

WHAT STORIES DO YP TELL ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE SELECTIVE EDUCATION PROCESS

Katherine Madden

University of East London

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Abstract

Very little has been researched about the experiences of young people who undertake selective education tests in the UK. An explorative narrative research design was used to gain a better understanding of the six (age 10-11) participants' experiences of sitting the 11+ test and not gaining a place at a grammar school. Questions from the Little Box of Big Questions 2 were used as a tool in semi-structured interviews, in addition to questions devised by the researcher. Each of the participant's narratives were storied using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of human experience that is defined in terms interaction, continuity and situation. The resulting narratives were written in the 'third-person-omniscient'. This phase of the study was followed by a 'commentary phase' that aimed to describe the connectedness between the young people's stories. Young people discussed aspects of their lives that enabled them to learn at school, and spoke about their future hopes, dreams and aspirations. The research used Positive Psychology, taking a strengths based approach to explore the skills young people thought they brought to their education, skills they would like to develop, and their plans for the future. The research highlighted the impact and importance of parents in young people's life and how vigilant young people are to ability grouping in schools. The study also sheds a new perspective on the divisive grammar school debate in UK education.

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Abbreviations

YP	Young people/ person
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
LA	Local Authority
LBBQ2	Little Box of Big Questions 2
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UEL	University of East London
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Overview

The aim of the current research is to understand young people's (YP's) views on the selective education process. By gaining YP's narratives the research aims to offer another dimension to the grammar school debate. It appears very little is known about YP who undertake selective education tests and do not gain a place at a grammar school. Within this chapter, the national context will be discussed followed by the background of grammar school education. The importance of seeking the voice of the YP and my position as researcher will be discussed.

1.2. National context

In July 2016 the Prime Minister, Theresa May, made a reactionary speech outlining her vision of opening more grammar schools in the UK. Under her new proposals all non-selective schools could become grammar schools. This suggested a new policy that went directly against the promises and policies of previous governments to end selective education in the UK (Richardson, 2016). Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw reacted to Theresa May and referred to her grammar school arguments as "tosh and nonsense" (Butterfield, 2018). He argued Theresa May's plans to make this fundamental change to the education system would not "work for everyone" and would undermine the Government's other policies to raise standards in education.

At the time, these new proposals reignited the old contentious debate about grammar schools in the UK, which dates back to the 1960s. Since the 1960s grammar schools in the UK have declined in number from 1300 schools to 163 schools spread across English Local Authorities (LAs). In a review of the English Grammar school debate, Morris and Perry (2016) assert that there is no clear consensus on the value of grammar schools, particularly in comparison to comprehensive schools. However, it remains an emotive debate

with fierce defenders of grammar schools alongside ferocious opposition. This debate resurfaced in 2016 in a changed political and education landscape where there is increased school autonomy and choice (Morris & Perry, 2016). In my view, it appears previous research, which is arguably historic and unreliable, has neglected to understand the selective education system from the perspective of those who experienced it.

The decision was made to carry out this research when Theresa May stated that opening new grammar schools was one of her flagship policies, when she took office. However, following the General Election in May 2017 when the Conservative Party lost some of their majority, the government changed its position on this divisive policy to maintaining the ban on creating more grammar school. Nevertheless 163 grammar schools remain in the UK, which under the current government policy are allowed to expand. The Local Authority where this research was carried was an outer London borough where grammar schools approximately make up half of the state funded secondary schools in the borough.

1.3. Background of the research

Debates and discussions surrounding selective education in the UK are not new. The arguments for and against grammar schools have been occurring for decades and it remains a very political and contentious topic in many areas. Grammar schools were viewed by some as causing greater social divisions and limiting the educational prospects for YP not attending them, hence they were abolished in 1998 (Coe et al. 2008). However, as Morris and Perry (2016) outlined there is still strong support for grammar schools and they remain highly popular schools amongst some parents. There have been various researchers who have attempted to answer questions regarding grammar schools in comparison to comprehensive schools. The research evidence has been variable and mixed when attempting to answer questions such as, “Do grammar schools improve learning outcomes for YP?” or “Do grammar schools offer the prospect of greater social mobility?” (Coe et al. 2008).

Coe et al.'s (2008), extensive report reviewed the evidence on the effects of selective education. It is a comprehensive and lengthy critique of previous research on selective education. They identify studies that are either in favour of comprehensive education systems or in favour of grammar school systems, highlighting a lack of a clear consensus. However, Walford (1994) argued that the question of which type of school system is more effective (comprehensive or selective) could not be answered. Walford (1994) claimed there cannot be serious or successful study to answer this question due to the absence of necessary preconditions due to the number of selective schools declining to a level "where further meaningful comparisons between the systems are impossible" (Walford, 1994, p.23). This suggests researchers should explore different ways to help understand the comprehensive and grammar education systems in the current educational context, such as using qualitative methodologies.

Furthermore, many of the studies exploring the effects of selective education are historic and unreliable meaning this area of research is likely to remain unresolved. The data is now old and may inform the reader about the changing landscape of education in past decades rather than the strengths and weaknesses of current arrangements (Crook, Power & Whitty, 1999). There are also major methodological issues in studies attempting to establish the effects of selective education for pupils attending or not attending grammar school (Crook et al. 1999). All the empirical studies investigating the effects of selective education have limitations and readers have to be very cautious with the findings. Coe et al. (2008) notes anybody with a claim or argument for or against selective education could find evidence to support it in previous research studies. They state that any dataset could be analysed and used to reach a conclusion to support assumptions for or against selective education.

A major methodological issue in research investigating effects of selective education is the ability to control for other differences. To compare pupils in grammar schools to pupils in comprehensive schools is challenging due to schools being complex social systems (Coe et al. 2008). The differences identified between the pupils in research studies could be due to a huge range

of reasons other than just being exposed to a selective education system or not. There are also challenges in defining what a selective system is. The majority of LAs (selective and non-selective) in the UK have a diverse mix of school types and admission arrangements are highly dependent on each local context. It is therefore difficult to determine and conclude the effects of the selective system on YP who do or do not attend a selective school.

Furthermore, differences between selective school pupils and non-selective pupils is more complex than simply exposure to a selective or comprehensive school system (Harris and Rose, 2013). Coe et al. (2008) argue many of the studies have not taken sufficient steps to minimise the threats to validity and have attempted to represent the reality of complex school systems with statistical models leading to unreliable assumptions and conclusions. Coe et al. (2008) also discuss the question of whether grammar schools increase social mobility, as claimed by defenders of selective education. Atkinson, Gregg and McConnell (2006) found a low proportion of pupils in grammar schools are eligible for free school meals (FSMs) and selective education does not generally benefit YP from poorer backgrounds. The review by Coe et al. (2008) very briefly discussed the impact of failing the selection tests on YP and reported the only evidence to be speculative and anecdotal. The authors reported there is an absence of rigorous research and evidence investigating whether failing the 11+ causes any long-term damage. It appears, due to the lack of research exploring the YP's experiences of not being selected, that it is not given much weighting in the selective education debate.

1.4. The researcher's position

My theoretical orientation is Positive Psychology. This research has chosen to take a Positive Psychology theoretical underpinning as opposed to other approaches such as Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1986) because I hope to identify evidence of strengths, growth and potential in the stories YP tell of their future. Seligman (2000) the founder-of Positive Psychology advocates a strength based approach, which is in keeping with the educational psychologist's (EP) role of promoting change on behalf of children and YP

(Beaver, 2011). The selective education process may have been a negative experience for some YP and I am interested in identifying the impact of that experience. Positive Psychology emphasises the importance of focusing on the future, hence I am interested in exploring how YP who did not pass the selection tests for grammar schools discuss their possibilities for the future.

I made the decision to carry out this research when I started at my placement borough that has several grammar schools and Theresa May had very recently made her controversial announcement to open new grammar schools in the UK. My interest in grammar schools also stemmed from attending one myself. Until starting my own professional working life, my only reference of secondary education was grammar schools. I began to reflect and compare my grammar school experience to other types of secondary schools. I began to explore why I was able to attend a secondary school that has frequently been ranked as one of the best state schools in the country while other young people could do. It seems my route into securing a place at this prominent school was very similar to the majority of my friends. This made me question the inequality and fairness in accessing a place. From informal conversations with my school friends, through the resources of their parents they had secured grammar school places via private tuition. It appears that the picture is that families with certain resources are more likely to get into grammar schools than equally bright YP from potentially lower income families. From informal discussions with colleagues and friends, I believe the government should tackle these issues before even considering allowing more grammar schools to be build or extended.

1.5. Hearing the voice of YP

Central to this research is listening to the voice of the child/YP. Gersch, Dowling, Panagiotaki and Potton (2008) argued that there are legal, moral and pragmatic reasons for involving children and YP as fully as possible in their education. If YP are listened to at the deepest level it will develop and empower their worlds (Gersch et al. 2008). Ravenette (1999) outlined that in order to understand and enable YP, asking the right questions is the most valuable

approach. In order to achieve that in this study, a selection of questions from The Little Box of Big Questions 2 (LBBQ2) (Gersch & Lipscomb, 2015) were used that focused on learning and the future. The research aimed to understand more about YPs experiences of the selective school process, their aspirations and their learning. This was with a view to finding appropriate ways to support other YP in the future. LBBQ2 is a tool developed by Gersch and Lipscomb (2015) that has been designed to elicit YPs views. There is research eliciting the views of YP and empirical research investigating the selective schools and comprehensive schools, however no research has specifically focused on the YPs narratives and experiences of the selective school process. This study aimed to fill that gap in the research literature.

1.6. Summary and current research

In summary, the grammar school debate has remained unresolved. There is much research and commentary on the selective education system but arguably it is now outdated. Previous researchers have neglected to understand the selective education system from those who experienced it.

In my research, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of YP who experienced the selective educational selection process, in particular those YP who sat the selective education tests and did not gain a place at a grammar school. This research hoped to contribute to the literature on selective education by giving YP a voice. It appears little is known about how YP who do not get accepted to their first-choice secondary school experience the selective education system and how they conceptualise their futures. It was hoped this research would provide a rich narrative of their experience, which in turn can have implications for how YP in similar situations can be supported. The research hoped to provide another dimension to the grammar school debate by giving YP a voice. In summary, this chapter highlighted the context and background of selective education in the UK and the importance of seeking the voice of the YP.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Rationale of Literature Review

The objective of this literature review is to explore research on the academic self-concept of children who have experienced segregation through either selective versus non-selective schooling or through ability grouping. The research in the area of selective education in the UK and academic self-concept is limited. Due to this paucity of research, the literature review has been split into three separate strands. The first strands reviews literature related to academic self-concept, the second strand reviews literature related to UK selective education and the third stand reviews literature related to ability grouping in UK schools. It is worth noting that from reviewing the literature in all three strands, it is apparent that the majority of the research omits the voice of the child.

2.2. Chapter overview

In order to gather relevant research on the selective education system in the UK, a literature search was conducted. This chapter will provide a broad overview of this diverse research area and aims to represent research that was in line with the inclusion criteria (see below). Following an introductory section, the literature review strategy will be provided. The review is made up of three strands: academic self-concept; the UK selective education system and ability grouping in UK schools. There is a critical review of previous research alongside any patterns or trends identified across the literature. Within the context of the previous research the rationale for this current research will be discussed. There is also an emphasis on the importance of seeking the voice of the child, which is an aspect missing from much of the previous research.

2.3. Search strategy

A literature review was carried out in order to analyse and critique areas of selective education research in greater depth using two search engines. Tables will be used to illustrate how the literature search was completed.

The initial search took place using EBSCO, an online research database. I used the combination of search terms presented in Table 1. Due to the literature being separated into three strands, many search terms and differing combinations were used in order to identify studies/ articles that were relevant to the research. Many of the search terms were pre-defined subject terms suggested by different databases' thesaurus/ index function.

2.3.1. Identifying terms

In order to identify the search terms and terminology in the literature, the 'advanced search history' option was used, which built up a 'history of searches'. For example, I searched key terms such as "selective school" and then searched key words used in research on selective school so alternative terminology could be identified. Due to databases organising research collections via key words, it was important to identify them.

Table 2.1: Keywords used during initial literature searching

Schools	Self-concept	Ability grouping
School*	"self-concept"	"ability
"selective school*"	"self-perception"	grouping(education)"
"academically selective school*"	"academic self-concept"	
"selective education"	"academic self-perception"	
"grammar school*"	"child voice"	
"11 plus"	"young person voice"	
"education"	"voice of the child"	
"academic achievement"	"child/ YP experiences"	
	"child/ YP views"	

Table 2.2: Literature search for the EBSCO search

Search engine	Boolean/ phrase	Inclusion criteria	Results
EBSCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Search Complete British Education Index 	Different combinations of keywords see Table 2.1	Peer reviewed academic journals	488 papers were found, 482 papers were not relevant to the topic of selective education and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERIC • PsychINFO 			academic self-concept. Six papers were therefore included within the literature.
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

To ensure a level of appropriate research quality was established, only articles that had been peer reviewed were included. Through searching, relevant literature was identified firstly through article titles. The abstracts of these papers were discarded if they did not meet the exclusion or inclusion criteria or full texts requested. If it was possible to obtain full texts, they were either discarded or studied in depth and critically reviewed. The second search took place using Scopus and hand searching. Citations and author names of relevant literature identified through ESBCO were searched. This further hand search identified four further papers relevant to the current research.

The purpose of the literature search was to review research literature with regards to how YP experience the selective education process in the UK. Due to a paucity of research in this specific area, I expanded my literature search to include exploring academic self-concept in relation to ability grouping across UK education as strand three. Ability grouping studies were included to provide a richer background and context of the UK education system as a whole. Furthermore, I extended the literature search to include international studies only for strand one; academic self-concept. The rationale to include international studies was due to the paucity of research. However, to investigate the variations and comparisons of selection in education is challenging. Apportioning causal influence across international research has difficulties as the cultural differences between countries cause different outcomes and pathways (Glaesser and Cooper, 2012). Table 2.5 is a map of the literature identified. In order to synthesise the information gained from the literature search, studies have been sectioned together according to the three strands.

2.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Below are the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the three strands of the literature review. Slightly different criteria were applied to each strand e.g. for literature related to academic self-concept, international papers were included. Academic self-concept is an international concept for children and YP while strands two and three are concerned with specific educational systems in the UK.

2.4.1. Strand 1: Academic self-concept

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research studies focusing on academic self-concept in relation to selective schooling, ability grouping and failure Research studies seeking the views of YP, parents and/or staff Studies of primary aged pupils and secondary aged pupils in mainstream schools Any gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies not focusing on academic self-concept of children who have experienced segregation through either selective versus non-selective schooling or through ability grouping Studies of children not of primary or secondary age and not in mainstream school
Study type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative studies seeking the experiences of YP, parents or staff in relation to academic self-concept Full text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No access to full text
Time and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International studies/ articles Written in English Studies published after 1984 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not written in English Studies published before 1984

Table 2.3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria (academic self-concept)

2.4.2. Strand 2: UK selective schooling

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research studies focusing on the UK selective education system Research studies focusing on academic self-concept in relation to selective schooling Research studies seeking the views of YP, parents and/or staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies not focusing on the UK selective education system Studies not focusing on academic self-concept of children who have experienced segregation through either selective versus non-selective schooling or through ability grouping

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies of primary aged pupils and secondary aged pupils in mainstream schools • Any gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies not seeking the views of YP, parents and/or staff • Studies of children not of primary or secondary age and not in mainstream school
Study type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative studies seeking the experiences of YP, parents or staff in relation to selective education in the UK • Quantitative or mixed methods studies related to selective education in the UK • Full text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to full text
Time and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK based studies/ articles • Written in English • Studies published after 1984 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not written in English • Studies published before 1984

Table 2.4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria (selective schooling)

2.4.3. Strand 3: Ability grouping in UK schools

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research studies focusing on ability grouping in UK schools • Research studies focusing on academic self-concept in relation to ability grouping and failure • Research studies seeking the views of YP, parents and/or staff • Studies of primary aged pupils and secondary aged pupils in mainstream schools • Any gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies not focusing on the process on ability grouping in UK schools • Studies not focusing on academic self-concept of children who have experienced segregation through either selective versus non-selective schooling or through ability grouping • Studies not seeking the views of YP, parents and/or staff • Studies of children not of primary or secondary age and not in mainstream school
Study type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative studies seeking the experiences of YP, parents or staff in relation to ability grouping in the UK • Quantitative or mixed methods studies related to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to full text

	ability grouping in UK schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full text 	
Time and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK based studies/ articles • Written in English • Studies published after 1984 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not written in English • Studies published before 1984

Table 2.5: Inclusion and exclusion criteria (Ability grouping in UK schools)

Below are the steps taken in the screening process of the research literature:

- All titles and abstracts had the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied
- Where possible, a full article was gathered if the inclusion criteria had been satisfied
- An article was made redundant if the exclusion criteria was satisfied

2.5. Map of Studies

Table 2.6 is a map of the literature identified. In order to synthesize the information gained from the literature search, studies have been sectioned together according to the three strands.

Table 2.6: Map of Studies

Number	Authors	Title	Main Topic	Population/ sample size	Findings	Measure	Voice of the Child	Location
Strand 1: 1	Ahmavaara, and Houston (2007)	The effects of selective schooling and self-concept on adolescents' academic aspiration: An examination of Dweck's self-theory.	The research aimed to compare the achievement aspiration of students educated at a grammar to students educated at a non-selective 'secondary modern' school.	856 students between Year 7- Year 9	The results showed that achievement aspiration is predicted by school type and type of intelligence theory, which supports Dweck's self-theory. YP in secondary modern school had lower aspirations than YP in grammar schools.	Questionnaire	No	U.K.
Strand 1: 2	Skipper and Douglas (2016)	The impact of a selective entry examination on children's feelings as they approach the transition to secondary school.	The research explored the YP's experiences of the entry examination on the impact on their feelings about school, intelligence and themselves.	98 children aged 10	The results showed that at; <i>Theory of Intelligence</i> -Time 1 (decision taken whether child will take the exam) that YP picked more likely to hold an entity theory than YP not picked -Time 2 (results are out) that YP who passed are more likely to hold an entity theory than YP who failed <i>Locus of control</i> -Time 1, YP taking the exam more likely to show higher internal locus of control compared to YP not -Time 2, YP who passed more likely to show higher internal locus of control compared to YP who failed <i>Self-esteem</i>	Questionnaire measuring YP's feeling about self and perceptions of intelligence	No	U.K.

					<p>Time 1, YP taking the exam had higher levels of self-esteem than those not</p> <p>Time 2, YP who passed the exam had higher levels of self-esteem</p> <p><i>Feelings towards school</i></p> <p>Time 1, YP who took exam felt more positively about school than those not taking the exam</p> <p>Time 2, YP who passed the exam felt more positively about school than those who did not.</p>			
Strand 1: 3	Banks and Woolfson (2008)	Why do students think they fail? The relationship between attributions and academic self-perceptions.	The research aimed to compare the attributions of students with a label of learning difficulties, low achieving students (no label) and averagely achieving students.	53 students aged 11-14 yrs.	The results showed self-perceived low achievers tended to view themselves as having less control over their (unsuccessful) performance than self-perceived high achievers. How students perceive themselves determines their attribution style.	Unsuccessful research task. Perceptual Reasoning Test. Attribution Rating Scale. Open-ended attribution question.	No	U.K.
Strand 1: 4	Kelly and Colangelo (1984)	Academic and social self-concepts of gifted, general and special students.	The research aimed to compare gifted youngsters with their nongifted age mates on both academic and social self-concepts	266 students	The results showed that compared to non-gifted students, gifted student hold significantly higher academic and social self-concepts. Plus, there is a definite relationship existing between academic ability	Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS)	No	U.S.

					and academic and social self-concept			
Strand 1: 5	Marsh and Hau (2003)	Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect on Academic Self-Concept	The research aimed to investigate academic self-concept in educational settings across 26 countries. BFLPE were the focus of the study.	103,558 students	The results support BFLPE cross culturally suggesting social comparisons processing that lead to BFLPE may be universal.	Self-concept questionnaire and achievement tests	No	Cross-cultural in 26 countries
Strand 2: 6	Coldron, Willis, Wolstenholme (2009)	Selection by attainment and aptitude in English secondary schools.	The research aimed to examine the scale and extent of selection by attainment or aptitude in UK schools by analysing admission criteria and surveying parents	43 Local Authority datasets on admission arrangements.	The results showed in 'selective' authorities fewer parents gained their first preference for secondary school placement and intakes were more socially segregated. There was a higher percentage of appeals in 'selective' areas in comparison to 'non-selective' areas.	Analysis of LA admission data and parental survey.	No	U.K.
Strand 2: 7	Harris and Rose (2013)	Who benefits from grammar schools? A case study of Buckinghamshire, England.	The research aimed to investigate if grammar schools improve learning outcomes for YP and if so do they benefit YP from lower income households.	Data from one LA case study; Buckinghamshire that still operates a full grammar and secondary modern system	Results suggest that grammar school pupils experience greater examination success but this is at cost to pupils not in selective schools. The eligibility of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) in grammar school is low suggesting they do not aid social mobility.	Data matching methods comparing pupils at a selective school to pupils not at a selective who had comparable prior attainment	No	U.K.
Strand 2: 8	Lucey and Reay (2002)	Carrying the beacon of excellence: social class differentiation	The qualitative study aimed to examine the school-choice policy in UK	454 Year 6 children	Due to parental fear of downward mobility, YP from professional middle classes	Phase one-focus groups and	Yes	U.K.

		and anxiety at a time of transition.	and the emotional consequences.		were being pushed towards high performance to ensure they gained a place at a high performing school, such as grammar schools. The researchers argue difficult emotions were being suppressed in order to ensure the family's professional middle class status is reproduced. The researchers also discuss the impact on working class YP.	observations of 454 Year 6 participants. Head teachers and Year 6 teacher were interviewed. Phase two- 45 Year 6 participants had follow up interviews and tracked into their destination secondary school (some of their parents were interviewed). 33 of the participants took an exam for a selective school.		
Strand 3: 9	Ireson and Hallam (2009)	Academic self-concepts in adolescence: Relations with achievement and ability grouping in schools	This longitudinal study aimed to investigate the effects of ability grouping on student's self-concept	1600 secondary school students	Students' self-concept strongly affected their intentions to learn in the future comparatively to achievements	Questionnaire administered when the pupils were in Year 9 and then Year 11.	No	U.K.
Strand 3: 10	Francis, Archer,	Exploring the relative lack of	The study aimed to explore the research	UK policy papers and	From analysing the research, the researchers	Discourse analysis of UK	No	U.K.

	Hodgen, Pepper, Taylor and Travers (2017)	impact of research on 'ability grouping' in England: a discourse analytic account.	evidence into ability grouping and the lack of impact it has had on policies and practices in UK education.	research evidence	provide seven different explanations for poorer progress of pupils in low ability groups. The researchers then apply the 'analysis of discourse' and suggest explanations for the apparent lack of impact and influence of existing research and UK policy and practices in education.	education policies and research evidence base for ability grouping.		
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2.3. Academic self-concept

Academic self is defined as “individuals’ knowledge and perceptions about themselves in achievement situations” (Byrne, 1984). Research has shown that negatively impacted academic self-concept can be hugely problematic for YP as it can impact on educational aspirations, academic achievement and decision making (Marsh & Hau, 2003). It has also been argued that academic self-concept mediates the relationship between academic performance and self-esteem (Skaalvik & Hagtvet, 1990). As mentioned previously, there is limited research in the area of selective education in the UK and academic self-concept.

Only two UK studies were identified that explored academic self-concept and selective education. Ahmavaara and Houston’s (2007) study provided the opportunity to examine Dweck’s self-theories within a UK context, as there is little published on this topic research outside the US. Ahmavaara and Houston (2007) developed a model of achievement aspiration based on Dweck’s (1999) implicit theories about intellectual ability which they used to compare the achievement aspiration of students educated at a grammar school to students educated at a non-selective secondary modern school. According to Dweck’s theory, YP can develop a ‘growth mindset’ where obstacles are seen as a natural part of the learning process and they view their intelligence as malleable in that it can be increased through effort. However, if YP believe their intelligence is fixed, it turns failures into measures of fixed ability and raises YP’s anxieties about how clever they are (Dweck, 1999). Kaplan and Midgley (1997) found YP’s aspirations and self-concept are influenced by their own perceptions of ability. In Ahmavaara and Houston’s (2007) study, students from both types of school were asked to fill out questionnaires that measured their implicit theories about intelligence, confidence in their own intelligence, perceived academic performance, self-esteem, future aspirations and identification with school. They found achievement aspiration is strongly related to school type and type of intelligence theory held. Pupils in grammar schools had higher achievement aspirations compared to pupils in comprehensive

schools. The researchers outlined that YP in a selective school who have passed a test that implies enduring ability have greater confidence in their own intelligence and higher perceived performance, which is related to aspirations. Similarly, if you are a pupil living in borough where you do not pass or are not entered for the 11+ test implies to YP in comprehensive schools that their ability is limited, which in turn places limits on what can be aspired to (Ahmavaara & Houston, 2007). The study's findings support Dweck's (1999) self-theories as YPs intelligence theory has a direct effect on their aspirations and in this study YP attending selective schools held more incremental beliefs than YP attending non-selective comprehensive schools. Ahmavaara and Houston (2007) outlined that the findings demonstrate that YP who hold an incremental theory of intelligence possess higher levels of persistence and motivation and are more likely to gain entry to a selective school and have higher levels of aspiration. Ahmavaara and Houston (2007) conclude that school selection significantly impacts YP's self-evaluation and aspiration. The researchers continue that the differences in theory of intelligence, aspirations, confidence and perceived performance found between pupils in selective versus non-selective schools is likely to be a product of the selection process. However, this study was based on quantitative measures only (questionnaires). If the researchers had used qualitative techniques it would have allowed more insight into YP's views and how they feel about the selective school selection process.

Skipper and Douglas (2016) also examined self-concept and UK selective schooling. Skipper and Douglas (2016) examined YP's experiences and impact of selective entry exams on their feelings, school and intelligence as they approached their transfer to secondary school. The YP included in the study were 98 pupils aged 10 years old, it was a mix of pupils who had and had not been asked to take the exam with some passing the exam and some not passing the exam. Questionnaires were used as measures of intelligence, self-esteem, locus of control and feelings about school. In the study, the researcher differentiated between 'Time 1' and 'Time 2'. Time 1 was when a decision was made for the pupils regarding whether they should be put forward to take the exam. Time 2 was when the results were out for the pupils and they found out if

they passed or failed. On the theory of intelligence measure, Skipper and Douglas (2016) found that YP selected to take the examination were more likely to hold an entity theory (leaners with an entity view treat intelligence as fixed and stable) than YP not picked to take the exam. Locus of control was the second measure. Locus of control is the extent that people feel they can control events that affect them. Positive educational outcomes are often associated with a more internal locus of control as people feel their efforts can lead to positive change (Skipper and Douglas, 2016). The researchers found that YP being selected to take the exam were more likely to show a higher internal locus of control compared to YP not selected. They also found that YP who passed the exam were more likely to show higher internal locus of control compared to YP who did not pass. Self-esteem was the third measure. Positive self-esteem is frequently associated with higher resilience in YP (Gilligan, 2000). Furthermore, it has often been theorised that experiencing failure can lead to a reduction in self-esteem (McFarland & Ross, 1982). Skipper and Douglas (2016) found that the measures of the pupils' self-esteem were higher for those YP who were selected to take the exam and those YP who passed the exam compared to those YP not selected to take the exam and those YP who did not pass the exam. The final measure was feelings towards school. The researchers discuss that a selective entry exam could influence a pupil's feelings about school (at primary school or future secondary school) due to differential experiences of YP in the same class. Skipper and Douglas (2016) found that YP who sat the exam felt more positively about school than those who did not take the exam. They also found that YP who passed the exam felt more positively about school than those who did not pass the exam.

However, if this study had utilised qualitative techniques rather than quantitative measures there could have been a more in-depth exploration of YP's views. The quantitative measures did not explore how, when or why the YP felt a certain way during their individual experiences. Qualitative measures would have also allowed discussion and insight regarding what support YP believed might have been helpful in those situations.

Banks and Woolfson (2008) carried out a mixed methods study based on two theories of attribution; Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale's (1978) theory of learned helplessness and Weiner's (1986) theory of motivation. Banks and Woolfson (2008) compared the attributions of students with a label of learning difficulties, non-labelled low achievers and non-labelled average achievers. The study was conducted in the UK with secondary school students. As part of the study students classified their own achievement level (as well as teachers providing classifications). The researchers asked all the students to complete a task where the only outcome was failure. The results showed that students who felt they were not as good as others (self-perceived low achievers) at their school work tended to view themselves as having less control over their (unsuccessful) performance than self-perceived high achievers. Banks and Woolfson (2008) suggested that they perceive academic failure as being caused by uncontrollable internal causes, which is linked to poor motivation towards schoolwork. The researchers argued that how students perceive themselves is more important than how teachers perceive student's learning status as it determines their attribution style. When students believed they are low-achievers their attributions are adversely affected. Learned helplessness is where pupils consistently perceive that there is nothing they can do to control their outcome and therefore they make less and less of an attempt to do so. The researchers discussed that a main precursor to learned helplessness is feeling a lack of personal control over negative outcomes. Although this study did research students' views on their academic attributions, it did not explore further why some students identified as perceived high achievers and why some students identified as self-perceived low achievers. Furthermore, the study did not examine attributions used in real life as the measures were not particularly naturalistic. High-stakes achievement tasks, for example the 11+ test, that have real-life implications for students might have had a stronger impact on their attributions and self-concept.

