An exploration of how autistic young people are positioned in their Person-centred Annual Review.

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Abstract

Young people with autism spectrum condition (ASC) are considered to be particularly vulnerable to poor transition outcomes. Historically, ASC has been conceptualised within a medical model which has resulted in a discourse of deficits surrounding the condition. Critics argue that such discourses have resulted in the lack of involvement of autistic young people in making key decisions which affect their lives. Person-centred Planning (PCP), with its roots in the social model of disability, is advocated as being a powerful tool which can empower young people to exercise greater personal agency and control over how key decisions are made. There is some evidence which demonstrates the efficacy of PCP approaches for this population. However, little is known about the complex social processes underlying Person-centred Annual Reviews (PCARs). The current research aimed to explore these underlying social processes through the use of Positioning Theory, which acted as both a conceptual model and theoretical framework. Participants included two transition-aged autistic young people, their families and three key members of school staff. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analysed using a Critical Discursive Psychology approach. Analysis revealed that PCARs have the potential to offer a social context in which new knowledge is co-constructed and where a climate of empowerment and enhanced personal agency can be engendered. However, adults' constructions of autism represent a possible barrier to the promotion of young people's voice, choice and control. Implications for EP practice at the individual, family and organisational level are discussed.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere else for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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List of abbreviations

PCP	Person-centred Planning
PCAR	Person-Centred Annual Review
CDP	Critical discursive psychology
PT	Positioning Theory
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
BPS	British Psychological Society
ECHp	Education, Health and Care plan
YP	Young people
CYP	Children and young people
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
ASC	Autism spectrum condition
DfE	Department for Education

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late grandfather, John O’Regan.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank the young people, their families and the members of school staff who acted as participants. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to step into your worlds. I hope this research makes some small difference to your lives. To my family, you have always believed in me which has helped me to believe in myself. To my wonderful partner, Clare – your calmness guided me through the more challenging times, and I will be eternally grateful for the warmth and understanding you unceasingly showed throughout this journey. Finally, I would like to thank my Director of Studies, Dr Mary Robinson, who always kept me in mind and whose enduring support made the completion of this piece of work possible.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

The following chapter offers an overview of the various contexts in which the current research was situated. It provides an introduction to the Person-centred Annual Review (PCAR) through an exploration of its historical and legislative origins. This is followed by a discussion of the cultural and historical contexts in which autism has been constructed, including a critical perspective on the dominant medical discourses surrounding the condition. A brief overview of the current research regarding outcomes for adults with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) and possible links to transition experiences is provided. A reflexive account is also presented to allow the reader to further situate this researcher's position within the research enterprise. Finally, a rationale for the current study is provided.

1.2 Person-centred Planning: Origins and applications

Person-centred Annual Reviews (PCARs) have their origins in the Person-centred Planning (PCP) approach originally developed in the USA and Canada in the late 1980s within the inclusion movement. PCP was intended as an effective way of putting the person with disabilities at the centre of the planning process (Murray & Sanderson, 2007). It originated from the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy approach, with its focus on the active involvement of all participants and its emphasis on developing solutions (Roller, 1998). The approach is rooted in positive psychology, and uses solution-oriented, strengths-based methodology to identify the strengths of the current reality and the skills and support necessary to realise an individual's desired future (Murray & Sanderson, 2007; Sanderson et al., 2013).

Effective PCP occurs when people listen carefully to what the focus person says and seek to understand the importance of this from their perspective (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2000). The process relies on the engagement of all professionals in a continuous cycle of listening and learning in order to focus on what is important to the focus person now and in the future. The fundamental aspect of the PCP approach is the focus individual's place at the centre, with the implicit assumption that they and those closest to them have the most knowledge about their own life (Roller, 1998; Sanderson, 2000). This shifts control towards the individual with a disability, as it is they who take the lead role in planning. The dynamic, visual nature of PCP approaches allows for this shift in control and the emergence of a powerful, truly collaborative plan (Sanderson, 2000).

1.3 The national context

The development of PCP approaches within North America has its roots in the inclusion movement which emerged in the late 1980s. Adopted in the U.K. in the 1990s, PCP quickly became widespread in health and social care for engaging individuals in planning for their futures (Sanderson, 2000). The rise of disability advocacy groups within the UK throughout the 1990s coincided with the ‘quality of life’ debate which saw a shift in values and attitudes within social care toward an emphasis on empowerment, personalisation/individualisation, and choice/control. This shift saw the embedding of PCP approaches within adult learning disability services and represented a marked change within its community of practice (Kilbane & McLean, 2008). The increase in the use of PCP approaches was further supported by changing policy contexts. The White Paper, Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disabilities (Department of Health, 2001) emphasised the duties on service providers to promote the rights, independence, choice and inclusion of service users. This document recommended the use of PCP approaches as a key tool in bringing meaningful change for people with disabilities (Routledge, Sanderson & Greig, 2002).

The use of PCP approaches within adult social care reflected rapid changes within practice, policy and service developments across the sector. The adoption of PCP processes within the U.K. also saw the emergence of outcomes-based research studies investigating the efficacy of the approach. However, research in this area has provided a mixed picture. Claes et al. (2010) conducted a literature review of the effectiveness of PCP processes, concluding that the approach is associated with positive, albeit moderate, improvements in outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities. The reviewers found that positive outcomes were seen primarily in the areas of community involvement/participation and social networks/relationships. In contrast, a study by Robertson et al. (2006) found that PCP processes had little to no impact on outcomes for adults with learning disabilities in the areas of relationships, employment, physical activity and emotional/behavioural needs. Of particular relevance to the current research, are the researchers' findings that individuals with an ASC are less likely to receive a Person-centred plan compared with other disability groups. Furthermore, the study also identified that plans for individuals with an ASC tended to be of lower quality in comparison to other groups. Indeed, it is this finding which has informed the development of the current research's rationale and purpose. Whilst outcomes-based research investigating the efficacy of PCP approaches have found limited evidence for its effectiveness, changes in policy and practice saw PCPs continued adoption across sectors.

Within the field of education, the adoption of PCP approaches was spurred on by the introduction of the Children and Families Act (2014), which placed a statutory obligation on educational practitioners to fully involve children and young people and their families in matters affecting them. The accompanying Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE], DoH, 2014) also strongly emphasised that practitioners focus on the unique strengths and needs of the child and makes explicit reference to the use of PCP approaches during the period around the transition to adulthood. Furthermore, advice and guidance by the Department of Health (DoH, 2010) recommended the use of PCP approaches in Annual Reviews, a statutory review process required for children with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCp). This advice has described the 'Person-Centred Annual Review' (PCAR) as distinct from previous approaches to planning, where the structure and techniques used would place the young person fully at the centre of their review.

1.4 The local context: Implementation of PCP approaches in schools

The current research was conducted within an Inner-London borough with a multi-ethnic demographic. According to statistics obtained from the Department for Education, young people within the locality achieve lower post-compulsory outcomes relative to the national average (DfE, 2018a). Statistics also indicate that there are a greater number of young people eligible for free-school meals compared with neighboring boroughs (DfE, 2018b). The development and implementation of PCP approaches is supported through continued training and guidance from the Local Authority's Educational Psychology Service (EPS). For children and young people with an EHCp, the PCP approach used within Annual Reviews is based on an adapted model developed by Helen Sanderson

Associates (Sanderson et al., 2006). An outline for the structure of PCARs used within schools in the local area has been provided in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1. Overview of the PCAR structure (based on Sanderson et al., 2006)

1. Who's here?	All attendees are introduced, ground-rules established, and an agenda outlined, including what can be expected from the review and its purpose
2. What do we appreciate about the young person?	Attendees are invited to share what they appreciate about the young person at the center of the review, including positive characteristics and strengths
3. What is important for the future?	The young person's aspirations and ideas about the future are captured
4. What is important to…and what is important for…?	All attendees identify what matters to the young person and what is important for them to have in order to achieve a fulfilling life
5. What's working?	Attendees discuss what progress has been made and what has contributed to that progress
6. What's not working?	Attendees discuss challenges, barriers and any unmet targets. Discussion moves toward how these can be overcome
7. What do we want the young person to achieve?	Attendees move toward generating outcomes which are meaningful and realistic for the young person
8. Action planning	A Person-centred action plan is developed based on the various areas discussed during the meeting
9. Conclusion	The PCAR concludes with a positive summary of what has been discussed and next steps, including who will do what and by when

1.5 The discursive construction of autism: The medical versus social model

ASC is typically described as a neurodevelopmental disorder which affects approximately 1% of the school-aged population in the UK and the rates of diagnosis are increasing (Baird et al., 2006; Baron-Cohen et al., 2009). Historically, it has been characterised by deficits in social communication, reciprocal social interaction, and restricted repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests (American

Psychological Association [APA], 2013). This conceptualisation of ASC has been underpinned by a medical model of disability which has been codified in diagnostic manuals such as the *DSM-5* and *ICD-10* (Kapp et al., 2013). This medical model approach has largely dominated the discourse surrounding ASC which has resulted in the condition being regarded as a neurological impairment or disorder, situated within the individual that is primarily treated by therapeutic interventions (Molloy and Vasil, 2002).

However, many commentators - including autism advocacy groups, autistic individuals, their families, and some researchers - have begun to challenge the medical model's characterisation of ASC and its associated discourse of deficits (Pellicano and Stears, 2011). These commentators argue that alternative perspectives have been largely absent from discussions concerning the condition which has resulted in the marginalisation of the voice of autistic individuals and their families. For example, Lawson (2008) highlights that 'concepts of normality' have shaped what autism is considered to be. He argues that autism should instead be reconceptualised as being a 'difference', best understood as one of the many aspects of diversity which exists in our society. Indeed, there is growing dissent amongst some researchers who question whether ASC constitutes an actual impairment as opposed to a neurological difference (Pellicano and Stears, 2011). Molloy and Vasil (2002) view the bio-medical model approach to ASC as being largely counter-productive, noting that once children are labelled, they tend to be defined by that label. Consequently, this labelling results in the loss of the individuality of the child and a limiting of adults' expectations of what that individual child can achieve. There is a shift therefore in the priorities of adults, away from a focus on the individual strengths and needs of the child, toward the addressing of the core deficits associated with their diagnosis. Molloy and Vasil (2002) argue that what is required is a reframing of the current medical conceptualisation of ASC; away from the usual concerns of diagnosis toward an examination of the social repercussions of representing children as having ASC. In doing so, issues of representation and power can be exposed and addressed. Here, language and discourse have a role to play in how ASC has been constructed.

Critics argue that the medical model represents the dominant discourse surrounding ASC which has influenced a particular construction of what it is and what we know about it. This construction of ASC has acquired a privileged status in Western cultures and has come to be accepted as being the most correct version. This has resulted in the devaluing of alternative constructions of ASC and the marginalisation of alternative discourses. The implications of this are that only those who are versed in the medical model and its language acquire the right to use its associated discourse. This has led to the suppression of the voice of autistic individuals and their families and a creation of power hierarchies (Bagatell, 2007; Milton, 2012; Begon & Billington, 2019). So how might autistic individuals resist this dominant discourse and reposition themselves to have greater personal agency and control? Matthews and Singh (2015) argue that new discourse leads to change. Furthermore, resistance to change is not the result of particular individuals or groups, but rather the lack of the new language needed for those individuals and groups to effectively engage in the new discourse which will lead to change.

