EXPLORING CHILDREN'S STORIES OF BECOMING 'MIGHTY': A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Growing research highlights the need to target the prevention and early intervention of mental health problems. This is reflected in a number of recently published policies emphasising the pressing importance of addressing inequalities in mental health promotion and prevention, through an integrated approach which enhances the role of schools as pivotal settings in promoting positive mental health. A key focus in recent public health implementation programmes emphasises the ethical need of inviting the child's perspective about decisions which affect their lives.

Although there is growing support for the use of Narrative Therapy and Narrative Therapy Group interventions with children and young people, the perspective of parents and healthcare professionals is a predominant theme in the literature. This research is a response to this call, through attempts to 'co-compose' with therapy participants in their school setting.

A school-based Narrative Therapy Group programme, '*Mighty Me'*, offered by a small London charity, is the focus of this research. Following Narrative Interviewing with children who have participated in this group, 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry' was adopted to examine how children describe the narrative process of becoming 'mighty', and the ways in which they represent themselves, a minimum of four months after their completion of '*Mighty Me'*.

Within each child's story, 'historical unique outcomes' are brought forth during their involvement in '*Mighty Me';* this has created a 'unique account' where their 'mighty' qualities are evident, marked by a 'turning point' in the child's narrative. Upon examining a series of identity positions unique to each child, an arrangement indicative of 'narrative reframing' coincides with the emergence of the child's 'unique account'.

A Critical Review presents an evaluative framework enabling a number of key considerations with this research to be addressed. Attention is given to the implications of this research for Clinical Psychologists, and recommendations made for future research.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Chapter Preview

The aim of this study is to explore how ten-year-old children describe and make sense of their participation in a Narrative Therapy Group (NTG) intervention that was carried out at their primary school.

The Introduction will begin by contextualising this research: firstly, the personal and professional context that has influenced my choice in undertaking this investigation; secondly, the broader context of the social, historical, and cultural conceptualisations of childhood, which will involve examining the existing context of childhood in the United Kingdom and why 'Every Child Matters' (Department for Education, 2003); thirdly, the specific school context where this project is situated.[1]

Understandings of mental health in children will then be explored before examining research which has prompted the arguments in recent Annual Reports (Department of Health, 2013/2014), that action is needed, at multiple integrated levels, to target promotion, prevention and intervention efforts early in life.

This chapter will then present the school-based group intervention, *'Mighty Me'*, at the heart of this thesis, prior to an overview of the 'broaden and build' theory (Fredrickson, 2004), that is presented in relation to ideas of 'mightiness'. Following this, a description of Narrative Therapy (NT) and a rationale for the chosen narrative methodology in this research is considered. A summary of the existing literature highlights that there appears to be an absence of the views of children who participate in NT and NTG interventions. This will lead to the justifications for this study, and an outline of the research questions.

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[1] Single quotation marks indicate quotes from academic texts, literature or policy documents. Double quotation marks refer to direct quotes from contact with participants or professionals.

1.2. The Personal and Professional Context of the Researcher

1.2.1. <u>Why this 'Dance'?</u>

In describing the journey that has led me to undertake this research, I wish to share a quote with the reader, alongside the invitation to hold this in mind throughout their reading:

'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' (Yeats, 1928)

The above quotation resonates with me at three related levels; *personally, professionally* and as a *researcher*, and, thus, provides an entrance into my relationship to this piece of research. *I* identify as a second generation Italian. My personal experiences of growing up in England with a parent who was navigating a new culture has been pivotal in my development, and has fostered an interest in the myriad of factors which shape a person's identity and sense of self. In essence, '*how* does one come to perform *their* dance?' I hold an interest in appreciating the role of diverse circumstances, or what we may refer to as the 'music' that can serve to accompany or distract.

As a *Trainee Clinical Psychologist* with a range of experience working with children and young people receiving diagnoses of learning disabilities and mental health problems, these questions seem increasingly pertinent for myself, and have generated many discussions with inspiring colleagues. I have become increasingly interested in the questioning of psychological approaches where there are minimal opportunities for children to move beyond limiting descriptions. In contrast, NT involves generating separation from a problem-focussed story, to enable the emergence of strengthening descriptions of individuals and their lives (White & Epston, 1990, White, 1995; White & Morgan, 2006). I believe this provides an avenue for working appreciatively and ethically with difficult life circumstances, building emotional language whilst respecting the influence of events over which people have often had very little control.

As the *researcher* undertaking this study, I have come to reflect upon the influence of my positioning. Reason and Rowan (1981) argue that research can never be neutral. It has been suggested that upon adopting a particular position, it is inevitable that an individual will see the world from 'the vantage point of that position' (Davies & Harré, 1990: 46), highlighting that research undertaken can be considered as 'tacit and intentional positioning' (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999:31). Arguably, the research questions chosen reveal what I conceptually value, as the researcher (Young & Cooper, 2008); given that children have been described as one of the least recognised people in our society (Williams, 1999), I believe they must be offered a platform from which to 'dance', whilst we must work towards being an 'appreciative ally' (Madsen, 2007).

Freeman, Epston and Lobovits (1997) have highlighted 'the bridging of meaning' that we build with children in nourishing healing developments; throughout this thesis, I have sought to adopt the spirit of 'co-composing' with therapy participants (Young & Cooper, 2008), in my attempts to involve children in qualitative research driven by the position that new possibilities emerge when we highlight their significance (White, 1988).

1.2.2. <u>Initial Reflections upon my 'Dance'</u>

I have therefore sought to respond to concerns that children have, for a long time, represented a 'muted' group; that 'time *in* childhood', referring to children's daily life experiences, has often been examined secondary to the 'time *of* childhood', whereby children are represented by another agency (James & Prout, 1997, *initials in original text*; Qvortrup, 1997). Whilst there has been a significant move forward in involving children in research about their lives, the perspective of children participating in NT interventions appears limited. However, involving children in research is an active process as we hear 'voices' that we interpret (Riessman, 1993; Alldred & Burman, 2005). But what influences one's interpretations? I propose that we must attend to the historical, social and cultural variability of childhood; the suggestion that childhood forms a part of society, rather than being a forerunner to it (Prout & James, 1997). My epistemological viewpoint is rooted in this perspective.

1.2.3. Epistemological Position

I suggest that understanding what is 'told' in research with children cannot be separated from circumstances whereby the 'teller' carries out the 'telling' (Hiles, Čermák & Chrz, 2009: 108). In considering the interactive context of the 'telling', and my role here-in with the 're-telling' (Hiles and Čermák, 2008), my epistemological stance is presented.

I take a 'moderate constructionist' epistemological stance (Willig, 2012). Whilst I hold that one's multiple realities are inextricably related to one's circumstances and interactions (Crossley, 2000), I believe we need to start from the position of those whose actions we aim to understand and attend to how people describe their active entwinement in the process of meaning-making and agency (Willig, 1999). This has influenced my approach to understanding a child's development; as a product of a complex range of critical aspects including context, process, time, as well as personal attributes (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Bruner (1986) proposes that an individual can be viewed as agentive, and in constructing and telling their autobiography, 'commitments' to a particular way of life are communally shared, following plot constructions that have likely been told before.

1.3. Examining the Broader Context

1.3.1. Childhood as a Social Construction

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe the rich trajectory of frameworks that have been influential in the study of childhood, in deserving detail.[2] However, I wish to highlight a key shift in accounts, in light of the above.

The developmental approach to the study of children and childhood is based on the notion of natural growth (Jenks, 1982). Childhood is examined as a biologically determined phase through which progression to the status of

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[2] The interested reader is invited to consider Aries (1962), Richards (1974), and Prout and James (1997).

adulthood occurs (Prout & James, 1997). Piaget (1952) suggested a series of pre-determined stages sets the scene for the attainment of logical competence; the mark of adult rationality is achieved in-line with the assumption that the process of child development is universal (Prout & James, 1997).

Progressive awareness that the meanings of 'child' and 'childhood' might differ across time, spaces and places fostered dissent with traditional models (Danzinger, 1970). For example, Aries (1962) studied medieval icons, and suggested that the concept of childhood emerged in Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, thus, questioning the notion of the universality of childhood.

1.3.2. Why 'Every Child Matters'?

The 'paradigm' that considers childhood, as a 'specific structural and cultural component of many societies' (Prout & James, 1997: 8) is an important development. Furthermore, in collectivizing children into childhood, significant differences of gender, class, ethnicity and disability between children receive insufficient attention and conceal the variation in experiences that are the consequence of intersecting positions in society (Prout & James, 1997; Frones, 1993).

The 'paradigm' asserts that 'there can be no concepts of childhood which are socially and politically innocent' (Prout & James, 1997:21). This is vital to consider in relation to the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC), whereby a 'child' is defined as a person below the age of eighteen years (Unicef, 2005) and asserts that childhood refers to the 'condition' of a child's life (Unicef, 2005). [3] Through a series of fifty-four articles, it describes children as holders of their own rights, setting out to promote and protect their rights in a range of domains. Boyden (1997) has stressed the need to question in whose interests are the 'best interests' of the child being considered,

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[3] Where laws of particular countries set the legal age of adulthood below eighteen years, adequate protection to such young people is stressed in Article One.

stressing that children did not participate in the drafting of this Convention, nor the approach to implementation.

1.3.3. The Current Context of Childhood: Key Legislation and Policies in the United Kingdom

The emphasis we place on understanding the 'best interests' of the child must attend to the interconnectedness of emotional well-being with other areas of a child's life. This is the cornerstone of the key Government policy initiative 'Every Child Matters' (Department for Education, 2003), now backed by legislation in the form of the Children's Act 2004 (HM Government, 2004). It set forth the five outcomes that matter most to young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being.

The 'Healthy Child Programme' (Department of Health, 2009a), a public health implementation programme, has sought to align 'Every Child Matters' with:

- The 'National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services' (Department of Health, 2004), which has set out a ten year strategy for the development of services around supporting young people and their families, and;
- The Child Health Strategy, 'Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures' (Department of Health, 2009b), which has stressed the significance of the child's 'voice' and involvement, key to the spirit of this thesis.

The 'Healthy Child Programme' has established the good practice framework for prevention and early intervention services for five to nineteen year olds. It highlights how health service providers, education providers and wider service partners, such as voluntary organisations, working in a co-ordinated manner, can significantly enhance a young person's life chances. Importantly, following reforms to the Education Bill (Department for Education, 2010), the need for schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts Boards was removed.

It is interesting to consider this in the context of recent findings of an independent survey of people, directly involved in the commissioning, management, and delivery of health and related services (National Children's Bureau, 2013). This survey found that 66% believe acute care is still given priority over prevention, while 89% feel schools' potential to support good child health is not yet being fully utilised. The findings concluded with the need to better harness the contribution of schools, as part of a prioritisation of prevention and early intervention, echoing the Annual Reports by the Chief Medical Officer (Department of Health 2013/ 2014). Here, a further message includes the need to address inequalities in mental health promotion and prevention, alongside integrated working across services involved with children. The Report (National Children's Bureau, 2013) also underlined the need to explore ways of meaningfully involving children to gain their perspective in issues that affect their lives.

In a recently published Report, the Government set out a central commitment to address the gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers (HM Government, 2014). This can be understood in the context of the alarming Unicef Report (2007) that placed the UK at the bottom in the rankings of twenty-one countries from within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), on measures of child well-being (Unicef, 2007). Whilst recent improvement is visible (Unicef, 2013), the picture is complex in that disparity underpins the 'condition' and 'state' of children's lives within the UK. This can be clearly understood through addressing the issue of poverty; findings from The Equality Trust (2015) highlight that the poorest one-fifth of UK society hold only 8% of the total income, whereas the top one-fifth possess 41% of this total.

Whilst addressing the profound impacts of growing up in poverty lies beyond the scope of this thesis,[4] a summary is considered important given that in London, the site of this project, child poverty is acute; the capital has the highest rate of severe child poverty in the UK (Magadi & Middleton, 2007). Studies highlight

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[4] The interested reader is directed to Ridge (2013) and Wilkinson and Pickett (2010).

that poverty affects children's well-being, mental and physical health, social relationships, and the opportunities that they can pursue (Ridge, 2002/2009). Furthermore, a 'social-gradient' has been described by Marmot (2010) that can aid our understanding of the health of our nation; children from less affluent backgrounds suffer long-standing consequences for their health, education and employment. Marmot (2010), thus, emphasises a co-ordinated approach across social and health policy, and the school environment becomes an important component of individual child development.

1.4. The School Context

The site of this research is a primary school in an Inner London borough. The Admissions Policy and a recent Ofsted Report have been drawn upon to demonstrate the following:

1. The Admissions Policy attends to two criteria when applications exceed the number of available places: places will be allocated to Looked After Children in care of the local authority, children who have been adopted, or children made subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order; applicants will be prioritised if admission to the school is necessary on the basis of professionally supported medical or social need.
2. The children attending are from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, with Black African, other White, and Black Caribbean being the largest minority ethnic groups.
3. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is much higher than average, and the majority are at an early stage of learning English.
4. Pupil's personal, social and emotional development, are considered particularly weak.

The Ofsted Report summarised the overall effectiveness of the school as Level 2 ('good') and highlighted strengths; the school works hard to ensure that pupils are well cared for. The Report recognises the project at the heart of this thesis as it highlights the school's good links with a range of outside agencies,

fostering holistic development. However, the Report documented the standards reached by learners as Level 3 ('broadly average to below average') which can be understood by acknowledging the aforementioned significant barriers to learning that the school is required to respond to.

1.5. Mental Health in Children and Young People

1.5.1. Re-defining Mental Health in Children

The Mental Health Foundation (2007) describes good mental health as guiding the development of one's sense of self-worth, extending beyond the absence of emotional difficulties:

> 'Young people who are mentally healthy will have the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, creatively, intellectually and spiritually; initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships; use and enjoy solitude; become aware of others and empathise with them; play and learn; face problems and setbacks and learn from them; enjoy and protect their physical health; and make a successful transition to adulthood in due course' (2007:1).

There are a range of terms used to describe the difficulties that children may experience in relation to their emotional well-being and mental health; when such difficulties become persistent, severe, or affect daily functioning, they may reach a threshold for definition as a 'mental disorder', classified within a psychiatric classification system such as the International Classification of Diseases - 10 (ICD-10; World Health Organisation, 1992) or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Diseases - V (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Timimi and Maitra (2006) critique the use of diagnosis in children and young people, and in-keeping with this critique, the limitations of adhering to approaches which categorise and, thus, limit opportunities for 'authentic self-definition' (Sutherland, 2007: 196) shall be revisited at a later stage of this thesis.

The argument that the psychiatric classificatory systems are situated in a predominantly Eurocentric Western paradigm has been proposed (Dogma, Parkin, Gale & Frake, 2002). An individualised model of mental health, which reflects Western constructions of mental health problems may not be appropriate for cultures where problems are not always seen as being located within the individual (Watters, 2001), highlighting our need to address diverse worldviews of mental health (Mio & Iwamasa, 2003). This is crucial to hold in mind given the diverse ethnicities of the children within this study.

1.5.2. <u>The Prevalence of Mental Health Problems in Children and Young People</u>

The variation in defining, and in the thresholds for defining, emotional or mental health problems lead to differences in the reported prevalence for mental health difficulties and disorders (Action for Children, 2007). The last national community study looked at the mental health of five to sixteen-year-olds in Great Britain in 2004 (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005), and proposed that around one in ten children have a 'mental health disorder' to clinically significant levels – equating to around three children in every class.[5] Young Minds (2014) estimate, based on the prevalence rates found in Green et al.'s study and demographic data from the 2001 census, that 7.7% of, or nearly 340,000, children aged five to ten years have a 'mental disorder', and that a rise in the figures with age is notable (Young Minds, 2014). Furthermore, ChildLine have recently reported a double in the number of under eleven-year-olds they referred on to Emergency Services, due to concerns about suicide, in the year 2013/14, from 2012/13 (NSPCC, 2014).

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[5] Assessed through children, parent and teacher reports using ICD-10 criteria and separated into 'emotional disorder', 'conduct disorder', 'hyperkinetic disorder', and 'less common disorder' (including 'autism spectrum disorder', 'tic disorders', 'eating disorders', and 'mutism').

1.5.3. The Need for Prevention and Early Intervention Efforts

The case for emphasis on the prevention and early intervention of mental health problems also comes from an increasing body of research which suggests that half of those with lifetime 'mental health disorders' (excluding dementia) first experience symptoms by fourteen years of age (Kim-Cohen, Caspi & Moffitt, 2003; Kessler, Amminger & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2007). Longitudinal research has highlighted that nearly half of young people with a clinically diagnosable 'disorder' are considered to have a 'disorder' when surveyed three years later, leading the authors to conclude that young people, who experience clinically significant mental health problems, have not been offered appropriate intervention at the earliest opportunity for maximal benefits over their lifetime (Meltzer, Gatward & Corbin, 2003). In-keeping with the aforementioned findings and message of Marmot (2010), Green et al.'s (2005) study demonstrated that children from households with the lowest 20% of incomes have a three-fold increased risk of mental health problems.

1.5.4. Mental Health Awareness in Schools.

Despite the findings suggesting insufficient attention from schools in the domain of mental health (National Children's Bureau, 2013), the Department for Education has published guidance addressing the need for schools to take a more holistic approach to the needs of their pupils; the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL): Improving Behaviour, Improving Learning' (Department for Education, 2005). In addition, the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) project acknowledged the interconnectedness of a child's development (Department for Children, School and Families, 2008) However, as presented, recent clarification (Department of Health, 2013/ 2014), points towards the role that schools must do more to respond to the research findings summarised above. A key document, 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff' (Department for Education, 2014a), demonstrates the expectations that are being placed on schools to:

1**. Promote** positive mental health;

2. **Identify** mental health difficulties as early as possible; and

3. Consider **appropriate intervention**; including involvement from outside agencies e.g. CAMHS or voluntary organisations.

A recent report, 'Promoting, Protecting and Improving the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People', incorporates the work of the 'Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce' (Department of Health, 2015), with involvement from the Department for Education. The Taskforce identified key areas, including the promotion of resilience, prevention and early intervention efforts, suggesting increasing use of voluntary services. 'Key aspirations' that the Government wishes to see implemented by 2020 include:

- Providing mental health training for school staff enabling problems to be identified and children supported;
- Improving access for children and young people who are particularly vulnerable.

This research directly responds to a range of calls addressed above:

1. The group at the heart of this project, '*Mighty Me',* responds to the recommendations that **schools attend to mental health promotion and early intervention,** through collaboration with a local charity, to provide children with additional support.

2. This project seeks **to invite children's perspective in their school setting**, whereby the school context is one in which there are significant barriers to learning.

1.6.   '*Mighty Me'*

A small children's charity has collaborated with the school at the centre of this project to offer '*Mighty Me'.*

'*Mighty Me'* is a nine week NTG programme carried out with children between the ages of eight and eleven years, referred by professionals working within the schools. The children referred have a range of experiences; some have

experiences of abuse and their resultant effects, or have been affected by bereavement or bullying. The professionals refer children who are considered to hold problem-saturated stories about their lives, to the extent that the child and others around them are finding it difficult, at times, to differentiate the child from the problem.

The group is based on a programme originally developed for children who have experienced sexual abuse (Want, 1999). Through the use of play, art and a vivid imagination, *'Mighty Me'* seeks 'to implement strategies that give rise to feelings of personal agency, serenity, mirth and appreciation for others' (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2009). The group has been running for over six years and has generated a wealth of positive feedback from children, parents and teachers (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2009). A breakdown of the group sessions is presented in **Appendix A.**

1.7.   Understanding 'Mightiness'

As described above, good mental health has been considered as extending beyond the absence of emotional difficulties (The Mental Health Foundation, 2007). Despite this, Fredrickson (2004) highlights that, historically, negative emotions appear to have dominated the research field. She draws attention to positive emotions producing 'optimal functioning' within the present moment, as well as over extended time periods, through the 'broaden and build' theory of positive emotions, highlighting a link to personal resilience (Fredrickson, 2004).

1.7.1. The 'Broaden and Build' Theory of Positive Emotions

The 'broaden-and-build' theory examines the form and function of a set of positive emotions, including joy, interest, contentment and love (Fredrickson, 2004). A central aspect is that these positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire:

  'joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore,

  contentment sparks the urge to savour and integrate, and love sparks a

recurring cycle of each of these urges within safe, close relationships'
(Fredrickson, 2004: 1).

Such positive emotions serve as 'undoers' of the associated arousal and
narrowing of attention within the nervous system that is linked with negative
emotions (Fredrickson and Levenson, 1998). Restoring physiological activation
to levels prior to the kinds of physiological arousal associated with the stress
responses (flight, fight or freeze), positive emotions are considered to re-
establish psychological openness to a greater range of possible actions
(Fredrickson, 2004).

1.7.2. <u>Building Personal Resources</u>

Fredrickson (2004) suggests that the second aspect of the 'broaden and build'
theory concerns the consequences of these broadened mindsets; by
broadening an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, for example
through play, positive emotions foster the discovery of creative actions and
social bonds, which consequently build the individual's personal resources.
Exploring the example of play, physical resources of strength and co-ordination
are fostered alongside social resources, developed through building strong
bonds and attachments (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna & Heyman, 2000;
Fredrickson, 2004). Intellectual resources develop through problem solving
skills and learning new information, whilst psychological resources are
developed through optimism, a sense of identity and goal orientation
(Fredrickson, 2003). Crucially, these personal resources function as reserves
that can be drawn upon later to aid successful coping as the personal resources
gained during periods of positive emotions are durable; they outlast the
transient emotional states that led to their initial development (Fredrickson,
2004). These resources can be drawn upon in different emotional states
enabling individuals to become more creative, resilient and socially integrated
(Fredrickson, 2004).

1.7.3. The 'Upward Spiral': Becoming 'Mighty'

In this way, the 'broaden-and-build' theory proposes an 'upward spiral'; positive emotions lead to increased resources which in turn lead to more positive emotions, and the spiral continues in this way (Kok, Catalino and Fredrickson, 2008). Thus, frequent positive emotions are seen as keys for the development of future wellbeing (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, and Finkel, 2008). Furthermore, within difficult times, experiencing positive as well as distressing thoughts and feelings, helps with coping with adversity and improves the possibility of emotional well-being and future coping (Fredrickson, 2004). Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) highlight three types of coping that allow individuals to experience positive affect during stressful periods: positive reappraisal (reframing a situation with a positive perspective); goal directed problem focused coping (addressing a problem through pinpointing realistic goals, their internal resources and small steps that can be taken to address the challenging situation); and contemplating ordinary events with positive meaning (identifying what people have done that has been helpful or which relates to something they value).

Hutchinson and Pretelt (2009) highlight the range of techniques adopted in 'Mighty Me', such as play, art, and making space for children to engage with their imaginations, which ultimately broaden repertoires of action and build personal resources leading to an 'upward spiral' experience for the children and those around them. Furthermore, they highlight an aim to create opportunities for children to problem solve by setting realistic goals and identifying internal and external resources. In this way, change that happens is conceptualised within a social context so that the positive emotions are considered as transforming not only the children, but also their families and school communities (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2009). Through bringing the voices of teachers, family members and friends in to the room, the aim is to build a sense of community 'in which children experience a sense of interconnection and oneness with significant others' (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2009).

Of further importance, facilitators are aware of ensuring children can articulate and understand their negative feelings so that these can be both normalised and validated; in this way, there is a moving back and forth between negative and positive emotions enabling children to explore and more easily withstand some of the emotional pain that characterises their experiences (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2009).

1.8. Why Narrative Practice?

1.8.1. <u>The Use of Narrative in the Presentation of Self</u>

I have been influenced by the argument that the essence of humanness has, over time, come to be described as 'the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative' (Johnstone, 2001: 635). This can be traced back to the practice of guiding moral behaviour through the reciting of parables and fables (Crossley, 2000). A narrative is regarded as a story, containing a sequence of events known as plots, relating to things that have happened, or are happening, and, thus, narratives take place within or over a time period (Berger, 1997; Sarbin, 1986).

Research indicates that children are enthusiastic and vivid storytellers and listeners from a young age, and that a story is a way of understanding oneself-in-the-world (Engel, 2006), as it represents a system for linking individual human actions and events, in-line with one's context, into an integrated whole (Polkinghorne, 1988), and thus, draws upon significant social, cultural and psychological meanings (Ozyildirim, 2009). McCabe (1997) argues that by four years of age, most children are able to tell stories that follow an order of causal events, with a beginning and an end, involving a problem and its resolution.

1.8.2. <u>The 'Narrative Turn'</u>

Riessman (2008) outlines the work of Langellier (2001) who suggests that key movements influenced the 'turn' in approaching narrative as an object of study, from the 1960's, including the criticisms around 'positivist' modes of inquiry, and

the 'identity movements' of marginalized groups in society; She argues that the 1980's saw the field 'flower' with landmark contributions. Labov and Waletzky (1972) influenced the ideas of Mishler (1986) concerning the importance of the interview as a narrative encounter, as shall be explored, whilst Polkinghorne (1988: 182) suggested that the significance of one's past events can change if a different plot is used to 'configure' them.

What is key to the 'paradigmatic shift' is a dynamic interchange between disciplines (Riessman, 2008). NT has therefore been influenced by the rich interchange between anthropology (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967; Bateson, 1972; Meyerhoff, 1982/1986), ethnography (Bruner, 1986), post-modern philosophy (Foucault, 1979/1980), and social learning theories (Vygotsky, 1962/1978). Thus, the move from structuralist to post-structuralist thought is a key philosophical shift that informs NT; Busch, Strong and Lock (2011) have suggested this reflects a step away from the assumptions of knowledge neutrality, in favour of the position that assumes people contextually produce knowledge through an interactional process.

1.8.3. <u>Narrative Therapy</u>

In honouring the above influences, NT holds that people give meaning to their lives through storying their experience, and their interactions with others are instrumental in the shaping of their lives and relationships, through the performance of these stories (White, 1988; White & Epston, 1990). The theoretical construct of viewing 'problems as separate from people' (White, 1987), is a central part of the approach and draws upon the linguistic practice of 'externalizing' the problem (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990). White and Epston (1990) suggest that it is possible to identify five stages in the approach of narrative therapy; (1) defining the problem, (2) mapping the influence of the problem, (3) evaluating and justifying the effects of the problem,

(4) identifying 'unique outcomes', known as exceptions (or 'sparkling moments'),[6] and (5) 're-storying'.[7]

It has, however, been suggested that the stages are not meant to be understood as having clear boundaries given the recursive nature of the approach (Butler, Guterman & Rudes, 2009; McGuinty, Armstrong, Nelson & Sheeler, 2012). Law (2013) has proposed that the narrative process can be separated into two parts; (1) 'externalizing conversation' and (2) 're-authoring'. Drawing upon Vygotsky's 'zones of proximal development' (1962), White (2000) has suggested that the therapist scaffolds small context-specific changes to enable the child's journey through zones of proximal development. This is apparent throughout the two parts of the narrative process (Law, 2013). Furthermore, Combs and Freedman (2012) have highlighted that there are key ideas that are especially important as guides in the process of NT. For example, the 'narrative metaphor' allows for the development of multiple story lines, working to highlight different possibilities (Combs and Freedman, 2012). The process of 'externalization' enables the identification of 'historical unique outcomes'; opportunities to examine defiance towards the power of the problem (White & Epston, 1990), providing the opening for the co-development of the alternative story (Law, 2013). This follows the 'scaffolding conversation map' set forth by White (2007). In this way, the 'problem-saturated plot' can be 'thinned down', whilst the alternative story's 'counter-plot', can be 'thickened', through examining the characters and circumstances (Freeman et al., 1997). This allows for the identification of the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) within the story.

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[6] White (1989/1997), and White and Epston (1990) draw upon Goffman's (1961) identification of 'unique outcomes'.
[7] White and Epston (1990) draw upon Myerhoff's (1982) concept of 're-authoring' in the proposal of 're-storying'.

1.8.4. Narrative Therapy Application in Groups

1.8.4.1. The 'Mighty Me' Group

In *'Mighty* Me', 'externalizing conversation' draws upon the use of play, art and interaction between group members, exploring the way the problem operates in the child's life, thus aiming to enable the child to see themselves as separate from the problem. The child's influence over the problem is explored to increase the child's sense of competence, helping children move towards holding a 'relationship' with a problem, rather than being defined as 'inherently being a problem' (Freeman et al. 1997). 'Mighty qualities', considered to reflect 'unique outcomes' are identified, forming the opening for the alternative story (Law, 2013).

The 're-authoring' part of the narrative process is viewed as a 'co-authorship' of this emerging alternative story and the new possibilities and vision brought forth by this story (Law, 2013). *'Mighty Me'* therefore aims to build personal resources, allowing for the natural strengthening of social bonds as children navigate challenges together (Hutchinson and Pretelt, 2010).

1.8.4.2. The 'Tree of Life' Group

The 'tree of life' is a tool that uses 'different parts of a tree as metaphors to represent the different aspects of our lives', reflecting a hopeful approach (Ncube & Denborough, 2007). This approach enables people to speak about their lives through drawing their own 'tree of life': the ground contains aspects of their current lives; strengths and abilities are mapped onto the trunk of the tree, which may be identified by the observations of others; hopes and dreams for the future are written in the branches of the trees, along with the names of important people from the present and past on different leaves; and, gifts that the person has been given are written in the fruits of the tree (Hughes, 2013). Through narrative questioning, people are supported in building rich descriptions of their lives, identifying their own resources and skills, exploring the social history of how these developed, and contemplating how these can aid moving them towards their preferred futures (Hughes, 2013). The participants can then join their trees into a 'forest of life' and, in groups, discuss some of the

'storms' that have influenced their lives and the ways that they respond to protect themselves and others (Ncube & Denborough, 2007).

The approach has been used with children, young people and adults in many different contexts, including groups of refugees and immigrants; groups of young people who have been expelled from school; and adults who are experiencing mental health struggles (Ncube & Denborough, 2007).

1.9. Narrative Analysis

1.9.1. The Value of Qualitative Research with Children

As outlined above, the Child Health Strategy, 'Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures' (Department of Health, 2009b), highlights the significance of involving children in issues that affect their lives, and forms a part of the 'Healthy Child Programme' (Department of Health, 2009a). In-keeping with this focus, Willig (2008) argues that qualitative research is concerned with how people make sense of the world. Griffin and Phoenix (1994) have argued that qualitative research has a number of strengths that are considered here in the context of inviting children's perspectives: it makes room for flexibility in the carrying out of a particular study; it can allow for the exploration of sensitive areas if a relationship of trust builds up between researcher and participant; and it allows researchers to make connections between different domains of an individual's lives, for example, school and home life. Riessman (2008) argues that whilst many forms of qualitative research involve segmenting information into categories, Narrative Analysis seeks to privilege the integrity of an event or individual through a more holistic examination.

1.9.2. Narrative Analysis: Setting the Scene

Narrative Analysis will be used in this study in-light of what I have presented about the underpinnings of the narrative method, considered of crucial importance in examining the ways in which children are meaningfully involved in research about their lives. In honouring an ethical approach to analysis,

Riessman (1993) highlights the importance of finding ways to work with material, from the spectrum of narrative approaches, so the 'original narrator is not effaced' (1993: 34). Whilst the suggestion that everyone not only has a story, but also the right to tell their story (Bamberg, 2010) is a central tenet of this thesis, attention to how the researcher contributes to the construction of meaning (Willig, 2008) must continually be explored given that we 'hear voices' that we interpret (Riessman, 1993), and given my position as the researcher. This highlights the importance of ongoing reflexivity, in-light of my participatory role in the research (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). A detailed description of the analytic procedure is presented in Chapter 3. Here, I highlight my involvement in the analytic procedure, as the 're-teller'.