Kelly and Colangelo (1984) completed a study in which they compared gifted students with their non-gifted age equivalent students on both academic and social self-concepts. It was a quantitative study that measured students' self-assessment of their academic ability and self-esteem. The researchers

concluded that there is a definite relationship between academic ability and academic and social self-concepts. They found that compared to non-gifted students, gifted students hold significantly higher academic and social self-concepts. However, it is noteworthy that this study took place in the US so therefore may not be generalizable to the UK. Furthermore, it was a quantitative study that did not make clear the relationship between academic ability in relation to academic self-concept and social self-concept as separate domains. The reader is left to assume academic self-concept and social self-concept are affected by academic ability in equal measure.

From the literature evidence linking selective education and academic self-concept it could be argued that selective education is likely to negatively impact the academic self-concept of YP not selected for grammar schools. However, there is a plethora of research exploring the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (BFLPE) (Marsh & Hau, 2003). BFLPE is an application of social comparison theory where YP will have a lower academic self-concept in selective schools than in non-selective schools (Marsh & Hau, 2003) as they compare their ability with peers in their frame of reference (Ireson and Hallam, 2009). For example, a might pupil perceive that they are failing to achieve in a selective school as they are measuring themselves against a relatively higher 'benchmark' even if they are achieving more than pupils in a nonselective school. BFLPE outlines that YP's academic self-concept is based on their academic achievement levels and on the achievement levels of their peers in the same class (Marsh & Hau, 2003). I will briefly outline one cross-cultural study investigating BFLPE. Only one study investigating BFLPE has been included in the literature review as BFLPE has relevance to this research but it is not the focus. Marsh and Hau's (2003) cross cultural study made BFLPE the focus of the study where the researchers investigated academic self-concept in educational settings across several countries. 103,558 students from 26 countries completed a self-concept questionnaire and an achievement test, which was analysed by multilevel models applied separately to each country. The results supported BFLPE cross culturally and the researchers concluded that social comparison processing that leads to BFLPE might be universal. Marsh and Hau (2003) outline that the theoretical basis for BFLPE and their study is social comparison

theory (Festinger, 1954). The researchers discussed that the educational context fosters YP to compare their own academic achievement to their peers and these social comparison processes form the YP's academic self-concept. If social comparison processes are considered in relation to the 11+ examination that UK pupils sit early on in the Autumn Term of Year 6, what impact will not passing the test in comparison to your peers who did pass have on your academic self-concept? However, Marsh and Hau's (2003) quantitative study did not consider the differences between the idiosyncratic school systems and quality of education across the 26 countries. Furthermore, the findings might have been influenced by the achievement test in the study not representing a realistic or naturalistic test that they might come across in school. High-stake achievement tests that students are likely to come across in their school careers could have more important implications for YP's academic self-concept and academic achievement.

2.6. Selective education in the UK

Coldron, Willis and Wolstenholme (2009) examined and analysed the scale and extent of selection by attainment or aptitude in UK secondary schools across 43 Local Authorities (LAs). The researchers analysed LA admission data, including data on what proportion of parents gained their first choice secondary school preference. Data from each LA was also analysed in relation to population density, appeals, segregation between schools and level of cross border traffic. Additionally, a nationally representative sample of parents was surveyed. Out of the 43 LAs, 14 were selective authorities. In the selective authorities, the researchers found a higher rate of appeals, fewer parents gained their first preference for secondary school placement and intakes were more socially segregated. Coldron et al. (2009) highlighted that compared to other children poorer pupils with the same underlying ability were half as likely to attend a grammar school. The researchers went on to discuss that those pupils not selected for a grammar school can experience a sense of failure that, "contributes to disrespect and social stigma of social groups and individuals" (Coldron et al, 2009: p.249). Other issues associated with selection by attainment identified by Coldron et al. (2009) included selective authorities

having, on average, higher proportions of higher attaining students and comparatively fewer lower attaining students. The lower attaining students are more likely to attend schools in other LAs, which impacts not only in their own authority but on neighbouring LAs as well. Coldron et al. (2009) highlighted that although the proportion of pupils in a selective place in the UK is low at 4 per cent, a further 10–12 per cent of pupils who attend non-selective schools are affected. However, this research study is eight years old, which is relatively old in terms of UK schooling structures because over recent years with government changes there has been further diversification of UK schools meaning there are limitations in the study's generalizability. The introduction of Free Schools is an example of a significant change in UK schooling. Furthermore, the analysis of the data in this study did not take into consideration that admission arrangements in individual LAs are highly dependent on the local context. Further research could distinguish the different contexts of selection places, as there are many different categories.

A study by Harris and Rose (2013) offers a specific focus on one LA (Buckinghamshire) that is one of only two LAs in England that stills operates a full grammar and secondary modern school system. Their case study of Buckinghamshire aimed to investigate whether grammar schools improve learning outcomes for YP and, if so, do they benefit YP from lower income households. The study considered 9866 YPs' educational attainment who took their GCSEs across three academic years, the researchers found the GCSE performance was 1.5 times greater for pupils in a grammar school. Harris and Rose (2013) used data matching methodology on an identified a sample of "borderline" pupils, who were pupils who had near-equal prior attainment at KS2. Half of the borderline sample transitioned to selective schools and the other half did not, the researchers aimed to establish the effect of being in selective school on the probability of success at GCSEs. The borderline sample was also exactly matched by free school meal (FSM) eligibility, gender, whether they were born in September or October and by year of examination. It was found the probability of success at GCSE was significantly greater for borderline YP in a grammar school compared to secondary modern school. From these findings, the suggestion is that there is an educational advantage

to attending a grammar school in Buckinghamshire, however what remains unresolved is how this difference in attainment is created. The researchers found a much lower prevalence of FSM eligible pupil's relative to other pupils across Buckinghamshire grammar schools. From the borderline pupils with similar prior attainment, those eligible for FSM are less likely to attend grammar schools, suggesting that coming from a low-income household is an educational barrier to gaining a selective place. From the 9866 sample, the researchers found that FSM eligible YP make up 7.5% of the 6250 pupils in secondary modern schools while they make up less than 1% of the 3616 YP in grammar schools. This study suggests that grammar schools in Buckinghamshire are reinforcing social divisions rather than removing them. Harris and Rose's (2013) finding that borderline pupils attending a grammar school have an increased probability of attaining five GCSEs suggests that an educational benefit has been given to them. The researchers go on to propose that for borderline pupils who are not selected for a grammar school, their academic prospects are reduced. This led Harris and Rose (2013: p.165) to suggest that the "selective system comes at a cost to some pupils", which they attempted to address in the second part of the research.

Harris and Rose (2013) compared and data matched academically borderline pupils in Buckinghamshire to pupils in Oxfordshire (neighbouring LA to Buckinghamshire) that does not operate a selective school system. The researchers' data matched pupils in Oxfordshire who had similar prior (KS2) attainment to that of the borderline pupils attending a Buckinghamshire schools. Using logistic regression, the researchers found the probability of borderline pupils in Buckinghamshire grammar schools achieving five GCSEs is greater compared to pupils of similar prior attainment in Oxfordshire. The researchers then compared borderline pupils in Buckinghamshire who attended a secondary modern school. The researchers found that these pupils had a lower prospect of GCSE success comparatively to their Oxfordshire counterparts. It would appear from this case study that the educational advantage bestowed onto YP who attend grammar schools is at a cost to YP in secondary modern schools. The researchers concluded that the selective system remains a system of 'winners and losers' as it does not guarantee YP a

place at their first-choice school which can be responsible for “creating winners and losers in terms of who gains most from their schooling” (Harris & Rose, 2013: p.168). The researchers go on to conclude that it is important that YP who could gain less should not come disproportionately from one particular social group. They suggested reasons for differences identified between the attainment outcomes of selective schools and non-selective schools. One suggested reason discussed is the learning culture and peer effect cultivated from passing a selection test and attending your first-choice secondary school. The peer effect can be positive to learning in grammar schools however it could be also be negative to learning in other schools (Harris & Rose, 2013), which could have unfortunate further consequences. However, this research is a case study so there are challenges in generalizability and no comment can be made about all pupils because the data analysis was restricted only to borderline YP. The findings cannot offer insight into whether the selective school system has a direct or indirect effect on other pupils, positive or otherwise. Furthermore, the use of FSM as an indicator of socioeconomic status is relatively basic and further research could use more sensitive measures to establish whether similar findings are yielded. Also, this research only used quantitative measures; qualitative techniques would have allowed more insight into the views of YP in Buckinghamshire who experience the selective school system first-hand.

Lucey and Reay’s (2002) qualitative study aimed to explore the emotional consequences of secondary school choice policy in the UK and link it with structural processes. The researchers outlined that previously most research examining secondary school choice and transfer had harnessed the notion that middle-class YP are the straightforward winners. Lucey and Reay (2002) aimed to challenge this idea.

The researchers discuss that the Year 6 transition to secondary school is intensified for many middle-class families’ due to anxieties about “ensuring the social and economic reproduction of their children” (Lucey & Reay, 2002: p.325). The focus of Lucey and Reay’s (2013) qualitative study was to explore the YP’s perspectives and experiences of the transition process. The

population was 454 Year 6 pupils from two London boroughs. In the first phase of the study all 454 pupils were involved, and the researchers gathered data through focus groups and participant observations. In the second (and follow up) part of the study, 45 pupils were selected and interviewed individually, as well as a sample of parents from the group. The 45 pupils were tracked and interviewed when they moved into Year 7 at secondary school. Lucey and Reay (2002) focused on 33 of the Year 6 participants who sat an exam for selective schools. The researchers found that middle class parents are more likely to make the secondary school decision on behalf of their children, while working class parents are more likely to prioritise the YP's preference. The rate of selection school failure was extremely high amongst the group (only five participants out of 33 were offered a place at a selective school). The researchers comment on the middle-class parents' narratives around failure and report that the "child's emotional state was subsumed to rationality and the pursuit of high academic attainment" (Lucey & Reay, 2002: p.326). The researchers report that some middle-class parents denied the significance of the failure experience on behalf of their children, even though the YP participants reported it was a difficult experience and they did not want to attend a selective school in the first place. A theme identified from the parental interviews was the concept of deferred gratification. Lucey and Reay (2002) discuss that middle-class parents were aware that their children might be suffering and sacrificing happiness in the present but this emotional cost was considered worth it for the imagined future of securing a selective school place. The researchers also claimed that deferred gratification is valued amongst the middle-class parents, with little sense of what might have been lost in the present. They also identified the theme of defensive mechanisms among the parents' interviews, particularly in regard to distances middle-class parents are willing to consider in order to get their child into their desirable secondary school. This led the researchers onto discussing Pat Allatt's research. Allatt (1993) highlights that middle-class parents view their child's education as an investment into their middle-class values and beliefs. This then leads middle-class parents to view their child's education as a bargain to be struck between themselves and their child, involving a significant amount of obligation.

In Lucey and Reay's (2002) study, one participant that had been accepted into a selective school reported she did not want to attend that school, as she was anxious about being clever enough and the school was very far away from home. The participant felt she could not tell her parents because they had invested a lot of time, money and energy into ensuring she was accepted into that school. The researchers discuss that this finding is complemented by other research that has demonstrated how middle-class parents' everyday practices involve insistent implicit and explicit messages about the "power of rational argument over irrational emotionality" (Lucey & Reay, 2002: p.328). The participant's desire to not attend a selective school could be seen as irrational and therefore not considered by some middle-class parents. The researchers also found not all the YP were passive in the selective school process. Some middle-class parents were conflicted and anxious about entering their child into selective testing as politically they supported a comprehensive state education. However, they lacked basic trust in the outcomes of that system. In the case of these parents, their children initiated their own applications to the selective school. Every YP in this group was a middle-class girl. Themes emerged from the girls' narratives that included possessing a very competitive attitude towards their schoolwork and wanting to beat other pupils in their class. The narratives of participants entered for a selective test also included a desire to be chosen in order to gain status enhancement (Lucey & Reay, 2002).

The researchers go on to discuss that YP are sensitive and highly aware of distinctions made within education, particularly if they are based on elitism and exclusion. Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, a small portion of the group gained a selective school place. Participants who were not accepted into a selective school reported that the rejection caused great disappointment and made them envious towards peers that were successful. Lucey and Reay (2002) found both middle-class YP and parents struggled with the concept of cleverness coupled with failure. The YP consistently achieved above average attainment in primary school yet failed in selective tests. The researchers outline this as a confusing and contradictory experience for YP who have been previously assured of their possession of cleverness. One male participant who

failed the selective tests had previously presented as a studious and hardworking primary school pupil. However, Lucey and Reay (2002) suggested that this failure impacted on his educational identity. His previous hardworking identity was not enough to secure (or win) a selective school place so perhaps it contributed to his dramatic rejection of that version of himself into a 'lad' persona that denied the importance of school. This was the only qualitative paper which the literature search identified and the findings are interesting. There was a particular focus on the interviews and discourses of the middle-class parents' experiences of the selective school process rather than the YP participants. The study did not provide rich detail or discussion on common themes identified through the YP interviews, the themes discussed in the paper tended to be in relation to their parents. Insight was not provided into YP's long-term aspirations and how the YP reflect back on the selection school process. The study is 15 years old and rationale for the research is based on educational policies dating back to 2000, which could now be out-dated. Furthermore, the definition and categorisation of participants into class identities was highly subjective. Class location of the participants was determined using traditional markers of education, employment and housing, which can be viewed as problematic when attempting to measure objectively. Additionally, there are issues with generalizability, replicability and objectivity of this qualitative paper.

2.7. Ability grouping in education

Ireson and Hallam (2009) researched the effects of ability grouping on secondary school pupils' self-concepts. The researchers measured general self-concept, academic self-concept and achievement of 1600 secondary school students. Ireson and Hallam (2009) outlined that previous research had suggested that through social comparison processes of their abilities, YP's academic self-concept is developed and formed as they compare themselves to others in their class as a frame of reference. However not all research is consistent with social comparison theory and the BFLPE. Oakes's (1985) conflicting findings found that as low ability pupils progress through school their

self-concept becomes more negative. Ireson and Hallam (2009) aimed to clarify the relationship between ability grouping, self-concept and academic self-concept. It was a longitudinal study of 1600 secondary school pupils, the measures of pupils' self-concept and educational intentions (post compulsory schooling) were collected via questionnaires administered when the pupils were in Year 9 and then Year 11. All these pupils had experienced a range of structured ability grouping. Ireson and Hallam's (2009) findings indicated that ability grouping has an effect on YPs academic self-concept but not their general self-concept. The researchers found pupils in schools with the most ability grouping had a more negative academic self-concept. One important finding from Ireson and Hallam's (2009) study is that pupils with low academic self-concept had more negative intentions towards learning in the future. The researchers discussed that this is concerning as low academic self-concept could be an important determinant of educational choices and future careers. This led the researches to discuss pupils' academic self-concepts and the processes of social comparison. They suggest that several different frames of references could influence pupils and schools need an awareness of the impact and prominence of these reference frames in their educational practices. However, in Ireson and Hallam's (2009) study the schools used were a sample and should not be taken to represent all schools in the UK. Furthermore, it was a quantitative study that did not take into consideration pupils' interests and enjoyment that can affect their intentions towards learning and therefore achievement and future career choices.

A very recent study by Francis, Archer, Hodgen, Pepper, Taylor and Travers (2017) used discourse analysis to explore the apparent lack of impact and influence of ability grouping research evidence upon policies and practices in UK education. From analysing research, Francis et al. (2017) outlined that poorer pupils are disproportionately represented in lower ability groups and these practices lead to social segregation. A similar trend has been observed in the proportion of YP from low socio-economic groups who are accepted into grammar schools (Harris & Rose, 2013). From reviewing the research, Francis et al. (2017) pointed out that evidence suggests ability grouping does not have a significant benefit on attainment with a negative impact for lower sets, which

are mainly made up of YP from low socio-economic backgrounds. While reviewing the literature, Francis et al. (2017) did a thematic content analysis of existing literature and identified potential explanations for the poorer progress of YP in low ability groups. One explanation offered was the impact of ability grouping on pupils' learner identities. Research has found that pupils in lower ability groups are more likely to become anti-school, which has consequences in their achievement and their future aspirations (Ball, 1981). Self-fulfilling prophecy was another explanation reported by Francis et al. (2017). Labelling pupils as low ability leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy as it can reduce their confidence and self-perception of ability. This can therefore potentially cause disassociation from their education. The researchers then applied analysis of discourse to explore the lack of research impact on practice. Francis et al. (2017) outlined how politicians and policy makers have used particular discourses. One discourse outlined in the study was that of 'natural order'. Francis et al. (2017) proposes that ability grouping in education reflect cultural investments in discourses of 'natural order' and hierarchy amongst middle class parents, i.e. where they might expect these children to be. Francis et al. (2017) discussed that hierarchies and segregation of 'ability' has been used as an expression of employing educational standards and is manifested in UK culture. The researchers outlined that nostalgic notions of distinctions can be applied to the continued popularity of grammar schools and public schools, which prioritise segregation. The researchers discuss that these schools present, "quintessentially 'English' imagery, and the (classed) segregation [they] project as 'natural', speaking to long-standing cultural fantasies of identity, aspiration and natural order" (Francis et al. 2017: p9). Like their views on grammar schools, Francis et al (2017) suggested middle-class parents favour ability grouping to fit in with their constructions of education. The researchers outlined that middle-class parents can hold competitive and entitled mind-sets when it comes to their children's education. They expect the best for their children often using financial and cultural resources to secure advantage, for example selective test tutoring. Ability grouping and selective schooling reflect their constructions because they assume their children should be high achieving and populate the high sets and grammar schools. Francis et al. (2017) discuss that discourses such as "natural order" have impacted recent

UK government initiatives that have emphasised meeting the needs of high ability pupils even though research contradicts the benefit of segregation. Francis et al (2017) conclude that “setting” pupils dominate educational practices as policy-makers promote it despite the research evidence. The researchers argued that segregational practices have become symbolic of academic “standards” and appeal to middle-class parental desire and this could explain the resurfacing of the grammar school initiative in 2016. There is an assumption that ability is fixed and that social segregation is beneficial. Francis et al.’s (2017) study is interesting and discourse analysis provokes insightful associations between research and UK education practices, which can be directly linked to the selective education system. However, this study is unlikely to have a far-reaching impact on UK policy makers and the segregation inside education. A more robust study needs to be conducted in order to mobilise an alternative narrative with a parallel discursive power.

2.8. Chief implications for this research

Overall this chapter highlighted the limited research on the views and experiences of YP on the selective school process in the UK. The research reviewed has been conducted in three strands: academic self-concept; selective education in the UK and ability grouping in education. An examination of the methodologies used by the researchers, show that eight out of the 10 studies were found to only use quantitative measures.

Having examined the research into academic self-concept, there appears to be no clear consensus, for example the concept of BFLPE is in direct contrast to Kelly and Colangelo’s (1984) findings, although this is an international study that is very dated. No recent qualitative research conducted in the past ten years could be located that explored YP’s personal views and experiences of the selective education system. In particular no recent qualitative research could be located that explores YP’s views for those who were not accepted into a selective school.

The area of ability grouping was included in this chapter due to the dearth of recent research into the selective education and to provide a context to UK

educational practices. Having examined the research into ability grouping in UK education, the research suggests that ability grouping does not significantly benefit attainment and can negatively impact academic self-concept, which has consequences for future career choices. However, ability grouping is a powerful discourse in UK policy and educational practices as it is seen as an expression of “standards”.

Across the three main areas, an emphasis on raising educational attainment emerged as a common theme. It appears the affective and moral aspects of YP’s development play little part. Interests, enjoyment and perceptions of competence are important aspects of learning and if these are ignored it could impact on YP’s future aspirations (Ireson and Hallam, 2009).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides the research's purpose and aims. It outlines the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research and the methods chosen to elicit YP's stories. Information regarding the research context and potential ethical issues are outlined.

3.1. Research purpose and aims

As outlined in previous chapters this is an exploratory research study that aims to explore and elicit the stories and views of YP who have experienced the selective school process in an outer London borough. As argued in the previous chapter, there is a paucity of qualitative research exploring the UK selective school system. Predominantly the research identified was quantitative, positivist and excluded the voice of YP. No previous research was located that aimed to understand the UK selective school process from the perspective of those who experience it, particularly those YP who sat the 11+ examination and did not gain a place at a selective (grammar) school. The narrative analysis in this research aimed to give a voice to YP's stories of the selective school system. The study aimed to contribute to the research literature by using a qualitative methodology with a social constructionist and positive psychology underpinning. The themes of selective school process, YP's current approaches to their learning and their hopes and future aspirations were aimed to be covered through questioning in a semi-structured interview. The research questions are:

1. How do YP who were not selected for grammar school reflect on that experience?
2. What views do YP who were not selected for grammar school have of their learning?
3. What are the aspirations, hopes and dreams of YP who were not selected for grammar school?

3.2. Ontological and epistemological position

Within psychology "worldviews" are conceptualised as different ways of knowing things. These are broad orientations about the world and nature of

research (Creswell, 2009). The terms paradigms, ontologies and epistemologies are used to describe worldviews (Crotty, 1998). When carrying out research, researchers must acknowledge their influences by being transparent about their values and beliefs. A researcher's ontology is the assumptions they hold about the nature of the world and how reality is perceived while epistemology is how things can be known (Robson, 2011). A researcher's values, beliefs and chosen worldview will lead them to choose either a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach in their research (Creswell, 2013).

Differences in worldview fall within two primary traditions: positivism and social constructionism. Positivism follows a standard scientific approach using quantitative methods to measure the one objective reality (Creswell, 2013) through direct experience or observation (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In contrast, social constructionism rejects positivism's ontological position that there is one objective reality. Instead social constructivists advocate that humans seek to understand the world they live in through social interactions and constructing meaning of their individual experiences (Robson, 2011). This means there are multiple interpreted realities as the meanings people construct are varied, subjective and multiple (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple interpreted realities are constructed through each individual's subjective meanings of their experiences in order to seek an understanding of the world (Creswell, 2009). The discourses people develop about the world are created through language and social interactions. A social constructivist researcher attempts to interpret and make sense of these subjective and varied meanings about the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this research, a social constructivism worldview has been adopted, as through the stories YP tell it strives to make sense of how they have constructed and made sense of their subjective experiences and reality. There will be multiple stories, all equally valid. In my role as a researcher I acknowledge I am the product of my own values and I cannot be independent of them (Mertens, 2015). Epistemologically, I accept my values and experience will influence the research and that I am in an interlocked interactive process

with the inquired- into (YP). I accept that I co-construct the participants' stories with them (Fox, Green & Martin, 2007). I position myself within the research, accepting that my own personal values and perspective, coming from my personal, cultural and historical experiences will shape the questions posed and my interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). I have outlined my motivations for undertaking this research in the introductory chapter in order to provide transparency.

This research is concerned with stories YP tell of their subjective experiences and it acknowledges these stories are a product of each YP's social and cultural context and their relationships and social interactions with others at that time in history (Creswell, 2009). The research aims to access the individual voice of each YP in order to understand how each individual makes sense and meaning of his or her reality, rather than gaining an objective, factual account. This is in line with a social constructionist perspective.

3.3. Selecting a research method

In order to address the aims and research questions, I required a qualitative research method that provided a voice to rarely heard individuals in educational research. A narrative approach was chosen because it allows individual complexities and richness to be maintained and is in contrast to earlier studies as outlined in Chapter 2. A narrative approach allows YPs' stories to be represented and respected, while at the same time celebrating their individuality. An individual's narrative is seen as the stories that they use to bring order and make sense of their life (Fox et al. 2007). Sandelowski (1992: p.165) concluded that selecting a narrative framework in research allows, "a special access to the human experience of time, order and change, and it obligates us to listen to the human impulse to tell tales".

A narrative approach typically looks for meaning within transcripts rather than across transcripts (Creswell, 2009). Finding meaning within transcripts allows for individual richness and depth. Narrative research is concerned with exploring the experiences of each individual, which Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) pointed out is drawn from John Dewey's philosophical thoughts that *"individual experience was a central lens for understanding a person"*. From these philosophical thoughts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss that experience should be viewed as continuous, where one experience leads to another. Therefore, narrative researchers should focus on understanding individual history or past experiences and how it contributes to present and future experiences. Advocates of narrative research argue that it is the best method to understand human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Also, narrative studies tend to focus on single events or episodes in a participant's life (Creswell, 2009) and this research is an example of gathering accounts of personal experiences.

3.4. Narrative research method

In narrative research design, there is no prescribed approach or definition to gather participants' narratives. For this research, semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow the researcher to ask the children pre-determined questions. This is important as children can sometimes be unpredictable with their responses and a semi-structured interview allows scope for following their ideas and interpretations. The range of definitions and approaches in narrative research can be seen as a continuum (Riessman, 2008). Sandelowski (1992) pointed out that narratives assume many forms but a commonality across the narrative approaches is that the data is examined in a storied form (Riessman, 2008). Errante (2000) considered that narrative approaches are still developing across many human science disciplines including education, history, psychology, anthropology, etc.

Polkinghorne (1988) argued that narrative design can be categorised as descriptive and explanatory and goes on to discuss how, in descriptive narrative research, a researcher aims to describe an individual's narrative of a certain life episode or life story. A narrative design in this research will involve documenting individuals' voices and outlining portraits of their lives within a social and cultural context (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). It has been reported that narrative research design has grown in popularity in social

research over the past 30 years (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). Fox et al.'s (2007) observation that practitioner researchers' interest in individually constructed knowledge (like narratives) is due to its parallels to their own professional practice. This observation could be used as a suggested reason for the rise in popularity of narrative research. The connection of narrative research to my own practice as a TEP was a motivation to carry out this study. The "objective of narrative explanation is not so much to foretell as to tell and re-tell: to provide an insight only possible when looking back" (Sandelowski, 1992: p.164).

Narratives are stories and stories are communicated via actions, settings, characters or plot (Sandelowski, 1992). Three main characteristics differentiate narrative research design from other qualitative approaches: Time; Meaning and Context (Elliott, 2005).

Firstly, time in the narrative is how the sequence of events is described (chronology), which allows the narrative to be told rather than just describing a situation. Next, meaning is made from the events/story. Finally, context is the social aspect of the story. How the story is being told will be affected by the listener, hence in narrative research narratives are socially constructed between the participant and the researcher.

Broadly speaking, narrative approach is concerned with either the content of the story or the structure of the story (the way in which it is told). Riessman (2005) outlined that narrative researchers can focus on either of these areas and both are viewed as equally important. This research is focused on narrative content analysis. It involves identifying themes and recognising that human experiences normally involve relationships with others and a variety of contexts (Bold, 2011).

3.4.1. Restorying

The narrative analysis process undertaken in this research is outlined below. One aspect of the analysis includes restorying the participant's transcripts. Restorying is a non-traditional approach used to re-present the interview

transcripts. Often in qualitative research, the interview transcripts (texts) are collapsed down into small segment of codes and then recombined into themes (McCormack, 2004). These themes that move across the participants' data are then fitted into the researcher's pre-determined framework. It has been argued that through this process, "the discrete, separate and different individuals [interviewed] are gradually lost" (Mauthner and Doucet 1998: p138). Restorying was also chosen as I felt it to be more creative, highlighting individuality and retaining the essence of each participants' experiences. Restorying all the transcripts also provides the reader with multiple interpretations. Stories allow this to happen because "they have the potential to reveal both the individual and the collective aspects of experience" (McCormack, 2004: p233). Stories can act as a mirror for individuals to learn about themselves and also act as a window by looking into the past, present and future experiences of others (Jalongo, Isenberg and Gerbracht, 1995).

