listened to the voices and stories of male speech and language therapy students and early career professionals from across the United Kingdom, as they described their experiences of becoming a student and a professional in a majority female environment. These descriptions were gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted through a variety of mediums chosen by the individual participant.

The study aimed to develop an understanding of how the male students within this research constructed their professional identity and made sense of their experiences within the profession of speech and language therapy. It was hoped that in developing this understanding
we, the Higher Education practitioners, and the speech and language therapy practitioners, could alter and develop our practice, to enhance the learning experiences of all our students.

The question posed to commence this understanding was;

‘How do male students construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of speech and language therapy?’

The specific focuses being:

How does gender impact on their experience of becoming a qualified speech and language therapist?

How do the male students’ experiences differ from their perceptions of their female peers’ experiences?

How do the students identify as being a member of the speech and language therapy profession?
Chapter two establishes the theoretical foundations in which this study is located and reviews the research literature. Due to the paucity of literature on the profession of speech and language therapy, research literature on similar professions; teaching, nursing and medicine have been reviewed. The chapter commences with the author’s theoretical understanding of the concept of identity, followed by discussion and a review of the research relating to the development and construction of a gender identity. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three sections; speech and language therapy; caring and science, becoming and being a student and becoming a professional and commencing professional practice. These sections aim to provide a landscape in order to understand the experiences of the male students, and how they construct their professional identities.

2.1. Positioning identity

Within this research, identity is viewed as a subject position. Davies and Harré (1990) describe a subject position as a vantage point, a place in which an individual views their social world. Burr (1995) states that the subject position/ identity provides an individual with the schema, concepts and knowledge to view, experience and interact with their social world through the position of their identity. Moscovici (1985) defines these schemas as social representations; a set of ideas about an identity, which provide a homogenising force around a figurative nucleus, whilst simultaneously recognising that the identity is flexible and individualised, but provides the individual with information in order to understand not only the familiar identities but also the unfamiliar subject positions.

The notion of individuality stems from the premise that all subject positions/identities are described by means of what they are, but also in what they are not (Collinson, 2007), or as Derrida (1978) described through difference and deferral, or through absence and presence. Consequently, an individual could describe himself as a male, by depicting the characteristics held by that subject position, consequently implying the characteristics that the position does not hold. If identity is viewed as a subject position in this manner it can be seen that the position is relational to others (Burr, 1995), and therefore not an entity within the individual.

Davies and Harré (1990) argue that subject positions are made available to the individual either through reflexive positioning; in which they take up the position, or through interactive positioning; in which another person offers access to the position. For example, an individual wanting to become a qualified speech and language therapist must take up the subject position of student, which is only available to them if the lecturers within an institution of Higher Education that offers the pre-qualifying programme allow the access. This example indicates that this reflexive positioning is not completed through mutual respect or equality (Becker et al., 1961), but one that recognises the status and the power of the more experienced members of the profession, or identity.
Following this interactive positioning, the individual needs to negotiate themselves within the position, to take into account other subject positions/identities which may be socially constructed as conflicting or associated with the subject position. Burr (1995) suggests that by taking into account the conflicting and complimentary discourses a clearer understanding of why some subject positions appear to be open to specific genders, such as management and masculinity, can be found. This reflexive and interactive process gives rise to the notion that identity is not a fixed, static state which is inflexible, predetermined and replicable (Gergen, 2003), but a state of fluidity.

Burr (1995) argues that this interactive positioning is a result of the discourses and discursive practices located in the individual’s cultural and social worlds. Discourse, in relation to this study, is defined as historically situated representations which are embedded within social institutions, circulated by discursive, descriptive practices (Gee, 2011). Discourses embody the beliefs, expectation and assumptions in relation to an identity and consequently constitute a way of being and thinking in relation to an identity (Gee, 2011, Fairhurst, 2007, Mills, 2004).

Burr (1995) further argues that these discourses and discursive practices provide the structures that depict the possibilities and limitations of the position to the individual, and consequently restrict choice or individual agency. This process of opportunity and limitation echoes the work of Erikson. Erikson (1980) suggested that an individual's identity develops in relation to the outcomes of a series of events or opportunities, provided by members of the individual's society, to perform, negotiate and complete. For example, throughout adolescence an individual is offered opportunities to develop a sense of self in relation to, but with personal agency, family and cultural origins. Erikson’s theory specifically addresses the personal identity, or self, whereas developments of his theory by Marcia and others look more specifically at aspects of identity, such as gender, professional and ethnic identities. In particular, Marcia stresses the importance of opportunity to reflectively test traits and behaviours associated with identities as a fundamental element of a healthy or achieved identity, in contrast to an individual assuming an identity through duplication (Marcia, 1966).

Hollway (1984) suggests that an individual becomes invested within a subject position, by continually repeating the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs in relation to that position, which in turn enables the position to resemble a fixed nature. For example, by continually repeating the behaviours relating to the subject position of student, an individual becomes a student. Berger and Luckmann (1966) highlight the triad nature of this process, from externalisation of a specific behaviour, through the objectification, in which the behaviour becomes associated with the identity, to internalisation in which the individual subsumes the identity and associated behaviours as part of their conscious awareness and acquires a sense of self.

It is argued by the author that the reflexive nature of the investment process could include the process of comparing the self to others in a similar position in order to clarify and allocate meaning to the identity. The presence of this other individual could be real or theoretical, but is perceived as being ideal (Diller et al., 1996), or as encompassing the essence of the subject position. In the literature, the terms role prototype and role model are used to describe this
individual. Whilst it is recognised that much of the literature refers to a role model as a fixed and pre-determined state, this author suggests that that status of role model is acquired through a source of self-comparison and consequently a reflexive and interactive position, rather than a fixed state. Ibarra (1999) stated that individuals compare and contrast themselves to role prototypes, who, are viewed as a source of information about the essence of the identity/subject position, and also the integration of related and conflicting discourses and behaviours. This source of information is viewed as a demonstration of the potential behaviours an individual could perform in relation to the subject position or identity. As a source of calibration in times of transition, rather than a performance to replicate, and a source of information about a set of behaviours, and their associated discourses, for the individual to reflect on as they experiment with their provisional selves (Handley et al., 2006, Ibarra, 1999).

This reflexive process of self-comparison enables the individual to construct the subject position and its associations with other discourses and subject positions, maintaining their sense of agency (Mutch, 2003), allowing for individual interpretation and modification. This in turn enables the individual to self-categorise in relation to these constructions, which may differ from other individuals’ constructions of the positions and discourses. Turner (1975) argues that this self-categorisation requires the individual to understand the identity and what it entails, a process which Davies and Harré (1990) would label as allocating meaning, based on social and cultural influences. For example; if an individual wishes to take up a professional identity, they need to categorise themselves with the profession or not; whether they fit the mould (Tierney, 1997). This process of self-categorising is reflected in the ideas of Lucyclex et al. (2009) who suggested that throughout the process of development, the individual explores, both in-depth and through a wide range of alternative identities. However, this exploration is dependent on the opportunities offered by the social contexts and the individual’s ability to self-reflect and analyse and concludes with the individual making a commitment to the professional identity.

It is this author’s view that identities are fluid-with-boundaries and flexible, constructed through a negotiation with others, some of whom provide the opportunities for the negotiation and the consequential demonstration of identity related behaviours, whilst others provide a template or essence of the identity as a source of comparison and reflection. This negotiation is not one of free-will, autonomy and agency, but of autonomy and choice within the boundaries and constraints set by others and the society which they inhabit.

2.2. The acquisition and construction of a gender identity

Previous studies on speech and language therapy professionals (Greenwood et al., 2006, McAllister and Neve, 2005, Boyd and Hewlett, 2001), in particular male professionals, identified that elements of the profession reduce the likelihood of men wishing to enter the profession. Therefore, in order to understand the research on the experiences of male professionals this section will consider the theoretical positioning and previous studies relating to the acquisition and construction of a gender identity.
Studies from neuroscience have argued that there are a number of biological or physiological differences between the brains identified as male and female, (Jaušovec and Jaušovec, 2005), which led to the assumption that masculinity and femininity are in bipolar opposition. Such studies state that biological differences lead to differences in cognitive performances by gender arguing that females perform better in tests of language, empathy and cooperation and social judgement, whereas males are found to perform better in tests of spatial skills, mathematical problems and embedded figure tests (Baron-Cohen et al., 2005, Falter et al., 2008). These studies appear to demonstrate that sex-typed brains show specificity, in that their structure and organisation predict behaviour and prevent alternate behaviours. However, Fine (2010) argues that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support association of psychological functions with specific structures. Additionally, Sommer et al. (2008) found no significant sex differences in a meta-analysis of neuroimaging studies claiming to support the hypothesis of the lateralised male brain.

Studies on the early development of the human brain in-utero suggest that levels of hormones, in particular testosterone, account for the wide variation in sex-typed behaviour differences between male and female children (Hines, 2011) and that the early hormonal environment leads to structural differences between male and female brains (Goldstein et al., 2001). Numerous studies by Baron-Cohen and his fellow researchers have demonstrated significant differences between ‘male’ and ‘female’ brains in relation to performing behaviours relating to empathy (see Baron-Cohen 2011). However, despite their prevalence and popularity, neurological approaches to gender are not without criticism. Indeed some have questioned such research in regard to its methodology which could have skewed the results. Likewise, neuroimaging studies have demonstrated that ‘male’ and ‘female’ brains utilise different areas of the brain in order to process emotions, with ‘male’ brains relying on cognitive constructs and ‘female’ brains demonstrating a greater reliance on the mirror neurone system (Schulte-Rüther et al., 2008). Whilst these studies could be utilised to generalise that males and females are biologically structurally different, they do not account for, nor do they control the variable of, the wide variation in brain structures and behaviours performed by individuals. Likewise, Fine (2010) argued that the results of such studies have not been through adequate statistical analysis, and therefore the results could be interpreted differently and be dependent on other variables such as caffeine intake and breathing rate of the participants within the studies.

In contrast, Bem (1974) argued that gender identities can be usefully viewed as two concepts or dimensions, not in direct opposition, but discourses which account for the wide variation in behaviour performed by individuals. Butler (1990) argued that if gender is constructed in this free-floating manner, then masculine may signify an individual with female or male body. This separation of gender from biological form indicates that gender is discursively produced (Halberstam, 1998), by the institutional and culture systems that the individual inhabits, and consequently the language systems that they use to describe their experiences of being (Butler 1990). Although Shefer et al. (2006) argued that the meaning of these experiences is not inherent in the language system, but constructed and shaped by broader systems. This sense of relativity gives rise to the notion that gender, like other identities, is constantly unfinished and
unfixed, consequently behaviours that arise from these discourses cannot be understood within a structural framework nor from a unitary position (Butler 1990).

Whitehead (2002) concurs with this view; he stated that the labels of masculine and feminine are rooted in the assumption of truth, as unitary identities, which is a false position, but rather than support notion that gender is a fluid state, he suggested that multiple forms of both masculinities and femininities exist, implying a sense of fixation. These multiple forms develop from the social practices and interactions within the individual's society, rather than stem from pre-conceived social norms, which are internalised by the individuals and enacted (Connell 2002). A number of researchers have explored how masculinities and femininities are constructed through social interaction in a variety of contexts. Collectively, they appear to concur that hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are constructed as the dominant gender identities, and perceived as ideal. Connell (2002) argued that hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity should be viewed as relational gender positions which serve to support the patriarchy and the dominance of masculinity in relation to the subordination of femininities, Charlesbois (2012) added that these positions are dependent on and within the social, institutional and historical contexts in which they are positioned. He further suggested that an individual's behaviour, such as the participation in sports, is an integral element of hegemonic masculinity as the behaviour contributes to sustaining unequal gender relations by excluding and subordinating the individuals who choose not to participate in the behaviours. Connell (2002) also argued that both actors and fantasy figures could be exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, if the behaviours they perform appear to reinforce the subordination of femininities. The author argues that individuals who portray these identities are rewarded in current society. This reward serves not only to reinforce the behaviours, but also leads to the association of specific behaviours with the construction of the gender and its position, rather than with the individual. This rewarding can be seen throughout the individual's life from childhood, in the reinforcement proffered for playing with gender congruent toys (Freeman, 2007), through the practices of education, such as participation in gender defining activities and subject preference (Murphy and Elwood, 1998, Thomas, 1990) and into adulthood and the reinforcement of occupation choice or the association of a profession with a gender position (Jones, 2003, Young, 2003).

This reinforcement from the individual's social world ensures continued performance, assuming that the individual does not actively reflect on the process. Wetherell (1996) argues that through the process of continual portrayal the behaviours associated with a subject position become automatic, consequently the behaviours are then assumed to belong to the gender, rather than be identified as a result of reinforcement or negotiation. Consequently, these patterns of behaviours become integrated into the societal expectations of the identity. Thomas (1990) argues that these social expectations play a contradictory role in the construction of an individual's identity, in that they provide opportunities for construction through, and by interaction within, the social environment, whilst simultaneously limiting the construction through social expectations, implying that construction of an individual's gender identity is through a series of negotiations.
This contradictory role can be viewed in the studies of Freeman (2007) and Francis (2000). In 2007, Freeman questioned parents on their attitudes relating to gender and toy choice, to ascertain the role societal constructions of gender had in reinforcing toy choice in pre-school children. The parents questioned indicated no opposition to their own pre-school child playing with toys culturally associated with a different gender, however, were observed actively encouraging gender matching toys and play (Freeman 2007). Similar results occurred when Francis (2000) questioned a group of school children about their abilities in subjects typically associated as being more aligned to the skills for the different gender. The students suggested that both girls and boys were equally capable at the subjects, yet explained their own skills in the subjects in line with gender congruent behaviour, or explained difference as due to an overall position of gender compromise.

It could be argued that the participants in these studies were simply reflecting an essentialised notion of gender. However, this only explains the behaviours of those observed rather than the expressed attitudes. Azjen (1991) highlights the notion that expressed attitudes do not necessarily lead to corresponding behaviours, as the individual also takes into account their perceived control of the consequences to the behaviour prior to executing the behaviour. Taking both these notions into account, it is highly likely that a parent will express socially acceptable discourses, yet act in an incongruent manner due to the perceived lack of control over the outcome; whatever they do the child will still prefer to play with toys associated with their gender due to the other social influences in their social and physical environments. However, this author argues that the discourse of equality and freedom to choose, which the participants in these studies appear to be reflecting, is a mythical discourse. As whilst members of today’s society are encouraged to view women as equal as men, it fails to encourage the view that men are equal to women and fails to empower the behaviours and roles associated with the female gender, such as caring and working with children.

It is suggested that society continually influences an individual’s gender identity development and performance throughout their life, through powerful others, media and the groups in which the individual lives. These sources continually reinforce stereotypical gender norms, through praise and reward or, mock with ridicule those who do not maintain gender normative behaviours, and as such open or close subject positions for the individual to inhabit, resulting in the individual feeling compelled to perform gender normative behaviours. A great deal of research has sought to explore this gender theory in practice, for example in the Kimmel (2001) study, boys were observed to suppress their feminine traits, such as language skills, when they were surrounded by other males, in order to reduce the risk of their peers questioning their sexuality following a performance of behaviours associated with femininity. This suppression is due to the ideology of masculinity, which equates masculinity with heterosexuality and homophobia, whilst marginalising femininity (Kimmel, 2008). Butler (1990) describes this association as the heterosexual matrix, in which it is assumed that biological sex causes gender identity, which in turn causes sexual identity and sexuality, and that in Westernised society this sexuality is assumed to be heterosexual. Therefore, those individuals who do not match this heteronormative assumption are marginalised and placed in a subservient position.
Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) highlight the fragility of masculinity, as seen in the Kimmel study, in stating that constructions of the position are based on group affirmation. Hogg and Vaughan (2004) state that group affirmation is a process by which social identities, such as gender, are borne through interactions with others. Therefore, the constructions of the social identity and related positions are subject to constant renegotiation and redefinition, therefore easily undermined and risk damage, causing potential difficulties for the individual’s self-esteem and their social positioning. Some individuals choose not to place themselves in this position of risk, as evidenced by the constructions of teaching and speech and language therapy as not for real men by school children (Greenwood et al., 2006, Jones, 2007). Alternatively, Jones (2007) suggests that those who do find themselves in this position distance themselves from identifiable ‘others’ and marginalising the gender identity of these individuals through their descriptions and communication. This performance of ‘othering’, which is described as a process which creates an under-valued, secondary or subordinate position in relation to one’s own (Lévinas, 1997), enabled the individuals to place themselves in a more dominant position within both the profession and gender subject positions and ultimately reduced the risk of the marginalisation of their masculinity.

It is argued that role prototypes could be a useful tool in demonstrating alternate performances of masculinity, and to offer a performance of the association of two previously disconnected positions, such as masculinity and caring. Ibarra (1999) argues that individuals evaluate the behaviour and performances of role prototypes, alongside others who share the constructed identity, in order to examine the feasibility of integrating the behaviour or performed subject position with their current and potential future self. This implies that an individual’s identity is unique and subject to continual reflexivity and negotiation.

The notion of negotiation is echoed in the theory of communities of practice, in which an individual concurrently practices the behaviours associated with the identity and actively constructs the identity, by renegotiating the concepts of the identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Paechter (2003) argues that the notion of a community of practice can be used to explain how masculinities, and femininities, are performed. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is an expansion of the theory, in that communities of practice were originally identified as small localised performances of learning and identity, Paechter suggests that the contextually bound nature of gender leads to localised performances. For example, a performance of masculinity within the context of a school environment with similarly aged peers may differ to a performance in higher education or a professional context. Wenger (1998) states that the individual learns to become a member of the identity by performing the practices on the periphery of the community of practice before becoming a legitimate member, and this trajectory, although not linear is controlled by others who share the identity, indicating that one person’s construction of the identity, influences another’s.

In contrast, some individuals attempt to construct and perform an identity incongruent with the dominant constructions of their society. This incongruence causes difficulties for both the individual and the society in which they are involved. For example, Jones (2003) found that
members of the public identified three types of male teachers of primary age children. They were; superhero, wimp and sexual predator. It could be argued that these are a consequence of confirmation bias, a heuristic device, in which new conflicting information of a social representation is inaccurately assimilated with an alternative explanation (Hogg and Vaughan, 2004). In this case, rather than try to assimilate the previously unrelated discourses of teaching and masculinity, the parents have sought to explain the behaviour through the association with differing formations of masculinity, or sought an alternative discourse to explain the association, rather than with their professional identity.

For a male individual wishing to enter the teaching profession he must overcome these societal assumptions and discourses and reconstruct his subject position by working through the dilemmas between the competing discourses. Conversely, when faced with a male teacher, members of the community must reconcile their behaviour with the assumptions or construct a new identity relating to male teachers. This, alongside the role society and other individuals play in allowing access to specific subject positions and identities, may explain why the male to female ratio of primary teachers remains low. Likewise, as approximately sixty percent of speech and language therapists work with a similar age of client it could be assumed that these assumptions are equally applicable to the constructions of the male speech and language therapist.

It is recognised that societal discourses are slow to change. Prior to the professionalization of the occupations and the newer discourses of accountability and state regulation there were a number of male individuals who committed crimes against children with the repercussions only being established later due to a societal and judicial interest in previously hidden crimes in hard to access institutions (Maguire, 2007). Consequently, society developed a discourse of fear and mistrust relating to men working with children; through the process of generalising the behaviours performed by a few to the gender rather than relate the antecedents to the behaviour within the individual. As State regulation provides a basis for reducing this fear and mistrust, for example the introduction of the Criminal Records Bureau check for all individuals wishing to work with children and the licensing and regulation of professions, the discourses surrounding male teachers and health professionals should begin to change.

To summarise, gender identity is viewed as a construction, as a subject position which has associated discourses and behaviours. The portrayal of the identity is played in-line with societal expectations and constraints, and could include a negotiation with the practices and performances of a gender prototype. However, it is also argued that rather than a fixed homogenic category, gender identity is fluid, and that the individual must resolve dilemmas and contradictions between the discourses in order to negotiate their identity within the constraints of today’s society.

2.3. Speech and language therapy, caring and science.

In order to become a speech and language therapist an individual must be able to integrate the helping identity into their notions of the professional identity and, according to the Royal College
of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), must demonstrate excellent communication and listening skills (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2012). The pre-registration training programmes offer the individual time to acquire and demonstrate this integration and the associated behaviours in both the Higher Education Institution and work-based placements. Although, based on professional experience, the author argues that the work-based placements have the greater impact on the individual, as these placements offer the individual opportunities to work with both clients/patients and the practicing speech and language therapy professionals.

This section addresses the concepts of caring and empathy which are viewed as fundamental aspects of the profession of speech and language therapy and yet, in today's society, are constructed as being associated with femininity (Francis, 2000), which could impact on a male student's experience of becoming a speech and language therapist.

The helping/caring identity is categorised by Grant et al. (2008) as a pro-social identity in which the individual gains satisfaction from working with others in order to improve some aspect of their lives. This broad definition enables a wide range of practices and behaviours to be plausibly associated with the identity. Noddings (2001) states that caring is a relational behaviour, that it implies and requires permission and a relationship between two or more individuals. She goes on to describe two formations of caring; caring-for, which she defines as the face-to-face encounters and caring-about, which is defined as the public realm of caring. Tronto (1993) clarifies the difference between the elements of caring as direct and indirect, with the indirect elements being more associated with the recognition and taking responsibility for a need, whilst direct caring is viewed as the actual behaviour of giving care. In relation to the professions, it can be suggested that teaching and speech and language therapy professionals are expected to perform in relation to the indirect element of caring, in fact it is argued that an individual could not achieve success in the profession without indirect caring. In contrast nursing and, to an extent, professionals working in an early years setting perform direct care. In contrast, Vogt's (2002) characterisation of caring as a continuum of behaviours indicates the possibility of a multiplicity of caring identities and associated behaviours, which include caring as relating to mothering, but also include a number of other associated behaviours, such as caring as relating, which according to Hansen and Mulholland (2005) is not related to gender.

When working with younger children some professionals adopt a role of loco parentis, in that they offer care, support and nurture, and occasionally, provide physical care giving. The notion of mothering in the early years setting is a predominant discourse, forcing male professionals to negotiate their position in relation to this pedagogy (Osgood et al., 2006). Jones (2007) stated that for some, the early years setting is seen as an extension of mothering, and consequently caring is called upon, with the assumption that female professionals are better able to perform this task. In assuming this position, the professionals are ascribing to the essentialist traditional structures of roles for females and males, leading to the assumption that men do not ‘do’ mothering (Haase, 2008). This separation is reinforced by the findings of Carrington's study, which addressed the views of male and female students on primary teaching as a career choice. Carrington (2002) found that the student teachers did not equate working with the
younger child to the teaching role they performed, suggesting that teaching younger children was more akin to caring and nurturing and therefore not a position for a male teacher. For speech and language therapists working in the early years setting the nature and timing of the relationship should prevent a caring as mothering/parenting relationship from developing, in that the relationship between speech and language therapist and child is short-term and focussed on specific difficulties, rather than focussing on the overall well-being of the child. However, it is widely recognised that the performance of empathy and nurturing, which are associated with the performance of caring, are fundamental to building rapport between therapist and client (Rogers, 1992).

The association between the behaviours associated with helping or caring and speech and language therapy has been evidenced by studies seeking to ascertain an explanation for the low number of males within the profession. Collectively, they identified the helping identity, the perceived subject base of the profession, poor remuneration and employment opportunities as antecedents to the low uptake of male individuals into the profession (McAllister and Neve, 2005, Greenwood et al., 2006, Boyd and Hewlett, 2001). Grant (2007) suggested that if an individual is motivated to enter an occupation based on their associations with the caring identity, the individual is less likely to be motivated by financial reward. Likewise, Skeggs (1997) argues that caring is typically associated with low paid work performed by less academically successful women. Therefore, it could be concluded that it is not the helping identity per se that deters individuals from entering the profession of speech and language therapy, but a combination of the helping identity in relation to their male identity. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Boyd and Hewlett (2001) who reported that their participants associated the profession with the notions of caring and helping others, but negatively associated these behaviours with masculinity.

In direct contrast, the participants in the McAllister and Neve (2005) study cited the personal satisfaction they would gain by helping others as a reason for their career choice. This difference in result could be a consequence of the experience of the profession by the participants in the studies. Specifically the participants in the McAllister and Neve study were speech pathology students, and therefore reflecting on their direct experiences. Whereas the participants were school children in the Boyd and Hewlett study, therefore only able to express their expectations of health professionals and popular discourses that associate caring with femininity. Consequently, it could be argued that it is the expectation of the performance of behaviours relating to caring that reduces the likelihood of men wishing to enter the profession, and not the actual performance of the behaviours.

Men’s performance of caring behaviours in the nursing profession has been studied on a number of occasions. Ekstrom (1999) found that male students had lower expectations about their ability to perform the behaviours in comparison to their female peers, this could be due to cultural pressures which encourage boys to suppress these behaviours (Chu, 2005), and consequently have had less opportunities to perform them prior to commencing their nursing training. However, Govier and Boden (1997) reported that in a dichotic listening test male
nurses outperformed female doctors. The dichotic listening test is a test of an individual’s selective attention ability within auditory processing. It requires the individual to identify one spoken sentence from a selection simultaneously presented to the individual (Broadbent, 1954). Collectively these studies indicate that whilst male individuals are encouraged to suppress their behaviours, the culture of the profession actively supports their development, and that performance of behaviours relating to caring such as listening are not dependent on an individual’s gender identity.

The role of the professional environment also appeared to impact on the nursing students in Whittock and Laurence’s (2003) study; they reported that the male nursing students in their study were comfortable with the relationship between themselves, their profession and the performance of caring behaviours. They attributed this finding to the rise of male nurses, and therefore reducing their hyper visibility and increasing the number of male role models or prototypes performing the behaviours therefore reducing the risk of gender identity threat/conflict, although Cushman (2008) warns that only a competent role model can achieve this reduction.

Thomas and Maio further studied the impact of gender role conflict. They reported that despite challenging their male participants to perform behaviours relating to empathy, as a challenge to assumptions about their gender identity, there was no increase in the performance of empathy related behaviours (Thomas and Maio, 2008). Likewise, Cramer (1998) reported that an individual’s masculine identity impacted on how they reacted to their behaviours being labelled as feminine, during a false-feedback test. These studies demonstrate how the internalisation of cultural expectations of behaviour influences the performance of behaviours and arguably skews the self-rating of these behaviours.

Francis (2000) states that whilst caring is associated with femininity in Westernised cultures, a preference for science is constructed as being associated with masculinity. This association reflects the essentialised notions of gender and is reinforced by popular notions such as the ‘male brain’, a highly contested notion which Baron Cohen (2011) argues utilises cognitive processing, rather than emotional perception leading to a preference for systems, rather than empathy. He suggests that this explains the gender inequalities found in science and maths. This notion, previously identified as stemming from contested research, has become popularised by today’s society and has led to a number of activities designed to increase the number of men into healthcare programmes; by stressing the problem solving, scientific and quantitative research basis of the professions rather than the clinical elements of working with people, and utilising empathy. The author suggests that this practice also reflects the current discourses in today’s UK society; of accountability and risk management (Findlow, 2008).

Edwards, Ranson and Strain (2002) argue that the discourse of risk management is a consequence of the societal fear associated with risk taking, previously thought to underpin professional practice, although conversations with colleagues indicated that this practice is often referred to as practice based on intuition, not risk. This has led to a substantial amount of political rhetoric on increased standards relating to patient care, hospitals achieving minimum
standards and financial consequences for those who do not. Alongside increased importance being placed on the notion of lifelong learning and professionals being required to continually update and improve their professional knowledge (Nicoll and Edwards, 2000). However, Pitts (2007) argues that this hides the implicit discourse that professionals are no longer trusted to maintain their own agency and professional development.

These discourses have ensured that health professionals are encouraged to move away from the professional artistry (Fish, 1991) model of practice; in which professional practice was viewed as a vocation, in which holistic, individualised and improvised therapy was practised, with a basis in empathy and listening to the client. To a technical rational (Fish 1991) model; in which the individual therapist is accountable for their practice and the managers and professional bodies utilise a number of mechanisms in order to ensure the professional maintains the expected standards of practice, through adherence to evidence based scientific practice.

The regulatory bodies of the speech and language therapy profession, both state that all speech and language therapists must not only participate in regular and accredited activities of professional development, but must also ensure that their daily practice is underpinned by research (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2012, Health Professions Council, 2007). It could be argued that this promotes health professions, in particular speech and language therapy, under false pretences, as the school children interviewed during the Greenwood et al (2006) study expressed the notion that speech and language therapy is not scientific. In addition, anecdotal information from speech and language therapy students would suggest that a sizable proportion of the practice they have observed and participated in during work based placements has not been based in evidence, but provided on the basis of the professional’s intuition.

The Health Professions Council (2007) devised ‘Standards of Proficiency’ for all the health professions that it regulates. This document states that a speech and language therapist must be able to demonstrate the core knowledge basis of the profession, analyse the systems of language, perform linguistic analysis and be able to work effectively with clients, carers and other professionals. Burnard (2005) asserts that this effective working requires a therapist to: communicate with others, demonstrate empathy and other counselling skills. Consequently, it is argued that a student, whether male or female, must be able to utilise both empathy and science in order to become a successful speech and language therapist.

This section has demonstrated how cultural discourses shape the associations between gender and specific attributes such as caring and a preference for science-based knowledge. The review demonstrated that these discourses appear to reduce the likelihood of a male individual deciding to enter the profession of speech and language therapy or to commence working with young children. However, from the literature it can be seen that this does not prevent all men from entering such professions, therefore it is argued that this discourse affects attitude, but not actual behaviour, or performance of the behaviours associated with caring. Additionally that the absence of these discourses may increase the number of male individuals choosing to enter the
profession and those that have may perform the behaviours relating to caring with increased confidence.

The Royal College of Speech and Language therapists (RCSLT) states that a student must be able to perform the practices of the profession, thus demonstrating a successful integration of these attributes to their sense of self in order to gain qualification as a speech and language therapist. The literature review demonstrates that for some individuals this integration is difficult and dependent on other factors, such as the proximity of peers, volition and likelihood of personal gain. This in turn demonstrates that the integration is individual and unique and that constructions differ from presentation.

2.4. Becoming and being a student

To become a qualified speech and language therapist an individual must successfully complete a pre-registration training programme at an institute of higher education; consequently, an individual positions themselves as a student, and a professional. This section will address the factors that may influence the individual’s construction of their student identity.

It is well documented that the transition into higher education can, for some individuals, be problematic and difficult (Bean and Metzner, 1985, Baxter and Britton, 2001, McCune et al., 2010). This difficulty is increased with the individual’s reliance on outdated stereotypical views of higher education and the student identity, such as a carefree and overindulgent; accompanied by moderate academic demands lifestyle as anticipated by the potential students in Ozga and Sukhanandan’s (1998) study. However, on admission to the arena of higher education, many students found that the culture of higher education was unable to support this antiquated view, as with all areas of the public sector a focus on financial constraint has seen class sizes rise; lecturer-student ratios increase and direct teaching diminish.

