

How do young people talk about relationships?

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Abstract

Interpersonal relationships are important for young people's social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Educational Psychologists in their work with children, young people and families play a role in promoting the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of young people. A review of previous literature suggested that young people's voice is missing from much of the research about relationships. This research is positioned within an ontological perspective of social constructionism. It aimed to explore ways in which a group of Year 8 students used their language to talk about relationships; what meaning they drew from them, who they have relationships with and what is important about them.

13 Year 8 students participated in the study and their views were explored using semi-structured interviews. Data gathered was then scrutinised using a discourse analysis technique. Three broad discourses were drawn upon by participants: 'Social Contract', 'Interpersonal Aspects' and 'Relationship Diversity'. Within each of these there were smaller sub-discourses and interpretive repertoires drawn upon by participants to convey action and function within their talk. Participants considered relationships as very important, though they rejected the notion of a single construct of relationships, choosing instead to draw upon relationships with different people as different types of relationship. Friendship was the primary type of relationship which young people spoke about, however, they often constructed their discourse to undermine the importance of these friendships.

The research findings were incorporated within the wider literature and relevant links have been drawn between the study and psychological theories. Implications for the work of Educational Psychologists were also discussed, in terms of utilising relationships for interventions and supporting those working with young people to consider young people's views and meaning making about relationships.

Student Declaration

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Declaration

I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution.

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

Anna Bryant

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Bryant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Date: 22.04.2016

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Table of Abbreviations

DA	Discourse Analysis
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DoH	Department of Health
EP	Educational Psychologist
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education

1. Introduction

1.1 National Context

In June 2014 the Department for Education and Department of Health jointly published the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014), a statutory guidance that replaced the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). This was updated in January 2015 and will be kept under review (DfE & DoH, 2015).

The document explicitly states that local authorities must have regard to this guidance. Educational Psychologists (EPs) working in the local authority context and in their role to “support and promote the proper development of young people” (British Psychological Society; Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002, p. 4) will often apply the framework of this guidance to their practice. For example, the guidance divides special educational needs into four broad areas. Psychological reports in the local authority where this research was undertaken name the area of need which a young person’s needs fit best within, under the framework of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015). Recommendations made after assessment typically then relate directly to this area of need.

The SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) also sets out guidance for Education, Health and Care Plans, documents that EPs typically contribute advice towards. Therefore, the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) is a dominant framework for the work of EPs, in the local area where this research took place and within a national statutory context.

One of the significant changes within the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014 & 2015) was the loss of the ‘social, emotional and behaviour’ area of special educational need, and the introduction of ‘social, emotional and mental health’ area of need. The ‘Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools’ (DfE, 2015) guidance sets out a clear responsibility for schools to play in promoting, identifying and intervening to support young people’s mental health. It provides details of strategies for schools to follow both within school and through accessing external services, including a “Child Psychologist and Educational Psychologist” (DfE, 2015, p.23). Despite the word ‘behaviour’ appearing in the

title of this document, observable behaviour is referred to very little within it. Instead the primary focus is 'positive mental health' and 'wellbeing'.

The new 'social, emotional and mental health' area of need within the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014 & 2015), through the change in language, shifts the focus from observable behaviour to the social, emotional and/or mental health needs of the young person. The importance and power of language will be revisited in the methodology of this research.

It is within this broad area of 'social, emotional and mental health needs' which this research positions itself. Specifically, this research proposes that relationships are an integral part of young people's social, emotional and mental wellbeing. The Faculty of Health's publication, 'Thinking Ahead' (Bird, Burton, Maryon-Davis, Murphy, Stewart-Brown, Weare and Wilson, 2011), which is a recommended resource in the 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools' document, discussed above (DfE, 2015), places great importance on interpersonal relationships for young people. This is predominantly through emphasis on the quality of family relationships acting as a protective factor against psychological problems, and also the role of using relationships with peers in schools to promote wellbeing. Another document produced jointly by the Department of Health, 'Promoting emotional wellbeing and positive mental health of children and young people' (DoH & Public Health England, 2014) uses the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' Framework. The first of these five ways is enabling meaningful connections (or relationships) with close people within young people's lives.

1.2 Local Context

Research conducted by Trainee EPs within the Educational Psychology Service in the local authority in which this research is being undertaken must address the core priorities of the service.

The core priority of the local authority that this research aims to explore is 'To engage all children and young people so that they achieve socially and emotionally'. EPs would probably say that social and emotional development is a core part of their role in "supporting and promoting the proper development of young people" (British Psychological Society, 2002, p.4). With the changes in the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014 & 2015), the area of 'social,

emotional and mental health needs' will be in the spotlight to see what changes occur as a result of the re-labelling of this SEND area of need. In this way national policy corresponds with the local priority to 'engage all children and young people so that they achieve socially and emotionally'.

The education support service within the local area that supports children and young people identified as having additional social, emotional and mental health needs, emphasises the importance of relationships amongst all stakeholders as key for improving the wellbeing of those pupils. The Educational Psychology Service works closely with this support service at a local level. The education support service emphasises the importance of 'reflecting and re-launching' when there has been a breakdown in relationships in the school, family or community.

Both the national and local context discussed here have set the scene for social, emotional and mental health needs as an area in which EPs support young people's development. Both contexts acknowledge that relationships are an important part of young people's social, emotional and mental health needs.

1.3 Relationships

Reis and Rusbult (2004), describe relationships as "an ever present theme throughout human history" (Reis & Rusbult, 2004, p.26). Interpersonal relations are relevant within Erikson's (1968) lifespan development model and the systemic importance of close relationships is central to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystem model. Levinas (1969) argued that meaning can only arise through face to face encounters with other people. There are many theoretical orientations within psychology that have been applied to the construct of relationships: evolutionary, attachment, systemic and interdependence, to name just a few.

Kelley (1978) described a relationship as existing when two people have an effect on each other over a period of time, though relationships are not limited to existing just between two people. Crucially it is the fact that there is an interaction between them and that both persons are, to some extent, dependent on each other that defines the relationship as existing (Kelley, 1997). The Oxford English Dictionary defines relationships as, "The way in which two or

more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected.” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016).

Reis and Rusbult (2004) suggest that no single definition of what a relationship truly is has ever been arrived at, but they state with some certainty that healthy relationships are important for physical and psychological health and development. Much research has looked at the association between relationships with significant people in the lives of young people and their wellbeing both in and outside of school. Perceived support from teachers was found to have a significant impact on students' wellbeing as measured by a life satisfaction scale and positive and negative affect scale (Suldo, Friedrich, White, Farmer, Minch, & Michalowski, 2009). A longitudinal study by Fosco, Caruthers and Dishoin (2012) found that positive family relationships in late adolescence could predict positive social and emotional health of young adults. Positive family and peer relationships were associated with greater overall wellbeing and reduced school misbehaviour (Williams & Anthony, 2015). A systematic review of behavioural research (Markham, Lormand, Gloppen, Peskin, Flores, Low & House, 2010) found that 'connectedness' or 'bonding' was a central element of many youth development programmes claiming to improve the wellbeing of young people.

Part of the work of EPs may be to deliver interventions with young people in schools (MacKay, 2007). Indeed, the 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools' (DfE, 2015) document identifies the profession as one that can be accessed for this purpose. It has been found that the relationship between those delivering interventions and those receiving interventions has a significant effect on intervention effectiveness (Assay & Lambert, 1999).

Relationships have therefore been identified as a core part of young people's social, emotional and mental health wellbeing, promoting positive outcomes in many areas of school life and personal wellbeing; and also as being a significant factor for intervention effectiveness. Whilst this is useful in identifying the suggested importance of relationships for young people, the young person's voice is missing from much of this research. Much of the research discussed above has used standardised assessment scales to gather findings, rather than gather any meaning or sense making from the young people themselves.

A relationship is a multifaceted construct that can be identified and defined on many levels (Reis & Rusbult, 2004). This research is based in the ontological position that there is more to reality than what is objective and 'knowable'. Hearing an individual's experience and views of a phenomenon is valuable for the development of knowledge about that phenomenon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Relationships are interdependent between people (Kelley, 1997) and contain a social element (Reis & Rusbult, 2004). People construct meaning through that social interaction (Kelley, 1978), therefore there is value in research that asks about that meaning. If research has found relationships to be beneficial to young people, it follows that we should ask them if they agree.

1.4 Relationship Education

Schools tend to include some form of teaching about relationships within the curriculum. The area of the curriculum in which relationships are most likely to be addressed is within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). The PSHE Association (2016), a membership organisation that develops resources for the teaching of PSHE, conceptualises PSHE as a programme of learning, through which young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need, to develop the qualities and attributes to thrive within society. It also states that effective PSHE requires the school to promote effective relationships.

PSHE contributes to schools' statutory duty (Education Act 2002 & Academies Act 2010) to provide a curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of all pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. In this way PSHE is well placed within schools to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing. The 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools' (DfE, 2015) guidance also promotes the use of PSHE to address these areas.

Schools specifically address the teaching of relationships within sex and relationship education (SRE). SRE is typically taught within the wider PSHE context (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). Whilst PSHE is not currently a statutory subject, all maintained secondary schools (therefore excluding academies and free schools) must teach the biology of sex within science lessons. It is the responsibility of governing bodies in primary schools to

decide whether to teach SRE, but if they do they must have regard to the government guidance (DfEE, 2000). Some Members of Parliament have called for this guidance to be updated but the government's current position is that this is not necessary (House of Commons Library, 2016).

Brook, PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum (2014) published advice to supplement the DfEE (2000) guidance on SRE teaching. Within this they suggest that SRE delivery within schools is highly variable, referring to an OFSTED report (2013) which concluded that PSHE teaching is 'not yet good enough'. These three associations have a joint agenda to make PSHE a statutory subject in schools, therefore the document is somewhat politicised. However, an external steering group consisting of members from a wide range of associations concluded that primary schools are often not teaching enough of the biology of SRE and secondary schools not enough of the relationship part of SRE (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008).

A historical review of SRE policy (Moore, 2012) from the 1990s to the publication of the steering group review (DCSF, 2008), critiqued SRE as risk focused and lacking in positive dialogue. Indeed, the DCSF (2008) stated that the key messages of SRE should be about avoidance of risky behaviours, the use of safe sex and learning skills such as assertiveness to avoid pressure. Others have also criticised SRE policy for being homogenous and risk laden (Allen, 2004; Hirst 2004). Hirst (2008) described SRE as 'reductionist' and stated that there is no shared sense of what SRE is trying to achieve.

The DfEE guidance (2000) states that within secondary schools, SRE teaching should be about responsibilities and how to make choices with an understanding of consequences. This focus on individual responsibility seems to be in direct contrast with Kelley's (1978) definition of relationships as being interdependent and existing between people. By focusing on responsible behaviour, SRE places responsibility within the individual and ignores the interdependence of relationships. In her review of SRE policy, Moore (2012) identified that SRE has largely ignored the concept of relationships as relational, positioning young people as autonomous decision makers.

SRE, therefore, has its critics, with some saying it is not good enough (OFSTED, 2013), and others saying that what is being taught takes the wrong

approach (Hirst, 2008). Research shows that relationships are of central importance within the lives of young people and schools teach, to a varying degree, what is important in a relationship. However, the construct of a relationship, as construed through research and relationship education in schools, appears to be lacking the young person's view of what this word, 'relationship', really means.

Increasing importance and influence is placed on friendships during the secondary school age range (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011). The adolescent years have been conceptualised as a period in young people's lives where they are striving for independence and identity (Erikson, 1968). Young people of secondary school age are developing more autonomy in relationships (DeGoede, Branje, Delsing & Meeus, 2009), though this was identified as a time when relationships are not the focus of SRE and PSHE teaching (DCSF, 2008). This would therefore appear to be an important time for relationship development with perhaps little agreement as to what a relationship is, what it should consist of and how it should be talked about in schools.

As an EP in training I believe that there is a role to be played by EPs in informing PSHE and SRE teaching, and enabling schools to elicit the voice of young people to guide practice in schools that is affected by relationships.

1.5 Young People's Views

The principles underlying the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) include having regard to the views, wishes and feelings of young people and parents, the participation of children, their parents and young people in decision making, and greater choice and control for young people and parents over support (DfE & DoH, 2015, p. 19). By focusing on 'participation', 'choice' and 'control', it is implied that the young person and their family should be given a more active role to play in decisions that will impact upon their lives. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) encourages all planning to be underpinned by a person centred approach with the young person at the centre.

Harding and Atkinson (2009), talked about the importance of listening to children and young people and position listening not only as central to their role as EPs, but also as the right of the child to be heard. Gersch (2013) discussed the need for a "true listening ethos" (Gersch, 2013, p.229) in which children's

views are respected and encouraged within the context of Inclusion. This can also be positioned within the international context of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989, UNICEF), the recognition that children are entitled to human rights.

This underlying philosophical principle of the SEND Code of Practice (DoH & DfE, 2015) is reflected in the ontological and epistemological perspective of this research, that listening to young people is vital in order to know what is important in their lives. The language used by young people to talk about relationships is the focus of this research. By listening and attending to what young people say, meaning will be constructed and a richer picture of what relationships mean to young people, can begin to be understood.

Much has been written about the importance of relationships; that they are core to social, emotional and mental wellbeing, that they may be a protective factor within overall wellbeing, and that they must be taught appropriately in schools. What this research hopes to discover is not necessarily whether relationships are helpful, as there appears to be much research supporting this idea, but what 'relationship' actually means to young people.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

In their critique of qualitative research, Walsh and Downe (2005) state that it is essential for such research to include a literature review in order to set the scene and provide context. They acknowledge that exploration of previous research may provide alternative explanations for data gathered within a study, and thus influence the researcher's process during data analysis. However, they also suggest that to neglect existing presuppositions is dishonest and not transparent (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

The current research is concerned with young people's views of relationships. A relationship is a broad construct, which psychologists have attempted to explain and define using a number of different theoretical frameworks (Reis & Rusbult, 2004). Therefore, to conduct a manageable literature review into this area, a number of constraints were placed upon the search terms, as discussed in the methodology of the literature search.

This literature review will first describe the methodology used to gather the research articles being reviewed. Readers may wish to refer to Appendix B for further information with regards to this process. Whilst the current research will use a qualitative methodology, it was felt that to inform the research area, research using quantitative methodologies and mixed methodologies (using both quantitative and qualitative analysis) should also be reviewed. Within the conclusion of this review greater attention will be given to research using qualitative methodologies, as these have the most relevance to the current research.

It was found that the methodologies used within the research greatly affected the findings of young people's views about relationships. Therefore, this chapter will review the literature by method of analysis; quantitative, mixed method, and qualitative, and within this papers will be broken down into the type of relationships examined. The findings from the review will then be brought together to discuss what previous literature says about young people's views of relationships. Finally, the conclusion will consider implications from the literature review for the current research.

2.2 Methodology of the Literature Search

The current research asked young people to describe what a relationship is, without reference to theoretical frameworks. For this reason, any research clearly applying a dominant theoretical framework (e.g. attachment) was excluded. The definition of a relationship within the current research is, 'The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Not all the research found made explicit reference to this definition; however, relationships did appear to be conceptualised in this manner within all the literature discussed within this review.

The purpose of the search was to find research articles about young people's views on relationships. Any articles not directly about relationships or not with a young person sample, or not giving their views, voice or opinions were excluded. 'Young people' were taken to be any person within the UK secondary education age range (11-19 years old). Samples that included only part of this age range or the age range plus young people above or below the range were also included. The focus on relationships meant that no alternative word for relationship was searched for. The construct of relationships and language around them is central to the current research, therefore it was felt that alternative words, such as 'bond' or 'connection' were not relevant.

The first search term used was 'Relationship AND (teenager OR teen OR adolescent OR adolescence OR youth OR late childhood) AND (view OR voice OR opinion)'. Subsequent search terms and the numbers of papers generated are detailed in Appendix B. Of the initial 100 articles that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria, and were published in a peer-reviewed journal within the last 25 years; 82 were excluded after more in depth examination.

Articles focusing on relationships in specific populations, such as Autism or Looked After Children, were excluded as these additional factors could take the focus away from relationships. Articles were also excluded if they specifically looked at conflict in relationships. It was felt that this might shift the focus of the research through a specific lens. Other articles were excluded because they focused on only one element of relationships, rather than relationships as a whole. Articles focusing specifically on sex or interventions around relationships

were excluded for similar reasons. Of the final 18 articles, references were checked through and an additional two articles were found, therefore the total number of articles reviewed in this literature review is 20. Appendix B includes a full breakdown of reasons for exclusion.

Due to the vast amount of relationship research relating to young people, the exclusion criteria of this search have been strict. It is possible that some rich data may have been excluded. The phrase 'view OR voice OR opinion', may have biased the search to find more qualitative and mixed methodology articles than is representative of the literature as a whole. Despite this, there were still more quantitative papers found than qualitative, which may reflect a bias within peer reviewed journals and the scientific community towards quantitative approaches and positivist epistemologies. Qualitative research is often published in book chapters (Walsh & Downe, 2005), therefore the limit to looking for peer review journals only may have excluded some qualitative research. At the stage of looking through references of the first 18 articles, book chapters were explored, however, none that met the inclusion criteria were found.

2.3 Breakdown of Articles by Methodology and Relationship Type

Of the twenty articles that have been reviewed, eight used a quantitative methodology, seven used mixed methods and five used a qualitative methodology. This review critiques those articles according to methodology type and relationship type. A more in depth breakdown and summary of each paper reviewed can be found in Table 2.3 below.

Despite search terms aiming to find a variety of different types of relationship, the majority of relationships discussed in the research articles found, either relate to family relationships or romantic relationships. There was one paper looking at peer relationships, one relating to teacher-student relationships and six discussing relationships more generally. One paper examined friendship and romantic relationships specifically, rather than relationships more generally.

Table 2.3: Overview of Literature Reviewed

Author, Date	Relationship Type	Participants and Context	Methodology	Relationship descriptions, if qualitative element
Attar-Schwartz, Tan and Buchanan (2009)	Family (Grandparents)	1478 young people aged 11-16, UK	Quantitative (Closed questionnaire)	
Bennett and Westera (1994)	General	2347 young people aged 15-19, Canada	Mixed (Closed questionnaire with use of quotes)	Relationships are important.
Connolly, Craig, Goldberg and Pepler (1999)	Friendship and Romantic	1755 young people aged 9-14, Canada	Mixed (Sentence stems & Likert scales)	Affiliation, passion and intimacy.
Connolly and Johnson (1996)	General	1049 young people aged 13-19, Canada	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	
Feinberg, McHale, Crouter and Cumsille (2003)	Family (Parents & Siblings)	Young people aged 13-16 and sibling 1-4 years younger, 185 families, USA	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	
Feiring (1996)	Romantic	117 young people aged 15, white, 'middle-class', USA	Mixed (Interview with closed & open questions, coding of qualitative responses)	Companionship, intimacy and support.
Furman and Buhrmester (1992)	General	554 young people aged 9 - 'college years', USA	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	
Giordano, Longmore and Manning (2006)	Romantic	957 young people aged 12-17, USA	Mixed (Standardised inventories & relationship narratives)	Communication, emotion and influence.
Halpern-Meehin (2012)	Romantic	50 young people aged 15-17, USA	Qualitative (Open interviews, responses coded)	Communication, divorce, relationship efficacy, relationship timing and sequencing, family relationship examples ('Believers', 'Skeptics' & 'Unlikely Optimists').

Hayter and Harrison (2008)	Romantic	35 young people aged 14-16, UK	Qualitative (Thematic analysis from focus groups)	Empathy, complexity and language.
Lamborn and Moua (2008)	Family (Parents)	40 young people aged 11-18, Hmong Americans, USA	Mixed (Closed questionnaire and Open interviews analysed through content analysis)	Involvement and acceptance, interdependence, monitoring and high expectations, responsibilities and respecting parents, autonomy support, ethnic identity, hardworking but absent and preparing for the good life.
O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003)	Romantic	57 girls aged 10-13 from 'low income neighbourhoods', African American and Latina, USA	Qualitative (Grounded theory from focus groups)	Affection, intimacy, status, sexual activity is the norm.
Ozer, Wolf and Kong (2008)	Teacher-Student	32 young people aged 17-18, USA	Mixed (Responses coded from semi structured interview & Likert scale)	Respect, feeling cared about, belonging.
Roisman, Booth LaForce, Cauffman and Spieker (2009)	General	957 young people aged 15, USA	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	
Shek (2001a)	Family (Parents)	429 'adolescents', exact ages not given, Hong Kong	Quantitative (Standardised inventories & closed questionnaire)	
Sheb (2001b)	Family (Parents)	429 young people, average age 13, Hong Kong	Mixed (Standardised inventories & content analysis of narratives)	Love, understanding, communication, togetherness, conflict, roles, problem solving, family composition, economic, personal characteristics.
Tucker, McHale and Crouter (2001)	Family (Siblings)	185 sibling pairs, oldest was average 15 years old, younger sibling	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	

		average 13 years old, USA		
Way (1997)	Peer	19 boys aged 15-19, 'ethnic minority from low income or working class families', USA	Qualitative (Narrative summaries and the Listening Guide)	Trust, betrayal and loss.
Way (1995)	General	12 girls aged 15-18, 'urban, poor & working- class', USA	Qualitative (Narrative summaries, conceptually clustered matrices and the Listening Guide)	Ability to speak one's mind.
Wentzel (1998)	General	167 young people aged 11, USA	Quantitative (Standardised inventories)	

2.4 Quantitative Research

2.4.1 Family Relationships

Many of the quantitative research papers found for this review referred to general terms within relationships, for example, 'quality' or 'functioning'. These terms have typically not originated with the participants themselves, but were used by the researchers to summarise specific elements of relationships that they measured. For example, Feinberg, McHale, Crouter and Cumsille (2003) studied the change in parent-child relationship and sibling relationship over time for adolescents. The older adolescents were between 13 and 16 years old and the younger sibling was between one and four years younger. They found that as individual sibling relationships with parents became more different to each other over time, in terms of parent-child warmth, ratings of siblings' warmth towards each other increased. This was measured through Likert ratings of conflict and warmth within each type of relationship. These findings suggest that different types of familial relationships may be affected by each other, which is interesting when considering relationships in more general terms, such as in the current research. However, Feinberg et al. (2003) refer to the conflict and warmth ratings as 'quality of relationships'. This terminology is perhaps too broad, for ratings on a predetermined scale. The term 'quality' should be interpreted with caution, as participants' open views were not sought.

Another methodological concern for quantitative research is the amount of weight given to statistical analysis. Whilst Feinberg et al. (2003) gathered some support for some of their hypotheses and were able to map their results onto growth curves in the sibling relationships, there were some results that were non-significant and some that did not support their hypotheses. These results were discussed in much less detail. One criticism of quantitative research is that it can present findings as 'truth', from a positivist epistemology, without giving full ethical consideration to all the data collected (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

Shek (2001a) explored the parent- child relationship through standardised self-report measures. Though such measures ascertain adolescents' perceptions, the closed choice measures limit the extent to which participants' views can be fully gathered. 429 intact family units participated with a fairly even mix of boys and girls, however, young people were referred to as 'adolescents' and no

information was given about specific ages of young people, making it hard to draw conclusions for the current research. Results showed that parents' and young peoples' views of 'family functioning' were longitudinally related to dyadic relationships within the family. The measure of 'family functioning' was a self-report family inventory that has been found to predict whether a family are receiving counselling. The author suggests that this gives the measure construct validity. However, similarly to Feinberg et al.'s (2003) definition of 'quality' within a relationship, this definition of 'family functioning' appears reductionist and over simplistic.

Another quantitative study that looked at family relationships was by Tucker, McHale and Crouter (2001); also focusing on sibling relationships using the same age range and sibling age difference as Feinberg et al. (2003). Tucker et al. (2001) used a measure of sibling support that originated from their own pilot study. This is a helpful reminder within this critique, that predetermined measures can originate with participants and their views. Findings suggested that siblings view each other as a source of support about non-familial activities, although support varied depending on the domain. Older siblings gave more support to their younger siblings in parent-child relations, though sibling support was complementary in non-familial contexts. Sibling support therefore varied across age and domain. This study was able to be context specific, and indicates that there may be different dimensions of support within the sibling relationship.

It is worth noting that the parents of young people in these first three studies were all either married or co-habiting. A claim of quantitative research over qualitative research is often that quantitative methodologies allow for a 'representative' sample whereby the authors can claim that their findings are applicable to a wider population than their sample. By limiting the sampling procedures in this way, any generalisability assumptions also become limited.

Attar-Schwartz, Tan and Buchanan (2009) looked at the adolescent – grandparent relationship. Adolescents aged 11-16 were asked to rate how well they get along with their 'closest' grandparent from 'not at all' to 'very well'; this measure then made up the degree of 'emotional closeness'. The more frequent contact and involvement that the adolescent had with the grandparent and the better the parent-grandparent relationship was, predicted adolescents' reports

on higher levels of emotional 'closeness', 'importance' and 'respect'. Again, it could be argued that to consider just these elements of a relationship is reductionist and does not fully represent what a relationship might be. The increased rating of emotional closeness for grandparents that adolescents see more often could merely reflect how much that grandparent is in the adolescent's life.

The intergenerational context of Attar-Schwartz et al.'s (2009) study is interesting to consider within the context of familial relationships. The search criteria for this literature review did not specifically look for grandparent relationships. According to Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009), such studies are not common, therefore inclusion within the search criteria could have added an additional layer to information gathered.

Older adolescents also reported less 'emotional closeness' and more respect directed towards their closest grandparent compared to younger adolescents. As with Tucker et al.'s (2001) study there is an indication that meaning within relationships may change with age. It is also of note that Attar-Schwartz et al.'s (2009) study is one of only two pieces of research found within the search that was conducted within the UK. Therefore when considering the relevance of this literature review to my own research this context may be more relevant.

2.4.2 Other Relationship Types

Connolly and Johnson (1996) looked at romantic and peer relationships amongst 13-19 year olds. The structure of adolescents' peer networks was found to differ between those with and those without a romantic partner; with those in a romantic relationship reporting larger peer networks, more opposite sex friends and more non-school friends. Similarly to Feinberg et al. (2003) these results suggest that different types of relationships may relate to each other. The authors suggest that romantic relationships become part of a hierarchy of support for adolescents. However, as with other quantitative studies, the authors have made some assumptions, for example describing 'quality' of relationships as related primarily to duration of relationship rather than any qualitative experience described by young people.