Below is an overview of the research design and the steps that were followed while conducting this narrative research:

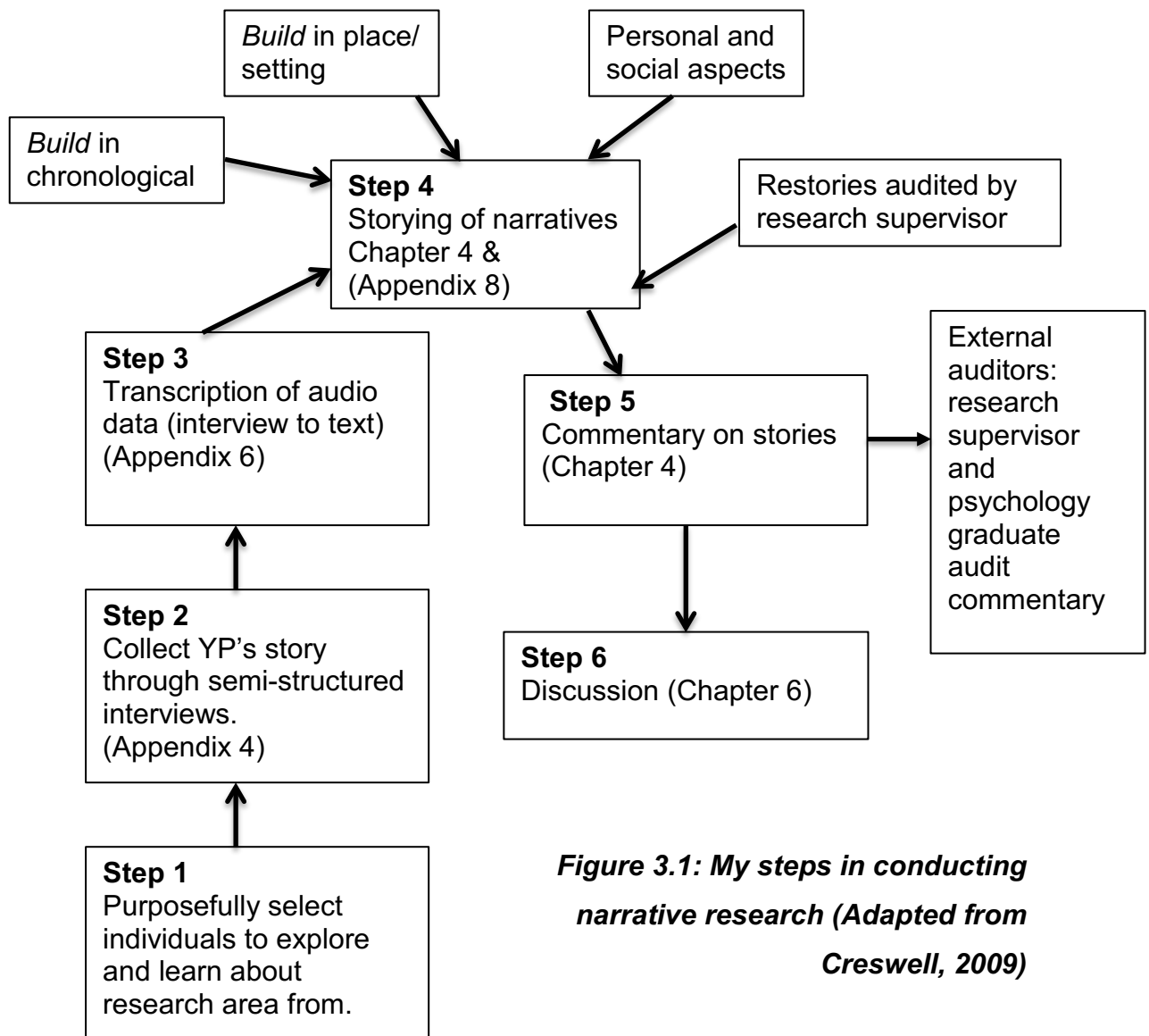


Figure 3.1: My steps in conducting narrative research (Adapted from Creswell, 2009)

3.5. Participants

The following section will outline information about the local context and recruitment of the participating schools and YP. Any identifying terms, including the participants' and schools' names have been changed to protect the YP's anonymity, in line with ethical procedures.

3.5.1. The local context

Information about the Local Authority (LA) where the YP are living has been outlined in order to allow the reader to gain some insight into the local context.

The research took place in an outer London borough, which has a mixture of comprehensive schools and selective grammar schools. In the 2011 census it

was reported 79% of the borough's population was of white ethnicity and other ethnic groups in the community included those of African and Caribbean descent and Asian descent (Office of National Statistics, 2011). The participating schools in the research were three mainstream state funded primary schools.

3.5.2. Recruitment

Mainstream state funded primary schools were invited to take part in the study. I approached 14 schools and three of them agreed to take part in the research. All of the schools were in the LA where I was based as a TEP and, using purposive sampling methods, six participants were recruited. Participant recruitment and interviews were held during the summer term 2017, the Year 6 pupils had all previously sat the 11+ examination in September 2016 (autumn term of Year 6).

Firstly, through my contacts within the borough's psychology service, I approached SENCos and then head teachers in the target primary schools with information about the research so they could express an interest. Information sheets and consent forms outlining the research aims were provided to schools (see Appendix 1). When agreement and signed permission was granted from head teachers, information and consent forms were sent to the parents/ carers (see Appendix 2) of Year 6 pupils who sat the 11+ examination and had not secured a place at a selective grammar school and to the YP (see Appendix 3). The SENCos in the three participating primary schools had a list of the children who sat the examination and knew which secondary school the YP were transitioning to in September 2017. Apart from describing the research aims and purpose to school staff and stipulating that the participants should have taken the 11+ examination and not secured a place at a grammar school, the researcher had no input into the selection process.

Table 3.1: Participant Details

Participant Name	Gender	Age	How long in current school	Ethnicity
Ali	Male	11	6+ years	Asian British
Anya	Female	11	1+ year	Asian Chinese
Joe	Male	11	2+ years	Asian British
Leo	Male	10	6+ years	White British
Max	Female	11	1+ year	Asian Indian
Violet	Female	11	6+ years	Asian British

3.5.3. Information to stakeholders

The information sheets sent to parents/ carers and YP provided a full brief on the research. Parents/ carers were informed of all participant rights, including the right to withdraw, anonymity and data protection. The information sheet acknowledged the potential 'risk' of the research as the interviews planned to explore a potentially distressing event in the YP's life. However, it emphasised the research was taking a Positive Psychology approach. This was a strength based approach to identify and explore the skills YP thought they brought to their 11+ experience and learning. It aimed to highlight YP's aspirations and how they can be supported in this. My contact details were provided on the information sheet inviting any parent/ carer to get in touch if they had any further questions or clarifications; one parent chose to do so. Where written signed consent was gained from parents/ carers, YP were asked if they were willingly to provide written consent to take part in the study. School staff gave YP an invitation/ information sheet with a signed consent form prior to the interviews. When all the gatekeepers agreed with signed written consent, an interview date was organised in conjunction with school staff to take place during the school day. By signing an individual consent form, each participant acknowledged that they had agreed to take part in the study, read and understood the information about the research and agreed that the interview could be audio-recorded. Each participant was reminded at the beginning of the interview of the nature and purpose of the research and that they had the

right to withdraw at any time without disadvantage to them and without being obliged to give any reason. The participants were also reminded that should they want any further clarification on the topic or research process at any time they were free to ask. Later on in this chapter there is a section on ethics that will outline considerations that were taken into account regarding the impact of reflecting on an experience that could be potentially upsetting for some YP.

3.6. Interviews

Interviews lasted on average for 35 minutes (the longest was 44 minutes and the shortest was 22 minutes). Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis; all the recordings were stored on a password-protected computer and complied with data protection law. The interviews were carried out in empty available classrooms in the participants' primary schools during the school day. Table and chairs were arranged at an angle to create a more amenable positioning for the participant and researcher.

Reissman (2005) outlined in narrative interviewing it is important that researchers listen in an emotionally attentive and engaged way and pointed out that this can be a complex process. I feel through my current role as a TEP, the development of this skill has been a main focus of the training. I felt confident that through this training and my previous work experience that I was able to facilitate a secure and rapport-building atmosphere between myself and YP, which helped enable them to feel comfortable to share their stories.

3.6.1. Semi-structured interview

in order to capture participants' views and voice a semi-structured interview method was used, in line with the qualitative approach taken. As a TEP and researcher, I felt that as I was interviewing YP aged between 10- 11 years a structure and predetermined questions would provide the best platform to elicit their views and provide detailed information on the YP's experiences. Some narrative researchers use unstructured interviewing where there is no set agenda and the participant guides the direction. In this research, it was considered the semi-structured approach would not impact on the YP's expression. This semi-structured approach also offered the interviewer

opportunities of asking for more detail and allowing follow up questions to any interesting responses.

3.6.2. Development of the semi-structured interview

An interview schedule was used but the order of the questions was not strictly adhered to. The interview questions incorporated in the interview schedule were based on Kvale's (1996) guidance, which suggested the following types of questions within a semi-structured interview.

- Introducing questions: used as a way to gather detailed responses from the YP regarding their 11+ experience, for example, "Can you tell me about..."
- Follow up questions: utilised in order to extend the YP's responses. For example, through nodding or clarifying what the YP has just said and using further questions if appropriate. At points when I asked follow-up questions to a participant, I tried to ensure that I used the YP's own words as much as possible as I did not want to impose my own interpretations of meanings on their story.
- Probing questions: examples include "Can you tell me more...". Probing questions are used to support the YP to elaborate on their answers and provide deeper insight.
- Direct questions: ensure what the YP had said was completely understood.
- Indirect questions: were used in this research in some of the interviews via vignettes (Appendix 4) being read by me to the participants. The YP were then asked to comment on the vignettes or asked questions such as, "What do you think of her situation". The responses to these help me to gain an insight into the YP's own attitudes.
- Interpreting questions: were used to clarify, for example, "You mean that..." or "Is it right that it impacted in that way?" I ensured all the YP were given space to reflect and time to add more to their answers.

The interview schedule (see Appendix 4) was flexible and not strictly adhered to so YP felt able to share aspects of their stories that were important to them. The research aimed to have a flexible interview schedule to not only elicit information more relevant to the study but to also demonstrate to each

participant that the researcher was interested in their individual story and also put them at ease to initiate any discussion in areas of priority for them. In line with the research's social constructionist epistemology, the interview process was adapted depending on how each individual participant was making sense of the topics raised. For example, some participants preferred a more a structured interview approach. As the researcher, I was aware of my own body language and non-verbal signals to the YP and tried to demonstrate empathy and active listening throughout each interview. An opportunity at the end of each interview was provided for the YP to add anything they felt might be important and had not been covered in the interview.

At the beginning of each participant interview, the topic areas were outlined and the interview was presented as an informal discussion with each YP. The interview schedule began with three selected cards from the Little Box of Big Questions 2 (LBBQ2) (Gersch & Lipscomb, 2015) see Appendix 5, followed by a supplementary question. Each card had a question on the front, with four further questions on the back. Each YP picked up and held each card so that they could refer to questions if they needed to. The questions are outlined in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Questions asked in semi-structured interview (also see Appendix 5)

<p>Card 1: What do you most love to learn about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are your favourite lessons in schools? - If you definitely could not fail, what would choose to do? - If you went on a quiz show, what two subjects would you choose to answer questions about? - Has there been something you have loved doing, such as an interest or hobby since you were very young
<p>Card 2: How do people learn things?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you learn best? Who with? Where? With what? - Who would you like to learn about in the future? - Who has been you very best teacher? Why?

- What do you think is the most important thing for you to learn about now?

Card 3: What are your dreams for the future?

- What sort of person would you like to be when you are an adult?
- What plans or goals could you make for this year?
- What are your hopes and dreams for the future? How could you achieve your dreams?
- What would you like to achieve in 5 years' time? 10 years' time? By the time you are a much older person? Who can help you?

Additional question: If you were asked to advise the Prime Minister, what would you tell her to do to ensure every YP succeeded at school?

The interview schedule (see Appendix 4) contained a summary of themes that the interviews aimed to cover, which included:

- YP's perspectives on their learning and school;
- YP's aspirations and hopes for the future;
- YP's experiences of the 11+ process.

The themes were developed in light of the literature so a variety of aspects could be considered in the YP's lives. In the interview schedule, there were suggested questions for each of these themes, which took a positive psychology approach. I found for some of the interviews it was necessary to refer to the interview schedule throughout while for other participant interviews I did not because as the conversation developed these themes were naturally covered.

When asking the participants about their experiences of the 11+ examination process, a visual tool that I called a 'timeline' was utilized. In my role as TEP I regularly use a timeline approach as a useful framework gather the YP's views. Also, as the participants were aged between 10– 11 years, I felt having the option of a visual tool to focus on might help structure and elicit the YP's views. Parallels between this timeline approach and life grids used by other researchers can be drawn. O'Connor, Hodkinson, Burton and Torstensson (2011) advocates using life grids as these can be as a visual tool to identify

'critical moments' in YP's personal journeys, which can have important consequences. Visual life tools have also been promoted in narrative research as Elliott (2005) outlined "respondents are likely to find it easier to talk about specific times and places rather than being asked about a very wide timeframe" (Elliott, 2005: p31)

In this research, the timeline was presented to the participants in a very open manner and it was used to talk around periods in the participant's life. I provided cards of the year groups in primary school (Reception, Year 1 etc.) and asked the participant to map the cards along the time line. The initial question then asked of all the YP was, "Can you point to the year you were in when you first heard about the 11+", then general probe questions were asked there. Examples of general probe questions were, "Can you give me an example" or "Tell me more about when...". As the research aimed to gather stories about particular experiences it was hoped these questions would elicit them. Part of the interview schedule also included opportunities for the YP to mark on the timeline any significant people and any future plans they might have.

Due to the flexible design of the interview schedule, not all participants were necessarily asked all the same questions or followed the structured pathway stringently. As the researcher, I adapted my approach and questioning differently for each individual participant. Pilot interviews were not carried out as the interview schedule was a flexible design, each interview was slightly different in terms of questions asked and how the discussion developed.

3.7. Data analysis

3.7.1. From interview to text: the transcription process

In order to explore the participants' knowledge and beliefs, the conversations in the research interviews were converted into text via the process of transcription (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). The conversations (data) gathered in the interview were recorded on an electronic device. Interpretation is very important in narrative research and this process often begins during data collection and

transcription stages (Bold, 2011). In this research, orthographic transcription was used. Orthographic transcription focuses on transcribing the spoken word i.e. what was said, not how it was said (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In narrative analysis, there are different approaches to presenting and organising data in transcripts. In thematic analysis, the focus is on the content of the narrative (Riessman, 2008). However other forms of narrative analysis focus on how language is presented verbally and used. This type of transcription would focus more closely on the subtleties of language. This research is not focused on the language used; rather it is concerned with the content of the YP's narrative in order to understand their individual experiences. The data was therefore transcribed verbatim and paid attention to whole words used.

3.7.2. Reorganising and restorying the narrative

Once the interviews have been transcribed, the data can then be reviewed and retold. The data can be reorganised in different ways in order to best make sense of it for analysis. As mentioned previously there is no one prescribed approach in narrative analysis. Dependent on the aims of the research there are different ways to restory the data. The approach in this research uses narrative thematic analysis, rather than structural analysis methods. Creswell (2009) outlined that restorying will allow both the listener and reader to understand the story better by providing order and sequence to it. As narrative researchers restory they identify key elements in the transcript and then rewrite the story in chronological sequence (Creswell, 2009). The restorying process aims to provide causal links between ideas. The restorying phase of this research is based on the elements of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative structure of human experience. The three dimensions in the framework are interaction, continuity and situation, and I felt that restorying the transcripts around these elements could better capture the past, present and future dimensions of a story. The concept of experience was really important in this research as it is the foundation and framework for thinking about a YP's story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that an individual's reality and perspective needs to be understood as a product of their past experiences and future prospects. They argued that an individual's experiences grow out of other experiences and every experience leads onto

further experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also claim that an individual's experience will happen in a particular context or location. Appendix 7 provides examples of how this framework was used.

INTERACTION		CONTINUITY			SITUATION
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place/ Context
<u>Inward</u> conditions e.g. feelings, hopes, moral dispositions.	<u>Outward to</u> exterior existential conditions in the <u>environment with other people</u> and their intentions, purposes, assumptions and points of view.	Look <u>backward</u> to remembered experiences, feelings and stories from earlier times.	<u>Now:</u> look at current stories and experiences relating to actions of an event.	Look <u>forward</u> to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.	Look at <u>context, time and place:</u> space situated in a physical landscape or in a setting bounded by characters' intentions, purposes and different points of view.

Figure 3.2: Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure- Adapted from Creswell (2009) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

3.7.3. Developing a flexible approach

Through my reading of the literature I chose to take a flexible approach to narrative analysis. From this research, I wanted to gather each individual's story and also identify themes and commonalities across the transcripts. In order to have more freedom, I did not use one particular model. Rather I used elements from different models in my flexible approach to analysis.

Through restorying, individual storied narratives were created for each individual participant (see Appendix 8) written in a 'third-person-omniscient'. These stories from beginning to end are co-constructions. Themes and broad areas of commonality were then searched for in each individual story. The process was circular and it was necessary to move between stages in order to

protect the essence of each participant's story and reflect on the analysis process. The phases and my approach to analysis is outlined below:

Phase One: Familiarisation with the data

The aim of this stage was to develop a picture of the individual's story as they described and made sense of their experiences. I aimed to fully engage with the data to build up this picture. This stage started during the transcription process and audio recordings of the interviews were repeatedly listened back to and the transcribed interviews were repeatedly read.

Phase Two: Reorganising and restorying the data

The transcribed interviews were read, reread, analysed and reorganised into Clandinin and Connelly (2000) (three-dimensional narrative structure of human experience) framework. It was a shifting process, where I moved frequently between the transcribed interviews and framework. The framework also served as an overview tool where excerpts of the transcribed interviews could further be rearranged into thematic stanzas. Due to the spontaneous nature of interviewing and conversation the sections of transcripts were rearranged into chronological order as often participant's speech as they are narrating an experience can be disorganised. A sense of chronology was already evident in the transcripts due to the timeline tool used during the interviews. Riessman's (2008) concept of 'thematic stanzas' were used in this narrative style. The aim was to meaningfully group various excerpts into a series of thematic stanzas that were concerned with similar subjects/ themes (events) and each thematic stanza was given a title. Arranging the transcripts into thematic stanzas distinguished transitions from one narrated event to the other. Consequently, the Clandinin and Connelly (2000) framework and the arranged thematic stanzas served as the founding blueprints that directed the creation of the participants' narratives. Storying techniques were used to turn excerpts of original transcripts into storied accounts of the participant's lived experiences

Phase Three: Identifying key themes (events/ elements)

As Creswell (2009) points out qualitative analysis is not linear, it is circular and includes many levels of analysis. As an individual story was created for each

YP, connectedness and commonality between the transcripts/ stories were identified and analysed by grouping of common experiences and events. This began at phase two where the narratives were reduced and reorganised to make individual third person narratives while still sustaining the key essence of each story.

These stages of breaking down and reorganising the transcripts and then analysing them for key themes and areas of commonality allowed me to engage in the data in multiple ways. It was a lengthy and circular process that helped me to ground my understanding and interpretation fully within the YP's words.

Phase Four: Check-back meetings

During this stage of the analysis I planned to collaborate with the participants by 'checking back' their individual restoried narrative with them, this is discussed further in Chapter 5. It was planned that their stories would be presented back to them to ensure validity and authenticity of the narratives. YP would have been invited to comment on the stories and discuss whether they would like to make any amendments to their story. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, it was not possible to hold these check-back meetings with the YP.

3.8. Trustworthiness, validity and reflexivity

3.8.1. Trustworthiness

This research is a flexible qualitative study so the criteria for judging it is different from quantitative studies. As a qualitative study, it set aside the concepts of generalisability and reliability. Qualitative studies are evaluated via trustworthiness and researchers acknowledge that their research is subjective and reflect on it. Robson (2011) defined trustworthiness as, "general, relatively neutral term referring to the extent to which one can have trust or confidence in a study and its findings' (Robson, 2011: p.534).

The study's purpose is to learn about each YP's individual experience, as they will be leading the discussions, which I will be recording accurately. It can be argued that trustworthiness can be achieved (Wolcott, 1990).

3.8.2. Validity

To evaluate a study's validity in qualitative research, a judgement of the accuracy or credibility (trustworthiness) of findings can be made (Creswell, 2009). To contribute to a study's credibility Mertens (2010) outlines a number of factors which are detailed below:

1. Researchers should be sufficiently involved in the field. This study met this by completing it in a 'real-life' setting of school where I was the attached EP.
2. I ensured the interviews were sufficiently long in order to gather relevant and meaningful information. I checked back throughout the interviews with the YP that I had understood what they had said and meant.
3. Credibility was also sought via the strategy of member checking that used via 'check-back' with the participants. The participants were invited to comment on the accuracy of their individual restoryed narratives after analysis. During member checking participants are asked if the interpretations are fair and representative. Furthermore, an external audit was conducted of the research's findings by two independent people including my research supervisor and a psychology graduate.

3.8.3. Reflexivity

Qualitative research is interpretative and as a researcher I must be self-reflexive about my role and influences. I recognise as a researcher that the narratives, conventions and audiences differ in research interviews compared to everyday conversations and that as the researcher/ interviewer I co-construct the narratives with the participants (Sandelowski, 1992). As the researcher, I position myself within the research recognising the participants' narratives are a co-construction (Stiles, 1999). Fox et al. (2007) discusses that researchers have to be aware of how they personally construct the world and their position within the research needs to be explicit. Fox et al. (2007) go on to describe researchers who are conducting qualitative research as needing to be

aware how their position as a researcher affects their research, which in turn affects their researcher position, as I have outlined in the Introduction.

I kept a reflective diary throughout the research process and made detailed reflections and notes after each individual interview (Appendix 13). Notes were also made throughout the data analysis phases, which were referred to when I was writing up the Findings Chapter and Discussion Chapter.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Throughout the research's journey from conception to completion, an ethical stance was maintained. It was crucial to maintain an ethical stance as the research was conducted with a vulnerable group (YP) who arguably need more protection than adults. The research adhered to the Health and Care Professions Council's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2012) and British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2009). The research hopes to do more than 'minimise harm' by empowering and giving a voice to a group who are currently disempowered in research.

Discussion with my research supervisor regarding the ethics of researching YP who have experienced failure took place before the study began. The study was then designed to take a Positive Psychology approach. Positive Psychology focuses on strengths, growth and potential and is in direct opposition to a preoccupation with risk and deficits. Rather than ignoring the presence of negative experiences, positive psychology accepts that they are part of life and can actually build qualities. It was not envisaged that any distress would be caused to the YP taking part but sources of school and local support were compiled to support emotional well-being if necessary. The potential 'risk' in the research was made transparent to all participants and gatekeepers before they consented to take part. No participant expressed any distress or upset during the interview process.

For qualitative research practice, Willig (2013) outlined five ethical considerations; informed consent (from YP and all gatekeepers), the right to withdraw, no deception, confidentiality/ anonymity and debriefing. These were all adhered to in this study.

Informed written consent was gained from YP, school and parents/ carers (Appendix 1, 2 and 3). Three different letters were sent to the school, participants and parent/ carers. All letters were appropriately differentiated for the target audience and worded sensitively to avoid stigmatising YP who had experienced not gaining a place at a selective school. YP not only received a letter but the research was also verbally explained to them, including information about the nature, duration and style of the interviews. It was also made clear to participants that should they want further clarification on the topic or process they are free to ask at any time during the interviews. All participants and gatekeepers were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage to them and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participants were made aware that their interview would remain strictly confidential unless a disclosure was made that would put others or themselves at risk of harm. All the participant data was anonymised and each participant choose a pseudonym that they would like to be known by in the research thesis. Anonymity was clearly explained to all participants and gatekeepers and all data collected was stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

In this research, I aimed to be considerate and respectful to each individual participant. Attributes that I hoped to embody during the interviews included; a caring attitude, good rapport, transparency and equality between us (Creswell, 2012). As mentioned previously, the aims of the study were provided at the beginning of each interview, questions encouraged and all participants debriefed at the end of the interview.

UEL School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee approved this research (see Appendix 9).

3.10. Summary

This chapter has discussed the researcher's ontological and epistemological positioning, which has informed the research. It has detailed the data gathering steps for the research. The next chapter will describe the findings after systematically analysing the data.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

As outlined in Chapter Three, the narrative analysis aimed to capture the diversity of individual experience but also identify key areas of meaning across the narratives. One of the restoryed narratives will be presented in this chapter (and the remaining five can be found in Appendix 8). Leo's story was chosen because he was the only participant who independently made the decision to sit the 11+ exam. Then a descriptive commentary on the six restoryed narratives will be provided.

4.2. Leo's story

Personal

Leo lives at home with his mum, he is celebrating his eleventh birthday with his mum and extended family in two days' time at Pizza Express. Since being young, Leo has enjoyed swimming and FIFA. Leo goes swimming one to two times per week and plays FIFA either alone or online with others from all over the world in his spare time at home. Leo's main passion is reading, he particularly loves Harry Potter and Diary of the Wimpy Kid books. Leo says that his specialist subject on a games show would be Harry Potter because he loves the books and films.

Leo is a firm believer that people should make decisions based on what is best for them individually rather than others telling them what is best. Leo is of the opinion that YP can still do well, if not better if they do not attend a grammar school. He believes YP need to take their own path, which might be different from that of your family

School

Leo has attended the same primary school since Reception. In that time, his favourite teacher was his Year 2 teacher called Miss Lucy. She was a kind teacher who did not tell Leo off, her teaching approach made all the concepts easy to understand and Leo really liked her personality.

Currently, Leo's favorite lessons in school are maths and ICT, he really enjoys creating PowerPoint presentations in ICT. Right now, in school, Leo thinks it is very important to concentrate and try his very best to have a good understanding of all his school subjects. Peers in Leo's class can try to distract him when he is working hard; when this happens he either tells the teacher, tries to distract them with something else or ignore and hope they might stop.

Leo believes that the 11+ test is a good idea but it is important that people are given the choice to sit it or not. He thinks it is beneficial that people don't have to do it, especially if they suffer from nerves. If nervous people were

made to do it, they might get bad results just because of their nerves. Leo thinks it is important that people go to the right school for them and that might not necessarily be a grammar school, YP can succeed and do well even if they don't attend a grammar school. Leo feels that sometimes YP can have worst outcomes if they go to grammar school because it might be wrong school for them.

Learning

Leo learns best when he is working alone at home or school. Leo dislikes working in groups because there are often disagreements, which he finds frustrating as it sometimes leads to the groups changing and having to restart the work.

More generally, Leo believes that in order for pupils to succeed and do well at school, pupil's parents and teachers should motivate them but at the same time support students to remain calm, not stressed and worry free. Furthermore, Leo believes that being in good health is important to help students succeed in school. Leo's mum supports his health through providing him with a sensible diet that includes an appropriate amount of vegetables, proteins and carbs and reducing his intake of sweets, crisps and fizzy/ energy drinks. Leo's mum regularly reminds him that he should not be pressured into eating unhealthy foods if he does not want to.

11+ itself

Leo first heard about the 11+ when he was in Year 5 from friends in his school chatting about it, from there he then independently researched it online. From his research, Leo decided he wished to sit the 11+ and asked his mum if she would mind. Leo believes it is very important that YP make their own decisions about sitting the 11+ or not and adults should not instruct YP to sit it. Leo enjoyed sitting the 11+ test because it involves silent individual work following the instructions on the paper rather than teachers telling him what to do.

Leo sat the 11+ test at a local grammar school near his primary school, he liked that he got the morning off school to sit the test. Leo did not practise or revise in preparation for the 11+ test but he tried his very best while sitting it. On the day, Leo had mixed feelings of nervous excitement because he enjoys doing tests/ examinations. While Leo found doing the actual test enjoyable he was found the adults in the room scary and slightly intimidating. He felt very aware of the adults invigilating the 11+ test and described them as being like "watching owls".

The test itself was made up of a maths and English section, the maths section was multiple choice and there was space for Leo to do his workings and the English section involved verbal comprehension. Leo had never come across a test format like the 11+ before and said he found it exciting because it was different, he liked shading in his multiple-choice answers. If Leo was not sure of an answer, he guessed from one of the five options. A few of Leo's peers sat the 11+ test and when Leo spoke to them afterwards

their responses varied. Some of his peers finished the paper while some did not and some of peers found it easy while some found it hard.

Leo felt like the 11+ test was over very quickly and his advice to anyone in the future sitting is to be yourself and remain calm. Even though on the day Leo found the 11+ easy, he did not pass and probably thinks it wasn't as easy as he originally thought. When Leo received his results that he did not pass, he felt fine because he didn't really care. Like Leo, his peers who did not pass appeared to not mind and those who did pass let others in the class know

Leo thinks that other pupils might worry that if they don't pass the 11+, it might upset their parents and this could be contributing to pupils' stress levels. He thinks on one hand adults need to reassure pupils that it is okay not to pass and they should not feel forced to sit it. But equally, adults should also gently encourage pupils to sit the 11+ because in Leo's view it is good thing to do. Leo is grateful that his mum told him beforehand that it is okay not pass, all she asked was that he tried his best. His mum's approach eased pressure off Leo.

Future

Leo is looking forward to attending the local high school in September and he is not worried about being the youngest year group in the school. There are four or five others from Leo's primary school transitioning into his secondary school. When Leo reaches secondary school, he would like to learn about the human body and perform well in all of his classes. Leo is planning a good start at secondary school by ensuring he completes all the homework set, not talking in class and telling the teachers if others are distracting him in class. With this plan, Leo hopes he does not get side-tracked from working hard during his time in secondary school. When Leo looks forward to Year 9/10, he hopes to be doing well in his classes, not engaging in bad behaviour and achieving good attendance in school. It is also important to Leo that he remains in good health.

Leo's plan for the future is to work hard at school, achieve good GCSEs, move onto sixth form college and then university. Leo's dream is to become a GP and to accomplish this, he plans to work hard, stick at it and not to get side-tracked. Hypothetically, if Leo could definitely never fail, he would always choose to be a doctor. He is aware of the timeline of studying and that it is a long training route, he does not expect to be graduated by age 24. Leo finds it difficult to imagine himself as 40/ 50 years old but he hopes that by that age he is doctor earning a good salary who owns a house and a car.

In order to achieve his ambition of reaching medical school, Leo names his high school teachers, university lecturers and his family as people who can keep motivating and supporting him to achieve his goals.