According to van Gennep (1960), for some, especially school leavers, attendance at university is an assumed rite of passage, an expected journey for individuals from particular backgrounds or family aspirations. It is argued that in order to become a student, the individual needs to negotiate the elements and performances of the identity in order to ascertain whether the constructions fit with their current sense of self. In particular Woodley and Parlett (1983) identified gender, age, previous qualifications, occupation and place of residence as factors which could impact on the likelihood of a student developing a sense of belonging, becoming isolated from their peers and completing their studies. McGivney (1996) adds that if a student fails to develop a sense of belonging with the learning community they are more likely to decide to leave their programme of study, or become increasingly isolated from their peers.

The individual’s social world impacts on this integration process, in that it can provide information about their potential profession (Alsup, 2006), or encourage entering a specific profession based on family tradition (Niemi, 1997). However, Ozga and Sukhanandan (1998) stated that many students arrived at their Institution of Higher Education poorly prepared by
inaccurate information on the cultures in which the students were expected to become quickly embedded.

Weidman et al (2001) argued that anticipation, which is assumed to include preparation, is the first stage an individual navigates in order to construct a new student identity, in association with their other current and previous subject positions. Weidman et al (2001) argued that this integration takes place over four phases; from anticipation, through the learning of formal and informal performances, values and practices, concluding in the personal phase, which they argued denotes the final integration of the social expectations of the identity and the individuals’ subject positions.

It is argued that the learning that takes place within the development of an understanding of the formal performances of the identity is a reflexive process, relying on both the behavioural elements performed by the individual student and the feedback from others on this performance. Willcoxson et al (2011) stated that dissatisfaction with feedback on assessments was a common theme in a second year student’s decision to leave. Additionally, the relationship between student and their supervisor impacts on the student’s motivation to continue on their programme of study (Golde, 2000), and, according to Hoffman and Oreopoulos (2009), the gender identities of the individuals involved. In relation to this specific study, many speech and language therapy students have their first work-based assessed placement in this mid-programme period. A process which relies on reflexive observation and performance of the informal and formal practices of the profession, self-comparison to expert and other members of the profession, and evaluative feedback from others within the profession, in particular from a nominated, typically female, supervisor. Therefore, in relation to this particular study, it is argued that this could be a significant episode of identity construction.

Once the student has learnt the practices and behaviours relating to the formal stage, they become concerned with the informal expectations (Weidman and Stein, 2003), learnt through interactions within the significant relationships in the community. This concern leads to an increased focus on the practices and performances of the institution, which according to Willcoxson et al (2011) could lead to increased dissatisfaction with the institution, which preceded their decision to leave their programme of study. In relation to speech and language therapy, the individual is expected to integrate with not only their institute of higher education in order to become positioned as a student, but also the social institutions of the profession and, due to the nature of the work-based placements, the social institutions of the NHS and education.

Tinto (1975) argued that this integration is complex, and dependent on a number of factors, including the individual’s peer relationships and the support on offer by the institutions to support their learning, integration, and to meet the expectations of the norms of the institution. This expectation, according to van Maanen and Schein (1979) is fraught with difficulties if the individual has characteristics different than the norm, for example gender or ethnicity. The author suggests that this integration could be complex and problematic for some speech and language therapy students, as according to Stapleford and Todd (1998), the members of the profession are predominately white middle class females. Therefore, an individual who does not
match these norms may become isolated from their speech and language therapy peers or face a null environment, which Meinholdt and Murray (1999) define as an environment in which they are ignored by the other members rather than being excluded. Alternatively they could become less motivated to continue, particularly as some of the practices of the profession are associated with gender identity norms (Meinholdt and Murray, 1999, Conefrey, 2000).

The dominance, by number, of females within the nursing profession has been reported by Wilson (2005) as a negative environment for the male students. Conversely, the students in Stott's study, whilst recognising that they were a minority in the profession and that it was an isolating environment, characterised the isolation as a positive environment as it reflected their preference to study independently (Stott, 2007), which is consistent with perceived male values of competency and achievement and preference for autonomy within relationships (Horgan and Smith, 2006, Paterson et al., 1995). It could be argued, that this preference for autonomy and competence is developed earlier in the individual's education, as evidenced by Kahle et al. (1991) who, on observing classroom interactions, concluded that, in comparison to the interactions with female students, teachers tended to focus their attention on boys, asked challenging questions, and encouraged them to assume leadership roles. The author argues that these academic practices provide opportunities for the individual to develop the skills and knowledge base required for autonomous study and offered significant opportunities for the male students to participate in competition within an academic arena. This previous experience arguably enabled the male student to smoothly transition from formal high school education to the practices of Higher Education, which Berzonsky and Kuck (2005) argue is one of the fundamental difficulties that an individual must overcome in order to establish themselves within higher education and the associated student identity. However, it is questioned whether this learning preference, based on competition and analysis (Sallee, 2011), corresponds with the dominant discourses of performance and reflection found in the health pre-registration programmes of today.

In my higher education setting, it has become custom and practice to match new students with role models in order to provide a formalised forum for support, and to ease the transition from high school education, or employment, to the position of student in higher education. These role models are typically students from higher years in the pre-registration programme and provide different support than a nominated tutor or lecturer. Weidman and Stein (2003) stated that whilst students looked towards the faculty members for support, they relied more heavily on peers; those around them and in higher years, for support beyond day-to-day conversation. Likewise, Buunk et al (2007) highlighted the value of role models; either from the profession, or in higher years in education. In that they offer relief to a student's uncertainty about their current student identity, and that they could be utilised to reduce anxiety relating to novel or ambiguous situations.

Buunk et al. (2007) found that exposure to a successful individual, positioned as a role model, led to an increase in the student's level of inspiration and identification with the identity. Other studies have indicated that the gender of the individuals involved in this relationship influences
its success in supporting the new student. For example, Cross and Madson (1997) reported that female students had a greater need for interdependence and were therefore more likely to offer and seek peer support, whereas male students were less likely to seek support due to the stigma attached to seeking support within male peer groups (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Syed and Azmita (2008) investigated the role of peers in supporting a school leaver when they first encountered higher education. They argued that the individual transfers from using family as a system to support and maintain ethnic identity to spending more time with peers, which heightens their awareness of their ethnic differences, and encourages the individual to rely heavily on peers with similar ethnic origins. Difficulties in forming friendships and a relationship with the institution ensue if the individual has few peers to rely on in this manner. Steck et al (2003) stated that in the United States, race identity can only be understood in terms of the history of oppression. In their study they found that race identity was more salient for individuals who identified themselves as black, attending a university dominated by white individuals, than individuals who identified themselves as white attending a university dominated by black individuals. Steck et al (2003) suggest that this is due to cultural dominance and the integration of the norms of the white identity being encapsulated within the American academic identity, with the expectation that the minority individuals adapt to the majority’s norms, if the majority is white. Whilst this specific study is looking at the experiences of UK based students, parallels can be drawn, as the speech and language therapy profession is dominated with individuals labelled as ‘white’.

To summarise, it was argued that a number of factors influence the individual’s construction and positioning as a student. Additionally that these factors could also affect the relationships between the members of the institutions in which the subject position of student speech and language therapist is located.

2.5. Becoming a professional and commencing professional practice

As stated previously the speech and language therapy student must not only construct their student identity but also their professional identity. A professional identity contains a delicate equilibrium between personal and interpersonal components, which are held in balance by a continual process of reflection, negotiation and definition through interaction with others holding the professional identity and with those who do not. This process enables the individual to maintain the beliefs, attitudes and emotions that mediate their professional behaviour, and signify their commitment and sense of belonging to the profession (Ibarra, 1999, Griffith, 2008).

According to Hoyle and John (1995) a profession is a symbol of a person’s work and hence themselves. However, this representation of the individual is only one of a number of subject positions that they can occupy, therefore cannot be seen as a true symbol of the individual. Although in today’s UK society, the term professional is used as a synonym for accomplished and qualified (Grant, 1999) therefore it could be argued that an individual’s professional identity is a more privileged position, or is held in higher esteem than other identities. Slay and Smith
(2011) state that membership within a profession not only shapes how the individual defines themselves, but also how others perceive them.

Additionally, an individual's professional identity cannot be characterised and explained without reference to other individuals, as identities are inherently constructed through interactions with others. Peel (2005) argues that there are five characteristics of a profession; extensive training required prior to membership, provision of a service, process for licensing and regulation of practice, an ethical underpinning to practice and a recognition of the member's autonomous working status. This list indicates the role practices of the profession have in the representation of an individual's professional identity. Therefore, this section will focus on how the individual can construct their professional identity through the use of reflection and how their experiences and interpersonal relationships within the workplace shape this construction.

When entering a new profession the individual must hold a basic understanding of, and commitment to, the profession (Niemi, 1997, Coulehan and Williams, 2001). It is assumed that without direct experience of the profession this initial understanding is underpinned by the preconceptions of the individual and social influences stating what it means to be that professional (Alsop, 2006). For professions such as teaching and nursing these preconceptions are typically founded in experience of the profession, whereas for speech and language therapy the individual must actively seek information about the profession, as little is available in the public arena (Greenwood et al., 2006).

Some individuals commit to a professional identity, despite evidence of difference between their attributes and those of the profession. Two reasons are offered for this continuation to commitment. Firstly, according to social identity theory (Turner, 1975) when an individual self–categorises with the profession, this analysis is both comparative, in that the individual perceives intragroup differences as less important than intergroup differences, and normative, in which similarities and differences are perceived as consistent within the normative beliefs of the category. Alternatively, when seeking information about a profession information seeking biases can occur, in which the individual chooses to ignore information which does not fit with previously held beliefs (Jonas et al., 2001), as the decision to commit leads to the cognitive response of defending the position, rather than risking changing to a new position (Kunda, 1990).

Both these arguments indicate the process of reflection commences prior to joining the profession. Reflection requires the individual to acknowledge not just the looking glass reflection (Cooley, 1983), but also the relative reflections from both themselves and from others. This requires both high self-esteem and humility in delicate balance. Therefore, it is argued that the new member of a profession does not passively accept and then perform the behaviours of a profession, but they experiment and construct the identity and the knowledge of the profession within the constraints of the value and belief systems of the profession, based on these reflections and comparisons.
An inability to reflect prevents the individual from continuing on the journey from the periphery of the profession to a more central position, due to the expectation by the governing bodies of the individuals continual participation in reflective practice and lifelong learning initiatives, such as CPD activities (Health Professions Council 2011). Consequently, their professional identity becomes a reflection of their professional performances and acts as a means to adapt future behaviours and manage change, demonstrating the value of reflection as a tool for personal growth (Fenwick, 2008, Levine et al., 2006). If the individual has experiences which do not match their previous expectations, or are not able to adequately reflect on them they, according to Cheung (2008), are faced with the decision to quit or accept the status quo, both outcomes arguably then prevent the individual from continuing along the reflective journey to developing their professional identity.

Alongside the ability to self-reflect, an individual joining a health profession must be able to accept feedback from others, which is utilised to validate their representation of their professional identity (Slay and Smith 2011). The continual development of their professional identity can be seen as a self-awareness process by being given opportunities to practice skills, interpret the context and construct meaning from it (Gee, 2011), which relies on the individual continually interpreting their contexts, which, according to Gadamer (1989), is a characteristic of being human.

It is argued that at eighteen years of age, an individual is not yet cognitively competent to actively negotiate the construction of their professional identity through reflection; as to do so requires the performance of continual self-analysis and the ability to perceive experiences from multiple perspectives; cognitive tools typically developed through experience in adulthood (Kegan, 1982). Whilst it is acknowledged that the application of a chronological age undermines the notion that identities are individually constructed, it is argued that the experiences that enable the individual to perform these pre-requisite skills are open, by their social world and educational establishments, to an individual labelled as adult, rather than adolescent. In relation to this specific study, most individuals who commence the pre-registration programmes are in their adolescence, therefore it is questioned whether they are cognitively capable of performing these behaviours.

Further to this, Arnett (2000) argues that this is a difficult time for individuals as the late teen years are a time of profound change, in which the notion of adulthood is only just beginning to emerge. Arnett (2000) suggests that around the age of eighteen years, an individual is just beginning to leave the safety and dependency of adolescence to begin the process of developing independence in adulthood. This statement is reminiscent of Erikson's work on the stages of life; he stated that in industrialised nations prolonged periods of moratorium were common in individuals in their late teens (Erikson, 1980). It is suggested that this stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2000) does not provide the individual with enough space and opportunities to explore possible professional identities before a commitment to a pre-registration programme is required. Consequently many younger students leave their undergraduate programmes citing that the profession ‘is not for me’ which, according to Haslam
et al. (2003), enables them to resolve the threat to their identity, caused by the process of social categorisation.

As previously demonstrated, the admission to an identity or subject position is dependent on interactions with others within the profession. These interactions and the associations with other subject positions and discourses ultimately shape the identity. Sallee (2011) argues that, in particular, gender identities and the associated behaviours can shape a professional group or the organisation/culture that they inhabit. For example, as the dominant gender in nursing is female, it could be argued that the practices of the profession have become associated with the behaviours associated with femininity. Therefore, when an individual joins the profession, they are learning and developing the practices and behaviours of being a nurse, as well as the behaviours associated with femininity, which, as previously ascertained, could cause difficulties for some individuals if this causes a threat to, or conflict with, their gender identity.

In the short-term, in healthcare settings, role models have been used to demonstrate how an individual can congruently perform both gender and professional identities. Wilson (2005) identified that male nursing students benefitted from male professional role models, who demonstrated the integration of the behaviours associated with nursing with those associated with their gender, without their gender identity becoming degraded. The role models were also influential in affirming the students’ aspirations, although Slay and Smith (2011) argue that the absence of minority figures within the profession can also shape an individual’s profession identity. A number of studies demonstrated that mentorship or role models within a profession facilitate the individual in developing their professional identity (Kalet et al., 2002, Lindquist et al., 2006), regardless of gender match, through the provision of immediate feedback on the individual’s autonomous performance and through analysis of critical incidents (Althouse et al., 1999, Bluff and Holloway, 2008, Ackerman et al., 2009). However, this facilitation relies on effective mentoring (Walkington, 2005) and a willingness of the individual to negotiate themselves through the work environments (Coulehan and Williams 2001).

This section has addressed how this willingness to negotiate demonstrates that an individual’s professional identity is not just the outcome of shaping by the workplace and members of the professional body (Collin et al., 2008). This indicated a mutual practice between individual and the professional group (Wenger, 1998), and arguably therefore that an individual’s portrayal of their professional identity is a compromise between their various subject positions and the opportunities and expectations provided by significant others.

A speech and language therapy student is expected to perform the practices of the profession whilst beginning to develop their own professional identity. In order to achieve this, they are offered a number of work-based placements. Not only to demonstrate skills and knowledge of the profession to a pre-determined standard, which mirrors the view that professional identity is a symbol of achievement, but also to demonstrate the core values of the profession, implying that professional identity is more than just this symbol, but is a situated identity (Vélez-Rendón, 2010). This enables the individual to amend and adapt their practices and constructions of their identity in anticipation of or in reaction to the context in which they are located.
2.6. Chapter Summary

To summarise, an individual’s identity is constructed through their interactions with other individuals and institutions in reaction to their expectations and constructions of the identity. This results in the identities becoming situated, resulting in different aspects and behaviours being performed depending on the circumstances and social environment. It was argued that society, through discourses, not only shapes the performance of the identity, but also the associations between various subject positions. The speech and language therapy student must negotiate a number of subject positions and their related discourses, including becoming a student, performing the practices of speech and language therapy and achieving successful professional qualification.

However, it is also argued that the individuals are not involuntary actors (Collin et al 2008) determined by their environment, but also actively navigate the portrayal and self-representation of the identity through negotiation within the interpersonal relationships and between the various other subject positions or identities that they inhabit. This active negotiation enables the individual to overcome conflicts between subject positions and associate subject positions which their social world may indicate are conflicting, such as masculinity and caring. This negotiation, in turn, enables the individual to perform the practices of the profession.

The third section, entitled ‘becoming and being a student’ discussed the various aspects of, and influences on, a male individual’s journey through scholarship, indicating that in order to become a successful speech and language therapy student, an individual should become integrated into both the student and professional community. It was argued that this integration could be influenced by a number of intrapersonal factors including the individual’s abilities to reflect and accept feedback from others, their age, gender identity and ethnic identity, as well as the environmental factors and influences such as the members of the profession and student peers, who not only support the individual’s construction of the student identity, but also act as gate-keepers to opportunities to perform behaviours relating to the identity.

The number of published research articles on speech and language therapy professionals and students is small, therefore the chapter reviewed some of the literature on the experiences of male practitioners in professions similar to speech and language therapy, and found that these professionals and students had sought means to integrate identities socially constructed through discourse as conflicting. Throughout this literature review there was the recurrent theme of the balance between construction of an identity by the society/community that the individual inhabits and the negotiation of the individual to construct their individualised identity. A number of the studies reviewed have either addressed the generalised process to ‘becoming’ or addressed the specific skills and behaviours relating to the expectations of the identity and its current community members. Collectively, within the healthcare setting, role models or mentors were viewed as offering a novice practitioner support and a demonstration of the performance of the integration of various subject positions. It was also argued that reflective practice was an integral element of both the professional practice of a speech and language therapist and in the development of the professional identity.
Previous research with speech and language therapy students and professionals collectively identified the possible antecedents to the low number of male individuals choosing to enter the profession. However, they have not addressed the experiences of these practitioners within the profession, nor whether being a minority individual within the profession affects their experiences of becoming a professional. This research aimed to redress this balance by focussing on the male students experiences of being and becoming a speech and language therapist. The following chapter outlines the methodology for the research.
Chapter three: Methodology

3.1. The study

This research is a study of the experiences of male speech and language therapy students as they develop their professional identities. It is framed within an interpretive phenomenological perspective, and utilises a variety of forms of interview in order to hear the stories and experiences of the male students and early career practitioners. In this chapter, I will; summarise the perspectives and practices that have influenced my approach to educational research, justify my choice of research methods, outline the research approach I took to gain a greater understanding of the topic and my reflections on the process and practices of the research for this specific study.

The details of the design, sampling and content of the phases will be described in more depth later in the chapter. Briefly, the study included two phases; Phase One involved the questionnaire, which ascertained the topics for discussion during the interviews, as well as to provide a brief snapshot of the participant's opinions on the themes of the research and of their professional identity. Phase Two involved the interviews, in which students and practitioners described their experiences of being a male speech and language therapy student. In total twenty-three students completed the questionnaire and twelve, ten students and two practitioners, participated in the interview phase.

3.2. Identifying the influences

The practice of educational research can be as individual as the researcher, as the practice of research is learnt through immersion in the research environment and practices (Popkewitz 1984), and frameworks. This immersion enables the novice researcher to identify and construct their own research practice based on their observations and interactions with other researchers and reflection on their own experiences of research. Therefore in this section I aim to highlight the perspectives and practices which have influenced my research practice and in particular this study. The influences discussed are; the interpretative approach, phenomenology and reflective practice.

This triad combination allows for the recognition of a constant cycle of reflection, and the role that this plays in the interpretation of experiences and stories from both the perspective of the researcher and of the individual participant. It enables recognition that for the individual, realities are multiple in form, and that our experiences of a specific focus vary over a course of a day and lifetime in response to our changing environments. In this particular study, it has enabled the participants to address the question of the impact of their gender on the development of their professional practice, through descriptions of their practice and experiences whilst acknowledging that this impact may differ, depending on the work-based placement or university environment that they are located.
The focus of interpretative research is the subjective meaning of an individual's lived experience and the goal is to understand this subjective meaning (Dilthey, 1976). Lavallee and Robinson (2007) suggest that illumination is a concept central to interpretative research, in which the researcher aims to shed light on an experience and the individual's meanings relating to that experience in order to understand it. However, Blumer (1954) argues that the role of the researcher is to direct the essence of the experience rather than to provide a direct description. Likewise Packer and Addison (1989) state that the report should not just be a mirrored reflection of the experience but an improvement, therefore this illumination should be viewed as interpretative illumination rather than true image or reflection in order to aid understanding.

Schwandt (2000) argues that the key to this understanding is the interpretation and constant review of the material from the participant, through the utilisation of the hermeneutic circle; in which the whole is understood in relation to its constituent parts, and the parts are understood in relation to the whole. Geertz (1973) states that this constant interplay is further enhanced through the reading and writing process, and as such should be seen as an integral element of the process of analysis and understanding within interpretative research. In relation to this particular study, the constituent parts are identified as the individual participants; therefore, their experiences are understood within the context of the discourses, interpersonal relationships, identities and subject positions that they inhabit. It is this constant interplay between the constituent parts and the whole of the study which characterises interpretative research apart from other forms of research, in that the individual elements of the study can also be viewed as performing an interplay between their component elements and the whole. For example, Schwandt (2000) highlights that the initial understanding of a lived experience is performed and produced through dialogue, and is not just a reproduction of an experience, therefore during the interviews the participants are producing a formation of their experiences, which has to a greater or lesser extent already been produced and reproduced through a cycle of reflection and analysis.

The phenomenological approach aims to understand social phenomena, such as identity, and the social actions relating to the phenomena. Within this form of phenomenology, the researcher aims to understand and consequently report the participants’ subjective interpretations of their social worlds (Ernest, 1994), from the position of their perspectives, whilst dispensing with taken for granted meanings of objects (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004). In its initial form, phenomenology was a descriptive perspective, and that focussed attention on a subjective description would lead to a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon (Moran, 2000). van Manen (2003) argues that a focus on their lived and taken-for-granted experiences, such as their experiences of being a student and participating in a work-based placement, becomes a central aspect of the research. It is the careful examination of an individual's lived experience through their descriptions of that experience (Smith et al., 2009). When working within this perspective, the details of the experience are viewed as more important than the individual's understanding of the experiences and the meanings that they have taken from it (van Manen, 2003, Moran, 2000). This enables the researcher to begin to understand the experience from the viewpoint of the individual who experienced the focus of the study, rather
than utilising the researcher's prior knowledge. The approach provides a focus on the comprehensive descriptions of the experience, which according to Husserl, can later provide a basis for reflection and interpretation (cited in Moran 2000). Therefore, knowledge can be gained by listening to the voice of the individual, which is not then generalised to a larger population through assumption or interpretation. However, Lopez and Willis (2004) state that if commonalities are found between participants who have had similar experiences, then generalities could be drawn.

Husserl stated that the aim of phenomenological research was to gain an eidetic variation of the experience under scrutiny, by comparing the individual's experience to others (cited in Moran 2000). In order to achieve this aim the researcher is required to identify and then dispense with/bracket off (Lopez and Willis, 2004) their perceptions, values and assumptions relating to the experience in order to naively interpret the materials the participant offers (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast, Heidegger (1962) stated that the aim of phenomenological research is to; examine an individual's factual existence; to examine experiences as they appear to the individual, recognising that reality is a lived experience (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008), and therefore contains interpretations and influences which cannot be fully dispensed. Heidegger (1962) suggested that the research should focus on the interpretation of the meaning of being-in-the world, recognising that we cannot objectively separate the individual from their context, nor the context from their individual, therefore encompassing an element of interpretation within the description, rather than viewing it as a separate and secondary process.

In line with Heidegger, I view this process of bracketing and separation, as a naive assumption, in that the position of being value-free in research is an assumption-laden position in its own right that cannot be dispensed with. Therefore in my study, I have taken the approach of later phenomenologists who have examined the descriptions of an individual's experience, whilst recognising that we do so through our own social-historical and socio-cultural lenses and that the descriptions of an experience are also value-laden and linked to the social, cultural and political contexts of the individual (Heidegger 1962, Leonard 1994).

As Smith et al. (2009) stated, our understanding of a situation is always mediated by existing knowledge; therefore working within this framework, a phenomenological researcher not only holds an emic approach to the research, but also an etic approach, in that the researcher begins to develop an understanding of the experience from inside the individual’s perspective, and from their outside/etic perspective (Crang and Cook, 2007). This dual approach enables the focus of the research to be the illumination of the experience through the voice of the individual who experienced it, whilst recognising the contexts of this illumination and description. Therefore for me, utilising a phenomenological approach is not only about asking the participants to describe their experiences but also asking them to describe what they mean, and how this relates to their social-cultural contexts, which takes the description beyond the mundane and taken-for-granted experiences (van Manen, 2003) to something which is illuminating and explanatory. The social-cultural context should also include the interview in order to prevent a systematic error (Piaget, 1929), in which conclusions are sought and later,
during reflection and analysis, proved to be incorrect or unfounded. Chase (1996) argues that involving the participants in a review of the data may prevent this error. It is argued that the individual analysis by the researcher offers the etic category of analysis to complement the emic analysis offered by the participants during the interviews. However, it is recognised that reflection distorts the phenomenon (Moran, 2000) that as the cycle of reflection and interpretation continues, the focus of the study could be moving further away from the individual participant's initial constructions and descriptions, therefore it is of paramount importance that the interpretative researcher attends to the quality, authenticity and trustworthiness of the research. How this was managed in this particular piece of research will be discussed later in the chapter.

This process of illumination and description echoes the description of reflective research by Carr and Kemmis (1986) who stated that research practice should be a continuous cycle of analysis, transformation and application. However, Johns (2004) argues that reflective practice should be a way of being, demonstrating that the continuous cycle of practice and reflection should become a central element of the researchers identity, suggesting that the identity of a researcher is not just a socialised construction as indicated by Popkewitz (1984) but a negotiation through practice and reflection.

3.3. The researcher, the participants and their relationship

Working within the phenomenological perspective a researcher should recognise and identify their experiences, assumptions and position with the research, whilst also acknowledging the subjective lived-in experience of the participants within the research, and that their experiences, and the storytelling around these experiences are shaped and negotiated within, and by, their relationship with the researcher and the research. Consequently, this following section will address the position of the researcher, the position of the participants and the relationship between researcher and participants, within the context of this research.

It was important for me, as a female lecturer researching the experiences of male students, to identify and reflect on the reasons for completing the research as well as my values and assumptions about the research and the potential participants prior to commencing the research. The reasons for completing this research were outlined in the introduction chapter; a reflection of how I may have influenced the interviews is discussed later in this chapter, consequently this section will focus on the role that I assumed as researcher and its potential impact on the participants and my relationship with them.

Three subject positions need to be addressed in relation to this specific research. These are identified as; the positions of researcher, lecturer and female. The identification of these subject positions, allows me, as a phenomenological research to identify the potential discourses and assumptions, which may influence my perspective on the participants stories and how they may influence my participation in the processes of this research. The role of the researcher within qualitative research is, according to Glesne (1999), dependent on the situation, context, values and personality of the researcher. It is also arguably dependent on the permission of others.
placing me within that position, as without the Doctorate of Education programme, I would solely be holding the position of ‘curious lecturer’, rather than the complementary positions of researcher and curious lecturer. As a researcher, I maintained the position of empathetic outsider. This position was maintained through the interpersonal relationships with each individual participant, with the recognition that this relationship influenced the experiences of the research and the sharing of their experiences. In order to support the participants sharing their experiences I developed a safe and secure relationship, which in-line with Gair (2012) was dependent on my demonstration of empathy. Empathy is described by Rogers (1992) as the understanding of another’s frame of reference, to hear and understand their lived experience. This definition appears to echo the view of Weber who stated that the researcher should aim for ‘verstehen’, understanding of the other’s lived experience (Ritzer and Goodman, 2003). Additionally the role of empathetic researcher prevents the researcher from treating the interview as a mundane functional task designed to gather enough data from the individual participant before its conclusion (Fontana and Frey, 2005).

As a lecturer on a speech and language therapy programme, researching the lived experiences of speech and language therapy students, it could be argued that I am positioned as an insider, as I have common and shared knowledge about the journey the individuals have taken; from deciding to enter the profession, through to gaining professional qualification. However, I am not a qualified speech and language therapy professional. Therefore, I have not travelled this journey; consequently, I would argue that I am positioned as an outsider. This dual positioning is described by Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2008) as insider-outsider, a position from which the researcher is able to acknowledge the elements of shared experience and knowledge with the participants, but also acknowledge the level of this shared history. Adler and Adler (1987) offered three levels of insider membership; peripheral, active and complete. I have self-identified as a peripheral insider, this positioning acknowledges the fundamental differences between my participants and myself, I am not a speech and language therapist or student, nor do I position myself as masculine. Whilst it is acknowledged that this positioning appears to place me in bipolar opposition to the participants, and consequently supports the notion of fixed identity states, the shared experiences and knowledge between myself and the participants, the experiences of higher education and the National Health Service (NHS), demonstrates the flexibility within these positions. These shared experiences indicate one of the fundamental reasons for completing this research; to inform and potentially alter my practice as a lecturer on a speech and language therapy programme.

The final position to address is that of gender. I am an individual who positions herself as female, researching the lived experiences of individuals who position themselves as male. It is argued by some theorists that matching the gender identity of researcher to participant may lead to an improved relationship and increased level of sharing on behalf of the participant, due to the assumed commonalities (Wasco and Bond, 2010). However, this assumption is based on research addressing the relationship between professional therapist and client, in addition to the assumption that gender is a fixed homogenic category.
Within the context of this research, gender is not viewed as a fixed category, but as a subject position. Subject positions (as depicted in chapter two), are viewed as vantage points (Davies and Harré, 1990), from which an individual views their social world. This perspective is influenced by the social discourses and assumptions discursively associated with the subject positions, which according to Paechter (2003) is influenced by, but not tied to, the form of the body.

Viewing gender subject positions in this manner, indicates that I, as a female, could potentially have a different perspective on the social worlds of higher education and the health service workplace than my participants, however the aim of this research was to hear the voices and experiences of the male students, treating their descriptions as testimonies, therefore I aimed to listen, record and share these stories, whilst recognising that from my gender position I may have a different perspective of the stories, but that the emphasis should remain on their experiences. This role of outsider prevents the researcher from becoming too involved in the construction of the individual's experiences and enables the individual participant to maintain their role within the interview, of expert of their lived experiences. Whilst Fielding and Fielding (1986) argue that it should not be assumed that the participants always hold this privileged position, this positioning was in-line with the methodological underpinnings of this research.

Kvale (2007) offered two metaphors to describe the relationship between the researcher and their participant, the first typifies the researcher as a ‘miner’; someone who seeks and reports, in contrast the ‘traveller’ who journeys with the participant and then reports on the story. The positions of empathetic insider/outside and expert could lend themselves to either form of the relationship, but with differing outcomes. The ‘traveller’ with a fluid conversational style of interview would lead to a shared construction and understanding of the students’ experiences, arguably this requires a greater level of insider membership than peripheral, as identified previously, and leads to knowledge construction. In contrast, the ‘miner’ style of relationship would utilise a semi-structured or structured approach to the interview, with the researcher identifying the nuggets of data pertinent to the aims of the study, leading to knowledge collection. Kvale (2007) likens the ‘miner’ formation to Husserl’s search for the phenomenological essence of an individual’s lived experience, consequently this research has taken a ‘miner’ approach, in order to listen to and collect the experiences of the male speech and language therapy students.

3.4. Ethical considerations

In addition to considering the role of the researcher and participants, certain ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the University of Exeter (see appendix twelve). The research placed a number of demands on the participants, in either completing the questionnaire or participating in the interviews. Josselson (1996) stated that to explore an individual’s identity and life is to interfere with the individual and their social world, and that, bar reasonable considerations, a researcher cannot protect the individual from this intrusion. In the research, the interviewed participants shared their understanding of their identities in relation to the
profession and described situations that may have influenced their choices, behaviour and consequential identity formation. By the nature of this intrusion it is likely that the participants will question their identities and choices, and compare themselves to others, as self-interpretation is at the core of self-identity in modern life and humans cannot exist without doing so (Gadamer, 1989, Giddens, 1991).