In Furman and Buhrmester's (1992) research, young people completed the Network of Relationship Inventories (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) at different

stages in their school life. This study had the broadest age range for adolescents; starting at 9 years old, continuing until the college years. This adds breadth to the data collected, though stands alone in comparison to all other research considered in this review in terms of the age range of participants. This relationship inventory consisted of 10 predetermined relationship qualities. Initially parents were seen as the most frequent providers of support but as they got older this became more strongly associated with same sex friends, and then at college, romantic partners and mothers. The breadth in age of participants in this study and the breadth of relationships covered has implications for the present research, which will focus on relationships more generally. However, the research focuses mostly on 'support' within relationships, rather than wider views about relationships.

Roisman, Booth LaForce, Cauffman and Spieker (2009) assessed 'Romantic quality' in relationships with 15 year olds, using a scale devised by Furman (1996), co-author of the previously mentioned research. Connolly and Johnson (1996) also refer to the work of Furman and Buhrmester (1992). These authors have seemingly contributed a lot to the field, and though their measures use predetermined scales, these have been revised over time in response to their research. Roisman et al. (2009) found that 'high quality' experience with parents and peers was negatively associated with romantic engagement, but positively associated with positive aspects of romantic relationships. Though 'romantic engagement' was measured with quantitative measures such as duration of relationship, it also included the question 'Have you ever been in love?' therefore possibly allowing a richer picture of 'romantic engagement'. Similarly to Feinberg et al. (2003), and of relevance to the current research, different relationship experiences related to each other.

The final piece of quantitative research was by Wentzel (1998). She found that supportive relationships with parents, teachers and peers as measured through self-report predetermined scales, were associated with school motivation as measured by goal orientation and goal pursuit measures. The author suggested a predictive relationship between measures of relationship support and school motivation. Whilst this is a valuable finding within the relationship literature and is relevant for the current research, (which assumes relationships in general to have positive effects) the research neglects any environmental

factors. If, for example, a young person has a positive environment that enables them to engage in supportive relationships, it may be that the environment is also supportive of their ability to be motivated in school.

Wentzel's (1998) study was unusual in that participants were 11 years old when asked to complete the measures. Only four other papers in this review used participants of such a young age (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009; Furman & Burmester, 1992; Connolly, Craig, Goldberg and Pepler, 1999; Lamborn and Moua, 2008), but Wentzel (1998) was the only one of these to not also include older participants. Conclusions drawn from this study cannot, therefore, be said to apply to the wider adolescent age range.

2.4.3 Summary

Much of the quantitative research discussed above takes a reductionist approach to the complex construct that is 'relationships', in terms of relevance to the current research. By referring to 'quality' or 'functioning' from a few predetermined scales there is little opportunity to add any richness to what a relationship is in the eyes of adolescent participants. Quantitative methodologies allow for exploration in a relatively structured manner, whereas qualitative methods enable the exploration of meaning and subjective experience (Shek, 2001b). Much of the research relied on predetermined definitions and did not allow participants to express themselves in any open sense. It is also hard to assess whether terminology of questionnaires was understood by all participants in the same way (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Likert-type scales can only provide information about how well participants fit into categories set up by the scale. They are less useful in exploring the intricacies of lived experience (Way, 1995). The change reported by participants in longitudinal studies is interesting from a developmental perspective, and the apparent relationship between different types of relationship in some studies is of relevance to the current research.

2.5 Quality Control in Qualitative Research

Researchers choosing a qualitative form of methodology must make explicit their assumptions as to how knowledge is produced. This epistemology guides how researchers have extracted meaning from their data (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and without detail of this it is hard for the reader to draw conclusions.

Different methods within qualitative research have evolved from different philosophical assumptions, and identification of research methodology must be consistent with both this and the researcher's intent (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

Qualitative research comes from an epistemology whereby ethical issues such as sensitivity, reflexivity and integrity form part of the methodological process (Walsh & Downe, 2005). 'Good' qualitative research should make explicit reference to this (Yardley, 2000). When considering research that uses qualitative methods it will be important to consider how they have communicated their assumptions, their research process, and how they have extracted meaning.

2.6 Mixed Methods Research

2.6.1 Relationships More Generally

Bennett and Westera (1994) analysed responses from a survey of 15-19 year olds asking about attitudes and beliefs across the spectrum of different types of relationships. Findings suggested that the young people valued relationships in all parts of their lives, though peer relationships had particular importance for them. Though participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with various fixed statements about relationships, the authors also collected qualitative information. It was unclear in the article how this information had been collected but direct quotes were used to reinforce conclusions drawn from quantitative data. There did not appear to be any level of analysis conducted with this qualitative information, which is possibly a lost opportunity to draw further information from their data. This is an example of researchers not stating their epistemological position, and therefore the analysis and conclusions drawn appear somewhat unclear.

Connolly et al. (1999) explored conceptions of cross sex friendships and romantic relationships within a group of 9-14 year olds. Cross-sex and romantic experience information was gathered quantitatively and conceptions of the different types of relationship were gathered through an open-ended questionnaire, from which the authors coded responses. Little information was given as to how the responses were coded, making the study hard to critique and draw conclusions from. Cross sex friendships were largely characterised by 'affiliation', and romantic relationships by 'passion' and 'commitment'. As with

much of the quantitative research previously discussed, differences were found according to age and experience of participants. Conceptualisations of the two different types of relationship are relevant to the current research which will look at relationships more generally. By nature of the research not being quantitatively or qualitatively detailed, it is not possible to gather whether there was any interaction between the two different conceptualisations.

2.6.2 Romantic Relationships

Feiring (1996) looked at the structure and context of romantic relationships for 15 year olds, as well as how those adolescents characterised 'romance'. Dating experience information was gathered quantitatively and likes, dislikes, advantages and disadvantages of having a romantic partner were gathered from a semi structured interview from which the responses were coded. Though the analysis type is not specifically named, details of the reliability measures are given. 'Companionship', 'intimacy' and 'support' were the themes that characterised romantic relationships for participants. By gathering both quantitative and qualitative information the authors were able to ascertain that the majority of the sample had romantic encounters that were brief, though intense, in terms of frequency of contact, and 'affiliative' characteristics rather than 'attachment' characteristics were given to these relationships. They characterised this picture as 'short term fascination' and explained it within a wider developmental framework of adolescents' developing romantic relationships. Unlike Connolly et al. (1999), Feiring (1996) used the combination of methodologies to build a richer picture of romantic relationships for young people.

Giordano, Longmore and Manning (2006) explored both boys' and girls' (ages 12-17 years) views of romantic relationships, arguing that the literature tends to focus on girls. They used a quantitative relationship study and analysed relationship narratives in greater depth. Although the coding programme they used was named for the reader to learn about quality control measures, the specifics of the analysis were not given. Boys reported low relationship confidence, challenging the view of males as more powerful than females in relationships (Giordano et al., 2006). Communication, emotion and influence all appeared as dominant themes within the narratives.

2.6.3 Family Relationships

Shek (2001b) explored Chinese adolescents' views on the attributes of a 'happy family'. The mean age of adolescents was 13, though the detail of the range in age was not given. Similarly to Shek's (2001a) other paper reviewed in the previous section, he made some assumptions with the concept of a 'happy family'. This comes from a standardised interview schedule. However, through use of qualitative data he was able to give a more in depth picture of what this might mean. Adolescents' responses once coded were grouped into three broad categories; attributes related to the whole family domain, parent-child subsystem attributes and husband-wife subsystem attributes. 'Togetherness' was also highlighted as an important attribute of a happy family. Both adolescents and parents placed less emphasis on their own role, and more emphasis on the role of the other in maintaining a happy family. Through use of quantitative analysis after coding, Shek was able to explore, more distinctly the differences in parents' and child's views.

Shek (2001b) clearly stated his epistemology; that gathering views gives potential for exploring meaning. The article discussed the utility of 'lay views' to inform interventions. Despite the clarity of this interpretive epistemology leading to a qualitative methodology, it was less clear as to the purpose of the quantitative analysis after coding, as the difference between parent and child's views were clear from the subjective information gathered, without the use of statistical analysis. Part of the criteria for appraising qualitative research, suggested by Walsh and Down (2005), is that methodology is consistent with the research philosophy. This was not the case with this paper.

Adolescents' views were closely related to traditional Chinese family values. This highlights the importance of culture when thinking about how young people might define relationships. It is also important to hold in mind when considering that 16 of the studies discussed within this review were from North America, making it important to remember cultural variation when drawing conclusions across all studies.

Though Lamborn and Moua's (2008) study was conducted within the USA, participants were first generation Hmong Americans, and culture was also found to be a significant factor when teenagers (11-18 years old) were asked about

their perceptions of their relationships with their parents. Open ended and fixed choice questions led the researchers to categorise five parenting styles from the perception of the adolescents, and five family ecologies. Teenagers emphasised themes of parental involvement and depending on the family for support. The theme of depending on the family was more commonly used to describe mothers, whereas that of respectful relationships was used more frequently to describe fathers. Participants identified interdependence within family relationships. Two emergent themes were the adolescents' views of fathers as 'hardworking but absent' and the adolescents' understanding that parents were preparing them for 'the good life'. Fixed choice data categorised parents as 'authoritative', 'authoritarian', 'permissive' or 'neglectful' parenting styles. Older adolescents described relationships with parents as less close and connected, than younger adolescents, again demonstrating developmental differences in relationships.

2.6.4 Teacher Relationships

Ozer, Wolf and Kong (2008) explored sources of 'school connection' amongst high school seniors (17-18 year olds). Whilst this is a broad construct, and certainly relates to relationships, it does not equate to relationships and can be viewed as an even broader construct. However, of relevance to the current research, the authors explored participants' relationships with teachers, both through a standardised connectedness scale and qualitative analysis. Relationships with teachers were characterised by 'respect' and perceptions of 'feeling cared about'. Crucial to this latter theme was the concept of being cared about as a learner versus a person. Through the use of interpretive phenomenological analysis the authors explored this relationship. Meaningful relationships were built over time and across roles, and some reported 'deeper' relationships with teachers that influenced their views of themselves. Though the authors gave detail of the methodology, a synthesis between the interpretive method of qualitative analysis and the more quantitative elements of 'connection' measures, was not given. This reflects a confusion in epistemology present in much of the mixed methodology studies discussed in this review.

2.6.5 Summary

The qualitative elements of these mixed method studies reflect a 'listening' approach within the methodology. Methodologies such as those used by Giordano et al. (2006) and Ozer et al. (2008) were able to gather richer information from young people that were not initially guided by the predetermined scales and measures, often used in purely quantitative methodologies. These two studies used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology in a complementary manner. Other mixed methods studies, such as Shek (2001b) appeared to reflect possible insecurities within qualitative research (Yardley, 2000) that lead authors to employ quantitative methodologies to qualitative data in an inappropriate manner.

2.7 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, as discussed, gives the opportunity to provide richer and deeper understanding of concepts. By taking a purely qualitative approach the researcher's epistemological position is clearer, and they are less likely to present confusing findings, as in the case of Shek (2001b). However, there is still the expectation that the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher should be clearly stated (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Walsh & Downe, 2005).

2.7.1 Romantic Relationships

Halpern-Meekin (2012) conducted interviews with 15-17 year olds around their understanding of marriage and divorce. The author proposed that knowledge of how adolescents talk about relationships can shed light on the frameworks that they will use for their future relationships. The methodology was clearly explained; though the specific type of analysis was not named, it can be assumed to be 'thematic analysis'. Coding of core concepts led to five emerging themes: communication, divorce, relationship efficacy, relationship timing and sequencing, and family relationship examples. The purpose of the research was to gain an understanding of young people's views about marriage and divorce, and the themes were clearly shaped by this purpose.

Halpern-Meekin (2012) grouped participants into three typographies of relationship orientation: 'Believers', 'Skeptics' and 'Unlikely Optimists'. Each

group had a different stance on the five core themes. Though this was not a longitudinal study Halpern-Meekin suggests that these typographies could reflect distinctively different relationship trajectories. The qualitative nature of the study means that this cannot be stated with any objective certainty. However, with greater attention to sensitivity and reflexivity Halpern-Meekin (2012) could have suggested this within the interpretive context of the study, though this was not stated. It has been acknowledged that part of the difficulty for qualitative research is that these considerations are often omitted for publication (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

Hayter and Harrison (2008) used focus groups with 14-16 year olds to explore gendered attitudes towards sexual relationships, using case studies. The methodology and quality control was detailed, however, little attention was given to the ontological assumptions. The setting of the research was a sexual health clinic and the research was positioned within a 'sexual risk taking' (Allen, 2004; Hirst 2004) discourse, therefore consideration could have been given to the positivist context within which meaning was being extracted. However, the authors did not include any of their own reflexivity, as recommended by Walsh & Downe (2005). They used thematic analysis to analyse their data and three themes emerged in differences between males and females: empathy, complexity and language. Though the findings are relevant to young people's relationship talk, they mainly reflect gender differences. Female responses were more complex and empathic, the authors explained this in terms of social pressures that exist for women and not men, which is possibly oversimplified.

O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003) conducted group interviews with African American and Latin American girls aged 10-13 years old from 'low income neighbourhoods' around their cultural expectations regarding appropriate romantic and sexual conduct in relationships. The researchers discussed their use of grounded theory to identify 'concepts' which evolved into 'categories'. However, they also used the discourse-based phrase 'scripts', and focused around experience, particularly 'tension' and 'pressure', which is more commonly associated with interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The lack of discussion around ontological position and epistemological assumptions resulted in a somewhat confusing methodology.

One category that O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003) found was that romantic and sexual involvement follow an age related progression. This is a similar finding to many other studies, both qualitative and quantitative; that there is a developmental change in young peoples' relationship experience. The authors' choice to focus on an early adolescent group was informed by the theory that participants' sexual self-concepts would be in an 'emerging' stage. Many of the studies in this review have looked at later adolescence or the adolescent years more broadly, therefore this is of relevance to the current research which will focus on the upper age range of O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg's sample.

The study focused on cultural expectations and there were notable differences between the two groups, again highlighting the significance of cultural variance. It is also of note that a sexual pleasure script was missing or deemed not acceptable by the girls, despite sexual activity being deemed likely within their age range (O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). This reflects findings discussed in the introduction to this research (Allen, 2004; Hirst 2004). A gender difference was also reflected within the study, with girls believing boys to be less emotionally invested in romantic relationships, however, the nature of the study being conducted with purely female participants did somewhat construct this difference.

2.7.2 Other Relationship Types

Way (1995) conducted a longitudinal study over three years interviewing girls aged 15 to 18 about themselves, their school and their relationships with parents and peers. Way (1995) clearly stated the epistemological position of the research: that there is value in listening to participants and that the research process itself is relational so the context cannot be separated. However, this was in the absence of a wider ontological context which might have made the aims of the research clearer. Way (1995) used three forms of qualitative analysis: narrative summaries, conceptually clustered matrices and the Listening Guide. Although the researcher breaks down each step of the analysis, the mixture of methodologies had the potential to create incoherence in the analysis. A clearer picture of the ontology might have allowed for more clarity.

The ability to be outspoken or 'speak one's mind' was prevalent across all the interviews, and this increased with age. Similarly to O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003), the participants in Way's (1995) study came from poor and ethnic minority backgrounds. The author suggested that the participants' backgrounds may have led them to be raised as, 'not passive', and this may be connected to concepts associated with such groups, such as 'survival' or 'adversity'. Culture and context were found, yet again, to be influential in relationship talk. Interestingly their outspoken voice was often 'silenced' when talking to boys, reflecting the gender differences that have been found within other studies (e.g. Feinberg et al., 2003; Hayter and Harrison, 2008).

The second piece of research from Way (1997) again talked with an ethnic minority group from low income or working class families over three years between the ages of 15 and 18. However, in this study all participants were boys. Way (1997) suggested that much research has paid attention to girls, claiming that it is girls who are more interested in relational aspects of relationships, and boys want autonomy development. As before, Way (1997) used narrative summaries and the Listening Guide, therefore the critique of ontology and epistemology applies again.

Participants made distinctions between 'close' and 'best' friends, and their interpretations of friendships revolved around 'trust', 'betrayal' and 'loss'. Boys appeared to desire a level of intimacy and closeness in their male friendships that other research, such as O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003) did not suggest that boys want. Interestingly this desire appeared to disappear by senior year. Way suggested many reasons for this, such as fear of "seeming like you're gay" (Way, 1997, p.718). The context in which many of the boys lived involved regular stop and search, metal detectors in school, poverty, violence and racism which Way (1997) linked to the dominant themes of trust and betrayal.

2.7.3 Summary

Qualitative methodologies have facilitated a more in depth picture of young people's views about relationships. The lack of reliance on methodologies with predetermined definitions and categories gave a richer picture of relationships that seemed more informed by participants than researchers. The two studies

by Way (1995; 1997) highlighted themes that had not been picked up by any other study: that of having a voice and betrayal. Although it is possible that use of 'The Listening Guide' by Way (1995) could have influenced the finding that speaking one's mind is important.

However, some of the same difficulties that were found with research using a mixed method design were found within the qualitative literature.

Inconsistencies in epistemology and ontological position led to a lack of clarity in some of the findings, making it harder to draw conclusions for the current research.

2.8 Discussion

The assumption introduced at the beginning of this thesis, that relationships are important in the lives of young people, has been reinforced by the literature in this review. Attar-Schwartz et al. (2009), for example, found that adolescents view their relationships with their grandparents as important; Tucker et al. (2001) found that siblings view each other as systems for support, and Wentzel (1998) found that adolescents' perceptions of supportive relationships could predict goal pursuit.

Such purely quantitative studies, however, communicated less about the nature of relationships from the adolescents' perspective, due in part to the predetermined scales and measures that they used. Studies that used qualitative methods were able to communicate more about the adolescent's views on relationships. For example, Connolly et al. (1999) found references to passion, affiliation and intimacy in young people's relationship talk, and Hayter and Harrison (2008) found themes of empathy, complexity and use of language relating to young people's sexual relationships.

Many of the studies discussed in this review found a developmental progression in adolescents' views and approaches to relationships (Feinberg et al., 2003; Tucker et al., 2001; Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009). Methodologies of interviewing adolescents several times over a number of years or talking with adolescents of different ages facilitated this finding. Between the ages of 11 and 18, young people's views and approaches to relationships develop significantly (Erikson, 1968), therefore drawing conclusions broadly across this age range is not

possible. It may perhaps be more appropriate to draw conclusions based on sensitivity to context (Yardley, 2000).

Studies that focused on culture also highlighted the importance of sensitivity to context (e.g. Shek, 2001a; Way, 1995). A difficulty with quantitative research is that it often claims to be generalisable to other contexts. This limitation was specifically discussed in reference to those studies that selected only young people whose parents were married or cohabiting (Feinberg et al., 2003; Shek, 2001a; Tucker et al., 2001). Studies that sampled more diverse populations (e.g. Way, 1995; Halpern-Meekin, 2012) in order to challenge conclusions drawn from traditionally white, middle class research, were able to directly apply their findings by making explicit the context and relating findings to this.

Another recurring theme in many of the studies was gender differences (e.g. Feinberg et al., 2003; Hayter and Harrison, 2008). Those studies that did find gender differences largely conformed to the dominant discourse that women are more 'relational', and that men are more 'autonomy seeking' (Way, 1997). However, there were three notable exceptions to this suggested gender difference. The first of these was a quantitative study (Roisman et al., 2009). They found that the difference between boys and girls in the measures of engagement in romantic relationships was not significant between the genders, though this measure has been critiqued. The second, Giordano et al. (2006), found that boys had a similar level of emotional engagement in romantic relationships to girls, going against the dominant discourse. The third, Way (1997), used a voice centred methodology with boys, arguing that this method has been useful to bring out the feminist voice and should now be applied to traditional groups who are often represented within research (i.e. men). A voice centred methodology aims to promote the words said by participants over the analysis and interpretation of the researcher. Although it was unclear as to exactly how Way (1997) did this, there was a large amount of quotes used to support the findings. The study found that boys desire intimate friendship and not necessarily autonomy, challenging the discourse in a similar manner to Giordano et al. (2006).

Another issue common across many studies was the role of conflict in relationships (e.g. Furman & Buhrmeister; Tucker et al., 2001). This was something that the methodology of the literature search had attempted to

exclude. Interestingly conflict only emerged in those studies that had a measure of it. In the purely qualitative studies that gave participants a voice and constrained them less with methodology, conflict did not emerge as a theme. This demonstrates the limitations of those standardised measures used in quantitative research that define a construct before asking participants their view.

However, Way (1997) found the theme of 'betrayal' in relationships and Halpern-Meekin (2012) found the typology of 'relationship sceptics'. Using a measure of conflict these themes may have been labelled instead as 'conflict' within a quantitative methodology. The current research emphasises the importance of young people's views to ascertain their meaning making around relationships, therefore using their own words rather than that of the researcher will be important.

In terms of themes within the qualitative literature, some could be seen across different studies. For example, 'intimacy' as a theme was found by Feiring (1996) and Connolly et al. (1999). Intimacy and closeness is a dominant discourse within relationship language (e.g. Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009) so this is therefore not a surprising theme to emerge. Similarly Connolly et al. (1999) found themes of affiliation and passion, and Ozer et al. (2008) found themes of respect and feeling cared about. These might all be terms that would fit within a definition of relationships (Reis & Rusbult, 2004), therefore could be perceived as 'dominant discourses'. These themes could all be conceptualised as having a social and emotional element within relationships, as conceptualised within the introduction.

2.9 Conclusions

It is clear from this literature review that there is an absence of adolescents' voices within the quantitative relationship literature. Those studies employing qualitative methodologies have not used discourse analysis, as the current research intends to do, to focus on the language and power dynamics within the discourse of young people. Way (1995 & 1997), in both her studies, used narrative analysis and the Listening Guide, and Giordano et al. (2006) also used narrative techniques. However, this focus on the stories being told, whilst similar, did not look at the detail of the discourse. O'Sullivan and Meyer-

Bahlburg (2003) explored girls' perceptions of 'sexual and romantic scripts', however, their analysis was not at the level of discourse.

This literature review would therefore indicate that an analysis of young people's relationship talk at the discourse level is novel. The aim of the current research is to explore the meaning and sense making which young people give to relationships within their discourse. Although some of the research has focused on the importance of relationships within young people's lives, very little of the research asks what particularly is important to participants within relationships, as this research intends to do.

Although many studies looked at the full range of adolescent years, few looked specifically at early adolescence. Participants in Wentzel's (1998) study were 11 years old, however, the quantitative nature of the study makes it less applicable to the current research. Connolly et al. (1999); Shek (2001b) and O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003) all used participants closest in age to the current research, though none were looking at relationships more broadly as a construct, again indicating the novel approach of the current research.

Four studies looked at relationships more generally (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992; Wentzel, 1998; Bennett and Westera, 1994; Way, 1995). Common across these studies was the notion of relationships as giving 'support', with the exception of Way's (1995) study, which found that the ability to speak one's mind was of importance in relationships. Similarly to this finding, communication and language occurred as a theme in many articles with a qualitative element (Halpern-Meekin, 2012; Hayter and Harrison 2008; Giordano et al., 2006; Skek, 2001b). Some studies (Feinberg et al., 2003; Roisman et al., 2009) found that different relationships appear to impact on each other. This is of relevance when thinking about relationships more generally and the different types of relationship that can exist, as the current research intends to do.

As most studies found within the literature search related to romantic partners or family (mostly parents), it is possible that these are the two forms of relationship that young people may consider first when asked about relationships more generally in the current research. However, none of the research reviewed here asked young people of the interpersonal connections

that they have, which they would consider to be 'relationships'. This is an area which the current research will contribute to.

Braun and Clarke (2013) discuss the different approaches that a researcher can take to analysing their data. Themes derived from data can pay more or less attention to previous research. This review of previous research will no doubt affect me as the researcher conducting interviews and subsequently analysing the data. Research is situated within the context of the research that has gone before it. To attempt to ignore this would be dishonest (Walsh & Downe, 2005). As a researcher I bring my own assumptions, and now, having conducted this review I have further assumptions, beliefs and expectations about young people's relationship discourse. Throughout the interview and analysis process I aimed to be aware of these assumptions and the extent to which they influenced and directed me (Appendix A).

3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

Following on from some of the aims introduced within the conclusion of the previous chapter, this chapter will go into more depth as to the purpose and questions that guide this research. The chapter will begin with the philosophical assumptions in which the research is grounded and then present the rationale of the research design. This research will use Discourse Analysis (DA), and I would invite the reader to familiarise themselves with the specific approach detailed below as this will allow for a fuller comprehension of the analysis, findings and discussion. The chapter will then detail the research procedures, including analysis, quality control measures and ethical considerations.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions

Research is one possible route towards knowing or understanding. It is a process of inquiry designed to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data to understand, describe, predict or control a phenomenon (Mertens, 2005).

Research, on the whole, is conducted by researchers. Researchers, by nature of being human, will have a way of looking at the world and defining reality. This is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that will guide and direct how a researcher collects, analyses, interprets and uses their data (Mertens, 2005).

My view of the nature of reality is that multiple realities can co-exist, and that these are socially constructed. The topic of inquiry for this research is social and emotional relationships. Relationships exist between people (Kelley, 1978) and contain a social element (Reis & Rusbult, 2004). Therefore, the ontology in which this research positions itself is that of social constructionism.

Social constructionism has evolved from a dissatisfaction with mechanistic explanations from a positivist and empirical perspective, claiming reality to be objective and knowable (Houston, 2001). The main critiques of the positivist approach within psychology have been that it does not allow flexibility in the study of psychological matter, and that it can distort key elements of the human existence (Downs, Gantt and Faulconer, 2012). Positivism has also been critiqued from a power perspective, in that it is used within psychology to give its subject scientific validity (Downs et al., 2012).