The social model of disability represents a challenge to the medical model's view that disability is caused by physical entities which exist in the material world. Instead, it views disability as being an interpretation of physical differences by discourses invested by social and political power. This model asserts that while impairments and illnesses may exist in the material world, how they are classified, treated and interpreted is socially constructed (Molloy & Vasil, 2002). Advocates of the social model of disability have also sought to develop new practices and approaches which aim to address the disabling effects of society and associated power differentials. An example of this can be found in the application of PCP approaches to the Annual Review process i.e. the PCAR, which have their roots in this social model (Sanderson, 2000).

1.6 Transitions, autism and planning for adulthood

Young people with an ASC are particularly vulnerable to poor transition outcomes (Howlin, 2004). It has become increasingly recognised that the transition to adulthood for young people with an ASC is a critical period that has a profound impact on adult outcomes, life opportunities, and experiences for this vulnerable group. A poor transition for these young people may lead to a reduction in support and an increase in unmet needs, which may have significant and lasting effects for their educational attainment, employment prospects, and community integration into adulthood (Beresford et al., 2013; Wittermeyer et al., 2011; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009). Wittermeyer et al. (2011) provide results from a survey of over 900 stakeholders (including adults and young people with an ASC) around experiences of the transition process to adulthood. The survey found that many adults with an ASC reported leaving school feeling unprepared and unskilled to meet what was required of them as adults. Furthermore, those individuals surveyed also reported that the transition planning process was not sufficiently future-oriented and lacked adequate co-ordination across schools and services.

Indeed, there is a growing body of research which highlights that adults with an ASC experience poorer outcomes across a number of key domains such as employment, community integration, postsecondary educational enrollment, and independent living in comparison to their neurotypical (NT) peers. For example, Howlin (2000) conducted a literature review of a range of outcome studies of adults described as having Asperger's Syndrome (AS) or High Functioning Autism (HFA). This review found that only a minority of individuals, ranging from 7% to 50%, had attended a college or university setting. Chown and Beavan (2011) comment that while some individuals with an ASC may have the intellectual abilities to achieve in postsecondary education, many 'are, in effect, barred from such education by the barriers they face in accessing college or in coping with college life' (p. 11). In the area of employment, adults with an ASC experience high rates of unemployment and underemployment, change occupations often, have difficulties in adjusting to new workplace settings, earn less than their NT counterparts, and are generally far less likely to be successful at interview compared with their NT peers (Howlin, 2000; Müller et al., 2003; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004). A number of studies have also found that young adults with an ASC have few meaningful social relationships and experience high levels of social isolation upon leaving full-time education (Brugha et al, 2009; Reid, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2008).

Given that adults with an ASC may experience poor outcomes and the emerging evidence to suggest that such outcomes are in part linked to poor transition experiences, it is essential therefore that young people are provided with comprehensive support throughout this critical period. Hendricks and Wehman (2009) highlight that promoting positive transitions for young people with an ASC is crucial to maximising outcomes and quality of life for this population. Furthermore, a number of researchers have emphasised the importance of increasing young people's active participation throughout the transition planning process and that such participation may contribute to better overall transition experiences. For example, Wittermeyer et al. (2011) highlight that due to the heterogeneity of the autism spectrum, what constitutes a good outcome will vary significantly from one individual to the next. Consequently, supporting young people to be more active agents in the decision-making process may promote a greater understanding of their unique profile of strengths, areas of need, interests and future aspirations (Wehmeyer et al., 2007). The promotion of greater student engagement - through supporting young people to take the lead during planning meetings - may also lead to increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and feelings of ownership of their transition plans (Mason et al., 2002). The empowering of young people to be more active participants within transition planning meetings may also lead to increased academic performance and enrolment in postsecondary education (Chiang et al., 2012).

Given the research highlighting the vulnerability of transition-aged autistic young people, it was deemed that focusing the current research on this specific age-range was of particular importance.

1.7 Researcher's position

Given the qualitative nature of the current research, it was important that this researcher engaged in a process of critical reflexivity throughout the research process. This researcher acknowledged that their own values, assumptions, beliefs, and prior experiences shaped the research enterprise. It was important therefore that the position in relation to the research was explicated. The following section offers an overview of this researcher's position and the first person will be used to further take ownership of that position.

The current study was concerned with how young autistic people were positioned within their PCARs. It is therefore of particular importance that I situate myself as a researcher in relation to 'autism'. I view autism as representing a difference rather than a deficit. This view has been developed within my increasing awareness of the critical perspectives which have been applied to how autism has been constructed historically within Western cultures. The traditional, medicalised view of autism has come to represent the official or 'dominant' story of what it means to be autistic and according to its critics, has resulted in the marginalization and suppression of the autistic voice. My developing view of autism, as representing an alternative way of being in this world, has been influenced by critical theorists and researchers (e.g. Billington, 2012; Milton, 2012) and the writings of activists and advocates, including first person accounts by authors with the label of autism (e.g. Lawson, 2008; Williams, 2009; Jackson, 2002). My interest and motivation in researching Person-centred approaches for young autistic people therefore can be situated within this critical perspective.

PCP approaches have the potential to offer an alternative understanding of how young autistic people experience the world around them, shifting focus away from processes of pathologisation toward processes which aim to empower and emancipate. It is this potential to empower and promote personal agency which has also directed me to focus my research in this area and reflects my own values as both a researcher and psychological practitioner. The taking of PCP approaches as the topic of study aligns with my own core professional values of autonomy, beneficence and social justice; values which have been developed from my Doctoral training in Educational Psychology. Indeed, I hope that the current study will add to the body of research surrounding the PCAR process, and in doing so bring about meaningful change for young autistic people and their families as they transition into adulthood.

1.8 Rationale for the current research

As outlined above, recent legislative changes have placed a statutory obligation on educational professionals, including EPs, to fully involve children and young people and their families in the decision-making process. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE], DoH, 2014) emphasises the need for professionals to place a stronger focus on the active participation of children and young people and their families and recommends the use of PCP approaches in fulfilling this requirement. This includes the recommendation for the use of PCP approaches in Annual Reviews for transition-aged young people with an EHCp. Whilst there is clearly a legislative context for the conducting of research into the PCAR process for children and young people with SEN, there are currently few published peer-reviewed studies in this area. It is this legislative context and the general paucity of research in this area which have informed the conducting of the current study.

The decision to focus on the experiences of transition-aged young autistic people was based on an increasing body of research which suggests that this population are particularly vulnerable to poor transition outcomes. Furthermore, there is research evidence to suggest that poor adult outcomes for individuals with an ASC are linked to poor transition experiences. It has been recommended that best transition practice for this population should include an emphasis on pupil participation throughout the transition process, particularly within transition planning meetings. There is further suggestion within this body of research that increasing young autistic pupils' active participation in the transition planning process may produce better outcomes into adulthood. However, while research has highlighted the vulnerability of this group and emphasised the importance of increased pupil participation, there is a dearth of research which has sought to actively explore the PCAR process for young autistic people at the point of transition.

Situated within a cultural and historical context, it has also been highlighted that there exists a dominant medicalised discourse surrounding how autism has been constructed within Western society. Critics of this medical model have highlighted that current conceptualisations of ASC have resulted in the marginalization and suppression of alternative discourses. PCARs, with their roots in the social model of disability, represent a potential opportunity for these marginalised discourses to be heard, given the emphasis placed on promoting young people's voice, choice and control. PCARs also have the potential to empower young autistic people and increase their levels of agentic action and decision-making abilities; in essence, PCARs may have emancipatory effects.

It is against this legislative and research context which the current study has been conducted. Therefore, the current study sought to explore the social processes underlying PCARs for transition-aged young people with an ASC. The study took as its focus, the PCAR process itself and explored how young people were positioned within their review meeting. It was hoped that this active exploration would add to the research base and ultimately lead to better outcomes for this vulnerable group.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has offered an overview of the various contexts in which the current research was situated. It provided an introduction to the origins of PCARs and the national and local contexts in which they have been developed and implemented. A critical perspective concerning the dominant discourses surrounding ASC was provided and possible implications discussed. An overview of current research concerning outcomes and transitions for individuals with an ASC was also provided and the potential for PCARs to enhance young people's personal agency and control was considered. A reflexive account was also provided to situate this researcher's position in relation to the research.

Finally, the chapter concluded by outlining a rationale for the current study. The following chapter will provide an in-depth critical appraisal of the current literature surrounding PCP approaches for transition-aged autistic young people. This will then be followed by an exploration of the theoretical framework in which the current research was situated and conclude with a statement of the current research's aims.

Chapter 2. Systematic literature review

2.1 Chapter overview

The current chapter provides a critical review of the literature surrounding the topic under investigation. An in-depth account of the strategy utilised to conduct a systematic search of the literature is presented and detailed descriptions of the inclusion criteria applied in the selection of reports is also given. This is followed by critical evaluation of the reports selected for review and key findings relevant to the current research are highlighted. A synthesis of these key findings is presented and their contribution to our understanding of PCARs as complex social phenomena is outlined. This is followed by an introduction and justification for the theoretical framework used within the current study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a statement of the aims and research questions of the current study.

2.2 Systematic literature search

As highlighted in Chapter 1, PCARs have been developed from PCP approaches, which have also been applied in a range of sectors such as health, social care, and education across international contexts. Consequently, in order to carry out a comprehensive search of the extant evidence base relevant to the current research's main research question of how young autistic were positioned in their PCAR, this researcher first had to consider the scope of the literature search. The initial phase of this process involved the generating of key search terms, which were developed based on the rationale and aims of the current research. Consideration was given to the inclusion of specific PCP approaches, such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH), as key search terms but were omitted in the expectation that more general search terms would yield identical results. However, due to the wide number of PCP approaches used internationally, it is possible that such omissions may have resulted in relevant studies not being identified and included in this review.

The following search terms were deployed to explore the relevant areas of the literature: 'autism', 'ASD', 'Autism Spectrum Disorder', 'Person-centred', 'Person-centered', 'Person-centred planning', 'Person-centered planning', 'Person-centred reviews', 'Person-centered reviews', 'Person-centred transition', and 'Person-centered transition'.