Whilst it is recognised that participating in self-reflection can lead to self-doubt (Attard, 2008), for some individuals this process of self-interpretation may lead to positive consequences, as by participating in discourse, identities can develop (Gee, 2011). However, Bar-on (1996) warns of the risk of the researcher performing a self-serving bias; to assume that the research holds value for the participant as well as the researcher. Therefore, in order to complete the research, this position was accepted alongside the acknowledgement that, as researcher I could not take sole responsibility for the potential consequences of the research. However, as researcher I did take into account a number of ethical considerations in order to minimise the impact of participation on the individuals involved. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (2011) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines for research (2009) were used as tools for this reflection. The following four sections are a summary of the ethical considerations made during the process of the research, the first three are based on the guidance from BERA and the BPS, the final fourth section is a summary of the local/research specific considerations made.

3.4.1. Informed consent

The potential participants were fully informed of the process and purpose of the research prior to participating. Smith et al (2009) and Chase (1996) state that the researcher should clearly state their personal aim for the research to the participants in order to increase the participants’ understanding of the research and to inform their choice of whether to participate. Every participant was given a written précis of the research and a consent form outlining their rights, to read and reflect on (see appendix three and four). Their consent was gained without the presence of the researcher in order to reduce the likelihood of student conformity, which is a state of forced agreement to complete an activity on request by a person in authority. Whilst it is recognised that consent is an on-going process, they indicated their consent to participate and understanding of the research by signing the consent form.

The potential interview participants were informed about my gender and employment status, in order to allow any potential participant who was not comfortable with discussing the topic of the research with a female, to decline to participate. Information about my employment status was also offered as the target population was relatively small, and therefore the openness enabled the potential participants to be fully informed prior to agreement. This decision led to some of the male students in my own institution declining to participate in an interview, which they might not have done, if the research had been conducted from a different institution. From the invite to participate, the researcher is exercising power over the potential participants, in that by requesting participation they are involving the potential participant in a dilemma of whether to conform to social norms and agree to participate, or decide not to, and conform to social norms.
to justify their choice. Consequently, the form of participation was left to the choice of the potential participant.

3.4.2. Right to Withdraw

In addition to the written précis, the potential participants were offered the opportunity to question the researcher either face to face or via an email conversation, about the research topic, content of the interviews and process of the research at any stage of their participation. The participants were given the researcher’s email address in order to ask any questions about the research after the interview date. After the verbal interviews, the researcher sent a copy of the transcript to the participant. Both these practices enabled the participants to monitor and continually reflect on their own participation, enabling them to choose to withdraw, along with all the data they had given to the research at any point within the research process. How the participants behaved in relation to this potential on-going situation is discussed in the interview section of this chapter.

3.4.3. Protection of the participants

The BERA and BPS guidelines state that the researcher should consider the potential harm caused to the participants as a consequence of participating in the research. The aim of the research was to hear the stories and experiences of the participants, therefore no deception of participants was involved. However, the nature of the focus of the research could lead to negative consequences for the participants. In particular, it was recognised that in talking about their experiences of difference within the profession it could lead to the student participants questioning whether they had a future in the profession, therefore, it was necessary to address how these potential consequences could be minimised. In all the interviews, the students were encouraged to identify an individual who could support their critical reflections following the interview, as it was not the role of the researcher to offer this.

All of the information and stories received from the participants were anonymised. As the number of male speech and language therapy students is small, the names of their higher education institution, workplace and work-based placement provider were removed from the transcripts and written interview scripts. All the participants and other individuals named during the interviews were given a pseudonym. These were allocated alphabetically based on the order of the interviews.

3.4.4. Local ethical considerations

During the research, a number of local considerations were made in order to protect the participants, their participation and their data. All the verbal interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, the audio recordings were then downloaded onto a password-protected area of the researcher’s computer equipment and the original recording deleted from the Dictaphone. The face-to-face interviews took place in pre-booked rooms on the participant’s university campus. The rooms were pre-booked in order to reduce the likelihood of interruption, and to offer the participant an element of privacy away from their student peers. In one institution, a number of
interviews were booked with participants; these were booked at two-hour intervals, to ensure a good time lapse between each participant in order to maintain confidentiality for each individual participant. The Skype/phone interviews were arranged for a mutually convenient time when the participant and researcher could ensure privacy.

The transcriptions of the verbal interviews and email interviews were stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher’s computer system, the completed questionnaires stored on a web-based system, within a password-protected file.

3.5. Data collection

The data collection occurred in two phases, the first phase utilised the questionnaire, whilst the second involved interviews. In this second phase, the potential participants were offered the choice of mode of interview. They were able to select from; face-to-face, telephone, Skype or email interviews. This choice enabled the participants to choose a mode of participation to suit their workload balance, geographical location and personal commitments.

It was decided to offer the opportunity to participate in the research to all male speech and language therapy students and practitioners in the United Kingdom, in order to hear a wide variety of experiences and stories from the participants and to contrast from previous research that had utilised either cluster or convenience sampling techniques. This decision enabled the participants to be homogenous by gender and programme of study, but allowed for potential geographical differences and variation.

In order to gain a wide sample of individuals, contact was made with an identified lecturer on all the speech and language therapy pre-registration training programmes within the United Kingdom. The lecturer was asked to forward on an email, with an embedded link to the questionnaire, to all the male students on the programme within their institution.

In addition to the email, a letter was printed in the RCSLT’s monthly bulletin outlining the research and asking volunteers to participate, and a Facebook page set up linked to the RCSLT’s Facebook page. These three methods enabled the research to be introduced to the wider professional group as well as the potential participants, resulting in a number of individuals volunteering to be part of the research.

A follow up email was sent to the Higher Education Institutions after it was established that the students who had volunteered had all attended the same five universities, all of whom were based in large urban areas. This second email resulted in a number of additional participants from a wider range of universities. The male students from my own institution were also invited to participate, but most chose not to due to the student-researcher/lecturer relationship that we had.

In total, twenty-two individuals completed the questionnaire, with ten offering to participate in a form of interview. In addition, two contacted me directly either via email or the Facebook page offering to participate in an interview. Nine of the interviewed participants were currently on an
undergraduate pre-registration programme, one of whom was on a joint honours programme, which enabled him to gain both registration as a speech and language therapist and join the British Psychological Society. Two of the interviewed participants had completed an undergraduate pre-registration programme. Pen portraits of the individuals who participated in the interviews are in appendix 1. Whilst it is recognised that twenty-two participants is a low percentage of the overall population of male speech and language therapy students, the participants within the research attended fifteen of the seventeen institutions offering speech and language therapy pre-registration training programmes.

3.5.1. Phase One; The Questionnaire

The questionnaire (appendix five) was designed to survey a wider group of male student speech and language therapists to ascertain the topics for consideration within the interviews. The questionnaire was made available to potential participants on-line; the link to the questionnaire was embedded in the introductory email that they were sent on agreeing to participate. Other formats were available on request. It was decided to design an online questionnaire as this enabled the potential participants to quickly complete the questionnaire at a time to suit their lifestyle; recognising that higher education students are more computer literate than other populations of individuals (Deloitte, 2005) the use of an online survey was not deemed problematic.

There are a number of previously identified benefits of using an on-line survey in research in comparison to paper surveys. These include; reduced cost, ease of distribution and effortless data entry and coding (Dillman, 2007, Lefever et al., 2007, Kays et al., 2012). Additionally previous experience of online questionnaires by the author, led to the conclusion that utilisation of an online survey reduces the problems associated with emailing an electronic version of a paper-based survey, such as the requirement to provide the electronic copy in multiple and alternative formats.

When researching individuals’ views and attitudes relating to specific issues, there is a risk that an individual will answer in a socially desirable manner or refrain from answering questions self-categorised as sensitive, such as the questions in section three of the questionnaire as outlined below. However, Tourangeau and Yan (2007) argue that individuals are more willing to answer sensitive questions if they are completing the questionnaire individually rather than when faced with the researcher. Additionally, Joinson et al. (2007) identified a higher response rate from male individuals from on-line surveys in comparison to paper based surveys. It could be argued that the electronic completion of the same questionnaire feels less personal than a hand written response, which is a reflection of the self in comparison to a typed response, which feels impersonal. Therefore, it could be argued that a better response rate could be gathered from on-line questionnaires than paper or face-to-face surveys or paper surveys for this specific topic of research. However, it is recognised that whilst many individuals are increasingly sharing private and sensitive information on-line across a broad range of interfaces, such as blogs, chat rooms etc., this information is inherently skewed to represent the constructed self -image the individual wishes to publically portray.
The questionnaire had three sections. Following an explanation of the research, the first section was designed to gain background information on the participant. The second section ascertained the participants reasons for choosing speech and language therapy, whether they had considered other professions and their views on the diversity amongst the profession’s members. This section contained both forced choice answers and open text boxes. The forced choice options were designed for ease of analysis and as a memory aid, to reduce the use of faulty recall by the participants. They were developed from themes taken from the literature search and a working knowledge of the profession of speech and language therapy. The open text boxes were all optional, allowing the participants to expand on their forced choice answer if they wished to do so, and acted as tool to commence critical reflection on the topics of the research, which was hoped to ignite a positive response to the request to participate in an interview.

The final section of the questionnaire was a reproduction of the Professional Identity Scale, developed by Adams et al. (2006), and previously Brown et al. (1986). The scale addressed the three components of group/profession identification; awareness, evaluation and affect (Brown et al 1986). If it is assumed that an individual develops their identification over a period of time, for instance during their pre-registration training programme then a difference in scores on the professional identity scale should be found between those students who have just commenced their programme and those about to complete. It is recognised that a measure of an individual's identity conflicts with the notion of a negotiated identity as outlined in the literature review. However, it provided a snapshot view of their identity, in terms of ascertaining whether or not students perceived themselves as part of the profession. Additionally, it provided themes for discussion in the interviews and, where there appeared to be elements of discrepancy within a single questionnaire, points for clarification. Finally, the analysis of the scale provided an insight, as predicted, into the intensity of the relationship between the participants and their profession, which is discussed more fully in the following chapters.

3.5.2. Phase Two; The interviews

The participants were offered a choice of formats for the interviews, to suit their time availability and personal preferences. Consequently, of the twelve interviews completed, eight were face-to-face, one over the telephone, one utilised video conferencing/Skype and two were written in format utilising an email system. Lummis (1987) argues that oral communication is richer in communicative power than written communication, as it contains both nonverbal communication and paralinguistic content, in addition to the content of the talk. Whilst this is recognised, it was felt that a variety of communication methods could add depth and variety to the research, and the differences in format enabled a greater number of participants to be involved in the research and have their stories and experiences heard and shared. Additionally Gillham (2000) states that individuals talk more easily than they write, consequently the reflection and task pressure on the individuals who chose a written format may have been considerably higher. However, the written format does relieve the pressure on the individual participant to reply immediately to a
question, enabling them to take time for reflection and consequently reduces the strain of the interview process.

As the differences in format were due to personal choice, there were no content differences between the interviews, however it should be noted that the written/email interviews were shorter in text than the transcriptions of the verbal interviews, with verbal interviews ranging from 50 to 120 minutes in length. Maxwell (1996) warns about the folly and error of inaccurate or incomplete data. In order to prevent this occurrence, all the verbal interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed.

The interview schedules (appendix six and seven) were designed following an analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire, and from the review of the relevant literature. In order to allow for comparison between the participants, the schedule for the email interviews did not radically differ, it only differed to allow for the lack of verbal prompts, probes and follow-up questions. The addition of the individual questions enabled the researcher to follow up on anomalies within the questionnaire or to probe a particular answer further, which enabled the development of a forum for the expression of rich accounts of the individuals’ lives. A view which is echoed by Karlsson et al. (2010) who utilised interviews to develop a greater understanding of the needs of family members, which had been previously and briefly outlined in a survey.

Prior to the verbal interviews, a summary of the types of topics to be covered in the interview was sent to each participant. This acted as a memory aid to encourage retrieval of stories and reflections which may have not been spontaneously shared in an interview setting (Cook et al., 2003). Consequently, many of the participants had made a number of written notes prior to the interview of topics and stories they wanted to share. Additionally, in most of the interviews, the semi-structured style acted as a prompt rather than a schedule, as the first question led to a long reply from the participant and the remaining questions were often answered within this first reply. This led to the interviews feeling more like a relaxed conversation about the participant’s experiences, rather than a mining of the participant for information.

One interview was held with each participant. O’Connor (2007) argues that this results in idiosyncratic data. However, as the content of interviews addressed, in some cases, a span of three years it was felt this would provide elements of comparison across the stories and experiences. At the end of each interview, the participants were offered the opportunity to provide more information and stories to the researcher if they wished to do so following their anticipated reflection on the interview.

Roberts (2002) warns about the risk of a lack of internal consistency within the data collected, which can subsequently lead to problems with the trustworthiness of the data and analysis. In order to reduce the likelihood of this risk occurring, follow-up questions and probes were used in all the interview formats to check the consistency of the participant's story. For example, Craig shared a long description of his experiences which appeared to contradict a previously shared anecdote. Probe questions were used to ascertain the relationship between these experiences.
3.5.2.1. Face to Face Interviews

Interviews allow the researcher to gather information in a sensitive, flexible and, if required, delicate manner (Mills, 2001). Kvale (2007) describes the interview as a conversation with structure, although it is questioned whether in this research context this definition is helpful, as the interviews required pre-planning, a set time, place allocation and understanding of roles, all of which differ in meaning and understanding to the roles and topic content of a conversation. The interview relies on both parties sharing an understanding of the roles and formation of the conversation and to agree on a shared meaning for their communication. This shared meaning can be impacted upon by both the participant and the interviewer through both conscious and unconscious motives (Smith, 1996, Mills, 2001) and displayed during the communicative performance of the interview. Consequentially, it is the role of the researcher to take into account these performances, as well as the social, cultural and political contexts of the interview and its setting, when performing an analysis of the interview.

Mishler (1986) stated that interviews can empower disadvantaged groups by validating and publicising their views. In this particular study, the interviews and consequential analysis has enabled the lone voices of a few male speech and language therapy students and practitioners, particularly those who found themselves the only male within a large cohort or professional group of female students/practitioners, collated into a group focus.

The interview can take two significantly different forms; in-depth unstructured and semi-structured forms. It was decided that a semi-structured form met the needs of this study and the honest aims of the researcher. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to maintain ultimate control on the content of the interviews, through appropriate questioning, probing, scaffolding and utilisation of the behaviour Flick describes as purposive topical steering (Flick, 2009). It enables the researcher to gather data based around a predetermined schedule, yet offers the opportunity to enable the researcher to choose not to ask all the questions on the schedule (Smith, 1995). This style of interview is described by Mills (2001) as guided and focussed, and this explanation indicates the expected experience of the interview for the participant, as it is expected that they are able to share their experiences and thoughts in an open environment and with the scope for the participants to talk at length, on a tangent and pursue a theme. Although Smith (1995) argues that, an individual’s subjective experiences can be difficult to gather and ascertain through a structured format, as the participants do not hold the power within the relationship.

3.5.2.2. Interviews via ‘Skype’

It is argued that interviews using the full ‘Skype’ facility, with webcam, are similar to the performance of a face to face interview, in that they are synchronous, and allow both parties to respond to the verbal as well as the nonverbal communication, although the response to the nonverbal cues is dependent on the quality of the equipment (Wright and Griffiths, 2010). Wright and Griffiths (2010) argue that Skype allows both parties in the conversation to remain in a safe
and secure place in order to participate, rather than entering one another’s private home or workplace. However, when completing the Skype interviews I found them intrusive, in comparison to most of the face to face interviews which were completed in a mutually convenient university based space. The Skype interviews were all completed from my home, in a room that I had carefully depersonalised, yet the participants had not, leading me to feel as if I were intruding into their private personal spaces. It was decided to depersonalise my home space in order to prevent any personal items becoming points of discussion or conflict and in order to reflect the spaces in the university setting used for the face-to-face interviews.

3.5.2.3. Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews can offer a participant a greater level of control of the process, in that according to Holt (2010) the participant is more able to rearrange the interview for a later more convenient time, than if the researcher was there in person. This control mirrors the factors of convenience and privacy, identified by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) as sources of influence on an individual participant’s choice to participate in a telephone interview over a face to face interview.

Due to the lack of visual cues to nonverbal communication, telephone interviews could require a greater level of communicative skill from both the researcher and participant, in that they both must fully verbalise and articulate thoughts, questions and responses, although Holt (2010) argues that this adds to the richness of the data collected. Silverster and Anderson (2003) compared the responses of participants to a task completed both via a telephone and face to face. They found that the telephone interviews were more task focussed than the face to face interviews, suggesting that the lack of visual cues and anonymity, which telephone interviews can offer, influences the participant’s responses and interactions with the researcher and interview process.

3.5.2.4. Email interviews

Email interviews differed in format, as they could not mimic a conventional conversation. Like the verbal interview participants, the participants were sent a summary of the types of topics to be covered, and then agreed a date for the ‘interview’ to commence. This enabled the participants to identify a time when they would be able to complete the interview, within the constraints of their work patterns, which had prevented a verbal interview from occurring. On the agreed date, the participants were sent the first questions to reflect on and answer; once this had been returned, the next question was sent, and the process repeated until all the questions had been answered. This process enabled the use of follow-up questions, or individualised questions if required. One participant found it problematic to return their thoughts, to the first question, in a timely manner, and consequently asked for the remaining questions to be sent in one email.
Interviews completed via an email system differ in style and characteristics than face-to-face interviews. Mann and Stewart (2004) stated that interviews completed through an email are destined to be problematic from the start, as they do not allow rapport to develop between researcher and participant. Additionally Mann and Stewart (2000) argue that interviewing through emails, reduces the flow and dynamic of the conversation and relationship, due to the asynchronous nature of the exchange.

However, it is argued that by removing the social and environmental factors that are used within interpersonal relationships to judge, perceive and inform social cues and perceptions about another person, the relationship and consequential conversation becomes increasingly equal and enables the participant to respond with information that they may feel unable to share in a face-to-face setting. Tourangeau and Yan (2007) stated that in comparison to face to face mediums, participants appeared more willing and were able to respond to increasingly sensitive information through an online format. Likewise McAuliffe (2003) and McCoyd and Schwaber Kerson (2006) found that the email interviews in their studies offered the participants more time to reflect, increased the depth of the responses, and appeared thoughtful, insightful and conveyed emotions.

Additionally, the email interview offers the participant more control over the content of the final data set, in that prior to sending the email, they are able to edit and amend the content. This consequently offers the researcher a piece of data ready for analysis, which is not edited by the researcher; through the removal of pauses, tags and fillers, and according to McCoyd and Kerson (2006) removes the embarrassment felt by some participants when reading the transcripts of their verbal interviews.

3.5.3. Reflections on the performance of the interviews.

Maxwell (1996) states that it is important that a researcher reflects on the possible influence they may have had on the participants and the setting of the interviews. Reflecting on this I was very aware of the difference in gender positions between the participants and myself. Consequently, on a number of occasions I felt the need to reassure the participants that they could be open with me and that I would not take personal offence to the stories, experience and ideas they wished to discuss, as I was viewing their stories as windows into their experiences. Even so, one participant declared that he felt awkward sharing a specific story with me, as it did not display females in a positive light; however, a majority of the participants were extremely open with their thoughts and views.

Likewise, my status as lecturer could have had a negative effect on the interviews and the participants. To try to manage this affect I was open and honest with all the participants about my employment and that whilst my research is linked to it, I was before them as a researcher, and to an extent fellow student. For many of the participants, this openness broke the ice and initiated small talk about essays, referencing and deadlines.
The in-person, face-to-face, interviews ran smoothly, in that rapport quickly built between researcher and the participants, particularly as the coordination of the interviews had taken a long series of emails to organise. In most of these interviews, following an outline of the research the participants started to share their stories and experiences without prompt or question. The interview schedule then acted as an aide-memoire for the researcher, rather than a formal list of questions to guide and facilitate the interview. The length of the interviews varied with some, which could be categorised as unstructured open interviews, being over an hour in length. This openness and willingness to share readily with the researcher without prompt could be a sign of the participants’ willingness to be part of the research and their motivation and desire to have their stories and voice heard.

The shorter interviews were more characteristic of a semi-structured interview in which the participant paused in their sharing in order to allow the researcher to ask a question. In contrast to the longer interviews, these interviews felt more formal in manner, less conversational and enabled both parties within the interpersonal relationship to play the predetermined roles of participant and researcher.

The interviews completed on-line using Skype and telephone, also shared these characteristics, in that they were formal and followed the expected script of a semi-structured interview. Arguably, this could be due to the reduced opportunities to develop conversation flow and rapport between researcher and participant through the use of non-verbal communication, which was not available throughout the telephone interviews, but was also made problematic by the visual and audio streams becoming detached during the Skype interview.

The use of a Dictaphone to record the verbal interviews worked well for the production of interview transcripts and process of analysis. On reflection, if the interviews were repeated, a video recording of the interviews would enable the interactional data to be analysed alongside an analysis of the content of the data. Video recordings may have also helped in the transcription of deep accents unfamiliar to the ear of the researcher, which due to the quality of the audio recording was problematic to transcribe on occasions.

3.6. Analysis

The data analysis was completed in two distinct phases. The first phase was the analysis of the questionnaire data. The questionnaire was designed to inform the questions and topics for the interviews, therefore they were individually analysed prior to each participant’s interview to enable the participant to expand on their answers or follow up a short point within their questionnaire. This brief initial analysis also enabled me to follow up points of apparent discrepancy in the professional identity scale. For example, in his professional identity scale Brian indicated that he did not feel part of the profession, although his other answers within the scale indicated that he did, in his interview he explained this difference indicating his uncertainty with the profession due to his current position of being on a dual honours programme (see chapter six).
The professional identity scale was designed to offer a snap shot of the participants’ professional identity. This data was analysed using cross-tabulation (Cohen et al., 2007), in order to identify categories and themes which were later related to the data collected by interviews in order to build a holistic view of the data.

The second phase of the analysis was the analysis of the data collected through interviews. The aim of qualitative data analysis is two-fold; firstly, it is to interpret the experiences of the male students through a reading of their descriptions and explanations. Secondly it is to offer an explanation and interpretation of their experiences within their individual contexts and the social, cultural and political contexts that they are located in. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state that the aim for qualitative data analysis is to create explanations, pose hypotheses and develop theories. In order to encompass both aims of analysis it was decided to utilise Borkan’s (1999) approach to data analysis; using vertical and horizontal analysis, whilst also recognising that the analysis continues within the writing and representation of the findings stage of the thesis.

Holloway and Wheeler (2010) state that vertical analysis is the process of looking at one section in its entirety, prior to commencing comparative comparison between the sections. In this research, each participant’s transcript was viewed as a section, therefore each individual interview was listened to, transcribed and read in order to be probed and analysed as a whole. This form of analysis maintains the individual, their identity and experiences which may become lost in a thematic approach and, according to Roberts (2002), improves the internal consistency of the data.

Following this first reading, memos were made. Memos are reflective notes about the data (O’Donoghue and Punch, 2003). Maxwell (1996) suggests that the writing of memos enables a thematic analysis to begin. Memos were used in this research to commence the interrogation of the data, by highlighting emerging codes within the data, and to begin to illicit how the participants constructed their identities. An example of a vertical memo, which demonstrates this early process is located in appendix eight.

The transcripts were then re-read and coded by theme. Coding is the marking of small sections of data with specific labels which link the section to the theme (Holloway and Wheeler 2010). This was an inductive process, by which the codes were developed from the data of the specific individual under analysis. An example of this is located in appendix nine. The development of the codes and the overall context analysis led to the pen portraits of each individual participant, located in appendix one, and informed the second part of the data analysis.

The second part of this phase of analysis consisted of a horizontal analysis of all the interview data. This process included the constant comparison of codes and data between the individual participants in order to identify major and minor themes and the identification of deviant data in order to interrogate the identified themes and subsequent conclusions (Silverman, 2005). This process was supported by a visual display of the codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest
that a visual display of the data and codes enables the researcher to begin to identify connections between the codes and commence analysis, due to the large amount of data, diagrams proved a useful tool in specific piece of research, an example diagram is located in appendix ten. Finally, each subtheme was individually analysed to take into account individual participant contexts and broader political, social and cultural contexts. It is recognised that this is an on-going process, and the analysis of the data has continued into the writing of the following chapters.

3.7. Writing and representation

The final stage of analysis is recognised as the writing and representation of the findings of the research. The analysis, led to the following themes and subthemes being identified, which were transposed into chapter titles and subheadings, these are depicted in figure one, and explored in depth in the following chapters. A fuller depiction of the associations between the codes, themes, chapter sub-sections, chapter and research question is located in appendix eleven.

Appendix 1 contains the pen portraits of the participants, which are short descriptions of each individual who participated in the interview phase of this study. These were developed from the vertical analysis and the initial thoughts about the individual participant following their interview in order to maintain some of the contextual information identified within the interviews in the data collection process. It is argued that this can improve the holistic nature of the data and the participant, which can become lost within a horizontal thematic approach to data analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Chapter title</th>
<th>Subtheme/Chapter subheadings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Noticing difference and isolation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dealing with the isolation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Confronting the isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assumptions about men</td>
<td>Men need complexity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Men work better with men</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Men should not work with children</td>
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<td>Men should be role models</td>
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<td>Men should be managers not therapists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Male therapists are gay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Females mother, but men are professional</td>
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<td>Becoming a speech and</td>
<td>Identification with the profession</td>
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<td>language therapist</td>
<td>Being a student speech and language therapist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beginning the customs</td>
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<td>Finding employment</td>
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Figure 1: Table of themes

Critical rationalism and horizontal analysis were used during the writing process to manage the risk of anecdotalism; the reliance of a few seemingly key or well-chosen quotes from the interviews (Silverman, 2006). Critical rationalism is defined by Popper (1959) as the process of trying to refute assumed relationships between data and the conclusions. In this study, each quotations from the interviews that was selected to appear in the results and analysis chapters was compared and contrasted to similar themes and quotations from other interviews. Crang
and Cook (2007) also argue that the integration of theories and ideas from previous studies adds to the quality of the analysis.

Roberts (2002) highlighted the risk of a lack of external consistency, in that the data that is represented in the conclusions to the research is not consistent amongst the participants and therefore cannot be generalised to the sample population within the research. Maxwell (1996) stated that some data can hold face generalizability, in which there are no obvious reasons as to not believe that the conclusions can be applied to the sample population. However, for this specific research this was not an adequate position, due to the underpinning assumptions of phenomenology, viewing each individual’s experience as unique. Therefore, checks for both consistency and similarities were made during the interviews. During the interviews, some of the experiences of the participants were shared (anonymously) through a question to later participants, in order to ascertain whether the experiences appeared reasonable or implausible to others. For example, in the questionnaire one participant stated his role in the profession was to balance the mothering role that he saw female students performing. As this statement was viewed as value-laden and potentially threatening to the research, I asked a number of the participants “In the questionnaire someone stated they viewed the female students as mothering and that their role in the profession was to balance this, how do you view this statement?” With the use of open questions, I was able to corroborate this view with that of other participants. This process of asking the participants to comment on a specific statement enabled me to connect themes and similarities throughout the participant’s experiences through the process of horizontal analysis. Whilst the findings of the research can only be applied to the participants, chapter seven discusses the possible implications of the findings of this study for practice within the placement provision sector and in higher education.

This chapter has presented the main methodological concepts of the study in relation to the theoretical underpinning provided by the interpretative approach, phenomenology and reflective practice. The combination of these perspectives established the framework for the methods of data collection, analysis and the resulting representation of the findings in the following chapters.
Chapter four: Experiences of male speech and language therapy students

This study aimed to develop an understanding of the experiences of male speech and language therapy students as they construct their professional identity. The literature review in chapter two offered a broad overview of the experiences of males in other female dominated professions. It was identified that the male students and professionals within these professions had had experiences of isolation, heard detrimental assumptions about their gender identity in relation to the profession and had had difficulties integrating their gender identity with the practices of the profession. Due to the similarities between the professions of speech and language therapy, teaching and nursing, it could be argued that the speech and language therapy students would have had similar experiences.

Whilst a number of the individuals interviewed shared similar experiences to those found in the literature, analysis of the data led to a notable difference; many of individuals interviewed did not identify a conflict between gender and profession; they did however identify the positives their gender difference could bring to the profession. These experiences and stories form the basis of the following chapters; this chapter focuses on their experiences of isolation. The following chapter on the assumed relationship, and in some instances conflict, between their gender and professional identities, and how they transformed these discourses into benefits in order to support their continuation into the profession and development of their professional identity. Their experience of developing their professional identity and eventual progression as a qualified practitioner into the profession forms the basis of the final findings chapter.

This chapter addresses the theme of isolation. The participants’ voices and lived experiences are shared throughout the chapter, alongside my interpretation of their experiences in-line with both the phenomenological and interpretative frameworks. The theme of isolation has three elements; ‘Noticing difference and isolation’ which depicts the participants first experiences of the profession within the arena of the pre-qualification programme, ‘Dealing with isolation’ which demonstrates how the individual participants faced and dealt with their own feelings of isolation, and ‘Confronting the isolation’ which depicts how a small number of participants chose to actively deal with the reactions of others to their gender difference.

4.1. Isolation

When the participants were asked about their experiences of being a male speech and language therapy student, they all stressed how isolating they found the university and to a lesser extent work-based placement settings. Many of the individuals interviewed had experienced being the only male in a year group, with cohort sizes, ranging from twenty to nearing one hundred. A request under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) ascertained that twenty-five percent of the cohorts/year groups, of speech and language therapy students had one male student, with fifty percent having no male students, indicating that the experiences of the participants was replicated across the population of male speech and language therapy students in the United Kingdom. This numerical experience matches the profession as a whole,
with less than three percent of the registered speech and language therapists being recorded as male therapists (Blendell 2009). The literature review demonstrated how being a member of a minority group within a setting could influence an individual’s ability to negotiate their student, professional and gender identities, and integrate these into a cohesive sense of self.

Whilst for many of the individuals interviewed the feeling of isolation led to varying levels of psychological distress, all noted that they had come to terms with their status and made the commitment to continue with their programme of study in order to become a speech and language therapist. A small number of the participants commented that this commitment appeared to be lacking within some of the male students, in particular those who had taken the decision to leave the profession prior to qualification, or utilised it as a reason as to why they had chosen to complete the qualification but not to proceed into professional practice.