The previous chapter reviewed research into relationships and found a prevalence of quantitative research methodologies taking a positivist perspective. This paradigm often forces the subject being considered to be defined and operationalised by its measurement and epistemology. The understanding generated from such approaches is often useful in what it tells us about how well subject matter fits into certain categories (Willig, 1999), however, it is limited in what it can tell us about subjective experience.

Social constructionism rejects the view that meaning can be reducible to a mechanistic process (Downs et al., 2012). As a paradigm it links a range of philosophical assumptions (Houston, 2001), though it is predominantly based on the philosophy of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Mertens, 2005). Social constructionism therefore assumes that meaning can be found through studying lived experience and by interpreting meaning from the point of view of those who live it.

At the core of social constructionism is the concept that reality is viewed as an interpreted understanding or 'construction'. An individual's experience of reality is socially constructed, and multiple constructions can exist, some of which may be in conflict with each other and are open to change (Mertens, 2005). Within this ontology reality is seen as negotiable (Kelly, 2008), in so far as our social world is socially manufactured through human interaction and language (Houston, 2001). Meaning is constituted through people acting in a world of meaning, towards other meanings. This world includes personal history, as well as human history, and cultural meaning (Heidegger, 1962).

The two essential elements of social constructionism are human interaction and language (Houston, 2001). Language is central to all social activities, and is the most pervasive form of human interaction. Activities are performed through language; it does not live in a purely conceptual realm; it is a medium for action (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Constructionist researchers perceive the researchers' role as one of understanding multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Robson, 2011). Research is a product of the viewpoint of researchers and cannot be independent of this. Research can only be conducted through interaction between and among investigator and respondents, therefore

qualitative methods such as interviews are common within this paradigm (Mertens, 2005).

As the researcher I must recognise that I bring myself into the research process. Qualitative researchers aim to be transparent about this through the process of reflexivity (Ortlipp, 2008). As a gay woman I recognise that I may tend to recognise and support alternatives to mainstream, heterosexual constructions of relationships. Rather than trying to reduce these 'biases' of mine I needed to reflect on them transparently and critically examine how they impacted on the research process.

To remain relevant and ethically responsible, the psychological community must be willing to allow many views to participate in the research world (Downs et al., 2012). This research not only embraces the ethical standpoint of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) of hearing the views of young people; but also argues from a philosophical position that hearing individuals' social constructions of phenomenon is valuable for the development of knowledge about that phenomenon.

3.3 Purpose

This research has an exploratory purpose and design; to explore the meaning that young people give to the construct of relationships. Within a positivist paradigm, 'exploring' may be viewed as less useful than 'explaining', however, from a social constructionist perspective, describing and exploring phenomenon is the basis for knowledge development about that phenomenon (Robson, 2011).

Research that takes an exploratory approach is typically looking into an area in which little is already known (Robson, 2011). However, the initial search terms used in the literature search for the previous chapter found well over a thousand articles, indicating that this is a much researched area. Although, once exclusion criteria were applied in the literature search, it was found that not a great deal has been published about the meaning making that young people give to relationships in a qualitative sense. Relationship constructs have mostly been explored using predetermined, quantitative measures. The literature review did find some qualitative exploration of young people's meaning making of relationships, though these were with particular groups of young people and

most were with specific types of relationships. This research is exploring young people's meaning making of the general construction of relationships through a qualitative methodology, which can be considered a novel piece of research.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a relationship as 'The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). The interdependence and interaction between people in a relationship are what defines that interaction as a relationship (Kelley, 1978). This research, therefore, views relationships as existing between people, and containing a social, and potentially emotional, content.

Research discussed within the literature review found that young people do consider relationships to have a social and emotional element within that interaction. This research aims to explore young people's meaning making around relationships and to explore what, if any, elements of relationships are important and why. Much of the research reviewed talked about specific types of relationships; however, young people had not been asked whether they actually viewed these interactions as relationships. Therefore this research is interested to ask with whom young people consider themselves as having a relationship. Most of the research found in the literature review related to specific types of relationships, therefore this research is interested in whether young people have a single construction of relationships more generally.

The research aims to contribute to our understanding by informing upon how young people construct meaning around relationships within a 'social and emotional' context. This social and emotional element of relationships is relevant to the work of EPs, and also to relationship education within schools. Therefore, the research purpose should inform practice for EPs and schools.

3.4 Research Questions

The research questions are the focus for this inquiry and will directly inform and guide the research procedure. They must take into account the ontological and epistemological approach of the research, as well as the research purpose. Research questions must be coherent and interconnected. They should be clear, unambiguous and answerable (Robson, 2011).

The purpose of this research and the conceptual framework discussed above have led to the following three research questions:

What is the meaning and sense making that young people give to relationships?

With whom do young people identify as having a relationship or connection?

Do young people consider relationships important, if so what do they say is important about them?

3.5 Research Design

The following section will discuss the rationale of the research design, grounded within a social constructionist position. The importance of action, function and variation will be discussed within the context of the specific DA framework used within this research.

The research questions have framed the 'problem to be solved' within this research and thus lead directly to the research design (Robson, 2011).

Research questions that require detailed, in depth exploration about a phenomenon can lead a researcher to select a qualitative research design (Mertens, 2005). The research questions for this piece of research focus on the meaning and sense making of young people, therefore a qualitative methodology was most appropriate. The ontological assumptions of social constructionism, that there are multiple realities that are context dependent and defined through social consensus, typically lean research towards qualitative methods of data collection, such as semi structured interviews (Mertens, 2005); as has been chosen for this research.

3.5.1 The Centrality of Language

A central assumption of the ontological position of this research is that language acts to construct our experience of reality. We use language to construct different versions of our social world (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); the epistemological position of this research is that these versions are the route towards interpretation of the different realities that can coexist. The focus on the language used by participants was central to the research analysis.

The tool used for analysis of participants' language during interview was DA.

DA, though attentive of linguistic resources used by people, is primarily focused

on the meaning making that people construct through their use of language (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). It is this centrality of language, rather than episodic narratives that might align the research with methods such as narrative analysis, that led to the selection of DA. Other methods of analysis that share similar epistemological assumptions to this research, such as interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) were not considered to focus sufficiently on language use. DA is congruent with both the ontological position of this research and its purpose and research questions.

3.5.2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysts have been highly critical of a 'Chomskian approach' to language which would suggest that it is made up of rules which can be regulated, standardised and decontextualised (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The central critique to this approach is that it does not reflect naturally occurring talk, therefore discourse analysts will always look at verbatim transcripts rather than edited or summary transcripts. DA refutes Chomsky's claim that language is abstract, and prefers to analyse discourse within real world contexts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). DA arose from a frustration with much of the social psychology of the 1980s which standardised and categorised much of its constructs. It has therefore been referred to as taking an 'anti-cognitive' position (Willig, 1999).

The current research is largely informed by the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) and their contemporaries, as they have applied DA most prevalently within the social psychology realm. Potter and Wetherell's DA framework (1987) incorporates both semiology and an examination of linguistic resources and practices. Semiology is most commonly associated with Foucauldian DA (Willig, 1999), however, this framework has not been selected as it is grounded in sociology and philosophy, rather than psychology. Semiology focuses on the conditions for meaning within our talk and claims that language is dependent on a system of relationships (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). These relationships are then considered within the context of the specific linguistic practices and resources that are drawn upon.

DA has been utilised in many different disciplines, thus different authors tend to give different histories of its origins. This has sometimes led to a fragmentation

within the DA approach (Burman, 1991). Potter and Wetherell's (1987) version of the history of DA begins with Austin, whom they claim reshaped our view of language and its operation. Austin (1962) suggested that utterances do not simply describe the nature of reality in a neutral fashion, but can be used for a purpose; introducing the idea of language as a medium for action. It is this focus on action, revealed through variation within talk, that meant that Potter and Wetherell's (1987) DA framework was selected for analysis within this study.

The cousin of DA, conversation analysis, takes this one step further, claiming that every detail within our talk, every 'um' and every 'ah', is significant to the interpretation of talk (Silverman, 2001). However, conversation analysis does not allow for such an examination of power relationships as DA (Silverman, 2001) which is why it was not chosen for this methodology. Whilst focus on linguistics is important within DA, the context for the meaning making process is primary to analysis.

3.5.2.1 Action and Function

Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that language can be used for different functions and has a variety of consequences. The proposition of DA is that all meaning making is textual in some form (Parker, 1990). Discourse contains objects and subjects and can be located in a time and a place, though it is not static (Parker, 1990). Unlike conversational analysis, DA recognises the context in which language is situated, and it is perhaps for this reason that it has often been a method through which to address social practice and power-status relationships (Gee, 2004). DA is a critical form of analysis, seeking to expose power and ideology (Billig, 2008). We use language to build significance, identities, relationships, knowledge, power and politics. DA seeks to draw attention to discourse structures, illuminate the underlying assumptions and challenge their facticity (Burman, 1991).

The ontological position of this research, that reality and meaning making systems are constructed through language, is central to DA. Constructions are built from linguistic resources, involving active selection and choosing different forms of description for different occasions, though the speaker may not be conscious of this (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The object is formed and constructed within discourse, rather than being separate from it. DA is not

concerned with 'why' questions around the object, but rather DA would ask, how is language constructed to form the object and what are the consequences of that construction? (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). People assemble versions of the world through discourse in order to perform social actions. DA is concerned with how those versions then become 'real' and independent of the speaker (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Discourse, therefore, brings phenomena into sight (Parker, 1990).

The importance of context in DA means that the question for analysis becomes, how and when is a particular discourse evoked? (Silverman, 2001). Discourse is routinely used for different actions: to coordinate, account for errors, accuse, excuse and refuse (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The function of our talk is often to undermine an alternative account and promote the speaker (Edwards & Potter, 1992). People reconstruct the past according to functional concerns of the present. It is this function of the active use of discourse that DA is concerned with, asking how it is done, within which context and for what purpose (Silverman, 2001).

This research looked at young people's relationship discourse and identified the active use of discourse by identifying variation, resources and practices with the discourse. This information was then used to hypothesise the discourse function, presented in the findings.

3.5.2.2 Variation and Interpretive Repertoires

Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that social psychology has often been concerned with social representations; mental schemata which people use to make sense of the world and communicate within it. They argue that social representations assume a homogeneity in their use and application and cannot explain the variation in naturally occurring talk. They suggest instead, that people use interpretive repertoires; a lexicon of terms drawn upon to characterise and evaluate particular actions and events. These interpretive repertoires are less boundaried than social representations, and are not assumed to be a cognitive process. Silverman (2001) describes interpretive repertoires as a systematically related set of terms that are often organised around one or more central metaphor or figure of speech. It is this constitutive

nature of interpretive repertoires which allows people to use contradictory repertoires for different purposes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The primary method through which DA attempts to uncover function and action within language is through searching for account variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). People use different interpretive repertoires in different contexts and it is therefore possible for different interpretive repertoires to be in conflict. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that naturally occurring talk is often inconsistent, therefore social representations of a traditional social psychology or cognitive approach are insufficient. It is the celebration of variation and difference within social psychology that makes DA reflective of the genuine human experience (Burman, 1991).

By attending to how young people constructed their discourse around relationships, and in which contexts they used different interpretive repertoires, leading to variation within their accounts; this research explored how relationship talk was used in different contexts and hypothesised the function of this.

Having explored the rationale of the research design of this study, the following sections provide further detail of the research procedures.

3.6 Participants and Sampling

A homogeneous sampling procedure was used, which is a common sampling technique in qualitative research (Mertens, 2005). This research is interested in the meaning making processes of young people who share similar characteristics (i.e. age and school), therefore such a sampling procedure was considered appropriate.

Participants for this research were recruited over a two week period from one tutor group in Year 8 in one secondary school within the local authority where the Trainee EP researcher was on placement. The data was therefore analysed with reference and sensitivity to this context (Yardley, 2010).

Variance within homogeneous samples is at the core of the analysis process in DA (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourse analysts have critiqued traditional social psychological approaches as assuming that variance only exists between, rather than within categories (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This research

design, consistent with DA procedures, seeks to uncover variance within such homogeneity, as a method of hypothesising about the function of participants' discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Within the homogenous sampling procedure (as explained below), a convenience sampling technique was used, which is common, though not ideal, within psychological research (Mertens, 2005). The participating tutor group was identified in conversation with the pastoral lead at the participating school. This sampling technique does have limitations, such as recruitment biases. However, reference has been made to these limitations during analysis and within the implications of the study, in an effort to be transparent about the research process.

Information and consent letters (Appendix G) were sent to parents and carers of thirty children within the tutor group identified by the pastoral lead. There were thirteen responses to the letters, all consenting to the young person taking part. All thirteen participants were invited to attend individual conversations (Appendix H) during which the purpose of the research and the ethical considerations were explained.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) advise that ten interviews is a manageable and appropriate number in research such as this. All thirteen young people attended these meetings and all decided to participate, and gave their consent (Appendix J) after reading the information sheet (Appendix I) and discussing the study with me. It was therefore felt appropriate and important to the research integrity to interview all thirteen participants and use their data within the analysis of this research. Of these thirteen young people, nine were female, four were male and two would describe themselves as 'not White British'.

3.6.1 Sampling Issues

As with research using a convenience sample such as this, it is likely that those parents and young people who gave their consent to participate were the most engaged and felt able to give their time in this way (Mertens, 2005). Ethnic minorities have been found to be less likely to respond to participation in research (Mertens, 2005). This said, it is of note that the minority representation within this sample is loosely representative of the demographics of the school catchment area. No social or economic demographic information was gathered

from participants, however, it is of note that the catchment area of the school is loosely representative of a south eastern 'Home County' within England. The cultural implications of this are discussed within the findings and discussion chapters.

Response rates for research conducted within schools often relates to the timing of the school year and other priorities within the school organisation at that time (Mertens, 2005). This was considered in conversation with the pastoral lead. Information sheets were shared with the school senior leadership team (Appendix F) who consented to the research taking place within their premises and organised the administrative support for the letters to go out to parents and carers.

School systems were also considered in the age selection of participants. Year 8 was considered to be an age group who may be better able to participate in research during the summer term (when data was collected) due to a lack of other educational demands. This did mean that participants were at a stage whereby they were considering their entry to Year 9; a school year in which young people begin to consider their options for subjects and careers.

Implications of this are discussed in the analysis, findings and discussion. It was important for this research that the concept of relationships was a general term and it was felt that older adolescents may be more likely to associate the term with sexual relationships (Kindermann, Zimmer-Gembeck & Duffy, 2010). All participants were between twelve and thirteen years old.

3.7 Data gathering

The research questions outlined above have set out the focus for enquiry of this research. Semi-structured interviews with young people were the chosen method of enquiry (reasons for this are discussed below), therefore questions asked within interview aimed to answer the research questions. To uncover the meaning and sense making that young people gave to relationships required open questions that allowed participants to explore meaning without constraining it, wherever possible. Therefore the first interview question was, 'I'm interested to hear how you would define a relationship?' Participants' sense making was then explored further based on their responses to this question.

This opening question began with the phrase, 'I'm interested to hear'. Within a discourse methodology of analysis the interviewer should try to make the interview as much like a conversation as possible, including disagreement and challenge of the participant (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Therefore, not asking a 'Why', 'What', 'Where' or 'How' question at the beginning of the interview was important to create a flowing conversation, as much as could be possible. DA is concerned much more with 'How' questions rather than 'Why' questions (Silverman, 2001), and the interview schedule reflected this (Appendix C).

It was important to question the same thing more than once, and in different ways during interview, to reveal the practices and resources that were being drawn on by participants to construct their discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The interview schedule aimed to generate interpretive contexts to create connections between variation and reveal function. It was important for the interview schedule to make clear the potential probes and follow up questions which could be used during the interview (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), therefore semi-structured interview was most appropriate. The schedule guided me to cover the full range of topics, whilst being open-ended enough to allow participants to elaborate on their meaning making, and maintain the flow of conversation (Potter & Wetherell, 1995).

Uniformity is not important within this paradigm (Potter & Wetherell, 1995) and a discursive approach attempts to create variation within accounts, to form the basis of analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Variation came from participants' discourse and the interview schedule itself, however, it also required me to play an active role (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Within the interviews, sensitivity within the context of participants' discourse was attended to e.g. variation within their accounts. This was important for the analysis integrity, as all talk is set within a context (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Further probes checked and aimed to clarify participants' meaning making. The questions themselves, including probes and prompts, and the interviewer's responses, are all part of the topic of discourse in the same way as the participants' responses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Researcher reflexivity was extremely important during the interview process and in the subsequent analysis and referred to the active role that I took within this process (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

DA deals with “naturally occurring talk and text” (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p 28), which the interview situation cannot be said to be (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Although I attempted to create as much of a flowing conversation as possible, there were at times, by nature of the data gathering task, rules of a conversation that were not followed. For example, agreement to certain responses. Interviews can often create idealised conceptions of the topic being discussed by nature of their contrived context (Silverman, 2001). However, the interview situation still provided an opportunity to focus on how participants used their discourse.

Interviews were digitally recorded using an Olympus DS-2500 Dictaphone. Audio files were stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Gov.uk, 1998) on a password protected computer. Audio recordings were then transcribed as discussed in the following section.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative research cannot follow a linear process as the researcher must bring their own reflexivity to the process (Walsh & Downe, 2005). Potter and Wetherell’s framework for DA (1987) was followed. Although they suggest a number of stages for the analysis of discourse, they also acknowledge that these may “merge together in an order which may vary considerably” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p160). The following sections detail the stages used for the analysis of data, but these were followed in a cyclical rather than sequential manner.

3.8.1 Transcription

After the interviews were complete the audio data was transcribed. Transcription is a skilled and time consuming process (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As this was a piece of ‘Real World Research’ (Robson, 2011), sufficient time could not be given to transcription, therefore a professional transcription service was used which followed confidentiality and anonymity policies. I checked all transcripts with reference to the original audio files.

Transcription is not a neutral process, it is constructive in itself (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). There can be no perfect transcription that completely captures the joint meaning construction that took place during interview (Silverman,

2001). During transcription checking, reflexivity was used to consider the effects of my own responses on the participants' discourse (Appendix A). Transcription checking also facilitated reading and re-reading of the transcripts, a process essential for analysis (Mertens, 2005). Pauses and incomplete sentences can convey meaning (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and these were attended to during checking. Although DA has a social perspective rather than psycholinguistic (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), unlike conversation analysis, more value was placed on content, rather than the pauses.

3.8.2 Coding

Analysing at the level of discourse can become very in depth, therefore coding the data into manageable chunks (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) was necessary, and was the next stage after transcript checking. Unlike in some qualitative methods such as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), coding was used merely to organise the data, rather than analyse any discourse (Appendix N).

In the DA framework used it is advised that movement between coding and analysis should be fluid and cyclical (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and coding should relate directly to the research questions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I grouped the discourse roughly according to the research questions, this proved assistive later in analysis when trying to answer them. The interview schedule supported the coding due to how it had been devised according to research questions, though there was a considerable amount of overlap. The focus of DA (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) is to find variation within participants' discourse. Therefore, at this stage, coding was within each interview transcript, rather than across the data set as a whole.

3.8.3 Analysis at the Discourse Level

Coding identified the pieces of discourse to first focus attention on. This discourse was then read and re-read for detail rather than 'gist'. It was therefore necessary to repeatedly move between coding and analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) at this stage. It is important to acknowledge that my role during this process was very active, as themes cannot 'emerge' in any passive sense (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this analysis stage discursive practices and resources used by participants and variation within their transcripts were searched for. Dilemmas and contradictions, so often the enemy of social

psychologists, were the key to finding variation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Once variation was identified, hypotheses were generated around discourse function which incorporated interpretive repertoires, practices and resources (see appendix M for a sample transcript, appendix O for a sample of analysis per participant and appendix P for further evidence trail). A more detailed explanation of this follows below.

3.8.3.1 Practices

Analysis, through reading and re-reading the identified codes of discourse, searched for the practices used to perform actions. The discursive practices that were searched for were often organised to undermine alternative accounts or interpretations and to promote the credibility of the speaker's own discourse (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

'Fact construction' (Edwards & Potter, 1992), was a practice used within many participants' discourse. This was identified when notions of thought and reality blended to make participants' own versions appear credible and difficult to undermine, often through use of contingency and 'If-then' arguments.

Another practice commonly used was rhetoric, whereby participants constructed discursive accounts to persuade and counter alternatives (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Similarly to this, participants also used reification, whereby abstract concepts were constructed as 'real' within the discourse.

Analysis also looked for examples of participants constructing accountability of others and ignoring their own (Edwards & Potter, 1992). For example through use of 'stake' which can discount or rework the significance of an action, such as through use of the phrase, 'Dunno' (Silverman, 2001). Analysis also searched for how language was used to delete agency and create a sense of passiveness, whilst reifying other discourses (Billig, 2008).

This is not an exhaustive list of discursive practices but conveys examples of the level of action within discourse that were searched for. Alongside discursive practices analysis at this stage also looked for discursive resources that participants drew upon in their talk.

3.8.3.2 Resources

Participants used 'scripts' in their talk to invoke a routine character in their described events, which they used to imply a pattern or build a picture of what kind of person they wanted to appear as (Silverman, 2001). Scripts can be used to imply appropriateness, responsibility and blame. They can also divert attention away from other interpretations, in a similar manner to 'stake' (Silverman, 2001). Resources are broader than practices, therefore they often could not be identified until the transcript had been read several times.

Interpretive repertoires are another common discursive resource drawn upon by people in their talk. As mentioned previously, interpretive repertoires are a lexicon of terms organised for particular actions and functions (Silverman, 2001). They may be drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions, events or other phenomena (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As with scripts, they were often not identified until the transcript had been read several times, although sometimes interpretive repertoires were very clearly being drawn upon and so they were identified at the same stage as practices. I found it helpful to label each interpretive repertoire with the central term that linked the discursive ideas and metaphors. Throughout analysis this central term often changed.

Different interpretive repertoires were used by participants throughout their interviews and some conflicted with each other, giving an indication of variation. Interpretive repertoires were often used alongside discursive practices (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), therefore together they informed the hypothesising of function during analysis.

3.8.3.3 Bringing it All Together

At the stage of identifying practices and resources, variation within the discourse was often found. However, it was then necessary to bring practices and resources together, usually around one interpretive repertoire, to identify variation and hypothesise as to the function of this, supported by discursive evidence. As with every stage, this was cyclical with constant re-reading and revision. In this sense practices could be viewed as the smallest level of analysis, resources and variation as broader than this, and hypotheses as broader still. The ultimate goal was to arrive at a set of hypotheses that were

supported by linguistic evidence in the form of practice and repertoire resources for each participant.

Once hypotheses were formed it was then necessary to re-read the transcript to search for the linguistic evidence to support the hypothesis, if it was there. It was essential at this hypothesising stage to perform a critical interrogation of my own sense making (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), bearing explicit reference to quality control measures. Reflexivity was of high importance at this stage, in particular because revealing discursive practices can also reveal power institutions inherent in discourse (Burman, 1991). Whilst DA has traditionally been used to critique this power, in this circumstance, due to the age of participants, and school setting context, it was important to reflect on my own position of power within the interview process. Reflexivity with reference to this specific power imbalance was critical at the hypothesising stage, as evidenced in Appendix A and O.

Once hypotheses were subject to the validation and quality control process, hypotheses were brought together across participants in the final report. Whilst writing the findings, analysis was still ongoing, as advised by Potter and Wetherell (1987), as this helped to clarify analytic issues.

3.9 Quality Control

The social constructionist position of this research means that traditional concepts such as reliability and validity, crucial within the positivist paradigm, were interpreted differently. It is important to have quality control measures, as this will increase the value and impact of a piece of research (Yardley, 2000). Qualitative research comes from an epistemology whereby ethical issues such as sensitivity, reflexivity and integrity form part of the methodological process (Walsh & Downe, 2005). 'Good' qualitative research should make explicit reference to this (Yardley, 2000). In qualitative research, quality control forms part of the analysis and should not be seen as a separate process (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). It was my duty as the researcher to make analytic issues transparent to the reader (Silverman, 2001).

3.9.1 Credibility

The interpretive parallel to validity is credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). During the analysis process prolonged and substantial engagement was spent with the transcripts, reading and re-reading the participants' words. This also included listening to the audio recordings of the interviews to ensure intonation and pauses were appropriately captured in the transcripts. It required commitment, rigour and time on my part (Mertens, 2005).

A set of analytic claims should give coherence to a body of discourse. Analysis should lead to hypotheses that can explain both the broad patterns and the smaller sequences such as the discursive practices being used (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). If there were outliers that did not fit within the explanation, then the analysis was not regarded as complete. However, when there were regular patterns that appeared to be exceptions to the explanations, then these were considered evidence of variation and confirmation of the explanatory scope of the hypotheses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Member checks, peer debriefing and triangulation form another part of research credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1987). Whilst I was committed and reflexive in my analysis it was important to share hypotheses and have analysis checked by outside parties. My research supervisor provided further credibility checks at several stages of the analysis. I also met with peers engaging in their own research for reciprocal credibility checks.

I have made every attempt to make the analysis process transparent and have documented this through a paper trail (Appendices O & P). Each hypothesis for every participant was supported with evidence from the transcript and practices and resources used as evidence have been identified. In addition to this, my own reflexivity process was made transparent within the reflective diary (Appendix A).

3.9.2 Sensitivity to Context

Yardley (2000) states that sensitivity to context is an important quality control measure for qualitative research. The previous discussion about sampling positions the participants within a particular cultural context and analysis paid

regard to this. The transcription process was sensitive to participants' discourse as far as possible, as discussed.

During the interview process I paid close adherence to participants' orientation. It was important to check with participants during interview what they saw as consistent or different (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This was done throughout the interviews by summarising and asking participants whether their meaning had been accurately surmised. Adherence to my own contribution during re-reading also signified the extent to which participants' responses reflected their own views, as opposed to concurring with my direction. Reflexivity attended to the power imbalance evident in the interview process.

3.9.3 Impact

Good qualitative research should have impact and importance (Yardley, 2000). The application of research is not an 'optional extra' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The findings have been written with thick description (Mertens, 2005). Whilst qualitative research is situated within a specific context and does not claim to be generalisable, transparency must allow the reader to assess the interpretations and subsequent impact (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

An analytic scheme must make sense of new kinds of discourse and generate novel explanations (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). DA is a critical methodology and by presenting findings it can become part of the discourse that it was intending to critique (Burman, 1991). The discussion makes reference to this. The findings have been written in a way that attempts to avoid reification of theory or writing for a closed research world (Billig, 2008). Analysis, findings and the discussion chapter aimed to promote an informed, critical attitude, and to enable an awareness of the constructive nature of discourse.