Following an initial scoping of the available research, key inclusion criteria were developed to ensure any relevant studies were identified and included in the critical review. Firstly, studies which recruited young people with ASC and/or members of their support network as their primary participants were selected for critical review. Studies which recruited young people with ASC within a wider participant sample of young people with other SEND were also included. Identification of studies which recruited young people with ASC within a mixed sample was achieved based on the reporting of diagnostic status/type of SEND within the manuscript, or through confirmation by the study's authors. Studies which did not include young people with an ASC and/or members of their support network were excluded from the critical review. Whilst diagnostic status of young participants was not reported, an exception was made for Corrigan (2014) as the study was deemed to be highly relevant to the current research's rationale and aims. Secondly, studies which investigated the underlying processes within PCARs were also selected for inclusion in the critical review. This included studies which utilised researcher-generated data such as interviews, surveys etc. or naturalistic data sources, such as observations of PCARs. Therefore, studies which solely investigated outcomes or impact were excluded. Finally, the current research is focused on exploring the processes underlying PCARs for young people with ASC as they transition from an educational setting to adulthood. Consequently, research which investigated processes at this particular transition point were selected for critical review. Studies which investigated the process for child or older adult populations were excluded. A summary of the principle inclusion and exclusion criteria utilised in the selection of studies are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Summary of inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	**Exclusion**
Studies which recruited young people with ASC and/or members of their support network as their primary participants	Studies which did not include young people with an ASC and/or members of their support network

Studies which recruited young people with ASC within a wider participant sample of young people with other SEND	
Studies which investigated the underlying processes within PCARs	Studies which solely investigated outcomes or impact
Studies which investigated processes for young people transitioning to adulthood	Studies which investigated processes for child or older adult populations

A systematic literature search was conducted using EBSCO Host as a search engine. The following databases were utilised: Academic Search Complete; British Education Index; Child Development & Adolescent Studies; Education Research Complete; ERIC; PsychARTICLES; PsychINFO and Teacher Reference Center. Studies written in the English language and which appeared in peer-reviewed journal publications were included in the critical review. Details of the search terms used, refinements, and reference to inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in each search area, are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Summary of the systematic search using EBSCO Host

Search term	Refinements	No. of articles identified	Details of studies selected for critical review	Notes on inclusion and exclusion criteria
'person-centred planning' AND 'autism' OR 'asd' OR 'autism spectrum disorder'	none	21	Barnard-Dadds & Conn (2018)	Included: Investigated PCRs Included transition-aged young people with ASC and members of their support network as participants Focused on processes Excluded:

				Book reviews *Not carried out within educational settings*
‘person-centered planning’ AND ‘autism’ OR ‘asd’ OR ‘autism spectrum disorder’	none	66	Hagner, Kurtz, May & Cloutier (2014) Hagner, Kurtz, Cloutier, Arraelian, Brucker & May (2012) Whitney-Thomas, Shaw, Honey & Butterworth (1998)	Included: Investigated PCRs within wider PCP process Included transition-aged young people with ASC and members of their support network as participants within sample Focused on processes *Excluded:* *Did not include a review/meeting within investigation*
‘person-centred review’ AND ‘autism’ OR ‘asd’ OR ‘autism spectrum disorder’	none	none	No relevant studies	*Excluded:* *Did not include a review/meeting within investigation*
‘person-centered review’ AND ‘autism’ OR ‘asd’	none	1	No relevant studies	*Excluded:* *Not carried out within an educational setting*

OR 'autism spectrum disorder'				*Not focused on the application of PCP*
'person-centred' AND 'autism' OR 'asd' OR 'autism spectrum disorder'	none	104	Fayette & Bond (2018)	Included: Investigated PCRs within wider PCP process Included transition-aged young people with ASC and members of their support network *Excluded:* *Did not include a review/meeting within investigation*
'person-centered' AND 'autism' OR 'asd' OR 'autism spectrum disorder'	none	150	No relevant studies	*Excluded:* *Focused on younger children* *Did not include a review/meeting within investigation*
'person-centred planning'	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs) Young adulthood (18-29 yrs)	18	Corrigan (2014)	Included: Included transition-aged young people and members of their support network Investigated PCRs within wider PCP process *Excluded:* *Not focused on transitions*

‘person-centered planning’	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs) Young adulthood (18-29 yrs)	49	Hagner, Helm & Butterworth (1996)	Included: Included transition-aged young people with ASC and members of their support network
‘person-centred review’	none	188	Taylor-Brown (2012) White & Rae (2015)	Included: Included transition aged young people with ASC within wider sample of young people with SEND Investigated PCRs
‘person-centered review’	none	282	No new studies identified	
‘person centred transition’	none	40	No new studies identified	
‘person centered transition’	none	96	No new studies identified	*Excluded:* *No young people with ASC included in sample*

2.2.1 Studies deemed to have met the inclusion criteria

Following the systematic literature search outlined above, a total of 9 studies were selected for inclusion in the critical review. In addition to the use of *key term* searching via EBSCO host, other strategies were also utilised to identify relevant literature. This included a hand search of key journals and inspection of the citations used within previously identified articles. However, this process yielded no new studies which had not already been previously identified using *key term* searching. The details of the 9 studies selected for critical review are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Summary of research articles included for critical review

Authors(s)	Title	Year of publication	Country	No. of participants *& age ranges*
Hagner, Kurtz, Cloutier, Arraelian, Brucker & May	Outcomes of a Family-Centered Transition Process for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.	2012	United States of America	47 *16-19*
Hagner, Kurtz, May & Cloutier	Person-Centered Planning for Transition-Aged Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders.	2014	United States of America	292 *16-19*
Whitney-Thomas, Shaw, Honey & Butterworth	Building a future: A study of student participation in person-centered planning.	1998	United States of America	106 *18-21*
White & Rae	Person-centred reviews: an exploration of the views of students and their parents/carers.	2015	United Kingdom	16 *10-14*
Hagner, Helm & Butterworth	This is your meeting": a qualitative study of Person-Centered planning.	1996	United States of America	18 *14-21*
Taylor-Brown	How did young people identified as presenting with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties experience a person-centred transition review meeting?	2012	United Kingdom	3 *Approx. 13*
Corrigan	Person-centred planning 'in action': Exploring the use of person-centred planning in supporting young people's transition and reintegration to mainstream education.	2014	United Kingdom	6 *5-15*
Fayette & Bond	A qualitative study of specialist schools' processes of eliciting the views of young people with autism spectrum disorders in planning their transition to adulthood.	2018	United Kingdom	9 *Not reported*

Barnard-Dadds & Conn	Challenges of listening to an autistic pupil in a person-centred planning meeting.	2018	United Kingdom	4 *13*

2.3 Critical review of studies

In order to carry out a critical review of the literature in a coherent manner, articles were clustered using a narrative synthesis approach, as suggested by Popay et al. (1996). Narrative synthesis represents an approach to the systematic review and synthesis of findings across multiple studies that relies on the use of words and text to summarise the findings of the synthesis. Emergent themes within the findings of each study were identified and points of commonality and divergence were used to group articles together to form a coherent narrative. These emergent themes were derived from studies which explored PCRs from a within-in child perspective, studies which explored inner-metal states including attitudes and perceptions, to studies which explored the role of power, ethos and the role of language. In addition to this narrative synthesis approach, the guidelines developed by Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) provided a flexible framework in evaluating the quality of each study. Within these guidelines, Elliott, Fisher and Rennie (1999) outline seven criteria which are particularly relevant to ensuring quality within qualitative research. These are:

1. Situating the sample
2. Grounding in examples
3. Providing credibility checks
4. Coherence
5. Accomplishing general and specific research tasks
6. Resonating with the reader
7. Owning one's perspective

These criteria were referred to in critically evaluating each study included for review and aided the development of a series of questions which the current researcher utilised in the evaluation.

2.3.1 From within-child to interpersonal factors

Hagner et al. (2012) present research which investigated the efficacy of a multi-component intervention aimed at empowering young people with ASC and their families as they transitioned from education to adult life. The intervention consisted of three principle components including group training for family members, PCP meetings, and additional support aimed at career guidance and implementation of plans. The research was guided by two principle research questions. Firstly, the authors wished to explore how the *expectations* of young people and their families were affected by their involvement in the comprehensive, multi-component intervention. Secondly, the authors sought to explore how involvement in the intervention affected levels of *self-determination* amongst the young people. The research utilised a randomised control trial design, and included 47 young people with an ASC, aged between 16 and 19 years old. Family members were also recruited as participants. The researchers deployed a wait-list control group and data were collected pre- and post-intervention, utilising both survey and standardised outcome measures. Findings suggest that young people who received the multi-component intervention reported statistically significant increases in future expectations, decision-making abilities, and self-determination when compared to the wait-list control group. The researchers conclude that multi-component interventions - with a strong person-centred focus - have the potential to empower young people and their families to exercise greater levels of self-determination and self-advocacy. Furthermore, findings suggest that such interventions may have an overall positive effect on young people's transition to adult life.

This study by Hagner et al. (2012) provides a systematic and comprehensive exploration of the efficacy of a multi—component intervention, situated within a Person-centred planning approach. Whilst the authors do not explicitly state the theoretical underpinnings of the research, their focus on measuring changes in young people's levels of self-determination suggests that Self-Determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) acted as a guiding framework. Indeed, Self-Determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) maintains that enhancing particular attitudes and abilities, such as self-efficacy beliefs, decision-making, self-awareness, and vision-building can lead to more positive outcomes for individuals (Weymeyer & Schwartz, 1998). Such a theoretical framework may offer a powerful lens through which we may understand the various processes underlying PCP approaches. However, while this research utilised methods and procedures which were appropriate to the research purpose and aims, there are several apparent limitations. Firstly, the researchers comment that several of the young people received additional support in completing the outcome measures, such as the rephrasing of particular question items by adults. It is not made clear which adults offered this support and introduces the possibility that adults may have influenced the responses given by the young people. As such, a potential for bias is introduced and the reliability of the research results may be questioned. Secondly, the multi-component design makes it difficult to attribute any changes to the use of PCP approaches. For instance, the follow-up support and plan implementation aspects may have made a far greater contribution to any changes, compared with other components of the intervention. Consequently, the researchers' claims that PCP approaches have the potential to increase levels of self-determination and decision-making abilities should be treated with caution.

In a subsequent study, Hagner et al. (2014) recruited a different set of participants to explore the various accommodations and adaptations used to support transition-aged young people with ASC to contribute more meaningfully to their Person-centred planning meetings. The research addressed the extent to which PCP approaches could be used to develop transition goals with young people with ASC and their families. Further aims of study included identifying specific strategies which enhanced young people's levels of participation, and whether a relationship existed between young people's adaptive functioning and the strategies used. A mixed-methods design was utilised, and consisted of a qualitative analysis of narrative data and quantitative measures to assess levels of adaptive behaviour. In total, 47 transitioned-aged young people with a diagnosis of ASC were recruited as participants, across 28 school sites. Facilitator progress notes and meeting flip chart notes from each planning meeting formed the corpus of data for the qualitative analysis and was conducted using open-coding following the PCP meetings.

The researchers identify several adaptions and accommodations used across the planning meetings, including rapport building activities between the facilitator and young person, preparations with individual young people prior to each meeting, flexibility in how meetings were conducted, distance attendance, and support for young people to use alternative modes of communication such as electronic presentations. Furthermore, findings suggest that various accommodations and adaptions were used across meetings, regardless of the young person's level of adaptive functioning. The researchers' conclude that with suitable accommodations and adaptations, PCP approaches can be used to enhance young people's levels of participation during their transition planning meetings.