4.2. Noticing difference and isolation

Due to the reduced availability of unpaid work experience opportunities within education and health settings, the first introduction to the profession, for many students, was either the interview/selection day for the pre-registration programme or, as many of the pre-registration programmes do not require an interview, the first day of term. The following two quotations highlight this awakening:

‘when I first applied for the course it was a group interview, at that time I didn’t know it was a female course- nowhere I had seen had said it was a female dominated course I looked on NHS jobs and it didn’t say it was female dominated I should have guessed it when I was on the placement – I did a few weeks placement before I started the course. When I went into the room to do the group interview I was a little late so I had to walk straight into the room and looked and there were about 50 people there and they were all female all white females and I was the only dark skinned [and male] person there and that made me very nervous’ (Isaac)

‘I remember walking in on the first day to the introductory lecture, sat down and it slowly dawned on me that the whole of the room was female and thought ... ok – but it’s not something that I had thought a great deal about it before hand it had briefly been brought up in conversation because one of my mum’s friends is an SLT, but I hadn’t accepted it until when I sat down and I realised that nobody else was male in the room’ (Craig)

Both quotations highlight that despite small episodes of recognition that the profession is dominated by females, neither individual took on board this information until they physically faced it. It could be argued that this is due to the individuals performing selective exposure to information (Fischer et al., 2008), in which pieces of information which appear incongruent are ignored. From their reflections, it is apparent that both Craig and Isaac had been given the information about the gender balance of the profession prior to their decision to join, but chose to ignore the information. It is suggested that had they chosen to process the implications of the information, it may have had an impact on their decision to join the profession or may have caused cognitive dissonance; the sense of discomfort between elements of an individual’s situation and cognition, which can ultimately impact on self-concept (Festinger, 1962).
Alternatively, it could be argued that as they had already made the decision to become involved in the profession the new information about the gender balance was deemed irrelevant. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) argue that when an individual has a low level of motivation to be involved in the processing of information they tend to focus on just the peripheral features of the message, rather than using a more central route to cognitive processing which would require attention to the interpretation of the message and the meaning to their individual situation.

Isaac discloses his sense of intimidation felt when he entered the room; this experience was also found in the study of male nursing students by Stott (2007) and consequently highlights the impact and the role of the interview/selection day in introducing individuals to the profession. In the institution in which I am based, thirty applicants are typically invited to attend the selection/interview day. With no male members of staff, it is highly likely that a male applicant will find themselves in the minority for the duration of the day, which offers a different vision of the profession than the one portrayed in the publicity material used by both the NHS and the RCSLT. In this material, carefully selected individuals appear to have been chosen to portray the profession, which implies that the profession is gender, ethnic and age diverse. However, a brief observation of the students within my institution would indicate that whilst the profession could be constructed as diverse in terms of age, there are few individuals who could be classed as non-female or non-white. This brief observation echoes the findings of Stapleford and Todd (1998) and the current demographic statistics of the profession from Blendell (2009). One of the participants shared his distrust of this material, suggesting that the images had been chosen solely to comply with the Equality Act (2010), rather than as a useful representation of the profession. However, it is argued that if publicity material accurately reflected the gender and ethnic balance of the profession it would only serve to reinforce the stereotypes about the profession, and further increase the sense of isolation felt by those individuals who do not match the majority.

For some of the individuals interviewed they found that it was their difference in gender which they felt placed them in a different category than the other students and worked as a factor in isolating them.

‘In a sense it’s because you’re the male SLT it feels quite isolating in that sense I don’t know why that is I don’t know why being a different gender throws you into the different group’, (George)

He goes on to state;

‘it seems that the world we are living in now where things should be about 50-50 and then there’s our profession which seems to be just an exception where there’s just females working in it’ (George)

George’s statement reflects the expectation of equality, which stems from the modern discourses of fairness and equal opportunities and the collegiate nature of health professions, the students and professionals, both of which appear at odds with the isolating environment that the male students were located. For most of the individuals interviewed this led to a sense of discomfort, although the level of discomfort felt was dependent on the individual and their
university or work-based placement environment, which is discussed in the next section. However, Frank offered a different interpretation of his isolation;

‘a lot of the older women, I say older, most of them are only in their early 30’s but they have been in that sort of environment and for them it’s a bit of relief to be out of that environment [male dominated environment] and actually to be in an environment where they have their friends around them all the time and they don’t have to worry about whether it’s the right time to talk about girly things or not.’ (Frank)

He appeared to suggest that the gender balance of the profession was not due to skills, practices and knowledge base of the profession but as consequence of karma. In that many of his female peers had been in male dominated environments, and therefore had experienced isolating or discriminatory environments, and therefore it was only fair that he, as a male now had to deal with a female dominated environment, and that they were able to relax within it.

4.3. Dealing with the isolation

Turner et al. (1987) suggest that it is how the individual deals with this incongruent information which determines the success of their early integration to the social identities, and thus of student and speech and language therapy professional. For Eric this was particularly problematic, as not only did he find himself the sole male on his pre-registration programme, but also when in clinical practice he found himself isolated by gender from the rest of the multi-disciplinary team; indicating that the gender balance in speech and language therapy is also replicated in other health professions.

‘I had that to contend with and the fact that I am thinking ‘oh god I am the only guy in the community clinic’,’ (Eric)

However, for Larry his isolation within the classroom was less of an issue,

‘I knew that once I left the classroom it would be OK, as the rest of the university was more balanced and I would see men in the halls and library’ (Larry).

Larry expressed that he was able to cope with his new minority status, as once outside of the classroom setting, he was able to socialise and identify with the greater student identity. Paechter (2003) argues that gender identity results from interpersonal negotiation; therefore the presence of individuals identified as male provides the lone male with this interpersonal negotiation and a sense of belonging, which can consequently reduce the feeling of isolation.

This reduction was alluded to by Craig who stated;

‘a guy walked in and I thought that was nice ‘cos you know it is nice to have someone of your sex to chat to sometimes…[pause for thought] and then I heard him saying ‘is this the nursing induction?’” (Craig)

However, unlike Larry, Craig on a number of occasions within his interview indicated that he felt less able to take comfort from the presence of males not directly within his professional social grouping, indicating a preference for direct male contact. The notion of needing another male peer for conversation is a common theme within the individuals’ descriptions. This need appears to stem from a notion of safety, in that another male is required for support and
concurrent companionship rather than for shared leisure pursuits and activities; this is further highlighted by Brian, who suggests that the presence of another male is supportive yet does not guarantee the development of a fulfilling mutually dependent friendship.

‘With Paul it was fine we weren’t necessary together the whole time, we travelled together and we travelled back we shared experiences and we did have different experiences but that was fine, he’s my age so that was ok too’ (Brian)

In this quotation, Brian highlights the influence of other factors on the integration of individuals into their community; age and similar experiences. During his interview Brian had previously discussed how he chose not to typically associate with the other males in his cohort, as he positioned himself as very different to them, although chose not to detail these differences.

In contrast, a number of the participants expressed contentment with their solitude, within their speech and language therapy cohort, suggesting a preference for their singularity as this enabled them to find other sources for friendships or act out gender-typed behaviours without confrontation from the dominant female group.

‘I play football a lot and I find that when I play for 2 hours that’s all I’m thinking about and then I talk to my friends who aren’t doing SLT and are guys so it’s different conversation, and I think that’s the same everywhere’ (George)

Throughout his interview, George expressed his difficulties in conversing with his female speech and language therapy peers. He stressed that his humour and choice of topics for conversation differed significantly from his peers, to the extent that he described a number of occasions where he found himself ostracised following an expression of his humour, or due to his reduced desire to ‘live, breath and eat SLT’ (George). In this statement, George is differentiating himself from his student peers, and arguably positioning himself above the female students who are immersed in their goals to become a speech and language therapist. The manner in which he does this appears to undermine the importance of their goals, and positions their identities as trivial in comparison to his own, as their identities are portrayed as one simple identity; SLT, rather than an integration of complex states like his own. Williams (1993) argues that men will often perform emphasised masculinity, which is described as displaying characteristics of hegemonic masculinity which may or may not appear in the individual’s daily performance of their gender identity, in order to assert their identity within female dominated environments. For George, part of this performance is the claim that he needs more than just speech and language therapy in his life and that sport plays a major role, which according to Laker (2001) is a fundamental aspect of hegemonic masculinity. Likewise, the behaviour of working hard towards academic achievement is not associated with hegemonic masculinity (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

This preference for another male for shared social conversations is echoed by Larry, who as a practicing speech and language therapist, stated that he continues to feel bereft of having another male in his team to converse with, as ‘no other individual wants to talk about football’ (Larry). Whilst it cannot be assumed that all male speech and language therapy professionals and students require an outlet to discuss sports, its regular appearance in the interviews
indicates a strong preference towards the need for the individual’s to reinforce and define their masculinity, through stating this need.

In the words of both George and Larry it can be heard how they differentiate and distance themselves from formations of masculinity which they do not wish to portray, a performance is described by Lévinas (1997) as ‘othering’. This performance of ‘othering’ is similar to that demonstrated by the male teachers in Jones (2007) study, in which male teachers constructed their masculinity through difference with others, who were classed as ‘not real men’. This notion echoes the idea of hegemonic masculinity in which the playing and discussing of sport is a central theme. In contrast Alex, who had the unusual situation of being one of six males in a small cohort of students stated: ‘we haven’t talked about football once I don’t think it’s your typical male/masculine workforce’ (Alex) suggesting a recognition of other formations of masculinity and a rejection of the need to portray hegemonic masculinity in order to maintain his masculine gender position.

One way in which many men are expected to deal with the isolation caused by gender is through support groups. Whilst it is recognised that for some male individuals the notion of seeking support undermines their performance of masculinity (Mahalik et al., 2003), support groups are widely used within the health service in order to bring together individuals identified as isolated and are consequently promoted by speech and language therapists to their clients. Many of the individuals suggested that whilst a support group for male students and therapists sounded like a good idea; they were unsure what discussions could take place within the group. Demonstrating a preference for goal oriented groups rather than emotional support for dealing with the feeling of isolation and being a member of a minority group, which Lieberman (2008) identifies as a behaviour associated with masculinity. The participants identified that the problems in the profession that they would wish to discuss were not related to their gender, and that a support group would only serve to highlight their isolation further.

‘I personally don’t like the idea of assuming and forcing males together and assuming we’re all going to have the same personality. I don’t as the other ones here, so I don’t associate with them as friends outside of here, in terms of professionally maybe it would be a good idea, it’s hard maybe it would be a good idea, it would be interesting to bounce ideas off males on the course I haven’t had the opportunity to do that it’s hard to say unless I had experienced it,’ (Brian)

Brian’s words reflect the openness to new opportunities that all the participants demonstrated in their interviews, a willingness to try out new approaches, despite personal belief that the action may not meet the needs of the individual. It can also be seen that despite the potential of opportunities to discuss experiences with other males in his programme, albeit in other cohorts, he had chosen not to do so, leading to the suggestion that although willing to try, at that present time Brian did not need male support. His statement also demonstrates the conflict between the practices of grouping clients together by diagnostic label into a support group and not wishing to be categorised himself. Likewise, Alex objected to the categorisation of the students by gender;

‘I don’t know what they would talk about in there, I don’t think there are any male problems in speech and language therapy apart from the recruitment I don’t feel it’s a
profession divided by gender in that way I don't know what they would talk about they could talk about problems in SLT in general but that could be in a multi gender format there is no need to single men out. I suppose you could discuss issues of how you would promote men into the profession – but that should be more inclusive it should be a discussion across the main, it shouldn’t be just a discussion with men cos then you are just singling them out.’ (Alex)

Alex’s words highlight the conflict between the desire to discuss sports, as previously described by Larry and George, or to be understood without explanation, as described by Isaac later in this section, and the diametrically opposing desire to be separate and individual. Alternatively it could be argued, that this objection is a performance of agency and masculinity, in which they have asserted their masculinity through the rejection of the support groups. It is argued that this is a consequence of their continual renegotiation of their identities in relation to the core behaviours and practices of the profession which are associated with femininity, and due to the subject position of speech and language therapy student, which allows little personal agency due to the restrictive nature of the professional qualification.

Alex also reflects a recurring theme amongst those individuals interviewed; that their gender difference is typically not a problem. Whereas the previous quotations have indicated that their minority status on the speech and language therapy programmes is a problem, it could be argued that only those who maintained this view volunteered to be part of the research. However, as discussed later in the chapter, a number of the participants shared discomfort with their position within the profession and were considering their long-term future within it. Conversely, it could be argued that the stance of ‘not a problem’ enables the students to maintain their motivation; in by declining to identify a problem, they have no reflective requirement to address the issue, which previous studies have suggested can increase the likelihood of an individual choosing to leave their profession (Stott, 2007, Wilson, 2005). This interpretation is supported by the contextual information from some of the interviews in that only with probing and questioning did the problems associated with their difference begin to emerge. For instance, Frank maintained the ‘not a problem’ stance until he was asked if there was anything he did not like about the profession, to which he replied with a story outlining the difficulties he had faced being a lone male in a large group of female students. Indicating that his ‘not a problem’ stance is a performance to hide or prevent self disclosure, which according to Lieberman (2008) is associated with being weak and vulnerable and consequently not associated with hegemonic masculinity.

However, Isaac stated that he had thought about setting up an on-line group, which would enable other male students to identify that whilst they may be isolated within their higher education institution, there were male students at other institutions. The on-line support group protects the individual members from the fear of vulnerability, in that the on-line identity of the individual is often a projection of an ideal self, using an avatar, and meets an individual’s desire for privacy.

Many of the participants asked how many male students attended other programmes and appeared relieved to hear that their experiences of isolation were mirrored across other
institutions. Larry also liked the notion of a support group, but suggested that it should be only open for students, stating that when he was a student he was less able to deal with the gender isolation, but as a practicing professional, this activity was unlikely to be a priority. It is suggested that this reduction in priority for some qualified male speech and language therapists, may be due to the confidence achievement of the professional qualification brings, as the certification with the professional qualification indicates that the individual has become a more central member of the professional community and consequently their position is secured.

Peer support influences the individual’s ability to cope and deal with isolation, increases the likelihood of academic success and reinforces the ethos of the university setting (Havnes, 2008, Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005), which in turn creates an all-encompassing culture. It was found that the younger students were typically encircled with friends and peers from the speech and language therapy programme, whereas the older students felt more able to develop or use their social networks outside of the profession, as highlighted by Isaac, Harry and Frank all of whom were over twenty-four years of age.

‘I don’t have any friends outside who are in SLT’, (Isaac)

‘I think it works for me cos I come home and I have a very different social set up, whereas if you were living on campus as well I think that would be very tricky’ (Harry)

‘that’s the sort of thing you can put up with as an 29 year old but which as an 18 year old you might find difficult to deal with and also you don’t pay too much attention to whether the friends you talk to every day are male or female whereas at 18 you pay a bit more attention to that fact you’ve got that- maybe that’s why not many undergraduate males don’t get past the first year in this course, cos if you are the only one and you’re 18 it’s very difficult I would imagine to keep your head screwed on straight’ (Frank)

For Isaac and Harry, the process of separating their social life from their professional life enabled them to maintain a sense of self, as well as maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Rosenberg and Turner (1990) argue that this is essential in enabling an individual to look after their psychological well-being and self-esteem. This risk to well-being was highlighted by both Harry and Frank, who suggested that younger, or campus based, students would find it harder to separate work-life and social leisure due to the collective nature of the student community and face being placed in the situation of being a lone male for a greater proportion of the week. It is suggested that this position of placement could prevent the adolescent individual from continuing to develop their sense of gender identity, as according Bradford Brown et al. (2008) a central component of identity development in this time frame is the continual comparison of self to similar peers. This self-comparison is particularly relevant in the construction of an individual’s masculine identity, as it is thought that masculine identity is dependent on group affirmation, and easily undermined if the individual or their behaviours are associated with femininity (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003).

Eric positioned himself differently than the other participants in the research. In comparison to the other participants he placed himself in a position of isolated and belonging, rather one of
isolated and different, which transforms him from a position of powerlessness, due to the difference and minority status to one of power, implying that difference is positive. He stated that;

'I just see myself as a guy...... who is under represented' (Eric)

This positioning as under-represented is reflected by a number of the individuals interviewed, many of whom stressed the importance of increasing the number of males within the profession due to the benefits that their gender would bring to both the profession as a body and the clients that it serves. The benefits ranged from direct patient care benefits, to reducing the likelihood of isolation of current and potential members of the profession and to changing the knowledge base of the profession, from intuition and research to evidence-based practice.

4.4. Confronting the isolation

For most of the individuals interviewed they felt the optimum method to deal with the isolation was to ignore it and focus on becoming a speech and language therapist. However, a number of the individuals interviewed stated that they had challenged others’ reactions to their difference. These challenges took a number of different formats ranging from venting personal frustration to other audiences to outwardly identifying their gender difference to initiate a discussion.

For Eric the identification by others about his difference and consequential isolation was a source of annoyance, he indicated that he preferred his difference to not be noted, he stated;

‘you don’t say this is the speech and language therapy student who’s in a wheelchair or this is the student who’s half deaf or something that so why say this is the male SLT student? (Eric)

It is suggested the identification of difference could interrupt Eric’s professional identity development. Turner et al. (1987) stated that self-categorisation is a fundamental aspect of developing identity, as it enables the individual to transcend from personal identity to a shared social identity. This undertaking is dependent on both the individual’s self-identification with the identity and the other members of the group identifying the individual as having sameness and a shared understanding of practices and behaviours relating to the identity (Oakes et al., 1991). By identifying Eric, and presumably other non-female speech and language therapists, as different, they are being placed in a separate category or position and consequently on the edge of the group.

This annoyance with the categorisation by others, was shared by a number of the participants, many of whom, like Eric, had been also introduced as the male Speech and Language Therapy student; in contrast to their female peers who were introduced as the student. Craig joked that it felt that sometimes the profession he was working with felt the need to confirm the visual identity, just in case the other person did not believe who they were seeing.
Likewise, Alex, chose to encourage others not to make his and his peers’ gender into an issue, by describing the high number of males within his institution as a blip; an occurrence not worthy of scrutiny. Alternatively, it could be interpreted that Alex viewed this as a mistake in the recruitment process, indicating his sense of resignation to the dominance of females within his profession.

‘there are 36 people on the course- 6 of which are men. It’s really strange I know, that this year we’re just a blip on the radar. Though this year’s intake there aren’t any men on the course at all, so this year we seem to be a blip really’ (Alex)

However, in contradiction to this behaviour, in the clinical setting Alex suggested that in order to deal with his isolation he needed to make it obvious;

‘...it’s a sort of elephant in the room where I think if you haven’t brought it up with your practice educator or the topic hasn’t come up in conversation and you mention it, it is always quite interesting to see what they say it’s using along the lines of...[pause for thought]... normally it’s quite positive’ (Alex)

By highlighting the ‘elephant’, he then felt able to accept that others around him were viewing him as an equal member of the profession. However, for Eric he felt that, his continued behaviour from university to the clinical setting of ignoring the issue enabled the isolation to become easier;

‘for me that’s never quite felt like it’s an elephant in the room for me I haven’t really felt I have needed to break the ice about it as such. But... it becomes easier’ (Eric)

One notable difference between these two individuals is age. Alex is a mature student, whereas Eric had commenced his pre-registration programme immediately after finishing high school education. Therefore it could be argued that increased age leads to increased confidence in their sense of self, as the older students are no longer in the period of identity appraisal and exploration (Marcia, 1966) and therefore enables the individual to challenge other’s preconceptions about their gender in relation to the profession. This notion is replicated by the other participants in the research; younger, typically under twenty-three years of age, students felt less in control of their situation and a greater sense of initial discomfort with their isolation in comparison to the students who were over twenty-four years of age. However, this categorisation by chronological age is arbitrary, and the sense of self that enabled the older students to challenge, stemmed from greater exposure to life experience and working practices, which the younger students had not yet experienced. Therefore, the ease Eric expressed was his growing acceptance of the isolation and a sign of his developing identity, rather than an active challenge of others’ preconceptions.

4.5. Chapter Summary

The experiences of the individuals interviewed, alongside the information gathered from the Institutions of Higher Education demonstrate that male speech and language therapy students face isolation. Their experiences reflect the findings from research with males in other female dominated professions, which ranged from feeling isolated to being ostracised by the female
professionals. Like the male speech and language therapy students, Cushman (2005) reported that the male professionals in her study were faced with isolation and sought the company of other male professionals within the school environment to counteract this position. Whilst in some settings this only reinforces the stereotypes about masculinity and male professionals, in this study and the study by Stott, it appeared to counteract the psychological impact of the isolation. The male nursing students in Stott’s (2007) study stated that they felt left out by their female peers, as they were not included in confidences, although later stated a preference for independent learning and practice. Likewise Anliak and Beyazkurk (2008) found that early years male teachers stated that they were ostracised by the female teachers, which led to an isolating environment. In contrast, the male speech and language therapy students discussed how, after the initial few days, they were actively encouraged to participate in discussions and included in non-profession related conversations by their female peers.

Addressing their experiences of isolation as a whole it is evident that their isolation is not just physical, because of the numerical bias of the profession, but also social and psychological isolation. The requirements of the speech and language therapy programmes result in little time being available for students to interact with other males outside of the programme or participate in social activities, such as the discussion of sports, which arguably reduced their opportunities to construct their gender identity. From their perceptions, the female students were able to access a number of opportunities to negotiate and construct their feminine identities. It is argued that the isolation is also psychological in form, in that the students themselves distanced themselves from alternate forms of masculinity, through the process of othering, and that members of the community of professionals also distanced the male students from the community of the profession through depicting them as the male student, rather than student.

The isolating environment also appeared to produce a conflict, in that whilst the male students rejected the idea of a support group they also presented a preference for not being the sole male. Two discourses appear to underpin this conflict, the first being the stigma attached to seeking support by male individuals (Mahalik et al 2003). Secondly, the belief that the difficulties a student may face are not associated with gender. These underlying assumptions highlight the different approaches male and female individuals take to participating in a support group, as found in the study by Lieberman (2008) who found that male individuals typically utilise support groups for information, whereas female individuals utilise the groups for social and emotional support. However, in contrast the participants did acknowledge the role and influence of support networks, although this recognition was associated with older students, who they viewed as having supportive social networks outside of the profession and student community, which would support their transition and identity development.

Finally, it is suggested that this isolating environment impacts on the students’ ability to develop the required professional identity, as the process of self categorisation (Turner et al., 1987) is interrupted either by the student, in facing the physical reality of the gender bias and through self-appraisal or by others who place them in the different category to other student speech and language therapists. Despite this and the number of assumptions about the association
between their gender and the profession as discussed in the following chapter, the individuals interviewed continued on their track to become a qualified speech and language therapist.
Chapter five: Assumptions about men

Throughout the interview phase, the participants disclosed and described situations in which they had had to deal with their perceptions of other professionals’ assumptions about their gender, in particular in relation to their position within the profession and their relationship with the clients. A number of the assumptions had a negative impact on the participants and to an extent their peers. However, the participants also argued that the assumptions could lead to positive outcomes for both themselves and their clients. This chapter focuses on seven core assumptions, derived from the situated discourses, as described in chapter two, relating to an individual’s gender and professional identities, that appeared to regularly underpin the relationship between the student, the professionals they work with, the profession and clients. The assumptions are: Men need complexity, Men work better with men, Men should not work with children, Men are role models, Men should be managers not therapists, Male therapists are gay and female therapists mother but men are professional.

5.1. ‘Men need complexity’

The individuals shared a number of stories about how they perceived their experiences on work based placement as different to their female peers. All the individuals interviewed expressed concern that they had been given more complex clients to work with than their peers, or clients that had previously not engaged with therapy. It is suggested that the practice, by the supervising therapist in the work-based placement, of offering complex clients to male students is based on two assumptions; that men need complexity in order to remain motivated and engaged with the learning and that females cannot manage complex clients. Both these assumptions are grounded in the stereotyping of genders and ensure the continual reinforcement of the domination of masculinity over femininity; in implying that female students are only able to cope with non-complex clients. It continues to position the male students in a place of power and authority above the other students, and is argued to be a symptom of the discourse that more men are required in the profession, as in teaching, in order to rescue the female professionals from problematic individuals (Jones, 2003). This notion of rescuing was apparent in the marketing material of a recent event I attended designed to increase the number of men applying for health and education programmes provided by the universities in my local area. The posters for the event contained two images of men; both were dressed in mock superhero costumes, and consequently representing male practitioners in the profession as ‘rescuers’. Alternatively, it could be argued that it is not the female professionals who need rescuing from complex children and clients, but according to Jones (2003), it is the male children who need rescuing from feminised professions. Jones (2003) further argued that male teachers are required to not only be excellent at sport and technology but also become a substitution for absent fathers, a topic discussed later in this chapter.

Conversely, as most of the therapists that supervise and support the male student on placement are female, it could be argued that the practice of offering complex clients stems from the assumption that male individuals need complexity to remain motivated. This assumption is
associated with the cultural constructions of masculinity, which suggest that masculinity, in particular hegemonic masculinity, is associated with competition and a preference for pressure and problem solving (Whitehead, 2002); consequently, the challenge of complexity can meet these preferences. However, this assumes that the students are homogenous and the performance of their masculinity described as hegemonic. This categorisation is refuted as the educational basis of speech and language therapy is highly academic, (see Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (2012)), and consequently requires behaviours which are not commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity, which Mac an Ghaill (1994) identified as least likely to associate with an academic education. Many of the participants appeared to concur with this view, in particular Alex, who on reflecting on the conversations he had had with his male peers, Alex proclaimed; ‘I don’t think it’s your typical male/masculine workforce’; indicating that he did not categorise his or his peers masculinity as hegemonic.

Despite the providence of the practice to offer male students complex clients, many of the participants expressed confidence in the process. They suggested that the increased level of challenge and complexity enabled them to learn more from the work based placement, and proffered opportunities to challenge, not only themselves and their communication skills, but also their knowledge and therapy skills base. Additionally, some participants offered the suggestion that without this high level of challenge, they would have struggled to find a source of interest during the placement. It is suggested that this association with masculinity and challenge has become an engrained element of the participant’s performance of masculinity. According to Wetherell (1996), as an individual becomes comfortable in specific performances they become embedded within the portrayal of the constructions of their identity, and it becomes problematic to disassociate. A study of classroom behaviour by Kahle et al. (1991) found that male students were offered more attention by the teachers in order to maintain focus and asked an increased number of challenging questions in comparison to their female peers. Indicating that the association of masculinity with a need for complexity stems from the participants’ experiences of schooling rather than individual agency.

Like Alex, who constructed his, and his peers’, masculinities as non-typical, Isaac identified the core techniques utilised to engage young children in speech and language therapy tasks as not for men, and offered cultural reasons for this assumption; he suggested that in his culture, men are expected to perform professions that are in positions of authority. This appears to automatically place the profession of speech and language therapy in a submissive position, and serves to highlight the association between the practices of the profession, such as play, with femininity.

‘in our culture men it’s our responsibility to……[his broken sentence]… generally you are looked up to if you study medicine and those sort of things so to them we are just doing play and to them it’s not really a man’s job’ (Isaac)

Likewise Eric, stated that one of the reasons for male students to leave the pre-registration programmes early is the focus on language acquisition and early childhood rather than analytical linguistics and working with complex adults.
This preference for complexity is also expressed through their descriptions of the profession. All the participants were asked how they would describe speech and language therapy to a naïve audience. Without exception, they described the complex elements and clients of the profession; from using terms such as linguistic analysis to working with highly complex clients, as evidenced by Eric who said speech and language therapy is.

...‘very complex and you work with people with head injuries and brain tumours and children with really severe autism it’s not just people who stammer’ (Eric)

However, in reality, like all allied health professionals, clients with complex communication needs are a small minority of a speech and language therapist’s caseload. In his description, Eric is seen to separate speech and language therapy from working solely with individuals who stammer, this is due to the fact that in the months prior to the interviews the film ‘The King’s Speech’ (Hooper, 2010) had been released in the United Kingdom. The film depicted a male speech and language therapist working with King George VI, to reduce the impact of his stammer on his communication. The participants who commented on the film typically commented that the film was good to highlight the profession, but did not make the association between the film and the likelihood of increased applications to join the profession from male students and were, like Eric, keen to reinforce that the profession worked with clients with other communication difficulties.

It is also argued that the distancing that the participants performed in relation to themselves and the profession and the speech therapist in the film was due to a number of factors. These factors include; the manner in which the profession was portrayed in the film, the status of the therapist and the practices of the profession which were viewed in the film. Collectively they argued that, if an individual were to watch the film and decide to become a speech and language therapist, they would not expect to have to complete a qualification and perform evidence-based practice. As the film contained poorly researched therapy activities such as rolling on the floor with clients in order to reduce a communication difficulty by an unqualified practitioner. Whilst a number of the participants indicated that they were uncomfortable with the low level of evidence, scientific-research, based practice in today’s profession, they were clear that the practices portrayed in the film no longer had a place in current speech and language therapy work.

It is suggested that this desire for complexity results in male therapists clustering within specific areas of the profession. Snyder and Green (2008) found that male nurses appeared to be attracted to high pressure, highly medicalised aspects of nursing, which were congruent with behaviours typically associated with masculinity; instrumentality, rationality and technical sophistication. In listening to the work-based aspirations of the male students, they were also attracted to similar fields, away from the aspects of the profession that were associated with caring and nurturing and towards specialist fields either dominated with technical appliances
such as working in augmentative and alternative communication, or voice therapy, which is underpinned by a scientific evidence base.

Some of the participants also assumed that male clients would prefer behaviours relating to challenge, rather than play;

‘it’s important to give people a push I have seen evidence of if I could just do that I could see that one extra thing could be achieved in this session but from my experience watching females there have been occasions when I have wanted to push it a little bit further, but I wouldn’t do anything that would, you know if you with someone with behavioural issues or ASD you could break the relationship, if you have been working with someone and then pushed them too hard I understand that, but I want people to achieve and it’s how I see my job it’s about judging them and pushing them to achieve to the best of their ability’ (Craig)

The author argues that this stems from the assumption that children do not need nurturing, and consequently opens the subject position to male practitioners. However, conversely in his explanation, Craig demonstrates his caring identity; in that he recognises that other difficulties, such as the client’s behavioural or communication difficulties need to be taken into account when working with the client.

5.2. ‘Men work better with men’

The participants suggested that the practice of offering them complex clients, stemmed from client need or from service provision rather than a result of assumptions about their gender. They suggested that the clients defined as ‘complex’ were in fact those that were difficult to engage with a female dominated profession. The participants offered two reasons as to why they were able to engage these clients; cultural and religious practices and shared interests resulting from shared gender identity.

A number of the participants stated they had felt honoured to be able to offer a service to clients, who following religious or cultural practices had not welcomed therapy from a female therapist. They all indicated that as a speech and language therapist it was important to them to be able to offer all potential clients the same service. Therefore, for some services there was a need for men in the therapy team. Eric had had a number of episodes in which his gender had provided him with additional opportunities to work with clients,

‘there was like a gentleman who refused to have any input from a women speech therapist he just didn’t want it but they needed to do a proper assessment on him to determine his language functioning and it was my second day on an adult placement for the first time and I had to go and do it cos in the hospital I was in at the time there wasn’t a guy on the wards they were in the community they weren’t on the stroke ward or anything and they were saying ‘oh god it’s really handy having a guy we can get you to go and do that and then you can do the intervention’” (Eric)

Analysis of this event indicates that Eric’s gender enabled him to work with a client who had previously refused treatment, and the process that the team had completed in order to attempt to offer the client an equal service. Although, it is questioned whether the client did receive an
equal service, as Eric was not an experienced therapist; ‘my second day on an adult placement for the first time’ (Eric).