The specific analytic approach adopted in this study is 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry' (NOI: Hiles & Čermák, 2008; Hiles, Čermák & Chrz, 2009/2010) whereby a dynamic framework allows for the exploration of the 'inter-relationship' between the 'told', the 'telling' and the 'teller' (Hiles et al., 2009: 108). In adopting the musical metaphor put forth by Riessman (2008), the researcher slows the composition down to notice how the composition achieves its effects. Hiles and Čermák (2008) point to the importance of approaching NOI through respecting a 'double signature'; attending to the meaning-making process carried out by the participant, whilst acknowledging that this happens in contextual circumstances. This resonates with my approach to undertaking this investigation, described above. In highlighting my role as the 're-teller', it follows that the analysis becomes the 're-telling', whilst the outcome of the analyses can be considered as the 're-told' (see **Figure 1**). As Mishler (1995:117) argues, 'we do not find stories; we make stories. We retell our respondents' accounts through our re-descriptions'.

Figure 1: The approach to analysis; drawing upon 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry' (adapted from Hiles et al., 2009)
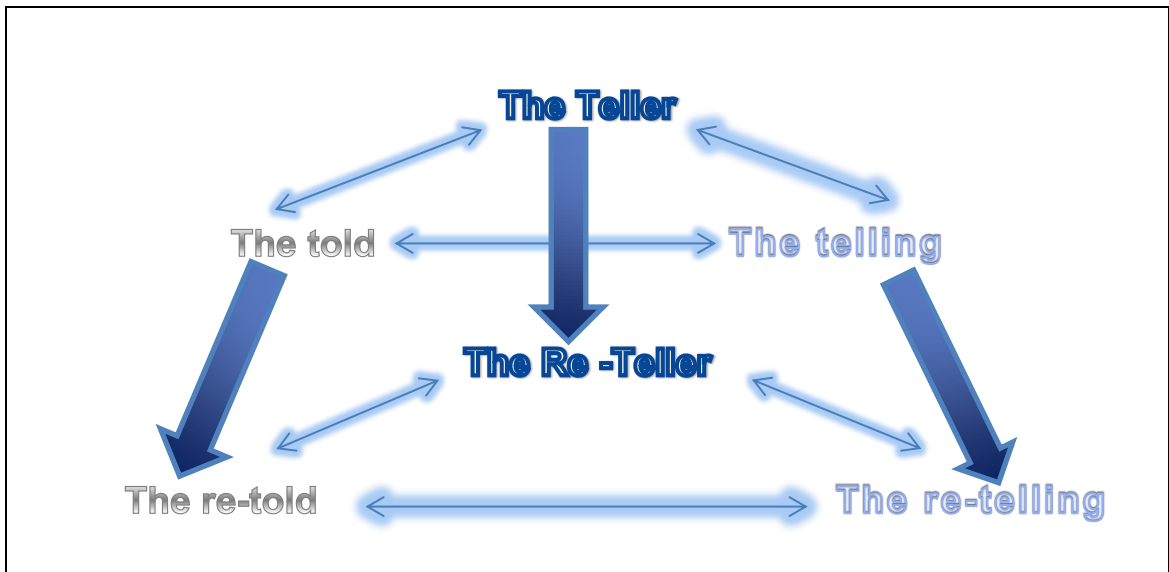
1.10. Research into Narrative Practice with Children

1.10.1. Literature Review Strategy

The aim of a review of the literature was to establish what is known about children's involvement in Narrative Therapy. Searches using the 'EBSCO PsycINFO', 'ScienceDirect', 'PubMed', and 'Web of Science' databases were carried out during August to December 2014. The publication dates entered were from 1988 to 2014. Key search terms were 'Narrative Practice' and 'children', 'Narrative Practice' and 'young people', 'Narrative Therapy' and 'children', 'Narrative Therapy' and 'young people'.

1.10.2. Summary of the Literature

1.10.2.1. Case Studies
In light of the post-positivist theoretical influences that comprise NT (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2008), most of the support for the approach is from qualitative methodology or case examples. There is an expansive case study literature which is continuing to provide a detailed understanding of specific applications (e.g. Focht & Beardslee, 1996; Volker, 1999; Larner, 2003; McLuckie, 2005;

Cashin, 2008; Butler, Guterman & Rudes, 2009; Matsuba, 2010). Despite criticism surrounding the inability to generalise findings from case studies (Evans, Turner & Trotter, 2012), they provide us with a rich account of a person's journey through a therapeutic intervention.

1.10.2.2. Separating the Narrative Process

There are attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of NT for young people using larger samples of participants, predominantly gaining insights from parents and professionals involved in the young person's care. Divergence emerges in the literature in relation to the particular aspect of NT regarded as most relevant. Silver, Williams, Worthington and Phillips (1998) conducted a retrospective audit of therapy for soiling in children, highlighting that parents and GP's reported on the benefits of the 'externalizing' practices, at six month follow up. Ramey, Tarulii, Frijters and Fisher (2009) also demonstrated the occurrence and distribution of 'externalizing' behaviours in therapy sessions with eight children. However, Besa (1994) found improved parent-child relations, in five of the six families that participated in their study, emphasising the importance of tasks to induce 'unique outcomes', whilst O'Connor, Meakes, Pickering and Schuman (1997) used ethnographic interviews with family members and highlighted the value of therapist's emphases on 'unique outcomes'.

1.10.2.3. Further Insights from Parents and Professionals

There is anecdotal evidence that a narrative community approach to address childhood stealing behaviours reduced stealing in forty cases (Seymour & Epston, 1989). Stock, Mares, and Robinson (2012) report that engaging Aboriginal parents and their children (four to seven-year-olds), through narrative approaches and expressive techniques, aided self-expression enabling parents to develop their parenting strategies.

From the perspectives of professionals, eight therapists reported finding the approach to be helpful in reducing the presenting problem with children at a paediatric and child psychiatry clinic (O'Connor, Davis, Meakes, Pickering & Schuman, 2004), and narrative approaches are recommended for children who have experienced sexual abuse (McKenzie, 2005). Rahmani (2012) demonstrated

the efficacy of a narrative approach in reducing the reading errors in children with dyslexia by 60% over a five month period, utilising teacher ratings.

1.10.2.4. Integrating Narrative Therapy with Other Interventions
Kozlowska and Khan (2011) highlighted the value of NT accompanied with cognitive-behavioural intervention in young people with unexplained chronic pain. Waters (2011) integrated NT and behavioural interventions to help families with children considered to be seeking of attention. Douge (2010) demonstrated that combining the principles of NT with the art of scrapbooking helped children (nine to twelve-year-olds) to regain optimism for the future.

1.10.2.5. Narrative Therapy Group Interventions
Looyeh and Matin (2006) found a NTG intervention for twenty children (eleven-year-olds), with learning disabilities, resulted in significant improvements in coping strategies. Sheibani, Looyeh, and Delavar (2007) found parental and teacher reports of a reduction in symptoms of depression in girls (ten to eleven- year-olds).

Looyeh and Kamali and Shafieian (2012) presented post-treatment ratings by teachers as evidence of the efficacy of NTG; it was seen to have a significant effect on reducing symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in pre-adolescent girls. Kamali and Looyeh (2013) explored the effectiveness of a NTG targeting the behaviours of a small sample of nine to eleven-year-old girls, receiving diagnoses of ADHD. Looyeh, Kamali, Ghasemi and Tonawanik, (2014) investigated a NTG with twenty-four boys (ten to eleven-year- olds) with a diagnosis of social phobia. Improvements were found, one week after completion of treatment and after thirty days, using parental and teacher ratings.

(Hughes, 2013) carried out a series of 'Tree of Life' groups for both parents and children in schools, for refugee populations. The need for the groups arose out of a concern about certain psychological treatments, which focus predominantly on vulnerability factors in refugee populations, and the effect that this can have on those they are attempting to help. The groups employed a strength-based narrative methodology, using the tree as a creative metaphor; this encouraged

parents and children to explore empowering stories about their lives, rooted in their cultural and social histories, and which enabled parents and children to develop shared, culturally congruent solutions to the issues they faced. Standardised measures were considered inappropriate due to such measures focussing on measuring symptom reduction and this incongruence with the strength-based approach taken in the group. Participants were asked for verbal feedback. The groups were found to benefit parents, children, and the school communities in which they took place. The responses indicated how people experienced them as positive through helping them to gain greater self-confidence, reinforcing of their identity and their resources, and transforming of aspects of their lives. The groups were considered to benefit the school environment by providing schools the opportunity to hear affirming stories about refugee students, and the children the opportunity to tell their stories in ways that invite pride.

1.10.2.6. Learning from Participants

Through 're-visiting' sessions, Young and Cooper (2008) invite young people to stop a video-recording of their session, to discuss aspects with the researcher. The authors suggest this represents a move towards 'practice based evidence' given the opportunities this presents to learn from participants.

1.11. Summary of the Key Issues and Justification for Further Research

It is possible to identify four main issues with the above mentioned literature:
1. **The child's perspective** - The most striking issue is that there appears to be inadequate attention given to the child's perspective, in light of findings predominantly documenting the reports of parents, teachers, therapists and GP's.
2. **Children in groups** - Studies describing a NTG approach solely invite perspectives from parents and teachers, and predominantly utilise pre and post-group rating scales.[8] This forum offers an opportunity for children to witness each other's journeys and inviting the child's account

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[8] Rose (2008) highlights political and epistemological reasons for a quantitative focus in research.

appears crucial. The 'tree of life' group (Hughes, 2013) is indicative of the value of encouraging the sharing of stories.

3. **The longer-term impact on the development of self-identity** - Examining the longer-term impact of using NT with young people may unearth a better understanding of the contribution of this approach on a child's emerging self-identity.

4. **The meaning-making frame in children** - Attending to the broader socio-political context within which children are situated cannot be divorced from attempts at understanding how children make sense of their experiences.

To address the above issues, the methodology of this research attempts to create a space for children's participation, holding in mind the following areas:

- A move towards 'dialogic mutuality' in research, through the practice of 'co-composing' with therapy participants, ultimately shaping therapy practice (Young & Cooper, 2008).

- Creating an opportunity for each participant to share their story has the potential for further therapeutic value for the participants themselves.

- Collaborating with children can thoughtfully inform the development of interventions within the school setting, in-light of the key policies described above.

- Collaborations with children may strengthen their position; as stated above, young people represent 'a muted' group (James & Prout, 1997).

1.12. Summary of Research Aims and Questions

This chapter has examined the current context of childhood and related concerns regarding the mental health of children. Illuminating the NT principles has also shaped this Chapter. It is argued that inviting children to participate in the research process about NT has the potential to strengthen our understanding of this approach with children.

To summarise, this research aims to respond to the above calls, in the context of '*Mighty Me*', through addressing the following two questions:

1. How do children describe the narrative process of becoming 'mighty'?
2. How do children represent themselves following a NTG intervention?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Chapter Preview

The first part of this chapter provides a brief account of 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry' (NOI) (Section 2.2), followed by details of the participants in this study (Section 2.3). An outline of the ethical framework and considerations central to this research are presented in Section 2.4.

In Section 2.5, the research procedure is explained with the aid of **Figure 2**, an adapted framework of NOI. This framework guides the reader through to the analytic procedure, forming part of the framework, which receives attention within Chapter 3.

2.2. The Narrative Approach to Analysis

In Section 1.2.3, I described my epistemological stance, argued to be in-keeping with the contextual meaning-making process central to NOI (Hiles & Čermák, 2008; Hiles et al., 2009/2010).

2.2.1. <u>'Narrative Oriented Inquiry'</u>

NOI comprises a diverse and complementary framework, developed through research on personal narratives. It seeks to understand how one imposes order on their experiences, through expanding upon what is 'told' in research, by also considering the 'telling' and the 'teller' (Hiles et al., 2009).

In highlighting the work of Ricoeur (1987/1991), Hiles et al. (2009) outline three features of 'narrative intelligence': 'a synthesis' of multiple events into a 'singular' story; a resolution of the tension between concord and discord into a 'unity'; and the construction of a 'configuration' from a temporal succession (2009: 109). They also describe Randall's (1999) perspective that 'narrative intelligence' has origins in childhood. Expanding upon these perspectives, they

propose attending carefully to the 'tellings' of one's stories. In this way, attention is given to how one is engaged 'in their own meaning-making' (Hiles et al., 2009: 110). Through using narratives, Hiles et al. propose that:

> 'individuals can actively participate in the *creation, compromise, celebration and configuration* of who they are' (2009: 110, *italics in original text*).

Thus, the importance of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982) within NT, alongside the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984), shall be considered given the opportunity for new understandings of oneself and one's context.

In-line with the author's recommendations (Hiles et al. 2010), the current research adapts the NOI framework and I have therefore sought to maintain a sense of flexibility and fluidity.

2.3. Participants

This section provides the reader with details of the 'tellers', the participants in the present study.

2.3.1. Inclusion Criteria

Children were required to have attended one of two '*Mighty Me'* groups that took place at their school. In-light of the research focus, participation in these two groups ensured that the children would be interviewed at a minimum of four months post-group involvement. The process of recruitment meant that ten months was the maximum amount of time since group participation.

The groups were offered to children between the ages of eight and eleven; these age ranges therefore comprised the inclusion criteria. The upper age limit was set as children were recruited from the primary school and it is not typical for children above the age of eleven to remain in attendance at a primary school. A particular diagnosis, levels of learning difficulty, or a child's gender, were not prerequisites for inclusion. As I am an English speaker and my role as

the researcher would require me to carry out a thorough analysis of the material, an ability to express oneself in English was a required prerequisite.

In-light of the findings of the school's recent Ofsted Report, the children who attended the *'Mighty* Me' groups had often experienced difficult circumstances within their home setting. The two Field Supervisors (FS), a Clinical Psychologist and a Counselling Psychologist, considered the research inappropriate for children in receipt of ongoing Social Care involvement due to safeguarding concerns. The referral into '*Mighty Me'* was made by a Special Support Assistant (SSA), working within the school, who highlighted individuals demonstrating a need for further emotional and behavioural support.

The groups were carried out with twelve children. The research was considered inappropriate for three children according to the exclusion criteria and thus, nine children were identified as potential participants. Parental or guardian consent, as described below, was received from eight participants. One child declined to participate. Seven children were interviewed and their data analysed. Five children have been included in this thesis. I chose the five accounts that could reflect the variety of narrative techniques that comprised the *'Mighty Me'* group.[9]

Mishler (1996) argues that Narrative Analysis does not use a 'sampling' procedure, preferring the approach of asking specific questions about particular lives. Within Critical Narrative Analysis, one of the interpretive perspectives adopted in this research, the central issue is that 'people's lives are highly specific, however strongly they might also relate to their status as social beings' (Emerson and Frosh, 2009: 17). Critical Narrative Analysis is founded on the detailed investigation of very small numbers of research 'subjects', whose processes of accounting and sense-making is seen as being of intrinsic interest, rather than as a source for generalizations (Emerson and Frosh, 2009).

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[9] Further attention is given to the ethical considerations inherent in this decision in the Critical Review section.

2.3.2. <u>Referral Information</u>

Subsequent to the consent process, I chose to limit the amount of information I received, prior to meeting the child, regarding: each child's referral reason; their self-expressed wish to participate; the perspective of the parent/ guardian on their child's participation; and information regarding social circumstances. This decision was taken as I reflected upon the suggestion that we all develop understandings from an influenced position (Young & Cooper, 2008). As a Trainee Psychologist, I hold pre-understandings about the concerns that have led a child to be referred. Upon completion of the interviews, I approached the FS for details (presented in **Table 1**).

Table 1: Referral details of the five participants including pseudonym and the number of months since group completion when interview participation occurred

Pseudonym	Reason for referral to group: expressed view of referrer within school	Self-expressed reason to attend group	Parent expressed reason to attend	Number of months between group completion and interview
Felicity	Improve self-esteem; Help to make better choices;	Reduce shyness	Express feelings more freely	10 months
Eddie	Improve confidence and self-esteem; Address feelings of nervousness	Improve confidence;	Parent absent	10 months
Sahra	Improve confidence; Help to be calmer within friendships	Upset by others	Low confidence	7 months
Semira	Improve confidence; Help to speak out more	Improve confidence	Parent absent	6 months
Nyah	Improve confidence; Help to speak out more	Improve confidence	Consider Nyah's relationship to having a diagnosis of diabetes	4 months

2.3.3. Demographic Details

I was mindful of the implications for anonymity when participant pseudonyms are presented alongside demographic details. Thus, **Table 2** presents information regarding the age, gender and ethnicity of the five children that participated in this study.

Table 2: Demographic details of the five participants

Age at interview (years)	Gender	Ethnicity
10	Female	Black African
10	Female	Black African
10	Female	Black Caribbean
10	Male	Black Caribbean
10	Female	White British

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The British Psychological Society's 'Code of Human Research Ethics' (British Psychological Society, 2010a) and The Social Research Association's 'Ethical Guidelines' (Social Research Association, 2003) were adhered to throughout this research. Attention was given to 'ethical symmetry'; this states that child participants should receive the same ethical entitlements as potential adult participants (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

2.4.1 Ethical Approval

A formal application for ethical approval was submitted to the University of East London (UEL) Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval was granted (**Appendix B**) and a copy was shared with the charity. The Chief Executive and FS gave approval following ethical approval from the UEL. Approval to recruit participants from the school, alongside the charity's involvement, was granted

after I provided an 'Information Form for School' (**Appendix C**) to the Head-teacher, and consequently received a signed 'Consent Form for School' (**Appendix D**). A copy of this confirmation was shared with the charity. The application for ethical approval highlighted that recruitment and data collection would be supervised by two FS from the charity, both of whom were facilitators in the group. Thus, each child was known to one or both FS. In-light of the social circumstances of some group attendees, this involvement was essential as the study was deemed inappropriate for some children.

2.4.2. <u>Establishing 'Ethical Symmetry'</u>

Lewis (2002) has highlighted six areas that should be given key consideration in establishing 'ethical symmetry' (Christensen & Prout, 2002). The following sections address how I have sought to adhere to these areas.

2.4.2.1. Access/Gatekeepers

I attended a number of school-based meetings, predominantly with a SSA. It was also possible for other school professionals to hear about the research. Attention was given to the opportunity for the children, with whom I would potentially interview, to meet me and to see me in their school context, before they were asked for their participation.

2.4.2.2. Consent

Gray and Winter (2011) suggest that when an adult's permission is given more importance than a child's, this can amplify power differentials between the child and the researcher and, thus, advise researchers to seek 'consent', rather than 'assent' from children, in addition to consent from their parent or guardian. I sought three levels of informed consent: first, the Head-teacher; second, a parent/guardian; and third, each child.

The Head-teacher was provided with an 'Information Form for School', which included information regarding the planned response to any risk issues (**Appendix C**), as discussed below. He signed a 'Consent Form from School' to indicate his agreement (**Appendix D**).

The FS then made contact with the parent/guardian for each child who had completed the first group. They were told brief details about the research, and consent was sought to be contacted by myself, the researcher, at a later date. At the close of the second group, the parent/guardian for each child was approached by the group facilitators in person.[10] Consent was also sought to be contacted at a later date. A parent or guardian for children in both groups, were asked to consent, under the Data Protection Act (Great Britain, 1998), before the FS handed over any identifiable information to me.

An 'Information Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' (**Appendix E**) and a 'Consent Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' (**Appendix F**) were produced. Similarly, an 'Information Form for Participant' (**Appendix G**) and a 'Consent Form for Participant' (**Appendix H**) were designed. In-keeping with the consideration of 'access/gatekeepers' and the issue of *informed* 'consent', I approached the SSA to ensure this was friendly yet appropriately informative.

The 'Information Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' stated that their child would be given an accessible version and that they would be asked to read this with their child. This described the need for receipt of parental or guardian consent prior to meeting with their child. It also made clear that at the beginning of the interview, I would read the 'Information Form for Participant' with each child, before asking whether he/she wishes to participate in the interview. Parent(s)/guardian(s) were therefore informed that should they consent and their child does not, the interview would not go ahead.

The SSA sent out these forms to the identified participants and their parent(s)/guardian(s). I carried out a coffee morning, with the SSA, for parent(s)/guardian(s), in order to answer any questions about the research (see **Appendix I** for the Invitation Letter).

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[10] The second group was on-going at the time ethical approval was granted.

The signed 'Consent Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' was collected by the SSA. The 'Consent Form for Participant' was considered at the outset of the interview; I emphasised that their involvement did not depend on their parent or guardian consenting. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw their involvement, take breaks or reschedule. It was outlined in all three sets of Information and Consent Forms that should the child, or parent or guardian, withdraw involvement after a certain date (when data analysis was planned to commence), the anonymised information the child had provided would be included in the analysis.

Full details of anonymity were provided in all Information and Consent Forms, and it was stated that confidentiality would be breached, in consultation with the FS, upon any concerns about the safety of a child or an adult

2.4.2.3. Confidentiality/Anonymity

I was provided with the names of potential participants whose parent or guardian were willing to be contacted. Anonymity was attended to through the use of the confidential code assigned to each child by the charity, in all email correspondence. Clinical files were not accessed.

The signed 'Consent Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' was collected by the SSA and kept in a locked cabinet at the school site, separate from any data collected. The signed 'Consent Form for Participant' was collected at the outset of the interview and was also kept in the same locked cabinet. They will be destroyed following final participant involvement after the feedback from analysis.

In highlighting the issue of pseudonyms, Dockett, Einarsdottir, and Perry (2011) propose that children may feel positive emotions following their contributions, wishing for this to be acknowledged. However, they argue that a reluctance to apply pseudonyms must be exercised cautiously, in-light of the issue of how children may feel in the future, should the information remain attainable. I chose to maintain confidentiality through fully anonymising all transcripts and field notes, and assigning all participants and professionals a pseudonym. As the

research progressed, some participants were invited to choose their pseudonym, in the spirit of 'co-composing' (Young and Cooper, 2008).

All information was stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Great Britain, 1998). Digital records were stored on a password-protected computer and each individual file was password protected. The recordings were deleted from the recording device and they were only available to myself, as the researcher. This procedure took place after the interviews at the school location. The recordings will be erased following completion of examination of the research. I will hold anonymised transcripts for a period of up to five years, providing an opportunity for preparation of the research findings for publication. Pseudonym details were kept on a password protected file on my private password protected computer. I carried out all transcription and each individual file containing a transcript was password protected. The drawings that were produced were scanned and saved as password protected files on my computer. Access to anonymised transcripts and to pictures was limited to the researcher, supervisors and examiners, and this was explained in all Information and Consent Forms. It was explained to participants that the pictures would be kept until the close of the research project (the end of their academic year) when their pictures would then be returned to them.

2.4.2.4. Recognition/Feedback

I gave thought to MacDonald's (2013) argument that researchers should continually check with children, so as to ensure that their attempts at understanding make sense to children. In the interviews where drawing took place, I spoke with the child as they drew, to gain a comprehension of the meanings which the children intended.

2.4.2.5. Ownership

In-line with MacDonald (2013), acknowledgement that the art work belonged to the children was stressed and I explained that whilst I would collect the drawings initially, at the close of the research project their pictures would be returned to them.

2.4.2.6. Social Responsibility

In-keeping with Narrative Interviewing (Mishler 1986; Murray, 2008) and 'co-composing', I considered my responsibility to be guided by the child in each interview, rather than remaining fixed to an interview schedule.

2.4.3. <u>Participant Distress and Protection of Participants</u>

The charity's 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures' (**Appendix J**) was followed alongside the 'University of East London Safeguarding Policy of Children and Vulnerable Adults' (**Appendix K**), and the 'Safeguarding Policy' of the school (**Appendix L**).

There were no potential risks identified to participants. The two FS are both psychologists with involvement in the groups, and knew the children well. We discussed that it would be essential to look out for signs that a child is becoming distressed, and ask whether they wish to terminate the interview. Clinical judgement would also be drawn upon, should the child explain that they wish to continue the interview and this is deemed unsuitable in light of the presenting issues. We agreed that as the interviews were carried out at the child's school, should immediate risk issues arise during the course of the interview, I would liaise with the SSA. A FS was also available via telephone. It was agreed that the above plan of action would be followed, informing the relevant parties, should it become apparent that a parent or guardian is considered at risk.

2.5. Procedure

The adapted model of NOI (Hiles and Čermák, 2008) used in this research is presented. **Figure 2** outlines a breakdown of this model; alphabetical boxes that can be consulted to aid the reading of this section. Details within **A** to **F** are described in this section. At the beginning of Chapter 3, the reader will find an outline of **G, H** and **I**.

Figure 2: Model of 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry' (adapted from Hiles and Čermák, 2008, for purposes of current research and alphabetical breakdown added to aid presentation of methodology)

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  A.  Research Questions                  │ ←──┐
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
                                    ↓                               │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
                    │  B. Preparation for the Narrative        │    │
                    │     Interview: Recruitment               │    │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
                                    ↓                               │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
                    │  C. Interviews as 'Narrative Occasions'  │    │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
                                    ↓                               │
              ──┐   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
                │   │  D. Transcribing Audio Text             │    │
                │   └─────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
                │                   ↓                               │
                │   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐  ──┤
                │   │  E. The Compilation of a Raw Transcript  │    │
                │   └─────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
                │                   ↓                               │
              ──┘   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
                    │  F. Persistent Engagement with the Text  │    │
                    │  (re-readings and the compilation of a   │  ──┘
                    │  summary of the interview)               │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    ↓
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  G. Narrative Analysis                   │
                    │  (the working transcript)                │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↙           ↘
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  H. Four Interpretive Perspectives:      │
                    │     (i) Fabula - Sjuzet                  │
                    │     (ii) Holistic - Form                 │
                    │     (iii) Categorical - Form             │
                    │     (iv) Critical Narrative Analysis     │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↑           ↑
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  I.'Transparency'                        │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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A: Research Questions

The reader is reminded of the two research questions:

1. How do children describe the narrative process of becoming 'mighty'?
2. How do children represent themselves following a NTG intervention?

B: Preparation for the Narrative Interview: Recruitment

Participants were recruited from two '*Mighty Me*' groups; the first group ran from September to December 2013, and the second group from January to April 2014. Both groups took place at one school, as contextualised in the Introduction chapter.

Recruitment occurred with the assistance of both SSA and FS, given their co-facilitation of the two groups and in-light of the research being unsuitable for some attendees. As stated above, the FS made contact with the parent or guardian of children for whom the study was deemed suitable. Consent to be contacted at a later date with further details of the research was gained.

C: Interviews as 'Narrative Occasions'

As the researcher, I interviewed each participant on one occasion. One participant consented provided a support staff could accompany her. The interviews took place at the primary school, in a private room.

The approach of NOI (Hiles et al., 2009) highlights the importance of a narrative style of interviewing where the aim is to generate detailed accounts (Mishler, 1986). Furthermore, Riessman suggests researchers follow participants down the paths they take; this can enable researchers to 'forge dialogic relationships and greater communicative equality' (2008: 26). She also highlights the need for attentive listening and emphasises that preconceptions come to the fore through such engagement in the interview process: this is particularly prevalent when interviewing across age, class, race, religion or geographical divides.

The Approach to Interviewing

Murray (2008) expands upon Mishler's (1986) approach, highlighting that the design of a narrative interview should allow 'latitude' for the participant to

develop the narrative account. Whilst a scripted interview guide was not constructed prior to the interview, congruent with a focus on eliciting the stories around the theme of becoming 'mighty', an outline interview schedule was designed (**Appendix M**). The following are example questions:

- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.
- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.

Engel (2006) suggests that a more open-ended naturalistic questioning technique should be adopted to elicit stories from young children, beginning questions in the following way:

- Can you tell me about…?
- I would like to hear about…

My approach to the interview was influenced by my clinical skills working with children. If the context for conversation is 'warmed', participants may feel more able to join the relationship more wholeheartedly (Burnham, 2005), and Engel (2006) highlights being curious about what the child may be thinking about his or her listener. These views led me to reflect upon my position as an adult in the school setting, and wondered whether children may see me as a teacher. I described to each child that this was not the case, rather, that I was keen to learn from whatever they may like to teach me.

Inviting the Children to Draw as Part of the Interviews
Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller (2005) argue that research with children demands flexibility and creativity from the researcher, and the method which they choose to collect data. They state that using a range of research strategies to engage children is essential as this allows for respect to be given to children's agency as 'social actors' and as 'active participants in the creation of their own worlds of meaning'. Indeed, Mason and Danby (2011) highlight the paradigm shift in child research; a shift from the child as the object of research, to the child as an actor in the research. Lutrell (2003), reflecting upon her personal experiences of interviewing, has suggested that a singular approach may not allow for 'unified or linked stories'. To fully engage the participants in

her study, she designed a richer set of activities to allow greater opportunity to explore how her participants were representing themselves.

Irwin and Johnson (2005) advise considering the expressional style of each child. Within the present study, my aim was to offer the child the opportunity to draw, as a complement to speaking. I therefore set out a range of drawing materials, inviting the child to draw at any time. If they chose to draw, I joined them and drew whilst we spoke in my attempt to establish 'communicative equality' (Riessman, 2008). In-keeping with the focus put forth by MacDonald (2013), this study utilises drawings in order to allow the children to be actors who communicate their understandings in ways that are meaningful to them. MacDonald (2009) highlights that drawings are a helpful tool for carrying out research with children as, for many children, they are familiar and non-threatening. Furthermore, the process of drawing can be carried out at the child's own pace, allowing them to add to the drawing as they see fit, and as such a quick response is not demanded (Einarsdottir, 2007). MacDonald (2009) also suggests that drawings enable the inner thoughts and feelings of children to be accessed, and while a child may have difficulty sharing this verbally, the story may be uncovered and addressed through drawing.

Throughout this study, there was an emphasis on listening to children as they draw, rather than solely trying to analyse their drawings, as the children's narratives and interpretations of their drawings opens up possibilities for understanding their constructions of their social worlds (Mason and Danby, 2011). In this way, types of questions could be held in mind, influenced by the work of Luttrell (2003). For example, questions about colour choice and features of design (aesthetic questions), and questions about the people or places the children chose to depict (autobiographical questions). This allows for the layered narrative elements to come forth; there is a story in the production of each image, and another story contained in different viewings by different audiences. I have sought to present the interpretations of the children alongside my own and to also encourage readers to interpret the images.

Riessman (2008) highlights advantages of Luttrell's (2003) study and I have, therefore, sought to adhere to the following two areas. Firstly, I have attempted to move back and forth among what is spoken throughout the interview and the drawings, investigating and inquiring about details in the images. Secondly, I have maintained a clear focus on the individual through considering how the child produces the image and what she/he creates in this image. Rather than considering the audience as a process that begins after an image is produced, here the focus is on the child, the investigator and the future readers.

Most interviews were between thirty and forty minutes in length. Due to my approach being guided by each child, one of the interviews included in this thesis was sixty-five minutes.

D and E: Transcribing Audio Text and the Compilation of a Raw Transcript
Individual interviews from audio text were transcribed to form a raw transcript, as soon as possible after each interview took place. Although the transcription and interpretation stages are set out as distinct stages in the model of NOI presented in **Figure 2,** it is not possible to separate them so concretely (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Bird, 2005) and I kept a reflective journal as I was transcribing (Riessman, 2008). Lapadat and Lindsay argue that transcription is an 'interpretive act', highlighting the need for flexibility within the process. I therefore adapted the 'Jefferson Lite' approach (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), to suit the interview context of a school setting. I sought to record all speech (interviewer and participant), uncompleted words (e.g. "sh..she"), vocal sounds (laughing), pauses, and inaudible speech. Non-verbal actions (e.g. drawing) were noted. Events happening outside of the room, considered part of the interview setting (e.g. noises of children), and any interruption to the interviews (e.g. staff entering the room), were recorded. **Appendix N** outlines the transcription conventions.

F: Persistent Engagement with the Text
Following a series of re-readings, I compiled a summary of the interview which included identifying a beginning, middle and end, loosely referring to the

account pre-group, during the group and post-group respectively (Murray, 2008).