A major critique of this study lies in the researchers' claims that specific adaptions can increase levels of participation. Whilst the analysis of the qualitative data helped the researchers to identify the most frequently used accommodations and strategies, no data were collected which evaluated levels of student participation. As such, it is not possible to make meaningful links between the particular adaptions used and participation levels. This reviewer would have welcomed a more robust design, which utilised some measure of student participation pre- and post-meeting. Therefore, the claims that the various adaptions and accommodations outlined in the study lead to greater levels of participation may be considered spurious, and should be treated with caution.

Whilst the theoretical underpinnings of the research are not specified, we can infer that the researchers drew from cognitive level explanations of ASC, such as theory of mind, weak central coherence and executive dysfunction in their design. This inference is based on the study's emphasis in exploring possible accommodations and adaptions to support young people with ASC who may experience difficulties in these domains. As such, there is a suggestion that barriers for young people with ASC in being active participants at their PCRs may be attributed to difficulties with social communication, reciprocal interaction and information processing. However, PCP meetings are typically carried out with a number of others from the focus young person's support network. This may lead us to consider the possible effects group processes may have on young people's levels of participation.

Whitney-Thomas et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative investigation to understand the levels of participation amongst young people with a range of SEND, as they prepared to transition from school to adult life using a PCP process called Whole Life Planning. The study also aimed to explore the role which other people from the young person's support network play in the planning process, and what influence they may have on the focus young person's levels of participation. The researchers utilised an ethnographic approach and gathered data using observations of planning meetings. Open-ended interviews were also conducted with the various stakeholders. However, the researchers comment the conducting of interviews was to provide additional contextual information, and did not form part of the corpus of data in the final analysis. 10 transition-aged young people with various SEND including autism (N=2) were recruited as participants across four school communities. In addition to the young people, 98 adults from the young people's support network also acted as participants. The researchers carried out 34 observations of the various planning meetings. Data analysis was conducted using open-coding to develop themes and categories from the various behavioural observations.

The researchers identified four levels of student participation, ranging from active to absent. Whist four distinct levels of participation were identified between the young people, the researchers also noted that variations existed within each young person's level of participation during their review meeting. This prompted the researchers to consider what other factors increased or decreased level of participation from one person to another, or for a single young person within a single meeting. A range of within-child and environmental factors which supported or constrained participation were identified, including young people's conversational style, the size of meetings, and the level of abstraction within the meetings content. Regarding the latter, the researchers suggest that the level of abstraction is a specific feature of transition meetings given their future-oriented focus, which can present additional challenges to young people's participation. This may be in contrast to other types of review, where the focus may be on present issues and thus be more accessible. The researchers also identified a range of behaviours exhibited by others, which they suggest had a significant effect on levels of student participation. Certain behaviours, such as speaking directly to the young person, verifying understanding and meaning, and maintaining a positive tone increased levels of participation. In contrast, behaviours such as the use of technical and patronising language and referring to the young person in the third person reduced levels of participation.

Findings from this study indicate that a range of internal and external factors can affect levels of participation, and there is further indication that group processes may play a pivotal role in shaping young peoples' ability to be active participants. The researchers conclude that PCP meetings may be conceptualised as being a highly dynamic and interpersonal process. This research offers a comprehensive and systematic account of PCR processes, and the researchers stated aims of increasing understanding of the various supports and constraints on young people's participation could be said to have been accomplished. The researchers utilise a number of credibility checks, such as the use of multiple analysts which enhances the overall trustworthiness of this research. A critique of this study however, is the omission of the interviews from the corpus of data, which was not subject to any form of interrogative analysis. This reviewer would have welcomed such inclusion as it may have added an additional dimension to the study's use of behavioural observations as its primary data source. A related critique is the omission of any examples from the researchers behavioural observation within the manuscript itself. Such an inclusion would have offered greater depth of understanding to how the researchers developed their behavioural categories. Whilst such methodological limitations affect the overall trustworthiness of the research, it can still be concluded that the study makes a contribution to our understanding of the various processes underlying PCP meetings.

2.3.1.1 Summary

The studies conducted by Hagner et. al. (2012) and Hagner et al. (2014) explored the extent to which young people with ASC can participate in their PCRs, and considered various adaptations and accommodations which would allow them to be more active agents in the process. These studies focused their enquiry at the individual child level, and utilised cognitive or self-determination perspectives to consider how the format and structure of PCRs may serve to support or limit young people's active participation. Findings from these studies suggest that with suitable adaptations, levels of participation may increase. However, the focus on the individual as the main object of enquiry within these studies presumes that PCRs are underpinned by a static process; where its format and structure give rise to a controlled ecology. The findings presented within the study conducted by Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) suggest that PCARs are underpinned by complex social processes, where the behaviours of others within a young person's support network may influence the extent to which they can actively participate. Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) applied a behaviourist perspective to consider how the behaviours of others may impact on young people's levels of participation. However, while this study can be said to have made a contribution to our understanding of PCRs as being a dynamic and interpersonal process, such reductionist accounts are limited in their explanatory powers, given that they tell us little about how such behaviours come to be manifest. This compels us to consider the role which attitudes and perceptions may play in shaping the behaviours of the various stakeholders involved within the process.

2.3.2 Attitudes, perceptions and role conflict

White and Rae (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study which aimed to explore the perceptions of 16 young people with a range of SEND including ASC (N=4), and their parents regarding their PCRs. The study included young people at various points of transition aged between 10-11 years and 13-14 years. A principle focus by the researchers was to capture the views of young people and their parents on the process and consider the extent to which participants felt listened to. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews from both young people and their parents following their PCRs and analysed thematically. A secondary focus was placed on exploring the extent to which the process affected young participant's Locus of Control (LOC), motivation and feelings of positivity. This comprised the quantitative aspects of the mixed-methods research design. These were measured using scaling questions and a LOC scale, which were administered with young people before and after their PCRs. The researchers make explicit use of Self-Determination theory as a theoretical framework to guide their interpretations and support their understanding of the processes underlying PCRs.

Findings from the quantitative data indicated no meaningful changes occurred within young people's LOC or scale scores for feelings of control, positivity and motivation. As highlighted previously, Hagner et al. (2012) found significant increases within similar domains, which included a multi-component intervention situated within a wider PCP process. The researchers of this study conclude that the lack of change in scale scores may be attributed to the relatively short duration of the PCRs investigated and that a multi-component programme - such as the one explored by Hagner et al. (2012) - may have produced more significant changes within young people's self-determination and locus of control. Whilst no significant changes were found within the quantitative data, the thematic analysis revealed several superordinate themes. The findings indicate that participants viewed the process as being generally positive and offered a safe and containing space where information could be shared openly and honestly. The process was also viewed as being collaborative, where the perspectives of parents and children were valued equally. As such, findings suggest it was viewed as an empowering experience. Findings also indicate that participants viewed the process as being emotionally daunting and anxiety provoking, which the researchers note may have been the result of a lack of preparation prior to the meeting.

Whilst the general research tasks of developing a greater understanding of how the PCR process is perceived by young people and their families may be said to have been accomplished, there are several critiques which can be made of this study. A principle critique is in how the results of the thematic analysis are reported in the manuscript. The researchers appear to have amalgamated the views of the parents and young people when generating the superordinate themes. Therefore, it is not possible to consider the extent to which the views of the young participants may have differed or corresponded with those of their parents. This is further compounded by the omission within the manuscript of any examples of the interview data gathered from the young people themselves. Indeed, the examples which are provided in the manuscript are taken from the parent interview data only, and the narrative discussion which follows is mainly focused on the parental views. This reviewer would have welcomed more detailed reporting and discussion of the views of the young participants, considering this was the researchers' main aim. A related critique is the inclusion of children of differing ages as participants. Whilst this inclusion is based on the researchers' rationale that transitions represent challenges to children across the age range generally, the amalgamation of the data and lack of examples in the manuscript mean that it is not possible to consider how the views of younger children may have differed from older participants. Indeed, the researchers report that some of the younger children found it difficult to take part in the interviews, which introduces the possibility that the superordinate themes which were developed are not wholly representative.

Whilst this critical review identifies limitations within this study's methodology and interpretation, the findings do offer some useful insight into the views of children and their parents around the PCR process. However, as the findings by Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) suggest, PCRs are a dynamic, interpersonal process where all members of young person's support network may influence levels of participation. This compels us to consider how the views of professionals and others may also help inform our understanding of the various processes involved.

Hagner, Helm, and Butterworth (1996) carried out a qualitative exploration which aimed to describe the implementation of a PCP programme called Natural Supports. The researchers sought to develop a greater understanding of how the process was being implemented and the views of the various actors involved, including young people, their family members and the facilitators of the meetings. The study was conducted over a period of six months and six transition-aged young people with a range of SEN including ASC were recruited as participants. Meeting observations, analysis of documentation, and in-depth interviews with multiple stakeholders formed the corpus of data. This resulting data set was analysed using an emergent themes approach.

Findings from this study indicate that participants experienced varying levels of participation, with the researchers noting that some inequalities existed amongst specific members, including young people and members of their social network such as community friends. Findings also highlight that the process was perceived as being negative by some stakeholders, with professionals' and some parents' views being oriented toward negative comments. These findings lead the researchers to suggest that social networks may impact upon young people's aspirations. Findings also highlight that facilitators viewed the process as being complex and challenging, and varied in their abilities to ensure that the young person remained at the heart of the process. The researchers comment that facilitators experienced difficulties in moving from their position of professional to that of neutral facilitator which resulted in role conflict. According to the researchers, this difficulty in separating roles may have impacted facilitators' abilities to support the young peoples' decision-making powers. This finding is particularly interesting, given that the facilitators of the meetings were external to the organisation and had received previous training in implementing the programme.

This research provides a rich account of the views expressed by multiple-stakeholders within PCRs and as such, the general research task of developing a greater understanding of the process from multiple perspectives could be said to have been accomplished. The researchers make use of multiple data sources to form their data corpus, which adds to the depth of understanding presented within the manuscript. The researchers' use of multiple analysts to interrogate the data enhances the study's credibility. Whilst the theoretical framework is not explicitly stated, we can infer that a Humanistic perspective was taken, based on the emphasis placed on considering the potential impact various processes may have on the focus young person's levels of participation. A limitation of this study however, is the omission within the manuscript of examples of the views of the young people themselves and such inclusion would have added to the study's overall coherence and trustworthiness. Despite this limitation, this research adds to an emerging evidence base which suggests that PCRs are underpinned by complex, interactive social processes which may affect young people's ability to be active participants in making decisions about their future.

2.3.2.1 Summary

Findings from the above studies suggest that PCRs can be viewed both positively and negatively by the various stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the findings by Hagner, Helm and Butterworth (1996) suggest that the perceptions of various stakeholders may impact upon the levels of participation of the young people involved. Indeed, there is an indication that the format and structure of PCRs does not necessarily lead to enhanced levels of participation, which adds to the emerging view that they are influenced by complex, interactive social processes.