A number of the participants highlighted the association of their gender with the assumption of shared interests with the clients, which appears to contradict the findings from the previous chapter. It would appear that whilst they did not wish to be positioned in the homogenic category of ‘male’ with the founding assumption that all men had similar experiences, preferences and behaviours, they intimated that they were better placed to work with male clients, because they were male and therefore had similar experiences, preferences and behaviours. For example, Alex who recognised the toys the young male client was playing with;

‘most kids in SLT being boys you have got a shared playing field you know thinking back to one of my first placement you know he’s got his Star Wars figures, he’s got his little Yoda doll and his boyish toys, and you know you can say when I was little I used to play with this and what do you think about that you know as most of the toys I was playing with when I was little they are still playing with now so I suppose it would help to form a bond’ (Alex)

Alex’s story highlights the role of toys in enabling younger children to access relationships within their gender identity, in recognising and stating his recognition of the toys with the child, Alex was reinforcing their gender constructions, which according to Paechter (2003) results from shared practices and pursuit of a common goal. In this quotation Alex, who had previously labelled himself as ‘not a typical male’, is reinforcing the association between the child’s toy and their gender, as found in the Freeman (2007) study. Whilst simultaneously demonstrating a performance of masculinity, which depicts that it is acceptable to play with toys as a male adult, which contradicts the portrayal of masculinity stated previously by both Isaac and Eric, as he had constructed himself as not-hegemonic. Two explanations for this difference are offered. Firstly, it could be argued that Isaac, Eric and Alex perform their masculinity differently, supporting the notion of multiple forms of masculinity as depicted by Connell (2002). Secondly, it is suggested that Alex’s reflection demonstrated the behaviour the male students perform in order to balance the conflict between their gender identity and the associated assumptions that men should not play with toys, and the requirement to use play to develop a relationship with a child client, depicting how they actively negotiated their masculinity (Wetherell 1996). Collectively, they demonstrate that masculinity is a performance rather than biologically innate, and that this performance is dependent on the social interactions and cultures within which the individual relates.

Similarly, Harry demonstrated the value of a shared common understanding with older clients;

‘I think having some life experiences like working with Peter the thing I noticed was he was very reserved about what was happening to him, and I think the thing that worked for us was that we had very similar life experiences…….it’s all down to interactions with people doesn’t it I’m not saying that women can’t interact with older men but it’s being able to relate it all at their level’ (Harry)

In his statement, Harry indicates the influence his gender identity has on the relationship between himself and the client, but also highlights the influence of other factors such as age.
and life experiences. A view which is echoed by Blow et al. (2008) and, to an extent, undermines the notion of matching clients to therapist by gender. A practice which is based on the assumptions that male professionals perform differently than female professionals, and in a manner than it more appealing to male individuals (Francis, 2008).

These examples have demonstrated how the male students, transformed assumptions relating to their gender identity, in order to gain benefit, and in particular carve a specific role within the profession, one that their female peers are less able to perform. This role could increase the male student’s sense of belonging within the profession, as discussed in the following chapter. Additionally, the specific role and the identification of other males to work with could, for some individuals, counteract the negative impact of feeling isolated and different, as discussed in the previous chapter.

5.3. ‘Men should not work with children’

The participants shared the perception that others were concerned about their ability and opportunities to work with children. This belief stems from the discourse that men are not safe to work with children, which is rooted in the societal or parental fear of paedophilia (Carrington and Skelton, 2003). This, alongside the discourse that children need to be nurtured and coaxed into integrating with the adult communities, led to the notion that if a male wishes to work with children, they must hold paedophilic tendencies, and the soft communication skills utilised in order to engage and nurture children are just expressions of a deeper and more sinister volition.

The paucity of male workers in early years and education increases the suspicion of those working within the sector, as their difference is viewed as abnormal, whilst similarity to the norm is treated with less suspicion (Osgood et al., 2006). The participants appeared to have internalised these assumptions, proffering a preference for wishing to work with adults, or individuals with a learning disability post qualification, rather than working with children; where a large proportion of speech and language therapists are based.

None of the participants shared direct experiences of others not wanting them to work with young children. In this following quotation, Harry typifies the experience of a number of the participants, who found that the children in early years settings were cautious about interacting with them, and appeared to take time to want to interact. When they did, the participants noted it appeared to differ from the interactions observed between their female peers and the children. For example, a child would sit and read with a female student, whereas with a male student would try to play rough and tumble games

‘in an all-female environment and some of them were quite young kids – some of them called me daddy and I don’t think it was because Diana was any better at playing with them, but when I sat down they didn’t want to know’, (Harry)

In this quotation, the child inaccurately labels Harry as ‘daddy’, which could be the child’s mistake or viewed as a side effect of the paucity of men in early years’ settings. Regardless of the antecedent, Harry’s experience demonstrates the interpersonal relationship some men in early years settings are positioned and the dilemma that they face. To either continue to sit on
the floor and offer language based activities such as reading, in line with the purpose of the profession, or to revert to performing aspects of hegemonic masculinity and play in the ‘rough and tumble’ manner that the children appear to expect from a man in this setting.

Conversely, it could also be argued that the childrens’ caution stems from the discomfort of the male student, like Harry, in the setting. Cushman (2005) and Sargent (2000) both argue that male professionals working with younger children are encouraged to avoid physical contact, a message which Harry may have internalised as part of his subject positioning of working with younger children. Sargent continues by saying that those who do not avoid contact, need to perform compensatory activities. In this instance, overtly masculine play was used as compensation to the risk of sitting in close contact with children and when marginalised masculine behaviours, for instance reading, was rejected.

5.4. ‘Men should be role models’

The children’s reactions in Craig’s experience supports the movement to increase the number of male professionals within the early years and later school-based settings. In that not only would more men in these settings reduce the novelty of the situation, and in the long-term consequently reduce the distrust individuals have in men in these settings, but also offer children role prototypes with differing performances of masculinity. When the speech and language therapy students were asked if they saw themselves in this light, all said no, stating this it is not a core role of a male speech and language therapist to act as a male role model for children.

However, a number of the participants suggested that other professionals had identified them as potential role models, with reasons ranging from children without, or with poor adult male influences in their lives needing an adult male to portray behaviours and communication styles, to children requiring a male adult to perform behaviours relating to authority and advice as Frank depicts;

‘I guess for boys you can see that they have an authority figure of sorts that can give them some advice’ (Frank)

For George, the notion of being a role model was incongruent with some of the aims of being a speech and language therapist.

‘in a sense I am a role model cos I am a professional and I’m sensible and I’m doing my job but also I don’t know whether in therapy you would want to be seen as a role model because you want the children to have fun’ (George)

In this statement he separates his aim for his speech and language therapy sessions with children; to have fun, and places being a role model in a different position, consequently something he would not be motivated to do, and implies that the children would not want this. Certainly, this view appears to match the literature on role model choices of children who appear to select lively individuals from sport or television as role models (Bricheno and Thornton, 2007), rather than their teachers and health professionals that they have been in
contact with. Similarly, Cushman (2008) found that head teachers sought individuals portraying hegemonic masculinity as role models for their pupils, therefore individuals who did not associate themselves with this positioning would claim that the position of role model is not open to them.

Craig’s statement highlights the difficulty many of the participants had in viewing themselves as a role model; their confidence. Many of the participants viewed a role model as an individual who had achieved a specific status, almost akin to the superhero identity as depicted in the previous chapter, which as a student speech and language therapist, they had not.

‘no, I think it’s because it’s about putting myself on a pedestal before I have done something that really deserves that title’, (Craig)

This statement is also a reflection of the view of Allen (1997) who stated that being a member of a minority group was not sufficient to lead to identification of being a role model, and that the status of role model is a privileged position earned through admiration and respect. It could be argued that the students were being positioned by others as a role model due to the respect they had gained from colleagues, for example Brian who identified that he may have gained the status after being observed working with a child;

‘I think it was the way they observed me interacting with certain children they knew for instance that one child was quite badly behaved and he was from a single parent family he just lived with his mother and that was the child who decided that I would focus my observations on so we did things together games played and he began to come out of his shell so I think it was the teachers observations of that that which made them say the role model thing and how it would-be good and how it was good that I was in there’ (Brian)

Brian’s experience appears to support the findings of Francis and Skelton (2005) who identified that male lay individuals were introduced into the education environment under the same premise as male teachers; to be a role model. Additionally, it could be also argued that the education staff took the opportunity to utilise a student in a role which was not typically available to them, as men in female dominated professions such as teaching, tend to cluster (Williams, 1989, Snyder and Green, 2008) in environments where there are other male workers, rather than work in isolation.

When probed further about being a male role model, the participants shared further discomfort at this notion, and would often change the topic of conversation. It is suggested that this behaviour was a defence mechanism, designed to reduce the individual’s discomfort. Cramer (1998) stated that defence mechanisms are often utilised when an individual faces a threat to their self-representation, for example representation of gender or identification of difference within professional identity, in order to preserve a coherent sense of self.

However, Harry viewed himself as a role model to fellow students and was happy to discuss how he, as an older student, with more life experience was able to be a role model to the younger students. However, he was less willing to position himself as a male role model, bar being a conduit for the male viewpoint on topics of discussion in lectures.
‘they do say things like what do the boys think and they point to Matt and I so we do have that if they want a male view they will ask’ (Harry)

In contrast to other participants, Brian appeared comfortable with being placed as a role model by others;

‘I was a good role model and they would get me to do 1 to 1 things with kids and they would actually take photos of me talking with the kids so it looked like there was a male role model for external investigations and put it on the wall’ (Brian)

Whilst simultaneously indicating this had not led to an integration of this subject position into his identity; as he viewed it as a short-term means-to-and-end positioning, and a position that brought more benefit to the education setting than himself. It is also suggested that, as the positioning did not offer him discomfort, he chose not to challenge the positioning. He further explained that the education placement he had experienced he was not working under the supervision of a speech and language therapist, and in his words was just there to understand how the primary education system worked. Consequently demonstrating that he did not view, as George did, being a role model as a fundamental aspect of being a speech and language therapist.

5.5. ‘Men should be managers not therapists’

Within the profession of speech and language therapy, there is a commonly heard belief that men are only in the profession in order to gain management positions. This belief is founded in assumptions that support a patriarchal society, that automatically place men in a dominant position above women, and lead to the assumption that women should be placed in positions of subordination. However, based on the numerical ratio of the profession, it could be assumed, numerically that most managers would be female. It could therefore be argued that male therapists were viewed as a threat to this female dominance, as highlighted by the following quotation from Eric, who reported this conversation taking place during a tour that he took of a university whilst deciding whether speech and language therapy was the profession for him. He reported that she had stated;

‘it’s quite unfair when they take men on the workplace ‘cos they just get promoted really quickly just because they are men’ (Eric)

This quotation highlights the discontent the female professional was experiencing in relation to the number of male managers within the workplace, indicating that she believes that gender should not dictate employment opportunities. However, by saying this to a young male student she is also positioning him in the place of powerlessness, suggesting that he, due to his gender, should remain on the periphery of the profession. On hearing this statement, an individual must deal with the realisation that the profession they are intent on entering may not be as welcoming as they initially thought. This experience appears to contradict the findings of Williams (1989), who studied the experiences of male professionals within a number of different, but similar to speech and language therapy, professions and found that male professionals were more likely to face discrimination and prejudice from individuals outside of the profession than within it.
Following on from this early experience, Eric shared that he had asked a female manager about the relationship between gender and promotion. He recalls;

‘she said to me that that the reason why men get promoted quicker is that in comparison to the women, not all the women but a lot of the women, the ones in their late twenties in band six, they want to go on maternity leave and work two days a week from there on and they’re thinking I’ve got a huge case load of referrals. Whereas the men they’ve taken on more of the job for life’ (Eric)

This statement is arguably a consequence of her discomfort with the position of male professionals within her female dominated profession. It echoes the findings of Snyder (2004, cited in Snyder and Green 2008), who when addressing the experiences of male nurses from the perspective of both male and female practitioners found that the female nurses were ambivalent to male nurses, which was an indication of their fear and concern that men monopolise the positions of power and authority within nursing. In the above quotation, it is proposed that suggesting that a male professional’s progression is more a consequence of managerial convenience or due to his female colleagues’ lack of motivation, aspiration, or different priority identification, than due to male skill or aptitude. Simultaneously undermines both the positions of the female professionals and undermines the male professional’s skills.

It is further suggested that the lack of recognition of the male professional’s aptitude for the task is a projection of the group anxiety the profession holds about the changing nature of the profession. Psychodynamic theory states that conflicts occur within a system, in this scenario the system is the profession, when the boundaries, task focus or roles within the system are challenged (Menzies Lyth, 1988). The members of the system collectively perform defense mechanisms to ensure the stability of the system. Likewise Blalock (1967) stated that the traditionally privileged majority of a profession can act in a hostile manner towards the minority group, if they feel threatened by their existence.

Conversations with colleagues about the findings of this research has led to some interesting insights about the professionally held anxiety about the change from a profession seeped in therapy based on intuition, or professional artistry (Fish, 1991), to one based in evidence and science, which are attributes associated with masculinity, alongside task orientation, authoritarian style of behaviour and assertion (Sargent, 2000) rather than femininity. Therefore, the political pressure applied to encourage the profession into researching and declaring its scientific evidence base (Royal College of Speech and Language therapists 2012) is viewed as a consequence of male dominance within positions of authority.

The situation which Eric is describing is, of course, illegal under the Equality Act (2010), however a search of the current speech and language therapy manager vacancies across the UK, supports Eric’s manager’s view, in that all the posts currently advertised are fulltime, whereas a majority of the advertisements for the therapy based, client facing, positions are for part-time posts. The manager’s statement also demonstrates the benefit some male professionals can acquire due to their minority status, as discussed previously, and could be an example of the phenomenon that Williams (1993) labelled as the glass elevator; the process by
which male professionals, feel pressure to move up through the profession despite their intentions.

The glass elevator could be a consequence of the discomfort or fear felt by members of the profession, or individuals outside of the profession about men within the profession providing therapy, being placed in roles that require caring and empathy and performing tasks which are not typically associated with masculinity. It is also argued that the glass elevator enables the profession to feel more comfortable with the few male therapists becoming managers, as this enables the female dominated working environment to continue; therefore it protects the members of the profession from the group anxiety of change, and the identity of a speech and language therapist is not altered. This conclusion is further supported by the admission of the participants, who indicated that if the number of male professionals increased substantially within the profession, the focus and underpinning knowledge and skills of the profession would be different. They suggested that the profession would undergo a transformation from caring and nurturing to an evidence-based, analytical, solution focussed style of therapy, which is characteristic of technical rational model (Fish 1991) of professionalism, and arguably more in line with today's NHS workplace environment.

5.6. ‘Male therapists are gay’

An additional consequence of the group anxiety surrounding men in the profession is the assumption that the male speech and language therapist is gay. This positioning is not solely found in speech and language therapy, but has also been identified by a number of previous studies as present in other professions, such as nursing, early years professionals and teaching (Owen et al., 1997, Jones, 2007, Stott, 2007). It is argued that in order to protect the association between the profession and femininity, the male members are assumed to portray feminine characteristics in order to match the representation of the profession. Additionally representing male therapists/students as homosexual, individuals are protecting themselves against the fear of paedophilia or male authority.

None of the participants in this study were asked to declare their sexuality, but a number of the participants were keen to express that they were not homosexual. It is suggested that this is a sign of othering, as similarly found by Francis and Skelton in their 2001 study of male teachers’ constructions of masculinity, which results from the male students’ discomfort in being placed in a position of compromised masculinity (Williams, 1989) by the female majority. Two of the individuals, who had commenced their pre-registration programme at eighteen years of age, were particularly forthright about their heterosexuality at times within the interviews when the topic of conversation was not obviously associated with sexuality. It is argued that through the interactions within the interview they were negotiating their masculinity, and positioning themselves to say ‘I’m caring and straight’. In contrast, two of the older students opening discussed the pressure they had felt arising from this positioning by others as gay.

‘On my first day on the course one of the females on the course came up to me cos I think she must have worked in some capacity in a speech clinic just as a helper or
something she said she was told by all speech therapists at work that if there were any males on the course that they would be either weird or gay. So I thought right so that’s the perception that the outside have of the male speech therapists it wasn’t necessarily the one I had’ (Brian)

‘they also think that you are a gay or that there is something wrong with you so yeh it’s been difficult’ (Isaac)

In both statements, the conflict between their own positioning and the forced positioning of others can be seen. In Brian’s statement, the negotiation of his identity is verbalised. Initially he appears to give greater emphasis to the accusation as the female student had worked within the profession previously, whereas he had not. This recognition of her previous status within the profession implies that she has more knowledge and consequential authority over his novice position. However, it is noted that he then removes this authority by positioning her as ‘outside’, therefore not in a position of authority and knowledge, which then enables him to integrate his masculine identity with that of speech and language therapist.

5.7. ‘Females mother, but men are professional’

All the individuals interviewed stressed the differences in working practices and skill use between males and females. One difference of note was that the female students/therapists were accused of being overtly maternal with young clients. The motherly approach was described by Frank as ‘bit more softer a bit more nurturing’ in comparison to the typical relationship between therapist and client.

Whilst the benefit of utilising a motherly approach was acknowledged by some individuals,

‘female SLTs are better at working with children cos they might think they are more maternal or able to put the children at ease,’ (Daniel)

Most suggested that the approach was not beneficial, with reasons ranging from it not enabling the clients to achieve their goals to doing harm to the client.

‘if you’ve planned your therapy you know what you want to achieve I think being mothering most of the time isn’t going to get you very far in terms of actually achieving your goals of what you want to achieve with the client’ (Frank)

‘it seems that sometimes perhaps being mothering and caring, was I shouldn’t use the word harm it’s a bit of a hard word to use but more harmful to the child in the long run than if she had put her foot down and said look let’s stop and do this, (Craig)

In these statements the participants positioned their female peers as mothering and unprofessional, which according to Vogt (2002) is a form of caring highly linked to femininity. They additionally demonstrated the association of masculinity with achievement of goals, which is a reflection of the alternate position of caring as depicted by Vogt (2002). Hansen and Mulholland (2005) found that new male teachers were happy to perform some forms of caring associated with the feminine end of Vogt’s spectrum of caring, these demonstrations of caring such as discipline are not obviously transferrable to speech and language therapy. However, Craig later returned to the notion of being maternal, and further stated that;
‘I think a male SLT could also give a maternal kind of role it’s about assessing what the individual needs whether they want sympathy or whether they want you not mother them or father whether the SLT is needed to be caring it’s about being caring but knowing the boundaries’ (Craig)

In this statement he is indicating that as a male therapist he is able to enact behaviours usually associated with femininity, as the antecedent to the use of these behaviours stems from the client rather than his own volition, therefore he is required to perform un-masculine behaviours. However, the control of the timing of these behaviours remains with the student who ‘assesses... what the individual needs’ suggesting that whilst the individual client, may prefer the therapist/student to utilise their softer communication skills, the student maintains the control.

This control is identified as the use of assessment, underlining the preference for an evidence base for skills use, whereas in contrast Harry suggested that female therapists use ‘intuition’ a characteristic stemming from a more creative base;

‘virtually all the lecturers say that we use intuition and that’s not a male statement you would not get a man saying that and it’s not a business statement’, (Harry)

In this statement, Harry is differentiating his practice from the artistry model of professionalism in which professional behaviour and skills stem from creativity, and aligning himself with the technical rationality model of professionalism, in which the skills and behaviours are structured, based in evidence and formal. For many of the individuals interviewed, this difference compounded the difference between males and females within the profession. Finally, Craig’s statement mentions the need for boundaries. In setting boundaries around the behaviour for himself and the client, he is ensuring that the use of the skills remains masculine; in that they are specifically related to a task and purpose and not utilised for emotional fulfilment.

Collectively it would appear from the participants’ statements that they distinguish the behaviours associated with mothering from those associated with being a professional. Although they appear to be more at ease with the use of the skills and behaviours if they are labelled in a manner as not to associate them with femininity, for example caring with boundaries and offering discipline in the form of goal setting and encouraging clients to achieve these goals. Alternatively, it could be argued that the separation of professional from mothering is a tool which the participants have used in order to integrate one of the core skills of the profession; empathy, with their masculine identity.

5.8. Chapter Summary

The experiences of the individuals interviewed demonstrated that they were continually facing and dealing with a number of assumptions, resulting from societal discourses, about their professional identity, gender identity and to an extent personal traits and behaviours. The participants’ reflections on their experiences indicated that they have begun the complex process of challenging these assumptions, either through direct action or by manipulating the consequential environments, to begin to integrate their new professional identities and negotiate
the relationship between gender and professional identity. However, it was also recognised that the participants chose not to challenge assumptions and discourses, to the extent that some assumptions were actively re-inscribed (Butler, 1990) by the participants, when the outcome of these could be classified as positive for the male students.

This chapter has focussed on a wide range of assumptions that the participants have had to deal with in order to integrate their new identity as a speech and language therapy student and their masculine identity. For most of the participants this integration, though fraught with difficulties and dilemmas concluded positively, although one participant had decided to complete his degree and then decide whether to practice as a speech and language therapist.

These assumptions and challenges are echoed in the experiences of male practitioners from similar professions, who collectively reported that the minority status of men in health and education professions continually creates unease for not only the male practitioners but also both the female practitioners and those individuals who encounter the profession/individual. It is argued that this discomfort is the antecedent to many of the expressed assumptions, which serve as a means to redress the discomfort with the provision of stereotypical explanations for non-typical or unexpected behaviours and practices.

The significant point of difference between the male speech and language therapy students and the experiences of other male professionals is the assumption that they are a role model. Warde (2009) reported that male social workers had viewed being a role model as a fundamental aspect of their work; likewise Cushman (2008) reported the expected integration of role model and male teaching practitioner. In both professions, it would appear that the male professionals had integrated the concept of being a role model for other males; both children and adults. In contrast, the speech and language therapy students had heard and to an extent accepted the assumption, but did not support the automatic association between their gender and being a role model. To the extent that a number of the participants rejected the association based on the overriding purpose of the profession and the nature of the relationship they wished to have with their clients. Whilst it could be argued that this difference is due to the difference in professional status; the participants in both the Warde and Cushman studies were qualified professionals rather than students, it is argued that this difference is a result of the contrast between the aims and purposes of the professions and their subsequent relationship with the clients. Whilst both teaching and social work practitioners have a longer-term relationship with their students/clients, speech and language therapists tend to have a very short relationship; current NHS guidelines imply only six contacts with a client.

The previous chapter addressed the isolating environment, which the male speech and language therapy students must traverse; this chapter has discussed the assumptions that have stemmed from individuals’ interactions with their point of difference. For some individuals these experiences would prevent or dissuade them from becoming qualified speech and language therapists, however, as previously mentioned most of the individuals interviewed were confident they would achieve this goal. The following chapter therefore addresses their experiences in
relation from the start of the journey through to becoming a qualified speech and language therapist.
The previous chapters addressed the physical and social isolation felt by the students and the assumptions; based on the discourses, identity constructions and subject positions associations they faced during their journey to become a practicing and qualified speech and language therapist. This chapter uses data and findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews to explore this journey; from their identification with the profession prior to commencing the pre-registration training programme, through developing a student identity and integrating with the student culture, to developing a professional identity, performing the customs and practices of the profession to seeking and gaining employment.

6.1. Identification with the profession

All the individuals interviewed stated that they were able to visualise themselves as, and expressed a desire to be, a speech and language therapist. By actively choosing the profession and positioning oneself as a member, it can be argued to be the beginning stages in developing a professional identity. According to Weidman et al. (2001) this identification begins with the association of personal characteristics and preferences with that of the chosen profession. In the questionnaire (appendix five), the participants were asked to identify the reasons why they chose speech and language therapy as a profession, as these reasons, often underpin a sense of seeing oneself as belonging to a profession and early identification with the profession. The decisions to join the profession are broadly divided into three categories. The first being identification of aspects of the profession which they liked, such as working with others and the broad range of clients. The second group contained the identification that they either possessed or enjoyed the key underpinning knowledge and skills of the profession. The third group differed in that rather than a process of self-identification taking place, the individuals who completed the questionnaire recorded that other individuals, in particular family members, who had had experience of the profession, identified that their knowledge, skills or values matched those of the profession. In addition, a small minority of the questionnaire participants cited their previous first-hand experience of the profession.

In the questionnaire, the participants were asked whether they had considered other professions prior to commencing the speech and language therapy programme. A majority of the participants who had completed the questionnaire had considered other professions (see figure 2), this is in line with Marcia’s theory of identity development (1966), which suggests that in order for an individual to develop a core and positive sense of identity, alternatives should be explored.
Analysis of the questionnaire data indicated that the professions of Occupational Therapy and Teaching were considered by the most individuals as an alternative to speech and language therapy. It could be suggested that this is due to the close relationship of associated roles and potential clients between the three professions. The presence of audiology was also expected, as in many countries outside of the United Kingdom, speech and language therapists are able to gain the dual qualification of speech and language therapy and audiology. It is suggested that the dual qualification has led to the higher number of male speech and language therapists registered to work in these countries; for example in the United States of America four percent of registered speech pathologists are male, whereas twenty-six percent of the dual qualified practitioners are male (American Speech-Language Hearing Association 2011). The presence of engineering as an alternative profession, on face value, appear at odds with the other alternative professions, as it is the only non health or education based profession. However, both engineering and speech and language therapy require high level analytical skills but, with different applications.

Almost a quarter of the questionnaire participants had not considered another profession prior to entering their speech and language therapy pre-registration programme. From the questionnaire results it is difficult to ascertain whether these individuals did not consider another profession because they knew speech and language therapy was the profession for them, or whether it could be an indication that they were in foreclosure (Marcia, 1966).

The snapshot of their professional identity derived from the professional identity scale within the questionnaire indicated that the participants potentially had not entered the profession in a state of foreclosure as they positively identified with the profession, indicated that they belonged to it and that they felt they shared characteristics with members of the profession, demonstrating
that their identification with the profession, through reflexive self-comparison had commenced either prior to or during their pre-registration training programmes. Buunk et al. (2007) argued that social comparison assists the reduction of uncertainty about an identity position; this in turn enables the individual to commence the process of self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1987). In addition, it is argued that these results demonstrate the position that students are placed within the community of the profession; as novice members on the periphery, with some shared practices and behaviours, and some points of difference. Additionally, that the recognition of some shared characteristics or practices increases the individual’s motivation to become a more central, or expert member of the professional community.

Previous studies have indicated an association between strength of identification with their profession and retention on the university programme of study (Worthington et al., 2012, Adams et al., 2006) this is not a surprising association. However, they further indicated that inter-professional education influences this association. Inter-professional education, in healthcare programmes is the combining of pre-registration programmes to deliver core knowledge subjects such as biology and psychology. Whilst this practice is cost effective, research has indicated that it can influence the students’ development of their individual professional identity, and locally was cited as the antecedent to increased attrition of students within the first year of the pre-registration health profession programmes. It is not known how many of the participants completing the questionnaire had, or were currently participating in inter-professional learning. Therefore, this influence should be noted, but cannot be analysed, as it could be argued that the rise in positive identification with the profession seen in the following graph could be due to the negative impact of inter-professional education in the first year.

In addition, it is argued that the first year students are more motivated to participate in the pre-registration programme, than students in later years, due to the novelty of the situation. This higher level of motivation could also skew the results, in that their higher levels of motivation drove them to answer in a more positive manner than offer a realistic perception of the associations. Alternatively, the results could be a reflection of the participants motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990), in which individuals defend their decision in order to maintain motivation, therefore would rate themselves positively in relation to their decision to join the profession. However, it is also important to note that, if a first year student is not highly motivated, he is less likely to complete the questionnaire and commence the first year of his pre-registration programme.

The following graph demonstrates the results broken down by year of programme. As the speech and language therapy pre-registration programmes differ in length, three categories were formed: first year; depicting those students in the first year of their study – both undergraduate and postgraduate. Mid-year; depicting those students who have more than twelve months remaining on their programme and last-year depicting those students who are in their final year of study.
Figure 3 demonstrates the relationship between time on programme and the participant’s positive identification with the profession. It would appear that the individuals who were later in their pre-registrations programme agreed more readily with the statement ‘I can identify positively with the profession’ than participants in the earlier years. The graph also demonstrates that few participants rated themselves as ambivalent, labelled as ‘neither’ on the self-rating scale and graph, towards the statement.

The figure demonstrates the difference in identification between the students in the earlier years of their pre-registration programme and the students at the end. Handley et al. (2006) argued that following the process of self-comparison, an individual may choose to marginally join a profession, to test out the compatibility of the identity with their sense of self. It is suggested that these results indicate that the individuals who have worked through this longer period of moratorium and feel unable to identify positively with the profession, alongside those who were ambivalent about their membership have by year 2, left the pre-registration programme; leaving only those who are identifying positively with the profession.

The mid-year students appear to be less confident that they are a member of the profession; they also indicated weaker ties with the profession, less identification with the profession and were less confident that they shared characteristics with the profession than the first year students. This result is in-line with the findings of Hind et al. (2003) who reported that students arrive to their pre-registration programmes with a high sense of professional belonging and identity. It is further argued that this dip demonstrates that the progression from novice to expert level of membership within the profession is not a straight trajectory, (Lave 2004 cited in Handley et al 2006) and a journey characterised by reflection and negotiation. As the individual student works through the demands of the role to preserve their sense of self, and to accommodate aspects of their sense of self to match the requirements and expectations of the role (Ibarra, 1999).

Alternatively, it could be argued that these results reflect the ‘difficult year 2 period’ in which many students question whether they are on the correct programme for them, begin to question their self identities in relation to their professional and student identities and cannot see an end to the current time of study. On many of the pre-registration programmes, the mid years contain the first clinical work-based placements for the students, therefore by participating in these...
placements they become more aware of the conflicting and complementary subject positions that are available to them, as well as becoming increasingly aware of the skill and knowledge base that they have yet to learn. It is argued that this heightened self-awareness leads to increased knowledge of this individualisation of the identity and concludes with further self-comparison to both peers and expert members of the profession and learning community, which results in the identification of the differences between themselves and the profession more than the commonalities. Therefore, it is suggested that the process of becoming a speech and language therapist is not a process of imitation but one of individual and situated negotiation, in which the individual begins to integrate their own history and identities with the requirements of the profession.

However, the figure also demonstrates that it cannot be assumed that the state of belonging to a profession develops as the individual becomes increasingly involved in the profession, as a number of participants in the first year of their pre-registration programme rated themselves as positively associated with the practices and characteristics of the profession. These findings are supported by the comments made by some of the participants in the interviews. For example, Daniel who, on reflecting on his recent work based placement, said;

‘I was able to establish a good working rapport with the client so yes I do see myself as an SLT even though we’re just in the first year’ (Daniel)

In his statement, Daniel appears to be negotiating the subject positions that he is located; he is able to identify that he has performed the practices of the profession, building rapport, which he equates to supporting his position as a speech and language therapist/student, whilst simultaneously recognising that his position as a first year student negates this position.