4.3. Identification and grouping of common experiences and events

The six narratives are all composed of ‘thematic stanzas’ that were identified when the data was reorganised via Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) framework of human experience (Appendix 7). Through analysing and mapping out the thematic stanzas, common storylines and connectedness between the narratives were identified. I gathered the common thematic stanzas across the narratives and were made up of similar experiences under the headings of “Events” and “Elements”. An overview of the clustering of the six narrative’s thematic stanzas can be found in Appendix 10. The identified heading used to describe the “Events” and “Elements” are inductive as they were elicited using a bottom-up (data driven) approach. The “Events” identified across the narratives are shown in Table 4.1. “Events” are made up of certain experiences and subthemes that I’ve put under the heading of “Elements”. Some “Elements” identified consisted of experiences shared by many of the participants, whilst other “Elements” were less common across the narratives. The “Elements” making up the “Events” in the YP’s life demonstrate how “Events” can be experienced differently. Appendix 10 and Appendix 11 demonstrate how “Events” and “Elements” making up the narratives were identified.

Table 4.1: Overview of Events and Elements

<u>Events</u>		<u>Elements</u>
1	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Moving countries/ home/ school- Family- Interests- Personal qualities
2	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ability grouping- Peer support- Learning skills views- Adult invigilators- How the world works
3	Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Current school- Secondary school

		- Grammar schools
4	11+ itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation - Exam - Results - Advice
5	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secondary transition - University & beyond - Working & adulthood

The following commentary provided on the “Events” is an overview of the thematic stanzas across the narratives and consists of excerpts from the six narratives. This commentary is about the narratives that have been restoryed, which are written in the third-person. The commentary should clarify further the headings used as Events and Elements. For the purpose of illustration, the excerpts provided are a mixture of the original transcript and restoryed narratives. Dependent on what gives the best sense of the event/ element some quotes are from the raw data and others from the restoryed transcript. Restoryed quotes are also used in places due to taking up less space than some raw data quotes.

4.4. Personal

The majority of the YP shared aspects of their personal lives in their stories, which were associated and also separate from their academic lives. Sharing parts of their personal lives were common in many of the YP’s narratives and four personal elements are discussed below.

4.4.1. Moving countries/ home/ school

Several of the stories collected consisted of an event where the YP had experienced upheaval and large changes in their lives in the form of moving countries or home and school. The experiences were similar between the two YP who had moved from foreign countries to the UK. Anya and Max both describe the move from Eastern cultures to a Western culture as a difficult

change. Both had similar perspectives when they compared their previous schooling to the UK schooling system they moved into.

"[Anya]...recently moved to London from Hong Kong, she joined the UK education system when she was in Year 5. The majority of Anya's earlier schooling was under the Chinese education system, which she found to be much harder compared to UK schooling. In Hong Kong, Anya attended two primary schools, one was Chinese where there were several languages spoken and the second primary school was slightly less strict and more similar to her current UK primary school." P. 132

In Max's case, the first school she attended was in India where she found the expectations on pupils to be are very different in comparison to UK schooling.

"Max attended school in India where corporal punishment still occurs... in India, girls are expected to "decent", for example, they are not allowed to talk back to the teacher or wear nail varnish. At times, Max found it challenging not talking back to the teacher because she likes to get her point across. She got into trouble when she did that in India. Max also received a lot of homework (three hours per night per subject), she thinks that Year 2 pupils in India get more homework than high school pupils in the UK." P. 137

Initially Max went to an all-girls primary school in UK however after two years she moved again to her current primary school, which is mixed. She describes this as a "shocking change".

"[Max] found a large difference moving from an all-girls school to a mixed school. In her experience in all-girls schools, the pupils are more disciplined because they behave in the expected way and do not talk. On her first day in Willow Primary, Max said to herself "oh god where am I" because the pupils were naughty; they were shouting and standing up in class." P.137

Max went on to tell how moving countries and school impacted on her 11+ preparation. In her experience, she found moving from a demanding Indian school to less demanding UK schools directly impacted her mindset.

"...since starting school in the UK, she [Max] got into the mindset of not doing much work. Max feels that being in mind-set of not working as opposed to the Indian mind-set, impacted on her studying for the 11+ and she often thought to her 'why do I have to write so much?'" P. 140

While Joe did not move countries, he moved from another city in the UK. All three YP spoke about the people they left behind in their previous home or school and how they miss them.

“I wasn’t too keen on this school... miss my old best friend” (Joe, lines 460-466)

4.4.2. Family

Relationships and circumstances within the family context were a common source of support within the lives of many of the YP. The experiences were varied, including which family member the YP turned to for help and how some YP reflected on their family. In Joe’s story, his older sister plays a very important role. She is the person who instructed his parents that he must sit the 11+ test and then supported Joe throughout his preparation and revision. He described the specific work she completed with him, which included exam technique.

“...my sister was because she, like, helped me a lot. Like, the practice books... Because she obviously knows quite a bit more stuff than me. She was helping me out... She, like, taught me, like, some of her methods to, like, sort of, like, questions a lot more quickly” (Joe, lines 724-740)

Family is also an important part of Max’s story. She describes her family as protective and puts this down to being the eldest child in her immediate and extended family. She told me that her Dad worries about her a lot and he does not let her out on her own and when she transitions to high school in the coming months he plans to personally drop her at school every day. Max was very reflective and open during our interview and there appeared to be a tension between how much she clearly loves and cherishes her family and home country, but also a sense of conflict between their values and traditions and her experiences in the UK and her outspoken candid personality.

“My dad’s kind of protective so I guess he’s going to drop me there... He doesn’t let me do anything on my own when I go out... Well, he worries a lot about me.” (Max, lines 443-453)

4.4.3. Interests

Many of the YP spoke with enthusiasm about their interests and hobbies in their personal life. Their interests ranged from origami to ethical hacking to Arsenal Football Club. Ali's interests are aligned with sport and his favourite lesson in school is PE. He enjoys many aspects of sport but in particular he likes the feeling of people watching him.

"he [Ali] can hit the ball really far and loves it when people cheer him on"
P.127

Anya and Leo both spoke about their passion for reading. Anya outlined that she has adored books since a very young age and when she imagines herself as an adult, she sees herself spending a lot of time reading. Anya loved reading all seven Harry Potter books. She described her favourite character as the heroine, Hermione.

"Hermione... Because she keeps on listening in class and she likes reading books." (Anya, lines 144-149)

Leo also spoke about his passion for reading, particularly the Harry Potter books.

"Leo says that his specialist subject on a games show would be Harry Potter because he loves the books and films." P.55

When Max discussed her interests, she appears to view them as detached from her school life. Max's diverse interests are a mixture of independent activities and activities with her family. She spoke about how she loves to dance to music at parties.

"Max enjoys Bharatanatyam dancing with her family, which is a South Indian dance." P.137

She also likes to spend time problem solving on computers related to ethical hacking and during her weekends she has completed university level courses.

"...but it's not bad hacking. It's ethical hacking. And a professional teaches how to do it and we have short clips of how to do things, we have these students in whatever the place is... No, it's Harvard University, yes. So people from there do some videos and stuff and the post it, and then we have problem sets from which, if you're going to watch the whole video of

how they teach, like... Every time they have a lesson, they video it and then they put it on the internet... It's quite interesting" (Max, lines 216- 236)

4.4.4. Personal Qualities

Leo and Max were two YP who spoke about their personal qualities and where a sense of their characters could be gathered from the interviews. From interviewing Leo, an autonomous spirit came across. He was the only participant who had independently made the decision to sit the 11+ without guidance or instruction from parents. He is a firm believer that people should make decisions based on what is best for them individually rather than others telling them what is best.

"... you don't have to take the same path as all your family..." (Leo, line 821)

Max is the only female member of the school's football team. She outlined that she feels she does not possess the usual female characteristics and used the example that she does not like to gossip. She prefers to openly share her opinions to others.

"It stresses Max out if she is not honest and straight forward with people, she feels it is important to talk to others directly in order to resolve issues."
P.137

Max feels these qualities will help her reach her aspirations of becoming a lawyer. She also describes herself as someone who is good in arguments, can make worldly points and she is not aggressive or shy.

4.5. Learning

A central theme running throughout the YP's stories is learning. Evident in the YP's stories is their individual views on learning, including what they believe helps them.

4.5.1. Ability grouping

Some of the YP spoke about how learning is organised in their school. Joe described that unlike his previous school, his current school has ability sets which he believes works well as it means that pupils can work at their own pace. He expects to be put in ability sets when he transitions to secondary

school in the coming months. Ali was also an advocate of ability grouping in school.

“Ali thinks streaming is good idea and in the future, he is of the opinion that there should be more opportunities for certain pupils to be taught higher level work to improve their learning.” P. 127

Ali appears to be very aware of the ability grouping in his class. He described the time when a friend of his newly joined the school. Ali was aware that when his friend joined the school he was put on the lowest table but the teacher quickly realised how clever this new pupil was and moved him to the top table next to Ali. From being on the top table together, they became firm friends who supported each other with their learning throughout the school day.

4.5.2. Peer Support

For Ali, friends are very important source of fun and support for him.

“...if he [Ali] is ever unsure about anything he knows he can turn to friend to ask. Ali learns best when he is with his friends.” P.127

Ali has many friends and he described how each of his individual three best friends help him in different ways from emotional support to academic support. Ali believes using peer support could be an effective method to help support children to succeed at school. He spoke about clever children taking the role of “mini teachers”;

“...clever pupils [could] stand at the front of the class and help teach like “mini teachers”. There could be “mini teacher” features table that others could visit to improve their learning by alternative methods being demonstrated in order to complete tasks.” P.127

Ali also talked about applying peer support in other situations;

“If Ali felt nervous about transitioning to secondary school, he would visit older students in Year 9 or 10 and ask for their advice because they were Year 7 pupils once and got through it.” P.128

4.5.3. Learning skills views

Evident in almost all the stories collected were the YP's individual views on their learning. Many of the stories were characterised by YP's opinions on their own strengths and difficulties, in particular they compared their maths abilities and their literacy abilities.

"Ali does not consider himself a strong reader, he finds it difficult particularly when he is asked to do verbal comprehension. He finds the inference questioning challenging because it not clear whether his answers are right or wrong." P.128

"Although Joe feels he is able at literacy, he believes he is ten times better at maths in comparison. He finds literacy trickier in school because it involves writing and checking your work." P.135

According to Joe he was left surprised in the 11+ test because he found the English section easier than the maths section and commented on gender differences

"But the girls... I think it's a little different for the girls because I think the girls, their English was a little harder, and for the boys the maths was a little harder" (Joe, lines 684-686)

Many of the YP's also included their views on teachers in their stories. Some YP explicitly named influential teachers they had experienced and described their approach to teaching. In Ali's story, he also noted that he does not mind strict teachers because he views them as individuals who are just trying their best to help children learn. The individual teachers described by the YP tended to possess qualities such as kindness, generosity and a sense of humour. The teachers described by the YP tended to use similar approaches to their teaching and were people the pupils could relate to and were liked.

"Ms Lilly used to provide Ali and his class with 'brain time', which supported his learning. 'Brain time' consisted as 15 minutes per day where Ali and his class would play with sports equipment to help them calm down and transition to the next lesson of learning." P.128

"He [Mr Wood] also breaks learning into manageable chunks. Ms Door is the other teacher who used similar approaches to Mr Wood but she was more practical. She would ask the class to do focus work for 40 minutes

then she would give 10-minute learning breaks when the class would play kinaesthetic games, which worked for Max by keeping learning interesting.” P.138

Although in Anya’s story she did not individually name an influential teacher, she spoke about teachers in a broad sense. Even though it was not explicitly stated in Anya’s story, her narrative seems to suggest that she feels a disconnect to her school. Anya outlined that demonstration and modelling techniques support her learning and she believes that to support every child to succeed in school that learning should be made fun. While in Max’s story she spoke about different approaches;

“For Max, she learns best via repetition and relating learning to her own life, for example, she generates better ideas for story writing if it is grounded in her own experiences.” P.138

Many of the YP’s stories discussed their peers in relation to their learning. Max compared herself to her friends where unlike them she thinks about the bigger picture and wonders what topics they will be covering next. Peers are a central theme throughout Ali’s story;

“I learn best probably with my friends, and sometimes, if it’s quite hard, they put it into a funny kind of question, and I can get it a bit easier with that. Where, I’d probably be in the classroom since that’s where you most learn.” (Ali, lines 84-87)

Conversely for Leo, he discussed that he works best when alone and views his peers as a hindrance to his learning.

“I don’t like doing it [learning] with other people because they annoy me if we don’t agree on something.” (Leo, lines 129-130)

This key theme of independence and autonomous spirit ran through Leo’s story.

“Leo enjoyed sitting the 11+ test because it involves silent individual work following the instructions on the paper rather than teachers telling him what to do.” P.56

Interestingly, Leo’s story also discussed that lifestyle choices can impact on YP’s learning and success at school.

“Leo believes that being in good health is important to help students succeed in school.” P.56

4.5.4. Adult Invigilators

Ali’s story quite vividly highlights adult invigilators in the 11+ exam. He described their role as strange and distracting because he is used to teachers helping with his learning.

“Ali found the adults invigilating the test quite scary because they kept walking and looking around the test hall with their serious faces... He found it intimidating when they came up to his desk to see what he was doing.” P.128

Leo also spoke about the adult invigilators in his story.

“...he [Leo] was found the adults in the room scary and slightly intimidating. He felt very aware of the adults invigilating the 11+ test and described them as being like “watching owls” P.56

4.5.5. How the world works

Some of the stories collected illustrated what the YP want to learn more about in the future. Anya and Max both identified a desire to learn about how the world around them works.

“It is important to her [Anya] because you have to understand the world in order to help the world, for example, if YP aspire to be doctors or scientists they need to have deep knowledge about the world.” P.133

Similarly, Max had her future in mind when she named learning about world. She was considering the new experiences that were approaching in her life with her transition to high school.

“...she [Max] expects that she will met a broad range of people who all bring their own different personalities. So, learning about how the world works will help Max to think of sensible ways of dealing with problems and help her make decisions while she is growing up.” P.139

4.6. Schools

Schools was a key theme across the YP’s accounts, but there were some differences in how the YP viewed their schooling and different types of schools. Some YP spoke with optimism and excitement about their future secondary

school while others were more apprehensive. There were also some subtle differences in YPs' opinions on grammar schools.

4.6.1. Current school

All the YP were approaching their upcoming move from primary school to secondary school. Joe's story sheds light on what it feels like to be approaching the end of his time in primary school.

"For Joe, being at the top of [his junior] school and being the oldest feels weird because he remembers starting this school towards the bottom in Year 4 and feeling small." P.136

In Max's story, she also reflected on primary school ending.

"Max feels sad that primary school is coming to an end because primary school is a happy place where you can play. She is planning on having fun for the remainder of Year 6" P.139

On the other hand, she also spoke about the relief she felt that Year 6 was drawing to an end because the SATS and 11+ were over.

"...Max felt free. Max feels relieved that she doesn't have to study anymore. Other than writing, everything is now fun in Year 6 and Max can take it easy." P.138

Many of the YP's stories included a description of their current school, half of the participants had attended the same school since they were four years old. While Anya's story sheds light on how it feels to join a primary school later on.

"Anya describes her move to her current primary school... as hard because when she joined in Year 5 everybody was already in their established friendship groups." P.132

Anya's story illustrates a disconnect between herself and her school and she tended to speak about the peers in her class as being detached from her. She referred to peers as "girls in her class" rather than as friends. When Anya thinks ahead to her transition to secondary school she is looking forward to making friends.

"[Anyia] is feeling excited... because she is looking forward to settling into the new surroundings, getting to know her new class and making friends."
P.133

In Leo's case, he describes how he deals with his peers who he sees as a hindrance to learning.

"Right now, in school, Leo thinks it is very important to concentrate and try his very best to have a good understanding of all his school subjects. Peers in Leo's class can try to distract when he is working hard; when this happens he either tells the teacher, tries to distract them with something else or ignore and hope they might stop" P.55

4.6.2. Secondary school

A central theme in all the YP's stories was their impending move to secondary school. Several of the stories reveal the mixed feelings some of the YP were experiencing regarding their transition.

"Violet feels scared about transitioning to secondary school because there will be other pupils from different primary schools she does not know."
P.142

Conversely, in Ali's story he is not worried about moving to secondary school because other than size he views it as being similar to primary school.

"It doesn't matter when you go to secondary school. It's just the same as primary school, it's different people and different teachers and more subjects. To me... it's just more teachers, more friends, and just a general bigger place to go... you just do more subjects to help you get smarter."
(Ali, lines 717- 731)

Apart from feelings of worry and excitement, the YP's stories also illustrated their hopes, plans and expectations of secondary school. In Leo's story, he identifies his plan for secondary school, which is focused on academic working.

"...he would like to learn about the human body and perform well in all of his classes. Leo is planning a good start at secondary school by ensuring he completes all the homework set, not talking in class and telling the teachers if others are distracting him in class. With this plan, Leo hopes he does not get side-tracked from working hard, not engaging in bad behaviour and achieving good attendance in school" P.57

Max talked about feelings of apprehension regarding her move to "big" school. In contrast to Leo, peers play a central role in her plans for secondary school.

"I'd like to have a good start in Year 7, make a lot of friends, because I don't want to be a loner." (Max, lines 384-385)

4.6.3. Grammar school

In Ali's story, he took a pragmatic view of grammar schools as he describes them in the context of the larger picture.

"...pretty much everyone goes to college or university...Some YP might get accepted into grammar schools that possess cleverer teachers with larger IQs but that does not necessarily mean that those YP are any smarter than those YP who did not gain a place at a grammar school. Furthermore, by the time everyone has grown up, everyone is just as smart as each other..." P.129

On the other hand, Joe is quite firm in his belief that grammar schools accelerate YP's education.

"Joe believes that you only get one chance to attend a grammar school and people should take that opportunity regardless of which secondary school your primary school friends are transitioning to..." P.134

While for Leo, he believes it is important for YP to attend the school which is right for them. Throughout his story, he spoke about YP making their own decisions and he applies that principle to the 11+; in his view YP should be given choice to sit the 11+ without the influence of adults.

"Leo thinks it is important that people go to the right school for them and that might not necessarily be a grammar school, YP can succeed and do well even if they don't attend a grammar school. Leo feels that sometimes YP can have worst outcomes if they go to grammar school because it might be wrong school for them." P.55

4.7. 11+ itself

The YP shared various aspects of their 11+ experience. Some provided a detailed description of the day, while others shared their advice and personal opinions on the examination in general. Evident in many of the stories is the preparation the YP put into the 11+ examination and some YP shared their feelings and reactions when they received their results.

4.7.1. Preparation

In almost all the stories, the YP had spent time and effort preparing for the 11+ and had been encouraged and supported by others in their lives. Leo was the only participant who made his own decision to sit the 11+ test and did not revise or prepare for it.

“From his research, Leo decided he wished to sit the 11+... Leo did not practise or revise in preparation for the 11+ test but he tried his very best while sitting it...” P.56

Evident in the other YPs' stories are the importance of preparation and the time and energy they put into revising for the 11+. Many of the YP spoke about the role family members and tutors played in their 11+ preparation. Many of the stories also illustrate when the YP first found out about the 11+, Max's story quite vividly highlights her feelings towards the 11+ test when she first heard about it.

“And then in my apartment, there was this girl. She did her 11 Plus, and she told my mum about it. And I was like, ‘Oh god, why did you hear about the test.’ I wasn't really happy with doing it, as in I'm okay. I can do it, it's fine. But I wasn't really keen to do it because I didn't really know what it was about.” (Max, lines 879-883)

Max's experience resembles Ali's where he initially avoided informing his parents about the 11+ test when he heard about it from peers in his class. In Max's story, she describes the preparation she did at home with her mum.

“...halfway through Year 5, her mum said she must study the whole time to prepare for the 11+ test. Max's mum made her do practise book and brought her tests. She really stressed Max out but Max managed to rationalise that just wanted her to pass.” P.140

Many of the YP's stories were characterised by parents and family members encouraging YP to work hard preparing for the 11+. Even though not explicitly stated in all the YP's stories, the narratives seem to suggest that like Max, the additional 11+ practice work driven by parents caused a conflict. I sensed a conflict between feelings incited by the work such as “stress” and “pressure” and YP trying to rationalise that their parents were pushing this in order to support their children.

“...but there was a lot of revision at home, which I did not like because I didn’t have time to play...” (Anya, lines 479- 480)

Apart from stress and pressure, some of the stories illustrate other feelings the 11+ provoked.

“Anya was worried when she initially heard about the 11+ because she thought the questions might be too hard for her abilities.” P.133

“Once he [Joe] heard about the 11+ test and what it was, he went from feeling calm to feeling pressured. At the time, Joe did not feel happy about taking the 11+ test.” P.135

Evident in many of the YP’s stories were the role of tutors. In Violet’s story, she revised with her mum at home and attended weekly tutor classes for over three years.

“Violet found her teacher from her tutorial class very helpful because she helped to explain problems and the appropriate methods to solve it.” P.142

Joe’s story however seems to indicate that his tutor experience was not completely beneficial, he had a separate maths and English tutor.

“...the work Joe covered with his maths tutor did not appear in the 11+ test. When Joe discovered that the work he covered with his maths tutor did not appear, he thought he would probably fail because his revision and previous learning would not work” P.135

However, it does not deter Joe from recommending tutors to others

“Joe believes that if other children wish to pass the 11+ test, they should get tutors” P.135

A central theme in Joe’s story is the concept of time. Joe and his parents found out the 11+ only one month before the test date, which Joe felt left him little time to prepare. Joe frequently reiterated this in his narrative.

“Joe did not feel happy about taking the 11+ test because he did not have much time to practice for it. He hopes that in the future for other important exams like his GCSEs he has ample to prepare and revise, unlike his 11+ experience.” P.135

4.7.2. Exam

In Joe's story the concept of time also impacted him during the actual exam. Joe became anxious about the timing of the test, he was particularly concerned he might not finish the maths section and wishes he had received further support regarding exam technique.

"Timing was a worry for Joe throughout that day, he now feels he concentrated too much on timing rather than the actual test. In the future, Joe believes there should focused support given to young people regarding timing in exams because managing his time was Joe's main problem in his 11+ experience." P.136

Many of the stories illustrated the YPs' feelings on the 11+ day. Common feelings amongst the YP were feelings of nervousness and worry. In Max's story, she quite vividly describes how she felt that day.

"I was kind of, like, nervous. I was literally shaking. When I get nervous, I don't speak at all... I was like 'Oh god,' and I was biting my nails and I was shaking" (Max, lines 982- 989)

Max's experience resembles Joe's experience. However Joe seemed able to rationalise those feelings on the day

"At first I was really nervous but then I saw a lot of people around me. I was like, I can't be the dumbest person. There's, like, a lot of people that's doing this..." (Joe, 618-620)

In Ali's case, he experienced a range of feelings. Friends are a central theme in Ali's story and he highlighted the social aspect of the 11+ day.

"Alongside Ali's feelings of nervousness, he also had fun seeing his friends and having a chat with them... which helped to ease his nerves... During the test, Ali did feel panicked at times." P.129

Interestingly in Leo's story, he described his feelings as nervous excitement and he talks about how he enjoys sitting tests. Like many of the stories, Leo talked in detail about the content of the 11+ paper, which involves a maths and English section.

“Leo found doing the actual test enjoyable... Leo had never come across a test format like the 11+ before and said he found it exciting because it was different.” P.56

4.7.3. Results

In both Ali and Max’s story, they discussed the 11+ results in relation to peers. Both stories identified that only very clever YP gained a place at a grammar school.

“A few of Max’s friends who she describes as very clever and bright got into grammar school but other friends did not. The friends that did not gain a place, didn’t mind because they generally don’t care about exams or tests” P.140

Even though not explicitly stated in Ali’s story, his narrative which is centred on friendships seemed to suggest that his friends not gaining places validated Ali’s own results

“Not passing the 11+ meant that Ali could go to the same secondary school as most of his friends. Even Ali’s best friend Sammy who Ali considers to be really smart did not pass” P.130

Max’s story highlighted feelings of disappointment when she received her results

“I was a bit upset because I tried my best... And I still didn’t pass... But then I was like, yeah, I kind of worried that I wasn’t going to pass because of my English” (Max, lines 1053- 1062).

Apart from identifying feelings of disappointment, Max’s story also shed light on factors that might have impacted her 11+ results. Max moved to the UK three years ago, English was not her first language although she feels she has learnt it quickly. She found the English section of the 11+ challenging.

“...she [Max] still struggles to understand components of the English language... Max found the English language section a problem and she believes this is due to her not living in this country and not speaking the language for that long.” P.141

Many of the YP’s stories also involved their parents being a source of reassurance after they received their results.

“When Ali’s parents heard he did not pass the 11+, they reassured him it was okay. They reminded him that he is clever and when he does other tests in future they are sure he will achieve good grades so it doesn’t really matter” P.129

Similarly, Anya’s parents offered her reassurance and Anya described that she felt better about her results because she beat her cousin’s grades.

“Anya felt okay about not passing the 11+ test because she beat her cousin’s scores. She also pleased because her mum and dad reassured her that although she did not pass, she still achieved good scores and worked hard” P.133

Although not explicitly stated in all the stories, many of the YP’s narratives seemed to suggest that receiving their 11+ results provoked feelings such as disappointment and upset. However, Leo’s story was different from that of the other YP in the sense that he did not appear to experience the degree of disappointment that the others might have felt.

“When Leo received his results that he did not pass, he felt fine because he didn’t really care” P.57

Leo’s story does however indicate he had an awareness of his peers’ differing feelings regarding their 11+ results and why they might be experiencing those feelings.

“Leo thinks that other pupils might worry that if they don’t pass the 11+, it might upset their parents and this could be contributing to pupils’ stress levels... Leo is grateful that his mum told him beforehand that it is okay not pass, all she asked was that he tried his best. His mum’s approach helped eased pressure off” P.57

4.7.4. Advice

Evident in some of the stories is the YP’s offering their advice and personal opinions regarding the 11+. In Ali’s case his advice is based on the nature and type of support that should be offered to YP prior to sitting the 11+.

“He believes smarter pupils in the class should have access to an additional teacher who comes into weekly and teaches higher level concepts that might come up in the 11+” P.130

He also advises that YP should not get their hopes up regarding the 11+ because you cannot predict what is going to happen, Ali used his friend as an example to illustrate this point. For Leo, his advice is centred on the decision-making process regarding whether to sit the 11+ or not.

“...adults need to reassure pupils that it is okay not to pass and they should not feel forced to sit it. But equally, adults should also gently encourage pupils to sit the 11+ because in Leo’s view it is good thing to do.” P.57

Leo also advised anyone in the future sitting the test that they should try to remain calm. In Max’s advice, she talked about feelings leading up to the 11+ test. She discussed that YP need to avoid feelings of stress and not to over work beforehand. She used her own experience as an example to base her advice on.

“Max believes that if you over study, it can lead to stress and thoughts becoming muddled so you won’t be able to think straight before the test... Thoughts racing through her head included “What if I don’t pass?” ... Max found that despite working hard and prepping for the test, the stress can take over and have a greater impact. Max found that stress magnified unhelpful thoughts in her mind, which leads to muddled thoughts and impacts on your test performance” P.141

4.8. Future

Key themes running throughout the YPs’ stories are their futures. Their stories shed light on their clear hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future. Many held high aspirations for academic achievements leading onto university and professional careers. Several YP also shared the personal qualities they hope to possess as they move towards and reach adulthood.

4.8.1. Secondary transition

The YP’s stories all included discussion regarding their impending move to secondary school. Joe’s story highlights his hopes and wishes for secondary school and relates his plan to his 11+ experience.

“Joe is looking forward to expanding his learning into new subjects such as science, geography and sociology. Joe plans to start studying for his

GCSEs when he is in Year 9 in order to give himself a lot of time to revise, unlike his 11+ experience.” P.136

Ali's story also highlighted the new subjects he is looking forward to covering in secondary school and he is already aware of the reputation of his new school.

“...he [Ali] has heard good and bad things about the school. He has been told that the teachers are strict at his secondary school but that does not bother him.” P.130

Ali discussed in detail about his future plans in secondary school and about utilising the resources he has at home to support himself.

“When Ali is completing GCSEs in five years' time, his older brothers and sister can help him revise and complete his school work because they have been through it before him. As Ali aspires to become a doctor... in Year 9 he plans to pick science, maths and English as his GCSE choices” P.131

Anya's story also highlights that she will seek support from her parents during her secondary school years. In Anya's story, she outlined that she is not feeling worried about her secondary school transition.

“Anya is not too worried about starting secondary school because she is currently at her third primary school. However, she is feeling slightly nervous about the homework and level of difficulty.” P.133

In Max's case, she talks about the reservations she has regarding joining a secondary school.

“...she [Max] feels worried because secondary schools are full of drama, studying, homework and lots of tests, which is going to be hard... Max has no experience of UK high schools so really doesn't know what to expect in the next five years.” P.139

Max also identifies her parents as a source of support.

“Max's expects that her parents will be supportive when she reaches high school however as the work becomes more complex, her mum might struggle to support her” P.139

Many of the YP's stories also involved the practical plans they have already put in place for their secondary school transition.