The most important stakeholders of this research were the participants, therefore I met with them, school facilitators and parents to disseminate the research. Specific applications of the research findings within the school environment were discussed at this meeting. I also disseminated the findings to the local authority in which the research took place and the academic institution at which the research was registered. Future dissemination of findings within an academic journal is also intended.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

'Good' psychological research is only possible if there is mutual respect and trust between investigators and participants (British Psychological Society, 2010, p4). The methods of quality control that have been applied within this research adhere to the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2010). The research has scientific value through the robustness of data analysis and through dissemination of research findings, therefore I feel that I have adhered to the social responsibility requirements of undertaking research (British Psychological Society, 2010). Quality control measures have attempted to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the research process, though this is also the responsibility of the reader to judge.

3.10.1 Consent

Approval for the research needed to be sought from the local authority in which the research took place. The requirement for Trainee EPs' research within the local authority was that its aims meet with the core priorities of the service. The research proposal was viewed by the Principal Educational Psychologist within the local authority and permission was granted for the research in November 2014 on the condition of gaining ethical approval from the academic institution. Application to the academic institution research board was submitted in January 2015 and approval was obtained in March 2015 (Appendix D). At this time the research was also registered with the academic institution and confirmation of this was given in September 2015.

Every person from whom data is gathered should consent freely to the process on the basis of adequate information (British Psychological Society, 2010). In addition to participant consent for this research it was deemed appropriate to gain approval from the senior leadership team at the school from which participants were recruited. Space in the school was used during interviews and participants missed time from their curriculum activities to attend, therefore approval from the school was ethically appropriate. After liaison with the head of pastoral care for Year 8 to discuss the most appropriate forms of access, a school information sheet was shared with the senior leadership team (Appendix F). They granted permission for access.

As participants were under 16 years old, consent was initially sought from parents and guardians. An information sheet accompanied the consent form (Appendix G). Parents were informed as to the purpose of the study and how the interview with their child would take place, including opportunities that the young person would have to ask questions. Parents were also given my contact email address should they wish to ask further questions themselves. It was made clear that parents could decline for their child to take part by not filling in the consent form and there would be no adverse effects for their child by not participating. Parents were also informed that even if they gave their consent, their child would not be required to take part if they declined to do so.

Participants were given a copy of the consent form that they had signed and the information sheet (Appendices I & J) to take away after the interview as a reminder of what we had spoken about. They were informed that if they had any further questions for me they could contact me via the pastoral lead at school.

3.10.2 Anonymity and Data Protection

Data protection, anonymity and confidentiality procedures were explained in the information sheets. It was made clear to the school, parents and participants that the audio recordings from the interviews would be stored on a password protected computer in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Gov.uk, 1998) and that these files would be destroyed in July 2020. The transcription service also adhered to data protection procedures. All stakeholders in the research were informed that participants would have full anonymity and pseudonym names would be used in the research report. If the research were to be published in an academic forum they were also informed that the name of the school and local authority would not be named.

For the young people whose parents gave consent, they were invited to meet with me for more information. They were given a participant information sheet which was differentiated using more accessible language for young people (Appendix I).

None of the participants had additional educational needs that would have required the information to be differentiated further. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and many did, particularly about the use of their names. Some found the concept of data analysis confusing and it was

explained that I would listen to everything that every participant said and write up what was found generally across participants rather than quoting individually from each person, though some quotes would be used.

Participants were informed that the final research paper would be shared with their school, the local authority and my university. They were also informed that it may be published in an academic journal. They were told that they would not be able to be identified within the writing of the research and all were then happy to give their consent and carry on to be interviewed. They were informed that they could stop the interview at any time and could withdraw their data from the analysis at any point up to July 2015.

As a Trainee EP often working with young people of this age group, I feel confident in my own professional and ethical judgement (British Psychological Society, 2010) that all participants gave informed consent to take part in this study. I took their questions as a sign that they made informed decisions and that they all genuinely felt that they had a choice about whether to take part. However, I cannot ignore that a power imbalance did exist within the room with myself as an adult and participants as children. The room in which the interviews took place was familiar to them all and they sat by the door with myself positioned further away. Whilst we went through the consent forms the door to the interview room was open and other pastoral staff were visible outside. I believe that all that could possibly be done to ensure they felt able to withdraw at any stage was done.

3.10.3 Risk

As young people under the age of 16, the participants were considered a 'vulnerable group' (British Psychological Society, 2010). In addition to the ethical approval that was sought from the academic institution connected to the research, I also submitted a risk assessment stating the protocols for risk management (Appendix E). I hold a current Disclosure and Barring Certificate, which is considered good practice when working with children and young people. My own experience of working with young people day to day meant that the risks for this research were considered to be low.

Interviews took place in a room with a closed door, however, there was a glass panel in that door and members of the school pastoral team were approximately

three metres outside the room during the interviews. The participant also sat nearer to the door than myself. The subject of the interviews was personal in nature, however, participants were informed that they did not need to disclose any personal information. They were informed before the interview that should they disclose any information that may put themselves or others at risk then I would have a duty to pass on that information.

After the interview was completed each participant was given a debrief sheet (Appendix K) which contained information about a local Connexions service which they could access online or via the telephone should they want to discuss anything any further. They were also reminded of the name of the pastoral lead within their school should they wish to talk to them about any issues raised during interview.

3.11 Summary

This research is grounded in the ontological perspective of social constructionism. The importance of language within this paradigm is reflected within the research design. The research aimed to explore the ways in which young people, specifically Year 8 students, used their language to talk about relationships. The aims and research questions have been set out in this chapter and detail has been given as to how these have guided the research procedure and analysis. At the heart of the DA framework used in this research is the search for variation within discourse, this chapter has detailed the rationale for this and the steps taken to form hypotheses which provided the findings in this study. Quality control and ethical considerations have also been discussed and the importance of researcher reflexivity was highlighted. A breakdown of the research procedure and timescale can be found in Appendix L.

Having detailed what happened and why, the following chapter will go on to discuss what was found.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the findings provided by the data analysis after confirmation and validation procedures (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). It provides answers to the meaning making which young people gave to the construct of relationships, it details with whom young people consider themselves as having a relationship, and what is important about relationships and why; which constitutes the aims of this research.

Three broad discourses were found: Social Contract, Interpersonal Aspects and Relationship Diversity. Within each of these there were smaller discourses made up of the interpretive repertoires that participants drew on to construct their discourses. This chapter will first discuss the structure of the findings in order to signpost the reader to the discourses which specifically answer each research question (presented in the previous chapter). The chapter will then go through each discourse in detail. It has not been possible, due to length, to detail each interpretive repertoire, although it has been made clear as to how each fits within the findings framework (see Table 4.2). The reader may wish to refer to Appendix O for further information about interpretive repertoires not covered in this chapter. Finally, the summary presents the findings in terms of how they are able to answer the research questions.

As discussed within the Methodology chapter, all findings have been found through the search for variation within discourse. Variation indicates the speaker's active use of their discourse and function within their talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Function has been hypothesised and an evidence trail of the hypothesising process, including supporting evidence and researcher reflexivity can be found in Appendix O and P. The reader may also wish to reference Appendix A for further information about researcher reflexivity during analysis.

4.2 Structure of the Findings

Although the analysis answered the three research questions, the examination of the data did not lead to separate structures for each question; as such the Findings have been organised to present young people's discourses in relation

to the construct of 'relationships'. The reader has been signposted below, as to which parts of the analysis relate to each specific research question.

Research question 1: What is the meaning and sense making that young people give to relationships? is answered throughout all the findings. However, section 4.3 'Social Contract' and section 4.4 'Interpersonal Aspects' relate most and best to this question.

Research question 2: With whom do young people identify as having a relationship or connection? is answered primarily within section 4.5 'Relationship Diversity'. However, section 4.4 'Interpersonal Aspects' also covers this question in a broader sense.

Research question 3: 'Do young people consider relationships important, if so what do they say is important about them?' is answered within section 4.4.4 'Not Being Alone'. However, section 4.4 'Interpersonal Aspects', covers this question in a broader sense.

The interpretive repertoires that were used by participants within their discourse to support their discourse function have been organised according to their corresponding discourses and are presented in Table 4.2 on the following page.

Within participants' discourse, scripts were often evoked to create a sense of routine and commonality. Though scripts were often part of interpretive repertoires, they did not constitute discourse on their own because variability was not found within them. See section 4.4.2 for further discussion around scripts. Practices drawn upon by participants in their discourse are also discussed throughout this chapter.

Table 4.2: Discourse Findings and Interpretive Repertoires

DISCOURSE	INTERPRETIVE REPERTOIRES
Social Contract	
Social Exchange	'Reciprocation', 'Society', 'Consequences', 'Responsibility', 'Attention', 'Trust'
Social Negotiation	'Different sides of yourself', 'Knowing but not liking', 'Amount of friends', 'Judgement', 'Conclusions', 'Appearance'
Work	'Working at relationships', 'Tiring', 'Inclusion'
Interpersonal Aspects	
Feelings	'How you feel about someone', 'Emotions', 'Make me feel'
Closeness	'Knowing and Liking', 'Time', 'Trust', 'Honesty', 'Being myself', 'Knowing', 'Talking'
Similarities	'Being similar to friends', 'Having things in common', 'Common ground'
Not Being Alone	'Not being alone', 'Not being lonely' 'Can't get anywhere without relationships'
Relationship Diversity	
Choice	'Family isn't a relationship', 'Who you have a relationship with', 'Different types of relationship', 'It's not a relationship with teachers', 'Family relationships are different', 'Choice'
Relationship Hierarchy	'Proper relationships', 'Family is the strongest relationship', 'Relationship Hierarchy', 'What you tell your parents'

4.3 Social Contract

Many participants used a 'Social Contract' discourse when describing the meaning making of relationships. This broad discourse was found to consist of three smaller discourses: 'Social Exchange', 'Social Negotiation' and 'Work'.

4.3.1 Social Exchange

Some participants used 'Social Exchange' interpretive repertoires, whereby relationship discourse was constructed with reference to the exchange of some form of social goods. George talked about 'Reciprocation', doing something and getting something back in return. His initial definition of a relationship was,

"When, er, people care about each other."

(George p:1 l: 6-7)

However, he later followed this with,

“I believe that if you do something for them, if they cared about you, they’d be nice enough to do something in return”.

(George p1 l:29-31)

George’s first definition referenced a common and socially acceptable construction of relationships, however, the second quote referred to a ‘Reciprocation’ that may take place within relationships for him. His use of “I believe” acted to blend notions of thought and opinion with a logical if-then consequential argument, building the persuasion of his discourse. The word “believe” also reworked the significance of his statement, diminishing the importance of what he was saying because it was belief rather than fact; possibly because he felt that this second definition was less socially acceptable.

George also said,

“To be sure that they’re fine and to put time”.

(George p:1 l:16-17)

The putting of time into the relationship created the impression of investment, adding to the contractual discourse.

Lavender also talked about the ‘Social Exchange’ and ‘Responsibility’ nature of relationships within a wider ‘Social Contract’ discourse.

“You kind of have, you kind of, it’s just like you’ll feel like, obliged to help them.”

(Lavender p:4 l:171-3)

Her use of the word “have” implied that it must happen and acted to persuade, and her use of the word “just” acted to reify what follows, making her words more real. “Obliged” also created connotations of her contractual duty.

Matilda echoed these notions of obligation, and similarly to George, used a ‘Reciprocation’ interpretive repertoire,

“You feel obligated to help them”.

(Matilda p:3 l:107)

Her use of “you” as the subject normalised the statement and acted to include all people, rather than it being her feelings alone.

She was clear about the ‘Reciprocation’ required in relationships,

“Because if someone just comes to talk to you about all their problems you feel as if, like, you can't confide in them because they're always talking about their self. So that isn't really a firm relationship because you can't actually talk to them about yourself cos they're always talking to you about them. So it is kind of a two way thing”.

(Matilda p:2 l: 63-70)

She built a clear, consequential argument for ‘Reciprocation’ and its basis in relationships. She drew on a rhetorical example of “someone” to construct her persuasion. Similarly to her use of “you”, “someone”, can be anyone, and therefore one might be able to recognise her example and agree with her. Her notion of a “two way thing” is a common rhetorical phrase which added familiarity to her logic, thus increasing the persuasion.

Amanda also used a ‘Social Exchange’ discourse when she discussed ‘Trust’ in relationships and said,

“They’ve not abided by the rules of that secret”.

(Amanda p:2 l:75-6)

This implies that “they” have not upheld their part of the ‘Social Exchange’ and the implication was then that the ‘Trust’, like a contract, was broken. “The rules” reflected the contractual nature of relationships for Amanda.

Rather than drawing on an interpretive repertoire of ‘Reciprocation’, Amanda used an interpretive repertoire of ‘Consequences’. She described some consequences of relationships that she does not necessarily like or agree with,

“Beauty does matter and I wish it didn’t”.

(Amanda p:7 l:273-4)

She attempted to rework this statement by showing her disapproval that beauty matters, but her use of the word “does” makes the statement seem factual. Amanda’s motivation for reworking the statement might have been that she

thought that I would disapprove because she tried to present herself as disapproving with “I wish it didn’t”.

Amanda also drew on an interpretive repertoire about ‘Society’ within ‘Social Exchange’,

“I think society plays a big part in this as well”.

(Amanda p:6 l: 258-9)

By drawing on a common, everyday notion such as “society” she reworked the attribution away from herself and towards the invisible notion of ‘Society’. She used this attribution technique again in her discourse when she said,

“It’s all about the popular ones and, you know, everyone wants, everyone wants to be friends with populars but I don’t”

(Amanda p:10 l:433-5)

Within Amanda’s ‘Society’ interpretive repertoire the “populars” held a lot of social goods and others wanted to be friends with them in order to acquire some of those goods. “Populars”, like “society” are an invisible group and easy to attribute blame towards because I cannot see them and she has not described them more specifically to make them ‘real’. As with “beauty”, she tried to distance herself from the societal ‘Social Exchange’ by saying “I don’t”.

However, Amanda also did not want to appear unpopular,

“I’m not popular, I am not unpopular.”

(Amanda p:11 l:477)

For Amanda, although she attempted to demonstrate her disapproval of the impact of ‘Society’ within relationships, she did not want to place herself outside of this, possibly because of the importance of ‘Society’ and the social goods that it contains.

Within these ‘Social Exchange’ interpretive repertoires participants were getting something from relationships, however, Hortensia talked about not getting something from her relationship with her parents within an ‘Attention’ interpretive repertoire.

“They don’t obviously have that much concentration on me”.

(Hortensia p:13 l:641-2)

She was talking about her parents focusing their attention on her brothers who were about to take their GCSEs and A Levels. This statement varied with what she had said previously about her parents caring for her. The use of the word “obviously” created an assumption of agreement. I hypothesised that she also wanted to present this as obvious because the alternative might be that her parents do not care for her, which would not be an acceptable interpretation; because we use discourse to promote ourselves (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Hortensia built the argument that her parents’ levels of attention were directly related to exams,

“Year 8’s not the most important year”.

(Hortensia p:13 l:613)

Whereas others constructed their persuasion within their discourse through a consequential argument, Hortensia built a consequential notion through inference, that as her brothers were receiving attention at this point in time, she would receive attention later when she takes her GCSEs and A Levels. The ‘Social Exchange’ implied in this instance would be that by taking her exams she would receive her parents’ attention.

4.3.2 Social Negotiation

Another part of the ‘Social Contract’ discourse was that of ‘Social Negotiation’. Some participants talked about making compromises and adjustments within their relationships. For example, Helga talked about,

“Give, like, different sides of yourself to friends”.

(Helga p:4 l:152-3)

She used an active discourse with the verb, “give”, indicating that this was an active decision that she was making. However, the word “like” acted to rework the significance of the sentence and diminish the impact of the action, possibly because the sentence might appear deceitful.

She talked about the importance of not lying in relationships, and answering people truthfully,

“I don’t think you should lie”.

(Helga p:18 l:826-7)

These two utterances could be at odds with each other; not lying and presenting different sides of herself. Therefore there was a chance that her actions could be interpreted as deceitful. To avoid this construction she built a rationale for giving different sides of herself,

“Sometimes you don’t wanna keep going on with that character, maybe you would like to try something a bit new”.

(Helga p:5 l:194-5)

This logic-building excused her actions of presenting different sides of herself. Her choice of pronoun, “you”, rather than “I”, acted to generalise and normalise the action.

Helga described this social negotiation as,

“Quite complicated”.

(Helga p:9 l:376)

The negotiation of her peer relationships involved a lot of active discourse and negotiation that Helga reflected in her description of them as “complicated”.

Sophie told me that relationships are between people that,

“Know each other very well”.

(Sophie p:1 l:5)

However, like Helga, this could sometimes be difficult for Sophie and involve a level of ‘Social Negotiation’ which she talked about within a ‘Knowing But Not Liking’ interpretive repertoire,

“They’re in my friend group, I have to say I like them...but they kind of irritate me”.

(Sophie p:9 l:323-6)

Sophie explained that there were people that she knows, therefore she would describe these as relationships, such as within her friendship group, however, she does not like them. This required negotiation on her part as she had to make compromises to incorporate these people within her friendship group and also manage her own feelings of irritation with these peers. As with Helga, there could be a danger of Sophie presenting herself in a poor light, by talking negatively about others, however, by saying that she does like them when she is in that group she managed to portray herself positively by not being rude to these peers that irritate her. There is an indication of the rules of the 'Social Contract', in her words, "I have to say I like them".

Charlie drew on the negotiation element in relationships within his 'Judgement' interpretive repertoire,

"People don't really want to be judged, so they're trying to get inside the group".

(Charlie p:4 l:123-4)

The element of social negotiation here was getting "inside" the friendship group or relationship in order to reduce the amount of judgement. Rather than talking about using relationships in order to gain something, as in 'Social Exchange', he was talking about using his relationships to negotiate something that is socially desirable.

Charlie viewed being judged as a negative yet unavoidable element of relationships,

"People try not to judge people but they kind of end up doing".

(Charlie p:3 l:73-4)

His use of the subject, "people", distanced himself from being the one who does any judging as he suggests that that is a negative action because "people try not to" do it. This first part of the sentence acts as the 'disclaimer', effectively saying, 'Judgement happens but it's not my fault'. The phrase, "kind of" then tries to reduce the significance of the action, however, in doing this it also reifies and emphasises the action, making it 'reality'.

Hortensia talked about knowing things about a person in order to make a 'Conclusion' about what type of relationship she might have with them. As part of her persuasion technique she drew on her relationship with me as the interviewer as an example,

"We don't know too much about each other so we can't make a conclusion with our relationships".

(Hortensia p:2 l:81-3)

By attempting to rework my investment in what she was saying, I hypothesised that she was trying to persuade me and therefore give more weight to her argument. For Hortensia, making conclusions allowed her to know how to negotiate and move forward in her interpersonal interactions. However, she also told me that,

"I don't like jumping to conclusions".

(Hortensia p:11 l:524-5)

As other participants have shown within the 'Social Contract' discourse, Hortensia felt the need to justify her interpretive repertoire in case it reflected on her negatively. "Jumping" to conclusions implies an unthoughtful decision making process that is not considered and Hortensia wished to communicate that the 'Conclusions' that she makes within her 'Social Negotiation' are considered and logical.

Danny told me about what it means to him to have a lot of friends and how this might relate to the 'Social Negotiation' of relationships,

"If you had a lot of friends you feel really good cos you think, 'Oh people like me so I'm doing something well'".

(Danny p:8 l:275-7)

His rhetorical device of giving an example of what someone might think acts to persuade, and his use of "you" rather than "I" acts to generalise the statement and make it more 'real'. Danny talked about using the number of friends that he has as a measurement for his own success in relationships. He implied that he had successfully negotiated his social world to amass "a lot" of friends and, by his reasoning, is therefore, "doing something well". Although Danny said he felt

“really good” about this, he also, similarly to Charlie, drew on notions of ‘Judgement’,

“You can’t really judge people on how many friends they have”.

(Danny p:8 l:283-4)

In many ways this contradicts what he had said previously; however, it picks up on a common trend throughout the ‘Social Contract’ discourse. Many participants attempted to rework the significance of what they said about the negotiation elements of relationships. I hypothesised that this was because it was not compatible with the ‘Closeness’ discourse that many participants drew on, which will be discussed later.

4.3.3 Work

Continuing the ‘Social Contract’ discourse, Hortensia and Charlie talked about the ‘Work’ that is involved within relationships. In this sense the contract is echoed in the work and effort that is put in to relationships, as was alluded to by Helga within a ‘Social Negotiation’ context when she described relationships as “complicated”.

Hortensia described this complicated nature of relationships,

“My friends in my year, um, I get on well with, like we do have some points where we’re sort of shaky, in a way, and it doesn’t always end up, like the best”.

(Hortensia p:16 l:756-60)

Hortensia acknowledged the difficulties that can occur within relationships, at times being “shaky”, or not “the best”. However, as with many of the examples above, Hortensia attempted to rework the significance of these difficulties that she has experienced in relationships. “Sort of” before “shaky” reduced the significance of the later word, and rather than using another negative word she used negation of a positive word, “best”.

However, Hortensia did later acknowledge more directly that relationships require ‘Work’. When discussing the equal role that people should play in relationships, she used a rhetorical example to talk about what might happen if one member of the relationship was putting in more effort than the other,

“That’s not fair on the person cos they have to do all the work”.

(Hortensia p:6 l:269-71)

Here she used the word “work”, implying further that relationships require active effort and if one person were to do all of that it would not be fair. Hortensia revisited fairness again when she talked about ‘Inclusion’ and trying to include everyone in relationships,

“Cos it’s like, who to go to, I’m trying to be as neutral as possible but it’s like someone’s desperate”.

(Hortensia p:10 l:458-61)

This partly reflects the ‘Social Negotiation’ discourse in terms of being between two people, but in addition to this she drew on the word “trying”. This effortful language of being “neutral” but not knowing “who to go to” implies an element of ‘Work’. The dramatic use of the word “desperate” also elaborated on her discourse of laboured work.

Charlie summed up the work required in relationships when he said,

“Like, a ‘bit much’, because, um, it can get quite tiring I guess”.

(Charlie p:2 l:63-4)

He was talking about particular people who are,

“Over-powering”

(Charlie p:2 l:63)

However, rather than focusing on the individual he talked about the effect on himself as “quite tiring”. “Tiring”, again, implies the notion of the ‘Work’ that is involved in relationships. For Helga, relationships are “complicated” due to ‘Social Negotiation’ and it may well be that relationships are perceived as ‘Work’ for Hortensia and Charlie due to negotiation as well. However, from the content discussed by participants, my hypothesis was that the ‘Work’ also relates to the ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ of relationships, which are discussed in the following section.

Many participants spoke about the ‘Social Contract’ nature of relationships, drawing on notions of ‘Social Exchange’, ‘Social Negotiation’ and ‘Work’. Many

elements of this discourse were reworked or contradicted with the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse, possibly because it was conceptualised by participants as a less 'socially acceptable' discourse.

4.4 Interpersonal Aspects

The 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse can be conceptualised as the 'largest' discourse as it was drawn upon by all participants and contains four smaller discourses within it; 'Feelings', 'Closeness', 'Similarities' and 'Not Being Alone'.

4.4.1 Feelings

For many participants, emotional feelings played a big part in relationships. When asked how she would define relationships Matilda said,

“I just believe that relationship can be used to describe how you feel about someone”.

(Matilda p:1 l:19-21)

For Matilda, relationships and her feelings for the person that she is in a relationship with were blended together. She used the word “believe” to blend together belief and reality, however, by preceding this with “just”, she reified her discourse, further establishing it as ‘reality’. Similarly to a ‘Social Contract’ discourse, Matilda described her relationships as having a “use” and acting as a reference point. She added to this further when she said,

“If you feel something then you can distinguish what relationship you have”.

(Matilda p:12 l:552-4)

In this example she talked about using her feelings as a measurement tool to “distinguish” the relationship. She was talking about whether the relationship could be seen as

“Bumpy”

(Matilda p: 1 l:29)

Or

“Firm”.

(Matilda p: 2 l: 67)

In this way feelings were acting as an indicator for Matilda within relationships, thereby giving her feelings a strong sense of agency.

Other participants talked about this in reverse; relationships leading to feelings. Within her ‘Make me feel’ interpretive repertoire Helga told me that,

“Some of them can make me feel a bit down about myself but some of them can make me feel really good about myself”.

(Helga p:15 l:718-21)

It was unclear whether the “them” was referring to people or relationships themselves when Helga said this, however, this lack of clarity indicated that the person and the relationship with the person had blended in Helga’s discourse. She used the phrase “make me” twice within this statement, indicating the agency that she attributed to relationships.

Others also gave relationships this same agency. Lavender said,

“Some relationships make me feel sad...but then some other ones make me feel really happy”.

(Lavender p:12 l:564-6 & 668-70)

This conflicting nature of relationships; creating both positive and negative feelings was also talked about by Roberta,

“They can make you feel quite upset but they can also make you feel really happy”.

(Roberta p:9 l:332-3)

I hypothesised that this variance within feelings in relationships might reflect or relate to the ‘Work’ and ‘Social Negotiation’ that others talked about. Working at relationships and negotiating within them might lead to a mix of feelings as it could lead to a mix of positive and negative results.

The way that Helga, Lavender and Roberta attributed agency to feelings and relationships put themselves in a passive position, attributing feelings and

relationships with the agency to “make me”. Within discourse, if one subject is attributed with agency, the other, in this case the participants themselves, become passive (Billig, 2008). As established, feelings are powerful because they can be conflicting and create different social and emotional effects, therefore, this positioned relationships within their discourse in a very powerful position; that relationships are able to “make me feel”.

George used attribution in his ‘Emotions’ interpretive repertoire to attribute blame. He talked about

“Love relationships”,

(George p:2 l:61-2)

and told me,

“From experience they don’t really work out”.