In contrast, Brian was also in the first stages of his pre-registration training programme, but describes his positioning differently

‘it feels like you’re not being included in lectures and things it seems like in some of the psychology lectures the lecturers seem to be talking to just the psychology single honours and forgetting us and in the speech path the lecturers are the same talking to the speech singles’ (Brian)

Brian’s statement appears to reflect how some subject positions ensure others are unavailable (Burr, 1995). In Brian’s case, the position of being on a joint honours programme ensured he did not belong to either profession, further supporting the negative impact inter-professional learning environments can have on an individual’s professional identity development. This unique positioning stemmed from the advice he received about the association of his gender with the profession of speech and language therapy. He was advised to complete the joint honours programme as it was expected that there would be more males on the programme. During the interview, Brian expressed the comical and ironic conclusion to this decision; in the speech and language therapy cohort, there were in fact four males that would have been in his cohort and only himself on the joint honours and therefore he was physically isolated for most of his university time. It is argued that this belief that he would be better suited to a joint honours programme was rooted in the belief that men should not be speech and language therapists
and that individual students should not be placed in a potential position of isolation, as this could affect their self-esteem, confidence and identity development. However, for Brian, the consequences have been that he continually compared himself to others, describing his attributes and skills in contrast to other professions, as he felt unable to contrast his skills to those of a speech and language therapist;

‘as for teaching, teaching children is not my thing I don’t think I have the ability to control them if they were behaving badly’ (Brian)

In contrast, Frank firmly saw himself as a speech and language therapist, although indicates that the road to achieving this goal is not necessarily smooth;

‘I know what my goal is, to be a speech and language therapist, so I’m not paying much attention to the little small problems’ (Frank)

Alongside their visualised identification with the profession, the individuals interviewed all expressed an enjoyment of their pre-registration programmes and the work-based placements. Whilst their reasons for the enjoyment varied, they were all closely aligned to the notion that speech and language therapy is the ‘right’ profession for them; a place where they felt able to express their views, share their skills and attributes and ‘fit in’ despite their differences and the expressed views of others. Daniel and Frank, both of whom were in the first year of their pre-registration programmes, shared how they identified themselves and their skills with the skills of the profession. In their following quotations, they both identify the role skills play in their integration, for Daniel the reflection arose after I asked him to explain why he had chosen speech and language therapy instead of Occupational Therapy which he had also considered, whereas for Frank the reflection arose after I asked him to describe how his first year had gone;

‘I thought I could use my skills to develop myself in that kind of career’ (Daniel)

‘I think for me it’s a case of how confident do I feel and certainly over the year I have grown more confident in my professional skills and my clinical skills and I think for me that’s how secure I feel in my place in the profession.’ (Frank).

6.2. Being a student speech and language therapist

To become a speech and language therapist, an individual must successfully complete a pre-registration training programme. In the UK, these programmes are available at a selected number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and enable the student to develop the knowledge, skills and values to become a successful professional practitioner. All the programmes contain both academic and clinical practice elements; therefore, the individual must develop not only a professional identity but also a student identity. This section addresses the experiences of being a student, from the perspectives of the individuals interviewed.

The individuals interviewed demonstrated a strong identification with their student peers, as they were all ‘just speech and language therapy students’ (Craig) indicating that they were able
to identify many commonalities within the student group, due, in part, to the shared goal of the
students, as further indicated by Craig;

‘I hear from all of them how much they have enjoyed their placement how they are
enjoying the course there were in the first year a couple of drop outs but everyone has
now followed through and I assume that it’s ‘cos everyone enjoys it there are times
when you’re sick of it and don’t want to do it anymore but you can see the light at the
end of the tunnel and you get through’ (Craig)

Nevertheless, for some of the participants, the integration was not unproblematic, Eric noted the
lack of student lifestyle; for many individuals entering higher education for the first time, there is
the expectation of a relaxed period of study, with few pressurised requirements and a high
number of opportunities to socialise with new friends and within the student community. It is
argued that for many eighteen year old students, this lifestyle is an integral part of their identity
development, as the community of higher education has become an extension of formal
schooling or of the adolescence period, in which individuals continue the performance of self
exploration typically found in mid-adolescence (Erikson, 1980). Whereas for the speech and
language therapy student these opportunities are reduced, in that they are often expected to
attend lectures for twenty hours a week, in addition to attending work-based placements and
complete self-directed study.

‘There are pros and cons about being a school leaver and being mature on this course
cos when you’re on this course you don’t really get a life that student life you know it’s
very intense’ (Eric)

Eric identifies that as a school leaver, an individual is unable to participate in the student
community, this echoes the experiences shared by Harry. Harry, a mature student identified the
difficulties he faced transitioning from being employed to becoming a student, but also the skills
his previous employed status had given him which aided his transition into behaviours
associated with the student identity. Harry’s experience demonstrates how the transition into
higher education is influenced by a number of factors as highlighted by both Tinto (1975) and
Bean and Metzner (1985). Harry also shared his difficulties in balancing home-life with the
demands of the programme, although for him, the home demands were more associated with
his reduced financial input into the household, than relating to demands for attention from family
members, which matches the findings of previous research. Previous research has indicated
that whilst many mature students maintained high levels of intrinsic motivation to complete their
degree programme and mature male students had greater freedom to pursue their studies in
comparison to mature female students, they struggled to balance home-life with university
studies (O’Brien et al., 2009, McCune et al., 2010).

Harry also shared how he regularly down-played his knowledge and skills in order to match his
student peers;

‘I found that I had to deliberately down play what I knew… in order… so that they would
think I was someone they could talk to and I wouldn’t tell them what to do’ (Harry)
In this statement Harry is recognising the inherent differences between himself and the other members of the student community, and the behaviours he performed in order to reduce their visibility. Throughout Harry’s interview, he disclosed situations in which he appeared to perform differently than his skills and knowledge would predict. Arguably, this could be an indication, as a new first year student, of his motivation to fit in with the community and achieve his goal to become a qualified therapist. However, it could also be an indication of his insecurity with the decision to become a student. Throughout his interview he also made a number of statements which appeared to either undermine his decision to become a student, or imply that he was not as motivated as his peers to practice as a speech and language therapist; although was keen to stress his curiosity and interest in the underpinning knowledge of the profession.

In contrast to Harry, Isaac expressed a number of occasions where he chose to embrace his difference. This expression appeared to support his position as effortless achiever, in comparison to his female peers who he depicted as needing to work hard to achieve the same level of success. Mac an Ghaill (1994) associated the behaviour of appearing to achieve without effort with masculinity labelled as ‘Real Englishmen’. Further to this, he suggested that they maintain an ambivalent stance towards academic endeavour, display confidence about their position in society and maintain career aspirations to be a professional, a stance echoed by a number of the participants in the research. In reflection of the high level of confidence he portrayed throughout his interview, shared the stories with humour;

‘when you have just walked into a lecture wearing your pyjamas [his words meaning leisurewear] and with your note book, if you’re lucky to have your note book with you, and you’re with these nice girls with their very nice organized folders, colour coded tags and those markers…..’ (Isaac)

It is suggested that the variation in approach to dealing with difference between Isaac and Harry is age. Harry, as previously mentioned, was a mature student, and was negotiating the transition from the positions of businessman and breadwinner to the positions of student and dependent, whereas Isaac had commenced the pre-registration programme almost immediately after completing formal education. In commencing higher education, Isaac was continuing along the expected journey; expected by his family and culture, it was these expectations and associated value base, which appeared to propel Isaac through his student journey. However, in contrast to this confident portrayal of gender difference, he was less able to cope with the cultural differences between himself and his peers. For Isaac, not only was he the sole male in his cohort, he was also the sole Asian, and on occasions found the forthright confident communication of his female peers difficult to cope with, as he had not experienced co-education prior to commencing Higher Education in the United Kingdom.

‘it was a group interview and there were the 6 or 7 girls there and by that time I had just arrived from India and so I usually speak slowly and pause and take time and these girls were confident and chatty and when I went back home I felt really bad I felt uncomfortable they say boys shouldn’t cry and I was trying really hard not to cry I got the place but it was really uncomfortable’ (Isaac)
In this quotation, Isaac also demonstrates the complexity in negotiating his current demands for performance within a situation; needing to cry to demonstrate his discomfort, with his cultural discourses of masculinity ‘boys shouldn’t cry’. Isaac later explained in his interview that, as an Asian man, he felt additional pressure to perform specific aspects of masculinity, and not to portray any behaviour which could be associated with femininity, such as the expression of frustration and discomfort through crying. Public display of these behaviours would lead to others questioning and making assumptions about his sexuality, which had already been questioned by his religious community as he had chosen to join an allied-health profession rather than medicine, which is viewed with less importance and more aligned to caring, consequently less masculine by his community.

In contrast, Harry, despite the age difference between himself and his peers, was able to identify with the class and ethnic origins of the other students on the programme. His quotation also highlights the class and ethnic bias of the profession; white and middle-class;

‘I can identify with them, and I can identify with them again as my parents and that sort of background and their friends with that sort of familial relationship’ (Harry)

The above quotations demonstrate the impact of historical identities on the performance of current identities and the cohesion with the community. In order to ascertain whether the behaviours of others had affected their sense of cohesion the following question was asked;

‘Have there been specific times when you have been aware of being male in a female dominated environment?’

The question was designed to enable the participants to reflect on and describe a critical or specific experience, from their mundane, every-day, experiences of being a student. Johns (2004) argues that in order to become an effective practitioner an individual should reflect on the mundane as well as the critical experiences, which are defined by Kilgallon (2012) as an incident in which they were made acutely aware of their identity, position and/or behaviours due to the actions of others. Collectively the participants responded negatively to the question, but after a pause for reflection identified a few specific examples; incidents of sexism and having their ‘male perspective’ specifically sought.

Frank and Kieran both described incidents of sexism;

‘you do get vaguely sexist jokes and you get them on this course as well but you ignore them because they're not meant mean spiritedly and you're used to the fact that the jokes are there and to be fair you can imagine that the women would get the exact same situation’ (Frank)

‘I recall being on placement and seeing a David Beckham poster up in the office, and wondering how people would react if the tables had been turned and a man had been in the team wanting to put up a female poster. The sexism shoe on the other foot!’ (Kieran)

Both these quotations demonstrate how the male students did not face a null environment, but one stippled with sexism, akin to the blatant sexism previously found in male dominated
environments (Meinholdt and Murray, 1999). However, rather than challenge the situation, both individuals appear to have reflected on the situation and chosen to ignore it, which is arguably a portrayal of a trait associated with masculinity. It is further suggested that their assumption of equality is demonstrated through their representations of the situation, in particular the indication that they were comfortable with its occurrence as the same situations would occur in a male dominated environment. Although Kieran alluded to the presumption that if the reverse occurred, a female colleague may have challenged the sexism.

Harry and Isaac both described situations when, during academic sessions, their male perspective was specifically sought either by lecturers or student peers;

‘they do say things like what do the boys think and the point to Greg and I so we do have that if they want a male view they will ask Greg or I’ (Harry)

Whilst for Harry this was seen a positive light, as an attempt to include them in the conversations, from which he initially felt isolated, for some students such as Isaac, the singling out increased his discomfort in the situation.

‘Yes they do say what do you think Isaac? And that makes me feel uncomfortable you should not been singled out you should be part of the team I felt that I had been singled out I have given what I think bit I find it quite uncomfortable sometimes cos you’re treated as something special’ (Isaac)

The methods of dealing with this discomfort differed amongst the individuals being interviewed. For some, conforming was the strategy.

‘my strategy was that I would stay quiet that was my strategy if I felt I couldn’t contribute I stayed quiet I think that’s what I did I let other people talk about it and then I would agree with it, unless I felt really strongly about it and thinking it was the other way round then I would say something but I was generally scared if I said this, if I let my views known firstly I wouldn’t think my views would be heard cos of lone voice’ (Isaac)

Asch (1952) states that individuals are forced to conform when they are confronted with a homogenous group. This conformity is also more likely if the individual is a lone voice in the group, suffering from decreased confidence and believes that others in the group have more power than themselves, as Isaac would appear to demonstrate. This conformity leads the lone male to question and doubt the accuracy of their own views and knowledge and further increase the cycle of decreased self-confidence and weakened identity.

However, in contrast, Moscovici (1985) argues that a minority figure, if comfortable with their own decision making and confident in their ability to share this, is able to change the view of the majority, by offering opinions which are closely associated but different. This enables the lone voice to be heard, as Brian found;

‘I tend to give them the male perspective on things, well I give them my perspective I don’t know whether that is necessarily male I give it and they take it and I think afterwards they recognise that it’s been a valuable contribution against somebody else’s but I don’t think they necessarily single me out for the male interpretation’ (Brian)
George admitted to specifically seeking his females peers’ perspective on a work-based placement that he had previously attended and stated that he was led to believe was one utilised only by male students. He spoke to them in order to ascertain whether their experiences had differed significantly from his own, under the pretence of offering them an opportunity to reflect on the placement in the forensic setting;

‘I wonder if on my course they were more likely to send the males rather than females, someone went there this year on the course and they said and someone went from the second year as well and I talked to them both so it was useful I think it was useful for them to know what they were going into’ (George)

However, in seeking their reflections he also portrays the assumption that men should protect females, and that his female peers would be too sensitive to deal with the forensic clients and their behaviours.

6.3. Beginning the customs of the profession

Once an individual is accepted into a profession and they have commenced the process of integrating the new identities into a core sense of self, through interactions and negotiations with the members of the profession, the novice member is expected to perform the customs and practices of the profession. For the individuals interviewed, their sense of belonging to the community of the profession appeared to occur during the final work-based placement. In this placement, they were offered opportunities by expert members of the community to perform the customs and practices of the profession independently, such as taking responsibility for the complete care plan of a client, participate in service planning activities and participate in high levels of administration. Prior to this final work-based placement, the students appeared to be comfortable with their performances of the practices and their knowledge base, but wanted this approved by others. For example Frank, a student in the middle of his pre-registration programme;

‘there was no one else in the room and my practice educator was off sick so I decided to field these questions and I’ll try and work within not only the professional boundaries of speech and language therapy but also the boundaries of student speech and language therapist who hasn’t actually had any exams on voice laryngectomy so whilst I might think I know this stuff I don’t actually know if I know this stuff’. (Frank)

Frank stresses the importance of knowing and being able to use the underpinning knowledge of the profession as an element of becoming a professional, yet also demonstrates an awareness of the scope within which he must perform. These boundaries are two-fold for Frank, relating to his profession boundaries and his positioning as a student. It is suggested that for some students this position created dilemmas; in that they hold confidence in their skills, but are held to account by others, who ultimately take responsibility for the students’ actions. This position continually reminded the student that as an unqualified professional the offering of opportunities to perform can be transient or subject to achievement of other practices, such as examinations or provision of interventions with clients. Josh demonstrated he was extremely aware of this position he placed his work-based supervisor;
‘At times you can feel like a burden to whichever SLT department you are in, and a few times I’ve felt more like a hindrance than an extra pair of hands’ (Josh)

In the following quotation, Eric describes his final work-based placement, in which for the first time he was not only offered the opportunity to provide interventions for the clients, as he had done previously, but also take responsibility to the management and administration around working with the client;

‘you see when I have been working I have been running sessions on my own, but I think it’s more about when you’re planning it, you’re doing the intervention you’re the one collaborating with the parents or families you’re the one that’s responsible’ (Eric)

In the quotation, Eric indicates the responsibility behind being trusted to work alone without the physical presence and support of a supervisor. This level of trust would indicate that the members of the profession were willing to enable Eric to engage in opportunities in order to enable him to learn the additional roles and responsibilities of the profession.

These roles and responsibilities can be identified in George’s interview; he suggested that it is more than just working alone with clients that indicates an acceptance into the profession; that the individual student also has to demonstrate an ability to perform the wider tasks of the profession, such as planning, administration and management. However, again recognising the limits of his integration within the profession, whether this was due to opportunities offered, or a reflection by others of his student/novice position within the profession, therefore ensuring that he is only offered opportunities that fit with this position.

‘not in the sense of the therapy sessions, I was very involved in that but the administrative stuff and all those things that help it tick over everyone has to do, planning, cos I was only there for 2 days a week planning for the future I didn’t have to do any of that and so maybe that as well kept me out a bit’ (George)

For George this limiting of opportunities, meant that he could not view himself as a full member of the profession despite being within a few weeks of gaining his qualification. It should be noted that George had had a particularly difficult final work-based placement which had led him to question whether or not he wished to join the profession upon qualification. He stated that only post qualification would he be able to develop a sense of belonging to the profession, as only then would he be working independently without supervision. This statement highlights the fragile nature of the sense of belonging to a profession and the impact that another’s views can have on this relationship. For George his sense of belonging was torn by a therapist who stated that he needed another twelve months before he would be good enough to qualify,

‘if I had another year and another placement on the course I would come out as a better therapist’ (George)

These statements all highlight the role, members of the profession take when inducting novice members into the profession, by gradually allowing them to work independently and perform the behaviours of the identity without instruction, and towards the relationship which Josh described as;
'feel like an equal in a way, that my ideas and opinions mean something to them'.
(Josh)

Previous research has argued that members of minority groups within professions benefit from support and demonstration of the customs and practices of the profession from a role model (Wilson, 2005, Lockwood, 2006), offering them opportunities to view and then post reflection add behaviours or performances to their identities (Ibarra 1999). However, the participants interviewed collectively suggested that whilst a work-based placement with a male practitioner would be beneficial to their integration within the profession, this integration stemmed from a social rather than professional skills basis. They indicated that they had learnt, and in the future would continue to learn, the behaviours and practices of the profession from a therapist, regardless of gender. Many of the participants, who had had experience of a male professional indicated that this male professional provided social support. The form of support varied; such as being able to share a humorous moment as suggested by George or alternate opportunities to the casual conversation found at the start of the working day as in Eric’s experience stated below, or provided the comfort of being understood without additional explanation as seen in the quotation from Isaac:

‘it’s different being with guys and girls it’s like a different sense of humour’ (George)

‘from my experience that a girl will go in have a little chat at the beginning and they’re all having there tea and talking and I’m like going in saying where are the files who’s coming in today’ (Eric)

‘felt I was with someone who understood what I was saying what I was doing you know working in communication people read what you saying’ (Isaac)

These quotations highlight how an individual’s professional identity is negotiated, how the individuals have viewed and chosen not to integrate certain aspects of the interrelationships of the profession into their subject position and the impact other subject positions, such as gender have in the interpersonal relationships between individuals. It is suggested that the assumption that male speech and language therapy students need male professional role models is steeped in the essentialist notion of gender, and that all male speech and language students and professionals are positioned with an identical form of masculinity. These assumptions appear to mimic the discourses which underpin the assumption that males working in education provide a role model for boys and to save boys from the learning opportunities aligned with femininity (Francis, 2008). Collectively they can be seen as a discourse relating to lacking, in that because something is fundamentally different we as practitioners need to provide the piece to fit within our preferred version of the jigsaw. For example, a child from a female single parent family is lacking a father therefore needs a male teacher, a male speech and language therapy student is lacking femininity and therefore cannot demonstrate empathy, therefore needed a role model to demonstrate how to do it.
6.4. Finding employment

Prior to the interviews, it was expected that the last hurdle for the final year participants would be the successful achievement of their final year assessments, which would indicate that their student identity is ending and they were able to take the opportunity to travel into the qualified element of the profession’s community. This was expected as the definition of professional is an individual who is accomplished and qualified (Grant, 1999). However, all the final year students interviewed demonstrated confidence in their ability to successfully complete the final year assessment tasks, but were concerned about their acceptance into the profession. Consequently, for them the final hurdle was the gaining of employment as a qualified speech and language therapist.

The participants demonstrated an awareness of the role others within the profession play in order to ensure their acceptance, and appeared concerned that their gender difference would influence this process. In the following extracts, both Eric and George express the complexity behind the acceptance, whilst relying on the notion of equal opportunities for all and that the selection process does not contain attribution errors or systemic bias (Fischer et al., 2008), despite the fact that their experiences on the work-based placements indicated that these inference errors occurred regularly.

‘I wouldn’t want to get a job just because I was a guy, I want to get the job cos I am considered to be the best person for the job’ (Eric)

‘the positive and negative discrimination as there is a difference and a separation, and everyone is aware that there are not that many male therapists, whereas it could be that people decide to hire him cos he is male, but then the other way they might see the difference and decide not to’, (George)

George’s quotation appears to reflect the careful balance managers should achieve in employing male therapists. They could argue a case for positive discrimination, citing the need for a male therapist rather than female to meet the needs of clients of the service, however this could equate to tokenism, which is defined by Kanter (1977) as behaviours which lead to an individual being perceived as a representation of their category rather than as an individual. Although Budig (2002) argues that tokenism is not typically problematic for male professionals, who benefit from high visibility and contrast with their colleagues, and consequently, often leads to promotion and new alternate opportunities. Conversely, in not employing the male therapist a manager could be accused of negative discrimination. George further expressed a number of challenges to successful employment. He noted that his humour, which he labelled as male, may prevent him from developing a rapport with the probable female interviewers and prevent him from gaining employment. He based this assumption on situations which had occurred earlier in his student career;

‘I do have a different sense of humour and I do find it difficult having a conversation with them for too long cos there are times when I find something funny and they don’t’ (George)
In his statement George is describing the role humour has to play in negotiating masculine identities, as previously seen in Frank’s experiences, and how for him, interactions with those individuals who do not share his humour is problematic. Later in the interview he directly compared himself to a female peer, and suggested that as a male he would be less able to communicate with a female interviewer;

‘her CV’s exactly the same and her personal statement and she gets the job cos she clicks with the person doing the interview who is most likely going to be female cos it’s SLT what if I don’t get a job – it’s a difficult one, cos everyone says you’re a male in a female profession you will get a job’, (George)

In this statement, George appears to be describing the fear of homophily. Homophily is defined by Newman and Dale (2007) as the tendency of individuals to associate and form relationships with those who are similar to themselves. Whilst it can be argued that a degree of structural homophily, associated with credentials and skills, must take place within the interview setting, this fear is relating to ascriptive homophily in which personal characteristics form the basis of the interrelationship. Gargiulo and Benassi (2000) suggest that relational inertia prevent individuals from forming new relationships with individuals diverse from themselves in order to maintain the relationships within their current community. This phenomenon could explain why male therapists tend to be employed into teams which are described as mixed gender or in clusters of male professionals within professions dominated by female professionals, as found in the study by Snyder and Green (2008) rather than working in isolation within a team dominated by female professionals. The fear reflected by George was echoed by a number of the students interviewed, he stated that;

‘it’s thinking about the balance in the team, cos if everyone is female, bringing a male in might upset the balance’ (George)

This fear appears to contradict the preparation the students stated they had made in order to join the profession, at the start of their pre-qualifying programmes; in that most of the students interviewed had not foreseen the gender imbalance within the profession nor thought about the impact that this may have on their studies and progress to becoming a professional. Whereas towards the end of the process they indicated a recognition that the difficulties they had faced in the university setting and during supervised work based placements may continue post qualification into their employment within the work place.

6.5. Chapter summary

The experiences of the individuals interviewed demonstrated the journey they travel from the periphery of the profession to a more central position during the period of the pre-registration training programmes. Their experiences have demonstrated the impact their previous experiences and other subject positions/identities such as gender, culture and age, have had on their experiences of developing both their professional and student identities.

Collectively the individuals, who participated in all the phases of the research, indicated that they had developed a positive identification with the profession, which Coulehan and Williams
(2001) state is integral to an individual commencing the development of a professional identity. This positive identification was based on their reflections and feedback from significant others in their social world, which according to Wetherell (1996) enables the individual to construct their identity within their interpersonal relationships. It is also argued that this positive identification stemmed from the process of considering alternate professional identities through self-exploration and reflection.

The results from the questionnaire, in particular the results from the professional identity rating scale, appear to demonstrate that some of the participants’ commitment to, and identification with, the profession wavers in the mid-section of the pre-registration programmes, whilst the students appear to have an increased focus on skills and achievement of qualifications (Willcoxson et al., 2011, Peel et al., 2004). It is argued that this commitment to, and identification with, the profession rises into the final stages of the pre-registration training programmes as the work-based placements offer the final year student increased opportunities to autonomously perform the practices of the profession. In order to demonstrate the internalisation of both informal and formal (Weidman et al., 2001) practices and values of the profession, and are capable of achieving the formal status of qualified practitioner.

This chapter has addressed the impact of the behaviour of others on the student speech and language therapist. In the main, this impact has been through the offering of opportunities to perform and demonstrate practice, consequently influencing their position within the community of the profession. These opportunities required the individual student to adapt and accommodate their identity performances to meet the needs and expectations of the specific environment, for example Eric was expected to perform autonomously in his final placement, whereas George, who was also in the position of being weeks away from qualification, was not. However, it was also argued, that the behaviours of others could have a negative impact on the individuals, by undermining their skills, their gender, and highlighting their difference due to gender. It is acknowledged that the student identity ensures that an individual is only able to access a novice position on the periphery of the community (Wenger, 1998). However, this position is dependent on the actions of others, and requires the individual to negotiate their position and progression to becoming an expert member of the community through demonstration of their knowledge and abilities to perform the practices of the profession, whilst demonstrating an awareness of the fragile nature of their position within the profession.

Chapters four and five addressed the isolating environment in which the students were located and the assumptions that others maintain about male practitioners within the profession, whilst this chapter has addressed how they have travelled through this environment, developed their student and professional identities and continued towards finding employment. The following chapter will now draw these findings together in order to address the questions of the research.
Chapter seven: Discussion and conclusions

My research set out to listen to and understand the experiences of male speech and language therapy students by addressing the question;

‘How do male students construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of speech and language therapy?’

The three previous chapters discussed the participants' experiences, in relation to this question. The delineation into three distinct chapters highlighted the three main themes relating to their experiences; isolation, facing negative assumptions and prejudices and their identification with the profession. Analysis of these experiences suggested that in order to deal with their experiences, the male students appeared to construct three subject positions, made available by other members of the profession. This first section of this chapter will discuss these emerging subject positions in relation to the question, the second section will address their lived experiences of being a speech and language therapy student the final section identifies some of the implications for practice, which have arisen from the research ending with some conclusions in relation to the specific study.

7.1. Emerging positions within professional identity

Through the process of analysis, it became apparent that the male students’ constructions of their professional identity developed through both interactive and reflexive processes, as defined by Davies and Harré (1990). Their constructions and subsequent subject positions appeared to have developed in relation to their other subject positions and the identities, behaviours and positions of others within the profession as well as those of their higher education student peers. These positions appeared to arise from the negotiation between the expectations of the members of the profession, in relation to the participants’ student and gender identities, their experiences and interpersonal relationships within the profession, and their assumptions of the associated behaviours relating to, and within, these identities. The analysis indicated three main positions made available by members of the profession and their student peers and taken up by the participants. This section addresses these positions; how they were shaped by the participants’ interactions with the profession and members of the profession and the potential impact of these positions on the individual male student and the profession as a whole. This identification highlights potential areas for further research and potential implications for the professional practice of both the profession of speech and language therapy and within the higher education institutions.

These subject positions are identified as ‘laid-back student’, ‘rescuer’ and ‘unicorn’. It is recognised that in identifying the subject positions that appeared to be taken up by the male speech and language therapy students, there is a risk of increasing categorical assumptions and consequential expectations of the students. Therefore, these subject positions should not
be viewed as distinct definable categories, nor should they be viewed as invariable states that an individual inhabits, or can be socialised into. These three subject positions appeared to be constructed by the participants within and through their experiences and within the context of this research. Therefore, they should be understood within the context of this research, and consequently are not automatically transferrable to all male speech and language therapy students, however, it is recognised that the subject positions could be available to other students, depending on their individual choices, surrounding contexts and environments.

Collin et al. (2008) highlighted the role of agency within the process of positioning, stating that individuals are not involuntary actors, determined by the actions of others, but actively constitute the reality in which they live. This active sense of agency ensures that the positions an individual may inhabit are fluid and dynamic constructions (Davies and Harré 1990), and are therefore constructed in relation to the individual and their context. Consequently, each individual student may inhabit the same three subject positions, but experience them, and their professional identity and membership, in a unique manner, due to their individual identities and multiple subject positions, and the specific discourses that are open to the individual. This individualised nature of the positions could account for the differences in reactions and consequential behaviours between the participants. As depicted in chapters four and five, the students faced similar assumptions and discourses relating to their gender and their place within the profession. Whilst some of these discourses were actively denied or protested by the students, others were accepted, ignored or internalised into their own constructions of their identities.

Slay and Smith (2011) argued that membership of a profession influences not only an individual’s self-definition, but also shapes how an individual thinks about others. This may offer an explanation as to why some members of the profession found the male students’ gender difference problematic, to the extent that they were unable to associate male individuals with the purposes and activities of the profession, resulting in the male individuals facing stereotypical comments, discrimination and being sidelined into specific areas of the profession.

Conversely, the male individuals in this research typically did not view their gender difference as a problem. Collectively, they appeared to indicate that it was their minority status, which affected their ability to construct their professional identities rather than their gender difference. It is argued that their minority status led to problems relating to hyper-visibility, increased further by the practices of others, for example the labelling of their gender during introductions or asking them to represent the profession to a specific target audience based on their gender. However, it is important to recognise that this difference in view, is described and explained from the vantage point, position and perspective of the male students and early career professionals within the research, as their reports were treated as testimonies within the research this difference can only be understood within the context of their reported lived experiences.
7.1.1. ‘Laid-back student’

The position of ‘laid-back student’ appeared to be taken up by a number of the participants in the study. The ‘laid-back student’ position is constructed as an individual who does not have to work hard or engage with the profession for a large proportion of his time in order to achieve the same goals as his peers. An individual who minimises the potential impact of behaviours, in order to maintain the stance of ‘not a problem’ in relation to potential difficult situations, and an individual who reduces the visibility of their knowledge and skills in order to appear to conform to the norms of their student group.

The findings presented in the previous chapters demonstrated this constructed position, from the participants' initial research about the profession through their experiences of being a student and working within the profession on work-based placements. The first narrations of this position appeared when the students described the research they had performed in order to learn more about the profession prior to joining. Many of the participants had failed to take note of, or had not researched, the gender balance of the profession, until they physically faced the environment, either at interview days or on their first day of the course. Suggesting that they had decided that speech and language therapy was the profession for them, and any information which may have contradicted this decision was ignored, or went unrecognised. Their reaction to being positioned as a minority group member further indicated their constructions of the student identity as ‘laid-back student’ in that many of the participants, when faced with the minority group membership and consequential isolation, decided to ignore it, actively choosing to not identify their status as a potential problem. It was argued in chapter four that this stance of ‘not a problem’ enabled the student to journey through the pre-registration training without reflecting on their own position within the profession and the potential impact that their identities may have on their professional identity and interpersonal relationships.

This reduction of self-reflection and analysis is arguably an element of the ‘laid-back students’ behaviour traits, as they appeared to indicate that they did not need to perform some of the expected elements or behaviours of the professional identity in order to gain qualification. For example; not wishing to fully immerse themselves in the profession ‘live, breath and eat SLT’ (George), or meet the behavioural expectations of being a student, for example having stationary to support their learning ‘if you’re lucky to have your note book with you’ (Isaac) in comparison to their peers. Nor, did they fully express their knowledge base, or as Harry put it ‘down play what I knew’ in order to present themselves as not needing to fully engage with the processes in order to qualify. It could be further argued, that their lack of engagement results in the lecturers in higher education specifically asking the male students for their opinion on the point of discussion, as they were happy to sit and ‘stay quiet’ (Isaac) until asked.