“Well me and my friend are going to the same school and he lives quite near me... and he said we can probably meet up at the X Centre. It’s a 43-minute walk from my house, and he said we can either run or walk there. We said we’d meet each other at, like, 7 o’clock...” (Ali, lines 852-856)

4.8.2. University & beyond

In all the YP’s stories they identified that they wished to attend university and named professional careers as their dream jobs. Very similar concepts were presented in several of the stories regarding how they would achieve this. In Joe’s case, he talked about his passion for inventing things and linked it to future aspiration. He discussed how he plans to help achieve this dream, including what he can do currently.

“[Joe] has enjoyed inventing things, he currently likes origami. When he older, Joe wants to become an engineer because it is a scientific and inventive profession. To become an engineer, Joe plans to go to university and complete a maths degree... Currently Joe would like to develop his knowledge around trigonometry to help him reach university and study maths” P.136

Interestingly in Violet and Anya’s stories their ambitions are centered on professions that are typically associated and populated by men. Violet’s dream is to become a scientist and Anya wishes to work in computers. A key theme running throughout Anya’s story is turning to her parents for support. She plans to continue this into adulthood.

“Anya certainly plans on attending university when she is older... completing a computer related degree... she expects her dad will help her because he is very skillful with computers” P.134

In Leo’s case, he has a clear and precise plan related to his aspiration to become a doctor. He spoke about the timeline of studying and he is aware it is a long training route.

“Leo’s plans for the future is to work hard at school, achieve good GCSEs, move onto sixth form college and then university. Leo’s dream is to become a GP and to accomplish this, he plans to work hard, stick at it and not to get side-tracked.” P.57

4.8.3. Working and adulthood

Many of the YPs' stories were characterised by their thoughts and opinions of their future selves as adults. Some stories also shed light on finances and earning a living in order to achieve their hopes and dreams. Ali aspires to be doctor and he discussed the expensive tuition fees associated with university so he plans on working alongside his medical studies and applying for additional funding during his college years.

"Ali thinks his part time job could be in McDonalds... Ali's brother also receives additional funding to attend college and Ali hopes he will benefit from that to when he is old enough." P.131

Ali's story highlights how he imagines himself as an older person with children.

"When Ali is a much older person, he imagines himself retired playing lots of golf. To be a good golfer, Ali hopes his future children could help him. He expects his child will be better than him because they will be younger and fitter so can help Ali's golf game." P.131

Visions into adulthood were also evident in Violet story,

"In the long, long term future when Violet considers herself really old she pictures herself as a Granny with lots of people around her." P.142

In Joe's case, he has views on what is likely to happen to him as he ages.

"Joe anticipates that once he reaches the age of 40, his engineering skills and brain capacity might start to deteriorate so he would like to also do a simpler job such as a taxi driver on the side." P.136

In Anya's story, she highlights what kind of adult she wants to be,

"As well as her academic and professional aspirations, Anya hopes that she will also be a kind adult in the future" P.134

Anya's story also sheds light on the practical aspects of adulthood she would like to achieve.

"...getting a good job and earning a sufficient amount of money." (Anya, lines 161-162)

Similarly, when Leo reaches adulthood he hopes to be financially stable

“Leo finds it difficult to imagine himself as 40/ 50 years old but he hopes that by that age he is doctor earning a good salary who owns a house and a car.” P.57

In Max’s story, she vividly highlights the kind of future she would like for herself. She describes in detail her plan to first secure a “safe” future by first building foundations in her twenties.

“Max plans to start working towards her future by earning money from as young age and studying hard... and then once she feels in a safe place she can do more socialising like “normal people do” P.139

In Max’s story, she also outlines how she would like to support her parents when she reaches adulthood.

“Focusing on studying means she can secure qualifications for her future. Max wishes to be independent from her parents when she is older, she does not want to financially rely on them, rather she would like to be in a position to give them money so they don’t have to work...” P.140

4.9. Feelings

Through interviewing the YP and collecting their stories, many of them shared their feelings and I was able to construct a sense of their character. I

triangulated my construction by referring back to my research diaries.

In Violet’s story, I gathered a strong sense of disappointment from her 11+ experience. She came across as a sensitive individual who was very measured in her responses. Violet’s responses during the interview tended to be in short phrases and unlike other participants she did not elaborate on her answers.

She did not discuss or reflect on her 11+ results, which I sensed remains a source of discontent. Violet had been preparing for the 11+ since being in Year 3 at home with her mum. Violet spoke about her mum frequently particularly in regard to the 11+ work they did at home together but she did not offer an insight into how her mum and family system processed her 11+ results.

Similarly, Joe did not readily discuss his results and his feelings of disappointment remained. However, it appeared that he tended to hold external factors accountable for his feelings of disappointment and 11+ outcome, for example, finding out about the 11+ very close to the exam date, leaving little time to prepare.

In Ali's case, the central theme running through his story is other people, especially his friends and family. It became apparent that Ali turns to his network of people to help process and support any difficult feelings.

Throughout Leo's story he came across as a single-minded YP. He only briefly acknowledged any dissatisfaction related to his 11+ experience. He had a broader outlook on education and life and shared his determined ambitions for the future.

Anya's story appears to highlight a current disconnect to her school and peers. Family is a major source of support and reassurance to help her manage her feelings.

In Max's story, she vividly shares her feelings throughout. In my view, she presented as the most open YP regarding sharing her innermost feelings and thoughts. I detected she was battling with her social and outgoing nature and the pressure to academically achieve, she conceptualised this in her "safe future". I did gather that the 11+ experience was difficult for her emotionally. I interpreted that her 11+ experience highlighted the conflict and comparison between her current UK schooling and schooling in India.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has set out the findings from the research. These findings have been organised into five events with every event being made up of different elements. The data gathered relates to many points and issues raised in the literature review. With the research questions in mind, some of the themes (events) that emerged from the data were expected however there were some surprising findings as well. The key findings to emerge were the positive and ambitious aspirations of the YP and the influence of parents. The next chapter will go on to discuss in depth the data in relation to the research questions and will connect this research and previous research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Overview of chapter

This chapter will discuss the overall findings. The literature will be considered as each research questions is presented. This will be followed by limitations of the study and findings for EPs. Lastly, I will reflect on what I have learnt from the research and my overall conclusions.

5.2. Considering the findings

In Chapter 4, the 'commentary phase' provided an overview of YPs stories and identified common events / elements found across the stories. The common events / elements found across the YPs stories (Table 4.1, P.62) demonstrate aspects of the YPs 11+ experiences as they described them. They describe the YPs past and present experiences, as well as their views about the future. The following section is a discussion of the events / elements in light of the study's research questions. Providing this discussion involved reflecting back and forth on YPs individual 're-stories', the 'commentary phase' in Chapter 4 and the literature in Chapter 2.

5.3. RQ1: How do YP who were not selected for grammar school reflect on that experience?

Preparation and family

Many of the YP's stories illustrate the time, energy and effort they put into their 11+ experience. In the majority of the stories the YPs parents were instrumental in the decision making and preparation to sit the 11+ exam. A comment cannot be made about the socioeconomic status of the YP and their families in this study. However, in Lucey and Reay's (2002) study they found middle-class parents are more likely to make the decisions about secondary schools on behalf of their children such as sitting the 11+. In this research, only one participant (Leo) made an independent decision to sit the 11+ test while the remaining participants were instructed to by their parents. Many of the YP's stories were characterised by parents revising at home with the YP or employing private tutors. This additional work provoked feelings of pressure

and stress in the YPs lives. Initially some of the YP avoided telling their parents about the 11+ exam and I gathered the sense from the stories that the 11+ preparation brought conflict to many of the YPs homes. However, despite these feelings the YPs continued with their 11+ preparation and sat the exam. This is in line with Lucey and Reay's (2002) findings that YPs emotional state is often negated if parents are pursuing high academic attainment. Allatt (1993) highlights that a bargain is often stuck between middle-class parents and their children because parents view their children's education as an investment into their middle-class values and beliefs. This bargain brings a significant amount of obligation. This sense of obligation came across in Max's story where she rationalised the conflict and stress provoked by her mother and 11+ preparation as her parents just wanting her to succeed. Since many of the YPs expressed that their parents were sources of stress and support during the 11+ preparation, it might be beneficial for parents to receive training or information on how to balance motivating their children while also supporting them. This will be crucial in improving YPs emotional well-being during stress provoking events.

Lucey and Reay (2002) also found that not all YP were passive in the selective school process. The particular children they described initiated their own applications to grammar schools and possessed competitive attitudes towards their schoolwork and wanted to beat other pupils in their class. Parallels between these children and Leo can be drawn; he initiated his own application and came across as an ambitious and hardworking YP. I noted in his narrative that he did not tend to mention friendships and came across as detached from his peer group. Interestingly, he commented that contributing to other YPs stress levels regarding their 11+ results is a concern YPs hold that they might upset their parents. This was particularly evident in Max's story where she commented that over working and preparing for the 11+ magnified her stress and caused unhelpful and muddled thoughts. If the pressure of the 11+ process is increasing YPs stress, this is having the opposite outcome desired by the government's focus on CYP emotional well-being (mental health and behaviour in schools', Department for Education, 2014). Max talked about the stress from the 11+ causing her to "freeze" on the day despite her working hard and feeling

she knew the material. Max's inaccurate thinking patterns which she described as "muddled thoughts" may have been caused by exam anxiety (Putwain, Connors and Symes, 2010) This may have implications for any future exams she sits and may reduce her engagement and exam performance.

11+ Results

Several of the YPs stories shed light on their thoughts and feelings regarding their 11+ results. A sense of disappointment comes across in many of the stories, particularly for the YPs who initially felt the 11+ had gone well and their hard work would pay off. As highlighted in the academic self-concept literature, dependent on a YPs implicit theory about their intellectual ability, failures can be turned into measures of fixed ability and can raise YP's anxieties regarding how clever they are. (Dweck, 1999).

However, the findings in this research do not imply that the YPs believed their intelligence was fixed. Despite feelings of stress and worry that the 11+ process brought, the YP were all optimistic about their future academic achievements and aspirations. They ascribed hard work and effort on their part to achieving their aspirations indicating that their intelligence is malleable and can be increased through effort. This could be due to the participants being considered clever enough in the first place to be put forward to do the 11+. Perhaps due to this they remained assured of their abilities. This can be seen to relate to the findings of Skipper and Douglas (2016). Their study found that YP who had been picked to take the 11+ exam were more likely to hold an incremental theory of intelligence than YP not picked to take the exam. Those YP selected to take the test were also more likely to show a higher internal focus of control compared to YP not asked to take the test.

Evident in many of the stories is that YP attributed external factors such as timing to their 11+ outcome. They did not tend to attribute uncontrollable internal causes to not passing the 11+ test. Joe commented that if YP received focused support on exam technique, it would enable better 11+ outcomes for YP. This insinuates that he believes his intelligence is malleable and through increased effort and training he might have managed his time better in the 11+

exam and passed. It also implies that YP need greater support on how to prepare for tests generally and that they would benefit from interventions that focus on improving study skills. Neuderth, Jabs and Schmidtke (2009) outlined that YP benefit from study skills interventions and delivered an intervention to university students as a way to help anxiety about their exams (no pre and post measures were taken). Only Max's story attributed uncontrollable internal causes to her failure. She found the English section of the 11+ test most challenging and reportedly scored badly, which she attributes directly to being an EAL student. In Banks and Woolfson (2008) study they found self-perceived low achievers are more likely to attribute uncontrollable internal causes to their failures and in turn linked that to feeling a lack of personal control over negative outcomes.

On receiving their results, a lot of the narratives reveal that many YP turned to their parents as a source of reassurance while others compared themselves to their peers. In Max's narrative, she outlined that only "*bright and clever*" friends were accepted into grammar schools. Max's story suggests that the 11+ experience urged her to compare her 11+ results to others who passed and these social comparison processes might have impacted her academic self-concept (Festinger, 1954). Social comparison processes are also evident in Ali's story however it seems his failure to gain a grammar school place was validated by his "*smart*" friends not passing as well. Considering my findings in relation to BFLPE (Marsh and Hau, 2003) it would seem that due to few children passing the 11+ in the participants' schools that social comparison processes did not seem to have a detrimental impact on their academic self-concept. In the future, research could explore YPs views in school where a high portion of children are entered and pass the 11+. Furthermore, I gathered a sense from across the narratives that their parents remain a major source of support and influence in the Year 6 participants' lives. Future research could follow the participants from Year 6 into secondary school to explore if their social comparison processes and theory of intelligence changes as parental influence reduces. It is a widely held belief that generally as YP grow up and enter secondary school the influence of their parents lessens so it would be interesting to explore if this impacts on their reflections on the 11+ experience

and views on grammar schools. Although the participants in this study tended to turn to their parents for reassurance and support when they received their results, it would be interesting to seek the parent's personal views. Lucey and Reay (2002) found that middle-class parents struggled with the concept that their clever offspring can fail. I sensed that the participants' perceptions of their parent's response to their failure carried great weight. Future research could compare parent's personal views and YP's perceptions of their parent's responses to their 11+ outcome to compare the similarities and differences.

Grammar school view and 11+ advice

The YP's stories possessed mixed views about grammar schools. In Joe's story, he was a firm believer that grammar schools accelerate YPs educational prospects. While, interestingly, Ali commented that in comparison to comprehensive schools, grammar schools only possess teachers not pupils with higher IQs. Many of the other YP were of the opinion that YP can achieve just as well if they don't attend a grammar school. Their views are in contrast to the generally held belief in our society that grammar schools boost the educational outcomes for YP who attend them. In Harris and Rose's (2013) study they found that GCSE performance is 1.5 times greater for grammar school pupils and the educational advantage bestowed onto them is at a cost to comprehensive pupils. It seems that many of the YP in this study might currently be unaware of the status grammar schools hold in UK education field. Future research could investigate whether the YP's views change as they progress through school and grow older.

11+ advice

Many of the YP also shared their 11+ advice and opinions within their narratives. Ali commented that it would be beneficial if clever pupils received additional support in class. He felt these pupils should have access to tutors who taught and practised higher level concepts typically found in the 11+ exam. Arguably, this indicates that he holds an entity theory of intelligence because with greater support and practice he believes he might have been successful.

5.4. RQ2: What do YP think helps them to learn at school?

Learning

In many of the YP's narratives despite their recent 11+ experience I sensed they identified as clever members of their class. Several YP spoke about their strengths and difficulties by relating them to the 11+ exam and then commented on techniques and strategies that support their learning. The Lucey and Reay (2002) study suggested that failure can impact on educational identity, however I did not sense that the YPs unsuccessful 11+ experience had negatively impacted on their educational identity to a great degree. As mentioned previously, this could be due to the participants knowing very few pupils who actually sat and passed the 11+ exam, plus their parents comforting and reassuring them once they received their results. Coldron et al. (2009) highlighted that the proportion of pupils in a selective place in the UK is only 4 percent. Many of the YP spoke about others who support their learning, including describing influential teachers and peers. For Ali, he was very aware of the support networks and placed a high importance on the people around him. Peer support is a major resource that I sensed supports his learning and maintains his confident and sociable personality. Strikingly many of the YP commented on the role of the adult invigilators in the 11+ exam. The participants are used to teachers and adults in school helping and interacting with them but the role of unfamiliar teacher invigilators incited feelings of fear.

Ability grouping

In Lucey and Reay's study (2002) they also discuss that YP are sensitive to elitism in education and are highly aware of the distinctions made. Social comparison processes were evident in many of the YP's stories. In several of the YPs stories they spoke about ability grouping in their schools and shared their class position. The YP who spoke about ability grouping in their school all commented that they were on the top table. The YP who spoke about ability grouping were advocates of it but they did not discuss it in relation to their 11+ experience. In Ali and Joe's stories I sensed they made a clear distinction between themselves and peers on lower ability tables. It would seem from the YP's narratives that the ability grouping in their current school had a greater

impact on their academic self-concept than their unsuccessful 11+ experience. Ireson and Hallam (2009) discuss that pupils with low academic self-concept had more negative intentions towards learning in the future. However, the YP in this study held positive intentions towards their learning in the future. The YP's narratives suggest that the YP are using their current primary school as their frame of reference in social comparison process rather than peers who sat the 11+ exam.

The majority of the literature identified in Chapter 2 used quantitative methodologies, which did not explore the YPs interests and backgrounds or discuss their personal qualities. In this study, many of the YP spoke with enthusiasm about their interests and hobbies and linked them to their school life and learning. Although the 11+ process might have been a disappointing experience for many of the YP, perhaps other factors could influence the YP's academic self-concepts and intentions to their learning. Several of the YP commented on their passion for reading, with one YP expecting to maintain that passion well into adulthood.

Moving countries and current school

For several of the YP, they spoke positively about their current primary and provided descriptions of their likes and dislikes of school. This is in line with Skipper and Douglas's (2016) findings that YP who sat the 11+ exam felt more positively about school compared to those who did not take the test. However, two of the YP (Anya and Max) spoke of their experiences of moving countries and schools and then joining their current primary school in the late junior years. These YP appeared to lack the connectedness to their schools compared to the other YP who had attended the same primary school from a young age. For Anya, when she spoke about the 11+ results and peers she commented on a group of friends detached from herself who passed the 11+ and were very excited. Anya was looking forward to her secondary school transition as she wished to make friends in her new school. While in Max's case she outlined that she does not identify as a typical girl in her school, she used the example of being the only girl on the all-boys football team. Max held reservations regarding her secondary school transition because it would bring

along uncertainties and increased pressure compared to primary school. For these two YP it seems they had less protective factors within their primary schools so might have found the 11+ experience harder to deal with. For Anya, she turned to her parents for support and they were a major source of reassurance throughout her story. While in Max's case, it seems evident that her 11+ experience remains unresolved in parts. Unlike many of the YP, she did not comment on her parents being a source of support to process her 11+ results. She attributes her failure to being an EAL pupil. She expressed the stress she felt during her 11+ experience and despite the hard work she put in, the stress took over and had a greater impact on her results.

Interestingly, Max and Anya were the only YP who spoke about wanting to learn about how the world works. Perhaps due to the fact they were both born and lived in cultures and countries on a different continent to the UK they have the insight and awareness that there is a lot to learn about the world. Therefore, it is important for schools to address this and support YP to gather a greater understanding of the world and what that means for them individually. They could provide practical advice regarding how to navigate the world as YP approach adulthood and also the importance of respecting and celebrating differences and similarities between people. However, for Max, her 11+ experience seemed to highlight the conflict between her Indian past and the English culture she finds herself living in. The 11+ suggested to Max that her mind-set had changed from a hardworking Indian one into an English mind-set of not doing much work. This conflict may have been a contributing factor to the 11+ pressure Max felt. This conflict and pressure is also coupled with Max feeling apprehensive about starting secondary school. I sensed her apprehension was due to the added responsibility she felt secondary school might bring. However, despite these feelings she presented as an outgoing and vivacious pupil who desires to be independent. Of all the participants, she seemed to be the one who had considered and thought deeply about what secondary school might bring. Perhaps her concern about secondary transition worsened in light of her 11+ results because she cannot attend her parents' first choice secondary school. Within her story Max commented that she had

no experience of UK high schools and “so really doesn’t know what to expect in the next five years or so.”

5.3. RQ3: What are the YP’s aspirations, hopes and dreams for the future?

University and working

Within each of the YPs stories, there was a strong sense of ambition and high aspirations for their future lives. The YP spoke about the hard work and effort they would have put in, in order to achieve their goals. Ireson and Hallam (2009) discussed that a major determinant of educational choices and future careers is low academic self-concept. Based on the findings that all the YP identified that they hope to attend university in order to secure professional careers it can be assumed that currently they do not have low academic self-concept. However, some of the YP’s ambitions did come with concern and worry. In particular for Max, I sensed that her ambitions and goals will come at a cost to her personal life and sociable nature. She discussed a need to first secure a “safe future” in order to become independent from her parents. Max outlined that in order to secure this future, it will require sacrifice and hard work on her part and once she feels in a safe place she can do more socialising like “normal people do”.

In Ahmavaara and Houston’s (2007) study they suggested comprehensive pupils had lower academic self-concept, which impacts on education and future career decisions. They discussed that this could be due to comprehensive pupils not passing the 11+, implying their ability is limited and therefore aspirations are limited. The researchers conclude that the differences they identified in theory of intelligence, aspiration and confidence between the grammar pupils and comprehensive pupils is likely to be a product of the selection process. However, these findings are in contrast to the findings in this study, where all the Year 6 participants had high achievement aspirations. Future research could follow up with Year 6 participants once they transition to their secondary school to explore if there is a shift in their aspirations and why.

Future research could also explore if grammar schools and comprehensive schools nurture and develop aspirations in their pupils differently.

Secondary school

The majority of the YP were excited about their impending move to secondary school. Many spoke with relish about the new subjects they were looking forward to studying. However, there were apprehensive feelings across several of the narratives. Some YP stated they would miss primary school because they associate primary school as a happy place where children play while secondary school can bring drama, unfamiliar people, complex work and higher levels of responsibility. I sensed from these YP they were at greater risk of becoming anti-school, which has consequences for their future aspirations and achievement (Ball, 1981). Francis et al. (2017) found that grouping YP via ability impacts learner identities, which in turn can enable YP to become anti-school. For the YP who found their 11+ experience disappointing, coupled with apprehension regarding their secondary school transition, they might be more likely to become anti-school once they leave the comfort and familiarity of their small primary school setting. After their transition to secondary school, there is a likelihood that parallels between the YP in this study could be drawn with a participant in Lucey and Reay's (2002) study. This participant had rejected the studious and hardworking identity he possessed in primary school and took on a 'lad' persona that denied the importance of school once he reached secondary school. The researchers hypothesised that his 11+ failure impacted on his educational identity. Similarly, repercussions of the YP's 11+ experience in this study might impact on the participants once they reach secondary school. Future research could incorporate a sense of belonging measure that explores if there is a shift in the YP's perceptions as they transition to secondary school.

5.4. Critique of the research

The research design in this thesis was effective in allowing the YP's voices to be heard and providing some idea of the impact of not passing the 11+. Admittedly, there are clear implications associated with interviewing very young participants, especially in asking them to outline in detail a sensitive and

potentially upsetting experience and, in the event, some of the YP did not feel able to speak in depth about their 11+ experience. However, on the other hand a strength of this approach was the frank and open nature of some of the interviews. They were willing to share their stories and were keen for me to hear and understand their views about the selective school process. In addition to this, all the YP who took part in the study were willing to do so and had given their consent as well as that of their parents. It could be argued that YP and their parents who did not want to take part in the study may have very different stories and experiences and there may have been a different impact on their learning. However, the group of YP who did take part in this study, while not being necessarily representative of all who failed the 11+, may represent those who had processed their 11+ experience and felt at ease with it. It is also noteworthy that the study did not take place in a borough that operates a full grammar and secondary modern system so the prevalence and status of grammar schools in this community might be less obvious when compared to LAs like Buckinghamshire and Kent that do operate a full grammar and secondary modern system.

In order to process the YP's experiences and the meanings they attach to these, a qualitative design was used. A narrative approach was chosen in order to allow for discovery and enable individuality as Bold (2011) states "the narrative represents experience rather than providing the reality" (p.30). This meant that the study is a co-construction that consisted of myself, the researcher, using open-ended interview questions and structures in order to gather YP's stories. The fact that I recorded the stories and my presence as an unfamiliar professional will have influenced the participants. I also play an important role in the construction of the stories meaning the interview and narratives stories were likely to be influenced by my own views and experiences. Therefore, the YP's stories that were gathered are not objective accounts. The interactions between myself as the researcher / interviewer and the interviewees have impacted the YPs co-constructed interpretation of their experiences. Therefore, a limitation of this study is that the 'commentary phase' in Chapter 4 could be viewed as a third hand analysis of the data because it is based on interpretation of the co-constructed YPs stories. However, objectivity

and an exact record of experiences was not my goal when striving to understand the YP's experiences. Rather, in line with a social constructionist perspective the process of meaning making and how YP present their subjective story is celebrated.

Furthermore, narrative approaches require a significant amount of analysis and interpretation by the researcher. Narrative approaches can also be conceptualised in different ways by different researchers, for example poems can be created from interview transcripts. In this study, I adopted a restorying approach, which involved reordering and editing transcripts to create re-stories using my own interpretations. I aimed to check the fidelity of my restorying approach by offering check-back meetings with the participants where I planned to present their restoried narratives back to them. However, when I contacted staff at their new secondary schools, they reported that the YP felt this was not necessary and they were happy and settled in their new schools.

5.4.1. Critique of the interview design

Given the difficulty of recruiting participants for this study, it was decided that a pilot would not be included. This was justified on the grounds that each of the interviews took a slightly different form and structure and this meant I had to take a flexible approach to the interviews. This allows the YP to share their experience in the order they wished within a naturally flowing conversation. With all of the YP it was necessary to have the interview schedule in front of me and for some the interview needed a structure that was led by an adult. Some of the young participants did not tend to elaborate on their answers, which presents a drawback to using narrative approaches with children. Arguably children are coached in primary school to just provide answers to questions rather than express their views and opinions at length. This brings the question whether it is appropriate to use narrative approaches in research with young children.

Other elements of the interview design can also be critiqued. The interview schedule took a positive psychology approach meaning the questions were

designed to focus on strengths, growth and potential. Negatively worded questions were avoided. YP could talk about negative and potentially upsetting experiences if they considered it relevant to their narrative, which some did. Due to some of the YP's reliance on the structured interview schedule, perhaps important aspects of their 11+ experiences were not identified due to the avoidance of negative questioning for ethical reasons. Since taking a flexible approach to the interview schedule, the fidelity of the narrative approach could be questioned. However, as Murray (2003) pointed out the aim of narrative interviewing is providing participants with an opportunity to share their individual and detailed narrative accounts. Therefore, if I had rigidly adhered to the interview schedule with all the participants, it would have been unfit for the research purposes.

Another issue with the data collecting technique used in this study is that the YP might have purposefully or unconsciously not disclosed certain aspects of their experiences. Hypothetically, they might have refrained from disclosing aspects related to their family's reactions or behaviour, their own behaviour or the impact of the 11+ experience on their own emotional wellbeing. Although this is just hypothetical because it is difficult to identify what aspects might have been omitted by the YP and why they might have done that, some reasons might be self-preservation; to protect their families; avoidance to disclose aspects of their experience that they have not processed or dealt with effectively; or avoidance to disclose aspects of their experience that they felt threatening to their emotional wellbeing. The trustworthiness of this study cannot be queried by this issue because the study's purpose was to learn about the YPs individual experiences, as told in their voice. Therefore, the study focused on aspects of the YPs experiences that they were comfortable to discuss and felt relevant to them. As the researcher, if I had tried to influence or sway the YP to discuss anything that they were not comfortable with, it would have posed a threat to their psychological wellbeing and the ethics of the study. Even though prior to the interviews I emphasised to the YP that there were no right or wrong answers and it was their individual story that was important, I acknowledge that the YP might have provided narratives that they anticipated would please me. They might have provided stories that they felt were more

‘socially acceptable’. For example, by portraying their 11+ experience as one they never really cared about, rather than emphasising any struggles.

5.5. Implications of the research on EP practice

The findings of this piece of research which explored YPs 11+ experience and interpretation of that experience has implications for EP practice. To structure this section, I have applied Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model. This ecological systems theory stipulates that there are four environmental systems in the child’s environment that influences them: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. The interactions between the child and environment are the key processes that produce human development and behaviour. This is a systemic framework that I also apply in my work as a TEP. I use psychological frameworks such as the Interactive Factor Framework (IFF) (Frederickson and Cline, 2002) to consider children and YP within the context of the wider system.

In Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory the microsystem encompasses the YP, immediate family, peers, school and community. The YP has the most direct interaction in this system and the relationships in this system are bi-directional. The mesosystem is the context system outside the microsystem, which involves interactions between different parts of the YP’s microsystem. These interactions are interconnected and influence each other. For my research, the mesosystem may involve relations between parents and private tutors. The exosystem affects the young person but the setting of it does not involve the young person as an active participant. The events that occur in the exosystem indirectly influence the young person by impacting the processes within the immediate setting where the young person is an active participant. For my research, this is less relevant but an example of the exosystem in context might be a parent losing their job. The macrosystem is the overarching cultural environment where the young person lives. The macrosystem affects and impacts all the other systems. In the context of my research, the macrosystem may involve the cultural values and views and

policy influencing knowledge and beliefs about the selective education processes in the UK.

Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as an overarching framework, I will discuss implications for EP practice on the three levels EPs may work.

5.5.1. Individual level

When EPs work with YP on an 'individual level' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) they should consider the resources the YP possess. The role of the school EP brings positive impact by building upon and strengthening YP's coping strategies. This research indicates that YP adopted certain coping strategies during their 11+ experience and an EP could encourage the development of already established effective coping strategies for YP.

5.5.2. Microsystem

There are several implications for EPs when considering Bronfenbrenner's microsystem. The unique narratives collected in the research demonstrate the importance of EPs taking a person-centered approach when working with YP. Every YP should be treated as an individual and assumptions should not be made about YP's experience and their interpretation without supporting evidence from them. The Children and Families Act (2014) and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2014) both promote person-centered approaches. I propose that the EP role should continue to emphasise the nurturing of aspirations of YP regardless of what type of secondary school they attend. More generally, EPs play a crucial role supporting person-centered interactions between children and YP (individual level) and other people in the environment (microsystem). Rogers's (1959) person-centered theory outlined that humans have an inherent tendency towards growth and development and emphasises the point of self-determination.