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Chapter Preview

As a continuation of the NOI framework introduced in Chapter 2, the application of the analytic procedure shall now receive attention. This sets the scene for the presentation of the research results within Chapter 4.

3.2. Analytic Procedure

NOI integrates a spectrum of approaches: Herman and Vervaeck (2001); Labov and Waletsky (1967/1972); Lieblich, Tuval-Masihiach and Zibler (1998); Emerson and Frosh (2004). In-line with the author's recommendations (Hiles et al. 2010), the current research adapts the NOI framework, as demonstrated within this section.

Each interview was analysed according to the stages described below. In-line with **Figure 2** in Chapter 2 (pg.45), the stages adhere to the alphabetical presentation (**G**, **H**, **I**).

G: Narrative Analysis

As an adaptation to Hiles et al. (2009/2010), numbered lines were used to aid the presentation of interview segments, for the purposes of validation.[11] Line numbers presented after each quote refer to the location in the transcript. I then adopted the NOI method of compiling the working transcript; text was arranged down the left-hand side of each page, and annotations added on the right, drawing upon a Coding Notation (Hiles et al., 2009/2010, **Appendix O**) that corresponds to the interpretive perspectives presented below. **Appendix P** provides a worked example of the analytic procedure described.

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[11] Riessman (2008) suggests the need to present interview segments that provide context, rather than isolated quotes.

H: Four Interpretive Perspectives

The selected interpretive perspectives are:

(i) Fabula - Sjuzet

(ii) Holistic - Form

(iii) Categorical - Form

(iv) Critical Narrative Analysis

The 'situated-occasioned action context' of the 'telling' is attended to alongside a critical analysis of how the 'teller' positions themselves with respect to what is being 'told' (Hiles et al. 2009: 62). Through attending to these perspectives, it is possible to delineate a micro-level, meso-level and macro-level of analysis inherent in examining the research questions at the centre of this study. This development is outlined in conjunction with the description of these steps.

(i): Fabula - Sjuzet

Bruner (1986: 32) highlights a 'dialectical interaction' between the fabula and the sjuzet; the fabula is the 'virtual text', the sequence of events as they occurred, whilst the sjuzet is the structure which encapsulates how the story is 'told', through narrative grammars (Bruner, 1986: 32). The narrative grammars can be considered in-keeping with Hiles and Čermák's (2008) proposal that the sjuzet comprises the 'situated-occasioned action' of the 'telling' of the story, acknowledging commentary, emphasis, reflections and remarks. Thus, the fabula can be read as a coherent but 'flat' story, if considered independently of the sjuzet (Hiles and Čermák, 2008).

The separation of fabula and sjuzet is a first step in separating form and content, whilst the embedded nature of the form of narrative, within the content, is held in mind and re-explored at the later stage of analysis (Hiles and Čermák, 2008). Here, it is argued that the micro-analysis firstly takes place through attending to the separation of fabula and sjuzet. The recommendations of Hiles et al. (2009/2010) facilitate this, as presented below.

(1) The Fabula

The fabula was broken down into a sequence of events/episodes being related (**Fab1, Fab2, Fab3**…; each seen as a self-contained story). The functional

approach of Labov and Waletsky (1967) was adopted; the narrative structure was separated into six components with different functions (exploration and coding is described in the Coding Notation; **Appendix O**). The functions were elucidated by asking the questions described by Labov (1972:365–370):

1. The 'abstract' summarizes the whole story and consists of one or two clauses at the beginning of a narrative.

    'What was the narrative about?'

2. The 'orientation' or 'setting' gives information about the time, characters, and their activity.

    'Who was the person/persons involved in the narrative?',
    'Where/when did the events take place?'

3. The 'complicating action' clauses are narrative clauses that inform the audience about what happened, containing the high point of the story.

    'Then what happened?'

4. The 'resolution' informs the audience about how the 'complicating action' was resolved, marked by the release in tension.

    'What finally happened?'

5. The 'evaluation' forms the emotional side of the narrative and explains why the story is worth telling.

6. The 'coda' clauses are located at the end of narratives and indicate that the story is over, bridging the gap between the narrative proper and the present.

(2) The Sjuzet

Several readings of the text facilitated the identification of the sjuzet which was underlined. Where a word or phrase functioned both in the sjuzet and fabula, this was highlighted. The sjuzet can be examined as appearing to bracket the fabula as the readings of non-underlined text may read as a coherent but 'flat' story. It is proposed that through attending to the subtleties of the sjuzet, the way in which the narrator creates an identity position, by engaging in their own meaning-making, can be explored (Hiles, 2007).

As a development upon the sjuzet and fabula, I selected three additional techniques from within the NOI framework; *'Holistic - Form', 'Categorical - Form'* (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998), and *'Critical Narrative Analysis'*

(Emerson and Frosh, 2004). [12] It is argued that through attending to these interpretive perspectives, the stage of micro-analysis examining the sjuzet and fabula, receives detailed attention.

(ii): Holistic - Form

This approach also involved attending to the plot or fabula (Hiles and Čermak, 2008), and comprises the narrative typology, plot analysis, and narrative cohesion, as described by (Lieblich et al. 1998: 88-111):

- narrative typology:
    - o 'romance': the hero faces challenges en route to his goal and victory, whereby the essence of the journey is the struggle itself;
    - o 'comedy': the goal is the restoration of social order where the hero must overcome the obstacles that threaten the order.
    - o 'tragedy': the hero is defeated and ostracised from society;
    - o 'satire': a cynical perspective on the social order;
- plot analysis:
    - o 'progression': progression towards the present moment in the 'teller's' life in a steadily advancing manner;
    - o 'regression': a course of deterioration is present in the 'teller's' life;
    - o 'stable': a steady plot is apparent;
- narrative cohesion:
    - o a 'cohesive' story is a well-constructed story in terms of continuity and how the story works as a whole.

Murray (2008) proposes approaching schemes developed to convey the temporal quality of narratives with flexibility so as to encapsulate the shifts, or 'turning points' in a narrative account (Gergen & Gergen, 1984).

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[12] The NOI '*Holistic- Content*' and *'Categorical - Content'* interpretive perspectives *(*Lieblich et al., 1998) have not been formally adhered to, as a focus upon carrying out a plot analysis, alongside attention to the detail of the sjuzet, and the identity positions of the narrator were prioritised, in-line with the focus of this study.

(iii): Categorical – Form

This involved examining the sjuzet (Hiles and Čermak, 2008). Exploring the linguistic features that offer emphasis and style in the way the story is 'told' were addressed (Lieblich et al. 1998: 156), for example:

- past/present/future forms of verbs and transitions between them may be indicative of a speaker's sense of identification with the events being described;

- transitions between first-person, second-person, and third-person speakers may indicate a split between the 'speaking self' and the 'experiencing self', due to difficulty re-encountering a difficult experience;

- intensifiers e.g. 'really', 'very' or de-intensifiers such as 'maybe' or 'like';

- repetitions of words, sentences and ideas may indicate emotional charge;

(iv): Critical Narrative Analysis

The functionality of the narrator's story is attended to through this level of interpretation, directly building upon the '*Categorical - Form'* perspective (Hiles et al., 2010). In extending the work of Emerson and Frosh (2004), Hiles et al. (2010) suggest that narrative identity is constructed around what is often a series of inter-related identity positions (Hiles, 2007). Thus, attention was given to identity positioning, the social and institutional contexts and power issues. This perspective involved the identification and coding of identity positions (***IP; IP1, IP2, IP3***...) through:

- examining how the narrator positions himself/herself to each of the stories - active constructions of how he sees, or has seen, himself;

- considering the identity positions as *in the text*, by the way the stories are 'told', encapsulated by the sjuzet;

- considering the identity positions as a demonstration of a fundamental 'narrative intelligence'; synthesizing a series of events into a singular chain of stories, resolving the tension into a unity, and construction of a configuration by 'narrative reframing' (Hiles et al. 2010).

Through examining the embedded nature of the sjuzet within the content of the narrative, the identity positioning of the 'teller' was examined (Hiles et al.,

2009/2010). Within my role as the 'reteller', I have attended to the micro-level of analysis enabling the identification of the identity positions, as suggested by the authors of NOI. From here, it is proposed that a meso-level of analysis can serve as a bridge from the identification of these identity positions, to illuminate the research questions at the centre of this study, the macro-level of analysis.

I: Transparency

Hiles and Čermák (2008) argue that the inquiry process must invite ongoing reflexivity and transparency, given that the researcher has a participatory role in the inquiry.

The Researcher: The 'Re-Teller'

I have sought to make explicit my own motivations that have been integral in my journey to undertaking this research. Thus far, the reader is invited to refer back to the personal and professional context described at the outset. In addition, some ongoing reflections and tensions about involving children in research were addressed within Chapter 2, and shall be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

I held in mind Afuape's (2011) account of the social GRAACCEES; this serves as a reminder of the need to reflect upon the social influences of gender, religion, age, ability, class/caste, colour (skin), ethnicity, education/employment, sexuality and spirituality, as a way of orienting us in aiding our reflections (Afuape, 2011). As a white, female, twenty-nine year old, I was mindful I may share many characteristics with the child's teaching staff, as described above; through describing the research as being carried out as part of my studies, I introduced the idea that I was wishing to learn from them. As I seek to expand upon, I have been mindful of the social influences that may have enabled certain stories to be performed in specific ways, while others may have been unintentionally silenced.

The Research Context and Process of Analysis: The 'Re-Telling'

Josselson (1996) reminds us that we write as scholars, about our participants, for our peers, and it is crucial to consider the academic audience in this context. It is

plausible that the 're-telling' is influenced by the constraints on the presentation of this research. This will be examined in further detail in Chapter 5.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: THE 'RE-TELLING'

4.1. Chapter Preview

I view my role as the researcher as interwoven with my role as the 're-teller'. Within Section 4.2, I present a 're-telling' of each child's 'telling', integrating the interpretive perspectives outlined in Chapter 3. Congruent with a synthesis of the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis, aspects of the discussion are detailed within this chapter.

In Section 4.3, an account that draws together the five stories is presented, in-line with the research questions of the study.

4.2. The Children's Stories: Becoming *'Mighty'*

The '*Holistic - Form'* interpretive perspective highlights that a common series of fabulas (**Fab1, Fab2, Fab3**…) are apparent in each child's story, providing the standard narrative structure of:

1. Beginning: this was life before '*Mighty Me'*;
2. Middle: the major part of the story involving participation in '*Mighty Me'* centring around the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984).
3. End: this encapsulates the changes described by the child, following *'Mighty Me'*, in relation to their ways of navigating their world and their interactions.

Each story is now presented in turn, bringing this to life. [13]

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[13] Within the stories, underlined text refers to where I have identified the sjuzet, and shaded text is indicative of my interpretation of the sjuzet and fabula (Hiles et al. 2009/2010).

4.2.1. Felicity's Story: The Rainbow Coloured House and the Unicorn

Summary:

Felicity is a ten year-old girl of White British ethnicity, referred by the school to aid the development of her self-esteem. Felicity and I met ten months after her completion of 'Mighty Me'. During her 'telling', we hear about her experiences with peers and frightening dreams symbolised by the disappearance of the people she knows well. Her account is centred around the "special place" she created during 'Mighty Me', and is considered to mark the 'turning point' of her story (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). This is richly described as a rainbow-coloured house with a unicorn as a guardian, where rules serve to respect and protect people. The appearance of rainbows, following a period of rain, and their associated significance as symbols of hope, can be held in mind when examining Felicity's account and her relationship with 'Mighty Me'. Thus, the tone of Felicity's narrative is 'progressive', as the story advances steadily, with a typology described as a 'comedy', whereby Felicity's sense of agency becomes apparent as she overcomes hazards in restoring social order (Lieblich et al. 1998). Her narrative is well-constructed with an on-going plot comprising a series of events with related sequencing between them (Lieblich et al. 1998).

Beginning

Before *'Mighty Me'*: Before the Sunshine Appeared

Through **Fabula 1**, Felicity explains how she recalled life before '*Mighty Me*', describing Year 3 and 4 of school. The 'abstract' and 'setting' comprise:

> **Fab1***: "To be honest it feels like…like all the time the boys would come and annoy the girls and I didn't want to be rude cos like they used to come over and tease the girls and all the girls got angry and would go charging…"* (5-7).

I observed the peripheral use of the adverbial disjunct (*"to be honest"*) in the opening to Felicity's account, and I wondered whether she held some apprehension about how her account would be perceived. Marking the 'complicating action', we hear Felicity's position in relation to the actions of the children:

> **Fab1**: *"…I would just stay back and just let them like do whatever…and I would just sit down and let them do whatever"* (7-8).

In attending to both sjuzet and fabula, it is evident that features of her account are marked by emphasis and exaggeration, potentially indicative of the feelings of apathy she may have experienced. For example, the repetition of *"whatever"* and *"let them do"*, may express her helplessness about the situation. The 'evaluation' and 'coda' in her account comprise the following:

> **Fab1**: *"I was basically keeping in my anger" (*14).

Felicity's reflection appears to summarize a complex account and I wondered whether being part of '*Mighty Me'* had facilitated her emotional expression. The *'Categorical - Form'* perspective illuminates Felicity's transition between tenses; this could be indicative of the extent to which she identifies with what is being described during the 'telling'. In the 'abstract', her expression of *"I didn't want to be rude"* appears to highlight her values; she positions herself as not wishing to take sides and this can be considered to reflect an 'historical unique outcome' (White & Epston, 1990), marking the identity position in relation to her sense of respect for others (**IP1: being respectful towards others).** It is possible that this has been overlooked in the face of a 'dominant plot' about Felicity's relationship with anger, reflecting a 'problem-saturated description' (White, 1988). In the 'complicating action', Felicity positions herself as being the sole bearer of the teasing comments of the boys, and being deserted by the girls (**IP2: being teased and alone),** and through the 'coda', she positions herself in relation to her consequent feelings of anger (**IP3: being angry**).

In **Fabula 2**, we hear further details of Felicity's account before she started the group. She describes further details of *"hold[ing] my anger in"* (179) where the 'coda' conveys the end-point of this account:

> **Fab2**: *"…so I would just lie there under my bed and face the wall and go to sleep…and fall asleep"* (180-181).

Alongside the use of *"so"* and *"just"*, Felicity positions herself as withdrawing from others. This can be examined in relation to **Fabula 3** where Felicity describes *"the scariest nightmare"* (268). The 'complicating action' is marked as follows:

> **Fab3**: *"…where I came home from school…and my mum was not there and I went to everybody's house and no one was there...I called everyone's phone and no one answered or nothing"* (268-270).

Within the 'coda' to **Fabula 3**, she concludes by explaining she stayed at home *"by myself" (*270). Through this account, the parallel use of emphasis is notable; *"everybody"/ "everyone"* alongside *"no one" / "nothing"/ "by myself"* seemingly reflects the experiences she described in **Fabulas 1** and **2**, and expands upon the positioning of *being alone* (*IP2*) highlighted above.

Middle

During '*Mighty Me'*: The Sunshine that Created the Rainbow

Upon listening to Felicity's 'telling' about her time in '*Mighty Me'*, we hear her locating 'facts' that seemingly provide 'the nuclei for the generation of new stories' (White & Epston, 1990: 39). The description of a *"special place"*, an aspect of the group that appears to have resonated with Felicity, can be considered as a 'turning point' in her account (Gergen & Gergen 1984). Felicity was invited to draw this during our time together (**Figure 3)**. Her use of extra-linguistic devices was observed as she became increasingly animated, whilst her speech quickened, and the use of *"could"* intensified, as though possibility and opportunity were being awoken:

> **Fab4**: "*My special place was a rainbow coloured house and then there was a waterfall with chocolate milkshake (laughing) or strawberry…"* (194-195).

The 'complicating action' and 'resolution' are marked by:

> **Fab4**: "...*I could press a button and it would just turn different …"*(195).

I considered the 'coda' to be conveyed as follows:

> **Fab4**: *"…and on top of the waterfall I mean milkofall (laughing) there was a unicorn"* (196).

Within this fabula, I reflected upon Felicity's choice of a rainbow and thought about this in relation to the appearance of rainbows; reflecting a spectrum of light in the sky, rainbows are observed whenever light shines and water droplets remain in the air. Furthermore, they are a symbol of peace and hope, frequently used to symbolise social change. I wondered whether *'Mighty Me'* represented the sunshine that had allowed the rainbow to shine, bringing a newfound sense of hope. In-keeping with this use of metaphor, I interpreted the 'complicating action' as marking Felicity's sense of agency shining through. Indicating what she "*could"* do and change, she positions herself as an active agent, in contrast to the pattern of withdrawal described earlier *(IP4: having agency).* The 'coda' is marked by the presence of a unicorn; I gave thought to the magical qualities often attributed to unicorns in mythologies, their horns often considered to have healing powers. Here, I considered Felicity's choice as metaphorically reflecting her new positioning in relation to her sense of agency and the engagement evoked by this positioning.

Figure 3. Felicity's Drawing

Within **Fabula 5**, Felicity begins to talk about what would characterise her "*world*":

> **Fab 5**: *"There are only erm…three rules in my world…no calling people rude names…no bad language…and no being mean to anyone"* (230).

Potentially indicative of what she has faced, I noted the transition from "*special place"* to "*world",* as highlighting her values and how these could be translated into possibilities in her "*world*". In this sense, Felicity positions herself as being able to express what she wishes from her "*world*" (***IP4: having agency***) and actively creating this through respect for the feelings of others (***IP1: being respectful***). It therefore appears that 'unique outcomes' (Goffman, 1961; White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990) which contradict the 'dominant plot' are identified whilst 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), indicative of her values and 'identity script', as observed in **Fabula 1**, are resurrected. Thus, the creation of the "*special place*" is considered as the 'turning point', in-light of the 'unique outcomes' being plotted into a 'unique account' (White & Epston, 1990).

Through attending to **Fabula 6**, we hear how the 'unique account' enables 'unique re-descriptions' of herself and her relationships with others (White, 1988). The 'complicating action' is marked as follows:

> **Fab6**: "*Yeah they have a unicorn cos I gave out unicorns to everyone in my world and what they do is just touch the unicorn on the horn and… and say what they need help with*" (617- 619).

The 'resolution' is conveyed through Felicity suggesting that people may need help if they are being bullied, and the 'coda' is considered as:

> **Fab6**: "*…I will bring the bullies in but I will make the bullies say sorry*" (624).

Through this 'unique account', Felicity's thoughtfulness about others is evoked. Through a switch to the present tense in the 'complicating action', Felicity enacts being open to help others, in the situated action of her 'telling' with me. She then changes to the future tense in the 'coda', highlighting her sense of agency and authority in the face of unjust situations. In this way, her 'unique account' is comprised of being able to express and make possible what she wants in her "world". This reflects the identity positions ***being respectful*** (***IP1***) and ***having agency*** (***IP4***).

The performance of the 'unique account' with the attention to the 're-descriptions' of her life and her relationships, to an audience in *'Mighty Me'*, is

facilitative of the stage of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982). 'Unique possibilities' (White, 1988) have opened up for her to retrieve her life from the influence of facing anger, as described in the 'dominant plot'. We see this brought to life in **Fabula 10**.

End
After *'Mighty Me'*: "Don't Follow be a Leader"

During **Fabula 7**, we hear Felicity's understanding of what being 'mighty' means to her. The 'coda' is conveyed through:

> **Fab7**: *"Mighty <u>to me</u> it means <u>it helps it means I've been helped</u>"* (177).

I thought about this in relation to how the 'unique account' and 'unique re-descriptions' appear to have resonated and connected with Felicity. In providing the space for her 'authentic self-definition' (Sutherland, 2007) this has generated a sense of having been helped. The initial use of the present tense (*"it helps")* reflects an enactment of the help she has received, in the situated action of the 'telling'. Thus, she positions herself in relation to this (**IP5: being helped**).

This appears to have had an impact on her understanding of what it means for other people to be facing difficulties, as in **Fabula 8**, Felicity describes herself as 'mighty' at the times she helps her mother when she is unwell; the identity position of being able to help others (**IP6: helping others**), connects with the identity positions of **being respectful towards others (IP1)** and **having agency (IP4).** Thus, through **Fabula 7** and **8**, Felicity conveys a sense of having been helped, as well as being able to help others, expanded upon below.

In **Fabula 9**, Felicity's account highlights the impact of being able to bring her "*special place*" to mind, indicative of how she is able to keep the rainbow shining. The 'abstract' to this account comprises my questioning about when she has used her "special place". The 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' are marked by:

> **Fab9**: *"…when someone called me a rude name and I got really upset…"*
> *(244).*

The 'resolution' and 'evaluation' are marked by:

> **Fab9**: "…*and I just went to the teacher because I was sad*…" (245).

The 'coda' is conveyed through:

> **Fab9**: "…*and then I just thought about my happy special place…for the rest of the day*" (245).

Whilst we see the identity position examined in **Fabula 1** (***IP1: being teased and alone***), we also see her connecting with her identity position of ***being helped*** (**IP5**) as she situates herself in relation to an authority figure whom she has felt able to approach to receive support. However, she also positions herself as having internal resources to draw upon through bringing to mind her "*happy special place*" (**IP4: having agency**). Proctor (2002) highlights the importance of recognising 'power from within', in relation to one's personal resources and values, and it seems evident that this has been fostered through her participation in '*Mighty Me*', through the celebration of a 'unique account' and the 'unique possibilities' this has opened up.

In **Fabula 10**, Felicity demonstrates how she has acted to make possible what she saw as integral to her "*world*", as described in a number of fabulas above. The 'setting' is conveyed through her description of an event, a few months prior to the interview, near her aunt's home. The 'complicating action' is as follows:

> **Fab10**: *"…there was about six girls picking on one girl and they were calling her names…" (448)*

The 'resolution' comprises:

> **Fab10**: *"…and I said don't be rude to my friend, don't be a bully, and don't follow be a leader…"* (449)

The 'coda' is described through:

> **Fab10**: *"…when the little girl's mum found out I stuck up for her she started crying cos no one ever stuck up for her daughter they just bullied her "* (450-451).

The changes in tense in the 'resolution' reflect the extent to which Felicity identifies with what she is asserting as she enacts her support for the girl in the situated action of the 'telling'. This is indicative of the importance of her values **(IP1: being respectful towards others)** and Felicity positions herself as having a sense of agency when someone is being mistreated **(IP4)**. Within the 'coda', she appears to position herself in relation to the hope she acknowledges she has fostered in others **(IP6: helping others)**, potentially indicative of the hope she has, herself, regained **(IP5: being helped)**. Thus, through celebrating the 'turning point' of creating Felicity's "*special place*", a gradual process of recognising what would characterise her "world" appears to have developed into this being acted upon and made possible, and we see examples of the 'future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990) taking place.

Conclusion to Felicity's Account:
It is apparent that 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), reflecting Felicity's identity position in relation to her sense of respect for others (IP1), have been given the space to grow within 'Mighty Me'. A 'unique account' (White & Epston, 1990) has blossomed underpinned by this identity position; here we see her developing a sense of agency (IP4) through considering the possibilities true to her sense of respect for others, within her "special place". This appears to mark the stage of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982), considered indicative of a 'turning point' Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Identity positions related to the 'dominant plot' (IP2: being angry; IP3: being teased and alone) are present in her account as she reflects on how she has been helped (IP5). Through exploring the possibilities to use her sense of agency (IP4) and respect for others (IP1), to help others (IP6), we see 'future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990) reflected through Felicity powerfully enacting her anticipation to help others.

4.2.2. <u>Eddie's Story: "When We Stick Together" - The Power of the "Bond"</u>

Summary:

Eddie is a ten year old boy, of Caribbean ethnicity. Our interview took place ten months after his completion of 'Mighty Me'. He was referred to address feelings of nervousness. In-light of a detailed 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al. 1997) drawing attention to his sensitivity to others, I noted Eddie's reports of his mother's experiences of being in pain. His playfulness and vivid imagination also contributed to the 'counter-plot', richly described through Eddie's 'telling' of his "special place". Thus, opening up the possibility for Eddie to be "playful" within 'Mighty Me' is considered as indicative of the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) within his account. His account is considered reflective of a 'romantic' typology, given the obstacles he has navigated, constituting a 'progressive' plot with a cohesive narrative (Lieblich et al. 1998).

Beginning:

Life Before 'Mighty Me': "Big Trouble…Big Like Big Trouble"

In **Fabula 1**, Eddie is invited to tell me about his understanding of why he attended 'Mighty Me'. This is marked in the 'complicating action' and 'evaluation'; *"I was <u>kind of a bit nervous</u>"* (9). Whilst he positions himself in relation to these feelings (***IP1: being nervous***), I also noted the minimising of feelings of nervousness (*"kind of"* / *"a bit"*). Conveyed through **Fabula 2** ('abstract' and 'setting'), Eddie was invited to reflect upon his understanding of what had been troubling for him:

> **Fab2**: *"<u>Cos erm like </u>from the start of year 4 to the end of year 5 <u>erm erm</u> <u>I was upset when I could not really do my work</u>"* (50).

Through Eddie's reflections it is apparent that Eddie shows a clear understanding of when he had been finding things difficult. His use of *"erm",* indicative of situated action reflections during the 'telling', appear to highlight the

emotional impact. The 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' highlight the 'high point' of this Fabula:

> **Fab2**: *"I might have been thinking that I might get into big trouble…big like big trouble"* (55).

Eddie's repetition of *"big"* in relation to trouble also suggests that this carries an emotional charge, whilst the use of the de-intensifier *"like"*, throughout this fabula, may serve to highlight his feelings of helplessness. The 'coda' summarises that Eddie considered this to happen after "*not doing enough [work]"* (67). Eddie appears to position himself in relation to authority figures and what is expected of him, and we hear his belief about the negative implications of not doing enough work *(IP2: being a good pupil)*. Eddie's understanding of not working hard enough may be grounded in the stories that circulate regarding academic performance for children in Primary Schools, in the context of Standard Assessment Tests (SATS) that appear throughout a child's time in Primary School (Department for Education, 2014b).

In the 'complicating action' to **Fabula 3**, Eddie describes himself as "*kind and helpful" (36)* indicative of 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), qualities that serve as the 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al., 1997), in the face of the powerful 'dominant plot' focussing on Eddie's relationship with work (White & Epston, 1990). Through the 'coda' of **Fabula 3**, Eddie summarises the way in which he likes to be *"kind and helpful"*:

> **Fab3**: *"I like being playful to let other people play and to be playful for like erm if I asked to play"* (46-47).

Here it is apparent that Eddie situates himself in relation to the wishes and feelings of his peers through inviting them to play with him, whilst also hoping for this to be reciprocated from them *(IP3: being playful)*. Within this, he appears to position himself in relation to principles of fairness *(IP4: being fair)* inherent in being playful. I wondered whether the hesitation around asking to play with others ("*erm*"), and the de-intensifier (*"like"*), could be indicative of Eddie having had a difficult experience that may stand at odds with what he privileges in his interactions.

During 'Mighty Me': Making a Space for Playfulness and Imagination

Through inviting Eddie to draw, I sought to invite him to bring his playfulness into our interview, as a continuation of '*Mighty Me'*, facilitating him in communicating his participation in the group.

During **Fabula 4**, Eddie chose to draw his "*safe space*" (118) (**Figure 4**). During this, he began to hum a tune with a high pitch, which he described as a Christmas tune. I gave thought to whether this expressed the significance of his "*safe space*". The 'complicating action' in **Fabula 4** appears to be the description of the presence of his mother in this space. As he drew, he reminisced about conversations with his mother, bringing to life this as a place where they are together. Thus, within the 'coda' Eddie positions himself as being in receipt of his mother's affection and being cared for *(IP5: receiving affection*).

This identity position is expanded upon in **Fabula 5**, where I inquired about the cherry that Eddie drew in the centre of the picture. Both the 'complicating action' ("*the cherry is like a bond*" [284]), and the 'coda' ("*like when we stick together*" [290]) appear to convey the power of Eddie's relationship with his mother serving to situate himself as being a unit with her. I wondered whether creating his picture in '*Mighty Me'* had facilitated him being able to express feelings about his mother, initially in a non-verbal way. Furthermore, I wondered whether he may have chosen to re-create it during our interview in-light of his baby brother's imminent arrival, reflecting his ongoing sense-making of his relationship with his mother.

I noted that within his "*safe space*", Eddie chose to colour in the pictures of his mother and himself using a peach colour that did not reflect his skin colour. It is possible that this is a window making transparent personal or familial experiences of racism and discrimination, and that this serves as a context from which to understand the importance of affection with his mother. Given the aspects of my identity that were dissimilar to Eddie's, I wondered about my role

in Eddie's 'telling'. Grenz (2005) proposes that power is fluid in a research encounter, and suggests that this movement is shaped by the different positions adopted. Whilst 'co-composing' with Eddie was the position I sought to take, I wondered how my ethnicity may have intersected with my age and position as mediator of the interview, within the institutional context of Eddie's school.

Figure 4: Eddie's Drawing

Within **Fabula 6**, Eddie describes a meditation exercise during *'Mighty Me'* that enabled him "*to feel as though I was in my special space where I can do anything*" (196). Here Eddie's change in tense could suggest that he identifies strongly with what he is describing. I was keen to allow Eddie to demonstrate his vivid imagination, as a way of thickening the 'counter-plot'. Here the 'complicating action' comprises:

>   **Fab6**: "*Like you can think that you can fly*" (198).

His responses to my questions marked the 'resolution' (202-207):

>   *Nicolina: "And how would you fly?" (202)*

>   *Eddie: "You would fly by going on a cloud"* (203).

>   *Nicolina: "Where do you think you may like to go if you fly on a cloud?"(206)*

>   *Eddie: "Like go to a special special city"* (207).

I inquired into what Eddie may be able to do in the "special city" and his response is suggestive of the 'coda' to this Fabula:

> **Fab6**: "*...visit people <u>and</u> take them <u>all</u> on the cloud<u>…to fly on the cloud</u>*"
> (209).

The use of commentary is apparent, as Eddie appears to enact possibilities during his 'telling'. It is possible that creating opportunities for Eddie to be "*playful*" within 'Mighty Me', enabled him to engage with other children, connected with 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990). I wondered whether this may reflect the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) within his account, and can be thought of as a powerful antidote to facing the problem of feeling nervous. Here there appear to be no limits on what can be made possible as he positions himself as enabling others to join him in his experience; in this way he appears to be exemplifying **being playful** (**IP3**), the 'counter-plot' described in **Fabula 3**.

In **Fabula 7**, Eddie reports being aided to identify and draw an "*ally*" which led him to choose a "<u>*dog ally*</u>" (299), considered indicative of what he has faced and his new ways of navigating his environment. The 'complicating action' marks his response to my inquiry as to what this has meant for him:

> **Fab7**: "*It means that…<u>that</u> I can <u>be safe at school</u>*" (307).

I questioned if there was a time when he did not feel safe at school, to which he responded:

> **Fab7**: "*<u>Erm when like when</u> I got bullied at school…<u>long ago</u>*" (309).

I observed the use of metaphor as Eddie associates the value of having a "*dog ally*" with feeling safe at school, positioning himself in relation to the protection that he believes he needs (**IP6: needing protection**). It seems likely that through being encouraged to think about having an "*ally*" during the group, Eddie has been able to start making sense of the challenges that he has faced.

Within **Fabula 8**, Eddie volunteers information about "<u>*the evil parrot*</u>" (337). Conveyed through the 'complicating action', we hear the significance of this character; "*you shouldn't listen to "<u>the evil parrot</u>*"(337). In **Fabula 9**, he demonstrates how during the group, he thought about this in relation to his school work:

> **Fab9**: "*<u>When</u> you are with your work <u>and the evil parrot says 'give up'</u>
> <u>and the ally will say 'no keep going'</u> *" (350).