(George p:4 l:119-20)

When I asked him why this might be, he said that,

“Puberty and emotions play a huge part so, um, people’s, er, emotions and feelings for people could change quickly”.

(George p:4 l:124-6)

He told me that he had difficulties with “love relationships”, but in order to rework this so that the inference was not that he had failed, he used a “Puberty” script in order to ‘excuse’ himself. One of the associations within this script was that emotions and feelings change quickly, therefore they cannot be trusted. He used this as a logical reason for why he should not try a “Love relationship” at his age,

“Not until, er, you’re older should you be in one”.

George (p:4 l:111-2)

This logical and scientific rationale gave weight to his argument and his use of “you”, rather than “I” inferred that his logic can be generalised to people widely.

4.4.2 Closeness

As well as 'Feelings', a lot of participants referenced a sense of 'Closeness' within relationships. A lot of this discourse involved blending of scripts. Blending terms and phrases adds weight to arguments and makes it harder for the listener to refute. Scripts invoke routine and familiarity within discourse and allow a lot to be inferred from what is said. The scripts that were identified within participants' discourse could not be said to be interpretive repertoires as they did not involve variability. However, there were interpretive repertoires that used a collection of scripts.

Many participants talked about 'Trust' being important in relationships and blended different scripts within this. 'Trust' has been discussed previously within the 'Social Exchange' discourse, part of 'Social Contract'. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that the same interpretive repertoires can be used for different functions. During analysis 'Trust' appeared to fit within both the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse and 'Social Contract' discourse at different points for different functions and for different participants. Therefore, this interpretive repertoire appears twice within the findings.

Helga said that a relationship is with,

“Someone you can trust and you can tell your secrets to...and you believe that they won't tell anybody or blabber it out”.

(Helga p:1 l:7-10)

Helga was using a “secrets” script to infer that “trust” is with someone who will keep your secrets. Her use of the word, “believe”, implied that there was the possibility for the trust to be ‘not believed’ or ‘broken’ and “blabber it out” suggested a careless breaking of trust. Such use of negative examples was a common practice used by participants within their discourse to persuade by using a ‘worst case scenario’.

Helga blended her ‘secrets’ script further with a ‘talking’ script within her ‘Trust’ interpretive repertoire,

“Sometimes when I hang out with my friends I just feel a bit uneasy...but when you, when I talk to [Name], I feel like she’s really listening and understanding”.

(Helga p:7 l:292-3 & 297-9)

Again, she referenced the possibility that she might be let down in her relationships. “Listening” and “understanding” were blended with notions of ‘talking’ and ‘secrets’ within the ‘Trust’ interpretive repertoire, adding to its richness which gave it an importance.

Amanda and Honey also talked about a ‘Trust’ interpretive repertoire within a ‘Closeness’ discourse,

“You thought that they were somebody that they weren’t”.

(Amanda p:3-4 l:131-2)

Similarly to Helga, Amanda used a ‘worst case scenario’ to persuade. This sentence implied that Amanda may have been let down by somebody who she trusted, however, her use of the subject “You” distanced herself from the scenario so that she did not portray herself as someone who trusted carelessly.

Honey also used a ‘Trust’ interpretive repertoire to convey a ‘Closeness’ within her relationships,

“My friends, I can trust them but I wouldn’t trust them with some stuff”.

(Honey p:5 l:140-2)

Honey gave the impression that trust can be a difficult thing to negotiate, reflecting the ‘Social Contract’ discourse. By reworking the sentence to suggest that she would not trust her friends with “some stuff” Honey, like Helga, implied that trust is very valuable.

Honey talked about a ‘Closeness’ within a particular relationship using an interpretive repertoire of ‘Be Myself’,

“I can be myself around her completely and I know that she won’t judge me for it. And I can, and I can just be myself around her, and, but if I wasn’t then it wouldn’t be the same”.

(Honey p:2 l:55-9)

Honey drew on 'Judgement' talk, as Charlie did when talking about the negotiation involved in relationships, connecting 'Trust' again with the 'Social Negotiation' involved in relationships. Honey's use of "just" before she repeated "be myself", reified this discourse and indicated how important it was for her to feel able to be herself. She further emphasised this importance by constructing a rhetorical negative example, "it wouldn't be the same", to suggest that with others it would be different, or not as close.

As well as 'Trust' and 'Be Myself' interpretive repertoires, participants used 'Honesty' interpretive repertoires to emphasise the 'Closeness' that is important to them in relationships.

Felicity blended notions of talking and fairness within her 'Honesty' interpretive repertoire,

"You're able to talk to them if something's bothering you and you feel like that, um, the person in your relationship is not, um, being fair to you and you feel like there's lying".

(Felicity p:4 l:172-6)

Similarly to others, Felicity drew on negative examples to increase the persuasion within her discourse. Her 'talking' script was used to persuade, by using the phrase "you're able", implying that the relationship creates an environment that promotes something positive, immediately contrasted with the negative example.

Matilda also used negative examples of lying to persuade about the importance of 'Honesty',

"If you constantly lie to someone in a relationship to impress them, then you're not in a relationship because you're trying to impress them and cos you should be equals".

(Matilda p:6 l:247-51)

Matilda implied that lying within a relationship would mean that it is not a relationship. "Should be equals" referenced the 'Social Exchange' discourse mentioned previously and blended notions of the 'Social Contract' with this 'Closeness' discourse. Her use of the word "should" implied the rules of the

contract, discussed previously. Similarly to 'Trust' and 'Be myself', it seemed that 'Honesty' was a defining feature of what a relationship should be for some participants.

James drew upon a 'Time' interpretive repertoire within his 'Closeness' discourse. He said of all his relationships,

"I spend a lot of time with them"

(James p:4 l:132-3)

This time spent was initially a defining feature of relationships for James. For some participants spending time was blended with 'Knowing' people that they were in a relationship with, which will be discussed in the 'Similarities' section. However, James later contradicted himself when he told me that,

"You could still have a relationship without spending time together".

(James p:7 l:238-9)

For James, although spending time together was important, there was something more than this, relating to a sense of both 'Knowing and Liking' the person. As James told me, a relationship is with somebody with whom he can say he is,

"Comfortable around them".

(James p:7 l:259-60)

Danny told me, within his 'Knowing' interpretive repertoire that in relationships,

"You have to definitely be really close to them".

(Danny p:3 l:71-2)

"Definitely" and "really", reified the discourse acting to make it 'real' and factual. Many elements of the 'Closeness' discourse appeared very important to participants within relationships.

4.4.3 Similarities

As part of the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse, participants spoke about the importance of 'Similarities' within relationships. Something important, mentioned

by Charlie, Felicity, Helga, Honey and Danny, was that of being similar to those people that you are in a relationship with.

Helga tried to explain why and how people might form a relationship together,

“People should like, match up with people who are like them”.

(Helga p:16 l:731-2)

Her use of “should” was instructional and rule based, reflecting how she organised her discourse for fact construction. Her use of “People” generalised the statement so that the rule could have wide application. However, when she tried to expand on this formula further she contradicted herself,

“You can be friends with somebody if you have something in common...but I also think there’s like a deeper side, like not just having something in common but maybe knowing each other for longer”.

(Helga p:9 l:408-9 & 412-5)

Helga acknowledged that similarities are helpful in her friendships and referenced knowing friends for longer, which Danny spoke about as part of a ‘Closeness’ discourse. However, there was also something more than this, a “deeper side”; a vague rhetorical expression which excused any further clarification. Her use of “like” and “maybe” reflected that she may have regretted her initial certainty about similarities, however, these words also reworked the significance of the beginning of her sentence, suggesting that having something in common is the most important part of forming relationships.

Charlie also mentioned,

“Common ground...having similar interests”.

(Charlie p:2 l:38 & 46)

However, like Helga, knowing the person for a length of time was also important,

“Now after a year and three quarters we know each other really well, so we get on”.

(Charlie p:6 l:209-11)

Charlie constructed a consequential argument through the use of the word, “so”, making his statement hard to refute. For Charlie, and perhaps also Helga, notions of similarities and knowing people well were blended. This blending could either infer that similarities have led to Charlie and Helga knowing their friends really well, or that they know them well because they are similar. This has the effect of ‘doubling’ the consequential argument.

Charlie’s logic construction of knowing someone for a length of time leading to knowing and getting on well contrasts directly with what he said about forming friendships,

“You get on really well, instantly”.

(Charlie p:5 l: 182-3)

In this instance he was talking about having similar interests with someone and therefore being able to get on well straight away, emphasised by use of the word, “really”. This is a contrasting discourse to that of building a friendship over a length of time, and the reason that he gives for this is “similar interests”. In this case for Charlie, sharing similar interests has helped him to form relationships, although getting on well with someone also relates to how long he has known them.

Felicity also tried to explain this connection between similar interests and getting on well with someone,

“You should agree; you should enjoy the same things....it gives you another thing to talk about”.

(Felicity p:9 l:399-401)

Felicity constructed an argument in order to persuade that enjoying the same things are important in forming relationships. This form of circular reasoning was often used by participants in order to construct their arguments, as this logic appears like the if-then consequential argument that has persuasive power. However, this form of logic is circular in nature and therefore nonsensical. She mentioned that having things to talk about is what supports the relationship, however, the reason for having things to talk about is the similarities, which in turn lead to the things to agree on and talk about, therefore

the logic moves in a circular motion and the logical argument cannot be identified.

Honey also agreed that,

“You just have everything to talk about”.

(Honey p:9 l:310-11)

The word “just” reified the discourse, making it ‘real’. Honey, like Felicity, used a ‘talking’ script to reinforce the ‘Similarities’ discourse. The assumption within the use of language was that having “everything to talk about” conveys a meaning about relationships that does not need further elaboration, like a short-hand.

Danny told me that,

“You can be different but I think there would definitely need to be something in common between you”.

(Danny p:2 l:44-6)

Danny acknowledged that difference is possible and similarities may not be the sole contributing factor within relationships and then immediately discredits what he has said by reworking his sentence with a “but”. The word “definitely” gave his commonality argument strength and made it harder to refute.

4.4.4 Not Being Alone

The ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ discourse drawn on by all participants contained lots of positive interpretive repertoires of what participants wanted to have in relationships, however, the ‘Not Being Alone’ discourse reflected a lack of something in relationships. In response to the interview question, “Why do you think that people have relationships?”, the majority of participants talked about ‘Not Being Alone’.

Felicity, Honey, Roberta and Sophie thought that the purpose of relationships is to ‘Not Be Alone’, and Amanda, Charlie, George and James told me that the purpose is to ‘Not Be Lonely’. Felicity told me,

“Um, I think the point is so you’re not alone all the time”.

(Felicity p:11 l:465-6)

This is in direct contrast to what many participants told me about the positive aspects of relationships such as to have someone that cares about you, someone to trust, someone to talk to, someone that makes you feel happy. For example, Felicity also told me that,

“You’re surrounded by people that you, that you love, you feel safe”.

(Felicity p:7 l:305-7)

All participants told me that it is important for us to have relationships in our lives, however, despite participants initially talking about positive aspects of relationships when asked to describe why people have relationships; not being alone or not feeling lonely was central to most participants’ reasoning about why we have relationships. It may be that participants felt that negative examples have more power to persuade as they create negative images which the listener would not like and therefore be more persuaded by their central argument, that it is important to have relationships.

George said,

“If I was lonely I'd be quite shy and that would, um, it wouldn't help me a lot in making friends, it would make me kind of get less friends. I have a lot of friends, it makes me more confident, and if I was lonely I'd be quite shy and that would, um, it wouldn't help me a lot in making friends, it would make me kind of get less friends”.

(George p:8 l:258-61)

This reflects Danny’s interpretive repertoire within the ‘Social Negotiation’ discourse, that the amount of friends that he has reflects his success in relationships. George used a circular argument in order to convey his message that without relationships he would be lonely. However, his argument was that he has relationships so as not to be lonely and he does not want to be lonely because then he would not have relationships, which is a circular logic that cannot identify an answer to the question of why relationships are important. Organising his discourse in this way implied that the concept of being lonely should be persuasive enough that George did not need to explain his logic further.

Sophie elaborated on 'Not Being Alone',

"Because, like, people don't like to be alone. Some people like to be alone, but, like, in the long run you want someone to be there with you."

(Sophie p:13 l:469-72)

She made the general statement about "people" and then changed this to, "some people", but then reworks the sentence once again with the use of "but", implying that this is how everyone feels. She used the rhetorical notion of "the long run" to imply that this is a consequential argument over a long period of time and "you want" applies to everyone and makes her statement appear factual.

Roberta saw the purpose of relationships as,

"So they know that they're not alone".

(Roberta p:7 l:257-8)

She then took this further,

"I think it's that someone's always there when you need them".

(Roberta p:8 l:294-5)

Similarly to the 'Social Contract' discourse, Roberta talked about getting something from the relationship, and how, by not being alone someone will be there if she needs them. She did not elaborate on what being there might mean, but this reflects some of the blending used in the 'Closeness' discourse. Roberta's use of "always" and "when" made her sound certain that she will need her relationships and that they will provide a usefulness for her.

Matilda did not talk about loneliness or being alone without relationships, however, she did talk about relationships providing a usefulness,

"Very important, cos if you don't then you can't get anywhere".

(Matilda p:15 l:723-4)

The phrase "get anywhere" implies that for Matilda, relationships provide a movement, possibly a movement towards gaining something, such as the positive elements of the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse. Similarly to other

participants, she drew on negative language, “if you don’t”. She was constructing a rhetorical example in order to persuade.

‘Interpersonal Aspects’ consisted of three discourses which implied gaining something positive from relationships; ‘Feelings’, ‘Closeness’ and ‘Similarities’. Whereas ‘Not Being Alone’ discourse had many negative implications, possibly implying that by being alone one could not get those positive aspects of relationships.

4.5 Relationship Diversity

‘Relationship Diversity’ was the third broad discourse that participants drew upon in their relationship talk and primarily answers the question of whom young people consider themselves to have a relationship with. This discourse consists of two smaller discourses; ‘Choice’ and ‘Relationship Hierarchy’. Interestingly, when asked during interview who they thought people generally have relationships with, participants primarily talked about ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ rather than naming specific people. Therefore this discourse was often only identified when prompts and probes were used during the interviews.

This research aimed to find out the meaning making that young people give to ‘relationships’, however, one of the primary findings was that they considered ‘relationships’ to be a diverse rather than a singular construction.

4.5.1 Choice

With the exception of George’s ‘Emotions’ interpretive repertoire, all of the above examples relate to friendship relationships, as this was the main type of relationship that participants drew upon when talking about relationships.

James’ initial definition of a relationship was,

“If your parents love you, that’s a relationship”.

(James p:1 l:10-11)

He was unique amongst participants in using the parental relationship as a reference for the definition of a relationship. However, when asked who he thinks people generally have relationships with James said,

“Their friends”.

(James p:1 l:33)

For James, although he recognised the word ‘relationship’ in both questions, he offered two very different responses. My hypothesis was that this related to choice. As James told me about his parents,

“Parents, like, are supposed to treat you”.

(James p:5 l:180-1)

This reflects the ‘obligation’ of the ‘Social Contract’ discourse; that parents are somehow different to friends because of what they are “supposed” to do.

Matilda also viewed friendships and family relationships as very different,

“There is, like, your family relationships but because they’re your family you don’t, you don’t have to feel...I wouldn’t say it’s a relationship with your family”.

(Matilda p:6 l:283-7)

She later identified herself as having,

“A strong relationship with my mum and dad”.

(Matilda p:7 l:325-6)

Although Matilda did not initially conceptualise her relationship with her family as a ‘relationship’, she did later refer to her relationship with her parents in this way, reflecting variance in her discourse, and therefore function. The phrase “they’re your family” is constructed to appear factual, therefore the function for Matilda appeared to be that “family” would be her preferred word rather than ‘relationship’, even though she did later use this word for her parents. By choosing a different word she conceptualised family relationships as different, and possibly stronger, due to the second quote.

Sophie also picked up on this difference between family relationships and friendships,

“It's kind of like a different bond because they like, they've been with you your whole life so it's kind of different”.

(Sophie p:4 l:126-8)

Sophie also appeared to reject the term, ‘relationships’ for her family, choosing to use the word “bond” instead. The attribution that she made for family relationships being different was that they have “been with you your whole life”. This reflected the attribution that Matilda made when she said,

“You just have a bond with them because they've been there”.

(Matilda p:7 l:302-3)

Matilda also chose the word, “bond” rather than relationship, reflecting something binding, possibly related to the ‘Social Contract’. Her notion of ‘Being there’ contrasted slightly with the ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ that participants talked about in their friendships, such as ‘Trust’, ‘Talking’ and ‘Knowing’. ‘Being there’ is a much more passive action and implies much less ‘Social Negotiation’ than some of the ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ discourse implied. It seemed that the parental and family relationships were much less effortful for participants.

This interpretive repertoire of ‘Choice’ was drawn upon by participants when they were talking about who they have relationships with. This involved active use of language. However, when talking about his parents, Charlie chose more passive language,

“You can't really choose them but you spend so much time around them that you just end up growing to like them”.

(Charlie p:9 l:324-6)

Charlie blended notions of ‘spending time’ and ‘liking’, he was clear that ‘Choice’ was an important element in identifying who he has relationships with. However, his use of “but” reworked the sentence to show that his parents were not included in this importance of ‘Choice’.

Charlie did not have the same views about teachers,

“Seems a bit harsh, but you can choose your friends and stuff, and teachers you can’t really choose”.

(Charlie p:9 l:302-4)

Some participants felt that they would describe themselves as having a relationship with their teachers; however, for Charlie, the fact that he cannot choose his teachers meant that he did not view that as a ‘relationship’. Although for his parental relationships, he had no choice, those relationships have certain ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ that can still qualify them as relationships. However, for teachers he did not use the same interpersonal discourse and therefore the lack of ‘Choice’ was a defining feature of that lack of relationship.

Choice was also mentioned by Felicity, in terms of being ‘forced’,

“You shouldn’t be forced to have a relationship”.

(Felicity p:11-12 l:496-7)

Rather than telling me that choice is important she used the negative associations of being “forced”, to emphasise her view that relationships should be chosen, and her use of “shouldn’t” constructs the factual persuasion of the statement. When I asked her if her relationship with her parents is different, she told me that,

“You’ve been brought up by them...It doesn’t feel like you’re forced”.

(Felicity p:12 l:519-21)

Similarly to Charlie, Felicity was making a distinction between ‘Choice’ and ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ of a relationship, in that although she has no choice it “doesn’t feel” that way, therefore it is justified, demonstrating the importance of ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ in a relationship.

Danny also used the rhetoric of being “forced” when talking about his friendships,

“You wouldn’t be forced ...you’d want to spend time with them”.

(Danny p:5 l:146-8)

In this statement, Danny gave himself agency through the word, “want” which is an active verb. Similarly to Felicity’s “shouldn’t”, Danny created power of

persuasion with the word, “wouldn’t”, therefore his statement constructs fact. This active phrasing suggests that Danny has autonomy in his friendship relationships.

Choice and autonomy, therefore, were important in participants’ discourse about who they wished to have relationships with. However, it would appear that ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ were more important or more powerful than ‘Choice’. What did seem clear was that participants did not like the idea of having all their relationships labelled as ‘relationships’, as they saw all the different types of relationships as quite separate.

4.5.2 Relationship Hierarchy

As well as young people being clear that there was not one single construction that can be called ‘relationship’, their discourse also constructed a ‘Relationship Hierarchy’. As seen through the ‘Choice’ discourse, relationships with parents were seen as different to friendships and the same rules about ‘Choice’ did not apply. By inference this might make parental and family relationships more important than friendships. As Lavender told me,

“Your family is kind of the, the strongest relationships”.

(Lavender p:6 l:248-9)

When George was describing family relationships, he told me that,

“They care each other, er, about each other, an extra amount like more than any love relationship”.

(George p:3 l:86-8)

George positioned family relationships as “more than any love relationship”. This reflected a hierarchy of relationships that some participants referred to in their discourse. When I asked George more about “love relationships” and his experience, he told me that,

“Most, er, most relationships I know are just friendships”.

(George p:2 l:58-9)

Typically within participants’ discourse, the word “just” was used to reify what preceded, thereby making the discourse more ‘real’. However, in this context it

seemed that George was positioning friendships as 'less than' love relationships. His earlier reference to "more than", would infer that there is a 'less than'. For George, it would seem that his hierarchy starts with friendship as 'less than', followed by love, with family being the most important relationship. When he tried to explain what a "love relationship" might be like he said,

"When you have more than just normal feelings that you'd have for some normal, for a normal person, like a friend, if you had deep feelings you'd have, like more feelings towards them."

(George p:2 l:49-52)

Again he used this "more" script, inferring that there is also a 'less'. He was trying to differentiate love relationships from friendships, therefore the "normal" refers to friendship. "Normal" creates a script of the everyday and the 'not out of the ordinary', therefore by inference this is how he is describing his friendships.

Helga also promoted love or romantic relationships to a position above her friendships,

"Like really relationships with women and men".

(Helga p:16 l:758-9)

After telling me about her friendship relationships she then went on to describe "relationships with women and men" as "really relationships", thus promoting and reifying such relationships to a status above the friendships that she had described. She also referred to such relationships as,

"A proper relationship".

(Helga p:17 l:800-1)

The word, "proper" reifies such relationships and promotes them in a similar way to how "normal" demoted the friendships that George described. This contrasts with Helga's description of what a relationship is. She initially went into a lot of detail elaborating her friendship relationships with 'Trust' and 'Having things in common' interpretive repertoires. To then go on to describe 'romantic' or 'love' relationships as "proper" reduced the significance of everything that she told me about her friendships.

Danny tried to rationalise his 'Relationship Hierarchy' by using a developmental script when he talked about getting older,

"You might become married or might have a girlfriend or something like that, whereas if you were a kid you'd just be friends, I think".

(Danny p:10 l:347-50)

In a similar way to how George used his 'Emotions' interpretive repertoire when talking about puberty and the biology of getting older, Danny tried to present a logic for why young people his age would not have romantic relationships. "If you were a kid you'd just be friends" gives a consequential argument that he also blends with his own thought, "I think". The use of "kid" reduced the significance of his own age range by using an informal term, and "just" further demoted the significance of "friends".

Danny further rationalised his argument when he told me,

"It's not really like appropriate for your age, you'd have to kind of... you'd be, in a way, taking away, like, your childhood".

(Danny p:10 l:356-8)

'Age appropriateness' is an adult directed script that he might have supposed I would agree with as an adult, and the negative example of "taking away, like, your childhood" further tried to persuade. The logical and consequential argument given by Danny and George for why young people their age do not have love relationships appeared to also demote and reduce their own descriptions of peer relationships being the primary relationship for them.

'Relationship Hierarchy' discourse often acted to dismiss what participants said about their friendship relationships. This discourse, along with 'Choice' discourse made up the broader discourse of 'Relationship Diversity' which many participants drew upon to describe different relationships and rework what they said about other relationships.

4.6 Summary

Rather than answering research questions in a linear process, the analysis of participants' discourse has led to a more complex and multi-layered answer to

the broader question; How do young people talk about relationships? However, each research question has been answered, with several different discourses.

What is the meaning and sense making that young people give to relationships?

Participants drew upon a 'Social Contract' discourse to give meaning to the term 'relationships'. This involved 'Social Exchange' which drew upon notions of 'Reciprocation', 'Society', 'Consequences', 'Responsibility', 'Attention' and 'Trust'. Within all of these interpretive repertoires there was a conceptualisation of some form of exchange of social goods. The 'Social Contract' discourse also included a sub-discourse of 'Social Negotiation', rather than a direct exchange these interpretive repertoires; 'Different sides of yourself', 'Knowing but not liking', 'Amount of friends', 'Judgement', 'Conclusions' and 'Appearance' involved more sophisticated negotiation and compromise. Finally the 'Work' interpretive repertoires; 'Working at Relationships', 'Tiring' and 'Inclusion' reflected the effortful and sometimes laboured work that was involved within the 'Social Contract'.

At times it appeared that participants felt that the 'Social Contract' discourse would be disapproved of and they tried to rework the significance of it, often instead drawing upon an 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse.

With whom do young people identify as having a relationship or connection?

Participants talked about friendship relationships as their primary reference for explaining relationships. They also rejected the idea of 'relationships' as one single construct, choosing instead to draw upon relationships with different types of people to convey that there are different types of relationships. Within these different types, 'Choice' was important and relationships were ordered within a 'Relationship Hierarchy' with 'love' and 'family' relationships as superior to friendship relationships, despite the latter being the primary reference point for relationships for participants.

Participants also spoke about 'Interpersonal Aspects' of relationships in terms of who they identified as having a relationship with. These could often supersede elements of 'Choice' within a relationship.

'Feelings' and 'Closeness' were an important element of participants' 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse. 'Feelings' and the person with whom participants spoke about having a relationship with were often blended with relationship itself, indicating how closely related they are. 'Feelings' discourse also related to the 'Social Contract' discourse, in that emotions could be used as an indicator or measurement of relationships. 'Feelings' discourse was also used to demonstrate the power of relationships. There were many blended scripts within the 'Closeness' discourse, constructing this as a dominant discourse with many interconnected elements.

'Similarities' discourse was drawn upon by participants within the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse when talking about who they had relationships with. Logical arguments were often circular in nature and other notions and scripts, such as 'Talking' and 'Knowing', were often blended with 'Similarities'. When contradictory evidence presented itself it was dismissed or reworked into the initial argument about 'Similarities'.

Do young people consider relationships important, if so what do they say is important about them?

All participants considered relationships important and drew upon an 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse to describe many important things within relationships. Though participants drew upon the 'Social Contract' discourse to describe their relationships, this cannot necessarily be said to be what is important to participants within relationships. It is likely that this more reflects the day to day functioning of relationships than the essence of the importance of relationships.

One particular element of 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse was drawn upon most frequently to describe the importance and purpose of relationships; that of 'Not Being Alone'. This was often described through negative rhetorical examples, rather than the more positive discourses within 'Interpersonal Aspects' in a relationship.

The following section will look in more depth at the implications of these findings; what they might mean more generally and how they might be relevant to the work of Educational Psychology. Within this it will also be important to consider any limitations that might exist within this research.