It could be argued that the male students positioned themselves in this manner in order to resolve the conflict between their constructions of masculinity and the norms of performance of the profession; in that working hard is associated with the profession, and, according to Mac an Ghaill (1994) not with some constructions of masculinity. For many of the students in the
research, this appeared to enable them to continue to construct their gender identity in relation to the formation identified as ‘hegemonic’, although it is important to stress that not all the participants interviewed shared this construction of their masculinity. However, as the research addressed the experiences of male individuals during their pre-registration training programmes, it is unclear whether the practices and constructions of ‘laid-back student’ continue post qualification and transfer to a similar position of ‘laid-back professional’, which indicates an area for further research.

Moreau et al. (2007) stated that the privileged position of masculinity enabled male teachers to perform the aspects of their role with a more easy-going style in comparison to their female peers, and that these behaviours were supported by the actions of their female peers, suggesting that for individuals within education settings this position of ‘laid-back’ professional could continue. It is argued that in the education setting, this continuation is an extension of the behaviours learnt by novice members; primary school children, in their acceptance into the community of education. Skelton and Francis (2002) reported that in primary education, female students appeared to take up a quasi-teaching position, by providing equipment etc. Enabling the male students to take up the position of ‘relaxed student’; not wishing to appear over involved with the process, yet appearing to, and being reported to achieve the same goals as their female peers by their teachers, which in turn reinforces the behaviour.

Regardless of whether the position becomes unavailable post-qualification, this position appeared to undermine the work and achievements of their female peers; as they are constructed as needing to work hard to achieve the same goals. Additionally, it is argued that this position influences their interpersonal relationships within the profession. A discussion about this research with colleagues, led to a colleague disclosing a conversation she had had with another member of the speech and language therapy profession. She stated that, as a working clinician, she had been expecting two students on placement, her colleague from a higher education setting, had described the male student as beautiful, and the female student as academic and industrious. This reflection of a conversation appears to support the positioning of male students as ‘laid-back student’ in comparison to female students who are positioned as ‘hard working’, as found in the studies on practices in the education setting (see Moreau et al 2007). Additionally, it also highlights the objectification of men, which echoes the experiences of Frank and Kieran, indicated in chapter six, and positions men within the profession as unimportant, there to serve the purposes of beautification rather than adding to the professional skills mix.

7.1.2. ‘Rescuer’

The position of ‘rescuer’ appeared to be made available to the participants by the actions of some of the members of the profession and taken up by the participants through their constructions of their professional identity. The ‘rescuer’ is constructed as an individual who takes on the task of complex or potentially difficult clients, in order to save the female students from having to deal with potentially problematic situations. An individual, who also assumes to
save the clients from participating in relationships that could be construed as nurturing or caring, and to an extent an individual, or group of individuals, destined to save the profession from its assumed basis of intuition.

From this description, it would appear that the ‘rescuer’ is positioned in contrast to ‘laid-back student’, and therefore could be viewed as a position that enables the individual to be released from the position of ‘laid-back student’ and actively engage with the tasks of profession. Offering the individual an opportunity to engage with the behaviours associated with challenge, competition and complexity, which Connell (2002) and Francis (2006) argue are associated with the performance of hegemonic masculinity. However, it is alternatively argued that the position of ‘rescuer’, like that of ‘laid-back student’, stems from, and reinforces, the privileged position of masculinity, by calling into doubt the capacities and skills of their female peers, an argument that Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) also relates to the associated position of male role model.

It is argued that placing a male student in the position of male role model, also opens the position of ‘rescuer’. However, the position of ‘rescuer’ does not automatically open the position of role model. By positioning the student as role model, they appear to be assuming that the male child needs to be rescued from an environment dominated by females in order to enable the development of behaviours associated with masculinity. Similarly, the same conclusions are applied to the presumption that a male student requires a male therapist in order to learn the integration of masculinity and the practices of the profession as discussed in chapter six. However, Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) state that the position of role model, fails to take into account the complex nature of identity and reduces it to an essentialised notion. Additionally, that it places an individual’s identity as the central component in determining and defining a professional’s influence.

The findings, in the previous chapters, demonstrated a number of occasions when the participants constructed themselves in relation to the ‘rescuer’ subject position; in particular, when they were describing their work with clients and the profession. The participants in this research described a number of occasions in which they felt that their relationship between themselves and their clients differed to the relationship between their female peers and their clients; in that they were able to offer their male clients, challenge and competition, and their female peers offered caring and nurturing. To the extent, that one participant suggested that their peers’ performance of the activities of the profession were ‘more harmful to the child in the long run’ (Craig), and consequently male therapists/students were able to rescue the male child client, from this situation.

Likewise, they appeared to indicate that their role in the profession was to rescue their female peers from potentially difficult clients. The participants expressed that their work-based placement supervisors had offered them comparatively increasingly complex clients to work with, in comparison to their female peers, and that some of the work-based placement settings were reserved for male students. This appears to support the findings from studies addressing the workplace preferences of male nurses, who, according to Snyder and Green (2008) opt for teams, and posts in services, providing high intensity or complex clients. Although it could be
argued that this was due to the assumption that men need challenge in order to remain motivated, as depicted in chapter five. It could also be based on the assumption proffered by Land (2002, cited in Skelton and Francis 2002) that men maintain their confidence through competition, and therefore require complexity to maintain esteem and commitment. Interestingly, when George's institution challenged the practice of only sending men to a forensic placement, by sending female students, he reacted by requesting a discussion with the female students about the placement, prior to them commencing, in order to warn them about the complexity and challenges they faced, therefore maintaining his position of 'rescuer', albeit prior to the situation occurring.

The participants also appeared to be suggesting that their role in the profession was to rescue the profession from its apparent basis on intuition and introduce more evidence-based practice. In implying that if the number of male therapists increased, the knowledge base and the representation of the profession in the media would alter. This position was challenged by the portrayal of the profession in the recent film ‘The King’s Speech’ (Hooper, 2010). However, the participants were quick to dismiss the film and its impact, they highlighted its historical basis and stated that the speech therapy treatment had been altered for entertainment purposes, rather than proffering an accurate representation of the profession in which they were based. The data provided by the Institutions of Higher Education, appeared to indicate that a rise in the number of male individuals within the profession is unlikely in the short-term, as the number of male students on pre-registration programmes emulates the percentage of male qualified therapists. Therefore, the members of the profession will need to explore alternate avenues to increase the promotion of the value of research and scientific evidence within the profession.

A number of the participants were placed in the position of ‘rescuer’ by other members of the profession, in particular, by their work-based placement supervisor. In the supervision of students in the workplace it is a nominated supervisor who decides which clients the students should work with, therefore it is argued that it is the, often female, supervising therapist who decides which clients need ‘rescuing’ from their current, typically female therapist, and be given a male therapist. However, it is also argued that the perceived practice of offering complex clients to male students, is based on the assumption that the male students need releasing from the complex, and sometimes conflicting, association of masculinity with the practice of playing with children, which is associated with nurturing and therefore femininity (Osgood et al., 2006, Jones, 2007).

For the participants, the position of ‘rescuer’, appeared to enable them to occupy preferred positions of masculinity, and enabled them to perform the practices of the profession without compromising either their gender identity or professional identity. It also enabled the continuation of masculine dominance, and consequential feminine subservience, by restricting female students to client groups classified as non-complex or to working in areas in which play forms the significant element of the interaction between therapist and client, and arguably ultimately supports the notion that men are destined to become managers of the profession. These positions could have a number of potentially damaging implications for the profession of
speech and language therapy. Firstly, in placing females in subservient positions, the glass elevator (Williams, 1989) which propels men into management positions will not be questioned. Secondly, they further reinforce the association of specific practices of the profession with gender identities. This association could increase the likelihood of gender identity threat occurring if an individual chooses to perform behaviours associated with an alternate gender identity. It also serves to reinforce the assumptions relating to the professions activities and compromised forms of masculinity, as found by some of the participants in the study, who had been wrongly assumed to be ‘gay or weird’ (Brian).

7.1.3. ‘Unicorn’

In mythology, the unicorn is a solitary creature, likewise in speech and language therapy the male student is typically the sole male within his cohort, with multiple male individuals described as ‘a blip’ (Alex) when they are not controlling their access to the environment. Whereas as previously stated male professionals, when controlling their entrance, appear to prefer to cluster in teams in order to reduce their sense of isolation (Snyder and Green 2008).

A unicorn is described as a mystical creature, a rare and unusual being with magical powers. Male speech and language therapy students, and professionals, are located in this subject position by others, particularly by members of the profession. The position constructs the male student/therapist as a rare individual, drawn from the reality of the gender bias within the profession. The other elements of the identity are constructed through, and resulting from, individuals’ interactions with male speech and language therapists and students. In particular resulting from the assumption that male practitioners possess the power to engage clients who had previously not engaged with the service, or resulting from their assumptions regarding the male students’ gender and its potential impact on the profession.

Unlike the positions of ‘laid-back student’ and ‘rescuer’, the position of ‘unicorn’ appeared to be given to the students by members of the profession, and not accepted or taken up by the students themselves. Certainly, the student who inspired the research thought the position was a problem; he viewed it as a position that prevented him from being able to fully engage with the practices of the profession. Whilst some of the research participants identified that their uniqueness or ‘unicorn’ subject position led to them being questioned more readily about their reasons for joining the profession; the implication being that if they were motivated by the association of caring with the profession assumptions could made about their sexuality. Alternatively, it was implied that they had joined the profession to be surrounded by females and position themselves as an alpha male, as intimated through humour by both Frank and George.

It is argued, that the position of ‘unicorn’ enabled members of the profession to accept the male individuals’ difference; by assuming that it is a one-off, and not a challenge to the norms of the profession. It is also argued that because they are positioned as a ‘unicorn’, therefore, from the perspectives of others, are unique and special, their actual behaviours, such as those relating
to ‘laid-back student’ and ‘rescuer’ are viewed as subservient in comparison to their status as a unique individual.

However, for the male students, in particular, the position was a source of frustration; as they were labelled in the workplace as ‘male student’ rather than student, which in turn made their place in the profession hyper-visible. A position reinforced by the practice of my institution, and others, of asking male students to act as role models at marketing events to encourage adolescent males to consider joining the profession. Conversely, Archer and Yamashita (2003) argue that hyper-visibility can provide status for men within their friendship groups. Similarly, Budig (2002) indicated that it can also lead to increased employment opportunities and responsibilities. However, despite these, and the benefits the participants suggested that male practitioners could offer the profession; the participants in this study were not comfortable with the position and the status that it brought; they wished to be viewed as ‘under represented’ (Eric) rather than different or unusual.

7.1.4. Summary

Throughout the research it was apparent that the participants positioned themselves, or were positioned within the subject positions at different times, dependent on the context, interpersonal relationships and the expectations of the experience, indicating that the subject positions were temporal, transient and fluid and therefore not categorical descriptions or essentialised labels. To form essentialised labels would be to not only perform a behaviour that the participants objected to; for example being labelled as ‘male’ therefore different, but also contradicts the methodological foundations of this research.

Reay (2001) argued that power can stem from the individual's constructions of their subject positions. In this study, it can be seen how the subject positions were used by the participants to transition from positions of powerlessness, such as being a minority figure, to positions of power such as ‘rescuer’. Likewise, it could be argued that the position of ‘unicorn’ and role model could be constructed as positions with power, and arguably utilised in this manner by some of the members of the profession. However, the participants in this research resisted both these positions and the benefits that could offer, as they appeared to highlight their hyper-visibility within the profession.

The subject positions described above, offer a description of the participants’ constructions of their professional identity. They consequently offer an insight into the individualised perspectives from which they view the profession and its members, in addition to offering insight into how they rationalise both their behaviour and reactions, and the behaviours of others. It is suggested that if we, as outsiders to the subject positions, begin to understand how others use the subject positions we, as practitioners in higher education, can support the individuals’ development of their professional identity within their social contexts, in relation to the other subject positions which they inhabit.
7.2. Lived experience of being a male speech and language therapy student

The subject positions described above, appeared to be made available and taken up by the research participants at different times, with differing discourses and outcomes. This unique and historically located nature of the subject positions indicates that the constructions of their professional identity and their position within the community result from both individual agency and the influence of others within the profession and the higher education contexts.

This research aimed to understand not only how the participants constructed their professional identity, but also to develop an understanding of their lived experiences of being a male speech and language therapy student. In order to develop a greater understanding of these experiences, in particular the taken-for-granted experiences of being a student, the following research questions were addressed:

How does gender impact on their experience of becoming a qualified speech and language therapist?

How do the male students’ experiences differ from their perceptions of their female peers’ experiences?

How do the students identify as being a member of the speech and language therapy profession?

This section will now address these questions in relation to the findings in the previous chapters and in light of the subject positions, which ultimately impact on how an individual negotiates and interacts with their everyday experiences.

7.2.1. How does gender impact on their experience of becoming a qualified speech and language therapist?

The small collection of studies on males within speech and language therapy collectively indicated that gender does impact on an individual’s ability to become a speech and language therapist. They identified that the comparatively low salary, employment opportunities, perceived subject base of the profession and the belief that speech and language therapy is not for ‘real men’ (Boyd and Hewlett, 2001, McAllister and Neve, 2005, Greenwood et al., 2006) could deter males from entering the profession. These studies addressed the representation of the profession through interviewing potential students and careers advisors, as well as asking current students and practitioners about why they thought men did not enter the profession.

In contrast to the previous studies, indicated above, this research explored the experiences of speech and language therapy students from across the UK in order to understand the potential influence their gender identity may have had on their experiences of being in the profession.
Therefore, this study adds to the understanding of the experiences of male speech and language therapy students, in that it has focussed on their lived experiences, rather than other’s beliefs and assumptions about the potential experience. This report of their lived experiences has demonstrated that an individual's gender position could have an impact on their development of a professional identity. However, this impact is due to both the assumptions of others about the association between masculinity and the practices and customs of the profession, as identified in chapter five, and the performances of masculinity by the individual participants themselves. It is consequently argued that when these assumptions, which are typically based on essentialised notions of gender, are challenged the impact appears to recede, as described by Alex, challenging the ‘elephant in the room’ depicted in chapter four. From the participants’ experiences, it appears that this impact is felt more readily in the work-based environment, within the profession, than in the student and higher education communities. Their experiences appear to indicate that in the higher education settings their hyper-visibility was reduced as they were more able to locate and benefit from friendships with males on other programmes of study, and that the subject position of ‘unicorn’ was more notable in the work-based settings.

The difference between the two environments was a concern for many of the participants, particularly for the students towards the end of their pre-registration training programmes, who expressed concern about entering the workplace as a qualified practitioner and that their gender may influence the process of them gaining employment within the profession. They appeared specifically concerned with the association of their gender with management posts and the position of role model. The association of masculinity with management roles, in addition to the preference of some clients to work with male therapists rather than female, enabled Eric, Harry, Alex and George to view that their masculinity would have a positive impact on their ability to enter the profession as a qualified practitioner. Additionally that it could offer them further opportunities to negotiate their masculinity within the profession without compromise. However, it is argued that the acceptance of an association between masculinity and management further reinforces the notion of the glass elevator (Williams, 1993) and enables the female professionals to deal with the threat to the feminine norms of the profession, by sliding the male professionals into marginalised positions within the professional community. It is suggested that this potential marginalisation could result in male professionals clustering in specific services, as found by Snyder and Green (2008). Alternatively, if the negative aspects of the subject positions identified earlier are not challenged, in particular, if male professionals are continually viewed as ‘unicorns’ or ‘rescuers’ they are less likely to be positioned as expert members of the professional community.

In relation to the subject positions discussed previously, it is suggested that a management role in the profession conflicts with the ‘laid-back student/professional’ position, but is potentially available to individuals placed in the ‘rescuer’ and ‘unicorn’ positions. It is further argued that a management role could open these positions, without conflict with the individual's gender identity. The combination of ‘rescuer’ and manager could enable the individual to perform behaviours of rescuing the profession from the perceived stance of professional artistry and
encourage the development of intervention options that meet the expectations of all clients, which the participants in the research indicated was lacking within the profession. A further benefit of the role of manager is that it could reduce a male professional's sense of hyper-visibility, in that the role of manager, is typically populated with male professionals (Budig, 2002, Snyder and Green, 2008), and therefore an individual’s gender identity is not visible in this role. However, it would not reduce their psychological feeling of hyper-visibility, as they would remain a minority, by gender, within the speech and language therapy profession.

It was found that, in some circumstances, participants chose not to challenge the discourses underpinning the positions in which they were located, to the extent that they recognised them and articulated the assumptions, such as working with challenging clients, demonstrating how their own performances continue to reinforce the associations between gender identity and particular behaviours, in this instance the preference for complexity and challenge, as outlined in chapter five.

Being located as a role model, on face value appeared to divide the participants, with some participants actively denying that they could be positioned in this identity, and others accepting the position. However collectively, they identified that the seemingly automatic position of male role model conflicted with their position as speech and language therapy student, and arguably positions them as ‘unicorn’. This conflict with the student identity could have implications for practice in both the higher education and work environment, in which the matching of male students either with male practitioners to demonstrate the integration of professional and gender identities or with other male students based on the assumption that this would reduce the students’ sense of isolation is common practice.

Greenwood et al. (2006) argued that the relationship between the representation of the profession as a caring profession and the male identity, reduces the likelihood of men wishing to enter the profession, and that those who do, are not real men, implying that men who choose to enter are somehow compromising their masculinity. The participants in this study did not concur with this view, although both Brian and Isaac had had to deal with others questioning their sexual identity, based on their choice of profession, suggesting that this construction of the profession is one based on societal assumptions about gender, and not the lived experiences of those within the profession.

Previous studies (Greenwood et al., 2006, McAllister and Neve, 2005, Boyd and Hewlett, 2001) indicated that the underpinning knowledge base of the profession is constructed in opposition to the assumed preferences of male individuals, and consequently would prevent male individuals from entering the profession. The findings from this specific study support this representation, as the participants indicated that the subject base of the profession may reduce male students’ motivation to complete the pre-registration training (Alex), however like the previous studies these are only suppositions as the research did not include students who had subsequently left their pre-registration programme, indicating scope for future studies.
7.2.2. How do the male students’ experiences differ from their perceptions of their female peers’ experiences?

In line with previous research (Stott, 2007, Wilson, 2005, Milligan, 2001) on the experiences of male students in the nursing profession, this research reported that male students had different experiences on the pre-registration training programme than their female peers. The analysis indicates that there were three main points of difference between the experiences of male and female students, from the perspective of the male students. They were; opportunities to perform gender identity, work-based placement opportunities and the experience of causing intrigue.

The participants collectively recalled a number of occasions when they felt isolated within the female dominated environment, when they felt unable to participate as the focus of conversation held little interest for them (Isaac, Frank, George) or that they wished to participate in conversations which would enable them to perform elements of their masculinity (George, Larry). However, when they were placed, by others, with male students or professionals, they stated that whilst this practice served to reduce their feelings of isolation within the profession, it did not lead to fulfilling relationships.

A discussion with colleagues from other institutions, following a dissemination of the findings from this research, indicated that the matching of students to placement supervisors or other male students was common practice amongst educators. From the discussion, it was apparent that this practice stemmed from the educators’ discomfort with the male students’ minority status, and the practice of matching all minority students based on physical characteristics, such as ethnicity, age and disability. This implies that the practice enabled the educators to feel satisfied that they were treating all students equally and enabling them to identify commonalities with others and feel included within the student community, a position supported by the work of both Havnes (2008) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) who argued that peer support offers positive outcomes for students. However, the matching by physical characteristics is based on essentialised notions of identity, and fails to take into account individuality and agency.

The participants also described how they had, on occasions, chosen to alter their behaviours and skill performance in order to match the norms of the profession (Eric, Frank). Whilst acknowledging that this incongruent behaviour is associated with being a student, in that many of the participants described that because of their student position they felt compelled to match their work-based placement colleagues’ and peers’ behaviour rather than performing in a manner more akin to their preferred sense of self. Ibarra (1999) would argue that this is a demonstration of the students trying out a provisional self, in order to reflexively construct a professional identity. However, it is argued that this incongruent performance is beneficial to neither the male students nor their professional peers. As it serves to reinforce the normalcy of the behaviours associated with femininity as behaviours relating to the core performance of the practices of the profession, and contributes to the continual marginalisation of men who do not conform to these behaviours.
The participants expressed discomfort in being continually offered difficult or complex clients because they were male. It was argued that these situations stemmed from two assumptions about male individuals; that men need complexity and that boys need male role models, both of which are echoed in the literature on men in other similar professions (Stott, 2007, Althouse et al., 1999). Notably, the participants relished the challenge of the complex clients (Craig, Eric, Frank and George) suggesting that complexity does improve motivation and interest, and therefore it is argued that it transfers the individual from the position of ‘laid-back student’ to one more engaged with the practices of the profession.

Conversely, these opportunities were, from the perspective of the male students, not offered to their female peers (George, Eric and Alex) and consequently it is suggested that this practice is to the detriment of the female students’ skill development. It was further argued that this practice feeds into the discourses which suggest that females need rescuing from difficult or complex situations or that they are better suited to working in a nurturing or caring capacity, than their male colleagues (Ekstrom, 1999, Hansen and Mulholland, 2005, MacLeod, 2011) and consequently places the student in the position of ‘rescuer’. However, these descriptions were only received from individuals who had an observation on the scenario, rather than first-hand experience, therefore indicating that in order to develop a fuller understanding of the practice, the female students’ experiences ought to be sought.

Likewise, the recent marketing event I attended constructed men in health and education professions as superheroes, and that men were needed to rescue the professions, and, by implication, the clients of the services. In contrast, many of the marketing events draw attention to the male individuals’ visible minority, or ‘unicorn’ subject position within the profession. The events actively highlight the small number of males within the profession, with the cry for more men to join the profession and attempt to match the underpinning practices and knowledge base of the profession with societal constructions of masculinity. However, the participants in this study suggested that if the profession were promoted to all individuals in a manner congruent with the practices of the profession, then these events would not be required.

Collectively, the interviewed participants labelled the differences between themselves and their female peers as relatively small difficulties which they had learnt to either overcome or chose to ignore. Consistent with this positioning they offered a number of examples where their experiences appeared to match those of their female peers, indicating that for them, individually, their gender has had little impact on their journey to become a speech and language therapist. It is noted that this was a recurrent theme for many of the participants in the research. It is argued that this apparent lack of focus on their gender identity as a potential difficulty in their integration with the professional community could be the result of distinctly different antecedents. Firstly, it could be a performance of masculinity or the position of ‘laid-back student’. Alternatively, it could be an indication of their discomfort discussing the topic during the interviews, as they wished to position or construct themselves as ‘rescuer’ during this interpersonal exchange, and therefore ensuring the position of ‘person-in-need’ or ‘person-with-difficulties’ was not available to them. Finally, it could be argued that those individuals who have
had significant difficulties integrating their gender identity with their professional identity have either chosen to leave their pre-registration programme of study, or declined to participate in the research, indicating an area for further research.

This study has indicated that the participants constructed their positions within the profession in relation to their female peers. This process of comparison led to the acknowledgement of difference, and different experiences as previously explored, but also of similarities with their peers. These similarities ranged from identifying similar skills, values and interest in the underpinning knowledge of the profession (Daniel, Harry), to the process of self recognition and matching of the self with the expectations, constructions and representations of the profession, as indicated by the findings from the questionnaire.

Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed and reflected on whether their age, regardless of their gender identity, and the age of their peers, impacted on their student identity. Collectively, the older students implied that being a school leaver on the pre-qualification programmes could offer more problems for the individual than they had faced being a mature student. These problems included; integration into the student community (Harry) being a minority student (Frank) and performing the required communication skills (Harry). Likewise, previous studies suggest that adolescence is a complex age to commence the process of developing a professional identity, as the individual needs an established sense of self before they commence the development of a constructed and shared social identity (Marcia, 1966, Ibarra, 1999, Arnett, 2000).

However, bar a recognition that a speech and language therapy pre-registration programme leaves little time for the student to enjoy the ‘rite of passage’ and anticipated student experience, the younger students interviewed did not agree with the views of the mature students. Stating that their age and availability enabled them to form friendships outside of the pre-registration programmes and consequently feel less isolated. They further suggested that the required communication skills, like all skills are an element of the profession they would develop over the period of the pre-registration training programmes. They did intimate that they believed that the mature students faced increased difficulties in integrating with the student community as their other commitments meant they were unable to participate in social activities, echoing findings from previous research on the experiences of mature students in higher education (O’Brien et al., 2009, Baxter and Britton, 2001, Johnston and Bailey, 1984) and the described experiences of the mature students in this research.

7.2.3. How do the students identify as being a member of the speech and language therapy profession?

The snapshot findings from the questionnaire indicated that the participants identified as being members of the speech and language therapy profession. The experiences shared in the
Interviews appeared to suggest that their development of their professional identity, followed the process outlined by Weidman et al. (2001), from the initial anticipation, evidenced by their comparisons of their own interests and abilities to other professions, in order to discount them as career options, and to the speech and language therapy profession itself. Through their acknowledgement and adherence to the formal and informal practices of the profession, despite in some cases the challenge that the informal practices brought to their gender identity, to the final integration of the practices of the profession into the constructions of their identities.

A number of the participants did not underestimate the role and influence of the expert members of the profession. They acknowledged that their work-based placement supervisors had granted them access to observe and perform in order to develop an understanding of the informal and formal practices of the profession. Likewise, their integration into the profession, which for most students appeared to coincide with their final work-based placement was dependent on their supervisors allowing them to perform without close supervision (Craig, Eric, George, Isaac and Josh). Alongside the opportunities to observe, reflect and perform the practices of the profession in order to develop their professional skills and identity, the practitioners, and other professionals made the positions of ‘laid-back student’ ‘rescuer’ and ‘unicorn’ available to the students. Whilst it was previously argued that the students chose to take up these positions, or in the case of the ‘unicorn’ position were forced in by the environment, the role of the other professionals in enabling these positions to be available should not be undervalued.

7.3. Implications for practice

One of the aims of a professional doctorate is to complete research which informs practice. This section focuses on how this research has informed my practice as a practitioner in higher education; identifies some areas of concern for the profession of speech and language therapy and concludes with the identification of further areas of research in order to continue the reflective cycle.

Chapters one and two discussed the literature, health policy and personal context in which this research was situated. Collectively they indicated a concern towards the low percentage of male practitioners within the profession and raised questions as to whether the current practices of the profession or the activities relating to the selection and recruitment of individuals to the pre-registration programmes affected this percentage. The participants in the research appeared to indicate that a small proportion of the practices of the profession and the assumptions and consequential behaviours of some of the members of the profession may have negatively impacted on the male students’ experiences of being in the profession, which for some individuals may have led to their exit from the pre-registration programmes. The participants also collectively indicated that the activities relating to the recruitment of individuals to the profession did not enhance the motivation of those male students within the profession,
and in-line with previous research (Greenwood et al., 2006, Byrne, 2007) may not increase the motivation of others to enter the profession. Consequently, the research has highlighted a number of implications for my professional practice as an educator in higher education and for our practice in relation to recruiting and supporting individuals to the pre-registration programmes.

Throughout this research process, I have maintained the subject position of curious lecturer, as depicted in chapter three, questioning how the research can directly and indirectly impact on my practice in higher education. This reflection has raised a number of potential implications, some of which have resulted in changes to practice and my curriculum. For example, recently I have amended a first year teaching module which focused on an individual’s behaviours in relation to illness and wellness, from a social cognitive perspective, which according to Hamilton (2005) views the individual in relation to cognitive norms of the society, to a module which focuses on individual differences, experiences and agency. Ernest (1994) suggests that a focus on individual experience and agency leads to phenomenological understanding of a subjective experience. It is argued that this phenomenological understanding of experience could enable students to become competent practitioners, who, according to Levine et al. (2008), utilise information from the clients perspective, as well as the practitioner, to critically reflect on practice and to avoid reliance on tacit knowledge or intuition derived from assumptions and expectations of behaviour relating to the client’s identities.

This curriculum development has ensured that the students begin to question the reflexive nature of identities and subject positions and the role that they play in positioning others, during their interactions, as indicated by the work of Davies and Harré (1990). Whilst the research itself was not about the students interactions with clients, it did raise questions about how the participants viewed their role in relation to clients, such as providing challenge as proffered by Craig in chapter five, and the professional or gender discourses which underpin these practices.

I have also encouraged colleagues in higher education to question the assumptions collectively held about male students, from our female subject positions, some of which were raised by the participants in the research and appeared in chapters five and six. Of particular note was the assumption that male students needed the opportunity to work with a male practitioner in order to develop their professional skills. This assumption is supported by Wilson (2005) and Lockwood (2006), who researched the benefits of role models for minority individuals. However, the participants in this research proffered the view that a good practitioner could be positioned as a role model regardless of gender, a view echoed by the research of Lindquist et al. (2006) and Kalet et al. (2002). These differing perspectives on the practice has led to the offering of the opportunity to work with a male practitioner on a work-based placement to all students, male and female, but is no longer a compulsory element of our pre-registration programme for male students.

Likewise, the practice of requiring our students to act as male role models in order to target and recruit more men into the profession has ceased. This decision was based on two outcomes of the research; the participants’ views on and experiences of being a role model and their
opinions on the marketing of the profession. In this research, the position of role model appeared to make available the subject position of rescuer, which appeared to complement some of the participant’s gender positions. However, it also made available the ‘unicorn’ subject position, which accentuated their hyper-visibility and according to Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) fails to take account of the complex nature of role models. Previous research on the profession indicated that the association of the profession with caring reduced the number of men wishing to enter the profession (Greenwood et al., 2006, Byrne, 2007). However, the participants in this study indicated that they had not considered the gender bias within the profession prior to commencing their pre-registration programmes, as seen in chapter four, nor had they been deterred by its apparent association with caring (see chapter five).

In addition to the impact on my practice, this research has highlighted two areas for concern for the profession of speech and language therapy. The first being how men are positioned within the profession, in relation to their positioning as potential managers rather than therapists and the objectification of men by some female practitioners, as depicted in chapters five and six. The second is the promotion of the profession as one based on hard science in order to attract more men into the profession, as raised previously in this chapter. Undoubtedly the solutions to these concerns are not easily resolved; However, the first stage in organisational change is awareness (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1984).

This research has sought and heard the experiences of being a male speech and language therapist, and by doing so has highlighted three subject positions which the participants appeared to take up, or were placed in, in relation to the discourses associated with the profession and their gender identity. By placing these experiences under scrutiny a number of other areas for further research have become illuminated. The research focussed solely on individuals who were continuing on their journey into the profession, and raised some questions relating to the experiences of those individuals who decided to leave the profession or the pre-registration training programmes prior to completion (see chapter five), with particular focus on the experiences which led to the individual’s decision to leave, as intimated by the participants in chapters five and six. Whilst the research of Greenwood et al (2006), Byrne (2007) and Litosseliti and Leadbeater (2013) indicate the potential causes for men choosing to leave the profession, little is known about their experiences of the profession, from their subject positions.