2.3.3 Power, ethos and the role of language

Taylor-Brown (2012) conducted a small scale, idiographic study which focused on developing an interpretative account of the experiences of three young people in Year 9 following their PCRs. The research was carried out within an educational setting for young people with the label of social, emotional, and behavioural needs. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilised to develop the interpretative accounts reported in the manuscript.

Findings suggest that the reviews were experienced positively by all three young people. The author's interpretation reveals that the PCR process may result in a reduction of power imbalances, which is facilitated by a climate of reciprocity amongst the various actors. This, the author suggests, allowed the boys to participate more meaningfully within their PCRs, as it reduced any power imbalances which may have been constructed in previous interactions outside the PCR setting. Findings also suggest that the process of emphasising a holistic, positive, and strengths-based view provided opportunities for the young people to hear alternative narratives from others. The author suggests that such ‘counter narratives’ allowed the young people to (re)construct or re-author their own stories, which may have been previously characterised by a discourse of deficits and difficulties. There is also a suggestion by the author that the person-centred value framework underpinning PCRs and associated processes, may disrupt wider school systems and practices which are situated within behaviourist principles. The author recommends that PCRs should not be isolated events. Rather, it is suggested that they should sit within a wider person-centred school ethos.

This research provides a rich, interpretative account of the experiences of three young people following their PCR and the author’s aims of developing a greater understanding of these lived-experiences could be said to have been accomplished. The author situates the research within a Social Cognitive framework, but also draws from narrative and personal construct psychology perspectives to develop the interpretations presented within the manuscript.

Indeed, this theoretical eclecticism supports the construction of a rich and detailed understanding of the young peoples’ meaning-making. This adds to the study’s overall trustworthiness. An external auditor is used to check the various interpretations developed, which enhances the overall credibility of the final reporting in the manuscript. A large number of examples of the young people’s interviews are provided, which illustrates clearly how the author’s interpretative accounts were developed. The quality of this paper is judged to be strong, and is considered by this reviewer to have made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the processes underlying PCRs.

Corrigan (2014) conducted a mix-methods, semi-longitudinal study which explored the use of PCP approaches in the transition and re-integration of 6 young people who had experienced exclusion from previous settings. The young people were aged between 5 and 15 years, and were recruited across six mainstream and two alternative provision settings. The study aimed to capture the views and experiences of all stakeholders as they engaged in the PCP process, and to also explore outcomes over time. An action research methodology was deployed and data were gathered across two time points; firstly after the initial PCP meeting, and then after the subsequent review meeting six to nineteen weeks later. Responses from open-ended questionnaires and the recording of outcomes following each meeting formed the data corpus. Thematic analysis was used to develop key themes relating to the views and perspectives of the various stakeholders.

Findings from the qualitative analysis suggest that targets developed within the initial meetings were at or exceeded expected levels at subsequent review. The author suggests that PCP processes have the potential to produce positive and meaningful outcomes for young people. Findings also indicate that the process was viewed positively by the various stakeholders. A key emergent theme was the empowering nature of the process. The child-focused, positive climate within the meetings was also perceived favourably by each participant. The highly visual format used within the meetings was also seen as being helpful. The author suggests that this visual format may serve to promote a greater interactive and discursive atmosphere within PCRs, which enhances young people's levels of participation. Based on the findings, the author concludes that PCP approaches may be more effective within schools with an existing Person-centred ethos and inclusive culture.

This research provides a useful contribution to the body of knowledge around the processes underlying PCRs, through an in-depth exploration of the views of multiple-stakeholders. Indeed, the principle finding that the process was viewed as empowering, engaging and positive corresponds with the findings identified by White and Rae (2015) reported previously. However, a critique of this study relates to the small number of young people included as participants compared with the number of adult participants. The number of adult participants was seven times that of the number of young people. It is possible therefore that the superordinate themes developed from the data are not wholly representative of the views of the young people. Similar to the critique made of White and Rae's (2015) study, the author amalgamates the data to generate superordinate themes from all of the stakeholder views. Consequently, it is not possible to identify points of commonality or divergence within the views expressed by the young people. Unlike the White and Rae (2015) study however, there are a number of examples from the young people's interview data included in the manuscript, which allows a reading of how the author's understanding was developed. Consequently, the trustworthiness of this study is considered to be maintained.

Fayette and Bond (2018) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the various practices and processes schools engaged in to enable young people with ASC to be more active participants in planning for their transition to adulthood. A case study design was adopted which aimed to explore how special schools elicited the views of young people with ASC as they prepared for their transition to adulthood. It also sought to explore whether such processes were viewed to be effective by members of staff. Two special schools were selected by the researcher based on an evaluation that each school demonstrated ‘good practice’ in eliciting the views of young people with an ASC. This initial evaluation stemmed from reports by four educational psychologists who had had prior experience in working within the settings selected. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an observation of a young person’s PCR formed the data corpus. A total of seven members of staff across two school sites were recruited as participants. Data were analysed thematically to generate superordinate themes.

Findings from this analysis reveal that across both schools, the enabling of young people to be more active agents in their transition to adulthood involves a highly embedded set of processes, which are underpinned by a Person-centred ethos. The researchers suggests that this embeddedness is not limited to discrete events such as a single meeting. Rather, it is spread across the entirety of each school’s practices. Findings also suggest that the Person-centred ethos within each school contributes to the development and implementation of a range of technologies aimed at promoting pupil voice and choice making abilities (e.g. photo elicitation, pupil input in staff recruitment, pupil visits to potential settings prior to transition). The participants’ perspectives also indicate that the person-centred processes used to elicit pupil views were deemed to be effective.

However, findings from the research highlight that while the processes were perceived to be effective, there was a marked divergence in the extent to which pupil views were used by each school to inform decisions within transitions meetings. The researchers comment that in one school, staff took on an ‘expert role’ in deciding future placements for young people. This, they suggest, may have been potentially influenced by school’s wish to address the expectations and anxieties of parents. In contrast, the researchers note that the other school included in the study took up a position of ‘advocate’. The researchers suggest that this position was situated within the belief that young people have the capacities to make meaningful contributions to the planning process.

Unfortunately, there is little commentary or further interpretation by the researchers regarding this disparity, nor is there an attempt to situate this particular finding within the extant research. However, the researcher does provide examples from the data and it is of interest to note the variations in participants' talk between each school. The school which adopts the 'expert role' highlights the various deficits associated with ASC generally. In contrast, the school which inhabits the 'advocacy' role highlights the importance of viewing young people holistically and identifying their individual strengths and needs. Whilst the theoretical orientations are not specified, the study's use of Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' model suggests that the research drew upon socio-cultural theories (e.g. Vygotsky) to inform the interpretations presented in the manuscript. Whilst a critique of this research is the lack of commentary around some of the key findings, this research is considered by this reviewer to have made a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge concerning the processes underlying PCRs. By shifting our focus beyond the immediate boundaries of the PCR as a discrete social event, findings from this research compels us to consider the role of school ethos and local culture.

Barnard-Dadds and Conn (2018) utilised a single-case study design to conduct a micro-analysis of participants' talk and interactional exchanges within a single PCR. The PCR was attended by a Year 9 young person with ASC, her parent and her teacher who also acted as the meeting's facilitator. The researchers aimed to explore the various processes underlying PCRs as a social phenomenon, and to consider how the voice of the focus young person was promoted by others. A transcript of the audio recording from the PCR formed the data corpus and was analyzed using Conversation Analysis.

Findings demonstrate that the level of participation of the young person was low and was characterised by an asymmetry in talk, where adults spoke considerably more than the young person. The researchers comment that this imbalance in talk was not uniform across the meeting, noting that the young person made more contributions at the start of the meeting. Based on the findings of the micro-analysis, the researchers suggest that this reduced pupil input over time is the result of a specific critical exchange between the facilitator and the young person. During this exchange, the young person communicates a future-oriented worry which is not acknowledged by the adults, who shift the conversation toward another topic. The researchers conclude that this exchange represented a pivotal turning point within the meeting, where the young person's responses dramatically reduced. The researchers suggest that the imbalance in talk may be attributed to difficulties with social communication and reciprocal interaction associated with the young person's ASC. There is further suggestion by the researchers that the imbalance in talk may reflect wider power imbalances within the relationship between the participants. The facilitator within the PCR was also the young person's teacher and the meeting took place within the young person's classroom. This leads the researchers to consider the possibility of a particular power dynamic being 'transported' from one social context to another, where previously established relationships such as 'teacher/learner', 'adult/child' etc. are (re)produced in a different social context with very different aims. This finding is situated by the researchers within the extant research around the transactional nature of ASC, which posits that difficulties associated with ASC are not solely attributed to the individual. Rather, the transactional view, which the researchers highlight, suggests that interpersonal interactions can be more or less supportive of communication, and that the actions of others is as crucial as those of the young person with ASC.

The study represents a systematic and comprehensive account of a single PCR through a micro-level analysis of participants' talk and interactions. The stated aims of the researchers to develop a richer understanding of PCRs as a social phenomenon could be said to have been accomplished. A critique of this study is the lack of specification regarding their theoretical orientations. Indeed, it appears the researchers drew from multiple theoretical perspectives in developing their interpretations. Whilst such eclecticism can produce a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation - as highlighted previously within Taylor-Brown's (2012) study - the researchers of this study appear to utilise theoretical frameworks which are not entirely compatible. That is, this study appears to utilise theoretical frameworks which are situated within very different philosophical traditions, underpinned by differing assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge. For instance, the finding that the imbalance in talk may be attributed to the young person's ASC seems to be located within a cognitive perspective, which draws upon more positivist assumptions. In contrast, the interpretation of subsequent findings seems to draw from a socio-cultural perspective. Indeed, it is not clear how the former is supported by the data and appears incongruent with the rich data-driven narrative which follows. This is unfortunate, as the application of theoretical frameworks with greater compatibility may have increased the overall coherence of the researchers' interpretations. That being said, the study provides multiple examples of the data within the manuscript, utilises several credibility checks, and specifies limitations regarding generalizability, all of which enhances the study's overall trustworthiness. Indeed, this reviewer considers this study to have made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the complex social process underlying PCRs for young people with ASC.

2.3.3.1 Summary

Findings from the study conducted by Taylor-Brown (2012) indicate that PCRs are perceived as being an empowering process and that the positioning of young people as active agents whose views are acknowledged and acted upon results in the reduction of power imbalances. However, Barnard-Dadd and Conn (2018) suggest that this shift in power may be contingent upon the various actors' awareness that such positions are possible or indeed that such power differentials exist. Indeed, the findings presented by Taylor-Brown (2012), Corrigan (2014) and Fayette & Bond (2018) have indicated that local cultures and school ethos may play a part in shaping the various interactions within PCRs; where various rights and responsibilities may be taken up by adults based on wider institutional practices and perceptions of the young person's choice making abilities. Findings from this cluster of studies have also highlighted the role which language may play in shaping the various interactions between actors within PCRs as dynamic social episodes. Corrigan (2014) suggests that the process underlying PCRs may produce a particular *'discursive climate'* which fosters particular types of interpersonal interactions. This in turn may result in a reduction of power imbalances, and enhance young people's agentic action. Taken collectively, findings from these four studies suggest that local culture, language and other forms of discursive practices have mediating effects upon the PCAR process.