The current research also indicates that parental factors (such as their reassurance and influence) impact on YPs 11+ experience. This is an example of the microsystem interaction between YP and parent. The interaction between the YP and EP is another example. The narrative approaches used in this research enabled YP to voice their stories, which in turn helped them to make sense of them. I felt for the YP in this study it was positive experience and it can be applied and used to support other children and YP make sense of their own experiences. Additionally, it might be advantageous for EPs in the information gathering stages of a psychological assessment to explore the student's secondary transition and whether they went through the selective school process.

5.4.3. Mesosystem level

At the mesosystem level, EPs as part of their role could provide interventions and engage in effective multi-agency working with professionals who work directly with YP. Through interventions with school staff, EPs can help them understand the potential impact of failing the 11+ on YPs emotional wellbeing, their secondary transition and educational identity. Through consultation or training, EPs could support and strengthen teachers' understanding of the impact high stake examinations on YPs stress levels and support YP if they experience exam anxiety. Findings in this research indicate that YP are vigilant about ability grouping in schools and could raise the awareness and impact of this to school staff. One participant in this study suggested that YP would benefit from receiving exam technique support. EPs could help facilitate teachers to help YP develop effective exam technique approaches.

If the findings of this study are considered alongside previous literature, YP's educational identity and sense of belonging could be negatively impacted once they transition to secondary school. EPs could support secondary school staff in identifying and exploring tensions and issues within their unique school environment, such as;

- Sense of belonging
- Student engagement

- Resilience
- Beliefs and attitudes

Another implication for EP work at the mesosystem level is supporting parents. This could be in the form of training in regard to the impact of parental pressure on YPs emotional wellbeing. This kind of EP support could help parents balance motivating their children but also providing a supportive and reassuring role, which cannot be overestimated particularly for primary aged children.

5.6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity in research is “a process through which a person attempts to identify and recognize external and internal influences that can affect his or her understanding of a phenomenon under investigation” (Hardy, Gregory and Ramjeet, 2009, p. 11). Reflexivity is important in qualitative research because it is essential for researchers to reflect on what might have impacted on the gathering and analysis of data (Shaw, 2010). Reflexivity is important to the research’s credibility and confirmability (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The confirmability and dependability was reviewed in this research via an ‘external audit’ (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The external audit involved two independent people who were not a part of the research to examine the findings. Those two people were the research supervisor and a psychology graduate. The audit trail (Appendix 12) helps provide truthfulness and coherence.

Throughout this research process I was mindful to keep a reflexive attitude (Watt, 2007). I have honestly presented my ontological and epistemological positions, my values and background. In order to keep a reflexive attitude while carrying out this study I did the following;

- Kept a reflective diary. This was particularly useful when it came to the ‘commentary’ phrase of the research. Please see Appendix 13 for extracts regarding each participant.
- Had regular and ongoing tutorials with my research supervisor at University of East London (UEL).

- Had regular and ongoing discussion and support sessions with colleagues from my EP placement and professionals within the Psychology department at UEL.

5.6.1. Reflection: learning from the thesis

I will use the six stages of Gibb's (1988) reflective cycle to reflect on the research process. The six stages are; Description/ Feelings/ Evaluation/ Analysis/ Conclusion/ Action Plan.

1. Description: I will describe the feelings felt at the different stages of the research.
2. Feelings: I had mixed feelings about the research. I was initially very apprehensive because I had not completed doctoral or even masters level research before. On reflection completing the research has presented me with valuable learning experiences particularly around narrative approaches. At the time of deciding to do the study, the research topic of selective education felt very relevant and was the main motivating factor to complete this research. However due to political changes, the grammar school expansion initiative was shelved by the current government. Although on a personal level I am more in favour of maintaining the current restrictions on grammar schools, the impact of the political agenda changing did make my research topic slightly less stimulating. The most enjoyable part of the research was interviewing the YP. Once the interviews were over, I felt a sense of relief and then once the data analysis and findings were written up I felt a sense of accomplishment.
3. Evaluation: Although I chose a narrative approach, participants aged 10-11 years need a semi-structured interview schedule in order to draw out their stories and provide some prompts. This meant I had to design questions, for example, questions based on their views about the future. Despite my planning prior to the interview, it seemed some of the YP were reticent. This made me reflect on the power dynamic between myself as an unfamiliar professional and the participants. I considered ways of reducing its effects but the power differences between me and

the YP were ever present. However, despite some participants presenting as reticent, other YP were very open and chatty, particularly Max. My role as a TEP and researcher blurred together when it seemed the topic was making YP feel upset. Importantly, I was mindful not to move into a counselling role and did not probe further if I sensed the participant was becoming upset. The pressure and time constraints I was under in my role as a TEP meant the quality of the research suffered. Ideally, I would have liked to have given more time and consideration to the research. I also found the research took a long time and it was very isolating. During the write up and analysis I spent a lot of time alone. If I ever embark on research again I would like to do so as part of a team. Crucially, I was given good support from my university supervisor and I was able to discuss the research with peers (in particular when I carried out credibility checks). This research highlighted to me the power and impact of collecting the voice of the child. Particularly in this study, the YP shared the stress and pressures of the 11+ experience and that they would want to be provided with effective skills in exam techniques. Within my work as a TEP I gather the views of children or YP, which is in line with the SEN Code of Practice. Using narrative and qualitative approach enabled me to gather the views of the YP, which would not have been possible with a quantitative design. A qualitative study enabled the YP to express their views and I did not have any pre-conceived ideas in my mind prior to the study taking place.

4. Analysis: During my interviews with the YP I checked throughout that the participants understood the language I was using. There is always a chance in qualitative research that the participant may interpret the language differently from how the researcher intended. Similarly, I often checked back with the participant that I had understood what they had meant. As I mentioned previously, carrying out this research was a valuable learning and development experience for me on a personal and professional level. Nevertheless, I found it challenging to produce a high word count chapter within short periods of time alongside the demands of my TEP placement. I have a diagnosis of dyslexia, which allows me to

better understand the impact of high stake work on YP and especially an awareness of the struggles of YP with specific learning difficulties. I feel completing this research has put me in a better position as a professional.

5. Conclusion: I feel this was a useful piece of research because previous literature had not aimed to understand and explore the 11+ experience from the YP who go through it.
6. Action Plan: I plan to present this piece of research within a in team meeting in my LA placement. I am also presenting it at a UEL conference.

To conclude, while there were limitations to this research process, conducting this research and going through the process has provided me with a valuable learning experience, which I will bring into my role as a qualified EP.

5.7. Conclusion

This research is distinctive because it has applied psychology view eliciting the voice of YP who have experienced the selective school process and did not gain a place at a grammar school. No similar qualitative research from an EP perspective has been done in the UK. The significance of this research is not that is it groundbreaking but it does shed a new perspective on quite a contentious and divisive topic in UK education.

A distinctive feature of this research is the use of narrative approaches in order to consider and gather the YP's views. A sense of positivity comes across from all the Year 6 participants and it would be interesting to explore if or when this positivity is lost in the future.

The research also emphasises the impact and importance of parents in YP's lives. It seems YP place great weight on their parents' perceptions. The YP's stories also reveal how vigilant YP are to ability grouping in schools.

This thesis also highlights that questions need to be answered regarding the segregation of pupils in secondary education. Arguably in recent years there has been further diversification of secondary school types in the UK and the impact of this new education market is an interesting area of exploration.

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Appendix 1:

School Information Sheet

Dear XXX,

Project Title: *What stories do young people tell about their experience of the selective education process?*

My name is Katherine Madden and I am training to become an educational psychologist at the University of East London. I am on placement XXX Psychology Service. I am writing to ask for your support for XXXX Junior's to participate in my research study.

The aim of the study- The aim of the study is to explore how young people who did not gain a place at a selective school reflect on their experiences of the selective education process (11+) and their aspirations for the future.

Why is the study being done? Although there is some research on selective education systems in England, there is no research giving young people a voice and gaining their unique perspective. Thus, my aim is to gain insight into how young people experience the selective education process.

In light of the recent government proposals for increased selective education in this country, it is hoped that this research will provide practical implications for schools and educational psychologists. I hope information provided in this study will help to better support young people who have experienced the selection education process and better support young people to have positive futures.

How much time will it take to participate? I wish to interview pupils in Year 6 who sat the 11+ and did not gain a place at a selective school. Each interview will take about 50 minutes and students will be asked questions about the selective education process, their learning and their hopes for the future.

When I have finished interviewing, I will be reconstructing the data that I have collected during the interview into a narrative. After this I will have one short "check back" meeting with each pupil to confirm they agree with the content of the narrative. These "checking back" meetings will consist of no more than 15 minutes.

I will require assistance in selecting pupils and obtaining consent.

What are the potential benefits? This is a really under-studied area of research and it is hoped that giving pupils a voice will have an impact on the type of support educational psychologists can offer young people in the future when they experience the selective education system. Once the research is completed I will disseminate the findings to the school with practical implications to support children in the future.

I hope it also adds a dimension to the selective education debate that is currently raging in the country, as nobody has attempted to gain the views and experiences of young people before.

Are there any risks? The interviews have been designed to take a strengths based approach using positive psychology and it is unlikely that pupils will feel any distress from participation. However, if this does arise, support will be made available to help any individual with any issues that may emerge.

It would be necessary to obtain informed consent from each pupil, their parent/carer, and the school. Students will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Students are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. Participants, if agreed to take part, will be free to withdraw at any time without disadvantage and without any obligation to give a reason.

Who will have access to the research records? All information collected during interviewing and throughout the project will be kept strictly confidential. Interviews will be recorded and after transcription all recordings will be destroyed. The identities of individual pupils will be anonymised in the write-up of the study. Participants will get an opportunity to comment on their narrative in the “check-back” meeting. Ultimately, when the study is completed the write-up will be available to you, me, participants, my colleagues at UEL and XXXX Educational Psychology Service.

All the data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

How to contact the researcher: By telephone: Katherine Madden XXX If you prefer to email, the address is XXX. My supervisor’s email address is XXX

Please feel free to ask me any questions.

Thank you for reading this information.

Consent form for head teacher:

Name of school: _____

Please fill this in if you are happy for the selected young people from your school to take part in the research project:

What stories do young people tell about their experience of the selective education process?

1. I have read the information about the project and I understand what it is about:

☐

Yes

☐

No (I would like to chat more about it)

Signature: _____

2. I am happy for the selected young people in the school to participate in the research project, pending permission from parents/carers and young people:

☐

Yes

☐

No

Signature: _____

3. I am happy for young people's responses to be recorded and destroyed afterwards:

☐

Yes

☐

No

Signature: _____

Thank you

Appendix 2: Parent Info

Parent/ Carer Information Sheet



Dear.....

My name is Katherine Madden, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with children and young people in Sutton. I am writing to ask for your support for your child to participate in a research project I am doing in Xxxx Primary School. The research project I am carrying out is exploring how young people who did not gain a place at a selective school reflect on their experiences of the selective education process (11+) and their aspirations for the future.

XX Educational Psychology Service is commissioning the research. This is a really under-studied area of research. Although there is some research on selective education systems in England, there is no research giving young people a voice and gaining their unique perspective. Thus, the research's aim is to gain insight into how young people experience the selective education process. Due to the new government proposals for increased selective education in the UK, the research hopes to provide practical implications for schools and educational psychologists to better support young people who have experienced the selection education process and better support young people to have positive futures.

I would like to talk to your child for around 50 minutes in school. I will ask questions about the selective education process in XX, their school, their learning and their hopes for the future. I want to find out things that young people think help them to do well at school, as well as things that are less helpful. I am also interested in the skills young people think they have and the skills they would like to develop.

~~When I have finished interviewing, I will be reconstructing the data that I have collected during the interview into a narrative. After this I will have one short "check back" meeting with your child to confirm they agree with the content of the narrative. These "checking back" meeting will take place at Devonshire and will consist of no more than 15 minutes.~~

If you are happy for..... to take part in this research then I will arrange a good time to meet..... at Xxxx. I will listen carefully to what he/ she has to say and record our conversation using a dictaphone. will be given a different name when I write up my research. This is to ensure that nobody will be able to identify them in my research. All the data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I will write up what I find out, and after I have finished my research all the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed. The entire study is confidential.

.....'s participant is voluntary and if he/ she decides they do not want to take part anymore they will be reassured that this is okay. Due to the nature of the topic discussed, the interviews have been designed to take a strengths based approach using positive psychology. It is unlikely that your child will feel any distress from participation. However, if this does arise, support will be made available to help your child with any issues that may emerge.

If at any stage you would like further information on any aspect of my project, please contact me via XX or XX I would be more than happy to talk with you.

If you are happy for your child to partake in this study please sign the attached consent form and send back into school to XX

Kind regards,
Katherine Madden

I am happy for my child to participate in the research project,

☐ Yes

☐ No

Signature: Date.....

Appendix 3: Participant Info

Participant Information Sheet



Dear.....



My name is Katherine. I work with children and young people in Sutton. I'm training to become an Educational Psychologist, and I am doing a research project on what young people have to say about their experiences of selective education tests really interested in talking to you, if you can spare the time!



The new Prime Minister said she would like to introduce more selective schools in the country. I'd like to hear what you have to say! There are **no right or wrong answers**; I'm hoping to learn more about what helps young people like you in their lives, particularly when thinking about the future. What you tell me might help other young people.

1. **If you are happy to be part of my project** – lets have a conversation! When we have our conversation, I'll record what you say to me using a tape-recorder called a dictaphone. This is so I remember all the important things you tell me.



What you say will be kept between us. Do you understand what I mean by that? Everything is confidential. The only time I would have to speak to anyone else would be if you tell me something that means you or somebody else is in danger. **Once I have talked to other young people I will write about what I have found out and "check back" with you.**

What happens next? With what you tell, I will listen back and think about what you have told me could help other young people in the future. But don't worry - I won't use your real name, we can make up a pretend name for you, so that nobody will know what you have told me. **Can you think of one?**

There's no pressure for you to take part, and if you don't want to that's okay, just circle NO.

If you are happy to talk to me about my project then put your name on the dotted line and circle YES.

My name is and I'm happy to talk to Katherine about her project YES/NO Thanks so much for taking the time to read this! Katherine

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

Themes to be covered:

- YP's perspectives on their learning
- YP's aspirations and hopes for the future
- YP's experiences of the 11+ process

Path visual to support discussion

Interview schedule –

Research question 1/3-

Part 1: Introductions and rapport building

- Participants will be thanked for agreeing to meet with me.
- So today I am going to ask you questions about taking the 11+/ your learning and your future. Is that okay? Talk as much as you can- nothing you say will sound silly to me! Go for it!
- I will engage in neutral, rapport-building conversation topics (such as asking participants how their day has been so far etc.)
- I will read through the pupil information sheet and ask the YP to sign their consent. Ensure understand anonymous.
- “Do you understand my research and why we are here”
- “Would you like me to explain it again?”
- “Can I have your signature?”
- “My phone is out so I can record”- I am going to start it now
- YP can decide on a pseudonym.

Research question 2/3-

Part 5: How do people learn things?

Now I have some cards with me with some questions I would like you answer.

Would you like you or me to read?

- Participants will be asked to read certain card from LBBQ2 resource and ask questions
- Remember probing questions

LITTLE BOX OF BIG QUESTIONS 2 (LBBQ2): SELECTED QUESTIONS

- How do you learn best? Who with? Where? With what?
- Who has been your very best teacher? Why?
- What do you think is the most important thing for you to learn about now?
- What would you like to learn about in the future? Why? **What are your dreams for the future?**
- What sort of person would you like to be when you are an adult?
- What are your hopes and dreams for the future? How could you achieve your dreams?
- What would you like to achieve in 5 years time? 10 years time? By the time you are a much older person? Who can help you?

- What plans or goals could you make for this year?
- *If you definitely could not fail, what would you choose to do?*
- If you were advising the new Prime Minister, what would you tell him/her to do to ensure that every child/ YP succeeded at school

Part 2: Outlining/ reflecting the selective education process

- Participants will be presented with a large, empty 'timeline' (a long, landscape piece of paper), representing their time in primary school.
- "Do you now what this is?"
- It is a timeline/ path that represents your time/path in primary school
- So what year were you in when you started school? / Down here (pointing)- Reception
- Until the end here (pointing -Year 6)
- I will explain (in appropriate language) that this is intended to give a framework for discussion, and to plot events in chronological order, although they may be discussed in any order.
- The participants will be shown cards labeled Reception → Year 6 (so they can think of their lives in 'chapters'). I will ask the participant to lay the cards along the timeline up to now.
- Here I have some cards- will you lay them out along the timeline in the right order.
- I will then ask the participants if they can remember which year they first hear about the 11+/ selective tests.
- Can you point to the year you were in when you first heard about the 11+?
- Participants will be given plenty of time to think about this and write on the selected card if they wish to.
- Can you tell what happened when you first heard about it? How? Who?
- Can you tell me ALL the memories you have from then?
- What happened next?
- How does that make you feel?
- Summarising- have I got that right?
- What was it like on the day?
- What was it like taking that exam? What did it involve?
- Practice beforehand? Where? With who?
- Participants will then be asked to tell me, in as much detail as possible, about an important memory from that time.
- I will then use appropriate follow-up questions and probes (see examples below) to elicit more detail and further information about this event.

General Probe Questions (examples):

The following are examples of follow up questions/probes to elicit more detail or further information:

-Tell me more about that.

-What else?
 -Go on...
 -What happened next? Clarify meaning
 -What do you mean by that?
 -Can you explain what you mean?
 -Have I got this right?
 -In what way...? Eliciting an evaluation
 -How would you describe that time? For yourself? For your family?
 -How did that make you/them feel? How did you/they feel at that time?
 -Another time you have felt like that
 -Did you speak to friends? How did they feel about it?
 -What was that like for you/them?
 -What was the outcome/result of that?
 -How did that end? Getting examples
 -Can you give an example?
 -Can you tell me a bit more about your life at this time?

-Tell me if you can the main things that happened during that time – Tell me some of the things that have helped.

 -Finally, what helped you at this time? (Gestures to life path) what would you say?

Part 3: Significant people (see cards)

Participants will be asked to think of 2 or 3 important people who was around at that time who might have helped them and to tell me all about them

(Maybe introduce when found out that they didn't get in)

Here I have some more cards, can you think of any important people who was around at that time who helped you?

Can you write their names and put them on the timeline.

How did they help you?

What did they do?

-And you mentioned that helped. How have they helped?

Part 4: Future scripts (see cards)

- Participants will be asked to add one or more 'chapters' for the future and asked to describe, in detail, what they think their future will look like.
- Completion of these cards will be optional, inviting participants to use any combination of the short, medium and/or long-term prompt cards (which could label as year group Year 7 etc.- see below).

I have some future cards.

- This one is labeled – *short time future*- thinking forward what will you **like** to be doing in the short-term future? (*Year 7/ summer hols*)

- This is *medium term future*- what age/ year will be in then? What would you like to be doing? What will help you do that?
- And this one is *long term future*. What would you like to be doing long into the future when you are older?
 - What kind of things will help you.....
 - How might having people like X who help you to....., how might that help you in the future.
 - How could these things.....help you in the future

Part 6: Debriefing

- Participants will be given the opportunity to tell me anything else that they feel is relevant.
- Is there anything I have missed out? Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- They will then be thanked for taking part, and asked the following questions:
- How was this interview experience for you?
- How have you been left feeling now?

Back up scenarios – if some children are particularly quiet. Ask if another of these scenarios relate to them.

I have some made up scenarios with me. Do any of these relate you or maybe some of your friends?

What do you think of them?

What do you think will help X?

Do you have any advice for X?

Who could be in X's life who could help him/ her?

What do you think X will be doing in the future?

Rosie's mum really wanted her to go to a grammar school however Rosie's friends did not sit the test as they decided to go another school. Rosie did not pass the 11+ so it meant she is going to the same secondary school as all of her friends.

Tyler worked really hard practicing for the 11+ test however on the day of the test, he felt really nervous. He found it really hard to concentrate and could not find the right answers. Tyler did not pass the test and he is worried he might have upset his parents.

For a long time Anya practiced 11+ papers at home with her mum and dad. Anya's tried really hard on the 11+ tests but she did not pass, this means she is going to a different secondary school to her sister.

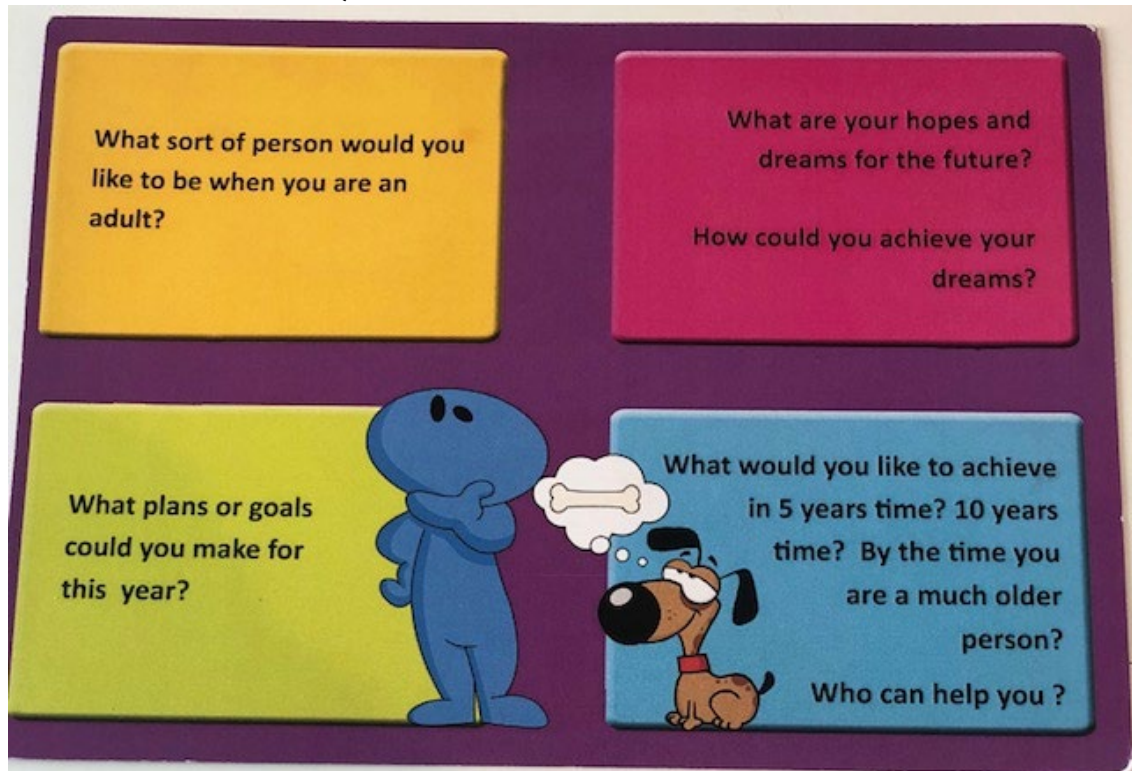
Kyle did not practice for the 11+ test at home or school, he found some of questions strange. Kyle and his friends in his class did not pass.

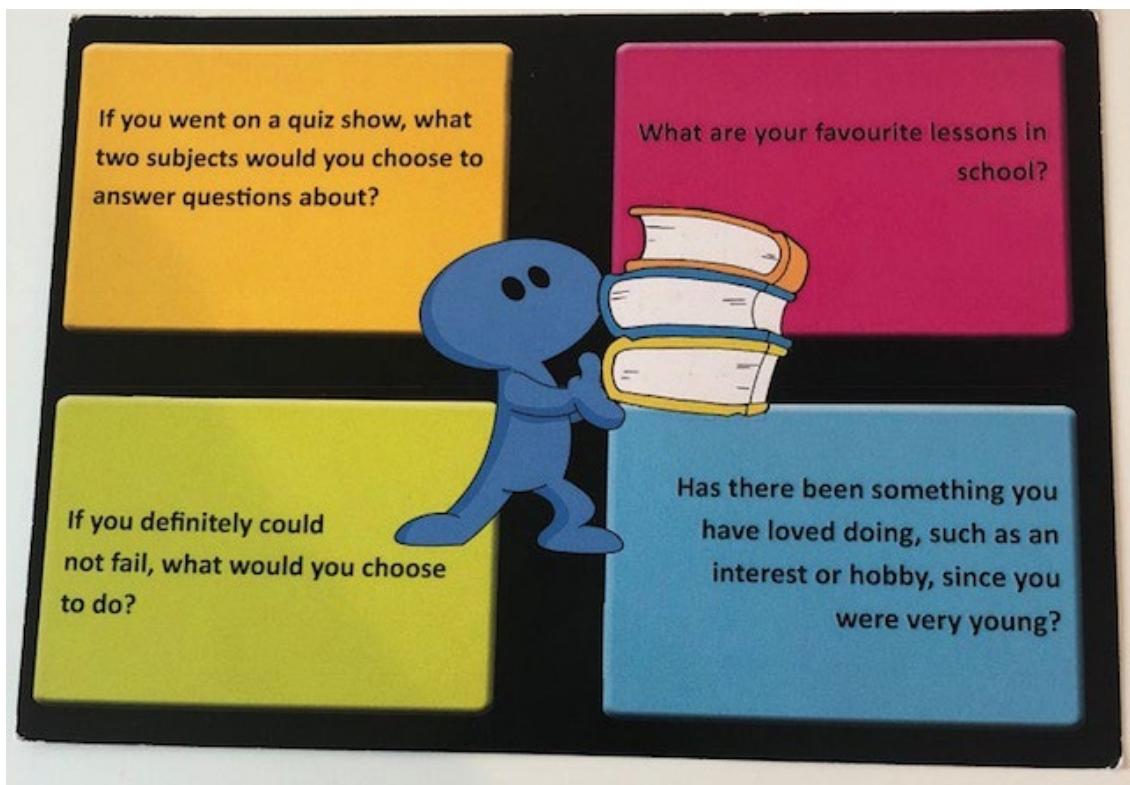
Marnie did not pass the 11+ exam, she still thinks about it because she really wanted to go to grammar school. She is worried about starting her new secondary school in September.

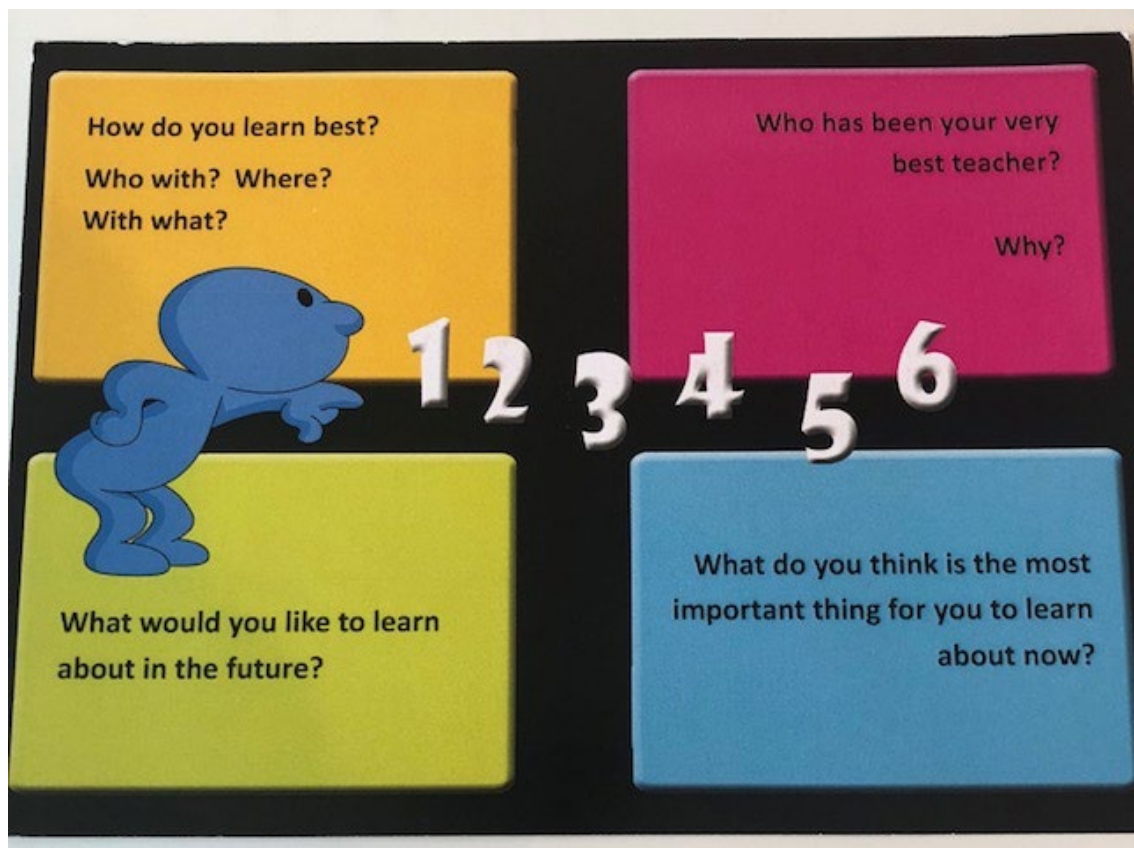
Jack sat the 11+ test ages ago and doesn't really get what it is all about.