5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This final chapter will examine the findings discussed in the previous chapter and consider implications from this. Firstly, the chapter will look at the three broad discourses that were found during analysis: 'Social Contract', 'Interpersonal Aspects' and 'Relationship Diversity' and consider previous research that may support or contradict these findings. Consideration will also be given to the literature review considered at the start of this research.

The chapter will then discuss the cultural specificity of these findings and methodological issues which position the findings within specific boundaries. Finally, consideration of the implications and potential applications of this research will be discussed, whilst remaining sensitive to the context of the research.

5.2 Social Contract

5.2.1 Links to Literature Review

The 'Social Contract' discourse that was found during the analysis of this research is a novel one, as it was not reflected in any of the research previously explored in the literature review. One explanation might be that none of the papers scrutinised used the method of analysis of this study. However, Way's (1997) research with 'urban, adolescent boys', as discussed in the literature review, was similar in nature to some of the discourses drawn on by participants within this study, in terms of 'Social Exchange' and 'Social Negotiation'. For Way's (1997) participants, the meaning making that they created within their friendships included 'Trust' and 'Betrayal'. Whilst her findings naturally connect to the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse found in this study, those themes could also relate to the ideas of negotiation and exchange, and the contractual basis of relationships; in that one might give 'Trust' with the expectation of gaining something, as participants in this study talked about within the 'Reciprocation' interpretive repertoire. The rules of the social contract that participants said they felt obliged to follow suggested that trust should not be broken, or, as in Way's research; 'Betrayed'. Whilst the differing methods of analysis mean that these separate findings are not comparable, the current research has, nonetheless, a

potential similarity to this particular research, discussed within the literature review.

5.2.2 Social Capital

A theory, which has been written about a great deal, particularly within the realm of sociology is that of 'Social Capital Theory' (Field, 2003). This theory describes the ways in which people's social ties, or relationships, connect individuals within a society together. By being connected with others over a period of time people are able to achieve things that they could not achieve alone; by reciprocation and sharing of resources. The 'Social Contract' discourse spoken about by participants in this study reflects Social Capital Theory in a variety of ways, explored below.

The discourses of 'Social Exchange' and 'Social Negotiation' in order to gain from the relationship can be positioned within the Social Capital Theory idea of connection through a series of networks, in which people cooperate for mutual advantage (Field, 2003). The investment that Social Capital Theory requires for a network to build resources (Putman, 2000) could be seen to reflect the 'Work' that some participants felt they needed to put into their relationships.

Papapolydorou (2013) described friendships as a form of social capital because they create networks between individuals who possess membership of certain friendship groups. These groups provide members with collectively owned resources, such as the emotional connectedness facilitated through friendship, which many participants in the current research spoke about within 'Feelings' and 'Closeness' discourses.

Putman (2000) believes that social capital is on the decline and society should be looking back to a time when community fostered association and shared connection. He described modernity as a move towards individualism and a loss of social capital. Interestingly, this was not the case for participants in this study. Participants spoke about doing something and getting something back in return. They spoke about investing time and being obliged to help one another. They spoke a great deal about trustworthiness, one of the main tenants of social capital, according to Putman (2000). Amanda even gave a clear rationale for social exchange by drawing on the wider concept of 'Society'. It would seem that social capital, amongst the participants in this research, is not in decline.

The modern day rhetoric of ‘the good old days’ and community is often used to criticise young people and position them as symbols of individualism (Field, 2003). I would argue that participants in this research, rather than referencing individualism, very much embraced the ideas of social capital.

Although Putman (2000) has written about the espoused idealism of social capital, there is also a “dark side” (Field, 2003, p71) to this theory, which is reflected in the findings of this study. Social capital can promote inequality because different people have access to different types of networks and resources are not typically evenly distributed (Field, 2003). Being similar to friends and having things in common within relationships was important to participants in this study. The rationale for similarities within relationships was clear for many participants, with most citing similar characteristics and having something in common as the reason for the importance of similarities. Many did also talk about it being possible to be different from your friends, though their discourse often undermined this argument.

Through use of socio-graphs and semi-structured interviews Papapolydorou (2013) found that despite exposure to a diverse socio-economic context, young people’s close friendship networks could be characterised by sharing social capital with similar others. Sharing social capital with peers from different socio-economic backgrounds was less common. Social Capital Theory would suggest that by forming relationships with similar others, inequality is maintained and perpetuated because people are not seeking connections through other networks (Field, 2003). Therefore those who ‘have less’ will be connected to others who ‘have less’ and those who ‘have more’ will continue to ‘have more’ by being connected through their networks to others who ‘have more’. In this way participants’ ‘Similarities’ discourse could be seen to perpetuate these inequalities. This discourse will be discussed again in the following section.

5.3 Interpersonal Aspects

5.3.1 Feelings and Closeness

The ‘Interpersonal Aspects’ of relationships which participants talked about, reflects much of the literature discussed within the literature review. The qualitative literature particularly found that young people have described intimacy (Connolly et al., 1999; Feiring, 1996), affiliation (Connolly et al., 1999),

emotional aspects of relationships (Giordano et al., 2006), communication (Halpern-Meekin, 2012; Giordano et al., 2006; Shek, 2001b) and love (Shek, 2001b), as part of the meaning which they drew upon within relationships.

'Interpersonal Aspects' of relationships could be interpreted as the primary area in which participants drew meaning within their relationship talk, as it was the largest section of the findings, reflecting its richness. Relationships creating emotional feelings and closeness, in terms of trust, honesty, spending time with others in the relationship, knowing each other well, being able to talk, and being able to be yourself, were all part of the way that participants talked about relationships. 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourses also attributed agency to relationships, making them powerful, through 'Make me feel' interpretive repertoires.

However, the connection between these 'Interpersonal Aspects' and the way in which participants created meaning when talking about relationships was perhaps more complex than the previous literature has suggested. Many participants drew on scripts within the interpretive repertoires of their discourse. These scripts, within and of themselves, were not the central meaning which participants were trying to communicate; but rather they acted as tools for the meaning making process. Crucially, for the methodology used in this study, there is no variation within a script, therefore scripts did not directly indicate meaning. Rather scripts were used to construct the variation within interpretive repertoires, which formed the meaning. The lack of variation within scripts suggest that participants were not actively using them to persuade, rather they formed part of the wider active use of discourse within interpretive repertoires. This is a finding that would only be possible through the method of analysis used. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006), for example, might have identified these scripts as themes and meaning within themselves. DA as a method of analysis was not used in any of the studies found in the literature review. The implication of this is that, perhaps, if Potter and Wetherell's (1987) framework for DA were applied in some of those studies, the emotional and connectedness findings of previous research might have been interpreted differently.

For example, some participants in this study blended scripts of secrets, talking, listening and understanding within an interpretive repertoire of 'Trust'. The

function of such blending was often to build evidence for a discourse in order to persuade. Some scripts that were drawn upon within the interpretive repertoires of the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourses, such as secrets, were also implicated in the 'Social Negotiation' discourse, as they related to the contractual nature of 'Trust'. 'Trust', therefore had a dual use across different discourses, rather than being a singular theme for meaning making. Although 'Interpersonal Aspects' were central to participants' meaning making within their relationship talk, this discourse was more complex and multi-layered than some previous research might have suggested.

5.3.2 Similarities

One critique within the literature review was that duration of relationship could be a measure of 'quality' of relationship (Connolly & Johnson, 1996), without any reference to young people's view on whether they felt that this was true. Participants in this study did refer to duration of knowing the other person, for example Helga felt that knowing someone for longer was related to a "deeper side" in her relationships. However, the connection between duration of relationship and 'Closeness' was not quite so linear for all participants. Within the 'Similarities' discourse, Charlie talked about knowing someone for a long time, and he constructed his discourse so that this duration was causally implicated in the reason why they got on so well. However, he also talked about getting on well "instantly", which was related to having things in common. For many participants, getting on well with someone in a relationship was about how well and how long they had known the other person. However, there were many other scripts and interpretive repertoires that were blended with this, such as what they could get from the relationship, how the relationship enabled them to not be alone, and how similar that person is to them. Therefore, duration of relationship as a single measure of 'quality' of relationship (Connolly & Johnson, 1996) is reductionist, as critiqued in the literature review.

As part of the 'Similarities' element of 'Interpersonal Aspects', participants drew on rhetorical ideas such as 'Common ground'. Within this there was an implied consequential argument between having things in common, being able to talk with the other person and spending time with them. Again, affiliative and communicative scripts were drawn on in order to construct this argument and

enable it to appear persuasive because it was constructed to appear consequential.

Although not a finding in the literature review, there are psychological theories which focus on similarities in friendships. It is suggested, for instance, that friendship groups tend to be homogenous, and can become more similar over time (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011). During early adolescence young people tend to have more same sex friends, and friendships tend to be with others of a similar ethnicity (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011). Young people progress through different types of relationship with age; typically from paired interactions to peer groups and friendships and then romantic relationships in later adolescence (Kindermann et al., 2010), and new relationships are often connected to prior relationships.

The main theories hypothesising as to why similarities in friendships are common draw on the role of selection, i.e. people *choose* people who are similar to themselves to be in a relationship with, or people form relationships with others who they have the most contact with, who are likely to be similar to them because they share a social context (Kindermann et al., 2010). In this way similarity within friendships can be seen as a cause and effect phenomenon (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011). The selection and socialisation theories of forming friendships (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011) could very well apply to participants in this study, as most reported that they would perceive their friends as similar to them and that similarities are an active choice and important within relationships.

This said, participants in this study very much talked about similarities due to selection rather than socialisation, such as the consequential discourses discussed above. Young people used persuasive and rhetorical devices to communicate the importance of this similarity, often reworking or undermining conflicting evidence. 'Interpersonal Aspects' within relationships such as spending time and being able to talk were used actively in participants' discourse to construct the importance of similarities and create a rationale for them. Their discourse around similarity within friendships was therefore constructed as being due to selection, and did not tend to give regard to any factors associated with socialisation or sharing a similar context, although socialisation was an attribution within family relationships.

Socialisation factors may relate to the exchange of social capital within one's social context, as discussed above. Participants often re-worked the significance of their 'Social Contract' discourse in a similar manner to how they constructed causal implications for 'Similarities' in friendships. This could suggest that they did not want to appear to be making these attributions, perhaps suggesting that these were less 'socially acceptable' discourses.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) would suggest that similarities within friendships is part of the 'in group favouritism' process whereby we prefer to be with similar others (Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010). A social identity approach suggests that our identity is relational in nature (Reicher et al., 2010) and that we define ourselves in terms of similarities and differences to others. Therefore, the importance of similarities within relationships which participants spoke about could reflect this social identity approach.

We define ourselves in terms of group membership and we attach value and emotional significance to relationships (Reicher et al., 2010). As with Social Capital Theory, a social identity approach links the individual and society and provides the basis for action within our social world (Reicher et al., 2010). Much has been written about social identity processes and how they may be implicated in social issues such as racial prejudice and stereotyping (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Participants' use of a 'selection' attribution for similarities within friendships, reflects these 'in group' processes and, as suggested in the social capital discussion, could imply that there are some negative implications within the similarities discourse.

5.3.3 Not Being Alone

'Feelings', 'Closeness, and 'Similarities' discourses reflect positive attributes which participants valued as part of 'Interpersonal Aspects' within relationships. However, when directly asked why relationships might be important, the majority of participants drew upon a 'Not being alone' discourse. This was an interesting finding because the structure of the question implied that the expectation was of a positive answer, i.e. what are the things that you *get* from a relationship, and participants had previously suggested both interpersonal qualities and elements of the social contract in terms of what might be important within a relationship. Therefore, for participants to draw on a negative discourse

and talk about situations in which they do not have relationships was somewhat counter-intuitive.

The 'Not Being Alone' discourse is reflective of the circular reasoning that some participants used; in that to say that the important element of a relationship is to not be alone, is to say that the important part of being in a relationship is to be in a relationship. I hypothesised throughout the analysis that the use of negative examples and circular reasoning may have been perceived as giving persuasive power, this was a fairly consistent finding across participants, implying that one way that these young people might create meaning within their relationships is to think about the absence of relationships. There is an element of this which relates to the 'Social Contract' discourse; in that being alone reflects a lack of social capital. Indeed, Danny suggested that being alone reflected failure or lack of success.

One theory that could explain the importance of 'Not Being Alone' is the theory of Attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). This theory recognises intimate and long-lasting relationships as a primary motivational force within everyone's life. Individuals form internal working models of themselves and those that they are close to based on past experience with attachment figures such as parents or carers. Part of these internal working models contain aspects of self-image, and expectations for behaviour when interacting with others. Attachment Theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) would suggest that through our everyday interactions with others within our social world we apply this internal working model and form relationships.

Another theory that relates to the importance of 'Not Being Alone' is the Need to Belong Theory, which posits that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The theory positions this need as a 'drive' to form and maintain a minimum quantity of lasting and positive relationships. Social bonds form in every society and even in adverse circumstances (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Many of our strongest emotions are linked to a sense of 'belongingness' and a lack of 'belongingness' has been linked to aversive consequences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Both these theories; Attachment and Need to Belong, discuss the importance of relationships and their prevalence throughout the human experience. They both

recognise the need which participants spoke about, to 'Not Be Alone', however, neither can fully explain the use of negative discourse which participants used to describe these feelings of needing to be with someone. The particular method of analysis used in this study has revealed a specific linguistic tool which young people used to convey this avoidance of loneliness or relational purpose of not being alone.

Positive interpersonal aspects within relationships described by participants very much contrasted with the discourse of 'Not Being Alone'. Whilst theories such as Attachment and Need to Belong can explain this importance of not being alone, what was interesting was the negative construction of the discourse, eliminating much of the positive aspects that had come previously. It may be that participants actively drew on negative examples in order to persuade, or this may reflect some wider issues with answering questions drawing on positive examples. Implications for this will be discussed within the 'Empowerment' section.

5.4 Relationship Diversity

5.4.1 Choice

'Choice' was an important element of who young people perceived themselves as having a relationship with. George used the 'Choice' discourse to justify why he would not consider himself as having a relationship with his teachers; because he cannot choose them. However, this discourse was complicated when considering family relationships. Although 'Choice' was important and participants recognised that they could not choose their family, this issue was reworked by many participants who perceived family relationships as different to other types of relationships.

During adolescence young people are developing their sense of autonomy and have more opportunities to make choices about the relationships in their lives (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, it follows that choice would be important to participants in this study when thinking about their relationships. Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) has explored, across many different settings, the ways in which choice and autonomy is a driving force for human action. This theory also states that relatedness is an important motivating factor. Although this is a theory of motivation rather than interpersonal relationships

there may be some relevance of this theory to what participants said about family not being included within their 'Choice' discourse. The relatedness needs that are met through family interactions may overcome participants' desire for choice within their relationships. Indeed 'Interpersonal Aspects' did tend to supersede 'Choice' discourse in participants' relationship talk.

Research has shown that supportive relationships can promote young people's sense of autonomy (Rabaglietti & Ciairano, 2008). Therefore, although participants implied a causal relationship whereby choice supported the forming of relationships, the picture may be more complex and bidirectional, as with parts of the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse.

One interesting finding was that the student-teacher relationship was not dominant within participants' discourse, and indeed George actively talked about how he would not view this as a relationship. Much has been written about the importance of the student-teacher relationship (e.g. Ozer et al., 2008), though this was not found within this study. Student-teacher relationships have been linked to academic success (Allen, Gregory, Mikami, Lun, Hamre & Pianta, 2013) and student wellbeing (Suldo et al., 2009), therefore, this relationship is of particular interest to the work of EPs.

However, the importance of the student-teacher relationship was not discussed by participants in this study. It may be that associations with the student-teacher relationship such as academic success or motivation in school were not important for the participants in this study. Or, possibly participants did not view issues such as academic success as relevant to relationships. This later interpretation is perhaps more likely as interview questions focused around general meaning making within relationships.

5.4.2 Relationship Hierarchy

The difference within the 'Choice' discourse between family relationships and other relationships may reflect the more general finding that participants did not view relationships as one single construct within their discourse. All participants talked about having different types of relationships. They made differing attributions and causal links based on the different type of relationship that they were talking about at the time. For the majority of participants, friendship was the relationship that they referenced the most and drew on within their

discourse. This can be viewed within a developmental framework. The age of participants was actively chosen to reduce the possibility that the term 'relationships' would be strongly associated with sexual relationships as may be more common with older adolescents (Kindermann et al., 2010). Age 12 is considered a critical stage in friendship development as the need for interpersonal intimacy emerges during this 'pre-adolescence' stage (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011).

It was apparent that participants were aware of this developmental framework as they drew on it within their discourse. Some referenced a 'developmental script' as the rationale for why they did not have romantic relationships. It was this same script that participants drew on to reduce the significance of their friendships, such as by saying, "just friends". Participants were saying that the relationships that they drew the most meaning from were their friendships, however, they used their discourse to communicate that their friendships were the least important type of relationship; at the bottom of their 'Relationship Hierarchy'.

Critical Discourse Analysis aims to uncover power imbalance (Billig, 2008) and this is a clear example of young people having their power reduced through discourse. Developmental theories are based on information from the research world and can therefore be positioned as 'adult-led'. Participants appeared to be reducing the significance of relationships that were important and meaningful to them due to this adult-led discourse.

Peer interactions are important for social development and mental wellbeing in adolescence (Allen & Leob, 2015), however, these interactions are also associated with adolescent misbehaviour such as fighting and binge drinking (Allen & Leob, 2015). This conflict around adolescent peer relationships has come to be known as 'The Peer Dilemma' (Allen & Leob, 2015); wanting to allow adolescents appropriate development whilst also aiming to impose control on them as a group. The 'Problematic Peer Culture' (Hine, 1999) is a discourse that is prevalent within the British media and therefore, as a 'social issue', requires 'social control'. The developmental script which participants drew upon in their discourse can be viewed as a method of social control being imposed upon young people. This is relevant to the work of EPs who may often wish to hear the voice of the young person but should be mindful that these methods of

control have an impact within the everyday discourses of young people and adults alike.

5.5 Cultural Specificity

It is important to remember that this research took place in one school and in one point in time, and the methodology used would not claim to have any power of generalisability. Amanda used a 'Consequences' interpretive repertoire within the 'Social Exchange' discourse. She drew on examples of exams and the importance of having parental support at this time. Other participants talked about going away to university or leaving home when they got older.

Participants tended to draw on these rhetorical examples with an assumption within their talk that such events would happen for them. The conviction with which participants spoke about their futures involving success in exams, university and leaving home could be seen to be representative of the participant sample. It cannot be assumed that a different sample of young people would draw on those same rhetorical examples.

The cultural specificity of this study must be held in mind when interpreting the findings. As has been discussed, the 'Social Contract' discourse reflects elements of Social Capital Theory (Putman, 2000). This theory is interconnected with ideas from economics of a capitalist economy (Halpern, 2005). Notions of a functioning 'market' in which flow of information connects buyers and sellers, and the ability to enforce contracts or other negotiated arrangements is the basis of much of the logistics of Social Capital Theory (Halpern, 2000).

Such capitalist economies are culturally specific and are not followed consistently across the world. Therefore, it is possible that the 'Social Contract' discourse is culturally specific. The UK follows a capitalist, free market economy and some of these ideas were reflected within participants' discourse. It is also of note that the sample of participants attended a school within a reasonably wealthy part of the country, therefore one in which capitalist ideals may be more likely to be espoused. However, it should be noted that no socioeconomic information was collected from participants. Nonetheless it is possible that economic ideas which are prevalent within this country influenced participants' discourse.

The 'Choice' discourse, which young people drew upon when talking about who they have relationships with, could be positioned within the often referenced, independence versus interdependence seeking dichotomy between North American and Western European cultures and 'non-Western' cultures (Raef, 2004). Jiang, Yau, Bonner and Chiang (2011) examined adolescents' perceptions of parental relationships within the framework of Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and found cultural differences between perceived autonomy support from parents within their relationships. However, Raef (2004) has argued that this autonomy seeking versus interdependence discourse reduces the importance of connectedness and interdependence seeking that is evident amongst 'Western' adolescents. 'Interpersonal Aspects' of relationships were certainly important to participants within this study.

Young people within this study talked primarily about friendships as their reference for relationships. However, they also drew upon a 'Relationship Hierarchy' discourse which placed friendships below other relationships such as parental and other family relationships. 'Adolescence' itself is a culturally bound concept with different definitions and constructions across the world (Bagwell & Schmitt, 2011). In other cultures young people in their teenage years engage and interact much more with adults (Allen & Loeb, 2015), and the peer context is very different. Young people in this study often spoke about their relationships with their parents in quite a passive manner, which might not have been the case in cultures in which young people interact more actively with adults. Therefore, friendships and the 'Relationship Hierarchy' may be talked about very differently within different cultural contexts.

Cultural differences were found within the literature review of this study. For example Chinese adolescents' views on the concept of a 'Happy Family' were found to be closely related to traditional cultural values (Shek, 2001b).

Questions within the interviews did not focus around cultural values and such issues did not arise during analysis within a 'culture' discourse, although, as discussed, findings such as 'Social Contract', 'Relationship Hierarchy', 'Choice', and 'Consequences' can be viewed within a 'culture-specific' framework.

5.6 Methodological Issues

One of the critiques within the literature review was that research findings can be a product of the methodology used. This critique has to be examined for the current research. Discourses are inherently about the distribution of social goods (Gee, 2004) and elements of the 'Social Contract' discourse that was found reflect this, particularly in terms of exchange and negotiation. DA is a method of analysis that searches for variation and diversity (Burman, 1991) and it is possible that the 'Relationship Diversity' discourse may, in part, reflect this. The methodology of this study has guided one particular route towards meaning and it would be interesting to apply other forms of qualitative analysis to this same research purpose.

The methodology used within this research, DA, is one which aims to critique power relationships (Billig, 2008). Analysis of participants' discourse has uncovered a dominant developmental script, which, it has been suggested, has been used to reduce and undermine young people's discourse around the importance of their friendships, and possibly also control them within a 'Peer Dilemma' context (Allen & Loeb, 2015).

DA is a methodology often applied with more powerful groups in order to critique these power dynamics, such as Potter and Wetherell (1992); 'Mapping the Language of Racism'. The young people that participated in this study could not be viewed as 'powerful' in the traditional sense of DA research. They have been positioned within this research as part of a group whose voice and views are absent from previous research, and whose voice and views should be heard in the context of the work of EPs (Gersch, 2013). As part of the power critique within the analysis and discussion it should be recognised that more 'powerful' voices have not been directly heard; only implied and inferred.

The cultural context within which participants are situated i.e. predominantly white and middle class and in full time education, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) could potentially position participants within a powerful context. However, analysis has not taken this position and participants did not consent to have their discourse critiqued in this way, therefore that would be beyond the capabilities of this study. If the power critique were to be taken further a natural next step might be to examine the

discourse of adults; parents and teachers, as to their views on young people's views about relationships.

The methodology of semi-structured interviews with less 'powerful' participants, i.e. children, might suggest that some demand characteristics were present in the interview situation. Participants may have felt the need to tell me, as the adult, what they thought I wanted to hear (Moston, 1990). The purpose of this research was shared with participants before the interviews, therefore they were fully informed as to what I was interested in hearing about. Analysis included examination of my responses to participants' responses and quality control measures ensured sensitivity to their content and identification of times in the interview in which they seemed unsure about their responses. Reflexivity during analysis was at the centre of this methodology (Appendix A & O) and was often what enabled interpretive repertoires and discourses to be found, particularly with regards to the 'Social Contract' discourse and the trend of participants to rework what they had said to give a more 'socially acceptable' account. Therefore, whilst this methodological issue should be recognised, I would not view it as a limitation.

The basis of the methodology used within this study was that meaning was created through language, and action was created through variance within language. However, participants were twelve and thirteen years old and language development continues beyond this age throughout adolescence (Nippold, 2007). The use of sophisticated language concepts and metalinguistic competence is still in development in early adolescence (Nippold, 2007). Therefore, the meaning which participants created with their language, and the subsequent analysis of that language should recognise that participants were not at an adult stage in their language development.

The critique within the analysis of this research, of participants using negative examples to persuade in their discourse, such as within the 'Not Being Alone' discourse, may reflect participants' stage of language development. It has also been argued that the use of circular reasoning reflects active persuasion within discourse, although this too could reflect participants' developmental stage of language. However, it is still significant that participants used their discourse in this way, rather than using alternative linguistic tools, even if these were not fully developed.

As has been previously discussed, participants drew upon 'scripts' within their interpretive repertoires, particularly within the 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse. Many of these scripts reflected the findings from the qualitative papers examined within the literature review. The majority of studies within the literature review that had an element of qualitative research used thematic analysis, or alluded to using thematic analysis. Whilst this is a valuable form of analysis, the use of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) DA framework has been a unique contribution to the research area of young people's views about relationships. The methodology has also allowed previous findings to be viewed in a different way; i.e. that young people may draw on scripts, such as 'secrets' to fulfil other actions within their discourse. The specific form of DA used within this research has focused on the search for variance within discourse. Without this focus, the 'Social Contract' discourse would not have been found.

Whilst the specific form of DA used in this study may have led to unique findings, it is also possible that the search for variance left other forms of discourse undiscovered. It is noteworthy that all the young people who talked about romantic relationships drew upon a heteronormative discourse. A 'Queer' approach to DA in which sexuality is central to meaning making and questioning within interviews (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013), may have brought the heteronormative discourse much closer to the surface, allowing for it to be critiqued. A feminist approach to DA, which would propose that the validity of experience should be prioritised over the suggested "male-dominated versions of objectivity" (Silverman, 2001, p.220) may have uncovered gendered elements of the relationship discourse which are missing from the findings here.

5.7 Implications

When it comes to discussing implications from this research, consideration must be given to the social constructionist position which the research is situated within. The aim of the methodology has been to critique (Billig, 2008) and to deconstruct in order to make space for alternative constructions, rather than recommended alternatives (Willig 1999). Discourse analysts are often cautious about recommendation, due to the dangers of rhetoric within critique and ideology. There is a history of discourse being used by powerful elites or

institutions in order to oppress and maintain power imbalance (Willig, 1999). Therefore, I will be cautious when considering implications of this research.