2.4 Overview of the current literature: Toward a discursive perspective

PCP approaches are represented by a set of common core beliefs and values which include independence and rights; co-production, choice and control; and the creation of inclusive and competent communities. These core beliefs represent a *values framework* which underpins the format and structure of PCRs (Sanderson, 2012). As demonstrated through this critical review, a range of studies have sought to explore the various processes underlying PCRs, and utilised a wide array of theoretical frameworks in order to further our understanding of this phenomenon. Several studies (e.g. Hagner et. al, 2012; Hagner et al., 2014) have explored the extent to which young people with ASC can participate in their PCRs, and considered various adaptations and accommodations which would allow them to be more active agents in the process. These studies have focused their enquiry at the individual child level, and utilised cognitive or self-determination perspectives to consider how the format and structure of PCRs may serve to support or limit young people's active participation. There is perhaps a presumption by researchers, who are engaged at such an intra-psychic level, that the various deficits and difficulties associated with ASC represent the principle barrier to their engagement in the process. This focus on the individual as the main object of enquiry presumes that PCARs are underpinned by a static process; where it's format and structure give rise to a controlled ecology. It follows therefore, that changes to its format and structure may facilitate more active participation for young people with an ASC.

However, findings from several studies presented within this critical review (e.g. Whitney-Thomas et al., 1998; Hagner et al., 1996; Barnard-Dadds & Todd, 2018) suggest that PCRs are underpinned by complex social processes, where the behaviours of others within a young person's support network may influence the extent to which they can actively participate. Some of these studies have applied a behaviourist perspective to consider how the behaviours of others may impact on young people's levels of participation. Whilst these studies have made a contribution to our understanding of PCRs as being a dynamic and interpersonal process, such reductionist accounts are limited in their explanatory powers, given that they tell us little about how such behaviours come to be manifest.

There is emerging evidence which suggests that PCRs are viewed positively by various stakeholders and its child-centred, positively-oriented and strengths-based focus is something which is valued (e.g. White & Rae, 2015; Corrigan, 2014). Findings across studies also suggest it is perceived as being an empowering process and that the positioning of young people as active agents whose views are acknowledged and acted upon results in the reduction of power imbalances (e.g. Taylor-Brown, 2012). However, there is a suggestion from the emerging research that this shift in power may be contingent upon the various actors' awareness that such positions are possible or indeed that such power differentials exist. As the findings from the study conducted by Barnard-Dadds and Conn (2018) indicate, previously established power dynamics may be transported across situational contexts and potentially remain outside the various actors conscious awareness. Indeed, several studies have indicated that local cultures and school ethos may play a part in shaping the various interactions within PCRs; where various rights and responsibilities may be taken up by adults based on wider institutional practices and perceptions of the young person's choice-making abilities (e.g. Taylor-Brown, 2012; Corrigan, 2014; Fayette & Bond, 2018).

Findings from several studies have highlighted the role which language may play in shaping the various interactions between actors within PCRs as dynamic social episodes. Taylor-Brown (2012) for instance, presents findings which suggest that the values framework which underpins PCRs provides opportunities for young people to construct new narratives, and in doing so reposition themselves as having greater personal agency and control. It is possible that the construction of these new and possibly 'counter-narratives' is made possible through the introduction of new language by adults, as they orient themselves toward the various discursive resources made available within the PCR itself. Indeed, it is possible that the values framework underpinning PCRs gives rise to new discursive resources - a particular type of 'person-centred' talk - which the different actors within PCRs may orient themselves toward to varying degrees. Corrigan (2014) suggests that the processes underlying PCRs may produce a particular *'discursive climate'* which fosters particular types of interpersonal interactions. This in turn may result in a reduction of power imbalances and enhance young people's agentic action.

Taken collectively, there is emerging evidence within the literature which suggests that PCARs are underpinned by complex social interactive processes, mediated by local culture, language and other forms of discursive practices. However, the current critical review has identified a number of conceptual, theoretical and methodological limitations across studies, including disparities across findings. Such limitations have meant a coherent picture of the psychological processes underlying PCRs has failed to emerge. The eclectic range of theoretical and methodological approaches used across studies - and how they have conceptualised the PCR itself - has presented challenges in making meaningful comparisons. Indeed, much of the research presented within this critical review has focused on language at the descriptive level or considered language as a means of exploring inner mental states (beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, attributions, values etc.). In contrast, the current research took language itself as the object of enquiry, and considered the 'action-oriented' or 'function-oriented' nature of participants' discourses. Consequently, the current research was situated within a discursive psychology perspective and applied Positioning Theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) as a theoretical framework to explore the complex processes underlying PCARs as social phenomena.

The application of PCP approaches within educational settings is a relatively new phenomenon, and it's use reflects a wider shift toward the valuing of young people's voice, choice and control. Evidence presented within this critical review suggests that PCP approaches, when applied to Annual Review meetings, is viewed positively by all involved. There is further suggestion that it has the potential to empower young people with an ASC to be more active agents in shaping decisions which affect their lives as they transition to adulthood. However, our understanding of the complex social processes underlying PCRs is limited. Many of the studies presented within this critical review have included young people with ASC within a larger sample of young people with a wide range of SEND. Those studies which have focused solely on young people with ASC have tended to be small scale single case designs, or have demonstrated conceptual, theoretical or methodological limitations. Consequently there is a paucity of research in this area.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, research has suggested that poor outcomes (e.g. employment and levels of independence) for adults with ASC are connected with poor transition experiences. Furthermore, individuals with ASC are less likely to receive Person-centred plans. Those who do receive plans, may receive plans which are of lower quality compared to other disability groups. PCARs play a critical role in providing opportunities for young people with an ASC to have a say in making decisions which will affect their lives as they transition to adulthood. It was hoped that the current research would address the gap in the evidence base and in doing so, enrich our understanding of the complex processes within PCARs.

2.5 Positioning Theory as a theoretical framework

Positioning Theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) was utilised as a theoretical framework to develop an understanding of the complex social processes underlying PCARs as social phenomena. A core feature of Positioning Theory (PT) is the establishment and existence of local moral orders or systems. PT finds its roots within socio-cultural theories (e.g. Vygotsky), which espouse the view that there are particular rights and duties which direct social relations; and that such rights and duties are determined by the particular values, beliefs, norms etc. which exist within a given culture at a particular time. For instance, within the concept of a school as an educational institution, there are duties ascribed to members (pupils) to learn and for others to teach (teachers). It is this local moral order which dictates the various rights and duties which are made available for individuals to take on, resist, contest etc., and are in turn created by the shared beliefs within a local culture at a particular time and place (Harré, 2015).

Of interest to the discursive researcher therefore, is an investigation of local moral orders which may be changing, contested, weak, in abeyance and so on. As noted previously, the application of PCP approaches within educational settings is a relatively new phenomena and represents a wider shift toward the valuing of the rights of children and young people to be involved in making key decisions which affect their lives. This shift could be said to represent the creation of a new local moral order, which stands in contrast to previous moral systems in which adults ascribed to themselves particular rights and duties to make decisions on behalf of children with SEND. The focus of the current research therefore, lies in the (re)distribution of various rights and duties, and extent to which such a (re)distribution may be accepted, rejected, contested etc. by the various actors involved within PCARs as dynamic social episodes.

2.5.1 Positions and the Positioning triangle

According to PT, a '*position'* represents a cluster of rights and duties which individuals ascribe to themselves to perform certain types of social actions. An act of positioning is a discursive process. In taking up a position, individuals will draw upon and make use of a repertoire of speech acts and other forms of discourse made available to them within a particular social episode. The discursive resources available to an individual at any given time during the unfolding of a social episode may be supported or constrained by what has already been said by another person within an interaction. This conversational sequence represents a '*storyline*' which emerges from the interactions between social actors (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). PT asserts that any interaction can be framed within a mutually determining triad or 'positioning triangle' (see Fig. 2.1).

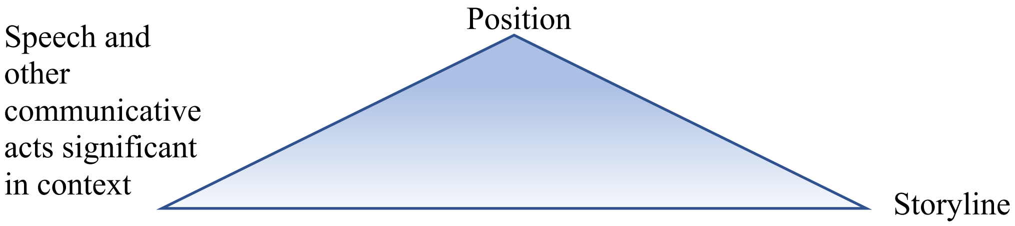

Fig. 2.1. The Positioning Triangle (based on Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 18)

Implicit within PT is the assumption that such acts of reflexive positioning results in the positioning of others. Positions therefore, can be conceptualized as binary alternatives, such as 'powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on' (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). As highlighted previously, there is emerging evidence from the literature that suggests PCARs are highly dynamic, interpersonal social phenomena, where interactions may influence levels of young people's participation. Viewed through the lens of PT, we may consider how the various actors involved within PCARs position themselves - through their talk and other discursive acts - to take on particular rights and duties to perform certain social actions. Such acts of reflexive positioning may also reveal various other positions which are made available to different actors to adopt, refute, strive for, be pushed into and so on.

2.6 Research aims

At present, little research has been conducted to investigate the complex social processes underlying PCARs for young people with an ASC, as they prepare for their transition to adulthood. Consequently, our understanding of the potential affect such processes may have upon young people's ability to be active participants in making decisions which affect their lives is limited. There is emerging evidence from the literature that PCARs can be an empowering process, which has the potential to enhance young people's personal agency and decision-making powers.

The aim of the current research was to explore the underlying processes within PCARs as social phenomena, and in doing so situated itself within Positioning Theory as an interpretive framework. The current research investigated how participants' talk is used to construct a particular version of a previous social event i.e. a PCAR. It was hoped that a fine-grained analysis of participants' talk would reveal the various discursive resources which participants draw upon to position themselves and others within PCARs; and in doing so, consider the effect such acts of reflexive positioning may have on young people's personal agency and control. It was also hoped the current research would add to our current conceptual, theoretical and practice-based understanding and in doing so, support young people to exercise greater choice and control. Consequently, the current research was considered to be both emancipatory and exploratory.

2.7 Research questions

To explore the various discursive resources and subject positions apparent in participants' talk, the following research questions were developed:

1. *How are autistic students positioned in their Person-centred Annual Reviews?*

This research question sought to explore how transition-aged autistic young people were positioned, both by themselves and others, within their PCAR. As highlighted previously, a position represents a cluster of rights and duties which individuals ascribe to themselves and others. It is based on the idea that not everyone in a social episode has equal rights and duties to perform certain kinds of meaningful actions (Harré & van Lagenhove, 1999). As such, this research question aimed to explore what positions were made available to young people to adopt or refute as a result of the PCAR process and the extent to which this may impact upon their agency, status and overall decision-making powers.