Here these two characters operate as 'partners in a dynamic duet' (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997) and it is apparent that Eddie switches from the present to the future tense to talk about what his *"ally"* will say; he positions himself in relation to the possibilities that have been evoked for Eddie as he appears empowered about his future direction (***IP7: being empowered***).

Through **Fabula 10,** we gain an understanding of the value of 'unlicensed co-therapists' that are characteristic of NTG interventions (Freeman et al., 1997). Conveyed through the 'complicating action' and 'resolution', Eddie describes the collaborative process of making a "*mighty self-portrait*":

> **Fab10**: "*What you had to do was draw yourself and then put words around it saying what you are…like kind…and what you like and stuff like that…and then we passed it on to each other and we had to write what we think of each other*" (401-403).

Through the 'coda', Eddie demonstrates his ability to hold in mind how his peers view him:

> **Fab10**: "*One of them said I like Doctor Who…and another said I like Minecraft and another said I'm kind and another said I'm helpful and…*" (407-408).

The use of commentary and reflection, in addition to repetition of the intensification "*another*", serves to highlight this as carrying an emotional charge for Eddie. Here Eddie positions himself as being positively regarded by peers. This can be considered as demonstrative of the thickening of the 'counter-plot' (***IP3: being playful; IP4: being fair***) whilst it appears to coincide with Eddie appearing empowered in **Fabula 9** (***IP7: being empowered***).

End
After 'Mighty Me': The Helper

In **Fabula 11**, Eddie was invited to reflect upon what he understood 'mighty' to mean. His response is conveyed through the 'complicating action' and 'coda':

> **Fab11**: "*Being mighty means like erm…that you can be you can do anything to help people*" (227).

I noted the use of "*you can be*" and "*you can do*" alongside the description "*anything*" as indicative of both sjuzet and fabula, highlighting how Eddie positions himself as being there for others. Within **Fabula 12** Eddie reflects upon the times he describes himself as 'mighty', both at school:

> **Fab12**: "*When I'm doing maths cos it's the easiest part for me*" (253);

> **Fab12**: "*When I'm helping people off the floor if they get hurt*" (257),

and also at home:

> **Fab12**: "*Erm by helping at dinner…like when my mummy is in a bit of pain…just a tiny bit not much…she just gets a touch of pain and then it goes and I will help her…*"(259-261).

Here, Eddie seems sensitively attuned to the needs of others, positioning himself as a helper (***IP8: helping others***). Through attending to the use of de-intensifiers in Eddie's telling ("*a bit*"; "*a tiny bit*"; "*a touch of*"), it is likely that it is understandably uncomfortable to consider his mother being in pain. It can be argued that the narrative approach has sought to respect that facing feelings of nervousness may have assisted his emotional survival (Freeman et al. 1997), in-light of bullying and what he understands about his mother's health, whilst the simultaneous thickening of the 'counter-plot' has awakened conversations about Eddie's strengths and values. Eddie also speaks of his relationship to school work in an excited way that celebrates his ability and he appears empowered through recognition of this (***IP7: being empowered***).

Conclusion to Eddie's Account:
Drawing together the interpretive perspectives illuminates a rich 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al., 1997) reflecting Eddie's identity positions relating to being playful (IP3) and being fair (IP4). These serve as the 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990) hidden in-light of the strong focus on Eddie facing nervousness (IP1). Through opening up a space for playfulness, the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) within his account, Eddie appears to have been able to express his need for affection and protection (IP5; IP6), initially in non-verbal ways. It is evident that the 'counter-plot' captures and thickens feelings of empowerment (IP7), notably in relationship to his work and his reflections on his ability, as well as his wish to help others (IP8).

4.2.3. Sahra's Story: From Chrysalis to Butterfly

Summary:

Sahra is a ten year old girl, of Caribbean ethnicity. We met seven months after her participation in the group came to an end. Sahra was referred to address her sensitivity within friendships and to aid her confidence. She described enjoying art and cooking, with aspirations to be an artist. This permeated our interview as Sahra's coherent account focussed around the value of identifying her "ally", a butterfly called "Layla", which I invited her to draw throughout the interview. Upon engaging in the process of transcribing the interview, I noted that Sahra's story shared many parallels with the process of metamorphosis, observed in the cycle of the butterfly. Through producing her picture during the interview, I reflected upon whether Sahra herself was transformed into an audience for her own image (Luttrell, 2003), uniquely capturing the process of her transition, characteristic of a 'romantic' typology whereby challenges are overcome (Lieblich et al., 1998). The progression of the story is largely 'progressive', reflecting a 'U-shape'; a period of 'descent' is followed by 'gain' in-light of the 'turning point' (Gergen and Gergen, 1984) which is considered to be the identification of the "ally". In this way, the key shifts in Sahra's account are examined.

Beginning

Before 'Mighty Me': The Chrysalis

Comprising the 'abstract' and 'orientation' of **Fabula 1,** Sahra explained that her class teacher raised concerns she was not contributing in class. Considered indicative of the 'complicating action', or 'high point' of **Fabula 1**, as well as reflecting the sjuzet, Sahra accounted for this in the following way:

    Fab1: *"Because I was scared that I was going to say the wrong answer"*
    (65).

In addition to feeling scared, marking the 'evaluation', feelings of shyness and anger were also described, whilst highlighting how Sahra felt about the events being narrated, and, thus, indicative of Sahra's expression regarding her self-identity before the group ("*being shy <u>and</u> <u>being</u> angry <u>and</u> getting upset about things <u>that I don't need to</u>*" [46-47]). The 'resolution' and 'coda' release the tension from this 'high point' and highlight Sahra's positioning following the intervention:

> **Fab1**: *"It helped me <u>because</u> I was <u>never really</u> putting my hand up <u>but then</u> I went to class and I was <u>always</u> putting my hand up in class and answering things"* (72-74).

Drawing upon '*Categorical - Form'* analysis, the repetition of "*putting my hand up*" and of the location ("*class*") may indicate the emotionally charged nature of this summary. There is contrasting emphasis between the intensifiers "*never"* and "*always",* considered to reflect sjuzet and fabula. The nature of these opposites reflects a somewhat 'all or nothing' separation and Sahra appears to position herself at the end-points of this division. Whilst the 'coda' signifies her latter positioning in-line with the canonical cultural pattern that privileges participation in the classroom setting (***IP2: being a good pupil***), this narrative account has made comprehensible for Sahra the deviation from this, prior to her participation (***IP1: being shy***).

In **Fabula 2**, Sahra's account of enjoying art, making jewellery and recycling leads to a 'complicating action' of a memory drawing a picture for 'Blue Peter', when she was five, which was selected to be shown on television. Representing the 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), these appears hidden in the context of difficulties within the classroom setting. The sjuzet within the 'evaluation' and 'coda' highlights Sahra's reflections:

> **Fab2**: "*I felt <u>really</u> happy <u>because</u> my trainer was on telly <u>and</u> I drew it when I was five. <u>And</u> it was a Nike shoe"* (401).

Through examining **Fabula 2**, I was reminded of the gradual emergence of a chrysalis; the 'historical unique outcomes' reflecting 'subjugated knowledge' (Foucault, 1980) about Sahra requiring circulation to enable her to thrive further. The use of the emphasis placed on how she recalled feeling, teamed with the repetition of "*and",* serves to highlight the immediacy of the account. It is

possible that participation in the group enabled the 'telling' of the event in this way, and reflects the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges' (Foucault, 1980) through having the space for these knowledges to be 'performed' (White & Epston, 1990). This marks the process of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982) which appears to have begun during the group. Here, Sahra positively positions herself with respect to her achievement (***IP3: being creative***).

Middle

During 'Mighty Me': The Emerging Butterfly

When the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, the wings strengthen and the pattern on the wings dries to form a unique pattern, marking a process of individuation before the butterfly is able to fly. I was curious as to what Sahra thought had helped her confidence to emerge, resulting in her feeling more able to put up her hand in class. In **Fabula 3**, Sahra identified "*our allies*" *(77),* considered to reflect the 'turning point' of Sahra's narrative account (Gergen & Gergen, 1894). She described bringing this to life during the group through drawing (I invited her to re-create this during our time together, see **Figure 5**). I inquired about her understanding of an *"ally"*, her response indicated by the 'abstract' to **Fabula 3**:

>   **Fab3**: *"Erm (pause) It's a person in your mind. It's a person in your mind*
>   *who helps who helps you…"* (88)

This double repetition could reflect an idea of emotional significance, suggesting that her *"ally"* holds a somewhat permanent presence. Below, the 'complicating action' of **Fabula 3** conveys Sahra demonstrating her understanding of her "*ally*", using further metaphor and reframing, whilst the 'coda' summarises, serving as a bridge to a new positioning:

>   **Fab3***: "…and if your parrot tells you to do the wrong thing and tells you*
>   *that because you are angry go and kick someone then your ally would*
>   *step in and say don't do that you know you are going to get in trouble"*
>   (89-92).

Through attending to both sjuzet and fabula, Sahra's account uses the present and conditional present tense, indicating a sense of current identification with what is being told. Sahra shared thinking of the role her *"ally"* plays in the face

of a *"parrot"* encouraging her to do something that could result in her getting into trouble. Sahra applied the principle of 'externalising' what could be regarded as a problem, through thinking about how the problem operates and its powers (White, 1985; White & Epston, 1990) (***IP4: listening to the "ally"***).

Figure 5: Sahra's Drawing

In **Fabula 4**, Sahra recalled being guided to give the problem of not being able to put up her hand in class the name *"Worry and Frustration"* (245), providing further examples of 'externalising conversation' (White, 1985; White & Epston, 1990. Comprising the 'complicating action' and 'evaluation':

> **Fab4**: "*Erm well, if I was getting worried in class I would just think to myself to fight Worry and Frustration*" (245).

The 'coda' was precipitated by my inquiry into how she would do this:

> **Fab4**: "*:Erm. With your ally (pause) using my ally. And not caring what anyone else thinks*"(249).

The situated action reflections (*"erm"*) indicate that there is some hesitation and confusion in Sahra's response which could indicate that Sahra is still familiarising herself with the metaphorical ideas of "*fight*[*ing*]" the problems; this may require further attention in providing an opening for 'future unique outcomes' to emerge (White & Epston, 1990). A sense of defiance is noted as she closes the story, reflecting a sense of confidence. This appears to link into her earlier identity position of ***listening to the "ally" (IP4).***

Through **Fabula 5**, Sahra described the value of communally identifying one's "*ally*". Through the 'coda', it is evident that this is taken beyond the group setting into the school environment:

> **Fab5:** "*Well my friends will <mark>always</mark> help me <u>because if</u> I was starting to get angry and not listening to <u>my ally they would help me listen to my ally</u> and calm me down*" (272-274).

It seems apparent 'definitional ceremonies' (Myerhoff, 1982, 1986; White, 1995) during the group have proved instrumental in encouraging the performance of 'future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), thickening the 'counter-plot' in recognition of her strengths (Freeman et al. 1997). Sahra positions herself in relation to other children from the group, as 'unlicensed co-therapists' (Freeman et al. 1997); as someone who is willing to help her peers and who would welcome their help (**IP5: helping others; IP6: receiving help from others**).

End

After '*Mighty Me*': The Butterfly Prepares to Fly

After time, the wings of the butterfly strengthen, preparing the butterfly for flight. In-keeping with this idea, Sahra's involvement in the group connected with her creativity, fostering her approach in dealing with difficult situations. A sense of resilience is apparent upon inquiring into her understanding of 'mighty':

> **Fab6**: "*<u>Erm I thought that</u> it meant it was going to help <u>us</u> be strong <u>and</u> not let us get upset <u>because</u> the word mighty <u>erm</u> it means <u>like don't give up and stay strong</u>*".

I noted the use of the mental verb "*I thought*", which could be indicative of ongoing mental processing around these ideas. This is considered in conjunction with the repetition of "*erm*", a 'situated action reflection' in Sahra's telling, alongside the use of the de-intensifier "*like"* preceding "don't give up". This may be suggestive of what is still difficult despite her aspiration. The use of "us" can be considered to suggest that Sahra holds in mind a collective understanding of 'mighty'. Reminiscent of a kaleidoscope of butterflies, this could reflect the value placed on developing resilience and emotional language together in the group, in preparation for each child's 'flight'. The 'complicating

action' of **Fabula 6** is reflected in Sahra's account of when she describes herself as 'mighty':

> **Fab6**: *"Mostly <u>when</u> I am doing my art work <u>and when</u> cooking <u>and erm</u> <u>when</u> I'm doing my tests <u>because</u> I think I'm going to get a bad score"* (194-195).

Here, we can see the 'subjugated knowledge' described above holds a powerful primary place in Sahra's account, as she draws upon the simple future tense which highlights her belief; *"I'm going to get a bad score".* However, within the 'resolution' to this Fabula there are intensificatory elements of how Sahra resolves the tension within the 'complicating action'; through thinking about being 'mighty' which helps her *"a lot"* during her tests. Consequently, the 'coda' is told in the simple future tense, highlighting Sahra's identification with her 'telling', as well as her aspiration, brought to life with the intensifier "*really*":

> **Fab 6:** "<u>*Because* I'm telling myself not to get worried <u>and that I'm going</u> <u>to do really good"</u> (201-202).

This seems to highlight the 'future unique outcomes' as she positions herself in relation to her aspirations to do well at school (***IP2: being a good pupil***). I noted that Sahra did not speak of *"fighting worry"* and I wondered about the absence of the 'externalising conversation' in this example.

In **Fabula 7**, Sahra describes alternating the pictures she made during the group, on her wall, indicative of her awareness of her emotions in conjunction with different situations. The 'orientation', 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' exemplify this:

> **Fab7**: "*…<u>if</u> in the afternoon I am <u>really</u> upset then I will get one of my <u>ally</u>.."* (321).

The 'coda' closes the account on a progressive tone; *"…where <mark>my ally is telling me not to give up</mark>"* (322-323). Sahra transitions between present and future tense, indicative of how she identifies strongly with what she is telling and the hope underpinning this (***IP7: not giving up***).

In **Fabula 8**, Sahra's strategy for responding to criticism is described. She puts her *"mighty self-portrait"* (332) on her wall. The 'orientation' and 'complicating action' describe this:

> **Fab8**: "*Yeah (pause) it was two weeks ago because erm because I was drawing a picture and I erm thought it was good and someone came up to me and erm said that it was terrible and I got really upset…*" (340-343)

The repetitions of "erm" represent situated action reflections, considered to elicit an emotional charge that is apparent through her use of the intensifier "*really*" in describing feeling upset. The 'resolution' comprises:

> **Fab8**: "*…I went home and I changed the picture on my wall and then I just kept on looking at it and telling myself that I was good*" (343-344).

The 'coda' summarises through highlighting the 'progressive' tone (Lieblich et al. 1998) within Sahra's story, and the resilience observed earlier;

> **Fab8**: "*they kept on saying it to me and then they stopped because I took no notice of them*" (355-356).

Sahra positions herself in relation to being hurt by others, whilst drawing upon her personal resource, demonstrating her emerging inner strength. This appears indicative of the identity position of **not giving up** (**IP7**).

Within **Fabulas 9** and **10**, Sahra described sharing aspects of the group with her family. The wish to have a positive impact on her younger sister, by sharing her *"ally"*, highlights the 'descent and gain' (Lieblich et al., 1998) within her account as the impact of the 'turning point' is realised (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Sahra positions herself as being able to share her new insight (**IP5: helping others**), in-light of the help she has received (**IP6: receiving help from others**), indicative of her emerging inner strength.

Conclusion to Sahra's Account:
It is evident that Sahra has positioned herself in relation to feelings of shyness before 'Mighty Me' (IP1). Opening up the possibility for her to be creative within 'Mighty Me', connected with an 'historical unique outcome' (White & Espton, 1990) bringing forth her identity position as a creative person (IP3). This appears indicative of the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) within her account; here, the stage of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982) elaborates the

'unique outcomes', considered 'thin traces', linked to her sense of being a creative person. Thus, she positions herself in relation to opportunities evoked by having an "ally" (IP4); having a personally significant resource to draw upon helps her become a good pupil (IP2), and motivates her when challenges present by encouraging her not to give up (IP7). Through positioning herself in relation to the help she has received (IP5), she also exhibits her wish to help others (IP6).

4.2.4. <u>Semira's Story: "My Imagination Friend"</u>

Summary:

Semira is a ten year-old girl of Black African ethnicity. Our meeting took place six months after she had completed 'Mighty Me'. At Semira's request, we were accompanied by a Special Support Assistant during our interview. Semira was put forward for 'Mighty Me' given her quiet presence in the classroom. In-light of the influence of this story, I wondered whether this was 'precluding refreshing possibilities and potentials' (Freeman et al. 1997: 48). During her 'telling', we hear how 'Mighty Me' celebrated her individual ideas, providing the forum for her to create her own unique way of managing the loneliness she faces as a consequence of being an only child. Thus, Semira's 'telling' is centred around her relationship with "Sally", her "imagination friend". Although largely 'progressive', Semira's account is characterised by 'descent and gain', in-light of the creation of, and consequent responses to her "imagination friend" (Lieblich et al. 1998). A 'romantic' typology is reflected through her account, as she faces challenges en route to her goal, whilst the narrative appears cohesive as a series of related sequences comprise the on-going plot (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Beginning

Before '*Mighty Me*': Becoming "More Smart"

Through the 'abstract' to **Fabula 1**, we hear a condensed summary of Semira's consequent account about being invited to attend '*Mighty Me*':

> **Fab1**: *"Erm I thought that it would be better for me to like erm learn some stuff and to learn how to…know things and more speaking and yeah and just like and just learn some words that I don't know"* (16-18).

Through attending to '*Categorical-Form*' interpretive perspective , I noted the repetitions of the word "*learn*", alongside ideas that conveyed the meaning of

learning; for example, *"know things"*, "*more speaking*", "*words that I don't know*". The 'complicating action' is conveyed as follows:

> **Fab1**: "…*[my mother] said <u>if</u> I learnt <u>more then</u> I can become <u>more smart</u>*"(29).

In the 'coda' to this Fabula, we hear Semira's understanding of becoming "*more smart*":

> **Fab1**: "<u>*It means that my brain is working more*</u>" (33).

Throughout **Fabula 1**, it is apparent that there is a focus on what Semira has not yet attained or achieved and I wondered whether this reflected an emphasis on 'much that is missing' (Madsen, 2007). This appears to link with the concerns over her quiet presence in the classroom. Semira appears to position herself in relation to a sociocultural narrative that serves to focus on developing (***IP1; becoming more smart***), whilst what has been attained remains uncelebrated. Esteva (1992) questions whether such a focus can serve as a reminder of what people 'are not'. Upon transcribing the interview with Semira, her account made me contemplate what her quiet presence in the classroom is assumed to represent, and how this assumption could be inadvertently disempowering through orienting attention away from her strengths. It led me to question 'what are her preferred ways of being known?'.

In **Fabula 2**, we hear about Semira's enjoyment of "*Science*", and what she looks forward to, indicative of 'historical and future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990). The 'coda' is conveyed through:

> **Fab2**: "*…[the teacher] is going to film a man opening a lamb's heart <u>and then one day we are going to do it too</u>*" (240).

Semira positions herself in relation to what she enjoys at school *(**IP2: enjoying school**)* and I noted her keenness to share this, reflected through her quicker pace of speech; I interpreted this as suggestive of the extent to which this excited her and I wondered whether her strengths in 'doing' in the classroom were being occluded, due to her quieter approach within this setting. I thought about this in relation to aspects of her life where, what is not always explicit, is nevertheless powerfully present, as demonstrated next.

Middle

During '*Mighty Me'*: Introducing "*Sally"* [14]

During **Fabula 3**, Semira describes her *"ally"* that she was encouraged to identify during '*Mighty Me'*. The 'abstract' is conveyed as:

> **Fab3**: "*Erm It's it's my imaginar..imagination friend cos when I'm alone like she always plays with me…"* (76).

The 'setting' is comprised of:

> **Fab3**: *"…when I'm alone at my house at my garden because I always want to find someone to play with…"*(77-78).

The 'complicating action' and 'resolution' are reflected through:

> **Fab3**: *"…like my parents are busy and don't have time for me…"* (78).

The 'evaluation and 'coda' are conveyed as:

> **Fab3**: "*…sometimes when I get lonely I play with my imagination friend like everywhere I go"* (78-79).

I noted the repetition of *"alone"* or *"lonely"* in emphasising the emotional nature of this 'telling', as Semira positions herself as **being lonely** (**IP3**). The hesitation within the opening can be considered by examining her positioning in the context of the broader cultural narrative about what is acceptable for a child of her age; she highlights her understanding of this within **Fabula 8** below, where further attention shall be given to this positioning. However, the use of "*always"* within the 'setting' to the current fabula reflects the strength of her playful quality, indicative of a 'historical and future unique outcome' (White & Epston, 1990) (**IP4: being playful**). In the 'coda', the emphasis conveyed through "*everywhere I go"* is considered indicative of "*Sally"* having an impact on how Semira is navigating different environments (**IP5:having a resource I can draw upon everywhere**). It is likely that the creative opportunities within *'Mighty Me'* enabled Semira to express facing loneliness, potentially for the first time and in her own way, whilst coming up with a personally meaningful solution. The de-intensifier "*like"* may reflect my adult status, as related to her hesitancy expressed above.

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[14] 'Sally' is a pseudonym chosen to respect the confidential nature of Semira's 'telling'.

Within **Fabula 5**, we hear Semira's account of "<u>a nasty parrot</u>", highlighting how she has been supported within *'Mighty Me'* to separate a problem from a person, (White & Epston, 1990) enabling her to view the actions of her peers from a perspective that appears removed from blame. The 'complicating action' and 'resolution' are marked by:

> **Fab5**: "…<u>erm</u> it <u>it</u> thinks up in your head <u>and</u> says something that you should not say… <u>but you just say it</u>" (149).

The 'coda' to this Fabula is considered reflected in the following:

> **Fab5**: "<u>And when</u> it was playtime somebody pushed someone… <u>but I think it was the nasty parrot</u>" (153-154).

It is possible that the changes in tense throughout this fabula, indicative of an enactment in the 'telling', highlight the extent to which Semira identifies with what she is expressing. Her use of 'externalising conversation' symbolises how this approach can be instrumental in paving a relationship with problems that move away from associated feelings of blame, and whether other significant people may be called upon to ask for their opinion (Freeman et al.,1997).

In **Fabula 6**, I was able to recruit "*Sally*" into our conversation, inquiring what she may think about the "*nasty parrot*". Within the 'coda', Semira explains that she believes "Sally" would say "*you can be friends <u>again</u>*" (156-157), suggesting that when moving away from a problem as inherent within a child, the focus of conversations shift towards their vision for possibilities. Thus, through the 'coda' to **Fabulas 5** and **6**, Semira positively positions herself towards her peers (***IP6: relations with peers***).

End

After *'Mighty Me'*: Keeping Sally a Secret

Within **Fabula 7**, the 'complicating action' is conveyed through Semira describing her relationship with "Sally" taking the shape of "<u>Olympic challenges</u>" (89) that form part of their play together. This reminded me of stories of courage in pursuit of one's goals, often predicated on working with others. I wondered whether this reflects Semira having hopes and dreams, and that her relationship with "*Sally*" has been instrumental in bringing these forth. It is possible that this

relationship might be enabling her to contemplate challenges in her life, with a newfound sense of hope (**IP7: facing goals with courage**).

Within **Fabula 8**, we hear how Semira has made sense of the perspectives of others in relation to her "*imagination friend*". After explaining that "*Sally*" was not around before she started the group, the following is thought to convey the 'complicating action' to this Fabula:

> **Fab8**: "<u>Well</u> she is a part of my life <u>because she is the only one I can play with</u>" (108).

In response to my questioning about who else knows about Sally, I interpreted the following as the 'evaluation' and 'coda' to this Fabula:

> **Fab8**: "<u>Well</u> I <u>usually just keep a secret</u> because everyone some people think <u>it's a bit babyish</u> to do things <u>like that and this</u> at <u>at</u> year 6 <u>right now</u>" (110-111).

Her use of "*everyone*" and *"some people"* appear to contradict; I wondered whether this serves to highlight the powerful effects of some people's opinions, making them appear more widely held by "*everyone*". The closing emphasis of *"right now"* can be considered as indicative of the enacted significance of this for Semira at the time of the 'telling'. Here, there appears to be a difficult tension; the opinions of others co-exist with the strong presence "*Sally*" holds in her life. Semira has resolved this through acknowledging the strong canonical narrative around what is acceptable for a child of her age, but positioning herself in relation to her own agency through having her *"secret"* (**IP8: being seen as a baby vs having a resource I can draw upon everywhere**). This seems indicative of her resistance to their perspective as a force that has 'the capacity to move beyond what we experience, to extend ourselves towards possibilities' (Afuape, 2011: 37). Given the important differences in how children think, know and understand (Gabarino, Stott et al., 1992), it is crucial to consider their sense-making and what this serves to enable, whilst questioning the impact of cultural stories (Freeman et al.,1997).

Conclusion to Semira's Account:
A crucial identity position relates to her facing feelings of loneliness (IP3). This appears in conjunction with a position that focuses on developing upon her

current abilities (IP1: becoming more smart). Through her 'telling', her enjoyment of school comes forth in an excited way (IP2), reflecting 'historical and future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), whilst a further key identity position relates to her playfulness (IP4), also considered indicative of such 'unique outcomes'. It is apparent that 'Mighty Me' has enabled her to examine the possibilities that open up to her when she connects with a special "ally"; her "imagination friend". This appears to mark the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) as this provides her with a resource she can draw upon everywhere (IP5) and who is able to help her in negotiating friendships (IP6) and navigating challenges with courage (IP7). Thus, the stage of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982) is underpinned by the way that Semira has thought to face loneliness. Whilst she reports an understanding of the views of others in relation to "Sally", I wondered whether keeping her a "secret" demonstrates her resistance to these perspectives (IP8: being seen as a baby vs having a resource I can draw upon everywhere).

4.2.5. Nyah's Story: Challenging "Shyness"

Summary:

Nyah is a ten year-old girl of Black African ethnicity, whom I met with four months after she had completed 'Mighty Me'. Nyah was put forward for the group to address her confidence in-light of her shy appearance in the classroom. Her 'telling' focussed on how "Shyness" was no longer a problem she faced following her participation in the group. I wondered whether her relationship with "Shyness", before 'Mighty Me', had become a powerful 'problem saturated story' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990) influencing those around her. During her 'telling' she demonstrates a sensitivity and attunement to those around her, considered indicative of a 'historical unique outcome' (White & Epston, 1990). Nyah's participation in the group is brought to life through her description of her "mighty self-portrait" that I interpreted as reflecting the 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984), given the value in being able to express herself non-verbally. Her account is considered reflective of a 'romantic' typology, given the obstacles she has navigated, constituting a 'progressive' plot with a cohesive narrative (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Beginning

Before *'Mighty Me'*: "I Never Used to Stand up for Myself or Be Confident"

Within **Fabula 1**, Nyah reflects on life before '*Mighty Me'*, in comparison to how she felt at the time of the 'telling'. The 'complicating action' is conveyed as:

  Fab1: "*I used to have a lot of Shyness in me…*"(4).

The 'resolution' and 'evaluation' are as follows:

  Fab1: "…*and I used to so I never used to stand up for myself or be confident…*" (5).

The 'coda' is comprised of:

  Fab1: "…*and 'Mighty Me' has really helped me by being confident*"(5-6).

Nyah presents a succinct account of what has changed since participating in the group; the 'high point' appears to be her reflections on having "*a lot of Shyness in me*" (**IP1: having Shyness in me**). Although the use of *"in me"* is present in her relationship with "Shyness", I wondered whether she was experimenting with 'externalising language' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990) in her reference to "Shyness", highlighting the successful attempts to diminish its influence. In this way, "Shyness" could be expressed as something that was overshadowing Nyah, and with the help of her 'unlicensed co-therapists' in 'Mighty Me', they could be united against it (Freeman et al., 1997). The use of intensifiers (*"a lot of", "never", "really"*) appear to relate cohesively to convey the powerful impact "Shyness" has had on her life. It is evident that there is a shift within the 'coda' as she positively positions herself with respect to her emerging inner resources and feeling more assured, as marked by the transition to the continuous tense (**IP2: being confident**).

Nyah's account made me consider whether life before *'Mighty Me'*, overshadowed by "Shyness", had developed into an influential 'problem saturated story' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990), engendering the 'selective attention' (Freeman et al., 1997) of those around her. I gave thought to a potential interaction between the story Nyah had been living out in her personal life, and circulating cultural stories (Freedman & Coombs, 1996), and wondered whether assumptions about the way girls present may have been unintentionally constraining Nyah (Parker, 1995). Through externalising "*Shyness*" it is possible to expose the conditions that support it; I wondered whether there were external factors that were encouraging its presence.

Through **Fabula 2**, it is interesting to observe Nyah examining her feelings and contemplating those of her peers: The abstract' and 'complicating action' are as follows:

> **Fab2**: "*I want I want to to be in the group and to see how it feels to become more to become more erm like… to see to see other people and like to see how they feel…*" (226-227).

It is possible that this emotional awareness and sensitivity to her own feelings, and to those of others reflects an 'historical unique outcome' (White & Epston,

1990); it is likely that this quality served to make Nyah a thoughtful 'unlicensed co-therapist' (Freeman et al.,1997), enabling her to draw on this sensitivity with her peers. I noted the repetition of "*to become*" as indicative of the difficulty of the problem she was facing, and I wondered whether this represented hope for the future. The repetition of "*to* see" is considered suggestive of this hope as Nyah positions herself as a curious detective, despite the influence of the problem (**IP3** :**being attuned to others**).

Middle

During '*Mighty Me*': "We were Really Thinking up a Picture in our Mind"

During **Fabula 3**, Nyah describes the *"mighty self-portrait"* that she drew in the group. The 'complicating action' and 'resolution' are comprised of:

> **Fab3**: *"…we drew it we thought about it <u>so we thought about what we like yeah we really did think about it</u>"* (29-30).

The 'coda' is conveyed through:

> **Fab3**: "<u>*Yeah…we were really thinking up a picture in our mind*</u>*" (33).*

I wondered whether the repetition in Nyah's 'telling' captured the emotional charge involved in expressing herself non-verbally, potentially for the first time, during the group. I was also struck by her focus on "we", and as explored above, I interpreted this as Nyah's attunement to the other children, indicative of an 'historical unique outcome' (White & Epston, 1990).

Through **Fabula 4**, Nyah expands upon this. The 'setting', 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' are conveyed through:

> **Fab4**: "<u>*Erm… well *</u>*mine was about shyness <u>about if</u> someone was to ask a question in class <u>if someone</u> puts their hand up <u>and someone</u> asks them <u>they are too scared to say it</u>"* (35-36).

The 'resolution' and 'coda' are thought to correspond to:

> **Fab4**: "<u>*But if* </u>*you <u>just</u> think about it…<u>you will become more confident</u>*"
> (38).

Within **Fabula 5**, Nyah examines this more closely. The 'setting', 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' are conveyed as:

> **Fab5**: "*I drew a person in class <u>and erm</u>…putting their hand up <u>and</u> they want to speak <u>but </u>they have no confidence <u>in themselves</u>*" (40-41).

The 'resolution' and 'coda' are as follows:

> **Fab5**: "<u>*I think that I'm not shy anymore and that's what I used to be like and now I just have a lot of confidence in me*</u>" (43-44).