Appendix 5

LITTLE BOX OF BIG QUESTIONS:







Appendix 6: Transcription of audio data

EAL

895 KM: Okay.

896

897 MS: But then when I got to the real test, because I haven't been here

898 for long, it's been only like three years now.

899

900 KM: Yeah.

901

902 MS: And even that, I only came here in holidays, in my India

903 holidays, and that's, like, how I came here. And it's still a good

904 thing that I learned English.

905 EAL

906 KM: Yeah.

907

908 MS: This fast.

909

910 KM: Yeah, definitely.

911

912 MS: And, yeah. So, well in maths I really got a good score but my

913 English was just bad.

914

915 KM: Oh, okay.

916

917 MS: Because I don't understand English. I'm really bad at what's

918 adjective, what's verb. Grammar is really bad. So, yeah.

919

920 KM: Okay.

921

922 MS: It wasn't really a problem for me to do maths but the language

923 was a problem because I haven't been here for long.

924

925 KM: Yeah. Yeah, I can see that.

3 yrs in country.

Impact of
EAL on
11+

maths vs Eng

EAL and
11+
Language
diff

30

926

927 MS: And kind of, yeah.

928

929 KM: Okay. So did you start doing some practising at home?

930

931 MS: Yeah.

932

933 KM: And what age was that? Do you remember what year you

934 were in?

935

05

936 MS: I think I was in the middle of Year 5 and my mum actually

937 went [inaudible], you have to study the whole time now.

938

939 KM: Okay.

940

941 MS: As in first, in, like, Year 4 and the first part of Year 5, she was

942 like, yeah, take it calm.

943

944 KM: Little bits like you said, yeah.

945

946 MS: Yeah. But as it got halfway through Year 5, summer holidays

947 - not summer holidays, like half term.

948

949 KM: Yeah.

950

951 MS: She made me do tests. We got out and got books, and my

952 mum was really stressing me out.

953

954 KM: Oh.

955

956 MS: But I was like, fine, she wants me to pass. I'll do it.

Mum
Support
Revising.

Working w/
Mum
+
revising.

revising
her
mum.

957

958 KM: Okay. So what was that like, then?

959

960 MS: That was okay for me, as I've been in India so it's not, so it
961 would be that much work but because in Year 4, the whole of Year
962 4 and Year 3, I wasn't doing that much work here, yeah? I go into
963 the mindset of me not doing any work.

11+ prep
↓
relating to
India.

964

965 KM: Okay.

966

967 MS: It's not doing any work but doing less work.

Current school

968

Present - comparing to
India.

969 KM: Yeah.

970

971 MS: So then when it got to the middle of Year 5, it was like, 'Oh,
972 why do I have to write so much in that?' So I wasn't really, you
973 know, practising what I used to do in India.

11+ prep.

11+ highlighted
↓
India vs UK.

974

975 KM: Okay.

976

977 MS: Which kind of made an impact on me studying for the 11 Plus.

getting out of practice /
mindset

978

979 KM: Okay. All right then, okay. And then what was it like on the
980 actual day when you had to...?

↓
impact

981

982 MS: I was kind of, like, nervous. I was literally shaking. When I
983 get nervous, I don't speak at all.

11+
day

984

985 KM: Okay.

986

Appendix 7: Examples of how the Clandinin and Connelly (2000) framework was used in practice

ALI'S STORY SKELETON

Personal Peer support	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place/ Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the day, Ali felt scared and panicked during the test but at the same time afterwards it was fun to see friends and have a good chat. 432 - Artie is another friend of Ali's who helps him. Artie has been Ali's best friend since Year 2 and if Ali is ever worried about anything, Artie will comfort him. 586 - Artie and Ali hang out at the weekend and recently they went to the woods near Ali's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ali feels he learn best when he is with his friends. If he is experiencing difficulty in class, his friend can use humour to help explain what the question is asking. 84 - Ali describes Bert as a mini teacher who is kind. 573 - Ali believes that to help every child succeed at school, the clever children could stand at the front of the class and help teach like "mini-teachers". 637 - There could be a "mini teacher" features table that 	<p>When Ali was in Year 3, his friend Sammy would help him with his learning. 554</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Around the 11+ time, Ali's friend Bert would help him with his learning especially maths concepts. Ali would sit next to Bert in class and he helped Ali with pi and algebra and lots of other concepts that Ali finds tricky. 558 - 	<p>If Ali did feel nervous about transitioning, he would visit older students in Year 9 or 10 and ask them how they felt when they were in Year 7 and how they got through it. 759</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When Ali gets to secondary, he plans to revise for his exams with his friends. 917 	

house where there is an abandoned building. Artie was scared about going but Ali comforted him and made Artie feel better, like Artie does for Ali at school. 593	<p>others could visit to aim their learning. 642</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If Ali is unsure about anything, he can just ask a friend. 711 - While in Year 5, Sammy and Ali would do additional writing practise together during break and lunch. 323 				
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--

ANYA'S STORY SKELETON

Personal Mum and Dad	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place/ Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anya's mum and dad made her feel better about her 11+ experience because they reassured her that it doesn't matter what secondary school she secured because she tried her very best and that is what counts. 582 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anya's dad is someone who helps Anya reach her goals and hopefully be successful one day. 213 - Anya's mum is someone else who can help Anya achieve her goals. 223 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When Anya was revising for the 11+ test at home, her mum supported her spellings skills and her dad supported her maths skills. 569 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anya's dad is really skilful with computer programmes so he can help her plan her work and keep track of finances as she grows up. 218 - Anya's mum is someone who can guide her because she knows what Anya needs to and warns her not to fool around because then 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If Anya experiencing difficulty with her homework at secondary school, she will initially try to complete it independently but she can ask her mum and dad to help her with English or maths problems. 661 	

			Anya won't achieve good grades. 229		
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JOE'S STORY SKELETON

Personal Learning- maths vs English	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place/ Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joe is best at maths and worst at literacy, although he is still "pretty decent at it". 136 - Jos finds literacy trickier because it involves writing and checking his work under a time limitation. 142 - Joe wants his literacy skills (GPS) to be perfect, they are good but not perfect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joe outlined that his friends found all part of the 11+ hard, particularly the maths 683 - Joe thinks it was different for the girls because they found the English part harder while the boys found the maths part harder 686 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 11+ test is made of maths and English papers 650 - Even though Joe describes himself as being 10 times better at maths compared to English, he found the English section of the 11+ easier than the maths. 633 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joe finds the overall concepts in Math easy to understand. 55 - Joe's maths levels are a lot better than his English levels. 118 - It is important for Joe to work on his English, he is put into ability sets for English at his current school 133 - This year Joe wants to work on his literacy skills (GPS) 193 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joe would like to develop in the subject of English. 119 - When Joe is in Year 11, he wants all of his school subjects to be equally as strong - Joe said that is he is not sure why but he would also like a good grade at English (837) 	School

MAX'S STORY SKELETON

Personal Personal qualities	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place/ Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Max does not identify as a typical girl, in the sense that she does not like to gossip. She likes to be open with people regarding her opinions. 355 - If stresses Max out if she is not honest and straight forward with people, she feels it is important to talk to others directly in order to resolve issues. 374 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Max likes to be upfront and honest with her friends if e.g. they are annoying her. She would rather ask them directly to be less annoying rather than talk about it to someone else. 367 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Max loves sports, especially football and supports Barcelona. 162 - Max is a girl who is allowed to play in the boys' football team. She is the only girl in the team. 176 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Max aspires to be lawyer because she is good arguments, can make worldly point and she is not aggressive or shy. 531 	

Appendix 8: YP's narratives

Ali's story

Personal

Interests

Ali has a passion for sport, PE is one of his favourite lessons in school. He enjoys playing rounders because he can hit the ball really far and loves it when people cheer him on. Ali is a keen Arsenal supporter and on his weekends, he likes to watch football and play football in the park with his friends. Hypothetically, if Ali was on a quiz show, he would answer questions on sports.

Learning

Ability grouping

Ali is on the top table in school for maths and it is one of his favourite lessons. Ali thinks streaming is good idea and in the future, he is of the opinion that there should be more opportunities for certain pupils to be taught higher level work to improve their learning. One of Ali's best friends called Sammy joined his school in Year 3. When he arrived, Sammy was placed on the lowest table however the teacher quickly realised how clever Sammy was and he moved to the top table next to Ali. That top table then allowed Ali and Sammy to become firm friends who supported each other with their learning throughout the school day.

Peer support

Friends are really important to Ali, he has fun with them at school and at weekends and if he is ever unsure about anything he knows he can turn to friend to ask. Ali learns best when he is with his friends. If he is experiencing difficulty in class, his friends can use humour to help explain what the question is asking. Bert, Artie and Sammy are Ali's best friends and they all help him in different ways.

Sammy has helped Ali with his learning since Year 3 and in Year 5 they both volunteered to do additional writing practise together during break and lunch times. Artie has been Ali's best friend since Year 2 and if Ali is ever worried about anything, Artie always comforts him. Artie and Ali hang out at the weekends and recently they went to the woods near Ali's house where there is an abandoned building. Artie felt scared about going but Ali comforted him and made Artie feel better, like Artie does for Ali at school. Ali describes Bert as a mini teacher who is very kind. Bert spends time in school helping Ali understand learning concepts, if he is not sure. Bert was particularly supportive around the 11+ time, he would help Ali with his learning especially maths concepts. Ali would sit next to Bert in class and he helped Ali with pi and algebra and lots of other concepts that Ali finds tricky. When Ali gets to secondary, he plans to revise for his exams with his friends

Ali believes that one way to help every child succeed at school could be asking clever pupils to stand at the front of the class and help teach like "mini teachers". There could be "mini teacher" features table that others could visit to improve their learning by alternative methods being demonstrated in order to complete tasks. Ali also thinks it would be beneficial if pupils spent less time reviewing basic concepts and had more opportunities to revisit and revise higher level work.

If Ali felt nervous about transitioning to secondary school, he would visit older students in Year 9 or 10 and ask for their advice because they were Year 7 pupils once and got through it.

Learning skills views

Ali learns best in the classroom with his friend and using equipment to support the concepts e.g. cubes. Ali does not consider himself a strong reader, he finds it difficult particularly when he is asked to do verbal comprehension. He finds the inference questioning challenging because it not clear whether his answers are right or wrong. Since attending school, Ali's favourite teacher has been Ms Lilly. He describes her as kind and generous who can make learning easy with her good sense of humour, which he appreciates. Ali does not mind strict teachers in school because he views them as individuals who are just trying their best to help you to learn. However, Ali does think it is important that YP have relaxing time to help their learning. Ms Lilly used to provide Ali and his class with 'brain time', which supported his learning. 'Brain time' consisted of 15 minutes per day where Ali and his class would play with sports equipment to help them calm down and transition to the next lesson of learning.

Adult invigilators

Ali is used to adults in school helping him with his learning however the adults in the 11+ did not, which Ali found strange. Ali found the adults invigilating the test quite scary because they kept walking and looking around the test hall with their serious faces. Ali felt like there were adults everywhere he looked. He found it intimidating when they came up to his desk to see what he was doing. There was one teacher who was pretty much right next to Ali's table almost the whole time. He found that really distracting especially when the reading section was challenging him.

Schools

Current school-

Ali has attended the same primary school since nursery. Ali's strong subject in school is Maths, he is good at it and can complete work quickly. He also finds History really intriguing particularly around the attack of Parliament. Currently Ali would like to learn more about science in school because he aspires to be a doctor.

Ali has many friends in school, who he has fun with but also, they help him academically. Sammy was one of Ali's best friend who recently left the school to move back to India, Ali misses him but they have promised to keep in contact via Skype. Ali is looking forward to the upcoming Year 6 production (Wind in the Willows) where he has a speaking role.

Secondary school

Ali is not worried about moving to secondary because other than size he thinks it will be similar to primary school. He simply views it as a place with more teachers teaching a wider range of subjects which in turn will make him smarter. Ali is also viewing it as an opportunity to make more friends. Ali can understand that some people might get nervous about secondary transition because Year 7s could be bullied because they are the freshmen of the school.

Grammar schools

Ultimately, Ali believes it does not really matter which type of high school YP go to because at the end of it pretty much everyone goes to college or university. Some YP might get accepted into grammar schools that possess cleverer teachers with larger IQs but that does not necessarily mean that those YP are any smarter than those YP who did not gain a place at a grammar school. Furthermore, by the time everyone has grown up, everyone is just as smart as each other.

11+ itself

Preparation

Ali sat the 11+ test in Year 6 and began additional tutor classes when he was in Year 4. Ali's mum wanted him to practise and revise for the 11+ test in advance. Ali continued attending tuition classes for two years because his mum wanted him to pass the test. At tuition classes, Ali would do reading tests each week and maths worksheets, which he enjoyed. He found the classes helped him explain more things. Ali went to tuition classes with his sisters and brothers but it took ages to get there. He did not like going to the classes because they took up a large portion of his weekend. Ali recently stopped attending the tuition classes.

Exam

Ali first heard about the 11+ when he was in Year 3 from his best friend Sammy. Ali describes Sammy as really smart and he told Ali he had already started attending revision classes to get into a grammar school. When Ali heard about the 11+ from Sammy, he did not tell his family about it at first.

Ali sat the 11+ test at the grammar school, which is just up the road from his primary school. On the day, Ali arrived feeling nervous and scared but his mum wished him good luck and gave him a kiss. Alongside Ali's feelings of nervousness, he also had fun seeing his friends and having a chat with them. He also enjoyed going to the toilet because all the boys would huddle up and have a chat, which helped to ease his nerves. In the test hall, Ali spotted some of his friends who he waved at, however they responded by giving him a stern look. During the test, Ali did feel panicked at times. The pupils were asked to bring a set of equipment, Ali was worried and frustrated at himself that he forgot to bring a pen. After he finished the 11+ test, Ali saw the boy who lives next door. They wished each other good luck and hoped they got into the grammar school.

(Concept of time) Ali ran out of time on the 11+ test. He did not realise the reading test was made of two parts and pupils were only given 45 minutes. The time aspect made the reading test particularly difficult. The first part of the reading sections involved a story with 15 questions and then the second part had 15 questions. Ali completed the first part and thought he had finished however he then realised that there was another part and he tried hurrying up but then ran out of time. He found the adults walking around the room particularly intimidating when he was rushing to finish the reading test.

Results

When Ali's parents heard he did not pass the 11+, they reassured him it was okay. They reminded him that he is clever and when he does other tests in future they are sure he will

achieve good grades so it doesn't really matter. Ali and his mum had been waiting for one month for the 11+ test results to come through the post however Ali's friend told him that he actually gets the results via email. Ali and his mum then checked her email and it said he had been accepted into his second-choice school. Ali's mum appealed that decision because she did not want him to attend that school. She felt it was not a good enough school, it was very far from their home and there is a better high school nearer their home.

Ali only knows one person who gained a place a grammar school, his name is Bert and he is really smart. Bert got into every school he applied for, even grammar schools in Kent. Not passing the 11+ meant that Ali could go to the same secondary school as most of his friends. Even Ali's best friend Sammy who Ali considers to be really smart did not pass. Apparently, Sammy didn't feel too bad about not passing because he has now moved back to India. Generally, Ali's friends don't care that they aren't attending grammar school in September. Everyone is happy with the secondary school they are transitioning to, especially Woodhouse High because famous footballers visit that school.

Advice

In Ali's opinion, there should be more support given to YP sitting the 11+. He believes smarter pupils in the class should have access to an additional teacher who comes into weekly and teaches higher level concepts that might come up in the 11+. It would be even more beneficial if a separate English and maths teacher came into schools and provided Year 7 or 8 level work to Year 6 pupils alongside frequent 11+ practice.

Ali also advises that YP taking the 11+ should not get their hopes up because you cannot predict what is going to happen. Ali used the example of his friend Sammy who is really clever and everyone thought he would get accepted but he didn't gain a place at a grammar school.

Future

Transition

This year Ali hopes to achieve good SATs results. He found the SATs quite nerve racking, but not as scary as the 11+. Ali was pleased the SATs reading test was short and easy to get through. The maths test was straightforward and one of Ali's strengths. Ali is looking forward to his upcoming summer holidays, where he is visiting family in Morocco and can spend time relaxing. Ali likes the TV in Morocco but he does not like that there isn't any internet.

Many of Ali's friends are attending the same secondary school as him and he has heard good and bad things about the school. He has been told that the teachers are strict at his secondary school but that does not bother him. Ali is really excited about Biology lessons at his new school and that his parents are buying him a mobile phone because he is independently travelling to school. Ali is planning on walking to school with a friend who lives nearby, it will take them 43 minutes and they plan to meet at 7am. Ali hopes by the end of Year 7 or 8, he is getting good grades at school so he can impress his mum and she buys him gifts for the summer holidays.

When Ali is completing GCSEs in five years' time, his older brothers and sister can help him revise and complete his school work because they have been through it before him. As Ali aspires to become a doctor when he older, in Year 9 he plans to pick science, maths and English as his GCSE choices.

University

Ali plans on going on to university, he has heard Swansea and Cambridge are good universities but Oxford is the best. He has seen those universities answer questions on University Challenge. Ali's older brother is planning his move to university very soon, he is likely to attend Brighton University but he has other offers as well. His brother is planning on going to university with friends and to study Biology so Ali thinks he can probably help him with his secondary level science work.

Working

Ali expects that when he is studying for his GCSEs and A-levels he will have a part time job as well. Ali knows people like his teacher and brother who have been working since they were 15 years old. Ali thinks his part time job could be in McDonalds like his brother, he would like to be behind the till beeping items. Ali's brother also receives additional funding to attend college and Ali hopes he will benefit from that when he is old enough. Due to university tuition fees being really expensive, Ali plans on working alongside his medical studies when he is at university.

When Ali is a much older person, he imagines himself retired playing lots of golf. To be a good golfer, Ali hopes his future children could help him. He expects his child will be better than him because they will be younger and fitter so can help Ali's golf game.

Anya's story

Personal

Moving to a new country

Anya fairly recently moved to London from Hong Kong; she joined the UK education system when she was in Year 5. The majority of Anya's earlier schooling was under the Chinese education system, which she found to be much harder compared to UK schooling. In Hong Kong, Anya attended two primary schools, one was Chinese where there were several languages spoken and the second primary school was slightly less strict and more similar to her current UK primary school. Anya misses the school friends she left behind in Hong Kong but she is really looking forward to visiting them when she returns to Hong Kong for her summer holidays. Anya describes her move to her current primary school and London as hard because when she joined in Year 5 when everybody was already in their established friendship groups.

Other than schooling, London is different to Hong Kong because there is less space in Hong Kong and everyone lives in flats, not houses. Anya found that living in flats was really convenient because there was a supermarket in the same building.

Interests

Anya has had a passion for reading since she was very young. When Anya imagines herself to be adult, she sees herself spending a lot of time reading. If Anya was ever on a quiz show, she would answer questions about books or authors because she adores books.

Anya has read all the books on her bookshelf and is looking forward to reading even more. She has recently finished all seven Harry Potter books, which she loved. She particularly liked the final three books because battles occurred. Her favourite character in the Harry Potter books is the heroine, Hermione. The character of Hermione resonates with Anya because she always listens in class and likes reading books. Anya often fantasies about what life would be like if she had a wand like Harry Potter. She can recite many Harry Potter spells that would help her in real life e.g. "Accio" is the summoning spell.

Family

Anya's mum and dad are two people who help her achieve goals, which might contribute towards her being successful one day. Anya's dad is really skillful with computer programmes so he can help her plan her work and keep track of finances as she grows up. Her mum is someone who can guide her because she knows what Anya needs to do and warns her not to fool around because then Anya won't achieve good grades. If Anya experiences difficulty with her homework at secondary school, she will initially try to complete it independently but she can ask her mum and dad to help her with English or maths problems.

Learning

Anya's favourite lesson in school is English because she enjoys writing stories and she also likes maths. In Anya's opinion, a good teacher is able to help YP learn through interactive games rather than sitting down and doing tests. She learns in school alongside her friends when the teacher is using demonstration and modelling techniques. Anya also finds it useful

when teachers use the smart board to demonstrate the learning task. Anya believes that to support every child to succeed in school that learning should be made fun. In her experience, kids don't enjoy boring learning tasks like copying from the board. If learning could be related to gaming that would work in Anya's opinion.

The World

Anya believes it is very important to learn about the world around you. It is important to her because you have to understand the world in order to help the world, for example if YP aspire to be doctors or scientists they need to have deep knowledge about the world.

11+ itself

Anya first heard about the 11+ when she was in Year 5. Anya was worried when she initially heard about the 11+ because she thought the questions might be too hard for her abilities and she wouldn't be able to do them. However, the 11+ experience was actually fine for her and questions she was unsure about she guessed, which she felt okay about. Anya recalls that the 11+ involves spelling and comprehension, she found the comprehension part easy because she really loves books and storytelling. Anya did a lot of practise papers and revision in preparation for the 11+ test, which she did not enjoy because it meant she had less time to play.

11+ prep

When Anya was revising for the 11+ test at home, her mum supported her spellings skills and her dad supported her maths skills. Anya's mum and dad made her feel better about her 11+ experience because they reassured her that it doesn't matter what secondary school she secured because she tried her very best and that is what counts.

11+ results

Anya's mum informed her of her 11+ results when she got home from school. The following day, girls in Anya's class were talking about their 11+ results and future secondary schools. There is a group of friends in Anya's class who she thinks all belong to the same religion and they all passed the 11+ and were really excited about transitioning to a grammar school in September. Anya felt okay about not passing the 11+ test because she beat her cousin's scores. She was also pleased because her mum and dad reassured her that although she did not pass, she still achieved good scores and worked hard.

Future

Secondary transition

When Anya reaches secondary school, she imagines herself studying hard and completing all the homework that is set by teachers. She plans to walk to and from her new secondary school in September, there are quite a few pupils from her current primary school transitioning to the same secondary school.

Anya is not too worried about starting secondary school because she is currently at her third primary school. However, she is feeling slightly nervous about the homework and level of difficulty. She is also feeling excited at the same time because she is looking forward to settling into the new surroundings, getting to know her new class and making friends.

University & beyond

Anya certainly plans on attending university when she is older, where she is considering completing a degree related to computers. If she decides to do a computer related degree, she expects her dad will help her because he is very skillful with computers. When Anya leaves university, she hopes to gain a good job that earns a sufficient amount of money, she is not sure what that specific job is yet. In order to achieve her future goals Anya ensures she listens and works hard in lessons. As well as her academic and professional aspirations, Anya hopes that she will also be a kind adult in the future.

Joe's story

Personal

Moving to London

Joe used to live in Birmingham, he moved to London and his current junior school two years ago when he was in Year 4. Joe's previous school in Birmingham was smaller than his current school and it did not have ability sets. Initially Joe was not keen to move to London because he had never moved to a new house before and he was worried he might feel lonely. When Joe first started at his current school in London, meeting all the new people highlighted how much he missed his old best friend in Birmingham. However, he made some new friends quickly and actually found the move to London alright in the end. Joe is not too worried about starting a new secondary school because he already experienced moving school.

Family

Joe's sister is someone in his life who helps him. Joe's sister was the person who told his parents he must sit the 11+ test. She did not sit the 11+ test because the family still lived in Birmingham at that time. Joe describes his sister as knowledgeable and she helped him a lot with his 11+ practice. She helped Joe work through the 11+ practice books and taught him methods to help him solve maths problems quicker because she knew that they would be time consuming questions. Joe believes older siblings are a valuable source of support to help pass the 11+ test.

School

Joe's current school

Joe's is currently in Year 6 at a junior school that starts at Year 3 and has three classes per year. Joe's favourite lesson at school is maths. Joe likes all the teachers in his school equally because if any pupil experiences difficulty, they are all willingly to help. Joe believes that in order to achieve good grades, he needs to practise his study books just like his sister does. He also believes that all pupils need support to try their best and complete their work.

Joe's views on grammar schools

In Joe's opinion, grammar schools are schools that accelerate pupil's education. Joe believes that you only get one chance to attend a grammar school and people should take that opportunity regardless of which secondary school your primary school friends are transitioning to. He thinks you can always keep in touch with your friends.

Learning

Ability grouping

At Joe's current school, pupils are organised into ability sets for maths and English. Joe believes this works well as it means pupils can work at their own pace. Joe says he expects that he will put into ability sets when he transitions to secondary school this coming September.

Learning skills views

Although Joe feels he is able at literacy, he believes he is ten times better at maths in comparison. He finds literacy trickier in school because it involves writing and checking your work, usually under a time limitation. Joe finds maths concepts easier to understand and his maths levels in school are a lot better than his English levels.

This year, Joe wants to work on his literacy skills in order to help them develop from being good to perfect. When Joe is in Year 11 he hopes to have developed in the subject of English and that all of his school subjects are equally as strong as his maths. He would really like a good grade at English GCSE.

The 11+ test is made up of maths and English papers. Joe was left surprised when he found the English section of the 11+ test easier than the maths. All of Joe's male friends found all parts of the 11+ test hard, particularly the maths section. However, Joe thinks it is different for girls because they found the English section harder and the maths sections easier.

11+ itself

Joe was first told about the 11+ test in August 2016 during the summer holidays between Year 5 and 6. This only left him with one month to prepare for the 11+ test. Once he heard about the 11+ test and what it was, he went from feeling calm to feeling pressured. At the time, Joe did not feel happy about taking the 11+ test because he did not have much time to practice for it. He hopes that in the future for other important exams like his GCSEs he has ample to prepare and revise, unlike his 11+ experience.

11+ prep

Joe's parents arranged for a maths tutor and English tutor one month before the 11+ test date. Joe believes his English tutor really helped and improved his English skills. In particular, his English tutor helped him with reading, which makes up a large part of the English section in the 11+ test. His English tutor advised him to read around the text because it would find the answers in there and to remain calm. However, the work Joe covered with his math's tutor did not appear in the 11+ test. When Joe discovered that the work he covered with his maths tutor did not appear, he thought he would probably fail because his revision and previous learning would not work. Joe believes that if other children wish to pass the 11+ test, they should get tutors.

Exam

On the day of the test, Joe felt really nervous beforehand. However, his nerves eased once he got into the test room and saw the large volume of young people sitting the test, he thought to himself that that he couldn't be dumbest person there. He recognized some YP from his school. Once Joe started on the test, he remembered thinking that he might fail

because the maths section was difficult. Joe then became nervous again because he realised he was concentrating and worrying about the timings of the test rather than the actual test items.

Joe only found out about the 11+ test one month before the test day and he would have wanted more time to practise. Joe also believes that if the actual 11+ test was not timed he would have probably finished and passed. The main problem Joe found with the 11+ test was finishing in time. Due to timing, Joe had to rush the end of 11+ test because he found out he had five minutes to finish 15 questions. Joe managed to finish all the questions in the English section, but not the maths section. Timing was a worry for Joe throughout that day, he now feels he concentrated too much on timing rather than the actual test. In the future, Joe believes there should be focused support given to young people regarding timing in exams because managing his time was Joe's main problem in his 11+ experience.

Results

One week after sitting the 11+ test, Joe received his results. Joe's best friend, Dev also sat the 11+ test and did not gain a place at a grammar school.

Future

School transition

Next week Joe is going for an Induction day at his new secondary school, he is transitioning to a local all-boys high school in September. His new school is near his house and he plans to walk to school. Joe explained he is not overly worried about transitioning to his new school because he already has experience of moving school. Although Joe does have concerns about the size of school and that he might be one of the shortest pupils there.

Joe thinks around 20 boys from his junior school are transitioning to the same secondary school including his best friend Dev. Although Dev is attending a separate Induction day than Joe so he unfortunately thinks it is likely that Dev will not be in the same form as him. However, Joe feels he will most probably make some new friends at secondary school.

Joe is looking forward to science lessons at his secondary school because it will involve doing experiments in science labs. Joe is looking forward to expanding his learning into new subjects such as science, geography and sociology. Joe plans to start studying for his GCSEs when he is in Year 9 in order to give himself a lot of time to revise, unlike his 11+ experience.

University & beyond

Since Joe was five years old he has enjoyed inventing things, he currently likes origami. When he is older, Joe wants to become an engineer because it is a scientific and inventive profession. To become an engineer, Joe plans to go to university and complete a maths degree. Currently Joe would like to develop his knowledge around trigonometry to help him reach university and study maths. Joe anticipates that once he reaches the age of 40, his engineering skills and brain capacity might start to deteriorate so he would like to also do a simpler job such as a taxi driver on the side.

Max's story

Personal

Moving countries. Moving schools.

Max moved to the UK (London) from India when she in Year 3, she returns to India during the summer holidays to visit family. Prior to Year 3, Max attended school in India where corporal punishment still occurs. Max found moving to the UK from India a hard change.

Max is currently attending her second primary school in the UK, her previous school was an all-girls primary in a neighboring borough where she attended from Year 3 to Year 5. In Year 5 she joined Willow Primary, which was not a hard change, rather a shocking change because she found a large difference moving from an all-girls school to a mixed school. In her experience in all-girls schools, the pupils are more disciplined because they behave in the expected way and do not talk. On her first day in Willow Primary, Max said to herself "Oh god where am I" because the pupils were naughty; they were shouting and standing up in class. Although Max was initially shocked when she joined Willow Primary due to the unfamiliar environment and expectations, she eventually got into it, got to know people and then settled in.