2. *How do participants talk about ASC and in what way does this feature in how young autistic people are positioned within their PCAR?*

This question aimed to explore the various ways participants talk about ASC and considered the effect this may have on how autistic young people are positioned in their PCARs. As highlighted in Chapter 1, there are dominant macro-level discourses surrounding ASC, which researchers and commentators have suggested result in the subjugation of autistic individuals. This *'deficits discourse',* according to these researchers and commentators, constitutes a particular version of ASC, and this research question attempted to explore the extent to which participants draw upon such discourses in their own discursive constructions.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a critical review of the literature surrounding the topic under investigation. An in-depth account of the strategy utilised to conduct a systematic search of the literature was presented and detailed descriptions of the inclusion criteria applied in the selection of reports was also given. This was followed by a critical evaluation of eight studies judged to be highly relevant to the current research. A synthesis of key findings was presented and their contribution to our current understanding of PCARs as complex social phenomena outlined. This was then followed by an introduction and justification for the theoretical framework used within the current study. Finally, this chapter concluded with a statement of the aims and research questions. The next chapter will provide an in-depth account of the current research's methodology including the ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives which have been taken up.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

The following chapter provides an in-depth account of the current research's methodology. An overview of this researcher's position in relation to the research design utilised will be presented, including the ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives which have been taken up. This will then be followed by a discussion of the rationale for the methods used in data collection and analysis. Next, justification for the strategies utilised in sampling will be provided, including a detailed account of the procedures used in the recruitment of participants. Finally, the chapter will close with a detailed overview of the ethical assessment carried out within the research, and the framework utilised to achieve quality and rigour in the current research's design and final reporting.

3.2 Positioning the researcher: Overview of research paradigm

The current research aimed to explore the processes underlying PCARs and how, through various discursive acts, participants positioned themselves and others. Ponterotto (2005) emphasises the importance for qualitative researchers to have a coherent understanding of the research paradigm which guides their enquiries, and how their philosophy of science relates to the chosen research design and methods. Mertens (2005) defines a research paradigm or world view as representing a means of looking at the world, constituted by particular philosophical assumptions that in turn give rise to and directs the thoughts and actions of people. Guba and Lincoln (2000) comment that there are four principle questions which define a research paradigm or world view. There is the ontological question which considers the nature of reality. There is the epistemological question which considers the nature of knowledge and how we come to know what we know. There is the methodological question which considers how the researcher goes about acquiring the knowledge they are seeking. Finally, there is the axiological question which considers the researcher's values, beliefs, intentions, hopes, etc. and the role these play in directing and shaping the research process. In order to achieve conceptual clarity, this researcher will address each of these questions, and in doing so construct a coherent research paradigm to guide the research enterprise.

3.3 Ontological perspective

Creswell (2003) comments that ontology is the study of being and existence in the world and represents an attempt to discover the fundamental categories of what exists in that world. Traditional psychological paradigms have adopted a realist ontology which takes the position that all reality exists independently of the knower, and context exerts no effect on this reality. Implicit in such realist accounts is the assumption that the nature of the world can be revealed through direct observation, measurement and classification of its various material properties. A criticism of a realist and essentialist account is its failure to acknowledge the role of language, culture, history and social factors in shaping people's realities as they interact with one another during their day to day lives (Burr, 2003). Gergen (1999) invites us to consider the value of adopting a 'relativist' position to guide our enquiries, noting that 'declarations of the real operate as conversation stoppers; they establish the limits of what others can say, who can be heard' (p. 161). Implicit in this view is the oppressive nature of realist accounts of their being a single true reality.

In contrast, relativist accounts take the position that there is no single true reality. Rather, there exists as many realities as there are individuals and emphasises the role of language, culture and history in the construction of these multiple realities (Willig, 2013). Burr (1998), in adopting a relativist position, argues that the only way of understanding reality is through discourse, and that there exists no reality beyond discourse itself. Wiggins and Potter (2017) assert that language is both construct*ed* and construct*ive* and that the latter refers to there being multiple versions of the world which are a product of talk itself. Therefore, what people perceive to be real is constituted by talk and text and language represents the means of constructing, rather than mirroring, reality (Georgaca & Avdi, 2011). The current research was situated within a discursive psychology framework and sought to understand the performative functions of participant's talk and the various subjects positions inherent in their accounts of PCARs. The action-orientation of language and discourse is the current research's focus of enquiry, and aims to examine the various ways participant's versions of PCARs are 'talked into being' (Willig, 2013). The current research therefore adopted as it's ontology, a relativist position.

3.4 Social constructionism as an epistemological framework

Having situated the current research's ontological position within the relativist realm, consideration was also given to identifying an epistemological position which was congruent with this world view. Epistemology refers to the ways in which individuals go about acquiring knowledge of the world, and how we come to know what we know (McCleod, 2003; Burr, 2003). Consequently, our position concerning the nature of reality (ontology) and the relationship between the knower and would be known (epistemology) are deeply intertwined. Realist accounts concerning the nature of reality - and their underlying positivist assumptions regarding a single truth - have given rise to an oppressive and elitist approach to psychological enquiry (Willig, 2013; Burr & Butt, 2000). This researcher rejected positivist assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and viewed such a position as being incompatible with the emancipatory aims of the current research. In contrast, Scotland (2012) comments that contructivism adopts a relativist view, which holds that there are multiple 'realities' which in turn give rise to multiple 'truths' and 'knowledges'. Neimeyer and Raskin (2001) take the view that there are many varieties of constructivism, and refer to there being a family of 'constuctivisms'; all of which share an overarching concern with how people construct systems for meaningfully understanding the world and their experiences. This 'constructivst family' can be broadly separated into two categories; constucti*vism* and social construction*ism*. Constructivist accounts place an emphasis on the inner psychological worlds of people, and is concerned with exploring how individuals construct and make meaning of their experiences. Here, phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography are central areas of interest to the consructivist researcher. Gergen (1995) views such a central focus on the inner psychological worlds of people as being too fully interiorised, and that such a position condemns the individual to being trapped within their own individualised experience. The current research was concerned with looking toward the 'out-there-ness' of the social world and to enquire into the realm of social interaction, discourse and the construction of shared meaning-making (Gergen, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Consequently, a constructiv*ist* epistemology was rejected.

In contrast to contructivism's focus on the inner psychological world, social construction*ism* views how we come to know what we know as being socially constructed through language and is culturally and historically situated. Social constructionists maintain that peoples' knowledge of the world is constructed within everyday interactions through various social practices and that it is through these social interactions that particular versions of knowing come to into being. The performative role of language is central to social constructionist perspectives, which view the constitutive nature of language as giving rise to - rather than merely describing - knowledge. Viewed through a social constructionist lens, how certain forms of knowledge are achieved is through the various discursive interactions which people are perpetually engaged in during the course of their everyday lives (Morrow, 2007; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1999). The current research aimed to develop a greater understanding of the social processes underlying PCARs and the various discourses, repertoires and subject positions revealed through participant's talk as they constructed their version of a shared social event i.e. the PCAR. The current research sought to explore the action-orientation of participant's talk and consider the effect this had on how young autistic young people were positioned, both by themselves and others. As noted in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.5), there are powerful macro-level discourses concerning how ASC is constructed, and the current research also sought to explore how these dominant discourses were drawn upon by participants, and the possible effects on the positioning of young people. Consequently, this researcher considered social constructionism's epistemological assumptions as being supportive of the current research aims and rationale, given its focus on the socially constructed nature of knowledge mediated linguistically, culturally and historically.

3.4.1 Social constructionism and epistemological reflexivity

The current research took social constructionism as its epistemological framework. Willig (2013) invites the social constructionist researcher to consider their role within the research process and how the researcher is implicated in the construction of the research data and interpretation of its findings. This researcher adopted the position that language is a central component of socially constructed knowledge and that the knowledge produced by the current research was co-constructed between the researcher and participants. This researcher acknowledged that they were implicated in the research process and that they were the author, rather than witness, in constructing its findings.

3.5 Research design

The following section presents a rationale for the research design utilised in the current research. An overview of discourse analysis is provided and situated within the current research's ontological and epistemological position. A justification for the use of critical discursive psychology is provided, with links made between the use of this analytical framework and the current researches aims and rationale. Mertens (2005) asserts that research which situates it's ontological and epistemological position within relativist and social constructionist realms typically orients toward qualitative approaches. Given the central focus on language and discourse within the current research, a qualitative methodology was deemed to be appropriate.

3.5.1 Discourse analysis and the turn to language

Discourse analysis (DA) is broadly situated within a social constructionist epistemological framework, and emphasises the constitutive nature of language. A central concern of DA is the use of talk and texts as social practices, and on the various discursive resources people draw upon to enable those practices. DA aims to explore and understand the role of discourse in the construction of people's social world as they go about their daily lives. Viewed through a DA lens, language is not considered a neutral or transparent medium. Rather, it is seen as a form of social action which people call upon to construct particular versions of the world (Wiggins, 2016; Wetherell, 1998; Potter, 1996). The centrality of language within DA, as being both construct*ed* and construct*ive*, was considered by this researcher to be congruent with the current research's ontological and epistemological position. Therefore, the current research adopted DA as both a theoretical and methodological approach. Other qualitative methodologies which shared similar epistemological assumptions, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), were judged to lack sufficient focus on the action-oriented and performative functions of language. Consequently, these were deemed to be incongruent with this researcher's world view and the overall aims and rationale of this research.

DA is not a uniform approach and is considered to represent an umbrella term that encompasses a range of methodological perspectives, aimed at exploring the constitutive nature of language in use. What each form of DA shares is a general commitment to the view of talk and text as being functional, constructive/ed, and situated (Wetherell et al., 2001; Willig, 2013). However, each version of DA has been developed from differing intellectual roots and approaches analysis from various macro- and micro-level perspectives. Wiggins (2016) emphasises the importance for the discursive researcher to explicate what version of DA is being deployed and present a clear rationale and justification for its use. The current research was largely informed by the DA approach developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), who defined discourse as involving 'all forms of spoken interactions, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds' (p. 7). These authors' approach to DA was later refined into what has become discursive psychology, which the current research has taken as it's principle framework. The following section provides a justification for the selection of DP as both a theoretical and analytical approach to discourse.