Drawing upon the '*Categorical-Form'* perspective, it is notable that she switches between past, present and future tenses, suggestive of a sense of identification with her description. Nyah also transitions between the first, second and third person in her speech. For example, within **Fabula 4**, she begins with the first person "*mine*" before switching to the third person ("*someone*"; "*their*"; "*them*"; "*they*"). She then draws upon the second person with her use of "*you*" in the 'resolution' and 'coda'. Here, I was mindful of the subtle way in which she included me in her story and I was curious about how she saw me given the strong message she conveys. Thus, she positively positions herself as an encourager. I interpreted this as indicative of how valuable this been for her in gaining self-confidence (***IP2: being confident***), as well as evidence of the 'historical unique outcome' that highlighted her sensitivity to others (***IP3: being attuned to others***).

Within **Fabula 5**, we see some mirroring of **Fabula 4**. Nyah begins in the first person ("*I drew*") before switching to the third person as she describes the act of putting up one's hand ("*their; "they*"). This transition may represent a split between the 'speaking self' and the 'experiencing self' due to the difficulty inherent in re-encountering a painful or emotional experience (Lieblich et al., 1998). Thus, I observed that within both **Fabulas 4** and **5,** this shift away from the first person illuminates that in describing the drawing of herself, she does so from an observer's perspective. I gave thought to the possibility that through being invited to express herself in diverse ways during the group, a respectful inquiry into 'the nuances of her meaning' took place in a medium with which she felt comfortable (Freeman et al. 1997) fostering the 'turning point' in her account (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). I also contemplated the influence of my presence as someone Nyah did not know well. Within the 'resolution' and 'coda' of **Fabula 5**, she switches back to the first person in her description of "*a lot of confidence in me*", positively positioning herself in relation to what she has attained (***IP2:***

being confident). It is possible to suggest that she situates herself in relation to the socio-cultural narrative that privileges perceived self-efficacy (Valentine, DuBois & Cooper, 2004)

End

After *'Mighty Me'*: "No Matter What…"

Within **Fabula 6**, Nyah describes how she sees herself as 'mighty'. The 'evaluation', 'resolution' and 'coda' are as follows:

> **Fab6**: "*Cos I would be able to do stuff without being shy….and standing up for myself and being strong*" (53).

Within **Fabula 7**, this is expanded upon following my question around how being strong has helped Nyah in her life. The 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' are conveyed through:

> **Fab7**: "*Being strong has actually helped me because…I mean like no matter what…*" (64*).*

The 'resolution' and 'coda' are conveyed through:

> **Fab7**: "…*if anything happens…I should just be strong and have all the strength I need to do stuff*" (64-65).

Nyah's use of "*no matter what*" alongside "*all the strength I need*" is considered indicative of her careful acknowledgement of the likelihood of future difficulty, alongside her emerging 'power from within' (Proctor, 2002) in the face of such challenges (***IP4: all the strength I need***).

Within **Fabula 8**, we gain an understanding of how 'threads of hope' (Freeman et al., 1997) have been woven together to bring about some colourful new perspectives**.** The 'complicating action' and 'evaluation' are conveyed through:

> **Fab8**: "*It feels well I'm actually excited cos I'm really happy cos now I have got more confidence…*" (167)

The 'resolution' and 'coda' are as follows:

> **Fab8**: "…*if I want to ask something or do something…I can just do it*" (168-169).

Through attending to the sjuzet within the 'complicating action', I considered her account of experiencing positive emotions ("*actually excited*" and "*really happy*") as suggestive of the extent to which she was entertaining the change she has hoped for. This is confirmed within the 'resolution' and 'coda' where Nyah identifies herself in relation to the possibilities that are opening up for her (**IP5: I can just do it**).

Within **Fabula 9**, Nyah reflects on her memories prior to the group. Comprising the 'complicating action' and 'evaluation':

> **Fab9**: "*I think about me not being able to not being able to to be to be strong and not being able to believe in myself*" (194-195).

The 'resolution' and 'coda' are conveyed through the following:

> **Fab9**: "*…now I have much more belief in me and I believe in myself and I believe I can be successful*" (197-198).

Nyah's repetition may be suggestive of the emotional response associated with reflecting upon how she struggled before attending '*Mighty Me*'. I observed that she appears to bring this to a 'resolution' through associating having belief in herself with having belief that she can be successful. The 'coda' highlights this as having belief in herself and being successful are brought to mind, engaging the identity position relating to **being confident (IP2)**.

Conclusion to Nyah's Account:

It is apparent that a crucial identity position relates to Nyah's sense of having "Shyness in me" (IP1) and the centrality of this is indicative of the 'problem saturated story' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990). She experiments with 'externalising language' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990) in describing her positioning. Her 'telling' captures her sensitivity to her peers (IP3), indicative of 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990). It is apparent that being part of a group has celebrated this, whilst finding a way to meaningfully express herself marks the 'turning point' of her story (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) and the stage of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982). She positions herself in relation to being confident (IP2), having strength she needs (IP4), and reminding herself of what is within her reach (IP5).

4.3.   Drawing Together the Children's Stories

I have 're-told' the stories of five children regarding their participation in a NTG intervention at their school, in an attempt to 'co-compose' with children. I acknowledge that my role has involved 're-telling' each child's account through my 're-descriptions' (Mishler, 1995), an argument vital to recognise when we speak of hearing children's 'voices' (Riessman, 1993).

Two research questions formed the focus of this study:
1. How do children describe the narrative process of becoming 'mighty'?
2. How do children represent themselves following a NTG intervention?

Through considering the embedded nature of the sjuzet within the narrative content, the identity positions of each 'teller' were examined (Hiles et al., 2009/2010); this reflected a micro-level of analysis (Hiles, 2007). The meso-level of analysis is reflected through a bridge from the identification of these positions to examine the research questions, forming the macro-level of analysis. Thus, the 'functionality' of each child's story has been addressed (Hiles et al., 2010).

Research Question 1: How Do Children Describe the Process of Becoming 'Mighty'?

Through attending to the basic outline of events (the fabula), each child's story comprised a series of events (**Fab1, Fab2**…), each seen as a self-contained story with components indicative of the narrative structure proposed by Labov and Waletsky (1972) (i.e. 'abstract'/ 'orientation'). As stated in Section 4.1, for each child, the *'Holistic - Form'* perspective indicated that the series of fabulas provided the narrative structure of beginning, middle and end, largely reflecting stories told about life before, during and after the group respectively.

Upon examining the plot analysis within the '*Holistic - Form'* perspective, a 'progressive' plot (Lieblich et al. 1998) can be identified within each child's story. This relates to positive change in areas of their life, seemingly captured by their emerging inner strength (their 'mightiness'). The emergence of which

corresponds to 'turning points'; this refers to the moment in the account when the 'teller' sees their world in an alternative way (Gergen & Gergen, 1984).This is reflected through each child's description of their own unique resource that they have drawn upon during challenging times, adapted in their own creative way, and intricately tied to their own circumstances. Thus, the 'progressive' nature of the plot can be understood through the child's description of what is made possible with this resource. For Felicity, her "*happy special place*" was a place of comfort in the face of comments from peers, enabling her to contemplate how she could help others, whilst Eddie's "*special place"* engaged his playfulness, enabling him to connect with others. Sahra described her "*butterfly ally"* ("*Layla*") and the role "*Layla"* played in helping her deal with critical comments, whilst Semira's story focussed around her *"imagination friend" ("Sally")* and their partnership in the *"Olympic Challenges*", indicative of having the courage to navigate challenges. Nyah's description of her "*mighty self-portrait"* captured her transition to having more self-confidence. In-keeping with the 'progressive' narratives, it is apparent that a 'romantic' or 'comedic' typology reflects the form of each child's story (Lieblich et al. 1998). Furthermore, each story was regarded as 'cohesive' given the relations between the series of events described (Lieblich et al., 1998).

In describing the process of becoming '*mighty',* for each child, prior to starting '*Mighty Me'*, there was a dominant story that conveyed a 'problem-saturated description' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990). Within these descriptions, it is apparent that some children experimented with 'externalising language', highlighting the approach of seeing themselves as 'separate from the problem' (White, 1989/1997; White & Epston, 1990). For example, Nyah initially spoke of "*Shyness*", rather than describing herself as shy, and Sahra described "*fighting Worry and Frustration*". However, it is apparent that this technique was not consistently used in the stories they told.

What appears to shine through within each child's descriptions, are 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), reflected through times when different qualities take centre stage, illustrating contradiction to the 'problem saturated description'. For Felicity, her respect for others is evoked, whilst Eddie

and Semira share a sense of playfulness. Sahra's creativity and Nyah's sensitivity to others shine through. Due to the influence of the 'problem saturated description', the extent to which, prior to the group, meanings were given to these qualities appears questionable. 'Mighty Me' has fostered each child's expression of a personal resource, considered indicative of a 'turning point' as the 'historical unique outcomes' are linked to 'current unique outcomes', which are plotted into an alternative story, the 'unique account' (White & Epston, 1990), or 'counter plot' (Freeman et al. 1997), establishing the process of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982).

It is apparent that the 'unique account' has facilitated 'unique re-descriptions' of the child, and their relationships with others (White, 1988). For example, for Felicity, being able to explore her sense of respect for others within her "special place" has enabled her to contemplate the times when she can support others. For Eddie, being playful within 'Mighty Me' has fostered descriptions of possibilities within his "special place", where inviting others to join him appeared central in his account. Through having an opportunity to share this with their 'unlicensed co-therapists' (Freeman et al., 1997) in 'Mighty Me', it becomes apparent that 'unique possibilities' (White, 1988) blossom, opening up different opportunities. From here, we see that 'future historical unique outcomes' are anticipated (White & Epston, 1990).

In-keeping with White's (2000) suggestions, it is evident that the group facilitators have 'scaffolded' (Vygotsky, 1962) small context-specific changes to enable the child's journey through zones of proximal development. For example, supporting each child's drawing or description of a "special place" or "ally", celebrating the 'historical unique outcomes' this connects with, encouraging each child to share the personal significance of this with their 'unlicensed co-therapists', and consequently, facilitating each child having a part to play in each other's stories. Through this 'scaffolding', the individual 'turning point' occurred for each child, in relation to what resonated with them. As stated by Law (2013), the 're-authoring' stage within the narrative process can be considered as a 'co-authorship' of the emerging alternative story and the new possibilities this awakens. Here, the 'co-authorship' appears to take place

amongst the children as they work together to thicken each other's 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al.,1997), collaboratively 'configuring' past events (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Metaphor is a key aspect within the stories the children tell. Felicity described her "*special place*" as a "*rainbow coloured house*"; this can be considered as reflecting the re-appearance of sunshine in her life. Furthermore, Sahra's "*ally*" was described as a butterfly, and her stories can be thought about in relation to the stages in a butterfly's development.

Research Question 2: How Do Children Represent Themselves Following a Narrative Therapy Group Intervention?

The *'Categorical - Form'* approach involves carefully examining the sjuzet (Hiles and Čermak, 2008) serving as the foundation for *'Critical Narrative Analysis'.* This was most powerfully employed through changes in tense, repetitions, and the shifts between first, second and third person, often considered to reflect enactments within the child's 'telling' suggestive of how children situate themselves in relation to the events they are describing.

A number of identity positions were coded for each child (spanning five to eight). By looking at the range of identity positions, coded from within the text of each child's account, a series of events appears to have been synthesised into a singular thread. From here, the tension created by different identity positions is released and unity is observable. This arrangement is indicative of 'narrative reframing', considered characteristic of 'narrative intelligence' (Hiles et al., 2010). In examining Felicity's account, as an example, a coded identity position related to her sense of respect for others, identified as an 'historical unique outcome' (White & Epston, 1990). Being respectful to others, in the face of teasing comments from peers, produced a tension in Felicity's story; through developing a sense of agency during '*Mighty Me'*, she acknowledged a sense of having been helped, reflective of a release from the tension. From here, unity is represented as she described her wishes to help others, positioning herself in relation to her sense of respect for others; this succession is suggestive of

'narrative reframing'. In this way, she has constructed a new position for herself in relation to the temporal succession of events described.

Within each child's story, the 'narrative reframing' appears to link with the emergence of the 'unique account', as events are brought together into a unity; thus, understanding how children represent themselves is intertwined in the process of becoming 'mighty'. Specifically, the release of tension appears to link to the 'turning point'. Felicity's 'turning point' occurred through identifying her "*special place*", which connected with her sense of respect for others and fostered a sense of agency. The resolution of the tension coming forth through this sense of agency, as reflected in what she could do to help others. For Eddie, the 'turning point' is reflected through the space provided to be playful, allowing him to express his need for affection and protection. The release from tension was formed as he described his abilities to help others and to do well academically. For Sahra, the 'turning point' occurred when she connected with being a creative person, notably through drawing her "*butterfly ally*" while the release of tension occurred as the opportunities evoked by having an "*ally*" were expressed. Semira's "*imagination friend*" formed the 'turning point' through the opportunities afforded to her by having a new way of facing loneliness. The tension appeared to relate to other's views of "*Sally*" but the release was formed as she demonstrated resistance to other's views and kept "*Sally*" her secret. Nyah's 'turning point' occurred through the space to express herself non-verbally, through her "*mighty self-portrait*", and the release from tension occurred through the acknowledgement of her inner strength.

As indicated, a 'progressive' plot (Lieblich et al. 1998) can be identified within each child's story which related to positive change in their life, reflected in their emerging inner strength (their 'mightiness'). Furthermore, understanding how children represent themselves, as intertwined in the process of becoming 'mighty', can be further examined through considering the 'broaden-and-build' theory (Fredrickson, 2004). In-light of the proposed 'upward spiral' inherent in this theory, it is argued that positive emotions lead to increased resources which in turn lead to more positive emotions, and the spiral continues in this way (Kok, Catalino and Fredrickson, 2008). As demonstrated by the rich and varied

techniques inherent in the children's accounts of '*Mighty Me*', including play, art, and making space for children to engage with their imaginations, the 'upward spiral' experience for each child has been indicated. Furthermore, this 'upward spiral' appears to parallel the emergence of the 'unique account' and the linkage to 'narrative reframing'; children represent themselves as more resilient and more aware of their sense of agency in future interactions, arguably a component of a broadened mind-set, predicated on the opportunity to experience positive emotions through, for example, play and creative interaction with peers.

The possibility to experience positive, as well as distressing thoughts and feelings, aids future coping (Fredrickson, 2004). As proposed by Folkman and Moskowitz (2000), types of coping may allow individuals to experience positive affect during challenging periods. What appears notable from the stories told by the children are examples of coping strategies; for example, through identifying an *"ally",* described by Eddie ("*the dog ally*"), Sahra *("Layla"),* and Semira ("*Sally*"), this appears indicative of goal directed problem focused coping, where the child addresses a problem through identifying their own internal resources and the steps that can be taken to address the challenging situation, fostering their creativity and resilience in the face of future challenges and obstacles. Furthermore, the moving back and forth between negative and positive emotions is described. Of additional importance, such personal resources, gained during periods of positive emotions, are described with detail at a later point in time, suggesting that these representations are long-standing.

5. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH: THE 'RE-TOLD'

5.1. Chapter Preview

The first part of this chapter presents a Critical Review and addresses the limitations of this research, examined around a set of five criteria (Sikes & Gale, 2006) for evaluating Narrative Research (Section 5.2.).

The final section shall contemplate the implications for policy and practice, and the possibilities for future research (Section 5.3), before offering some personal reflections on the research process (Section 5.4.). The chapter will close with a dedication (Section 5.5.).

5.2. Critical Review and Limitations

Sikes and Gale (2006) propose an evaluative framework that highlights the value of Narrative Research in fostering 'deep thinking about social issues and…a questioning attitude towards the outcomes of research' (Bold:2012: 176).

5.2.1. Substantive Contribution: How Does the Narrative Contribute to Knowledge and Understanding of Social Life?

Murray (2008) highlights the need to consider how the broader social context intersects with personal narratives. Thus, in situating this thesis within the socio-political context of childhood in the United Kingdom, I presented justifications for this study in Chapter 1. Key legislations and policies have been described that are grounded in research illuminating the prevalence of mental health difficulties in young people, and the need for prevention and early intervention efforts. The most recent Report from the Department of Health (2015) set forth pressing aims whereby the need for avenues of support within schools is emphasised,

alongside improving access to support for those considered vulnerable. '*Mighty Me',* responds to multiple recommendations: the school attends to mental health promotion and early intervention through collaboration with a local charity, in seeking to provide children with additional support. Thus, in response to Murray's (2008) argument for examining the intersection of the wider social context with individual narratives, I believe this research illuminates that when policies culminate in providing children with a space where creativity is honoured, opportunities for authentic 'self-definition' (Sutherland, 2007) are awoken. In a context where funding for children's mental health services has suffered a real terms cut of six percent since 2010 (YoungMinds, 2015), the united and pressing message of recent policies (Department of Health, 2015/2014) affords some optimism towards the opportunities for early intervention. A non-pathologising approach to early intervention has been examined in this study, highlighting the ways in which it has engaged children considered to be in need of additional support.

In-line with the 'Healthy Child Programme' (Department of Health, 2009a), my aspiration within this research has been to address the subjugation of children's 'voices' (James & Prout, 1997). This is in-keeping with the limited perspectives in the literature, *from children themselves,* about their involvement in NT interventions. However, I have considered the implications of 'the democratizing impulse' inherent in wanting to use research to hear children's 'voices'; it is possible to unwittingly reproduce the very disempowerment we set out to address, through a child's construction as 'other' (Alldred & Burman, 2006). Throughout this Critical Review, I have sought to highlight how the interview setting invites a 'voice' that is 'filtered' through, for example, the research focus, and my presence as their audience (Alldred & Burman, 2006).

Through NOI, each child's account has been addressed individually, privileging each child's own words. '*Critical Narrative Analysis'* (one interpretive perspective adopted) involves valuing individual lives through what it says of that person's subject positioning, rather than as representing something generalizable (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). Thus, personal narrative sense-making is situated, whilst enabling social accountabilities to be foregrounded for

contemplation (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). For example, Semira positioned herself in relation to her understanding of how her "*imagination friend*" ("*Sally*") was being perceived by others, whilst simultaneously expressing what "*Sally*" meant to her. I experienced this as enabling analysis to be guided by the data, allowing for a respectful relationship with the data. I have sought to make this process transparent as it has been my aim to present an account that encapsulates the context for each individual child, whilst acknowledging my role as the 're-teller'.

The integrative nature of NOI was, at many times, overwhelming; specifically, the process of drawing together findings in relation to the research question, underpinned by my theoretical understanding of Narrative Therapy. Riessman (2008:191) argues that validity can be strengthened if the analytic story the investigator constructs 'links pieces of data and renders them meaningful and coherent theoretically'. Here, she suggests identifying points where individual's accounts converge and others where they split apart (diverge), and exploring how sense is made of this, as a way to support trustworthiness.

This research has sought to address the gaps within the research regarding the longer-term impact of NT, on a child's emerging self-identity. Within each child's story, 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990) are brought forth during their involvement in '*Mighty Me';* this creates a 'unique account' where their 'mighty' qualities are evident, marked by a 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) in the child's narrative. In this way, this research has demonstrated that the presence of each child's 'unique account' in their descriptions, four to ten months after the intervention, is striking. Upon examining the series of identity positions unique to each child (this prioritised a divergence in the data), an arrangement indicative of 'narrative reframing' (Hiles et al., 2010), coincided with the emergence of the child's 'unique account'.

Keeping a reflective diary has facilitated methodological awareness with the research process (Riessman, 2008). As examined in Section 5.2.2., I am aware that certain avenues may have elucidated different 'substantive contributions'.

5.2.2. Experience Near: Does the Narrative Appear Real, and Present a Fair and Reasonable Account of the Contexts it Claims to Represent?

Bold (2012) highlights how both the researcher and researched come together to allow for a collaborative account of the story (the 'meta-narrative'); enabling participants to co-develop the final narrative provides a level of 'trustworthiness' for the data, whilst it is an ethical necessity to gain our participant's thoughts (Riessman, 2008).

Prior to the submission of this thesis, it is regrettable that I have had limited opportunity to take back the product of the analysis to each child, in order to fully determine the extent to which this can be considered 'experience near'. This has been due to the time constraints of completing this doctoral thesis around the academic calendar of the school setting. Thus, whilst I have strived to include children in the research process, in the ways detailed in the Methodology Chapter, I hold that my overarching aim of 'co-composing' (Young & Cooper, 2008) with children has not been fulfilled until this stage is completed. I have therefore chosen against speaking of a 'meta-narrative', in-keeping with Bold's (2012) argument. Careful thought has been given as to how this can be carried out, and this process has begun. This is presented in this section, whilst the ethical implications of this current position are attended to in Section 5.2.4. I remain curious as to where this will lead this research and the possibilities for future research.

In honouring the principles of NT, my approach to feeding back my interpretations took the form of a 'therapeutic document' (Epston & White, 1992; Fox, 2003). I saw this as a possibility to contribute to the 'rite of passage' accompanying the end of therapeutic work (Van Gennep, 1960; Fox, 2003). Van Gennep (1960) highlighted the universality of the 'rite of passage' for facilitating transitions, where a stage of 're-incorporation' helps individuals re-position themselves, with new opportunities and responsibilities, through 'alternative knowledges', in the social make-up of their familiar world (Epston & White, 1992). This was considered given the centrality of the 'alternative knowledges' forming the 'unique accounts' in my interpretations. I also reflected

upon the possibility that this would offer therapeutic value. Within the document, I invited each child to meet with me, as a way of encouraging their perspectives on my interpretations. I offered each child the opportunity to bring a guest to this meeting, predicated on the suggestion that 'communal acknowledgement' of the transitions people make holds a central place in the 'rite of passage' (Fox, 2003). An example of a 'Therapeutic Document' sent to Felicity is presented in **Appendix Q**.

Riessman (2008) argues that different interpretations may bring into view contrasting perspectives, forming a kind of triangulation where different interpretations can reveal multiple 'truths'. However, through acknowledging my position as mediator of the research, it is essential to consider that this may shut down disagreement. Given that research is guided by theory, Riessman questions whether our theoretical standpoints are meaningful to research participants. Whilst I have therefore thought carefully about the details that I have presented in the letters, this in itself formed another level of interpretation (Riessman, 2008).

5.2.3. <u>Aesthetic Merit: How Does the Narrative Invite Interpretive Responses?</u>

Riessman (2008) argues that different communities in a research endeavour may hold divergent expectations. Congruent with the demands of this thesis, I have documented the processes used to collect and interpret data, adhering to the argument that verbatim quotations without context can be misleading (Riessman, 2008). As much as was possible, I have presented interviews segments that offer a sense of context, in-light of Labov & Waletsky's (1972) breakdown of clauses, and the way in which I have interpreted identity positions from the words of the children, within these clauses. Whilst I have highlighted my role as the 're-teller', I have aimed to offer accounts which invite participation in the interpretive endeavour.

In writing the 'therapeutic documents', I invite the responses of the children central to this project, as I have sought to distinguish between my interpretations as researcher, and their own words (Riessman , 2008).

5.2.4. <u>Reflexive and Participatory Ethics: Does the Narrative Represent Participants Fairly and Acknowledge the Contextual Conditions in which the Data were Gathered</u>?

From the outset, I have made transparent the path I have taken; from my position as the author, through to the results that have been presented (Hiles et al., 2009/2010), guided by the ethical considerations and the theory that have been central (Riessman, 2008). I have highlighted my methodological awareness regarding the 'contextual conditions' that meant an unforeseen step away from fully 'co-composing' with each child, alongside the proposed plan.

I interviewed seven children and analysed each account in-keeping with the interpretive perspectives outlined. In this thesis, I have presented my findings from the analysis with five children. All seven children have been sent a 'therapeutic document', and have been invited to meet with me to gain their feedback on my interpretations put forth in their 'therapeutic document'. However, I acknowledge the ethical implications of not including two accounts in this thesis. This reflected a tension in writing up the findings in-line with the word constraints; I considered it essential to include each interpretive perspective from NOI in order to build a 'convincing analytical narrative based on richness, complexity and detail' (Mason, 2012: 5) to address the research questions, yet I found myself constrained in presenting this in a respectful way for each of the seven participants. As stated in Section 2.3.1., I selected the five accounts that could represent the variety of narrative techniques that comprised the *'Mighty Me'* group.

This has sat uncomfortably with me and I have given thought to the question raised by Caplan (1993) 'Who are we for them, who are they for us?' This led me to appreciate that each child consented with the understanding that they would be informing the project, as it was described to them, and children may take pride in knowing that their contributions are being addressed (Dockett et al., 2011). Das (2009) argues that it is crucial to take account of participants' agendas or we risk oppressing their authority. Upon contemplation, perhaps the two children who have not had their accounts presented in this thesis may have

views on how they would like their accounts represented, and I could explore this with each. It may be possible to consider presenting their accounts through different mediums of dissemination. Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) suggest ways of involving children and young people in the dissemination of research within which they have been involved: aiding in organising a conference or seminar based on the research; co-presenting at a conference or seminar; and compiling and distributing posters to peers.

This tension has led me to reflect on my position within an adult-child hierarchy and researcher-researched framework (Alldred & Burman, 2006). Whilst I have sought to carry out research *with* children (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2009; MacDonald, 2013), this emphasises the dynamic nature of power within this relationship (Grenz, 2005) and how quickly it shifted away from the children after the interview, as reflected through the way in which I have chosen to present these accounts in this thesis.

As well as my adult status, I did not share ethnicity with four of the children included in this thesis. Das (2009) highlights that minority ethnic groups may not have the resources or structures to question interpretations that do not resonate with them, while, Barn, Sinclair and Ferdinand (1997) argue that minority ethnic children may hesitate in being open with white researchers. This resonated, in particular, with my reflections upon my interview with Eddie, and my interpretation of his drawing, which centred around questioning whether experiences of racism were being expressed.

5.2.5. <u>Impact: What is the Impact on the Audience?</u>

It seems essential to question whom one regards as the audience. I hold that the children must be invited to respond, whilst how they express the impact of their involvement is an added consideration.

The ultimate test of validity may relate to whether the research becomes a springboard for future research (Riessman, 2008), thus, examining the impact upon a scholarly audience, as addressed below.

5.3. Implications and Recommendations

5.3.1. What Does this Research Tell us About Narrative Therapy?

Afuape (2011:81) highlights the 'transformative power' inherent in the narrative metaphor, as it reflects a sense of fluidity in-light of the 'construction, de-construction and re-construction' of stories, whilst representing a move away from metaphors of people as machines, 'working well' or 'breaking down'.

The following are key aspects of the current research, indicative of the 'transformative power' within a NT approach:

- Creative engagement within a 'scaffolding' process (Vygotsky, 1962) allows a child to create a personally meaningful resource, reflecting their uniqueness and the context of their lives;

- The child's unique personal resource was seen to connect with 'historical unique outcomes', forming a 'unique account'; the significance of this resource is instrumental in fostering a 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984);

- Exploring 'historical unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990) can be threaded into the process of 're-authoring' (Myerhoff, 1982);

- This opens up space for 'future unique outcomes' (White & Epston, 1990), predicated on the 'internalizing of personal agency', where the child is seen as an active agent in the course of their own lives (Tomm, 1989);

- This fosters 'unique possibilities' and 'unique re-descriptions' of their lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1990);

- A 'co-authorship' amongst children in a NTG takes place as they work together to thicken each other's 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al.,1997), collaboratively 'configuring' past events (Polkinghorne, 1988), as 'narrative reframing' appears to link with the emergence of the 'unique account'.

5.3.2. <u>What Does this Mean for Clinical Psychologists?</u>

Stanton-Salazar's (2001:18) 'social capital framework' emphasises that people are continually:

> '…*negotiating* both the constraints placed upon them and the
> opportunities afforded them, by way of the social webs of which they are
> part'.

It is possible to consider this perspective in relation to a recent statement from the charity YoungMinds (2015). This emphasises that within the school system, attention should be directed, *beyond* academic achievement, towards preparing young people for dealing with the stresses of 'growing up', promoting wellbeing from a young age within schools.

This current research highlights the opportunities that are afforded by a less pathologizing approach to mental health with children, demonstrating the ways in which ten-year-old children describe *negotiating* their environment, four to ten months after a NTG intervention. Here, I attempt to examine how Clinical Psychologists may draw upon this, through considering Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological framework; an exploration of the micro-level of day-to-day settings, the meso-level of communities and the macro-levels of social structures. I argue that this framework addresses the ways in which Clinical Psychologists may wish to position themselves, in-line with developments in their roles (British Psychological Society, 2007/2010) and in-keeping with 'aspirations' in recent policies (e.g. Department of Health, 2015).

5.3.2.1. Micro-Level of Day-to-Day Settings: Encouraging 'Unique Accounts'
The recent Report addressing 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools', (Department of Education, 2014a) holds a necessarily ambitious vision; one aspect within this is to examine the possibilities for appropriate intervention. However, attention to NT, or NTG interventions appears absent in this Report.

In relation to Clinical Psychologist's direct involvement with children in a school setting, it is proposed that the value of a NTG intervention is in enabling the emergence of children's 'unique accounts'. It is apparent that this intervention

has been instrumental in the 'internalizing of personal agency' (Tomm, 1989), In-line with the aforementioned statement from YoungMinds (2015), preparing children to hold a better relationship with future challenges is a likely aspect of this focus.

5.3.2.2. Meso-Level of Community Involvement: Partnerships to Empower
On considering the Report by the Department of Health (2015), one of the 'key aspirations' that the Government wishes to see implemented by 2020, is the need for school staff to receive mental health training, to enable children to be supported. This may take many different avenues. Here, I suggest that Clinical Psychologists may be well placed to contemplate consultation opportunities that respect the expertise of teaching staff, forming collaborative partnerships where there is a focus on adopting narratives which empower, rather than stigmatize (Bringewatt, 2013). Collaborating with school communities adopting narrative principles ('Community Narrative Assignments', Freedman and Coombs, 2009) may engender empowering narratives about children in the school setting, fostering a 'whole school' approach, a component of recent policies (Department for Education, 2014a) , where value is placed on what teachers are doing well, enabling this to have a 'ripple' effect on their relationships with pupils.

Within the Report published by the Department for Education (2014a) there is a focus on strategies to promote positive mental health, involving promoting social development. Here positive classroom management, coupled with small group work, is described to help pupils identify coping strategies. In-light of the current research, it is possible that through forming partnerships with teaching staff to offer mental health training, the nature of small group work, offered in the classroom, could be shaped by narrative principles. This may enable detailed thought to be given to establishing coping strategies that are personally meaningful to the child. The value of strengthening a child's 'historical unique outcomes', as identified in the stories described in this research, can aid the way in which children can be facilitated to be prepared for future stresses (Young Minds, 2015). In this way, through 'building bridges of meaning', teachers take an active role in thickening the 'counter-plot' (Freeman et al.,

1997). At the site of the current research, the SSA who co-facilitated *'Mighty Me'* takes an active role in offering *'Mightier Me'* interventions, indicating how her expertise in the school setting is privileged alongside principles inherent in NT.

5.3.2.3. Macro-Level of Social Structures: Beyond Assessment, Fostering Creativity

In addition to re-authoring stories, it is important to acknowledge that actual systemic changes may be needed, in-light of the constraints placed upon individuals (Afuape, 2011). Mansell and James suggest that the central purpose of any education system is to address 'the rounded education of young people' (2009: 19). I hold that the collective power of Clinical Psychologists may influence policy to change the assessment climate with young children, in-line with the views of Robinson (2006), who argues that we must question, 'to what extent are schools educating people out of creativity?' Congruent with the stories children have told in this research, Robinson argues that children have 'innovation' and 'tremendous talents', and highlights that a hierarchy of subjects is prevalent, meaning that people may believe they are 'not good at things', when what they were good at, was simply not privileged.

Rabinow, in summarizing Foucault's (1980) position proposes that the power of the State to create a totalizing web of control is intertwined with and predicated on its ability to produce an increasing specification of individuality (1984:22). Whilst it is possible to suggest that schools expect children to perform in certain ways, on certain subjects, Robinson (2006) highlights the gift of the human imagination as enabling us to see the richness of our creative capacities.