When Max went to school in India, girls are expected to "decent", for example, they are not allowed to talk back to the teacher or wear nail varnish. At times, Max found it challenging not talking back to the teacher because she likes to get her point across. She got into trouble when she did that in India. Max also received a lot of homework (three hours per night per subject), she thinks that Year 2 pupils in India get more homework than high school pupils in the UK.

Max still has family in India including cousins who are similar ages to her. Max is no longer looking forward to visiting family in India because her favourite cousin who she has lots of fun with is off at boarding school. The UK school holidays do not align with Indian school holidays, which Max finds upsetting. When Max and her dad go to India together, he lets her drive a car over there in the space behind her house. Max likes sitting there and getting familiar with how the car operates, she pushes the accelerator and zooms but doesn't use gears yet.

Interests

Outside of school, Max enjoys Bharatanatyam dancing with her family, which is a South Indian dance. She loves dancing at parties to music. She enjoys ICT and on her weekends completes edX courses online, which university level people do. edX is an ethical hacking course, which teaches users via videos. It was developed by Harvard University. After teaching, Max is set problems to solve, which she finds very interesting.

Personal qualities

Max does not identify as a typical girl, in the sense that she does not like to gossip. She likes to be open with people regarding her opinions. It stresses Max out if she is not honest and straight forward with people, she feels it is important to talk to others directly in order to resolve issues. For example, if friends are annoying her she would rather ask them directly to be less annoying rather than talk about it to someone else. Max also loves sports,

especially football and she supports Barcelona. Max is the only girl who plays in the boys' football team at school.

Max aspires to be lawyer because she is good in arguments, can make worldly points and she is not aggressive or shy.

Family

Max is the eldest child in her family and extended family, her cousins who are of similar age live in India. She has one younger brother who is five years old. Max's dad worries about her a lot, he is protective of her and does not let her out on her own. He plans to drop her at secondary school every day.

Max's parents are supportive and helped her around the 11+ time. They have her best interests at heart and guide Max in the right direction. Max's dad was supportive around the 11+ preparation by building her confidence and reassuring her that it was okay if she didn't pass because she tried her best. Max's dad encouraged her for trying and her mum helped her focus and study and she guided her on what she had to learn.

School

Current school

When Max compares her current school to her school in India, she is doing less work. Currently her favourite lessons are PE, ICT and maths. Max particularly finds problem solving questions in maths interesting but she doesn't feel she is really good at them. Max is looking forward to the upcoming Leavers' Assembly and the residential next week where she will be camping, rock climbing and shooting rifles.

(SATs and relief from testing) After the 11+, Max spent the remainder of Year 6 practising for SATs. Similar to her Mum's approach in the 11+ prep the class spent the first few weeks having fun, revising the basics and getting settled in. The work then became intense and doubled up, Max's PE lessons were even cut out and if anyone made a sound in the classroom they were sent out.

Once the SATs and 11+ were over, Max felt free. Max feels relieved that she doesn't have to study anymore. Other than writing, everything is now fun in Year 6 and Max can take it easy.

Learning

Max feels learning is hard. Unlike many of her friends, she tends to look at the bigger picture and thinks about what they might be learning next. For Max, she learns best via repetition and relating learning to her own life, for example, she generates better ideas for story writing if it is grounded in her own experiences. Max has experienced two good teachers in her schooling who have really helped her learning. One is her current teacher, Mr Wood, who is funny and kind. He isn't a strict teacher who insists on constantly working, he will bring humour and fun into his teaching. He also breaks learning into manageable chunks. Ms Door is the other teacher who used similar approaches to Mr Wood but she was more practical. She would ask the class to do focused work for 40 minutes then she would give 10-minute learning breaks when the class would play kinaesthetic games, which worked for Max by keeping learning interesting.

How the world works

It is important for Max that she learns about how the world works because she is transitioning to high school in September and she imagines that lots of new experiences will occur during those years and beyond. At high school, she expects that she will meet a broad range of people who will all bring their own different personalities. So, learning about how the world works will help Max to think of sensible ways of dealing with problems and help her make decisions while she is growing up.

Future

Beyond

(Adulthood and maturity) Max hopes to mature quickly into adulthood. She hopes to be an open and transparent person as she grows up. Max wants to be a financially independent adult who makes her own mature decisions. She believes a balance between focusing on your goals and being sociable is important.

Secondary transition

Max feels sad that primary school is coming to an end because primary school is a happy place where you can play. She is planning on having fun for the remainder of Year 6 because it is her final months in primary school.

Max is feeling apprehensive about moving to “big” school because she is moving from being the oldest in primary to the youngest in secondary school but at least her best friend is transitioning to the same secondary school. She hopes to make a good start in Year 7 by making lots of new friends and not being a loner. However, at the same time she feels worried because secondary schools are full of drama, studying, homework and lots of tests, which is going to be hard. Max expects that her parents will be supportive when she reaches high school. However, as the work becomes more complex, her mum might struggle to support her. Her dad will try to help too or redirect Max back to her mum.

Max has no experience of UK secondary schools so really doesn't know what to expect in the next five years or so.

Beyond

A safe future for Max means she can do what she wants. She is aware that plans and goals she sets now will impact her long-term future. Max plans to start working towards her future by earning money from as a young age and studying hard in order to build foundations for the future. The focus for Max is first securing her future by working really hard and putting studying first and then once she feels in a safe place she can do more socialising like “normal people do”.

If she secures her future early enough, it means she doesn't need to worry as she grows older. Max wishes to earn good money when she is older because she loves shopping. Max plans to put the hard work in when she is in her 20s, then once she is in her 30s she can be a “free bird” settled into her future who can do what she wants e.g. if she wishes to one day go on 24-hour shopping spree that will only be possible if she has safe future where she earns good money. Max's current ambition is to be a lawyer. Part of her plan in the short-

term is to learn about what a lawyer is in order to build up to her longer-term plan of studying law and becoming a lawyer. Focusing on studying means she can secure qualifications for her future. Max wishes to be independent from her parents when she is older, she does not want to rely on them financially, rather she would like to be in a position to give them money so they don't have to work.

If she knew she could definitely not fail in the future, she would relax and not put extra work in.

11+ itself

11+ preparation

Max first heard about the 11+ at the end of Year 4 when she lived in another London borough. A girl in Max's apartment block told Max's mum about the 11+ and Max told the girl "oh god, why did you tell her about the test?". Max was initially not happy or keen about doing the test because she knew nothing about it but then reassured herself that she will be fine.

Max's mum initially eased her into preparing for the 11+ test, she wasn't "work, work, work, work". They started preparing by first starting with the basics and building upon them and having regular breaks, which felt calm to Max. Then when Max was halfway through Year 5, her mum said she must study the whole time to prepare for the 11+ test. Max's mum made her do practise books and bought her tests. She really stressed Max out but Max managed to rationalise that her just wanted her to pass. Max found doing the extra work at home was okay because she had previously gone to school in India, which is more demanding than UK schools. However, since starting school in the UK, she had got into the mindset of not doing much work. Max feels that being in the mind-set of not working as opposed to the Indian mind-set, impacted on her studying for the 11+ and she often thought to herself "why do I have to write so much?"

11+ exam

On the 11+ day, Max felt so nervous, she was literally shaking and couldn't speak at all. Max felt so nervous she sat by herself and thought to herself "Oh god". She was biting her nails and shaking but once it got to sitting down for the test, she began to feel calmer. The maths section came first, which did not require explanations for your answers. However, the English section involved a reading paper and spellings that Max found tricky and she got a bad score.

11+ results

A few of Max's friends who she describes as very clever and bright got into grammar school but other friends did not. The friends that did not gain a place didn't mind because they generally don't care about exams or tests. These friends tend to focus on learning as and when it comes up, they don't look ahead or worry about what is happening next.

Max was upset when she received her results because she tried her best and still did not pass. Maths was Max's strongest section and she achieved a good score however she feels she scored badly on the English section. Prior to receiving her results, she was already

worried that her English language skills would affect her scores. Overall, Max was 11 points away from the actual pass mark.

Max feels that generally she learnt English quickly from when she started living in the UK three years ago. However, she still struggles to understand components of the English language such as grammar e.g. verbs, adjectives etc. In the maths paper for the 11+, Max achieved a good score, however she feels her English score was bad. Max found the English language section a problem and she believes this is due to her not living in this country and not speaking the language for that long.

11+ advice

(Stress) Regarding the 11+, Max's advice to others would be avoid getting stressed before the test and don't overwork. Max believes that if you over study, it can lead to stress and thoughts becoming muddled so you won't be able to think straight before the test. In Max's experience her thoughts became muddled prior to the test. Thoughts racing through her head included "What if I don't pass?", "If I pass, it's going to be so fun", "What will it be like", "What is the test going to be?". Max found that despite working hard and prepping for the test, the stress can take over and have a greater impact. Max found that stress magnified unhelpful thoughts in her mind, which led to muddled thoughts and impacts on your test performance. Max found that becoming stressed can make you freeze.

During the 11+, Max noticed that the girl next to her was literally frozen. Max wondered to herself "Is this girl okay, what is doing?" however she didn't say anything due to fear of getting kicked out the test. Due to this girl freezing, Max noticed that the girl had many questions left at the end of the test.

More generally, Max's advice to other YP includes trying to take it easy before the test to reduce nerves. She suggests eating food as a calming strategy to help keep your mind off the 11+ test so when you come to it you're not worried. Ensure you eat a good breakfast the morning of the 11+ test and if possible while sitting the test, try to forget it is a test.

Max also thinks that alongside the 11+ try to have fun and play. It is important that you do what you enjoy most and not get carried away with it all.

Violet's story

School

Current school

Violet is currently in Year 6 and attends a mixed primary, she likes every teacher equally in her school because they all help her. Violet feels that she learns best by people demonstrating to her. Violet is looking forward to the celebration at the end of Year 6 where her class are performing in a leavers production. Violet's role in the production is a singer and she is singing different songs from Aladdin.

11+ itself

Exam

Violet first heard about the 11+ test in Year 3 and sat the test at the beginning of Year 6. Violet sat the 11+ test in the grammar school she hoped to attend. On the day of the test, Violet described that she felt nervous. Violet found the maths part of the test of maths fairly easy but the English part was much harder. The maths section involved multiple choice questions while English section involved long written answers. Many of Violet's friends also sat the 11+ test and they mostly found it difficult. Violet received her results online at the beginning of 2017.

Preparation

Violet first began practising for the 11+ test when she was in Year 3. She revised at home with her mum and attended additional tutor classes every Tuesday from when she was in Year 3. Violet found her teacher from her tutor class very helpful because she helped to explain problems and the appropriate methods to solve them.

Violet described that her mother was the most important person who helped her to practice for the 11+ test. Violet first heard about the 11+ from her mum because her older sister had sat the 11+ test a few years previously. Her mum bought 11+ revision books and she taught Violet how to answer 11+ test questions at home. She particularly helped Violet's reading and writing skills. Violet's mum teaches her via demonstration techniques and on the run up to the 11+ test, Violet practised every day at home with her mum. In the future when Violet is at high school, she imagines that her mum will help her with homework.

Future

Secondary transition

Violet feels scared about transitioning to her new secondary school in September. Currently, she thinks it is important to learn about her high school, particularly what students are expected to do in high school. Violet feels scared about transitioning to secondary school because there will be other pupils from different primary schools who she does not know.

Beyond

When Violet is 16 years old, she hopes that she will be leaving high school and going to college and then university. In the future, she is not sure what she specifically wants to learn about but her dream to be a scientist when she is adult. When Violet pictures scientists, Bunsen burners come to mind. In order to achieve her dream of becoming a scientist, Violet wants to achieve good GCSE results. In the long, long term future when Violet considers herself really old she pictures herself as a Granny with lots of people around her.

Appendix 9: UEL Ethics form
School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates

REVIEWER: Dr Kenneth Gannon

SUPERVISOR: Dr Mary Robinson

COURSE: Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Katherine Madden

TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY: What stories do young people tell about their experience of the selective education process?

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

APPROVED

Minor amendments required (for reviewer):

Major amendments required (for reviewer):

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER (for reviewer)

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	HIGH
<input type="checkbox"/>	MEDIUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LOW

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

Reviewer (Typed name to act as signature): Dr Kenneth Gannon

Date: 27/02/2017

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

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

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

Student's name *Katherine Madden*

Student number: u1529174

Date:

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

PLEASE NOTE:

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

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

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix 10: Overview and clustering of narratives' thematic stanzas

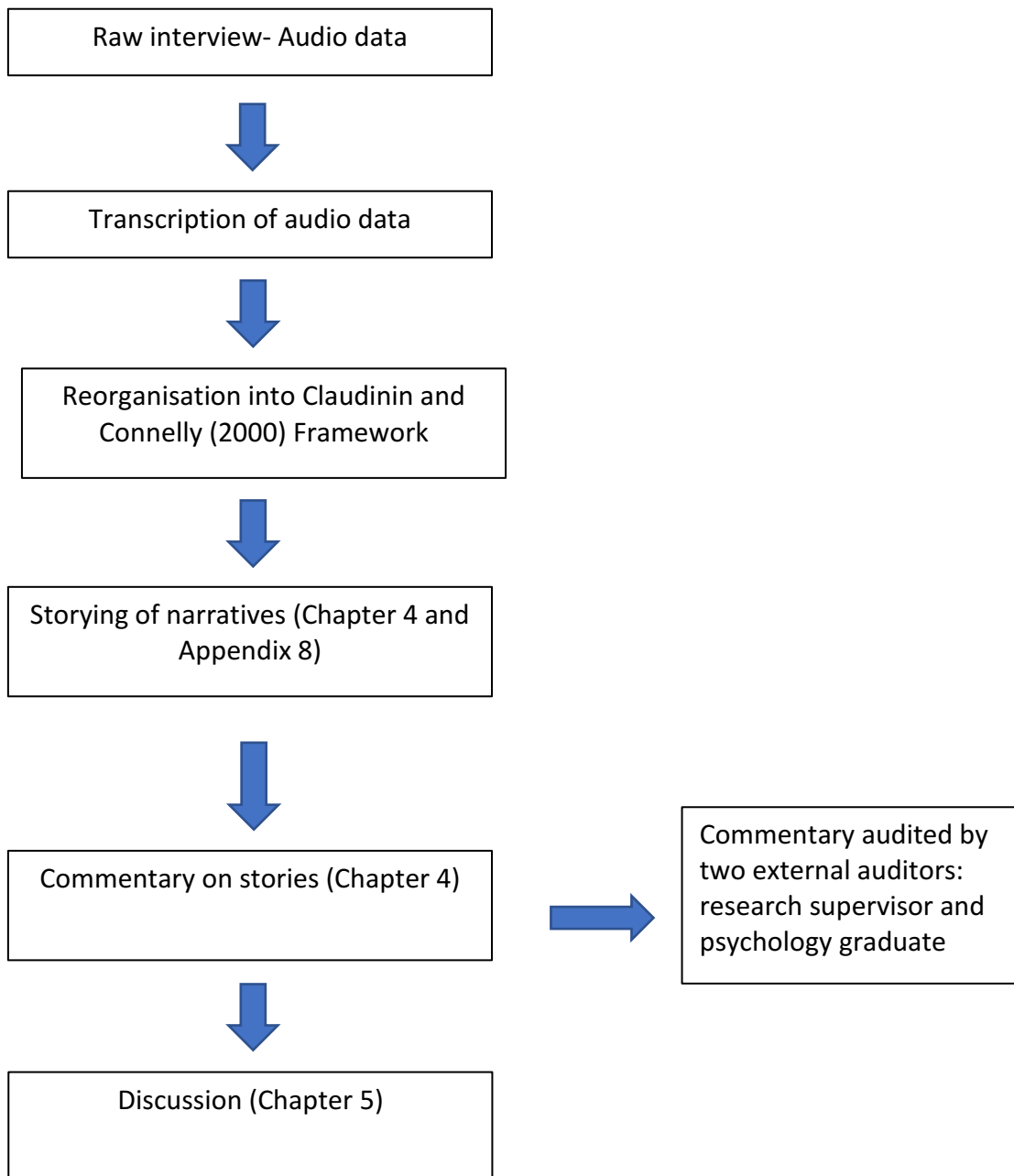
Table 1: Analysis of heading of the "thematic stanzas" that made up the six narratives

Joe	Violet	Leo	Ali	Anya	Max
Move to London *	Current school	Hobbies & home	Sport *	Move to new country	Moving countries, Moving schools
Current school	The 11+ test colour?	Current school	Current school	Anya's learning	Life in India
Ability grouping	Tutoring and revision	Views on learning	Ability grouping	The world	Current school
Maths vs English	At home with mum	Autonomous spirit	Learning skills	Reading passion *	SATS & testing relief
Being told about the 11+ *	Secondary transition	11+ day	Tutor classes	11+	Ethical hacking
Tutoring	The future	Friends *	11+ experience	11+ results	Max's learning
Family support and home life		Results	11+ timing	Mum and Dad	World works
What it was like sitting the 11+ test		Type & nature of support	Adult invigilators	Secondary school move	Personal qualities
Concept of time		View on grammars	Results	The future	Adulthood & maturity
Results		Secondary move	Peer support *		Secondary transition
View on grammars		Future	Type & nature of support		"Safe" future
Secondary transition		Health	View on grammar		Protective family
Long-term future		Adult invigilators	Future-secondary		11+ prep
			University		11+ day
			Part time job & retirement		11+ results
					11+ & EAL
					11+ advice & stress*

Appendix 11: Events and elements identified and colour coded

<u>Colour Key for themes</u>	
<u>Events</u>	<u>Keys</u>
Moving countries/ home/ school	1
Current school	2
Ability grouping	3
Learning skills views (maths vs Eng)	4
How the world works	5
11+ preparation (and tutoring)	6
Family support (and home life)	7
11+ exam (what is it like)	8
11+ exam (concept of time)	9
11+ Results	10
Grammar schools (views)	11
Secondary transition and secondary schools	12
Long-term future (university and working)	13
Peer support (and friends)	14
Personal qualities	15
11+ advice (views on type of nature of support)	16
Interests (and hobbies)	17
Adult invigilators	18

Appendix 12: Audit trail



Appendix 13: Reflective diary extracts

Ali:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?

Friends mainly (three names mentioned throughout), Ali tended to refer to himself in relation to his friends. Brief mentions of some of his family members and one teacher.

2. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur

Main events are around Ali's 11+ experience and his time in primary school. Ali frequently refers to his friends and how they support him/ how they spend time together. He has views on how children should be supported in school. Ali also spoke hypothetically about future events and he expects to be spending his time when he is older especially around university age, Ali's points of reference in these descriptions were his older siblings.

3. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?

This was a participant who presented as confident and mature. He had a lot to share and say but tended to steer in the direction of talking about himself in relation to his friends. He did not tend to share his innermost feelings and thoughts, just how his friends might have felt or thought. He was very friendly and I came from a position of mutual curiosity with this participant. He was a joy to talk to due to his nature and disposition.

4. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?

Although he was a delightful boy to interview, his speech was quite disorganised. He was very chatty and reported that he enjoyed the interview a lot however his conversation was quite difficult to follow in parts and this is evident in the raw transcript. I was quite wary because I felt he might be a participant who might try to distract the conversation from the interview schedule and talk about random subjects e.g. football.

5. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?

I felt this was a mature pupil, who appeared to enjoy the one to one attention and platform to share his thoughts and experiences. I was mindful to remember he is only 11 years old although he presented as older. It appeared that perhaps having older siblings made Ali aware about future plans and life around university. On reflection, emotionally he tended to not talk about his innermost thought and feelings and tended to use his friends as springboards to discuss topics. This participant came across as quite a pragmatic character.

6. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?

The participant reported that he really enjoyed the experience and it went really fast. He remained with me for part of his lunch to discuss his upcoming school production and plans for the weekend. He is a YP who appears to enjoy adult company and opportunities to talk!

7. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?

I am wary that his confidence and apparent maturity should not mask my interpretation that he is 11-year-old boy who did revise for many years for the 11+ and

did not pass. I should look beyond his outgoing and friendly personality during my interpretations.

Anya:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?

Anya, Harry Potter characters and her parents.

8. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur

Main events are around Anya's passion for reading and moving countries from Hong Kong to London. Anya also discussed her impending secondary school move.

9. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?

This was a participant who presented initially as shy but as the interview progressed she became more willing to open up and discuss her experiences. She was interesting because she had only recently moved to London from Hong Kong so I was intrigued about this move from an eastern culture to western culture.

10. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?

From a place of curiosity, particularly as she had only recently moved into this country. She referred to her passion of reading a lot and referenced this fantasy world in her speech and in relation to her experience. She gave the impression of a girl with a strong imagination. From reflecting on this transcript, I feel as a researcher I could have drawn more data from this participant had I pursued and given her more space to come up with more thoughts.

11. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?

She was an articulate and friendly participant who seemed comfortable in the interview. As she was one of the first participants I interviewed, I think I might have come from a wary position while interviewing and perhaps could have drawn out richer data if the interviewing technique was more advanced.

12. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?

I feel the participant felt quite happy at the end of the interview, she presented as engaged and willing.

13. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?

Perhaps that this participant has only lived in this country for a limited amount of time and so the weight and pressure of the 11+ might be less on her

Joe:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?

Joe, his sister, English tutor and friend Ibrahim

2. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur

Moving from Birmingham to London, starting new primary in London, hearing about the 11+ from sister, tutoring over one month (August), sitting the 11+ beginning of September, moving into Year 6. Looking ahead to future events- transition to secondary, GCSEs, university and future job.

3. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?

Very mindful about keeping the interview positive and not causing the participant any distress. I wonder if I could have asked more questions and perhaps been slightly less cautious towards him. This participant's parent was the only parent who contacted me to find out more about the interview and research project and his parent wished to me to call him afterwards to report how the interview went. I think it was in the back of my mind that although the parent had agreed to the interview, I had felt cross-examined by him and so took a position of caution towards this participant.

4. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?

From a place of curiosity however I remember at the time and now listening back after a period of time that I was very aware of reassuring the pupil and making them feel comfortable. I wonder if perhaps I over compensated in the interview and did not need to provide so much reassurance.

5. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?

I feel I displayed empathy and reassurance to the participant. The participant did enquire if there might be another opportunity to take the 11+ and I wanted to respond honestly with him but at the same time I was mindful about disappointing him. Intellectually he was very self-aware about his strengths and areas of development and he was very open and willing to share these with me. He was the only participant who asked me (the researcher) questions about my own experiences of secondary school transfer in order to learn more about the experience he was about to undertake. This was very interesting and showed skills of generalisability, understand others and being curious.

6. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?

Hopefully that someone had actively listened to him, I hope he felt reassured about his forth-coming transition to secondary school. I hope he felt positive about having time and space to reflect on the 11+ experience and look forward.

7. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?

Perhaps his proactive parent and the impact on my approach to interviewing. His timeline of finding out about the 11+, only one month ahead and perhaps the fact he was the only participant who asked me questions about my transition to secondary that displayed a high level of understanding others and proactive learning to apply to his own life.

Leo:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?

Leo and his mum (briefly). The general impression from Leo was that of as a single-minded boy with an independent spirit who generally prefers to work alone. This is reflected in his transcript where he does not mention other characters unless asked through direct questioning.

2. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur

Main events were around his plans/ ambitions for future, his preference to work independently and his interests/ hobbies. He struck me as boy who liked his own company. He also had a broader outlook on other aspects that can support his future e.g. being healthy and eating well.

3. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?

I was taken aback by this participant, he was the only one who researched and chose to sit the 11+ of his own accord. It was not introduced to him by an adult. On reflection, I hoped that I came from a nurturing and encouraging approach because I was impressed by his independent determination and ambitions for the future.

4. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?

From a place of encouragement, I wanted to let him know I was impressed by his drive and the plans he had for the future. He frequently referred to preferring working alone and without distraction; on reflection, I wonder if I could have explored this further with him because one can learn and develop deeper thinking by working in pairs and in groups. I was mindful that he appeared to benefit from gentle encouragement to be open. He came across as quite matter of fact.

5. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?

Intellectually this participant impressed me, he was ambitious and displayed a high level of initiative. He was quite firm in some of his opinions and I was mindful not to lead him in any way. Emotionally, I noted on reflection and reviewing the transcripts he did not frequently mention others. He is the main character in his story. In terms of grammar schools and the 11+, he appeared to have a broader vision of education compared to other participants, he could reason that in the long-term students are not necessarily at a disadvantage by not attending a grammar school. I wonder if this arose from Leo making his own decision about sitting the 11+ rather than his parents encouraging him to do it. Tutoring and revision were strong themes in many of the others' narratives, Leo did not have this- I am unsure if he is aware that many other children spend a lot of preparing and practising for the 11+.

I also noted with Leo that he had broader outlook on his life, not only considering different aspects of his future e.g. academically and well-being but also, he demonstrated attention to detail and knowledge of how the timeline might work. He knew and discussed what exact age he expects to have graduated from medical school. I felt this demonstrated a resourceful person who appears to plan ahead and do his research

6. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?

I think he might have left the interview feeling the same as he did when he arrived. He spoke frankly and appeared to have a detached perspective on the 11+ process and his learning.

7. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?

The fact that I was personally so impressed with the initiative he demonstrated in finding out about the 11+ and applying to do it independently. I might over emphasise this in the interpretations and highlight the difference in comparison to the other participants.

Max:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?

Max, her parents (mum did a lot of prep with her for the 11+), friends, cousin in India, two teachers.

2. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur

Main events included moving from India to the UK, Max discussed life in India and the comparisons/ difference to UK particularly around schooling. She spoke openly about her interests and hobbies. She was also transparent about her 11+ experience and the feelings that provoked.

3. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?

This was a participant who presented as confident and mature. She had a lot to share and her speech presented as chaotic in parts. From reflecting on the transcript, I consider her perhaps the most complex participant. This could be due to the fact that she was the most open participant regarding sharing her innermost feelings and thoughts. I sense conflict between her social and outgoing nature and the pressure to academically achieve. She conceptualised this in her "safe future" where she will work very hard from 16 and throughout her 20s so once she reaches her 30s she has a "safe" future secured and can enjoy the social activities she relishes.

4. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?

Max was a delightful girl to interview, she was very chatty and reported that she enjoyed the interview. However I was taken aback by her confident demeanour to begin with. She presented as very confident and articulate. She was very willing to provide long and in-depth responses to questions. However, I did gather that 11+ experience was difficult for her emotionally. It appears the 11+ highlighted the conflict and comparison between her current UK schooling and schooling in India. Max describes schooling in India and since moving to UK mixed-gender school, she had forgotten the Indian revision heavy way of working, which might have impacted on her 11+ performance. Max is also an EAL student who has learnt the English language in three years, I was mindful and sympathetic of this in terms of her 11+ results.

5. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?

I felt this was a mature pupil, who appeared to enjoy the one to one attention and platform to share her thoughts and experiences. From reflecting on the transcript and

analysing the data, I gathered a sense of feminist qualities from her, which I align with on a personal level. I wonder if I have positioned her in this light due to my personal views and recent cultural reading. Have I put this upon her because it is currently relevant in my own life?

6. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?
The participant reported that she really enjoyed the experience and it went really fast. She is an individual who appears to enjoy adult company and opportunities to talk!

7. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?
I am wary that her confidence and apparent maturity should not mask my interpretation. I should look beyond her outgoing and friendly personality during my interpretations.

Violet:

1. Who are the characters in this conversation?
Violet, her mum, her sister

2. What are the main events? Where/ When do they occur
Tutoring and revision at home for the 11+. Worries about transitioning to secondary.

3. As researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant?
Very mindful about keeping the interview positive and not causing the participant any distress. I wonder if I could have asked more questions and perhaps been slightly less cautious towards her. This was the most nervous and quiet participant (when transcribing the interview, it was difficult to hear her voice at points). I felt she was not prepared for the interview, so was surprised when I arrived at her school and took her out of her Art lesson. Personally, I was surprised how long she had been practising for the 11+ at home so I mindful that perhaps not gaining a place at grammar school might be a larger disappointment for her. It became evident to me that she wanted the interview to end so I was consciously very delicate/ reassuring and offered her opportunities to leave.

4. As researcher, how am I positioned during the conversation?
From a place of curiosity however I remember at the time and now listening back after a period of time that I was very aware of reassuring the pupil and making her feel comfortable. I was very mindful with this individual participant that she presented as a sensitive girl so tried my utmost to keep the conversation positive and quite light hearted.

5. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant?
I feel I displayed empathy and reassurance to the participant. This participant presently as the most nervous, additionally she was my first interview. Reflecting back, I wonder if my unconscious nerves or worries about the first interview impacted on the atmosphere of anxiety. She tended to respond to my questions in short phrases, not full sentences and responded "I don't know" frequently particularly in the second part of the interview. I felt she benefited from a structured interview approach and the use

of visuals, so she could focus on those on the table, rather than a 1-1 conversation with a stranger (me). I felt I was hyper vigilant to her nervous presentation so perhaps did not want to pressure her into provide comprehensive answers to questions.

6. How do I think the participant was feeling at the end of the interview?
Hopefully she felt reassured and understood the purpose of our interview. I reiterated this again at the end of the interview. We walked back to Violet's classroom together and engaged in further friendly conversation.

7. What assumptions may influence my interpretations?
The fact that this participant had over three years revising and practising for the 11+ and did not gain a place so it might have been a larger disappointment for her. She spoke about her mum frequently particularly in regard to all the work she did at home with her so I wondered how the family system processed Violet's 11+ results.