Potter and Wetherell (1992) advise that the implications of DA are to critique and take local action around specific issues. DA is critical of reification, therefore it would not be ontologically coherent to reify any one broad approach (Willig, 1999). DA can be used as a form of empowerment and a guide to reform (Willig, 1999). It will be my aim to remain sensitive to the purpose of this research when considering implications from the findings.

5.7.1 Critique

The discussion has already included some critique of participants' use of a 'developmental script' which acted to reduce the significance of those relationships (friendships) which participants felt were important in their lives. I have suggested that a 'developmental discourse' is adult-led and adult-imposed; however, the demotion of friendships was reflected in the wider 'Relationship Hierarchy' discourse. The discourse of some relationships being more "proper" than others, reflects a structural approach to relationship systems. Within the world of systemic theory and practice, which is concerned with relationships, narrative and interpersonal approaches are now much more dominant, from a social constructionist perspective (Hedges, 2005). Systemic practitioners have critiqued their own approaches to adapt to a much less structured approach. Perhaps there are some parallels to be drawn for how we talk about relationships with young people in terms of taking a less structured approach.

The discussion has also critiqued the idea of a 'Peer Dilemma' (Allen & Leob, 2015), a discourse that has been used to impose control upon young people. The importance of 'Interpersonal Aspects' within relationships can clearly be used to critique this idea, as young people within this study talked about the centrality of emotional feelings and closeness within their relationships. Putman's (2000) critique of the loss of social capital within modern society can also be clearly critiqued by the 'Social Contract' findings of this research, as can the 'Western independence seeking' narrative (Raef, 2004).

The discussion has alluded to potential negative connotations associated with a 'Similarities' discourse. From a social capital perspective (Field, 2003) a

similarities discourse can potentially maintain power imbalance; and from a social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1979), a similarities discourse can actively promote inequality and conflict. As advised by Willig (1999) the scope of this research is to reveal this, rather than to impose an alternative.

The final critique from the findings is of the assumptions of myself as the researcher. My starting position was that relationships are a singular construct central to the lives of young people and therefore relevant to the work of EPs. Participants very much told me that 'Relationships' are a multifaceted construct and should be defined, at least partly, by who they are with, rather than what they are. There is much writing within the relationship literature about relationships as a protective factor for young people in schools and something that can promote good behaviour and academic success. My critique from this research would be to highlight the importance of asking young people who they consider themselves to have a relationship with. If they do not consider themselves to have a relationship with their teacher, as many participants told me, but rather, consider friendships important; then I would suggest that as professionals working with young people, we consider the relationships that are important to them in order to promote positive outcomes.

5.7.2 Empowerment

As friendships were the primary type of relationship which participants drew upon within their relationship discourse, an implication of this would be to utilise those relationships within interventions for young people. Relationships are a significant factor in what makes interventions effective (Assay & Lambert, 1999), therefore a natural implication of this research is friendship and peer based intervention, such as Circle of Friends, or interventions in which relationships are central, such as Video Interactive Guidance.

A meta-analysis of peer mediated interventions found that for social skills, 'disruptive behaviour' and academic engagement, such interventions are able to demonstrate effectiveness (Dart, Collins, Klingbeil & McKinley, 2014). Additionally, peer mentoring interventions have not only demonstrated effectiveness for the mentee but can also increase self-efficacy amongst mentors (Brewer & Carroll, 2010).

EPs work increasingly to deliver intervention with young people (MacKay, 2008) and listen to young people's views (Gersch, 2013). The young people in this study said that their relationships with their peers are of central importance to them and there is an evidence base for peer based interventions. We know that the relationship is key to intervention effectiveness (Assay & Lambert, 1999), therefore an implication of this research is to talk with young people and ask them who their relationships are with, and in what ways interventions work best for them, in the context of those relationships. It may therefore be more appropriate, for example, that a youth worker whom the young person has a strong relationship with to deliver an intervention rather than the EP. Though the EP may still need to take a supervisory role.

The use of negative examples within the 'Not Being Alone' discourse has implications for strength focused approaches. It was hypothesised that the reason that young people used negative examples, was that they felt these had more persuasive power. It may be that young people are not used to discourses which draw on the positive in order to persuade. An implication for Educational Psychology is the use of solution oriented, narrative and personal construct based approaches when working with young people in order to expose them to these alternative discourses. Solution focused approaches have demonstrated an effectiveness within interventions for young people, particularly as early intervention and when issues are not severe (Bond, Woods, Humphrey & Green, 2013). And narrative approaches are frequently used to support young people to find coherence within their family relationships (Saltzman, Pynoos, Lester, Layne and Beardslee, 2013).

The purpose of this research was exploratory and did not aim to be emancipatory. Exploratory research is often a 'starting point' within the research paradigm (Robson, 2011). A natural progression from this research might be further research with emancipatory aims, such as action research (Lewin, 1946). Hearing young people's views was of central importance and the epistemological position has been that knowledge can be derived from the language used by participants. However, this research has focused on my analysis of participants' discourse and the process has been directed by myself as the researcher. For this research to truly address issues of empowerment, young people would need to be much more involved in the research process as

a whole. For example, young people could decide what the aims and the methodology of the research should be and conduct interviews amongst themselves.

5.7.3 Reform

This research began with a brief critique of sex and relationship education (SRE) in schools. The guidance for SRE policy within schools (DfEE, 2000) states that young people and families should be consulted in the creation of SRE policies. A review of SRE policy is beyond the scope of this research, however, previous research has suggested that SRE policy is often overly 'risk focused' (Moore, 2012) and neglects many of the relational aspects at secondary school level teaching, and that many young people feel that it is not taught in a way that is relevant to their lives (DCSF, 2008).

It has been found that the young person's voice is missing from much of relationship research, therefore it follows that young people's views may not have informed government policies at a national level, even if they are encouraged to do so at an individual school level. This research has gained a complex and in depth picture of young people's views about relationships, and an implication of this would be to encourage schools to do the same at a local level.

The literature review found a developmental progression in young people's views about relationships. Due to the participants being from one particular age group it has not been possible to explore this in the current research. It would be interesting to repeat this research with different age groups to gain a wider picture of young people's views about relationships throughout development. The possible link with the 'Social Contract' discourse and the experience of capitalism may change as young people grow older and closer to the world of employment. 'Interpersonal Aspects' and 'Relationship Diversity' might also be affected by young people's developing breadth of relationships as they grow older.

One area of relationships which this research has not uncovered is that of online relationships, such as through the medium of social media. Danny's interpretive repertoire about the 'Amount of friends' that he has reflecting his relationship success, within the 'Social Negotiation' discourse, could be

perceived as having implications for his online activity. This is a relatively new area of research and one that also relates to SRE teaching; though currently this is predominantly being approached from a 'safety' perspective (OFSTED, 2010), rather than considering the potential positive outcomes that may be related to online relationships, such as friendship development skills (Sheer, 2011).

5.8 Conclusions

Much has been written about the importance of relationships within the lives of young people. However, there is a paucity of research into young people's views on this perspective. This research has aimed to explore young people's views about relationships through a methodology of discourse analysis.

Participants within this study did feel that relationships are important, even attributing power to relationships within 'Make me feel' interpretive repertoires and relating lack of relationships to 'failure'. However, participants rejected the idea of one single construct called 'relationship' and instead talked about complex, multifaceted 'relationships'. This has implications for the teaching of SRE in schools, as discussed in the introduction to this research.

Three broad discourses were found within participants' relationship talk. The 'Social Contract' discourse included 'Social Exchange', 'Social Negotiation' and 'Work'. Within these participants spoke about getting something out of relationships and contractual rules that they were obliged to follow. This finding does not appear to have been found previously within research asking young people about their views of relationships, although it can be positioned within a social capital context (Putman, 2000). This discourse can be used to challenge a 'cultural' discourse of 'individualism' and a 'modernity' discourse of young people as disconnected from their society.

The 'Interpersonal Aspects' discourse appeared to reflect previous research into young people's views about relationships, particularly within 'Feelings' and 'Closeness' discourses. However, the methodology used allowed for a more complex and multifaceted interpretation of these findings. Participants used scripts such as secrets and understanding in order to construct meaning within these discourses, rather than the scripts acting as meaning within and of themselves. The frequency of scripts used within the 'Interpersonal Aspects'

indicated the active use of discourse and suggested that this is a rich and multi-layered area of young people's relationship talk.

The 'Similarities' discourse has been discussed in terms of young people's attribution of similarities to 'selection', rather than socialisation and different theories have been discussed in terms of the potential negative consequences of this discourse through a social capital and social identity perspective. Participants consistently talked about the benefits of relationships as 'Not Being Alone'. This has been discussed through a Need to Belong (Baumeister & Leary 1995) and Attachment perspective (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The specifics of the negative use of discourse have been discussed in terms of implications for solution focused and narrative based work with young people.

The 'Relationship Diversity' discourse has been discussed in terms of the implications of a 'Relationship Hierarchy' and how this may position young people and their relationships as 'less powerful'. Young people echoed an adult-led developmental discourse which placed friendships at the bottom of their 'Relationship Hierarchy', whilst simultaneously telling me that friendships were an important relationship from which they drew much meaning. It has been suggested that this relates to social control within a 'Peer Dilemma' context (Allen & Leob, 2015). Suggestions have been made for friendship and peer based interventions. The importance of choice has also been discussed, through a cultural lens and also in relation to autonomy within the context of Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This research has contributed, in a specific time and place, to the body of knowledge about young people's views of the meaning which they draw within their relationship talk. Some of the findings from this study are unique, as has been the methodological approach to the research purpose. By attending to the active use of discourse I hope that I have made space for alternative constructions of the discourse of the importance of relationships in the lives of young people. I have advocated for the importance of listening to young people's voices around relationships and have suggested ways in which it is relevant to the work of Educational Psychologists; through critique, empowerment and reform.

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Appendix A: Reflective Diary

Rather than include all of my reflections from the two years of this research process, I have selected key moments within the research journey which may help the reader to further understand the analysis procedure and the wider context of the research from my perspective.

It should be noted that whilst excerpts from my *reflective* diary are presented, these also contain elements of *reflexivity*. Reflection has been the process through which I have asked questions about the content of the research, and reflexivity has been the process through which I have asked questions of myself in terms of how my own attitudes, beliefs and values have impacted on the research. For further researcher reflexivity, the reader may wish to reference Appendix O.

November 2014

At this stage I was feeling a pressure from my service for my research to be focused on behaviour and exclusions. I did not feel that this was appropriate because the SEND area of need in the Code of Practice (DoH & DfE, 2014) had changed to 'social, emotional and mental health' with no reference to 'behaviour'. One of the core priorities of the service is 'To engage all children and young people so that they achieve socially and emotionally', therefore I felt that my research ideas could fit well within this. I was also aware that there is a danger that the word 'behaviour' can detract from the social and emotional.

By focusing on relationships within a social and emotional context I felt that I could maintain a social constructionist position, which fits well with my own world view. I think this would have been harder to do if my research area was around observable behaviour. However, I had some concerns about my own ability to maintain a social constructionist position throughout the research process. Whilst reading research and policy around SRE I found myself having quite certain, positivist views, therefore I became conscious that I would need to be aware of my own views throughout the research journey. I used my reflective diary throughout the process to reflect on my views and attitudes and notice in what ways this might have impacted on the research.

April 2015

Before beginning my interviews, I had to finalise my interview schedule with my research supervisor. It was important that the interview questions reflected the research questions and enabled them to be fully explored within the interviews. At this stage I was wondering about my third research question: Do young people consider relationships important, if so what do they say is important about them? My research proposal and literature review both state that this research is as theory-neutral as possible when it comes to the construct of relationships. My social constructionist position also aimed to allow participants to construct their own meaning within the interview situation. Although I have acknowledged that the research positions relationships within the social, emotional and mental health umbrella. However, the word 'important' conveys strong meaning and carries significance with it.

One of my interview questions directly asked, 'Do you think it is important for us to have relationships in our lives?' I was concerned that the word 'important' made too strong an assumption that would not allow participants to disagree with the notion. However, following on from my reading around the area and literature review I believed that the word, 'important' was justified. I ensured during interviews that my approach to relationship importance remained open and curious within the interviews, allowing for alternative constructions if participants wanted to disagree. One participant did challenge the idea, which I took as evidence that I had been successful in my openness.

May 2015

After the first few interviews I realised that I needed to really attend to the role that I was playing within the interview situation. I am used to talking with young people, however, much of this work involves challenging or reconstructing which was not my role as an interviewer. I noticed myself hypothesising and drawing on psychological theories internally during the interviews. I needed to consciously hold in mind my position as a researcher rather than an EP, I revisited my aims after each interview to help me with this.

I also noticed myself at times, going away from my prompts and probes. As part of DA, it is acceptable for the interview to become like a conversation, however, I needed to remind myself of the interview schedule after each interview.

Sometimes it felt natural for me to change the order of the questions, which was acceptable within the framework of my methodology and I ensured that I did ask every question. At times this meant I had to refer down to the schedule sheet which would have broken the illusion of conversation and reminded participants that this was a research interview, however, I think that this was necessary for the integrity of the research.

I noticed that some participants referenced their relationship with me in response to questions, which I had not anticipated. This was really interesting to reflect on in terms of what choices young people were making in their discourse, if they felt that a relationship existed between myself and them. Although my aim was to hear these young peoples' voices I had to remember my role as an adult in the room which created a power imbalance. I felt that it was likely that they wanted to present themselves in a positive manner, like they might do with a teacher.

I also noticed that some participants used phrases such as 'What's the word' or 'That's not the right word'. I wondered if my attention to language was being communicated through my interview style and cuing participants in to attend more to the language that they used. I had to be aware that I might be doing this and avoid doing so as it was not a helpful influence for the interviews and detracted from the aims and research questions.

July 2015

When I was confronted with the amount of data that I had collected after the interviews were complete and the analysis task ahead, I was somewhat daunted by the challenge. I was very relieved that I had allowed myself a whole month for my initial analysis, and several months after this for re-reading and credibility checks.

Throughout analysis I found myself agreeing with a lot of what different participants said. I had to ensure through my quality control measures that I did not end up privileging some participants over others. When I became aware of my own agreement I went back to the data and my methodology to ensure that I was remaining sensitive to the participants' language rather than my own thoughts and feelings. I think this also reflects the prevalence of relationship discourse within society and that I identified as coming from a similar cultural

context to my participants. I had to remain sensitive to the cultural context throughout analysis but this was difficult whilst I am living within that same context.

I began to notice certain interpretive repertoires occurring across participants, however, I was not yet at the stage of bringing all my findings together. I had to remain critical of myself and my analysis and look for both evidence against my hypotheses as well as evidence for.

There were chunks of data that were identified during coding that did not fit into any interpretive repertoires due to a lack of variation. I felt myself not wanting to let this data go but I had to remain consistent to my method of analysis and remember that my aim was to search for discourse function, and without variation, no function could be revealed.

October 2015

After credibility checks with my tutor I revisited the structure of my findings that had come together after analysis. Initially 'Similarities' and 'Not Being Alone' sat within the 'Social Contract' discourse but my tutor asked me to look at these again. By going back to the transcripts and audio files I realised that I had privileged the 'Social Contract' discourse over the 'Interpersonal Aspects'. I think that the reason for this was the 'Trust' interpretive repertoire seemed to fit both within the 'Social Contract' and 'Interpersonal Aspects'. However, by going back to the data I saw that all participants spoke about 'Interpersonal Aspects' of relationships and this appeared to be the primary discourse from which they drew meaning. After consulting the Potter and Wetherell text I incorporated 'Trust' within both discourses to remain sensitive to participants' context. I also realised that 'Similarities' and 'Interpersonal Aspects' fit better within 'Interpersonal Aspects'.

My tutor also asked me to re-examine the term 'Social Contract'. I sat with this for a month and read and re-read transcripts. I considered 'Negotiation', 'Compromise', 'Balancing Act' and 'Shared Experience' as alternative terms, however, 'Social Contract' remained the truest reflection of the findings. At this stage I felt that the term 'Social Contract' should remain but I was still open to change at a later date as I had further credibility checks with peers and my tutor.

November 2015

I had not been prepared for the writing of the findings chapter to be part of the credibility process but during writing, parts of the structure did not fit and other parts fitted very well; this process therefore became an important part of my own internal credibility process. At times I had to go back to the data and my hypotheses and some interpretive repertoires were re-named during this process, mainly to better reflect participants' own language. I feel that this process really supported the credibility of my findings. I found it hard at times when collecting evidence for the interpretive repertoires because conflicting evidence often also existed. However, this often became a clue to variation within the discourse which supported the hypothesising process.

At this stage I also shared some of my findings chapter and some of the original data with peers. Through this process I found that the term 'Social Contract' appeared coherent and valid to others.

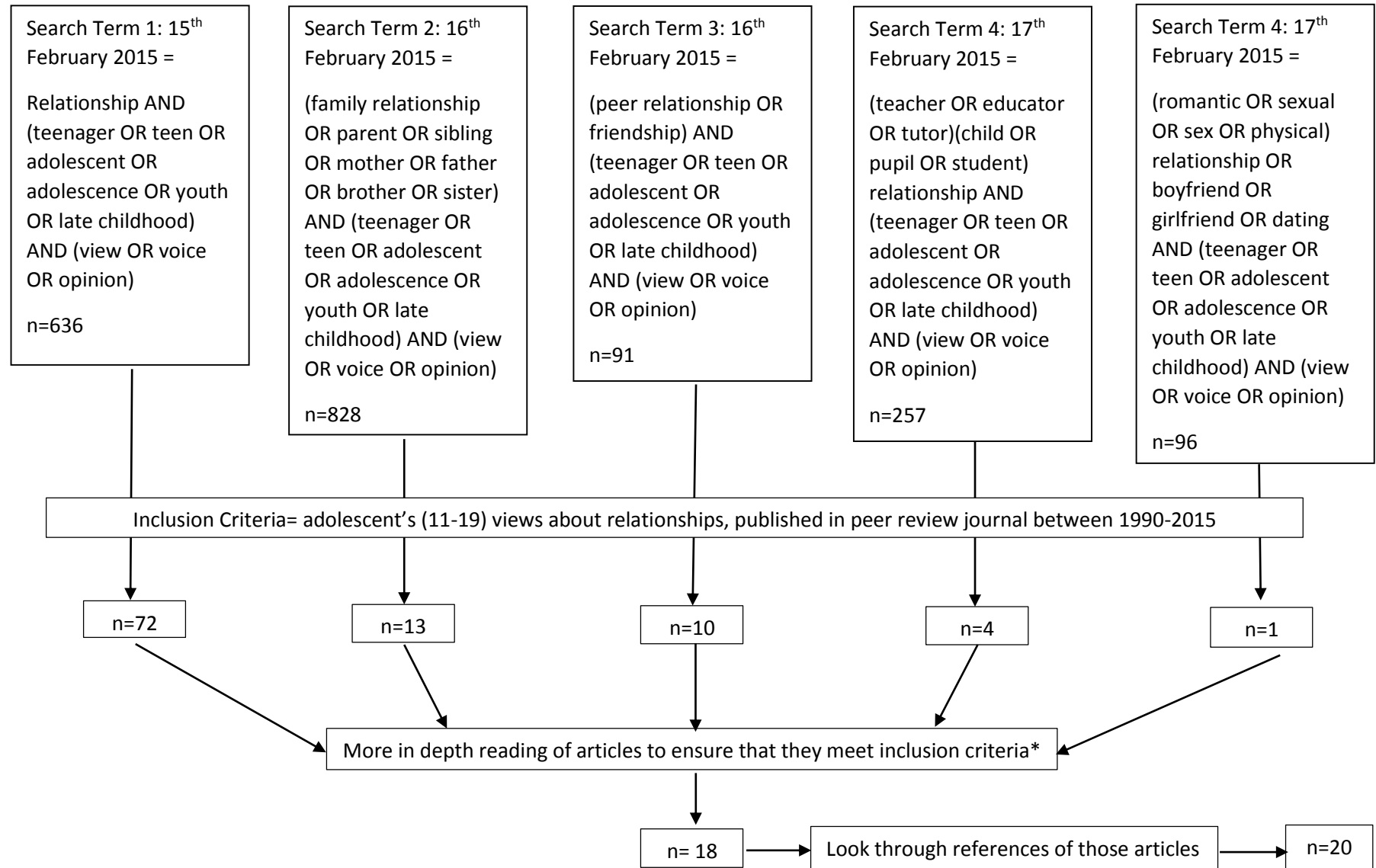
March 2016

After completing the writing of the research I then had to consider how to feedback my findings to my service and the participating school. I was aware of the dangers of reification of research findings and hoped to avoid this. However, one of the main suggestions of this research is that it is important for young people's views about relationships to be heard. I recognise that part of this suggestion is affected by my own views, as well as it being integral to the research. In this sense, due to the qualitative nature of the research, my findings and myself cannot be entirely separated.

As I have found a lot of what participants said intuitive I thought about the possibility of others also finding the results of this research intuitive during the feedback process. I was aware that this could create a tendency to dismiss the findings because conclusions based on a perception of intuition are likely to be given less weight within the research world. My aim within feedback was therefore to highlight the rationale of giving young people a voice, without reifying the parts of this research that are more led by myself as the researcher.

Appendix B: Literature Search Details

Figure B: Search Terms Diagram



* 82 Articles were excluded from the initial 100 that appeared to fit the inclusion criteria, there were 8 broad categories that reasons for exclusions fell under, detailed in Table B.

Table B: Reasons for exclusion

Reason for exclusion	Total number of articles excluded
Not specifically about relationships	25
Focused on relationships but also something else that distorts the focus on relationships e.g. 'Relationships and Kids in Care'	17
Focused on a specific dimension of relationships rather than the relationship as a whole e.g. 'Attachment style within relationships'	9
Focused on relationships as a whole but through the lens of 'conflict'	11
Focused on sex or sexuality rather than relationships more broadly	9
Focused on an intervention e.g. 'Sex and Relationship Education'	6
Did not include young people's views	4
A review	1

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

After going through information sheet and consent form I will double check that the young person is happy to start and press record on the Dictaphone.

1. I'm interested to hear how you would define a relationship?

(If they ask "What kind of relationship?" I will tell them it's up to them to define. Check sense making from their responses e.g. In response to "It's when two people like each other a lot" I would ask "What does liking each other mean?" "What does a lot mean?" Etc.)

2. Who do you think people generally have relationships with?

(For each person that they name I will ask "And how would you describe that relationship?" and check sense making as above. After they have named all the people to have relationships with I will ask "Is there anyone else that people might have a relationship with?" If they have struggled to give any response to question 2. I would ask "Can you think of relationships that you have in your life? Can you tell me about these?" If they do not name specific people; "Are there different types of relationships?")

3. How would you describe your relationships with the adults in your life?

(Check sense making again. Provide prompts if necessary – parents, grandparents, teachers)

4. How would you describe your relationships with people in your life that are about the same age as you?

(Check sense making again. Provide prompts if necessary – friends, siblings, romantic partner)

5. Is there anything common across all relationships?

6. Why do you think people have relationships?

(Check sense making. Use examples they have already given as prompts e.g. "Why do you have a relationship with your best friend?" Prompt – "What is the purpose/what's the point of that relationship?")

7. How do relationships make you feel?

8. Do you think your relationships might change as you get older?

9. Do you think it's important for us to have relationships in our lives?

(Follow up with – "Why? In what way is it important/not important?" "What is it about relationships that is important/not important?" Check sense making)

Appendix D: Ethical Approval

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

SUPERVISOR:

REVIEWER: Ian Wells

STUDENT: Anna Bryant

Title of proposed study: How do young people talk about relationships?

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

DECISION (*Delete as necessary*):

***APPROVED**

~~***APPROVED, BUT MINOR CONDITIONS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**~~

~~***NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED**~~

APPROVED: Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

Minor amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Major amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature)*: Anna Bryant

Student number:

Date: 14.03.15

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐

HIGH

☐

MEDIUM

☒

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*:

Ian Wells

Date: 13/3/05

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (moderator of School ethics approvals)

PLEASE NOTE:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here:
<http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix E: Risk Assessment Form

University of East London

Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Risk assessment for research that is being conducted away from UEL.

The focus of the Risk Assessment should be on the risks that researcher might be exposed to in the course of data collection. The ethics process largely deals with risks to the participants. This Risk Assessment should largely deal with the researcher's safety. Most of the issues in terms of your safety will be covered by the national Practice Placement Partnership Framework and your bursary Local Authority Safe Working Practices. However any additional Risks that you may be exposed to in completing your data collection need to be detailed here.

Title of study	Location(s) of interviews	Name of local contact (if available)	Severity of hazard (H, M, L)	Likelihood of hazard (H, M, L)	Risk (H, M, L)	Approved (Yes/No)
How do young people talk about relationships?	<p><i>Meeting Rooms within a secondary school in the local authority in which student is on bursary placement.</i></p> <p><i>Rooms will be at the front of the school building with a clear panel in the door.</i></p> <p><i>At least two members of school staff will know that young person is in the room with researcher.</i></p>		Low	Low	Low	

Brief details of nature of potential risks and how these will be addressed:

Interviews with young people aged between 12 and 13 years old in their own school:

Ethical approval has been given by UEL ethics board and permission for the research has been granted by principal educational psychologist in the local authority area. Local Authority

policies and procedures will be followed, in addition to any recommendations from ethics committees.

The researcher has over five years experience of working with secondary aged pupils and is experienced and skilled in facilitating one to one interviews with young people of this age. All interviews will be held in the secondary school in a designated room. The class teacher and pastoral lead for each young person will be aware of where they are and what they are doing during the interview.

During each interview the duration and content will be flexible according to verbal and behavioural feedback of each participant. Questions will not directly address experiences and narratives of relationships, however, it is a possibility that emotional issues, or disclosures that cause safeguarding concerns, may be raised by the participant during interview.

When anonymity and confidentiality is being explained to the participant before the interview, and before they sign the consent form, it will be explained to them that their anonymity will be protected, however, if they were to tell me something that means they or somebody else is at risk of harm then I will have to share that information.

The researcher has received safeguarding training on 7th January 2015 within the local authority where the research will take place. If a disclosure was made during the interview the researcher would record all the details by writing them down and then pass this information onto the safeguarding lead within the school.