5.3.3. Future Research

I believe this research illuminates some timely research directions, to invite children's perspectives on the implementation of pressing policies.

I argue for exploring the diverse opportunities within Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects with children in their school setting, to more

respectfully 'co-compose' with children, inviting their views from an earlier point in a research journey than in the present study. Save the Children (2004) highlight the myriad of openings from appreciating the 'wheel of involvement' that underpins participatory research: for example, assessing the current situation; formulating a goal; determining / implementing / assessing an intervention.

Langhout and Thomas (2010) suggest that within a PAR approach, children's expertise can be cultivated by teaching new skills, enabling them to become advocates for themselves and others. I propose that part of our work involves finding out what it is children want to be taught. Whilst it is possible to propose that children may be aided in interviewing other children, diverse methods beyond interviews could be explored when carrying out research with children, given the rich opportunities afforded with visual narratives (Riessman, 2008).

5.4. Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to articulate my position within the research, in-keeping with the transparency advocated by the authors of NOI. Here, I present some final reflections on the personal impact of carrying out this research (Willig, 2001). I have continually reflected on my position as a white, female researcher, the similarity of this position to the teachers of the children, and my aim to meaningfully involve children in research about issues that affect their lives. The process of undertaking NOI has involved immersing myself in the detail of the different interpretive perspectives, allowing this to be enriched by the broader perspective of on-going personal reflections on my position. Whilst I value the importance of holding this in mind throughout, I also acknowledge that I cannot know the impact that this has had on the children and their relationship to me during this research process.

My desire to pursue this area of research has arisen from my interest in exploring the ways in which people navigate circumstances and obstacles. It has been a privilege to hear the hopeful and determined stories of the children who have taken part in this research. This has been a memorable endeavour

which has left me feeling committed to exploring the possibilities for fostering 'unique accounts' with young people, and the opportunity for creativity in the process. As I approach the end of my training in clinical psychology, I feel strongly that this research process has had a pivotal impact on my understanding and appreciation of Narrative Therapy; through this detailed approach, I believe the individual significance of unearthing concealed stories has come forth in a striking way. Furthermore, I suggest that taking time to attempt to understand 'historical unique outcomes' is of central importance. The process of narrative interviewing involved following each child down the path they wished to take, with the aim of establishing 'communicative equality' (Riessman, 2008), and I feel inspired to explore how this may further influence my future clinical work.

5.5. Dedication

When I embarked on this research journey, it was with a sense of apprehension about how to stay true to my wish of holding the children as central throughout. Sharing conversations with a fellow Trainee Clinical Psychologist, also carrying out research with children in the field of NT, has played a great part in the development of this thesis, given her energy, dedication and a shared perspective on the path we hoped our journeys would take. A sudden accident caused her death in September 2014. Her inspiring contributions and suggestions have remained with me throughout, and have been pivotal in enabling me to hold a curious and appreciative stance, qualities that she enthused. I believe a hesitancy in drawing together the stories of each child reflects a new meaning given to honouring an individual's story.

6. CONCLUSION

This research is an attempt at 'co-composing' with children about their involvement in a NTG intervention, *'Mighty Me'*, aspiring to raise the profile of children's perspectives about therapeutic practices.

The findings demonstrate that participation in '*Mighty Me'* has encouraged a child's description of a personally meaningful resource, reflecting their unique circumstances, and connecting with 'historical unique outcomes', thus, enabling the 'resurrection of subjugated knowledges' (White & Epston, 1990). This is instrumental in the development of a 'unique account', fostering a 'turning point' (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) in the child's story. Within each child's story, 'narrative reframing' appears to link with the emergence of the child's 'unique account'.

This research highlights the 'transformative power' of narrative (Afuape, 2011) and sets forth recommendations regarding how Clinical Psychologists may wish to position themselves at a micro-level, meso-level and macro-level, given the stories described in this research and the need for a focus on mental health promotion and early intervention.

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APPENDIX A: Overview of '*Mighty Me'* Group Sessions

Session One:

-Introduction to group: definitions of mightiness and a general reminder of why people are doing the group

-Ice breaker (badges with mighty qualities): opportunity to have a fun creative introduction to the group and to begin to think of personal qualities. Children will be asked to write their name and a quality they think they have. Facilitators may brainstorm different 'mighty' qualities with the children to help them in the process and to raise their awareness.

-Group agreements: children and facilitators draw up an agreement on how to work together to make sure the group is a safe environment for all. Facilitators will ask children to keep other children's material confidential, encourage them to share with their families what they have learnt, and explain that they will inform their parents or other professionals if they have any worrying concerns about the children.

-Snack

-Introduction to mindfulness: the children will be taken through a 5-10 minute mindfulness exercise.

-Mighty check out: the aim of this is to support children in developing an emotional language by expressing how they feel and to give feedback on how the session was for them. The facilitators will keep in mind, for each session, that the children can express this in different ways (e.g. act, verbalize, write).

Session Two:

-Badges: children can wear this on their sweater should they wish.

-Mindfulness exercise: using visualization, children are asked to envision their 'safe/special place'.

-Mighty check in: opportunity for each child to say a few words on how they have been mighty throughout the week.

-Snack

-'Safe/special place': drawing of place where children feel happy or safe, where they can negotiate with their problems or not let them in at all, or by invitation only.

-Sharing 'safe place': children may wish to share this with the rest of the group/

-Mighty check out

Session Three:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty check in

-Snack

-Positive vs negative self-talk (introduction of the 'ally' and the 'nasty parrot'): introduce concepts of positive and negative self-talk to children and how these affect their feelings and behaviours. Exploration of strategies to help them quiet down the self-critical voice.

-Child to draw 'ally': children are encouraged to write around the 'ally' the advice and words of encouragement it gives them.

-Mighty check out

Session Four:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty check in

-Understanding the problem: there is the possibility of an out of group meeting between each child and the facilitators to think about what they want to work on in the group. During the previous weeks, facilitators will assess child's clarity on what they would like to work on in the group. A child may be invited for an individual session if it is decided that they need further assistance in clarifying this.

If the children are clear what they would like to work on, they will write a document about the problem answering the following questions:

1. What is its name?
2. When did it first start bothering me?
3. When and where does it bother me most?
4. Why does it keep hanging around?
5. How will life be different if it bothered me less?
6. How will I feel when the problem doesn't bother me so much?

-Snack

-Cards to supporters: the children are invited to write a card to their parent or other significant adult figure in their life. In the card, they will ask the person to

keep a look out for specific signs of mightiness the child will be working on. Some of these might be general things (e.g. tidying up), whereas others will relate more specifically to the child's attempts to make the influence of the problem smaller in their life (e.g. how have they been attempting to interact with other children in the park, how have they taken breaks from sadness or worry). Facilitators will send a letter to the recipients of the cards explaining the purpose and encouraging parents to notice signs of mightiness. Parent's natural ability to notice their children's strengths and resources will be acknowledged.

-Mighty check out

Session Five:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty check in

-Child to draw/sculpt the problem: children are asked to make a drawing or sculpture of their problem. During the group, they will explore which parts of the problem are unhelpful to them and they would like to make smaller so that it has less influence in their lives. Facilitators will be cautious not to pathologise children's problems as some of these would have been serving a purpose in their life. The aim is to explore the parts of the problem which are unhelpful to the child (e.g. being sad *all* of the time). Feelings will be normalized and validated. There is an opportunity to externalize the problem allowing the child to gain some distance from it and not feel it to be part of their identity.

-Store the problem in a box: children are invited to store the problem in the box. The purpose of the exercise is to reinforce the element of creating some distance from the problem allowing children to have space to delve into their resources and strengths.

-Mighty check out

Session Six:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty check in

-Snack

-'Mighty self-portrait': on a big sheet of paper, children are asked to draw a self-portrait and write around it things they like doing, qualities that describe them, their ideas on how other people view them.

-Child to present their 'mighty self-portrait': children are encouraged to share with the rest of the group their self-portrait and to speak about the things they wrote which make them unique and special.

-Mighty check out

Session Seven:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty check in

-Snack

-Continuing to externalise the problem (role play): the purpose of this activity is to continue the process of externalising the problem, allowing children to gain some further distance. This distancing provides children with enough emotional safety to explore the problem's weaknesses. It helps children tap into their internal resources and explore ways of using them therefore returning a sense of personal agency. They are able to discuss bot only how the problem influences their life, but the influence they have over the problem.

Facilitators will set the scene of a Talk Show in which the children are invited as expert consultants on the topic. One child will interview the problem and another will act out the problem whilst the rest of the children serve as experts. Throughout the interview, the aim is to explore the problem's way of operating, its reasons, and how we can reduce its influence in children's lives. Facilitators will take a turn first to model the process and to guide the children so that during the interview the 'problem' can become vulnerable enough to allow its weaknesses to come out.

-Mighty check out

Session Eight:

-Badges

-Mindfulness exercise

-Mighty Check in

-Visions of the future: children will be invited to draw or act a vision of themselves when the problem has less influence in their life. They will be asked to think about what their feelings about it are, what their behaviours are which allow them to have more influence over the problem, and what their thought process is like. Children may recruit other children to act out a scene when the problem was bothering them a lot to show how they used to manage it, and another scene where they put into practice their new skills to make the influence of the problem smaller. Children may also wish to draw their own cartoon, or a few scenes in which they show themselves and how they used to manage the problem when it bothered them a lot and how this made them feel, and another scene in which they are doing something to have more influence over the problem and how this makes them feel. Time will also be given to thinking about how to manage the problem should it pop back into their lives.

-Snack

-Gathering wisdom: children will be asked what advice they would give to other children on managing similar problems.

-Mighty check out

Session Nine:

-Celebration: cake and juice during snack time to celebrate children's achievements. The room will be decorated.

-Evaluation: a general evaluation of the group is carried out asking children what they found most helpful, least helpful, and any suggestions.

-Mighty recognition (mutual acknowledgement of mightiness): children are asked to write a mighty quality about the other group members and then hand it out.

-Discuss future plans as 'mighty me' alumni: discuss with the children ways in which they can continue being 'mighty' and sharing this will other children in their school.

-Certificates and wisdom cards

APPENDIX B: UEL Ethical Application and Approval

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology

APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE RESEARCH IN CLINICAL, COUNSELLING & EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Students on the Professional Doctorate in Occupational & Organisational Psychology and PhD candidates should apply for research ethics approval through *Quality Assurance & Enhancement* at UEL and NOT use this form. Go to:
http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/research/index.htm

Before completing this form please familiarise yourself with the latest *Code of Ethics and Conduct* produced by the British Psychological Society (BPS) in August 2009. This can be found in the Professional Doctorate Ethics folder on the Psychology Noticeboard (UEL Plus) and also on the BPS website www.bps.org.uk under *Ethics & Standards.* Please pay particular attention to the broad ethical principles of respect and responsibility.

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE APPLICATION

1. Complete this application form electronically, fully and accurately.

2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (5.1).

3. Include copies of all necessary attachments in the **ONE DOCUMENT** SAVED AS **.doc**. See page 2

4. Email your supervisor (Director of Studies) the completed application and all attachments as **ONE DOCUMENT**. INDICATE 'ETHICS SUBMISSION' IN THE SUBJECT FIELD OF THIS EMAIL so your supervisor can readily identity its content. Your supervisor will then look over your application.

5. If your application satisfies ethical protocol, your supervisor will type in his/her name in the 'supervisor's signature' section (5.2) and email your application to the Helpdesk for processing. You will be copied into this email so that you know your application has been submitted. It is the responsibility of students to check this. Students are not able to email applications directly to the Helpdesk themselves.

6. Your supervisor will let you know the outcome of your application. Recruitment and data collection are **NOT** to commence until your UEL ethics application has been approved, along with other research ethics approvals that may be

<u>necessary</u> (See 4.1)

MANDATORY ATTACHMENTS

1. A copy of the invitation letter or text that you intend giving to potential participants.

2. A copy of the consent form or text that you intend giving to participants.

OTHER ATTACHMENTS AS APPROPRIATE

- A copy of original tests and questionnaire(s) and test(s) that you intend to use. Please note that copies of copyrighted (or pre-validated) questionnaires and tests do NOT need to be attached to this application. Only provide copies of questionnaires, tests and other stimuli that are original (i.e. ones you have written or made yourself). If you are using pre-validated questionnaires and tests and other copyrighted stimuli (e.g. visual material), make sure that these are suitable for the age group of your intended participants.

- A copy of the kinds of interview questions you intend to ask participants.

- A copy of ethical clearance from an external organisation if you need one, and have one (e.g. NHS ethical clearance). Note that your UEL ethics application <u>can</u> be submitted and approved before ethical approval is obtained from another organisation, if you need this (see 4.1). Please confirm with your supervisor when you have external ethical clearance, if you need it.

- CRB clearance is necessary if your research involves 'children' (anyone under 18 years of age) or 'vulnerable' adults (see 4.2 for a broad definition of this). Because all students registered on doctorate programmes in clinical, counselling or educational psychology have obtained a CRB certificate through UEL, or had one verified by UEL, when registering on a programme, this CRB clearance will be accepted for the purpose of your research ethics application. You are therefore <u>not</u> required to attach a copy of a CRB certificate to this application.

* IF SCANNING ATTACHMENTS IS NESSASARY BUT NOT *AT ALL* POSSIBLE, SUBMIT <u>TWO HARDCOPIES</u> OF YOUR APPLICATION (INCLUDING ALL ATTACHMENTS) DIRECTLY TO THE HELPDESK. HARDCOPY APPLICATIONS ARE TO BE <u>SIGNED BY YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR</u> AND DELIVERED TO THE HELPDESK BY YOU

N.B: ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION IS REQUIRED WHERE AT ALL POSSIBLE AS HARDCOPY SUBMISSION WILL SLOW DOWN THE APPROVAL PROCESS

REMEMBER TO INCLUDE ALL NECESSARY ATTACHMENTS IN THE <u>ONE</u> APPLICATION DOCUMENT AND EMAIL THE COMPLETE APPLICATION AS ONE DOCUMENT (.doc) TO YOUR SUPERVISOR WITH <u>'ETHICS SUBMISSION'</u> IN THE SUBJECT FIELD OF YOUR EMAIL

1. Initial details

1.1. Title of Professional Doctorate programme:

- Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

1.2. Registered title of thesis:

- Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis (working title)

2. About the research

2.1. Aim of the research:

- The proposed study is designed to explore the following research question: How do children describe the narrative process of becoming 'mighty'?
- The study also aims to explore the impact of the intervention and a further research question is: What are the effects of becoming 'mighty'?

2.2. Likely duration of the data collection/fieldwork from starting to finishing date:

- Data collection will start in June 2014 and this stage will be completed by October - November 2014.

Methods.

2.3. Design of the research:

- The study will use the qualitative methodology of Narrative Analysis.
- Interviews will be conducted with children, between the ages of eight and eleven years, who have participated in a Narrative Therapy Group *('Mighty Me')* with the children's charity, West London Action for Children.
- In line with the framework of Narrative Analysis, the researcher will be guided by the response of participants, rather than adhering to a set interview schedule. The researcher will have a particular focus, in light of the research question.
- Interviews will be around 50-60 minutes in duration but this will be monitored in light of the age of the participants.

2.4. Data Sources or Participants:

- Final analysis for the thesis will be drawn from typed transcripts of audio-recorded interviews with, at least, eight children who have participated in a Narrative Therapy group programme *('Mighty Me')*.
- There are no inclusion criteria relating to gender.
- Children will be between the ages of eight and eleven years of age.
- The interviews are scheduled to take place at a minimum of two months post completion of the group.
- Interviews will take place in a quiet room at West London Action for Children, to enable participants to feel as comfortable as possible. It might also be appropriate to conduct interviews at the child's school and this will be discussed

with the child and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

- Recruitment will be facilitated through the field supervisors based at West London Action for Children (a Clinical Psychologist and a Counselling Psychologist). Further details of the recruitment process are included in section 2.6.

2.5. Measures, Materials or Equipment:

- As stated above, given the recommendations for carrying out Narrative Analysis, the interviewer will be guided by the responses of the participants rather than following a set interview schedule.
- Children will be invited to bring with them to the interview a picture that they made during their participation in '*Mighty Me'*. This is related to a particular task that the children carried out (drawing themselves as 'mighty' and presenting this to the group, explaining their 'mighty' qualities).
- An audio-recorder will be used to record interviews which will then be transcribed onto a password-protected computer. The computer will store the transcripts.
- Consent forms will be kept in a designated locked space in the premises of West London Action for Children.

2.6. Outline of procedure, giving sufficient detail about what is involved in the research:

- Recruitment will be facilitated through the field supervisors based at West London Action for Children (a Clinical Psychologist and a Counselling Psychologist):
  - o The field supervisors will identify potential participants for the research study, given their involvement in facilitating the group sessions and their understanding of the children.
  - o They will provide the children and parent(s)/guardian(s) with brief details of this research, at the end of the group sessions.
  - o They will explain that should the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child wish to consider participating, they will be contacted at a later date with fuller details of the study.
  - o At this later date, the researcher will provide details of the study in a written information sheet. This will be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) (Appendix A) and an information sheet will also be made accessible to children (Appendix B). Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to read through the information sheet that has been made accessible for their child, with their child, should they consent to their child's participation.
  - o A consent form will also be given to parent(s)/guardian(s)(Appendix C) and made accessible to children (Appendix D). It will be necessary to receive written informed consent from the child and one parent or guardian before interviewing can proceed.
- Interviews will last for around 50-60 minutes but this will be monitored in light of the age of the children.
- Interviews will take place in a quiet room at West London Action for Children or at the child's school, depending on what is more convenient for the child and parent, and depending on whether it is feasible to interview before the end of the Summer term in July 2014.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded. They will then be transcribed for analysis by the researcher within one month.

3. Ethical considerations

Please describe briefly how each of the ethical considerations below will be addressed.

3.1. Obtaining fully informed consent:

- The researcher will provide details of the study in a written information sheet. This will be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) (Appendix A) and an information sheet will also be made accessible to children (Appendix B). Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to read through the information sheet that has been made accessible for their child, with their child, should they consent to their child's participation.
- A consent form will also be given to parent(s)/guardian(s) (Appendix C) and made accessible to children (Appendix D). It will be necessary to receive written informed consent from the child and one parent or guardian before interviewing can proceed.

3.2. Engaging in deception, if relevant:

- The proposed research involves no deception.

3.3. Right of withdrawal:

- Participants will be advised of their right to withdraw from the research study without disadvantage to them and without being obliged to give any reason. This will be made clear to participants and to their parent(s)/guardian(s) on the invitation letter sent to them and it will also be necessary to explain that withdrawal from the study will not affect their relationship with West London Action for Children in any way.
- Withdrawing from the project would include deleting any audio recordings and interview transcripts, if the participant or parent(s)/guardian(s) indicated this was their wish.
- Analysis of accounts from this child would therefore not take place in such circumstances and it will be noted in the final write-up of the research that the withdrawal(s) took place.
- However, it will be clearly explained in the information sheets and consent forms that should the child or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) wish to withdraw after the analysis begins on 1st September 2014, the anonymised information that the child has provided will be included in the analysis.
- There will be opportunities offered to discuss this with the child or parent(s)/guardian(s).

3.4. Anonymity & confidentiality:

- The researcher will ask the Clinical Supervisor to provide the names and contact details of children interested in participating in the study and the researcher will make contact with the child and their parent(s)/ guardian(s) to seek informed consent.
- Participant details will be kept in a locked environment and not shared with anyone else. They will not feature on interview transcripts.
- Confidentiality will be protected as much as possible by using pseudonyms. It will also be necessary to remove any identifying references from interview transcripts and extracts in the final thesis and any resulting publications. This will be explained to the participants and to their parent(s)/guardian(s).

- Audio recording files will be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer, and deleted after examination. Only the researcher will have access to these files.
- Anonymised transcripts will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer, and only the researcher, supervisors and examiners will have access to transcripts.
- Transcripts will be kept for five years after the study and then deleted.
- The researcher will adhere to West London Action for Children Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure (Appendix E)[15]:
  - 'West London Action for Children's priority is to protect a child from harm or further harm. This takes priority over all other work (Child Protection Procedure point 12).'

- The researcher will also adhere to University of East London Safeguarding Policy of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Appendix F)[16].
- Participants will be informed that confidentiality may need to be broken if the researcher considers they are at risk of harm, or if they disclose information that suggests that others are at risk of harm. This will be fully explained to children at the outset of the interview, in line with policy set forth by West London Action for Children. This will be clearly documented in the information letter given to parent(s)/guardian(s) and participants.

3.5. Protection of participants:

- There are no potential hazards or risks of injury or accident to participants.
- Participants may become upset if they talk about topics that are distressing or emotional. The researcher will look out for any signs that someone is becoming upset or distressed, and ask the participant what they would like to do and whether they wish to terminate the interview.
- The Clinical Supervisor will be available to discuss any issues that might have arisen during the interviews and discuss risk issues. As described above, the child's safety will be prioritised.
- If it becomes apparent that a parent/guardian of the child is at risk, this will be discussed with the clinical supervisor.
- West London Action for Children offers support and counselling for parent(s) and guardian(s) and it will be possible to consider referring parent(s)/guardian(s) to the charity.

3.6. Will medical after-care be necessary?   NO

3.7. Protection of the researcher:

- There are no specific risks to the researcher.
- Interviews will be conducted at West London Action for Children offices or on school premises.
- The Clinical Supervisor will be aware of the times of interviews.

3.8. Debriefing:

- Participants will be given time at the end of the interview to ask any questions.

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[15] This Policy is included in **APPENDIX I** in the final Thesis.
[16] This Policy is included in **APPENDIX J** in the final Thesis.

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be offered an opportunity to discuss their child's participation.
- There is no deception involved in the study.
- Participants will be reminded of what will happen to the recordings that are taken during the interview and they will be asked if they are still in agreement about taking part in the study.
- Children, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school will be offered an accessible summary of the findings after the analysis.

3.9. Will participants be paid?   NO

3.10. Other:

- It will also be necessary for the researcher to attend Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Child Protection Training provided by Hammersmith and Fulham Local Authority, in March 2014.

4. Other permissions and clearances

4.1. Is ethical clearance required from any other ethics committee?   NO
(e.g. NHS, charities)

PLEASE NOTE: UEL ethical approval <u>can</u> be gained before approval from another research ethics committee is obtained. However, recruitment and data collection are NOT to commence until your research has been approved by UEL and other ethics committees as may be necessary. Please let your supervisor know when you have obtained ethics approval from another organisation, if you need one.

4.2. Will your research involve working with children or vulnerable adults?*   YES

If <u>YES</u>, please tick here to confirm that you obtained a CRB certificate through UEL, or had one verified by UEL, when you registered on your Professional Doctorate programme.

√

<u>It will also be necessary to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service Check through West London Action for Children. An application has been made and no involvement with children or parent(s)/guardian(s) will take place prior to this certification.</u>

<u>Parental/guardian consent will be sought for each participant given that they will be below the age of sixteen years.</u>

5. Signatures

ELECTRONICALLY TYPED NAMES WILL BE ACCEPTED AS SIGNATURES <u>BUT ONLY IF THE APPLICATION IS EMAILED TO THE HELPDESK BY YOUR SUPERVISOR</u>

5.1. **Declaration by student**:

I confirm that I have discussed the ethics and feasibility of this research proposal with my supervisor(s).

I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code of conduct in carrying out this proposed research. Personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and participants will be fully informed about the nature of the research, what will happen to their data, and any possible risks to them.

Participants will be informed that they are in no way obliged to volunteer, should not feel coerced, and that they may withdraw from the study without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason.

.

Student's name: Nicolina Spatuzzi

Student's signature: N. SPATUZZI

Student's number: u1236174   Date: 28.02.14

5.2. Declaration by supervisor:

I confirm that, in my opinion, the proposed study constitutes a suitable test of the research question and is both feasible and ethical.

Supervisor's name:

Supervisor's signature: Date:

Appendix A <u>in Ethics Application Form</u> : INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN(S)

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>

School of Psychology

Stratford Campus

Water Lane

London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

E-mail: u1236174@uel.ac.uk

Dear XXX,

Information regarding my child's participation in a research study

The purpose of this letter is to give you information that I would like you to consider in deciding whether you agree to your child taking part in a research study. I have also included an information sheet with this letter that I would like you to read through with your child, if you agree to your child participating in this study. Both of you need to agree for him or her to take part.

The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London.

1. What is the title of the project?
The project title is 'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

2. What will the project involve?
The aim of this project is to explore how children describe their involvement in the Narrative Therapy Group Programme '*Mighty Me'* that your child participated in at his/her school*.*

Previous research in this field has sought to understand how parents, therapists and other healthcare professionals view the impact of Narrative Therapy with children and young people.

I would like to interview your child, on an individual basis, to hear about his/her participation in the group and the ways in which your child talks about what they have learnt. The questions that I ask will depend on what he/she wishes to talk about in the interview. However, an example of the types of questions that I might ask are:

- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.
- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.

Should both you and your child wish to participate in the study, I would like to invite your child to bring with them to the interview the picture/painting that your child made to describe their 'mighty' qualities.

The interview will last for around 50 to 60 minutes but this will depend on the individual child. I will use a method called Narrative Analysis to analyse the interviews. This form of analysis seeks to understand a person's way of making sense of their lives by thinking about the stories they tell about their lives.

The finished research will be in the form of an academic thesis. At a later date, this might be turned into an article that is submitted for publication in an academic journal. Hopefully this will help broaden our understanding of the different ways that Narrative Therapy can be valuable for children and young people. I will feed this back to West London Action for Children

If you have any concerns about the project, you are welcome to contact me at any time to discuss these.

3. What else is important for me to be aware of?

I will audio record the interview and I will then type the interview into a transcript. The transcript will be anonymised and it will, therefore, not be possible to identify your child from the transcripts. The transcripts will be confidential and will not be shared with any parties other than myself (the researcher), my supervisors and examiners. The audio recording will be deleted after my examination in June 2015 and the anonymised transcripts will also be destroyed after five years. Quotes your child has shared may be used in the analysis of the research. However, no details will be shared which would mean other people could identify your child.

The interview is a safe space for your child to think about the group and care will be taken to ensure your child feels comfortable. Should your child bring up anything that is upsetting to them during the interview, your child will be offered an opportunity to take a break or to finish the interview at another time. I will talk with the Clinical Supervisor to discuss any further support that we might consider necessary to provide your child with.

I will explain to your child at the beginning of the interview that what we talk about will be kept confidential between your child, myself and my supervisors. I will also explain that the only time I would need to break this confidentiality would be if I was concerned about your child's wellbeing. If this circumstance did arise, I would explain this to your child. We will keep you informed of any concerns we have and of any referral we make. The only occasion you would not be involved is if this placed a child or adult at greater risk. This is very rare.

4. Why am I being asked about this?

When young people are asked to take part in research, a parent or guardian also has to agree to this as they are responsible for assisting them in making important decisions.

5. Do both parents have to agree?

Only one parent or guardian has to agree to a young person taking part although if possible, it would be good for everyone to agree together. However, it is recognised that there are circumstances when this might not be possible.

6. Where will the project take place?

The project will take place at West London Action for Children's main office (15 Gertrude Street, London, SW10 0JN), in a quiet space. It might be more convenient for you if I meet your child at their school. I would be very happy to discuss what you think might be more suitable for you and your child.

7. Will other people know my child is taking part?

The clinical supervisors, Dr xxx (Counselling Psychologist) and Dr xxx (Clinical Psychologist), have informed you about this study and have explained to me that you have expressed an interest in allowing your child to participate. They will be kept informed about your child's participation. Ms xxx (Learning Mentor) will also know your child is involved in this research. It will not be necessary to inform any other parties about your child's participation in this study. If I do meet with your child at their school, I will not inform the school about details of what we speak about unless I become worried about your child's safety or the safety of another person.

8. Will my child get anything for taking part?

Your child will not be paid for taking part in this study but I hope they will find it an enjoyable experience to talk to me about their participation in '*Mighty Me'* and what they have learnt from this group. It also provides a space for a further co-construction of '*Mighty Me'* which could offer further benefit to your child and I hope that the interview will be a positive and affirming experience for your child. Through your child's participation, it is hoped that we can gain a better understanding of how children experience the group whilst also promoting 'children's voices' in social and psychological research. We hope this will contribute towards making this intervention more widely available to children.

9. Does my child have to take part?

Your child does not have to take part in this study and you are under no obligation to agree to them taking part. Both you and your child are free to change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. If your child withdraws from the study they may do so without disadvantage to either of you and there is no need to give a reason. This will not affect any involvement you or your child has with West London Action for Children.

If your child withdraws before I begin analysing the anonymised transcripts on 1st September 2014, the information that they have shared with me will not be used in my research. In the final write-up of the study, I will explain that the withdrawal from the study occurred but due to the anonymised nature of this write-up, it will not be possible to identify your child. If your child withdraws after the analysis begins on 1st September 2014, the information they have provided will be used but your child will not be identified, in light of the anonymised nature of this research.

I would be very happy to answer any questions that you might have. If you would like to allow your child to participate, I will require you to sign a consent form stating your wish. As stated above, your child also needs to consent to participate before the interview can proceed. Please hold on to this information letter in case you want to look at it again in the future.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the project has been carried out, you can contact:

- The project supervisor: Dr. Ho Law, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15, 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 2457. Email: h.law@uel.ac.uk) **or**
- Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for considering whether to agree for your child to take part in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist,

February 2014

Enc: Information Sheet for your child

Appendix B in Ethics Application Form: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANT

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>

School of Psychology

Stratford Campus

Water Lane

London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

E-mail: u1236174@uel.ac.uk

Dear XXX,

My name is Nicolina and I am training to be a psychologist at the University of East London. I am doing a project for my course and I would like to invite you to take part.

This letter describes some details of my project. I would like you to read this together with your mum, dad, or legal guardian, to help you decide whether you would like to take part. You can ask me any questions about my project before you decide whether you would like to take part.

I will also be giving some information about my project to your mum, dad or legal guardian. This is because they will also need to decide whether they agree to you taking part.

1. What is the title of the project?

My project is called: 'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

2. What will the project involve?

The aim of this project is to explore how you talk about the group '*Mighty Me'* that you have been involved in at your school. *'Mighty Me'* uses ideas from a form of therapy called Narrative Therapy.
I would like to meet with you to hear about the things that you have learnt. The questions that I ask will depend on what you would like to talk about but I might ask questions such as:

- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.
- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.

I would like to invite you to bring along the picture or painting that you made to describe your 'mighty' qualities. You do not have to bring along this picture or painting if you do not want to.

I would like to record our meetings using an audio recorder. Only I will listen to the recording. I will then type up what we speak about into something called a transcript on a computer with a password. I will not include your name or any other personal details when I type up what we speak about. It will therefore not be possible to identify you. The only people that might read the transcripts are my supervisors and examiners at university. The recordings will be deleted after my project is finished. The transcripts will be deleted after five years.

I also hope to talk to other children who took part in '*Mighty Me'.* I will write up what children talk to me about into what is called an academic thesis. At a later date, this might be turned into an article that might be published in a journal where psychologists can learn more about the different ways that Narrative Therapy can help children and young people.

3. How long will we meet for?

Our meeting will last for around 50 to 60 minutes but this will depend on you.

4. Where will the project take place?

We will meet in a quiet room in the office of West London Action for Children. The psychologist that you know from 'Mighty Me' (XXX), works for this charity. We can agree a time that is suitable for you and the person who will be bringing you to our meeting. It might be more convenient to meet at your school and I can discuss this with your mum, dad or legal guardian.

5. Who else will know I am taking part?

XXX (psychologist) and XXX (Learning Mentor at XXX) told me that you might be interested. They will know if you agree to take part. You mum, dad or legal guardian will also need to agree to you taking part. No one else will know and I will not need to tell anyone from your school. If I do meet you at your school, people from your school would not need to know the details of what we speak about unless I become worried about your safety or the safety of another person.