Likewise, the research highlighted a number of differences in experience between mature students and their younger peers. Previous research (O’Brien et al., 2009, Johnston and Bailey, 1984) illuminated the experiences of mature students on degree programmes, however, these have not addressed the differences highlighted by the participants in this study, such as the experience of returning to higher education after a period in the workplace, and the transitions from employment to being a student, research on these topics could further improve our selection and support of students on pre-registration speech and language therapy professional programmes.
7.4. Final conclusions

To return to the research question; ‘How do male students construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of speech and language therapy?’ it was evident throughout the interviews that self-reflection played a significant role in enabling an individual to develop their provisional selves within the subject positions of student and professional. This is in-line with expectations of today’s health professionals. Alongside the self-reflection on their performances, skills, knowledge and values, it was apparent that the participants utilised direct feedback from others in order to develop their identities and performances of the identity. Additionally they compared their own practices against those that they had viewed, and were highly dependent on opportunities to perform being made available to them by members of the profession.

In addition to the reflection, self-comparison and categorisation that took place as a routine activity within their lived experiences, many of the participants interviewed were interested in the experiences of the other participants within the study. In my sharing of others’ anonymised, experiences and thoughts, the participants appeared to construct meaning from these experiences with reflections into their own, comparing and contrasting experiences and adding to the wealth of stories and experiences of being a male speech and language therapy student. It is argued that their participation in the research offered additional opportunities to construct their identities; through self-reflection prior to, and during, the interviews and through self-comparison with other male students, through the research, demonstrating the impact social situations and environments have on the construction of an individual’s identity.

This collection of practices and reflection, identified above, demonstrated that the construction of the student speech and language therapy identity is one of negotiation and reflection. Not one developed through socialisation and imitation, and that the social and cultural environments of the individual play a large role in the moulding of this negotiation by providing opportunities for practice, reflection and self-comparison as well as limiting opportunities for performance. An increased awareness of this role has led to the identification of a number of educational practices within both the higher education and work-based placement settings that need further consideration.

From the interviews, it was apparent that statements of difference, such as ‘male student’ instead of ‘student’ and the student subject position limited opportunities, for both male and female students, to develop their professional identity. For example; the practice of only allowing final year students to work independently with clients, or not allowing students to participate in activities relating to planning the future of a service, as depicted by Alex, Eric, George and Isaac. However, the participants also stressed that their identity difference also prompted the occurrence of a number of opportunities. Such as working with clients who had refused treatment from female professionals or working with clients with complex and multiple conditions. However, it is acknowledged that by appearing to only offer these clients to male
students, professionals were inferring that the opportunities were not available to female students.

It is argued that the participants’ experiences have shaped the behaviours and practices of being a student speech and language therapist and their gender identity, resulting in them seeking opportunities to perform their masculinity without compromise and to perform the practices of the profession in congruence with their preferences for complexity, challenge and goal completion. This reflects the findings from previous research which has indicated that male professionals in a female dominated profession tend to seek opportunities to work in areas in which their masculinity is not compromised, and to seek other male individuals from alternate professions to perform behaviours associated with masculinity in order to maintain their gender identities (Williams, 1989, Milligan, 2001, Stott, 2007). Consequently, it was suggested that optional opportunities should be made available to students.

Throughout the research process, the participants have demonstrated that an individual travels through a journey of opportunities within defined boundaries in order to construct and negotiate their professional identity. This journey commenced with their initial identification with the profession, and self-comparison with other professions, through the construction and process of amalgamating the student identity with their other subject positions and simultaneously participating in the practices and customs of the profession. This participation enabled them to traverse from a peripheral position on the edge of the community of the profession to a more centralised position and construct their own subject position within the profession, whilst recognising that this traversing is non-linear, limitless and influenced by their other subject positions.
### Appendix 1: Pen portraits of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alex</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Final year, post graduate programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
<td>Over 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>Alex was a confident and determined individual, who was convinced that he would easily find employment on graduation. He had entered the profession from a linguistics background. He was in a medium sized cohort with a relatively large group of males, which he described as an anomaly. Distances self from typical males and likes an authoritative status. Labelled himself as an SLT – firm attachment and identification with the profession Appears to prefer a position of authority – advice giving rather than therapy, working with whole family group. Dislikes ‘playful’ views mothers as preferring female SLT to discuss child’s progress Others assume he is a Dr on ward Sets self and other male SLTs away from typical male – not into football Doesn’t want a support group – doesn’t want to be identified as different</td>
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<tr>
<th>Brian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Mid programme, undergraduate programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
<td>Over 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Face to face interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>Brian was not sure of his relationship with the profession, he had yet to complete a clinical placement, so had not worked with in or SLT. He identified that he worked well with potential clients, and was bemused by the label of ‘role model’ which a teacher had given him. Worked prior to starting the course, number of different jobs with little focus, others identified SLT as the profession for him, applied because he needed a new challenge Set himself aside from typical males, Didn’t know it was female dominated – surprised on first day Others think SLT is the right profession for him Poor advice based on stereotypes led him to the wrong HEI programme Doesn’t want support group – we shouldn’t assume all males are the same</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Craig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current year of study</td>
<td>Final year, undergraduate programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age commenced</td>
<td>18 – straight from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Face to face interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method of participation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contextual information</td>
<td>In his final year stated ‘im not an SLT yet’ a number of times. Stated that he believed his gender was not an issue, and didn’t wish to talk about it, spoke at length about what he thought male patients needed and what he could offer as a male therapist in comparison to his female peers. Always stresses SLT’s work with complex conditions to explain the profession. Didn’t know it was female dominated Thinks male clients need a challenge, goals and pushing in therapy, not kindness and gentle encouragement</td>
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<th>Daniel</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current year of study</td>
<td>First year, undergraduate programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age commenced</td>
<td>Over 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Face to face interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual information</td>
<td>A cautious individual, who had not completed any clinical placement and was not confident that he would pass the first year, Firmly believed he had the skills for the profession, but was worried how they would stand under examination. Had prepared for the interview and had a long list of comments he wished to make Sees SLT as a worthwhile profession, Thinks females are more maternal, so empathise more than he does, but identifies that he has good skills Hopes that in 3-4 yrs he will be able to use his skills in the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eric</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Final year, undergraduate programme</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
<td>18 – straight from school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>A confident, orally skilled individual who works part-time as an SLTA, spoke at length about his position within the profession, what he can bring and how he aims to challenge others’ stereotypes of males and of SLT’s. Very long interview – 2 hours. Experienced, likes challenging clients. Views his future career progression. Uses stereotypes to describe females and males. Given more complex clients that female peers, but finds it stimulating. Confident about his skills. Aware of how the profession use him because he is male, and the benefits of being a minority figure.</td>
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<th><strong>Frank</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Mid programme, undergraduate programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
<td>Over 21</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face interview</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>Only male in cohort, doesn’t like this being highlighted, doesn’t like talking about why he chose SLT, uses humour to deflect from difficult conversations or to minimise the impact of what he is saying. Worked in health prior to starting programme, wants to work in public sector. Appeared not keen to be interviewed, but was doing so as he liked the idea of the research. Likes management, advice and consultative role of job. Used to working in a female dominated environment, thinks female students like being in a female dominated environment. Surrounded by male role models, thinks profession needs more. Lots of extra experience in holidays to boost employment prospects.</td>
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<td>George</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Final year, undergraduate programme</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
<td>18 – straight from school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face interview</td>
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| **Contextual information** | The sole male in his cohort after others had left/failed to progress. Curious and cautious about others’ motives.  
Enjoys football as a means to escape from female peers for masculine company, – likes to frame answers to others in male-friendly terms, wore a sci-fi t-shirt. Had had a bad experience on placement prior to interview which was affecting his self-confidence and view as to whether he would get a job. Unconfident,  
Wanted to protect female peers from complex placement  
Needs male company – finds female company difficult to handle  
Not sure whether he will get a job based on skills  
Not sure whether he will get a job because he is male, and not comfortable with either outcome  
Confidence grew over placement, could see himself doing the job  
Was given more complex clients that female peers  
Framed desire to be an SLT in a male-friendly manner  
Thinks publicity about profession is framed and inaccurate. |

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<th>Harry</th>
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<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Age commenced University</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
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| **Contextual information** | A mature man, one of a small group in his cohort, entered SLT later in life  
– fact he was very aware of, developed a good network of friends and family for support, worked in business prior to starting lured into it by the money, now secure going back to roots (his words) and preferences for helping others and public sector. Used a number of judgements about people – highlighted his class status,  
Used a lot of emotive words to describe clients and their conditions,  
Down played his knowledge and skills to fit into cohort- views himself as a role model to other students  
Dislikes that the profession is not Evidence-based and appears to be based on intuition – not a male concept |


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<th>Isaac</th>
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<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Final year, undergraduate programme</td>
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<td><strong>Age commenced</strong></td>
<td>Straight from school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>University</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>Confident self-aware individual, who had gained significant confidence in his final placement following positive feedback from a high grade professional. Committed to the profession, not necessarily going to stay in UK, as he viewed there is greater need elsewhere, doesn’t want 9-5 job wants something more fulfilling Doesn’t socialise with peers on course – prefers male company. Values status Wants to challenge stereotype others hold of the profession, in particular the status it holds within his culture Spoke of problems he had integrating his previous values, skills and knowledge with a female dominated environment – few difficult situations Feels uncomfortable when others refer to him for an opinion because he is male Aware of cultural differences between self and others in cohort plus gender differences uses his gender difference to minimise difference between self and others in personality, preferences views peers as mothering</td>
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<th>Josh</th>
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<td><strong>Current year of study</strong></td>
<td>Final year, undergraduate programme</td>
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<td><strong>Age commenced</strong></td>
<td>Straight from school</td>
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<td><strong>University</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of participation</strong></td>
<td>Email interview</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual information</strong></td>
<td>Considering whether the profession is the right choice, just aiming to complete programme,- as increased understanding of the role and tasks of the qualified professional do not match expectations, plus the lack of evidence base for the profession is increasingly problematic. Feels like a burden (his words) on the SLT department on placement. Has had difficulties integrating into the female social environment Identified how parents react to different genders of therapist. Thinks promotion of profession needs to be changed to match the changing role of the profession – links in to mix match of actuality and expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


| Kieran |
|---|---|
| **Current year of study** | Completed, undergraduate programme |
| **Age commenced University** | Over 21 |
| **Method of participation** | Email interview |
| **Contextual information** | Confident in position in the profession and how he is related to, Commented on how sexism is rife, Doesn’t work in an all-female environment Questions whether he got current post because he is male, male gender viewed positively by environment and parents. Short answers to questions, little reflection. |

| Larry |
|---|---|
| **Current year of study** | Completed, undergraduate programme |
| **Age commenced University** | Straight from school |
| **Method of participation** | Telephone interview |
| **Contextual information** | Confident in his position within the profession, Noticed isolation due to gender at large areas meetings, new female SLTs blend in, he did not. Isolated at University, sought male friends outside of programme, Wouldn’t want a support group, as men do not seek support, Risk averse (his words) profession, would change with more men |
Appendix 2; Email to potential participants

Dear X,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my Doctoral research. There are three ways to participate;

   Face to Face interview – at your university
   Skype/telephone interview
   Written format

I have attached the consent form and précis of the research for your consideration.

If you are happy to continue could you please email me;

Your completed consent form
Your preferred option of participation,

The days you would be free to participate and any dates before July 2011 that you would prefer me to avoid (ie exams, holiday etc).

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at hbending@marjon.ac.uk or hrb204@exeter.ac.uk.

I look forward to speaking with you soon,

Hazel

Hazel Bending

Doctorate of Education, University of Exeter
Senior lecturer, UCP Marjon.
Appendix 3: Précis of the research

The interview hopes to answer the question: How do men construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of Speech and Language therapy (SLT)?

To answer this question the interview will cover 2 broad themes: being an SLT and being a male SLT.

Being an SLT:

- Describe a typical day on placement/at university
- Why did you choose SLT?
- How would you describe SLT to an individual from outside of the profession?
- What activity/behaviour did you do – or will you do that makes you say “I’m an SLT”

Being a male SLT:

- In the questionnaire, one participant said that SLT needs more men in the profession to balance the mothering role that a lot of female SLT’s fall into when working with children – would you agree?

- There has been a lot of press around the need for more male teachers to act as role models in primary education – do you see yourself as a role model?

- In recent years there has been a big push to encourage more men into SLT and other healthcare professions – how would you encourage more men into SLT?

- In a pilot interview a male SLT student described himself as a unicorn; a minority and mystical being – Do you think about yourself as a man in a female dominated profession?
Appendix 4: Consent form

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM – Developing your professional identity

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

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between the researcher and supervisors of this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

..................................................  ..................................................  
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

........................................
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s): ..............................................................

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.........Hazel Bending at  hbending@marjon.ac.uk , hrb204@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University’s registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.
Appendix 5: Paper version of on-line questionnaire

Developing professional identity in speech and language therapy

This questionnaire is part of my research looking at the development of professional identity amongst speech and language therapy students.

The research forms part of my Doctorate in Education at the University of Exeter and whilst I appreciate your participation, I understand that if you decide to withdraw from the study at any point your information will also be withdrawn.

The aim of the research is to begin to understand the journey before they qualify that students follow in developing their professional identity.

All of the information that you provide will be kept anonymous and confidential, and stored securely for the duration of the research. For your identity to remain anonymous I will remove all your personal information from the questionnaire, as soon as I receive it and store it separately.

The questionnaire contains 4 short sections; demographic information, you and SLT, professional identity scale and ‘and finally’. It should take about 20 minutes to complete.

If you would like further information about the study or like to offer me some feedback, please feel free to contact me at hrb204@exeter.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Hazel Bending

Demographical information.

Name;  
University;

Gender;  
Ethnicity;

Type of programme Undergraduate/post graduate  
(delete as applicable)

Year of programme 1 2 3 4  
(delete as applicable)

Email address

Previous academic qualifications (from 16 years of age)

Previous employment (from 16 years of age)

You and speech and language therapy.

This section is looking at your relationship with and opinions of SLT.

a. Why did you choose to do speech and Language therapy?
b. Did you consider any other professions? **Tick all the options which are applicable**
   a. No I didn’t consider another profession
   b. Occupational therapy
   c. Nursing
   d. Teacher
   e. Social work/youth work
   f. Working with the under 5’s
   g. Other – please state below

c. Do you think is it important that the profession is culturally/ethnically diverse? Please explain your answer


d. Do you think the SLT profession is culturally/ethnically diverse?
   a. Yes
   b. No

e. Do you think it is important that the profession is gender diverse? Please explain your answer

f. Do you think the SLT profession is gender diverse?
   a. Yes
   b. No
**Professional Identity Scale**

This section is looking at your relationship with SLT. Please rate the following statements on the scale of 1-5. 5 being ‘I strongly agree with the statement’ and 1 being ‘I strongly disagree with the statement’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am a member of this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have strong ties with members of this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often ashamed to admit that I am studying for this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find myself making excuses for belonging to this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to hide that I am studying to be part of this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased to belong to this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can identify positively with members of this profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a member of this profession is important to me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I share characteristics with other members of the profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**And finally.....**

I would really like to hear more about your experiences of being an SLT student and the development of your professional identity.

**Would you be willing to:** *(tick all that are applicable)*

a. Keep a blog of your experiences  
b. Participate in an interview sharing your experiences  
c. I am interested, but I would like to know more about the options

Thank you for your time, if you would like any information on the results of the survey, more information or just to offer some feedback please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks

Hazel Bending  
hrb204@exeter.ac.uk
Appendix 6: Interview schedule (verbal interviews)

Interview schedule

How do men construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of Speech and language therapy (SLT)?

1. Tell me about a typical day on placement/at university
   a. What activities do you do?
   b. What motivates you?
   c. What dissuades you?
   d. What’s it like being an SLT student?
2. Why did you choose SLT? (link to their answers in questionnaire)
3. How would you describe SLT to an individual from outside of the profession?
4. What activity/behaviour did you do – or will you do that makes you say "I’m an SLT", for example, medical students would reply when they have performed their first practical anatomy session with a cadaver, when I was training as an OT it was when I did my first wash and dress assessment.
5. Is there a difference between male and female SLT students – Can you describe times when you have noticed your fellow students behaving differently?, is this difference at Uni or on placement – or at both, what about you – do you behave differently depending on the situation?
6. Do you think about yourself as a man in a female dominated profession?
   a. Are there specific times when you have been aware of being male in a female dominated profession? For example one of my students described feeling like a unicorn on placement.
   b. How do others view you?
   c. Do you find yourself behaving differently in different environments? (eg uni v placement)
   d. Have there been any incidents when you gender has been a barrier or gate opener? (link to research on male nurses where they have described being seen first as a man then as a nurse, or anecdotal evidence that male SLTs become managers faster)
7. In the questionnaire, one participant said that SLT needs more men in the profession to balance the mothering role that a lot of female SLT’s fall into when working with children – would you agree? (and why/why not).
8. There has been a lot of press around the need for more male teachers to act as role models in primary education – do you see yourself as a role model?
9. In recent years there has been a big push to encourage more men into SLT and other healthcare professions – how would you encourage more men into SLT?
10. Is there anything you would like to talk about further?
11. Is there anything I should look at further?
Appendix 7: Interview schedule (written format)

Blog/diary/journal emailing experiences

This is the information that was sent to participants at set points over the data collection period. They will only receive one topic at a time.

How do men construct their professional identity and make sense of their experiences within the profession of Speech and language therapy (SLT)?

Topic 1
Write the story of/write a reflection on/ write about your week on placement/at university.

You can write about anything, so that I can begin to understand your experiences as an SLT student.

I would like you to address the following:

a. What activities do you do?
b. What motivates you?
c. What dissuades you?
d. What’s it like being an SLT student?

Topic 2
What activity/behaviour did you do – or will you do that makes you say “I’m an SLT”, for example, medical students would reply when they have performed their first practical anatomy session with a cadaver, when I was training as an OT it was when I did my first wash and dress assessment.

Topic 3
I would like you to reflect on your gender identity and whether this impacts on you being an SLT.

Do you think about yourself as a man in a female dominated profession?

Are there specific times when you have been aware of being male in a female dominated profession? For example one of my students described feeling like a unicorn on placement.

How do others’ view you?

Do you find yourself behaving differently in different environments? (eg. At university or on placement)

Have there been any incidents when your gender has been a barrier or gate opener? (For example, research on male nurses has highlighted that on the ward they are often viewed as a male first and then as a nurse, whilst their female colleagues are viewed as nurses, or it is assumed that they are in nursing in order to become managers quickly)

Topic 4
In recent years there has been a big push to encourage more men into SLT and other healthcare professions – how would you encourage more men into SLT?
On my first day on the course one of the females on the course came up to me cos I think she must have worked in some capacity in a speech clinic just as a helper or something she said she was told by all speech therapists at work that if there were any males on the course that they would be either weird or gay

So I thought right so that’s the perception that the outside have of the male speech therapists it wasn’t necessarily the one I had

First impressions?

Others have more knowledge than him?

Everyone thinks this? he is implying that it is general view

Masculine stereotypes shared by others

Insider v outsider groups at play? She has more knowledge as she was a helper? Or less because she isn’t male?

I’m different - I don’t hold this view
Appendix 9: Example of data analysis; Coding

Example of the transition from memo’s to codes

The first column are extracts of data, the second are my initial comments and memos on this data, the third is the coding label applied to enable horizontal analysis between the participants to commence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>data</th>
<th>memo</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On my first day on the course one of the females on the course came</td>
<td>First impression</td>
<td>First day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to me cos I think she must have worked in some capacity in a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech clinic just as a helper or something she said she was</td>
<td>Others have more knowledge</td>
<td>Differences in being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>told by all speech therapists at work that if there were any males</td>
<td>Everyone thinks this</td>
<td>Differences in being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the course that they would be either weird or gay</td>
<td>Masculine stereotype</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So I thought right so that’s the perception that the outside</td>
<td>Insider v outsider?</td>
<td>Differences in being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have of the male speech therapists it wasn’t necessarily the one I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Similarities in being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had</td>
<td>I’m different</td>
<td>Differences in being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Similarities in being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10: Pictorial representation of theme, subthemes and links to participants

These is a pictorial representation of a theme 'isolation' which became a chapter, its subthemes, which developed into chapter sections and the codes which informed these subthemes.

The names in italic red font are the pseudonyms given to the participant in order to maintain trace back to the original data.

Arrows indicate the associations between the codes and subthemes.
Appendix 11: Association of codes, themes and chapters

This following tables depict the association between chapter section and the themes and codes identified in the transcriptions. The themes and codes all had an identifiable definition to aid the analysis process, which developed from the initial coding and memo stage. An example of each code is offered in the form of a short quotation from a transcript. The final column relates the row to the research question.

Q1: How does gender impact on their experience of becoming a qualified speech and language therapist?

Q2: How do the male students’ experiences differ from their perceptions of their female peers’ experiences?

Q3: How do the students identify as being a member of the speech and language therapy profession?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter title</th>
<th>SubSection title</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Links to research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noticing difference and isolation</td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant offers example of difference between self and peers, or self and female students</td>
<td>To be in an environment where they have their friends around them all the time and they don’t have to worry about whether it’s the right time to talk about girly things or not.</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant describes feeling lonely, alone or isolated</td>
<td>you’re the male SLT it feels quite isolating</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Description of their first day and comment on behaviours that separate them from peers</td>
<td>‘I remember walking in on the first day to the introductory lecture, sat down and it slowly dawned on me that the whole of the room was female’</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t know about gender balance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of research into gender balance of profession</td>
<td>time I didn’t know it was a female course</td>
<td>Q1, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the isolation</td>
<td>Need more men</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant comments on lack of males in course and need for more men to talk to</td>
<td>it is nice to have someone of your sex to chat to sometimes</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking for friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking friendships outside of programme</td>
<td>‘I don’t have any friends outside who are in SLT’</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sports</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of leisure activities and sports</td>
<td>‘I play football a lot and I find that when I play for 2 hours that’s all I’m thinking about</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being placed with other men</td>
<td></td>
<td>Placement – being placed with a male therapist or student</td>
<td>we travelled together and we travelled back we shared experiences</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participants comments on support group idea</td>
<td>, it shouldn’t be just a discussion with men cos then you are just singling them out.</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting the isolation</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participants expression on need for equality</td>
<td>‘you don’t say this is the speech and language therapy student who’s in a wheelchair or this is the student who’s half deaf or something that so why say this is the male SLT student?’</td>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging others’ assumptions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant describes how they have actively dealt with others’ assumptions about their gender</td>
<td>I haven’t really felt I have needed to break the ice about it the topic hasn’t come up in conversation and you mention it,</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter title</td>
<td>Sub Section title</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Link to research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men need complexity</td>
<td>Course is too simple</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participants dismiss content of course as simplistic or not worthy of thought</td>
<td>we are just doing play and to them it’s not really a man’s job’</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex issues</td>
<td>Participants describe complex elements when asked to describe the profession</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>very complex and you work with people with head injuries and brain tumours and children with really severe autism it’s not just people who stammer’</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>Participant describes how they were challenged or how they challenged others to work harder</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘It’s important to give people a push</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men work better with men</td>
<td>Men need men</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Describe times when they were given difficult or male clients</td>
<td>there was like a gentleman who refused to have any input from a women speech therapist</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys need men</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Describe shared leisure or other attributes with clients</td>
<td>his boyish toys, and you know you can say when I was little I used to play with this</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should not work with children</td>
<td>Kids prefer females</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Describe times when clients have shown a gender preference</td>
<td>I don’t think it was because Diana was any better at playing with them, but when I sat down they didn’t want to know’</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should be role models</td>
<td>I am a role model</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant agrees with the notion of being a role model</td>
<td>in a sense I am a role model</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am not a role model</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant disagrees with the notion of being a role model</td>
<td>no. I think it’s because it’s about putting myself on a pedestal</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should be managers not therapists</td>
<td>manager</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant offers an explanation for the assumption about male managers</td>
<td>the reason why men get promoted quicker is that in comparison</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>equality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant expresses desire for equality for job</td>
<td>they just get promoted really quickly just because they are men’</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male therapists are gay</td>
<td>gay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant describes situation when his sexuality is assumed</td>
<td>if there were any males on the course that they would be either weird or gay,</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females mother, but men are</td>
<td>Difference in behaviour</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Participant describes different behaviour between self and peers</td>
<td>female SLTs are better at working with children</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td>Mothering</td>
<td>Participant responds to mothering question</td>
<td>being mothering most of the time isn’t going to get you very far</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in approach</td>
<td>Participant describes difference between male and female therapists</td>
<td>virtually all the lecturers say that we use intuition</td>
<td>Q1,Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter title</td>
<td>Sub Section title</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Link to research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with the profession</td>
<td>Part of profession</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant sees self as belonging to the profession</td>
<td>yes I do see myself as an SLT even though we're just in the first year</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not part of the profession</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant doesn’t see self as belonging to the profession</td>
<td>and forgetting us</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant believes they have the skills or knowledge for the profession</td>
<td>use my skills to develop myself in that kind of career</td>
<td>Q1,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>goal</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant holds long-term aim to be an SLT</td>
<td>my goal is, to be a speech and language therapist.</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a student speech and language therapist</td>
<td>Similarities in being</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant views self as same as peers</td>
<td>everyone has now followed through and I assume that it's 'cos everyone enjoys it</td>
<td>Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences in being</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant sees difference between self/SLT students and other students</td>
<td>you don’t really get a life that student life</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences in knowledge and skills</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Seeing self as different to SLT peers</td>
<td>I had to deliberately down play what I knew</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Describing being a lone male in a group of female students</td>
<td>you do get vaguely sexist jokes</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyper visible</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Describing experiences of being singled out</td>
<td>Yes they do say what do you think Isaac? And that makes me feel uncomfortable</td>
<td>Q2,Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning the customs</td>
<td>Knowledge of profession</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant describing confidence in own knowledge and skills</td>
<td>so whilst I might think I know this stuff I don’t actually know if I know this stuff</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of knowledge</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant describing lack of confidence in own knowledge and skills</td>
<td>At times you can feel like a burden to whichever SLT department you are in, and a few times I've felt more like a hindrance than an extra pair of hands'</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing the job</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant describing when he feels like a profession</td>
<td>you’re the one collaborating with the parents or families you’re the one that’s responsible'</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>code</td>
<td>Participant describing how</td>
<td>from my experience</td>
<td>Q1,Q2,Q3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Job</td>
<td>He is managing the social aspects of the profession</td>
<td><em>That a girl will go in have a little chat at the beginning and they're all having there tea and talking…</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding Employment</th>
<th>Equality in Employment</th>
<th>Participant discussing need for equality in employment</th>
<th><em>I wouldn’t want to get a job just because I was a guy, I want to get the job cos I am considered to be the best person for the job</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Difficulties in gaining employment | Participant describing difference between self and peers in employment | Her CV’s exactly the same and her personal statement and she gets the job cos she clicks with the person doing the interview who is most likely going to be female |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Q3,Q2,Q1 | Q3,Q2,Q3 |
Appendix 12: Certificate of ethical approval

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School’s statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: HAZEL BENDING
Your student no: 540026431
Return address for this certificate: 6 BROADWAY HILL, EXETER, EX2 9NL
Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate In Education
Project Supervisor(s): Susan Jones, Alexandra Allen
Your email address: hr204@exeter.ac.uk or hbending@marjon.ac.uk
Tel: 01392226487

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: H Bending...........................................date: 1st November 2010.....

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010
Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 540026431

Title of your project: A study of male students negotiating their professional identity as speech and language therapists.

Brief description of your research project:
Speech and Language therapy is a predominantly female profession. Recent attempts to increase the number of male applicants to the profession have had little impact in redressing the gender imbalance. In the UK there are a number of drivers to increase the number of male speech and language therapists to ensure that the profession is more diverse and the notion that male clients, in particular boys, require a male therapist/professional to act as a role model and a professional that they can relate to. However, it is suggested that men in professions dominated by females tend to be promoted quicker to management posts, that their gender is seen as a barrier to their participation in the profession and that others see their gender identity and react to this before recognising their profession identity and skills.

This research aims to hear the voices of male speech and language therapy students, to gain an understanding of their experiences in developing their professional identity and to ascertain whether their gender has impacted on this process.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

All participants across the phases of the study will be over 18 years of age.

Pilot phase participants
• Student questionnaire; 10 students on a local speech and language therapy pre-qualifying programme or students will be offered the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. They will be given information about the research and its purpose in addition to the opportunity to feedback on the content and style of the questionnaire to the researcher.

Phase 1 participants;
• Student questionnaire; 70 male students from across the UK on pre-qualifying speech and language therapy degrees (under graduate and post graduate) will be offered the opportunity to participate in an online questionnaire.

Phase 2 participants;
• A sample of the students who completed the questionnaire will be invited to participate either in reflective journals or interviews (approximately 13).

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) informed consent:
All participants and their programmes of study will be given information about the research, its purpose and use prior to commencing their participation. A record of their consent will be kept in a secure manner. Participants will have the right to withdraw themselves and their data from the research. It is assumed that informed consent is an ongoing process throughout the research process.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010
Identifying information about the participants will only be known to the researcher. At the start of the research participants will be given a pseudonym, which will be used throughout the research process. An electronic file containing the link between identifying information and pseudonym will be kept in a secure manner within a password protected file.

All the questionnaires will contain a section requesting contact details from the participants wishing to be included in phase two of the research. On receipt of the questionnaire this information will be removed and stored separately.

Data collected during the research will be kept in a secure manner, any electronic files will be protected by password, and paper data kept in a locked file.

As a member of the Health Professions Council I am bound to report any information I receive which indicates harm has occurred to another. If this occurs, the participant will be informed that the information must be passed onto a third party.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Data collection
- Questionnaire;
  The questionnaire will contain basic personal information, closed questions with answers on a likert scale and the opportunity to offer qualitative answers. The questionnaire will be sent either by email, or by electronic link, which will enable the participants to complete the questionnaire at a time which suits their needs and preferences.
- Reflective journal;
  The reflective journal will be kept by the participants, to enable them to maintain the control of the input, content and style of the journal. The researcher will pose questions to consider, and these questions will be made available to the participants prior to commencing the journal. The participants will have full access to the journal enabling them to edit, delete and add comments and thoughts throughout phase two of the research.
- Interview;
  The participants will be offered the choice of either face to face or over the telephone interviews at times to suit them. The interviews will be no longer than 1 hour in length.

Data analysis
Interview data will be transcribed, and alongside the other data will be analysed for themes, similarities and differences will be noted and cross referenced throughout the data.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All data and information gathered throughout the research will be kept in a secure manner, physical data will be kept in a secure locked file, whilst all electronic information will be stored on the University secure system in a password protected file.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):
The researcher is a senior lecturer on the speech and language therapy programme, therefore it is possible that the male students on this programme will feel compelled to participate in the research. This risk will be managed locally and as much as possible reduce the contact between the researcher/lecturer and the participants/students during the research.

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the

Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010
Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

**N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This project has been approved for the period:</th>
<th>6/8/2013 until: 30/9/2014</th>
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By (above mentioned supervisor’s signature): [Signature] Date: [Date]

**N.B. To Supervisor:** Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: 3/19/11.5

Signed: [Signature] Date: 3/19/2010
Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee

This form is available from [http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/](http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/)
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