During debriefing all participant will be signposted to their local connexions service.

Trainee: Anna Bryant

Signature:

Date:

Director of Studies:

Signature:

Date:

Dean of School or designate:

Appendix F: Information Sheet for School Staff

My name is Anna Bryant and I am training to become an educational psychologist at the University of East London. I am currently on placement with _____ in the _____ District. As part of my training I am researching how young people talk about relationships.

Previous research shows that relationships (with school, family, peers) are important for young people's social and emotional development. However, little has been done to ask young people what they believe a relationship is and what is so important about relationships.

What does this research hope to achieve?

The research is interested in hearing the young person's voice and what they say will be analysed in terms of the specific language they use. The data collected will be used to help local authority and schools within it further support young people.

After the research is completed I would like to come back to all the schools that have participated and present my findings.

What does the research involve?

I hope to interview between 12 and 15 young people aged 13-15 years old about their views of relationships. Each interview will likely last between 45 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes.

I have received ethical consent from the University of East London's ethics committee. Informed consent will be gained from the parents/carers of all young people involved and the young people themselves. Both parents and young people will be aware that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

When talking to young people I will record what they say on a dictaphone and then transcribe what they have said in order to analyse the data. When I write about what I have found out I will not use the young people's names and they will have full anonymity. The school will know who has been involved but they will not know who said what.

What the young people say will be kept between myself and them, the only time I would break confidentiality would be if they tell me something that means either they themselves or somebody else is in danger. This will be explained to the young person at the start.

Data Protection

All the data will be collected and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Tapes and transcripts will be destroyed in March 2020. Local authority and The University of East London will retain a copy of the final research in which the young people will not be able to be identified.

What if I would like to know more?

If you have any questions about this study or you would like to discuss any issues further please do not hesitate to contact me on _____

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Anna Bryant

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix G: Information and Consent Letter to Parents

Dear parent/carer

My name is Anna Bryant and I am a trainee educational psychologist with _____, working with young people in the _____ Area.

I am currently researching what young people have to say about relationships. I am interested in relationships with school, family and peers, specifically *how* young people talk about these relationships and *what is important to them* in these relationships.

The research is a joint project between local authority placement, the University of East London and myself. I hope that the information collected in this research will help local authority further support young people.

I would like to first meet with your child to explain to them what the research is about and then if they are happy to do so I will interview them about their views of relationships. If they choose to do the interview I will listen to them carefully and record what they say on a dictaphone.

Once I have conducted all my interviews I will write up what I have found, your child's name will not be used at any point so they will not be able to be identified. All the data will be collected and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Tapes and transcripts will be destroyed in March 2020. Local Authority and The University of East London will retain a copy of the final research in which your child will not be able to be identified.

After I have finished writing up my research I will return to the school to present to them what I have found out. You would be very welcome to attend this session and further details will be available nearer the time.

Your agreement to your child taking part is highly valued. If you decide at any time between now and March 2015 that you do not want your child to take part then please let _____ at your child's school know. Participation is entirely voluntary and if you or your child decides that they do not want to take part then that is absolutely fine.

If at any stage you would like further information on any aspect of my research please contact me via _____ and I would be happy to talk to you.

If you do not wish for your child to take part then there is no need to take any further action.

If you are happy for your child to take part in this research please tick the following statements if you agree with them and sign below. Once the letter is returned to me I will ensure that you receive a copy of it.

	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
I have read this letter, which explains what participation will involve.	
I know that I can contact Anna directly if I have any further questions or via _____ at my child's school.	
I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she can withdraw at any time or I can withdraw them.	
I understand that Local Authority and The University of East London will receive a copy of the final research and that no one will be able to identify the participants involved.	

I agree to(son/daughter's name) taking part in Anna's research if they wish to

Signed.....

Date.....

Name in capitals.....

Yours sincerely,

Anna Bryant

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix H: Participant Invitation Sheet

Dear _____

My name is Anna. I work with young people in _____ area. I'm training to become an educational psychologist and I'm doing a project about what young people have to say about relationships and what is important to them.

I'm really interested in talking to you if you can spare the time. Your teachers will know where you are so don't worry about missing any lessons.

There are no right or wrong answers, I'm just interested in what you have to say. What you tell me might help other young people.

So.....

- If you would like to be part of my project I'll arrange a time to come and tell you a bit more about it. I can answer any questions you have and we can talk about you giving me your written permission which I will need before I can ask you the questions.
- If you would still like to be part of my project after we've talked about it we can have our conversation about what you think about relationships and what is important to you.
- If you choose to have the second conversation with me I will record what you say on a tape-recorder. This is so I can remember what you have said and then I can write about it.
- **Don't worry** – I won't use your real name and nobody will know that it is you who said what you said.

If you are happy to talk to me about my project then please circle YES

(Remember even if you talk to me first we still don't have to have the conversation that I will record)

There's no pressure for you to take part in my project so if you don't want to just circle NO

My name is _____ and I'm happy to talk to Anna about her project YES/NO

Thanks for taking the time to read this,

Anna

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to come and talk with me, please read this information about my project. We can talk about any parts that you don't understand and you can ask me any questions at all about the project.

After we have talked about what the project is about we will talk about whether you would like to take part.

What is it about?

- My project is about what young people have to say about relationships.
- I am asking lots of young people to talk with me about this for about 1 hour.
- In that time I will ask you some questions about what you think about relationships and what you understand the word 'relationships' to mean.
- I am hoping that the information you give me will help schools when they are supporting young people.

What would I have to do?

- During this conversation I will record what you say on a tape recorder so that I can remember exactly what you said.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions and you don't have to answer any questions that you feel you don't want to answer.
- I will not tell anyone what you have told me unless I am worried that you or someone else is in danger.
- The conversation will last for about 1 hour but if at any time during the conversation you would like to stop then that is okay.

What will happen afterwards?

- After I have spoken to lots of young people I will write about what I have found out but I will not use your real name so nobody will be able to work out what you have said.
- The tape with the recording of what you said will be kept in a safe place for five years and then be destroyed.
- After I have written up the project I will come back to your school and invite you, your parents and teachers to come and hear what I found out. Again I will not use your name so nobody will be able to identify you from what you said.

Now lets talk about if you have any questions!

REMEMBER you don't have to take part if you don't want to.

Appendix J: Participant Consent Form

- This is the consent form that you will need to fill in if you want to take part in the project.
- Read the statements in the table and tick either 'yes' or 'no' to show that you either agree or disagree.
- If you agree with all the statements please sign your name, write your name in capitals and write the date.
- When we meet again to have our discussion we can go back over these points and I will ask you to sign again if you are still happy to talk with me.

	YES	NO
Anna has explained the project to me and I understand what will happen if I take part.		
I know I can ask _____ to contact Anna if I want to ask a question about the project.		
I understand that it is my choice whether or not to take part. I know that if I decide I don't want to take part before the interview that is okay and if I want to stop at any time during the interview that is okay too.		
I understand that _____ Educational Psychology Service and the University of East London will keep a copy of the project write up but nobody will be able to identify me because my name won't be used.		
I understand that Anna will come back to my school after she has finished her project to tell everyone what she has found but nobody will be able to identify me from what I said.		
I understand that Anna will not share what I tell her with anyone else other than in what she writes, unless she is worried that I or someone else is in danger.		

I have read the participant information sheet and have been able to ask Anna any questions I have about her project.

I would like to take part in Anna's project.

Signature _____

Name in capitals _____

Date _____

Appendix K: Participant Debrief Sheet

Dear _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me.

I have recorded the things that you have said and I will listen to them again, along with things that other people have said. I will then find themes in what young people have told me and come to some conclusions about what relationships mean for young people.

I am then going to write this up in a project but remember I will not use your name and no one will be able to identify you. I will come back to your school in September 2016 to tell your parents and teachers about what I found out. You are very welcome to come to this and you will hear about it nearer the time. But again, no one will be able to work out what it was that you told me.

If you feel that you do not want me to include the things that you have said in my project please let _____ know by the end of the summer term and she will tell me. Then your views will not be included in my project.

If you would like to talk some more about these issues or you find yourself thinking about relationships some more you might like to check out this website;

https://www._____

There is a chat service under the 'need some advice' tab on the website or you could call

Thanks again so much for talking to me, your words have been really valuable.

Anna

Appendix L: Research Procedure

Research Activity	Timeline
Consult local authority for research approval	November 2014
Submit research proposal to academic institution	December 2014
Submit ethical approval form and research registration to academic institution	January 2015
Conducting and writing literature review	Jan-April 2015
Research approval granted by university ethics board	March 2015
Approach participating school & information sheet to senior leadership team	March 2015
Information and consent forms to parents	April 2015
Invitation letters to participants	May 2015
Information and consent forms to participants	May 2015
Participant Interviews	May –June 2015
Interview Transcription	June-July2015
Coding of transcripts according to research questions	July-October2015
Identification of variation and practices used within discourse for each participant	July-October 2015
Identification of variation, interpretive repertoires and hypotheses of discourse function	July-October 2015
Meeting with research tutor for credibility checks	August 2015
Confirmation of research registration with academic institution	September 2015
Writing Methodology	September 2015
Internal credibility checks	September-October 2015
Meeting with research tutor for further credibility checks	October 2015
Hypothesis formation across the data set	October-November 2015
Meeting with research tutor for further credibility checks	November 2015
Writing Findings and Discussion	Nov 2015 -March 2016

Peer credibility checks	December 2015
Submission of thesis	April 2016
Research dissemination to local authority, participating school and academic institution	July 2016

Appendix M: Sample Transcript

L	Transcript: Amanda p.2	Practices/ Resources	Hypotheses
42	help you through it but at the same time you know	Trust IR	Contractual/ Exchange
43	that they're not going to tell anybody and it's a		
44	really nice feeling to know that that person knows		
45	and you know that they know what you're going		
46	through, if you're going through a hard time or if		
47	you're having a bad day, its always nice to be able		
48	to tell somebody.		
49	I: So, and you mentioned a bit about it being your		
50	decision to tell, rather than theirs'		
51	P: I think that's where really, um, conflict comes in	Secrets script	
52	because, um, if they are telling other people	Rhetoric	
53	without your permission or your consent then I		
54	think that it makes you a little bit more upset		
55	because you know that they've told someone		
56	whereas its not really their decision to tell, I mean,	Rhetoric	<u>Variation</u> –
57	you've confided in them by telling you this secret		friends that
58	and, yeah, then they've gone on and just thrown it		tell and
59	all out the window by telling other people, I mean		friends that
60	if you say they can tell other people then obviously	Reifying	keep
61	that's fine but I don't think that it fair that other		confidence
62	people are finding out and then they're talking		
63	about it and then, you know rumours go round and	Rhetoric	
64	then people just get upset.	Rumours script	
65	I: So do you have experiences of times when,		
66	maybe someone has told or maybe when someone		
67	hasn't told and has kept something...		
68	P: Er...		
69	I:...to themselves?		
70	P: I do have quite a lot of experience with trusting		
71	people and them, you know, telling others, but I	Rhetoric	
72	think if that happens then the best thing to do is to	Fact	
73	just not tell them stuff anymore because obviously	Construction	
74	they're not really your true friend if they're not	Reifying	
75	listening to you and they've not abided by the rules	'True Friend'	
76	of that secret and, you know, with, me personally I	script	
77	find that its quite difficult to trust people because,		Contract
78	um, I think that sometimes, er, particularly with		
79	certain secrets, you know, people just want a bit of		
80	gossip and they just wanna tell some people and		Attributes
81	then it makes you kind of a victim in a way because	'Victim' script – stake	blame to others

Appendix N: Sample Coding

- RES: Um, yes but I suppose on some occasions it might be different, like if you were, er, to meet someone, for instance a homeless person or something like that, you might, you might not know them but you still like give them money or something like that to kind of help them through life.
- INT: Okay, but would that be a relationship?
- RES: [No, cos you don't really know them.] RQ2
- INT: Okay. Um, do you think that there's anything common across all relationships?
- RES: Um, your, your friends definitely and you [know them well, know the person well.] RQ1
- INT: Okay. Um, but thinking about all different types of relationships, so you've mentioned, er, family and you've mentioned friends, um, is there anything that is, is common to all of them that makes them a relationship?
- RES: You, [you know the person well.] RQ1
- INT: Okay, so it's about knowing the person?
- RES: Yeah, and [their personality and stuff.] RQ1, 2+3
- INT: Okay. So what does it, what does it mean to really know the person you have a relationship with?
- RES: Um, to know again what, [what they need and what they want and what to do in certain situations.] RQ1
- INT: So it's about what they need and what they want and kind of what to do?
- RES: Yeah.
- INT: Why do you think people have relationships?
- RES: Um, I think [to make them feel good in a way.] RQ3 For instance you might want a relationship with a friend cos then you have something to do with someone pr... Um, yeah, [I think it's just to feel good in a way.] RQ1+3
- INT: So about feeling good and also having something to do?
- RES: Yeah, for in- like [if you had a lot of friends you feel really good cos you think, oh, people like me so I'm doing something well.] RQ1 it/then reasoning
- INT: Okay. So, um, is there some kind of measure of, of yourself, how you feel about yourself, based on the number of friends you have?
- RES: No, because I... no, because you know you, you know yourself better than anyone will, um, anyone ever will. So I guess [you can't really judge people on how many friends they have or something like that, it's more you'd have to get to know them] and have a relationship with them I guess. RQ1

VARIATION

1
circular
reasoning

Appendix O: Sample Participant Individual Analysis

Amanda Analysis

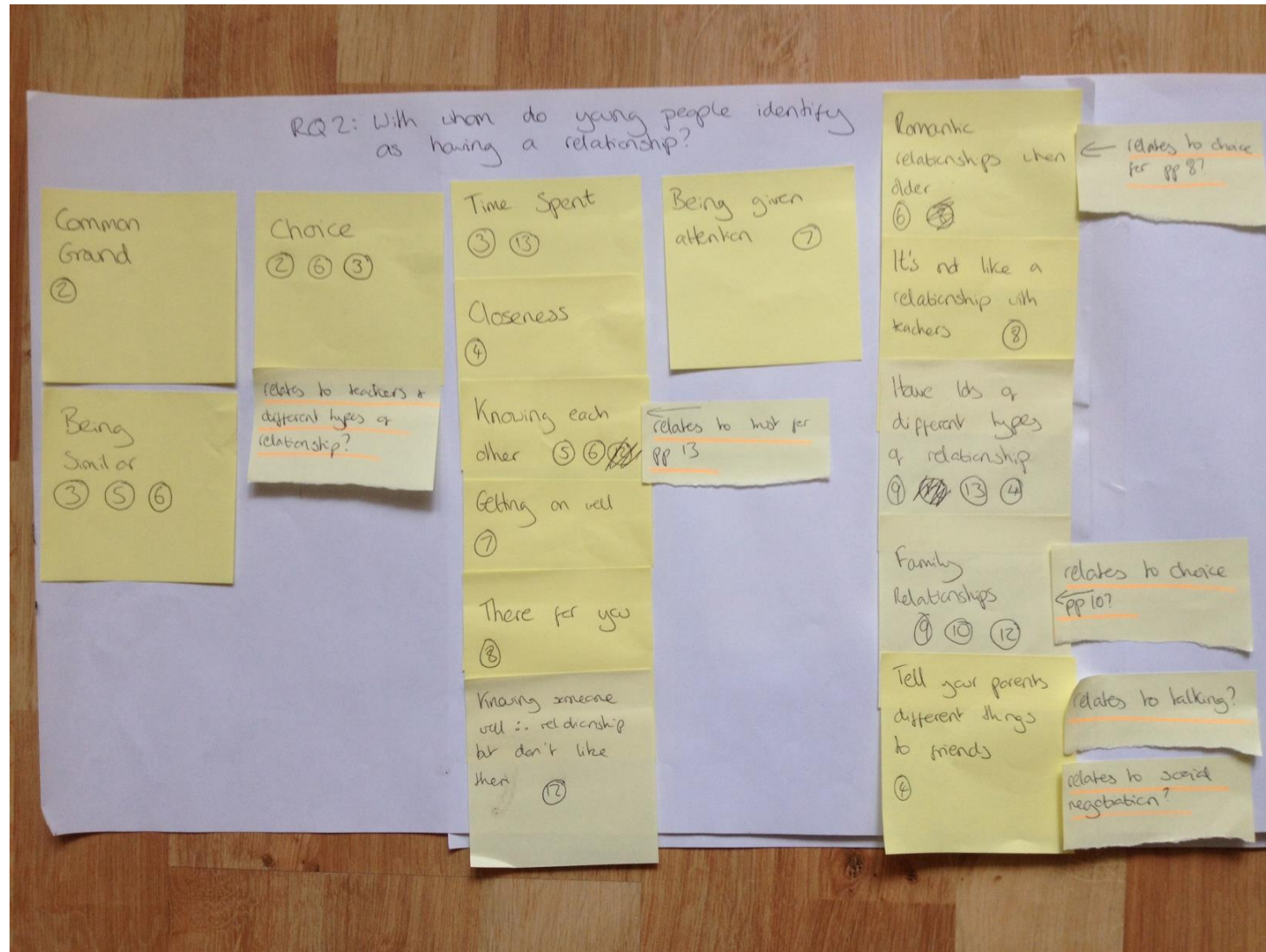
Discourse	Variation	Practice	I.R.	Function Hypothesis	Evidence	Reflexivity
<p>"A good relationship, is where you have a bond with a person" (p:1 l:5-7)</p> <p>"Without relationships then you become incredibly lonely" (p:17 l:763-4)</p>	<p>Positive vs Negative elements of a relationship –</p> <p>Bond vs loneliness</p>	Using negative examples	Not being lonely	She perceives negative examples as having more power to persuade	<p>"If you don't have a nice relationship" (p:17 l: 764-5) – rhetorical negative example</p>	<p>This discourse was initially part of 'Trust', but after analysis of other transcripts I have renamed it, therefore played very active role in analysis.</p>
<p>"It all starts with trust" (p:1 l:24)</p> <p>"I think that's just fakeness and I think that real relationships are not..." (p:3 l:113-6)</p>	Trust is most important thing vs you can be fooled	<p>Trust is important because its at the beginning – "starts"</p> <p>Using negative examples. Using the word "just" to diminish the other.</p>	Trust	<p>The function is convincing me about trust & negative discourse is more powerful practice. Wanting to acknowledge that trust is central whilst attributing blame to other people when trust fails – ie 'Trust is important but don't judge me when it goes wrong'</p>	<p>"You thought they were somebody that they weren't" (p:3 l:131-2)</p> <p>"When you've trusted them and you know you can trust them" (p:13 l:583-4)</p>	<p>I have brought myself into this hypothesis as I am assuming she wants to present herself in a positive light to me.</p>
"One of the reasons that I speak so much is because I think everyone deserves a	Taking responsibility vs responsibility	Some discourse attributes agency to others and	Responsibility	She is adjusting responsibility/agency to promote herself	"Populars" – using noun to create passivity (p:10 l:435)	"Responsibility" has not been a word that she has used.

right to speak” (p:10 l:429-31) “Makes you kind of a victim” (p:2 l:81-2)	is on the other	positions her passively but some takes control/ responsibility			“My anxiety makes me very nervous and very vulnerable” – reduced agency (p:12 l:536-7)	
“I think society plays a big part in this as well because, you know, um, you want the perfect look, and you want the perfect personality and I think that also comes with boyfriends, you want the perfect boyfriend, perfect girlfriend and you want, you want people to not look at your boyfriend and go, “Oh, he’s your boyfriend, well he’s a bit ugly” cos I think that’s the worst thing” (p:6 l:258-65)	Trying to fit in vs “I’m different”	Reduced agency by attributing to ‘Society’. “Oh he’s your boyfriend” – rhetorical example	Society	Relationships have societal impact – help to contribute to society. She has tried to present herself as ‘disapproving’ of the impact of society.	“Beauty does matter and I wish it didn’t” (p:7 l:273-4) “Everyone’s defined by how they look” (p:10 l:441) “I’m not popular, I’m not unpopular” (p:11 l:477)	Relates to responsibility and not being lonely. Reading and re-reading has led to these being separate.
If I don’t have good relationships, but I do, but if I didn’t it	Consequence of relationships	If-then consequential argument	Consequences	Negative examples to persuade.	“It’d be better to have bad relationships	‘Consequences’ has not been her word.

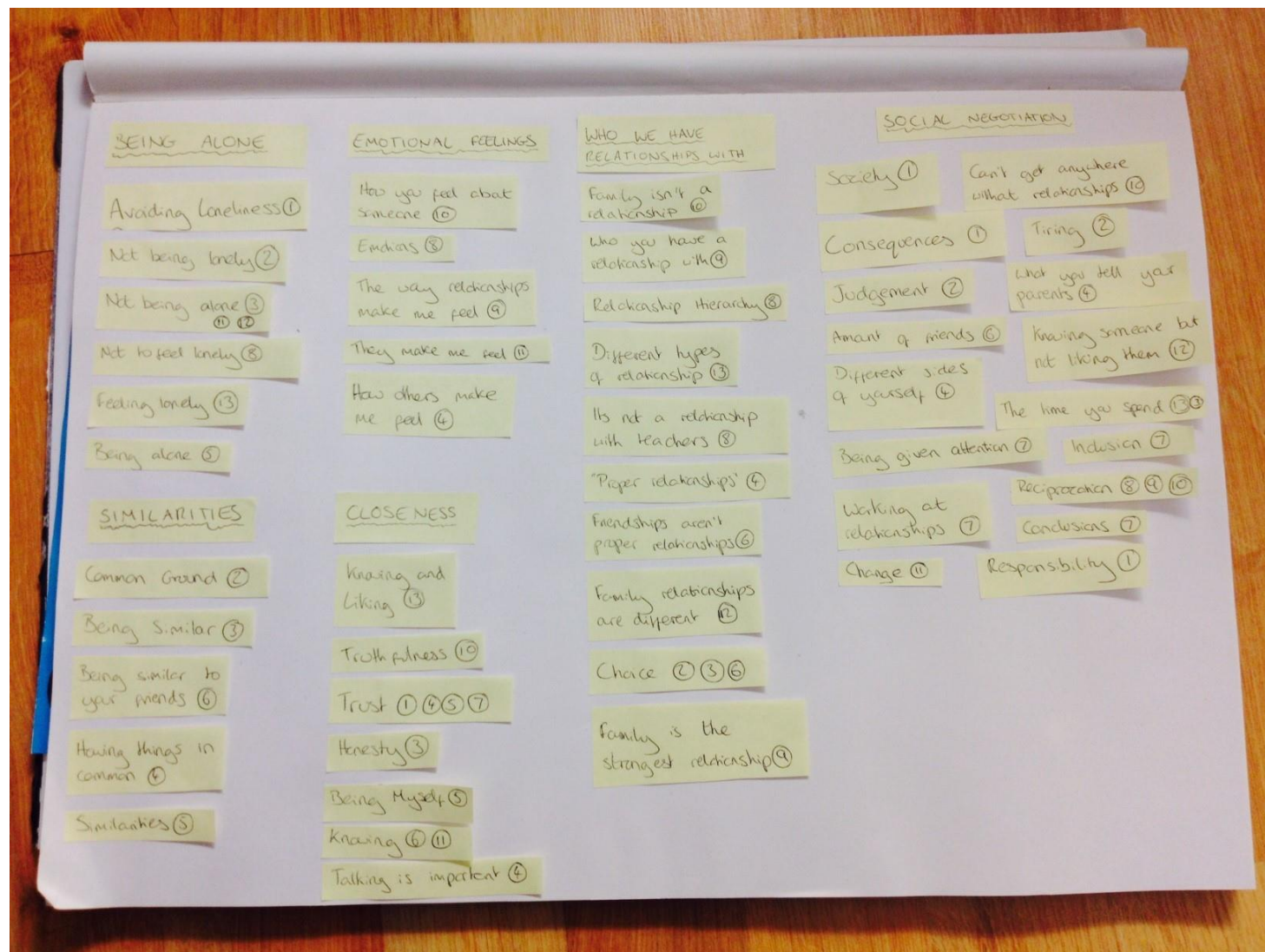
<p>would probably make me a more sad and unhappy person in general (p:13 l:599)</p> <p>“Even a bad relationship can still make you a better person” (p:17 l:261-2)</p>	<p>can be good or bad</p>	<p>Use of the word ‘even’ to diminish ‘Mould’ script drawn upon</p>		<p>Similarly to societal impact, consequences give power to relationships</p>	<p>because you would still be moulding yourself into being a better person” (p:18 l:818)</p> <p>“Not abided by the rules” (p:2 l:75)</p>	<p>Related to social currency element of trust/society/ not being lonely?</p>
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Appendix P: Evidence Trail of Interpretive Repertoires

August 2015



October 2015



December 2015

Social Contract 4.2	Social Exchange	Reciprocation 8, 9, 10 Society 1 Consequences 1 Responsibility 1, 9 Attention 7 Trust - 1, 4, 5, 7
	Social Negotiation	Different sides of yourself 4 Knowing someone but not liking them 12 Amount of friends 6 Judgement 2 Appearance 3 Conclusions 7
	Work	Working at relationships 7 Tiring 2 Inclusion 7
Interpersonal Aspects 4.3	Feelings	How you feel about someone 10 Emotions 8 The way relationships make me feel 9 They make me feel 11 How others make me feel 4
	Closeness	Knowing + Liking 13 Forthrightness Honesty 10, 3 Time 13, 3 Trust 1, 4, 5, 7 Honesty 3 Being Myself 5 Knowing 6, 11 Talking 4
	Similarities	Being similar to friends 3, 5, 6 Having things in common 4 Common ground 2
	Not Being Alone	Not being alone 3, 5, 11, 12 Not being lonely 1, 2, 8, 13 Can't get anywhere without relationships 10
Relationship Diversity 4.4	Choice	Family isn't a relationship 10 Who you have a relationship with 9 Different types of relationship 13 It's not a relationship w. teachers 8 Family relationships are different 12 Choice 2, 3, 6
	Relationship Hierarchy	Proper Relationships 4, 6 Family is the strongest relationship 9 Relationship hierarchy 8 Who you tell your parents 4 Change 11