6. What happens to the things I share? Will they be kept private?

Our talk will be private but I might talk to XXX(psychologist) about what we speak about.

If you tell me anything that makes me worry about your safety or the safety of anybody else, we might need to speak to other people. This is because we want to make sure you and other people are safe. If this happens, I would always try to talk to you about this first.

When I write up my project, I might include things that you have said to me. However, no details will be shared which would mean other people could identify you (e.g. your name or where you live).

The meeting is not meant to upset you. If you do become upset, I will ask you what you would like to do. You might want to have a break from talking to me or meet me at another time. Or, you might tell me that you don't want to take part in my project anymore. I will listen to what you tell me.

7. Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in my project. You are free to change your mind at any time and tell me that you do not want to take part in my project. If you choose to do this, you may do so without giving any reason.

If you decide you don't want to take part, you will have the option of telling me that you do not want me to write about what you have told me. If this happens after I start looking at all of the conversations I have had with other children, it might be more difficult not to include what you have told me about. I will start to do this on 1st September 2014. However, because what you tell me about is private, it would still not be possible to identify you.

I would be very happy to answer any questions you might have. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a form before you can take part. You mum, dad, or guardian, will also be asked to sign a form.

If you have any questions or concerns about how my project has been carried out, you can contact:
- The project supervisor: Dr. Ho Law, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15, 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 2457. Email: h.law@uel.ac.uk) **or**
- Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this letter and considering taking part.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist,

February 2014

Appendix C <u>in Ethics Application Form</u>: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN(S)

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>

Parental consent to participate in the research study:

'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

I have the read the information sheet about this research study and have been given a copy to keep. I have had the chance to ask questions about what I have read. I understand what is involved in the research study. I have read through the accessible version of the information sheet with my child. I understand that it is also necessary for my child to agree to participate.

I understand that my child's involvement in this study, and any personal data from this research, will remain strictly confidential, which means other people will not have access to this information or be able to see his/her personal details. Only the researcher and psychologist involved in the study will have access to identifying information. However, it has also been explained to me what will happen if there are concerns about the safety of a child or adult. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

By signing this consent form, I am aware I fully consent to my child participating in the study, which has been fully explained to me. I understand that even once I have given this consent I have the right to withdraw my child from the study. I understand that this will not affect my child's involvement with West London Action for Children. I also understand that if my child withdraws before 1st September 2014, my child and I have the right to request that the researcher does not use the information that my child has shared. However, I also understand that after this date, the anonymised information that my child has shared would be used in the study.

Parent or guardian's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Parent or guardian's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………

Date

………………………

Appendix D <u>in Ethics Application Form</u>: **CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT**

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>

Consent to participate in the project:

'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

- I have the read the information sheet about this project with my mum, dad or legal guardian and I have been given a copy to keep.
- The researcher has also explained to me what this project involves.
- I have had the chance to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.
- I understand what it is I am being asked to take part in.
- My parent or guardian has also been given a copy of the information sheet to keep and asked to agree to me taking part in the project.

- I understand that my involvement in this project, and any personal information from this project is private. This means other people will not have access to this information or be able to see my personal details.
- Only the researcher and psychologist involved in the project will have access to information that could identify me.
- I also understand that the researcher might need to speak to other people about me, if they are worried about my safety or how safe somebody else is. This is because they have a duty to make sure that people are safe.

- It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.
- By signing this form I am agreeing to take part in this project.
- I understand that even once I have signed, I can tell the researcher I do not want to take part anymore and I do not need to give a reason. I understand that I can ask the researcher not to include anything I have said in their project if I decide I do not want to take part anymore.
- I understand that the researcher would need to include what I have spoken about, if I decide I do not want to take part after 1st September 2014. This is because the researcher will start to look at all of the conversations she has had with other children at this time. However, it will still not be possible to identify me.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) …………………………………………
Participant's Signature ……………………………………………………………….

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) …………………………………….……
Researcher's Signature…………………………………………………………….…

Date………………

ETHICAL PRACTICE CHECKLIST (Professional Doctorates)

SUPERVISOR: Ho Chung Law   **ASSESSOR:** David Harper

STUDENT: Nicolina Spatuzzi   **DATE (sent to assessor):** 04/03/2014

Proposed research topic: Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis (working title)

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

1. Will free and informed consent of participants be obtained?   YES

2. If there is any deception is it justified?   N/A

3. Will information obtained remain confidential?   YES

4. Will participants be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time? YES

5. Will participants be adequately debriefed?   YES

6. If this study involves observation does it respect participants' privacy? NA

7. If the proposal involves participants whose free and informed consent may be in question (e.g. for reasons of age, mental or emotional incapacity), are they treated ethically?   NA

8. Is procedure that might cause distress to participants ethical?   YES

9. If there are inducements to take part in the project is this ethical?   NA

10. If there are any other ethical issues involved, are they a problem?   NO

APPROVED

	YES, PENDING MINOR CONDITIONS	

MINOR CONDITIONS:
- **Before the clinical supervisor can hand over contact details of participants the parent/guardian needs to be asked to consent to this under the Data Protection Act.**
- **You should password protect each individual file not just the computer**
- **You should include at least and outline interview schedule – you must have some ideas about what you might ask. Being more explicit allows reviewers to judge whether the questions might raise ethical concerns. If a parent was to say 'what will you talk/ask about?' what would you say?**
- **The information sheet/letter for both parents/guardians and children is too long and has some jargon in it (e.g. many people will not know what 'anonymised' means). Try to be more concise (e.g. reduce to two sides of A4). The sheet/letter for children needs to be in much simpler child-**

friendly language, possibly using illustrations or pictures. At the moment it comes across as very adult-oriented and formal.
- **The consent form for children (appendix D) is, likewise, too long and not in child-friendly language**
- **The word 'guardian' is misspelt in the title of appendix C**

Assessor initials: DH   Date: 4 March 2014

RESEARCHER RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (BSc/MSc/MA)

SUPERVISOR: Ho Chung Law   **ASSESSOR:** David Harper

STUDENT: Nicolina Spatuzzi   **DATE (sent to assessor):** 04/03/2014

Proposed research topic: Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis (working title)

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Would the proposed project expose the <u>researcher</u> to any of the following kinds of hazard?

1	Emotional	YES

2.	Physical	YES

3.	Other (e.g. health & safety issues)	NO

If you've answered YES to any of the above please estimate the chance of the researcher being harmed as: LOW

APPROVED

	YES, PENDING MINOR CONDITIONS	

MINOR CONDITIONS:
- **As well as the clinical supervisor being aware of the times of the interviews there needs to be an agreed procedure of what to do. How would you signal there was a problem? What would you want your supervisor/others to do?**

Assessor initials: DH   Date: 4 March 2014

For the attention of the assessor: Please return the completed checklists by e-mail to ethics.applications@uel.ac.uk within 1 week.

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.

UEL
University of
East London

www.uel.ac.uk

School of Psychology

Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966   fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk   web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE
UK
The Government Standard

The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2853

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

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APPENDIX C: Information Form for School

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator
Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist
E-mail: u1236174@uel.ac.uk
14.03.14

Dear Mr Fairley and Mrs Kapp,

Information regarding a Research Project with West London Action for Children

As part of my Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London, I would like to carry out a piece of research with young people. I have met with Dr May Karlsen (Counselling Psychologist) and Dr Annabelle Morrison (Clinical Psychologist) at West London Action for Children over the past six months. During this time, it has been very interesting to hear about the '*Mighty Me*' group that has been taking place at Lena Gardens. I would like to carry out a piece of research which aims to expand our understanding of how this group helps the young people who participate. This information letter provides an overview of my project.

I wish to highlight that I have received an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Check for the purposes of this research project. I will also be undertaking Safeguarding Children and Young People Training prior to any involvement with children or their parent(s)/guardian(s). Furthermore, the proposal for my research has received Ethical Approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London.

1. **What is the title of the project?**
The project title is 'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

2. **What will the project involve?**
The aim of this project is to explore how children describe their involvement in the Narrative Therapy Group Programme '*Mighty Me*'.

Previous research in this field has sought to understand how parents, therapists and other healthcare professionals view the impact of Narrative Therapy with children and young people.
I would like to interview eight children, on an individual basis, to hear about their participation in the group and the ways in which each child talks about what they have learnt. The questions that I ask will depend on what the child wishes to talk about in the interview. However, an example of the types of questions that I might ask are:
- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.

- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.
- Can you tell me about why you were invited to take part in '*Mighty Me*'?
- Can you tell me about what you remember from '*Mighty Me*'?

I will provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with an information letter detailing the study. Should they consent to their child's involvement, I will ask them to read through an accessible information sheet with their child. The child must also consent to participate. I will ask parent(s)/guardian(s) to sign a consent sheet and for each child to sign an accessible version.

The interview will last for around 50 to 60 minutes but this will depend on the individual child. I will use a method called Narrative Analysis to analyse the interviews. This form of analysis seeks to understand a person's way of making sense of their lives by thinking about the stories they tell about their lives.

The finished research will be in the form of an academic thesis. At a later date, this might be turned into an article that is submitted for publication in an academic journal. Hopefully this will help broaden our understanding of the different ways that Narrative Therapy can be valuable for children and young people. I will feed this back to West London Action for Children and would be very happy to share my findings with staff at Lena Gardens.

3. **What else is important to consider?**

I will audio record the interview and I will then type the interview into a transcript. The transcript will be anonymised and it will, therefore, not be possible to identify the child from the transcripts. The transcripts will be confidential and will not be shared with any parties other than myself (the researcher), my supervisors and examiners. The anonymised transcripts will also be destroyed after five years. Quotes the child has shared may be used in the analysis of the research. However, no details will be shared which would mean other people could identify the child.

The interview is a safe space for the child to think about the group and care will be taken to ensure each child feels comfortable. Should the child bring up anything that is upsetting to them during the interview, the child will be offered an opportunity to take a break or to finish the interview at another time. I will talk with the Clinical Supervisor to discuss any further support that we might consider necessary to provide the child with.

I will explain to each child at the beginning of the interview that what we talk about will be kept confidential between the child, myself and my supervisors. I will also explain that the only time I would need to break this confidentiality would be if I was concerned about the child's wellbeing. If this circumstance did arise, I would explain this to the child.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed about this. I will keep parents informed of any concerns we have and of any referral we make. The only occasion when this would not take place would be if this placed a child or adult at a greater risk.

4. Do both parents have to agree?

Only one parent or guardian has to agree to a young person taking part although if possible, it would be good for everyone to agree together. However, it is recognised that there are circumstances when this might not be possible.

5. Where will the project take place?

I will meet with the children at Lena Gardens Primary School as it has been discussed that the children will feel more comfortable in a familiar environment.

6. Who else will know the child is taking part?

The clinical supervisors, Dr May Karlsen (Counselling Psychologist) and Dr Annabelle Morrison (Clinical Psychologist), have informed some parents about the study. They will be kept informed about each child's participation. I am also aware that Mrs Basia Kapp (Special Support Assistant) has approached a number of parents about the project and it is my hope that she will remain involved. It will not be necessary to inform any other parties about the child's participation in this study.

7. Will children get anything for taking part?

The children will not be paid for taking part in this study but I hope they will find it an enjoyable experience to talk to me about their participation in '*Mighty Me*' and what they have learnt from this group. It also provides a space for a further co-construction of '*Mighty Me*' which could offer further benefit to each child and I hope that the interview will be a positive and affirming experience for each child. Through each child's participation, it is hoped that we can gain a better understanding of how children experience the group whilst also promoting 'children's voices' in social and psychological research. We hope this will contribute towards making this intervention more widely available to children.

8. Can parent(s)/guardian(s) and children decide to withdraw from the study at a later date?

A child does not have to take part in this study and I will explain to parent(s)/guardian(s) that they are under no obligation to agree to allowing their child to taking part. Both parent(s)/guardian(s) and children are free to change their mind at any time and withdraw from the study. If the child withdraws from the study they may do so without disadvantage to either parent(s)/guardian(s) or children and there is no need to give a reason. This will not affect any involvement they may have with West London Action for Children.

If a child withdraws before I begin analysing the anonymised transcripts on 1st September 2014, the information that they have shared with me will not be used in my research. In the final write-up of the study, I will explain that the withdrawal from the study occurred but due to the anonymised nature of this write-up, it will not be possible to identify the child. If the child withdraws after the analysis begins on 1st September 2014, the information they have provided will be used but the child will not be identified, in light of the anonymised nature of this research.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. I would be very happy to meet and answer any questions that you might have, at your convenience.

Dr May Karlsen will be the main Clinical Supervisor and can be contacted at West London Action for Children, on 020 7352 1155, should you wish to speak with her directly.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the project has been carried out, you can also contact:
- The project supervisor: Dr. Ho Law, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15, 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 2457. Email: h.law@uel.ac.uk) **or**
- Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

I look forward to hearing any thoughts you may have on the project.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist,

APPENDIX D: Consent Form for School

Consent from XXX School to participate in the research study:

'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

I have the read the information sheet about this research study and have been given a copy to keep. I have had the chance to ask questions about what I have read. I understand what is involved in the research study and I understand that any personal data from this research will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher and psychologist involved in the study will have access to identifying information. However, I am also aware what will happen if there are concerns about the safety of a child or adult.

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………….

Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………

Date

……………………

APPENDIX E: Information Sheet for Parent(s) / Guardian(s)

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator
Nicolina Spatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist
E-mail: u1236174@uel.ac.uk

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Information regarding my child's participation in a research study

The purpose of this letter is to give you information that I would like you to consider in deciding whether you agree to your child taking part in a research study.

I have also included an information sheet with this letter that I would like you to read through with your child, if you agree to your child participating in this study. When I meet with your child, I will explain this information to your child and gain their written consent. Both of you need to agree for him or her to take part.

The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London.

1. **What is the title of the project?**
The project title is 'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

2. **What will the project involve?**
The aim of this project is to explore how children describe their involvement in the '*Mighty Me*' programme that your child participated in at his/her school. *'Mighty Me'* is a Narrative Therapy group.

I would like to interview your child, on an individual basis, to hear about his/her participation in the group and the ways in which your child talks about what they have learnt. The questions that I ask will depend on what he/she wishes to talk about in the interview. However, an example of the types of questions that I might ask are:

- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.
- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.
- Can you tell me about why you were invited to take part in '*Mighty Me*'?
- Can you tell me about what you remember from '*Mighty Me*'?

The interview will last for around 50 to 60 minutes but this will depend on the individual child. The finished research, addressing how children describe being part of a Narrative

Therapy group, will be in the form of an academic thesis. At a later date, this might be turned into an article that is submitted for publication in an academic journal.

3.   What else is important for me to be aware of?
I will audio record the interview and I will then type the interview into a transcript which will not include any identifiable information about your child. The transcripts will be confidential and will not be shared with any parties other than myself (the researcher), my supervisors and examiners. The transcripts will be destroyed after five years. Quotes your child has shared may be used in the analysis of the research. However, no details will be shared which would mean other people could identify your child.

The interview is a safe space for your child to think about the group and care will be taken to ensure your child feels comfortable. Should your child bring up anything that is upsetting to them during the interview, your child will be offered an opportunity to take a break or to finish the interview at another time. I will talk with the clinical supervisor to discuss any further support that we might consider necessary to provide your child with.

I will explain to your child at the beginning of the interview that what we talk about will be kept confidential between your child, myself and my supervisors. I will also explain that the only time I would need to break this confidentiality would be if I was concerned about your child's wellbeing. If this circumstance did arise, I would explain this to your child. We will keep you informed of any concerns we have and of any referral we make. The only occasion you would not be involved is if this placed a child or adult at greater risk. This is very rare.

4.   Do both parents have to agree?
Only one parent or guardian has to agree to a young person taking part.

5.   Where will the project take place?
The project will take place at Lena Gardens Primary School.
6.   Will other people know my child is taking part?
The clinical supervisors, May Karlsen and Annabelle Morrison, have informed you about this study. They will be kept informed about your child's participation. Basia Kapp (Special Support Assistant) will also know your child is involved in this research. It will not be necessary to inform any other parties about your child's participation in this study.

7.   Will my child get anything for taking part?
Your child will not be paid for taking part in this study but I hope they will find it an enjoyable experience to talk to me about their participation in '*Mighty Me'* and what they have learnt from this group. It also provides a space for a further co-construction of '*Mighty Me'* which could offer further benefit to your child and I hope that the interview will be a positive and affirming experience for your child.

8.   Does my child have to take part?

Your child does not have to take part in this study and you are under no obligation to agree to them taking part. Both you and your child are free to change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study.

If your child withdraws before I begin analysing the non-identifiable transcripts on 1st September 2014, the information that they have shared with me will not be used in my research. In the final write-up of the study, I will explain that the withdrawal from the study occurred. If your child withdraws after the analysis begins on 1st September 2014, the information they have provided will be used but it will not be possible to identify your child.

I would be very happy to answer any questions that you might have. My email address is on the front page of this letter. If you would like to allow your child to participate, I will require you to sign a consent form stating your wish.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the project has been carried out, you can contact:
- The project supervisor: Dr.Ho Law, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15, 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 2457. Email:h.law@uel.ac.uk) **or**
- Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for considering whether to agree for your child to take part in this project.

Yours sincerely,

NicolinaSpatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist,

June 2014

Enc: Information Sheet for your child

APPENDIX F: Information Sheet for Participant

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>
School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator
NicolinaSpatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist
E-mail: u1236174@uel.ac.uk

Dear

My name is Nicolina and I am training to be a psychologist at the University of East London. I am doing a project for my course and I would like to invite you to take part.

This letter describes some details of my project. I would like you to read this together with your mum, dad, or legal guardian, to help you decide whether you would like to take part. You can ask me any questions about my project before you decide whether you would like to take part.

I will also be giving some information about my project to your mum, dad or legal guardian. This is because they will also need to decide whether they agree to you taking part.

1. **What is the title of the project?**
My project is called: 'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

2. **What will the project involve?**
The aim of this project is to explore how you talk about the group '*Mighty Me'* that you have been involved in at your school. *'Mighty Me'* is based on Narrative Therapy.

I would like to meet with you to hear about the things that you have learnt. The questions that I ask will depend on what you would like to talk about but I might ask questions such as:

- I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.
- I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.
- Can you tell me about why you were invited to take part in '*Mighty Me'?*
- Can you tell me about what you remember from '*Mighty Me'?*

I would like to record our meetings using an audio recorder. Only I will listen to the recording. I will then type up what we speak about into something called a transcript on a computer with a password. I will not include your name or any other personal details when I type up what we speak about. The only people that might read the transcripts

are my supervisors and examiners at university. The transcripts will be deleted after five years.

I also hope to talk to other children who took part in '*Mighty Me'.* I will write up what children talk to me about into what is called an academic thesis. At a later date, this might be turned into an article that might be published in a journal. Psychologists might read this to learn more about Narrative Therapy.

3. How long will we meet for?
Our meeting will last for around 50 to 60 minutes but this will depend on you.

4. Where will the project take place?
I will meet with you at your school.

5. Who else will know I am taking part?
May and Basia told me that you might be interested. They will know if you agree to take part. You mum, dad or legal guardian will also need to agree to you taking part.

6. What happens to the things I share? Will they be kept private?
Our talk will be private but I might talk to May about what we speak about.

If you tell me anything that makes me worry about your safety or the safety of anybody else, we might need to speak to other people. This is because we want to make sure you and other people are safe. If this happens, I would always try to talk to you about this first.

When I write up my project, I might include things that you have said to me. However, no details will be shared which would mean other people could identify you (e.g. your name or where you live).

The meeting is not meant to upset you. If you do become upset, I will ask you what you would like to do. You might want to have a break from talking to me or meet me at another time. Or, you might tell me that you don't want to take part in my project anymore. I will listen to what you tell me.

7. Do I have to take part?
You do not have to take part in my project. You are free to change your mind at any time. If you choose to do this, you do not have to tell me why.

If you decide you don't want to take part, you may not want me to write about what you have told me. If this happens after I start looking at all of the conversations I have had with other children, it might be more difficult not to include what you have told me about. I will start to do this on 1st September 2014. However, because what you tell me about is private, it would still not be possible to identify you.

I would be very happy to answer any questions you might have. If you are happy to continue, you will be asked to sign a form before you can take part. You mum, dad, or guardian, will also be asked to sign a form.

If you have any questions or concerns about how my project has been carried out, you can contact:

- The project supervisor: Dr.Ho Law, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15, 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 2457. Email:h.law@uel.ac.uk) **or**
- Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this letter and considering taking part.

Yours sincerely,

NicolinaSpatuzzi, Trainee Clinical Psychologist,

June 2014

APPENDIX G: Consent Form for Parent(s) / Guardian(s)

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Parental consent to participate in the research study:

'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

I have the read the information sheet about this research study and have been given a copy to keep. I have had the chance to ask questions about what I have read. I understand what is involved in the research study. I have read through the accessible version of the information sheet with my child. I understand that it is also necessary for my child to agree to participate.

I understand that my child's involvement in this study, and any personal data from this research, will remain strictly confidential, which means other people will not have access to this information or be able to see his/her personal details. Only the researcher and psychologist involved in the study will have access to identifying information. However, it has also been explained to me what will happen if there are concerns about the safety of a child or adult. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

By signing this consent form, I am aware I fully consent to my child participating in the study, which has been fully explained to me. I understand that even once I have given this consent I have the right to withdraw my child from the study. I also understand that if my child withdraws before 1st September 2014, my child and I have the right to request that the researcher does not use the information that my child has shared. However, I also understand that after this date, the non-identifiable information that my child has shared would be used in the study.

Parent or guardian's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………….

Parent or guardian's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………

Date

………………………

APPENDIX H: Consent Form for Participant

<u>**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**</u>

Consent to participate in the project:

'Exploring children's stories of becoming 'mighty': a Narrative Analysis'.

- I have the read the information sheet about this project with my mum, dad or legal guardian and I have been given a copy to keep.

- The researcher has also explained to me what this project involves and I have had a chance to ask her questions.

- I understand why I am being asked to take part and what is involved.

- My parent or guardian has also been given a copy of the information sheet to keep and asked to agree to me taking part in the project.

- I understand that my involvement in this project, and any personal information from this project is private. This means other people will not have access to this information or be able to see my personal details.

- Only the researcher and psychologist involved in the project will have access to information that could identify me.

- I also understand that the researcher might need to speak to other people about me, if they are worried about my safety or how safe somebody else is.

- It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

- By signing this form I am agreeing to take part in this project.

- I understand that even once I have signed, I can tell the researcher I do not want to take part anymore and I do not need to give a reason. I can ask the researcher not to include anything I have said in their project if I decide I do not want to take part anymore.

- I understand that the researcher would need to include what I have spoken about, if I decide I do not want to take part after 1st September 2014. This is because the researcher will start to look at all of the conversations she has had with other children at this time. However, it will still not be possible to identify me.

Participant's Signature …………………………………………………

Researcher's Signature …………………………………………………

Date……............

APPENDIX I: Coffee Morning Invitation Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian

Thank you for expressing an interest in my research into Mighty Me! I am hoping to interview your child about their experience of the group and would love to meet you to give you a better idea of what this means.

I'll be around for a **coffee morning,** with coffee, tea and biscuits, on **Wednesday 2nd July, at 9am.** This will take place at XX Primary School and Bea will be around to help me organise it. I will tell you a bit about the research to answer any questions you may have about my project and your child's participation.

Attached to this letter, you will find more information about the project. It would be great if you could read through this. It's quite a lengthy form, so don't worry if you haven't got through it by the coffee morning as I'll explain it all then.

Thank you again for expressing an interest and I look forward to meeting you on Wednesday 2nd July! Feel free to get in touch with Bea or myself before then if you have any questions (my details are on the form).

With best wishes,

Nicolina Spatuzzi

APPENDIX J: West London Action for Children Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

WEST LONDON
Action for Children

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Safeguarding Children Policy

1.   The community as a whole has a responsibility for the well being of children. Protecting children from harm is the responsibility of everyone.

2.   As a voluntary agency we have a responsibility to pass on our concerns if we suspect a child is in need of protection from neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse. We have a duty to do all we reasonably can to ensure the safety of the child we are in contact with.   Children have a right to expect this protection from harm.

3.   This duty may conflict at times with duties and responsibilities towards adult clients. However, the well being of the child is paramount.

4.   Parents also have rights and responsibilities. Parents who come to us have a right to expect a confidential service, unless this is compromised by a child's right to be protected from harm.

5.   West London Action for Children will ask permission of the client to share information with another agency. If this is refused we will only share/compare information if we have child protection concerns which we judge to be in the interests of the child's welfare to share.

6.   Parents should be kept informed of any concerns we have and of any decision to report concerns. They should be involved as far as possible in this process and given clear reasons for the referral.

      It is recognised that there may be exceptions, for example, in some cases of sexual or severe physical abuse, where it is judged that to inform parents about concerns, may place a child/children at increased levels of risk.   In such instances referral may need to be made first to Social Services.

7.   West London Action for Children staff may make use of anonymous consultation with Child Protection Advisers/Duty Social Workers without making a formal referral.

8.   Staff should keep clear written records of any incidents or concerns, or conversations with children, recording the child's words and subsequent case discussions or actions agreed. This is whether or not the concern is referred on to another agency.

9.   West London Action for Children will follow safe recruiting procedures for staff and volunteers. This will include written application forms, interviews, consideration of employment records, and taking up of two references. All staff will be subject to criminal records checks through the Criminal Records Bureau, and volunteers who have unsupervised access to children or confidential data regarding children and their families will be subject to these checks from CRB too. As part of staff and volunteer induction they will be given a copy of this policy.

10.   A Code of Practice has been developed and adhered to for staff and volunteers and is constantly under review.

11.   Most of the children who are involved in child protection procedures remain with their families.   In these cases, protecting children from harm can best be

achieved by supporting their families, working with parents in an open and honest way, being clear with parents about the types of behaviour or treatment which we and the British legal system find acceptable, and offering them the appropriate assistance to help them ensure that their children remain safe and free from harm.

12. Most safeguarding concerns unfold and develop over time. Therefore, most of the activity focused on safeguarding within WLAC will be ongoing concerns requiring ongoing conversations with the family and ongoing internal and external consultations, rather than immediate and urgent one-off referrals to social services. This activity should be reflected in safeguarding concerns brought to and updated in Team safeguarding and line-management discussions.

13. The Designated Person for overseeing Child Protection issues and concerns and for the implementation of the policy in West London Action for Children is the   Nominated Children Safeguarding Adviser (NSCA) or in his/her absence the Chief Executive.

Updated February 2011

Child Protection Procedure

1. At the beginning of any piece of work with a client, staff should explain that all work with WLAC is confidential except when a WLAC member of staff considers that either an adult or child is at risk or in danger. In these circumstances, the staff member may inform a statutory service. This information is also provided to the client in a written format; a copy is attached at the end of this guidance.

2. Staff should discuss any child protection concerns or incidents with the NCSA or in his/her absence, an appointee (an experienced therapist with safeguarding experience and training), or the Chief Executive as soon as possible. This may involve use of safeguarding discussions within the team meeting, individual or peer supervision time, a specially convened meeting or telephoning the NCSA or, in his/her absence, the Chief Executive.

3. If the NCSA is unavailable, an appointee should be consulted. If there is no appointee, the Chief Executive should be consulted, and, as appropriate, members of the Professional Sub-Committee.

4. Formal Team safeguarding discussions will usually be the first port of call for safeguarding concerns unless urgent. The NSCA, or appointee, will minute any agreed action and circulate these minutes to the team and the CEO. These minutes will also be entered into the client database by the allocated worker for each client. If there is disagreement within the team as to the action to be taken, the therapist can consult further with the NSCA and the duty officer/child protection advisors based within Statutory Children's Services.

5. The staff member, in the consultation process described above, will decide on an appropriate strategy:-

1. If it is not clear that there is a child protection issue that requires a referral to Social Services then the staff member will gather more information in order to make a decision.

2. If the decision is that there is not a child protection issue then the staff member will continue to work with the family as appropriate.

3. If it is clear that there is a child protection issue or if further assessment indicates that there is a child protection issue then the staff member will refer the matter to the appropriate Social Services area team. This would usually take the form of a telephone call followed up by an interagency referral form. Parents should be kept informed of concerns and of the decision to report concerns unless to do so would place the child at greater risk (see point 5 of the Child Protection Policy).

6. If the Nominated Children's Safeguarding Advisor/Appointee/Chief Executive are unavailable, the staff member must make a decision on whether to delay any action until it is possible to discuss with them or to refer the case to the Social Services Department if a delay would increase the risk to the child. If the staff member decides to refer to Social Services, he/she should inform the NCSA/Appointee/CE of this decision as soon as is practicable, and record their reasons for doing this.

7. There are rare occasions when there is an immediate risk to the life of the child or likelihood of serious injury to a child or it is clear that the child has suffered recent serious harm. In these circumstances, referral should be made immediately to an agency with statutory powers (police or Social Services) to secure the immediate safety of the child, using a 999 call if necessary. However, in most cases the identification of abuse is less clear and staff members will follow the procedures outlined (points 1 – 5).

8. The NCSA will be available to support staff in any strategy, e.g. can attend interviews telling parents of a decision to refer to the Social Services Department, can be present when referrals are made, etc.

9. The Administrator may in very exceptional circumstances have to consult others about a child protection issue if neither a professional staff member nor the Chief Executive is available in the office, following the procedures outlined above (points 1-5)

10. Volunteers with WLAC should discuss any child protection concerns or incidents with the NCSA, an appointee, or the Chief Executive as soon as possible. The NSCA/appointee/Chief Executive will make a referral to the Social Services team if this is appropriate and make a record of this action.

11. If a child discloses incidents of abuse to staff or volunteers with WLAC this should be recorded clearly including date and time of disclosure, the exact wording of the disclosure, and what was said by the counsellor or volunteer. Please see attached guidance. This should be discussed with the NCSA/Chief Executive or the Professional team and the discussion and any action taken should be recorded.

12. West London Action for Children's priority is to protect a child from harm or further harm. This takes priority over all other work.

14. If there is a disagreement within the Professional team, this should be referred to the Chief Executive who may, as appropriate, refer the matter to the Professional Sub-Committee. This includes any disagreements between West London Action for Children and Local Authority staff.

15. WLAC staff will follow school safeguarding policy and procedures when co-facilitating projects at schools. In the event that WLAC staff feel decisions made in this process have not been in the best interests of the child(ren), WLAC policy and procedures can be implemented.

Child Protection Contact Details

The Designated Person for overseeing Child Protection issues and concerns and for the implementation of the policy in West London Action for Children is the Nominated Children's Safeguarding Advisor or, in his/her absence, the Chief Executive - telephone 020 7352 1155.

HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM CONTACTS

Social Services

>   Contact and Assessment Team
>   Tel: 0208 753 6600
>   145 King Street
>   London
>   W6 9JT
>
>   Out of Hours Social Services
>   020 8748 8588
>
>   Child Protection Service Manager
>   020 8753 6221
>
>   Review and Quality Assurance Team
>   Tel: 020 8753 5125
>   Barclay House, Effie Road, SW6 1EN.

Police Stations
Hammersmith – 0300 123 1212
Fulham – 0300 123 1212

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA CONTACTS

Social Services

>   Referrals
>   020 7361 3013
>
>   Out of Hours
>   020 7373 2227 or above number – automatically put through
>
>
>   Town Hall and Main Office   Social Services Reception, Town Hall, Hornton Street,W8 7NX
>
>   K and C Child Protection Advisors

Lynda Deacon
Family support and child protection adviser (North)
020 7598 4457
07975 878 837
Lynda.deacon@rbkc.gov.uk

Jean Brown
Family support and child protection Adviser (South)
020 7361 4074
07967 347 861
Jean.brown@rbkc.gov.uk

Police Stations
Kensington – 0300 123 1212
Chelsea – 0300 123 1212

NSPCC CHILD PROTECTION HELPLINE

0808 800 500025

WHAT IS ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND HOW TO RECOGNISE IT

Please refer to the 4th Edition London Child Protection Procedures (Dec 2010), relevant sections listed below. A hard copy is always held in the office. Alternatively you can access it at: http://www.londoncp.co.uk/index.htm

4.1 Concept of significant harm

4.2 Definitions of child abuse and neglect

   4.2.1 Physical abuse

   4.2.3 Emotional abuse

   4.2.6 Sexual abuse

   4.2.10 Neglect

4.3 Recognition of abuse and neglect

   4.3.6 Recognising physical abuse

   4.3.16 Recognising emotional abuse

   4.3.19 Recognising sexual abuse

   4.3.25 Recognising neglect

4.4 Potential risk of harm to an unborn child

APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR STAFF

All staff working with children undertake Child Protection training provided by the boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea and of Hammersmith and Fulham.

All staff understand the four types of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect).

All staff read and sign to say they have read the policy and will report any concerns they may have to the Nominated Children's Safeguarding Adviser.

SUPERVISION OF PROJECTS

All projects are adequately supervised and the type of project determines the level of adult/child ratio.

No visitors or guests are allowed to any project, only users, staff and professional presenters, family members and appropriately supervised students.

The numbers of adults attending is monitored.

RECORDING SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS AND CONCERNS

All concerns and incidents will be recorded in detail on the client database. If a referral is made to Social Services a copy of the referral form will be pasted onto the client database. All action, including no additional action, should be clearly documented with supporting explanations in the client database, and any peer safeguarding discussions with action agreed should be pasted into the client database. This includes situations where there are current safeguarding concerns, but a referral to social services or to another agency is not considered appropriate. The reasons why a referral is not made must also be documented.

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES: ATTENDANCE AND PRO-FORMA

Practitioners will attend child protection conferences if they feel they have had significant involvement with the family around any safeguarding issues and have a useful contribution to make. If practitioners cannot attend a child protection conference they will need to supply a report to the conference and to send a representative is this is possible. Please see Child Protection Conference pro-forma attached. The contents of the report will be discussed with the relevant family members prior to the conference, unless to do so would put the child at risk of harm.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AND CHILD PROTECTION SAFEGUARDS

A safe and suitable environment is provided for all users of our services and participants in activities and projects. A Health and Safety Policy is in place and is reviewed at appropriate times and/or annually.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PERSON

The Nominated Children's Safeguarding Advisor is the 'designated person'.

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy is reviewed in line with developments in Safeguarding Children and/or annually.

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

DO

- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all time towards the child as if you believe that they are saying
- Tell the child that they are right to tell you
- Reassure them that they are not to blame
- Be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why
- Tell the child what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening
- Take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – and tell your nominated person (Nominated Children Safeguarding Adviser) immediately.
- Write down everything said and what was done

DO NOT

- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Do not interrogate the child
- Do not cast doubt on what the child has told you, do not interrupt or change the subject
- Do not say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse
- Do not delay - Make sure that you tell your nominated children's safeguarding adviser immediately

Updated March 2011

15 Gertrude Street, London, SW10 0JN
Telephone 020 7352 1155 fax 020 7351 2739 e-mail team@wlac.org.uk website
www.wlac.org.uk

West London Action for Children

Our Confidentiality Policy

Our services are confidential and all information you share with us remains within the professional team at West London Action for Children. We only pass information about you or your family to others with your permission.

Our Child Protection Policy and Our Duty of Care to Adults

We have a duty to refer to other agencies any child or adult whom we judge to be at risk of significant harm or self-harm. We will keep you informed of any concerns we have and of any referral we make. The only occasion you would not be involved is if this placed a child or adult at greater risk. *This is very rare.*

Our Data Protection Policy

Confidential information is kept secure and is kept for a maximum of six years only. Access is restricted to the team at West London Action for Children.

Our Complaints Policy

If you have any comments or suggestions, or are unhappy with the service you receive, you may call the Chief Executive, in confidence, to discuss this on 020 7352 1155.

Child Protection Plan and Child in Need Plan

Does your child have a child protection plan?   Yes ☐   No ☐
Does your child have a child in need plan?   Yes ☐   No ☐

Please sign below to show you have read the summary of our policies, and that you agree to us holding personal information about you.

Signature……………………………………………………   Date…………..

If you would like to see the full policies, please ask.

15 Gertrude Street, London, SW10 0JN
Telephone: 020 7352 1155 Fax: 020 7352 2739 E-mail: team@wlac.org.uk Website:
www.wlac.org.uk

Conference pro-forma

Re: Click here to enter text.
DOB: Click here to enter a date.

Referred by: Click here to enter text.
Date: Click here to enter a date.

Consultation by: Click here to enter text.
Date: Click here to enter a date.

Service agreed (including goals/preferred futures if relevant):
Click here to enter text.

Allocated Therapist: Click here to enter text.

Relevant feedback to conference:
Click here to enter text.

Particular safeguarding concerns:
Click here to enter text.

Signed: _____ (client)

Signed:_____(therapist)

APPENDIX K: University of East London Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

HR Services
Employee Handbook

Policy on the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

1. Introduction and scope of policy

1.1 The University of East London (UEL) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable groups including children taking part in our events on and off campus. Vulnerable groups - including children - are entitled to protection from harm and to take part in UEL's events in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment. Our health and safety policy aims to ensure that we maintain an environment where the health and safety of our staff, students and visitors is assured.

1.2 We recognise also that we have a responsibility to protect our staff, students and volunteers against unfounded allegations of abuse. The aims of this policy and our Code of Practice attached at Appendix C are to help us meet these two responsibilities. This safeguarding policy does not cover situations where students, staff or visitors bring children with them onto UEL's premises. In those circumstances it is the responsibility of the students, staff or visitors concerned to supervise and accompany children and young persons at all times during their stay on UEL's premises.

1.3 We have a responsibility under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SGVA 2006) as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PFA 2012) to ensure that vulnerable groups including children on our campuses are protected from individuals who are unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.

1.4 This policy provides guidance to all UEL staff and students on the expected standards of behaviour when working with vulnerable groups including children and our responsibilities and processes for reporting any concerns.

1.5 This policy applies to all staff, students and volunteers who may be working with children and vulnerable adults through our teaching and research activities, including outreach programmes and other related activities. It also includes the activities of staff and students with regard to computer use and photographic images. Please refer to Section 5 of UEL's Computer Use Policy relating to offensive or other inappropriate material for further information. All staff, students and volunteers undertaking research involving vulnerable groups including children should ensure that they understand the principles and implications of this policy and code of practice and all research activity should adhere to UEL's Code of Good Practice in Research (available on http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/policies/policies)

1.6 Under the SVGA 2006 (as amended by the PFA 2012), children are defined as people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults are defined as any person over the age of 18 to whom certain regulated activities (as set out in the SVGA 2006) are provided. For example, it would include any form of treatment or therapy under the supervision of a healthcare professional. Please see Appendix A for information about the definition of regulated activities which, if any adult requires them, lead to that adult being considered vulnerable at that particular time. Additionally UEL considers vulnerable groups to include persons aged over 18 who, by reason of mental ill-health or other disability or illness are or may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

1.7   UEL is a Regulated Activity Provider (RAP) where it is responsible for the management or control of regulated activity* and makes arrangements for people to engage in that activity. This policy seeks to support these activities and to offer assurances to staff, students, visitors and volunteers that UEL seeks to protect children and vulnerable adults when in contact with them. (*Please see Appendix A for the current definition of regulated activity).

1.8   We will support staff, students and volunteers by providing relevant training and we will issue guidelines to ensure that there is a clear procedure in place for them to follow, should any issues of a serious nature be reported. The Public Interest Disclosure Act, effective from 1 January 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers for disclosing concerns falling in certain specified categories (but not others). UEL's Policy on Public Interest Disclosure (http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/policies/policies/) enables staff and such other persons as are covered by the policy (see previous paragraph) to raise concerns or disclose information at a high level, which the discloser believes in good faith or disclose information at a high level, which the discloser believes in good faith to show evidence of serious malpractice including issues relating to safeguarding.

1.9   The lead member of staff institutionally responsible for this policy is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or in his/her absence, the Director of Student Life (or nominee) in regard to students and the Director of HR Services (or nominee) in regard to staff and volunteers. For all activities and events involving children managed by our schools and services Deans of School and Directors of Service will ensure that at least one member of staff will be nominated by the relevant school or service. The nominated member of staff will lead on safeguarding issues by raising awareness of UEL's safeguarding policy and guidelines with staff and, where appropriate, with the accompanying school/ care staff and parents.

1.10   We undertake to work with the relevant agencies to ensure that allegations of abuse are reported via the appropriate channels when they apply to children or vulnerable adults, whether or not the alleged abuse takes place on or off campus.

1.11   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will be responsible for reviewing and updating this policy.

2. Key principles underpinning this policy
UEL has a duty to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults;
All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse and to be safe in the activities that they or their carer choose;
All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
All staff have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate safeguarding protection lead member of staff.

3. Safeguarding and Risk Assessment
3.1   Risk assessment is a key tool to help ensure that we meet our safeguarding obligations. Risk assessment is not only a way to mitigate or remove potential risks but may also be a stimulus to consider alternative working practices.

3.2   Schools and services which carry out regulated activity involving children and/or vulnerable adults must develop procedures to ensure that these activities are competently supervised, and that the conditions set out in this Policy are met in full. All staff and volunteers who will be working with children

or vulnerable adults should ensure that they read and understand the principles and implications of the Policy.

3.3   The nominated school or service safeguarding lead should complete a risk assessment before any new or changed programme or event, visit or activity involving children or vulnerable adults, or before admitting or employing an under-18-year old. Please refer to the checklist and sample Risk Assessment form attached in Appendices E and F respectively for guidance on undertaking risk assessments.

3.4   Schools and services which only occasionally undertake activities involving children and vulnerable adults should, on a case-by-casebasis, follow the same risk assessment steps above, including the need, if any, for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be undertaken (see 4, particularly 5.3 below).

4. Students

4.1   UEL admits students on the basis that they are qualified academically for study regardless of age. On occasion this will include young adults who are under the age of 18 and who will require safeguarding whilst studying at UEL. UEL will safeguard these students by ensuring that the UEL school(s) concerned is aware of the of the students who are under 18 who are studying and the school(s) will be required to undertake a risk assessment for the teaching and learning activities that takes into account the students' age. Staff such as personal tutors who come into frequent contact with students who are under 18 will be required to have an enhanced DBS check (see section 5 below). For further information on the admittance and study activities of UEL students who are under 18 please visit: www.uel.ac.uk/under18

5. Recruitment, selection and employment of staff and volunteers

5.1   UEL will take all appropriate steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children or vulnerable adults and will comply with the safeguarding scheme established by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended by the PFA 2012) for that purpose. The DBS (established by the PFA 2012) merges the functions of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Part of the role of the DBS is to help employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working, or otherwise engaging, with vulnerable adults or children.

5.2   Where risk assessment has identified that staff, students or volunteers are likely to have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults (which might include regular processing of information) rigorous checks into their eligibility will be undertaken.

5.3   UEL is registered with the DBS and will ensure that any members of staff, volunteers or students who will engage in regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults will undertake a DBS enhanced check for regulated activity. For further information on who should have a DBS check please see Appendix B.

5.4   UEL will comply with its ongoing duty to notify the DBS where permission to engage in regulated activity is (or would have been) withdrawn from an individual engaged in regulated activity in circumstances where UEL has sufficient evidence that the individual has committed a 'relevant offence' or engaged in 'relevant conduct' or has satisfied the 'harm' test, as defined in the SVGA 2006.

6. Training and support

6.1   UEL will provide appropriate training and guidance on this Policy. Designated lead individuals in schools and services will be appointed by the Dean of School or Director of Service to undertake risk assessments.

Dean of School or Director of Service to undertake risk assessments.

6.2   Training for staff in schools and services who will be undertaking activities which involve children and vulnerable adults will comprise the following:

Clarifying the activity requirements and responsibilities;

Assessing risk;

Explaining our safeguarding protection procedures to all parties involved in the activity;

Identifying training needs;

Ensuring that key staff implement the Policy on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults appropriately.

6.3   Training and guidance will include general awareness for all staff and the provision of specific training for Schools and Services, if required. Appropriate training will also be provided where staff or volunteers will be working closely with children or vulnerable adults.

6.4   The Director of HR Services (or nominee) will advise on employment matters and will advise on the employment of under-18s. The Head of Admissions will advise on the admission of under-18s as students and the relevant Dean of School and Director of Student Life will be responsible for monitoring their welfare. Advice and Guidance on the safeguarding scheme is available on the DBS website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/

6.5   A working group of senior school and service staff has been established and will meet at least once a year to help ensure that UEL has in place a rigorous system of compliance with DBS requirements.

7. Procedure for reporting of allegations

7.1   Allegations or suspicions of abuse should be reported to UEL's Safeguarding Lead - the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in the first instance - using the referral form at Appendix D. In his or her absence allegations of abuse involving staff or volunteers should be reported to the Director of HR Services and allegations of abuse involving students should be reported to the Director of Student Life.

HR Services – updated 28.10.13

POLICY TITLE: HEALTH AND SAFETY
STATUS: Statutory
REVIEWED BY: TEFAT
DATE of REVIEW: July 2014

This policy is intended to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974. Its objective is to ensure that all practicable steps are taken to secure the health and safety and welfare of all persons using the Academy. It should be read in conjunction with the Security Policy (Visitors) and the Accessibility Plan.

1. Policy Statement

1.1   The Elliot Foundation Academy Trust and the local governing body of the Academy recognises their responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA) to ensure that arrangements are in place to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of students, staff and others using or visiting the premises or participating in Academy sponsored activities. The Governors will actively work with the Principal and staff to identify hazards and where, these cannot be removed, ensure that they are adequately controlled.

1.2   The local governing body in conjunction with academy leadership will strive
a)To establish and maintain in so far as is reasonably practicable
- An environment which is safe and without risk to health
- Safe working procedures among staff and students
- Safe and healthy arrangements for the handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- Safe means of access to and egress from the Academy.

b)   To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of information, instruction training and supervision to enable staff and students to avoid hazards and contribute positively to their own health and safety and that of others.

c)   To teach safety where appropriate as part of the curriculum

d)   To formulate effective procedures for use in case of accident and to lay down how these shall be followed.

e)   To provide and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, adequate welfare facilities for staff and students.

f)   To provide an effective system of reporting accidents, dangerous occurrences and potential hazards to health and safety.

g)   To provide appropriate resources within the budget for the implementation of security arrangements – see appendix.

2. Organisation and Responsibilities

2.1 The Sponsor – The Elliot Foundation Academy Trust
The ultimate responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy environment within the Academy lies with the Sponsor, The Elliot Foundation Academy Trust.
.
2.2 The Local Governing Body
The responsibility for ensuring that health and safety procedures within the Academy are adequate rest with the Local Governing Body. The governors will ensure that all necessary procedures are devised, implemented, monitored and reviewed to ensure compliance with these procedures and that they remain appropriate. In particular the Local Governing Body will:

a)   Make arrangements to ensure that the Academy complies with all relevant legislation particularly the HSWA and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

b)   Ensure that procedures are in place to identify hazards and evaluate risk control measures.

c)   Ensure that there is an appropriate management structure and periodically monitor its effectiveness.

d)   Ensure that a Governor attends any health and safety courses held by TEFAT as appropriate.

e)   Report regularly to the local governing body on health and safety across the Academy.

f)   Ensure that the Principal , as the Key Manager for health and safety, carries out the appropriate responsibilities.

The Local Governing Body will provide, in co-operation with TEFAT :

a)   A safe environment for students, staff, visitors and other users of the premises.

b)   Plant, equipment and systems that are safe.

c)   Safe arrangements for transportation, storage and use of articles and substances.

d)   Safe and healthy conditions that are compliant with statutory requirements.

e)   Adequate information, instruction, training and supervision.

f)   Provision of all necessary safety and protective equipment.

2.3 The Principal

The Principal as Key Manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Academy and implementation of this Health & Safety Policy.

The Principal is to assist in the development and maintenance of safe conditions for staff, students, visitors and anyone else using the premises. The Principal in particular will:

a)   Satisfy him or herself that effective arrangements are in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all users of the premises.

b)   To ensure that those staff to whom Health and Safety responsibilities are delegated, are suitably trained and competent to undertake such tasks

c)   Arrange for risk assessments to be carried out by a competent person.

d)   Put into effect any remedial measures or refer as necessary to the Governors or TEFAT.

e)   Consult with members of staff on health and safety matters particularly accredited staff and safety representative.

f)   Maintain a liaison with local police and be aware of local security matters affecting the Academy.

g)   Attend or ensure an Academy representative attend health and safety briefings and training arranged by TEFAT.

h)   Report to the governors at least once per year on health and safety matters.

i)   Ensure all staff are aware of this Health and Safety Policy and have access to the Safety file containing up to date Health and Safety guidance and advice.

2.4 The Vice Principal

The Vice Principal has responsibility delegated by the Principal for co-ordination and day-to-day management of Health and Safety matters with further delegation as follows:

a)   For all matters relating to premises, including compliance with legal requirement for materials used and methods of maintenance, for the state of repair of all premises and for cleaning and other servicing to the Premises Manager.

b)   For Health and Safety requirements for specific subjects, to the appropriate SLT member who will delegate as appropriate.

For the day-to-day matters concerning Health and Safety refer to the Premises Manager.

2.5 Senior Staff and Key Curriculum Leaders

Those holding posts of responsibility are to familiarise themselves with all safety legislation, codes of practice and guidance relevant to their area of responsibility. As part of their day-to-day responsibility they are to ensure that:

a)   Safe working methods are in place.

b)   Supervision is adequate and training needs met.

c)   Safety inspections carried out each term.

d)   Safety requirements for plant machinery and equipment are in place and are adequate.

e)   Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available, in good condition and being used correctly.

f)   Any hazardous substances are correctly used and safely stored.

g)   Standards of Health and Safety are monitored and appropriate remedial action is taken where necessary.

2.6 Premises Manager

The Premises Manager has particular responsibility for security and premises related issues and is to:

a)   Co-operate with the Principal (through Line Manager) and ensure that they effectively monitor the condition of the premises.

b)   Report defects so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.

c)   Arrange for the fire alarm to be tested on weekly using a different call point each time in rotation and the findings recorded in the Fire Log.

d)   Ensure that the Academy has a contract for the maintenance of the Fire Alarm System and Fire Fighting Equipment and that all fire escape doors are properly identified and accessible.

e)   Ensure that all fabric, fixtures and fittings on site are maintained and in a safe and secure condition.

f)   Ensure all fixed and portable electrical systems are tested annually.

g)   To be the focal point for day-to-day references on safety and give advice or indicate sources of advice.

h)   Ensure that contractors on site follow safe working practices.

i)   Ensure that regular health and safety inspections are carried out.

j) To maintain a system to ensure that accidents and hazards are recorded, reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive and that appropriate remedial action is taken.

2.7 All Staff

Members of staff also have health and safety responsibilities. In particular, staff are required to:

a) Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of anyone else who may be affected by what they do or fail to do.

b) Co-operate with health and safety arrangements.

c) Report any defect or any other health and safety matter that they are aware of.

d) Use correct equipment, tools and protective clothing issued.

e) Ensure anything, including systems and procedures provided in the interests of health and safety or welfare, is not misused or interfered with.

2.8 The Pupil

Pupils are expected to:

a) Exercise personal responsibility for the safety of themselves and others, bearing in mind the age and experience of the pupil;

b) Observe standards of dress consistent with safety and hygiene (this precludes unsuitable footwear, knives or other dangerous items).

c) Observe the safety rules of the Academy and in particular the instructions given by staff in emergency:

d) Use and not wilfully misuse, neglect or interfere with things provided for safety.

2.9 Health and Safety Representatives

The Governors and all levels of Academy management will co-operate with any Health and Safety Representative nominated by a recognised Trade Union.

2.10 Emergencies

Details of emergency procedures in the event of accidents or fire are in the staff handbook.
A list of staff with first-aid qualifications (which should be 'in date' and re-qualified in line with good practice) and the location of first-aid boxes will be circulated to all staff every September. Staff are encouraged to take part in first-aid training courses.

2.11 Concluding Statement

Suggestions from any source to improve standards of health and safety are welcomed by the Principal, the local governing body and TEFAT.

APPENDIX M: Outline Interview Schedule

1. Can you tell me about why you were invited to take part in '*Mighty Me'?*

2. Can you tell me about what you remember from '*Mighty Me'?*

3. Can you tell me about the times when you have thought about *'Mighty Me'?*

4. I am interested in finding out about what being 'mighty' means to you.

5. I am interested in finding out about the times that you describe yourself as 'mighty'.

APPENDIX N: Transcription Key

Line numbers on left hand side

Initial indicates speaker

[Bea] in sentence indicates speech of support assistant

… in middle of speaking indicates a speaker's brief space between spoken words, or in cases where words are performed with hesitancy eg. "sh…she"

(pause) indicates a speaker's space longer than the brief space of a ….documented above

(laugh/giggle) indicates this action from the speaker

(drawing/colouring) indicates this action taking place

[loud noise of children playing or shouting in playground/ general background noise] described in this way

[someone entering the room/action from someone coming into the room] described in this way

APPENDIX O: Coding Notation (Hiles et al. 2009/2010)

<u>That…..Because</u>… . . – Sjuzet is underlined

* - Labov & Waletzky (Abstract, Setting, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Result, Coda)

[. . !] – comments, etc.

●**Fab1** – Start of Fabula 1, etc.

Shading (highlighting) for word/phrase that functions in both *fabula* and *sjuzet*

'Holistic - Form' Analysis :

 'Categorical - Form' Analysis

'Critical Narrative Analysis': **IP1; IP2 – Identity Position 1, 2, etc**.

APPENDIX P: Worked Example of Analysis
1. **Summary of Interview with Sahra**
2. **Example of Worked Transcript**

1. Summary of Interview with Sahra

Sahra is a ten-year-old girl who enjoys art and cooking, and aspires to be an artist. She was put forward for the group as her class teacher noticed that she did not appear to contribute in lessons by putting up her hand in front of her peers. This was described in her school report which was sent to her mother. Following this, her mother and the SENCO both suggested that Sahra might like to take part in the '*Mighty Me'* Group to help her address this. During the interview, Sahra described how the group also helped with other areas of her life.

Sahra's narrative account focussed around the importance of her "ally", a butterfly called Layla, when she finds situations difficult.

She described sharing aspects of the group with family members, of varying ages, demonstrating how she assimilated key messages from the group and applied them specifically to other significant people in her life. In this way, Sahra's narrative account is progressive. It connects her personal experiences of what she has struggled with to her insight about how she can be a support to her younger sister and her aunt.

Beginning: this was life before taking part in the group.

Sahra reported that her class teacher noticed that she was not contributing in class by putting up her hand in response to the teacher's questions. Sahra explained that this was the case and described her worries about saying the wrong answer, as a way of making sense of this. She also described worrying about getting bad mark on tests and reported feeling shy, angry and upset at times.

It is apparent that Sahra has aspired to be an artist from an early age demonstrating a sense of direction and passion. This can be seen as examples of the 'thin' narrative that appear hidden in the context of difficulties that have come to light in the expectations of a school setting. Sahra reported drawing a picture, at the age of five, that was selected to be shown on Blue Peter. Although Sahra reported feelings of pride and recognition of her abilities about this achievement during the interview, it seems important to consider to what extent this sense of pride was apparent before her participation in the group. The school setting places many expectations on children and through attending to Sahra's account of her wish to be an artist, we are reminded of what behaviour and abilities can becomes privileged in the school setting, at the expense of other equally as important qualities.

Middle: this was what happened during the group

Sahra described the importance of learning about allies, in particular, drawing her personal "ally" (a butterfly called Layla) whilst in the group. It seems that the group has provided Sahra with an opportunity to connect with her creative abilities, to provide her with her own personal way of dealing with difficult situations. She also described her "ally" as a person in her mind, helping her at times when she would benefit from guidance, suggesting that her "ally" might also be a more permanent presence. She demonstrates her understanding of her 'ally' guiding her in the face of a 'parrot' who she describes as encouraging her to do the "wrong thing". This appears to be an example of how Sahra has applied the principle of 'externalising' the problem through thinking about how the problem operates and the tricks it may use, thus, considering the impact on her life.

Sahra described how having an "ally" makes her feel "good" because it helps her when she feels upset or when she finds work difficult, or struggles to put up her hand in class. The role of an 'ally' appears to be in fostering more current 'unique outcomes'; forming a bridge which can then be expanded upon in thickening the 'alternative story'. In this way, the "ally" serves to provide Sahra with a way of moving towards demonstrating further unique outcomes that serve to continually thicken the 'counter-plot. This seems important to consider in response to the question that asks 'how children describe the narrative process of becoming mighty'.

Sahra recalled being guided by the facilitators to give the problem of not being able to put up her hand in class a name. In this way, the group provides her with an opportunity to externalise the problem and see 'the problem as the problem'. She recalled giving this the name "Worry and Frustration", providing examples of 'externalising conversation'. She goes on to describe "fighting Worry and Frustration" through remembering her "ally". In this way we can see how the group enabled Sahra to use her "ally" as a way of breaking down the problem saturated narrative, enabling her to experience more unique outcomes that she will develop from.

Despite the group also providing Sahra with opportunities to engage with other narrative techniques, the significance of her "ally" appears to trump other techniques. Sahra also recalled that the group setting has meant that other children have an understanding of what Sahra can do during difficult times, and they can provide support for one another. In this way, there is recognition of the value of her peers, a key aspect of 'outsider witnessing practices'.

End: this involved looking at what Sahra has taken from the group.

It appears that the group fostered a sense of resilience as Sahra described understanding the word 'mighty' to mean "don't give up" and "stay strong". She explained that when she notices that she is starting to worry about getting a bad score on a test, she thinks about being 'mighty' and reminds herself that she can do well. Here we can see the 'alternative story' of Sahra recognising her competence. It is important to consider the way that Sahra described "worried" as she does not appear to continue externalising "Worry" as she described in an earlier part of the interview.

Sahra also spoke about the wish to have a positive impact on her younger sister by sharing her experiences of having an "ally"; this can be considered one of the key forces that helps her in becoming 'mighty'.

She also explained that she has recognised how her aunty may benefit from some of the messages in the '*Mighty Me'* group as she has recognised her aunty can become upset at times. Thus, through sharing the lessons with family members it is evident that Sahra's family network may also benefit and could serve to support one other.

Sahra also described how she has a relationship with the pictures she made in the group, on a daily basis, as she places them on the wardrobe in front of her bed as a reminder of one of the messages that she took from the group, "to not let things get to me". This is a further example of the importance of therapeutic documentation in providing a means for Sahra to continually expand upon the 'alternative story' about her way of getting the upper hand of "Worry and Frustration".

The group appears to have led Sahra to develop friendships around supporting each other to use the principles of the 'Mighty Me' group as Sahra spoke about being encouraged to listen to her "ally" at times. It is possible that the group may foster longer-term friendships among children given the interactional and strengths-focussed nature of the group.

Sahra described an awareness of her emotions. She described alternating the pictures she has on her wardrobe in relation to how she feels; she spoke about choosing the picture of her "ally"

if she feels upset and described this in terms of the benefits of looking at her "ally" telling her not to "give up". Here we can see the role of the 'ally' in enabling Sahra to continue recognising and connecting with her strengths, forming a bridge that serves to thicken the 'alternative story'. Sahra described putting up the picture of her "mighty self-portrait" when she thinks she is able to do something whilst someone is telling her that she cannot. She gave an example of using this approach when someone spoke negatively of her drawing, demonstrating that Sahra appears to have a strategy for dealing with critical comments from others.

2. Example of Worked Transcript

Fabula 1 : Line Numbers 51 - 74   •FAB1

N: Can you remember who mentioned to you in the beginning that it would be a good idea to take part in the 'Mighty Me' group?   ***Abstract 1**

S: Erm. Bea and my mum.   ***Orientation 1**

N: Can you remember why they said that it might be helpful for you?

S: Because erm I got my report at home and my mum read it to me and it said that I did not really put my hand up in class and then and then Bea asked me if I would like to take part in 'Mighty Me' to help me get over that and I said yes.   ***Orientation 1[situated action reflection]**

[Changes in tense]

N: And is that something that you think that you think was happening before the group? That you weren't putting your hand up in class?

S: Yeah.   **(IP1: being shy)**

N: And why do you think that was Sahra?

S: Because I was scared I was going to say the wrong answer   ***Complicating Action 1 (IP1: being shy)**

*Evaluation 1

N: It can be scary can't it. In front of lots of other children in your class to put up your hand if you are scared you are not going to say the right thing (pause) But you mentioned that you started the group and that within a few weeks you were feeling different.

S: Yeah.

N: And can you tell me a bit more about that?

S: It helped me because I was never really putting my hand up but then I went to class and I was always putting my hand up in class and answering things.   ***Resolution 1**

*Coda 1 (IP1: being shy) (IP2: being a good pupil),

[intensifiers and repetition]

'Holistic - Form' Analysis:

- Coda 1 - Pre-group and post-group; 'progressive'

'Categorical - Form' Analysis:

- Orientation 1 - tense changes indicative of a sense connection with what is being described.

- Coda1 – sjuzet reflecting two extremes through intensifiers (never vs always), repetition of "putting my hand up" and "class" suggesting emotional connection to events described.

'Critical Narrative' Analysis - Identity Position (IP):

- **IP1: being shy,**

- ***IP2: being a good pupil***

APPENDIX Q: Felicity's 'Therapeutic Document'

Dear Felicity,

It was great to meet with you. It was a few months ago when we met at your school and you told me about your time in 'Mighty Me'. I really enjoyed hearing all about it! You let me know how important and special it was for you to be part of 'Mighty Me'

You may remember when I met with you, I told you that I was going to be talking with other children about 'Mighty Me' to hear about what you each have to say. I told you that I was doing a project at my university about 'Mighty Me'. I thought I would write you a note about our time together.

You told me about how you had been finding school really difficult before you started 'Mighty Me' because of some of the things other children were saying to you. You said that you didn't want to be rude to other children so sometimes it was really hard for you to walk away. Sometimes when you got home from school, you just went straight to bed where you had some horrible dreams that scared you.

When Bea[17] asked if you wanted to be in 'Mighty Me' with other children in your class, you said it sounded as though it could be fun! When we met, you had so much to tell me about just how fun it was! I loved hearing about your special place, a rainbow-coloured house with a unicorn and a milko-fall! You even drew a picture so that you could tell me just how special it is for you. You described being able to change the milkshake from strawberry, to chocolate to vanilla, and that other children could come and drink the milkshake whenever they wanted. I also really enjoyed hearing about the unicorns. I heard that you give out unicorns to people and they can book an appointment to see you where you try to help them.

Felicity, it sounds as though you are very thoughtful and caring, and really think about other children. You even told me all about the time you stuck up for the little girl who was being bullied by your aunt's house. You said that her mum started crying because she was so happy to hear you had stuck up for her daughter. I wonder who else knows about this special story?

I was really inspired by how much kindness you want there to be for other children. Have there been other times where you have been looking out for children?

Felicity, I really enjoyed our meeting together and hearing how kind and caring you are. If you were to remember how important it was for you to be a part of 'Mighty Me', I wonder what difference that would make to your life? What do you think?

I thought you might like to meet with me again. We could talk about what I have included in this letter. Perhaps you would like to bring someone from your family, or a friend? If you would, please let Bea know at school and we can arrange for this to happen.

I will look forward to having another chance to meet with you,
Until then. Best wishes, Nicolina

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[17] This is a pseudonym.