3.5.2 Discursive Psychology: a micro-analysis of discourse

Discursive psychology (DP) represents a theoretical and analytical approach to the study of discourse. It treats all forms of talk and text as the object of study itself and views psychological concepts (e.g. identity, attitudes, attributions, beliefs, values and so on) as being socially managed and a consequence of interactions. DP provides a micro-lens through which the discursive researcher can examine, in detail, the social world and make sense of the talk which people are engaged in when interacting with others. It is concerned with the minutiae of everyday interactions and how people manage psychological concepts to accomplish various social actions via their talk (Wiggins, 2016; Potter & Edwards, 2001; Holt, 2011). DP rejects cognitivism and traditional psychological paradigms which have historically treated discourse as a means through which people build mental representations of the world based on inner mental structures. DP aims to 'respecify' traditional psychological notions by viewing discourse itself as the site where people actively construct their realities and come to know what they know. DP does not reject cognition *per se* and does not deny that people think, feel, and experience. Rather, a DP perspective maintains that through the study of discourse, we can consider how people construct versions of reality in the service of some particular action and interpersonal aim (Potter & Edwards, 2001). Wiggins (2016) asserts that DP focuses on the action-oriented nature of discourse (what talk and text is actually doing) over ‘discourse as representation’ (whether if or how discourse relates to inner cognitive processes).

3.5.3 Core principles underpinning discursive psychology

There are three core principles that define a DP approach, and were viewed by this researcher as being congruent with this research’s ontological and epistemological position. Firstly, DP views discourse as being both construct*ed* and construct*ive*. It is construct*ed* in the sense that people make use of and draw upon a range of cultural resources - words, expressions, metaphors, idioms, accounts, descriptions and so on - in the course of an interaction and in the service of particular social actions. It is construct*ive* in the sense that by drawing upon discursive resources, a version of the world is evoked and talked into being. Secondly, DP views discourse as being situated sequentially, rhetorically and institutionally. It is situated sequentially in that discourse is embedded within a sequence of interaction and what is said, how it said and the meaning which it carries will be determined by what is said before and after by particular interlocutors. The rhetorically organized nature of discourse means that people will deploy talk in the pursuit of accomplishing interpersonal goals/tasks. In doing so, a particular version of the world will be constructed and counter or undermine possible alternative versions. Thirdly, a corollary of the first two principles is the action-oriented nature of discourse. There will be particular functions or social actions which are accomplished by the discourse (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007; Potter & Edwards, 2001; Wiggins, 2016).

DP’s emphasis on the constructed/ive, situated and action-oriented nature of discourse allowed this researcher to consider the social practices used by participants and to explore the *consequences* of their talk-in-action. As noted in Chapter 2 (see Ch. 2.4), there is emerging research evidence which indicates that PCARs are underpinned by highly dynamic, interpersonal processes and that such processes may serve to constrain or facilitate young people’s personal agency and decision-making abilities. The current research’s use of DP as a means of analysing discourse allowed an in-depth exploration of the consequential nature of participant’s talk and to consider how participants negotiated various subject positions.

3.5.4 Agency, moral systems and limitations

DP distinguishes itself from other DA approaches based on how it conceptualizes human agency. Within DP, people are viewed as active social agents who utilise discursive resources to accomplish outcomes and maintain stake. Furthermore, the accounts which people give involve a negotiation of a particular subject position which is morally justifiable (Willig, 2013). Holt (2011) comments that DP allows for an examination of how such positions are negotiated and can reveal much about the moral contexts of an interaction. In essence, DP allows the researcher to characterise a discourse's 'moral flavour' (Edwards & Potter, 2001). This view of people as both active social agents and moral actors was judged to be highly relevant to the current research's aims of exploring how young autistic people are positioned within their PCARS; and the various moral systems/orders invoked through participant's discursive accounts.

The current research was situated within a discursive psychology framework, which provided a method to conduct a fine-grained analysis of participant's talk. In doing so, the question of how participants negotiated various subject positions was addressed. However, the current research also utilised a *critical* approach to the analysis of discourse. Willig (2013) argues that an inherent limitation of DP's micro-analysis of discourse is that it does not help the researcher to answer the question of *why* people may orientate their talk around particular discursive resources. In this way, DP is viewed as ignoring what is happening outside the text. That is, it does not address wider social, cultural and historical contexts. As noted in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.5), there are powerful macro-level social discourses surrounding ASC. In order to address the second research question of how participants may orient their talk around these wider discourses - and the possible consequences for how young autistic people may be positioned - the current research adopted a *critical* discursive psychology framework, as advanced by Edley (2011).

3.5.5 Adopting a *critical* discursive psychology approach

A critical discursive psychology (CDP) argues that sequences within an interaction are invariably situated within a broader historical, social and cultural context. From a CDP perspective, discourse is understood as representing the intersection between the everyday and the cultural; that there are cultural influences which shape our discourses (Wiggins, 2016). Edley (2011) argues that in order to fully understand the complex relationship that exists between discourses and speakers, we need to study not only the way people draw upon particular discursive resources within a given interaction, but also look at how particular macro-level discourses come to structure how we think, feel, and talk. CDP therefore can be seen to be situated within the intervening space of the two main forms of DA; occupying a place between the zoom lens of DP's micro-analysis of everyday talk and the wide-angle lens of neo-Foucauldian, post-structuralist approaches (Holt, 2011; Wiggins, 2016). This position of CDP along the DA continuum was deemed to be most appropriate for the current research, as it permitted an application of the empirical rigour associated with DP whilst also allowing this researcher to 'step outside the text' (Edley, 2011, p. 223). That is, this researcher was able to keep a critical gaze on the wider cultural discourses surrounding ASC, whilst also attending to the detail of participant's talk. CDP was also deemed suitable as it allowed this researcher to maintain the view of people as active social agents, whilst also acknowledging that there are powerful, hegemonic discourses surrounding ASC. In taking up CDP, this researcher also held the view that there exists a complex and paradoxical relationship between discourses and speakers. This view of how discourses come into being was influenced by the work of Billig (1991) who asserts that people are both the *producers* and the *products* of discourse.

Edley (2011) comments that the value of a CDP lies in its utility and potential to disrupt the *status quo*, and this was judged to be particularly relevant to the wider emancipatory aims of the current research. In achieving a critical approach to the analysis of participant's discourse, this researcher drew upon three inter-related analytic concepts; namely interpretive repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988), and subject positions (Harré & Lagenhove, 1999). Utilising these core analytic concepts allowed this researcher to attend to the action-oriented nature of participant's talk, whilst also remaining sensitive to operations of power and wider cultural and historical practices (Edley, 2011).

3.5.6 Summary

The current research was situated within a critical discursive psychology framework, informed by the works of Potter & Wetherell (1987) and Edley (2011). This approach to the analysis of discourse was considered to be congruent with the current research's ontological and epistemological position. DP's view of language as being action-oriented, situated and constitutive provided a way of exploring how participants actively constructed their version of PCARs. The current research utilised the analytic concepts of interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas, with a particular emphasis on subject positions. The focus on these analytic concepts allowed this researcher to explore how participants negotiated the various subject positions made available within their discursive constructions, and to consider possible consequences for young people's personal agency and decision-making powers. Having presented a rationale for the research design of the current study, the following sections present a detailed overview of the procedures utilised in the gathering and analysing of the research data.

3.6 Research Participants

The current research aimed to explore the underlying social processes within PCARs as discrete social phenomena. A central focus of this exploration was an examination of the various discursive resources participants drew upon in their accounts of PCARs, and to consider how young autistic people were positioned through these discursive constructions. As noted in Chapter 2 (see Ch. 2.4), there is emerging research evidence which indicates that PCARs are underpinned by highly dynamic, interpersonal processes; and that such processes may serve to constrain or facilitate young people's personal agency and decision-making abilities. Consequently, it was judged that including a range of stakeholders (young people with ASC, their family members, and members of school staff) as research participants was highly relevant to the current research's aims and purpose. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders also enabled a more complete exploration of the consequential nature of participant's talk from various perspectives and to consider more fully, how stakeholders negotiated various subject positions.

The current research therefore included three distinct participant groups. The *primary* participant group consisted of transition-aged young people with a diagnosis of ASC. The *secondary* participant groups consisted of the parents/carers of those young people, and members of school staff who were also regularly involved with the young people. In order to achieve homogeneity across the participant sample, a purposive sampling method was utilised. Purposive sampling offers the discursive researcher with an approach to the recruitment of a homogenous sample ‘to the extent that they share the experience of a particular event’ (Willig, 2013, p. 61).

A total of 8 participants were recruited to the current study. These 8 participants were recruited from 3 PCAR meetings across three different school settings. Two schools were mainstream educational settings. The third school was a mainstream school which also included an Autism Resource Base (ARB). The total sample of 8 participants consisted of 2 young people with ASC, 3 parents/carers, and 3 members of school staff. The young person participant sample was represented by one male and one female, ranging in age between 14-16 years old. There was a degree of attrition in the recruitment of young participants with one young person withdrawing from the research prior to the interview taking place. It is recommended that a small sample size be adopted when using CDP, as it enables a more in-depth analysis of a small number of cases (Wiggins, 2016). Potter & Wetherell (1987) suggest that a sample size of between 6-12 participants is sufficient when conducting a discourse analysis.

In order to further achieve homogeneity, three key criteria were developed in the recruitment of young people as the primary participants. Firstly, young people were recruited from educational settings who applied PCP approaches to the Annual Review process i.e. the settings used PCARs (see Ch. 1.4). Secondly, young people with a formal, clinical diagnosis of ASC were recruited. This decision was based on the current research’s aims and rationale (see Ch. 1.8 & 2.6 respectively). Finally, young people were recruited at the point of transition from secondary education and were currently in Key Stage 4. This final criterion reflected the overall aims and purpose of the current research (see Ch. 1.6, 1.8, & 2.6 respectively). These criteria have been summarised in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1. Participant group 1 - Young people with ASC

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
To currently have a formal medical diagnosis of ASC, confirmed via school records	Those young people who have an additional speech and language difficulty and/or learning difficulty such that it would prevent them from engaging in

	conversation during a semi-structured interview.
To be aware of their diagnosis	Children with looked after status (LAC) and as such would not have a family member who could attend their PCAR
To be in Key Stage 4	
To have an Education, Health and Care plan or Statement of Special Education Needs (where this has not been converted)	
To have experienced their PCAR within 2-4 weeks of the interview taking place	Those young people who had not attended their PCAR or attended their PCAR in excess of 4 weeks after an interview could be arranged.

As noted above, parents/carers and members of school staff were recruited as secondary participants based on their having attended a young person's PCAR meeting. Additional inclusion criteria for the adult participants have been summarised in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below:

Table 3.2. Participant group 2 - Parents/carers

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
To be a family member of Group 1	
To have attended a PCAR at the same time as their child	A parent/carer who did not attend a PCAR at the same time as their child

Table 3.3. Participant group 3 - Members of school staff

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
To be a key member of school staff (e.g. form tutor, SENCo, class teacher) at a school attended by a member of Group 1	
To have attended a PCAR at the same time as the young person and their family member	A member of school staff who did not attend a PCAR at the same time as the young person participant

The criteria highlighted above were developed with the purpose of creating a homogenous participant sample. This was to support the examination of the various discursive resources drawn upon by a range of stakeholders, and to consider more completely how young people were positioned within their PCARs.

3.7 Use of semi-structured interviews

The current research aimed to explore the various discursive resources participants drew upon in their (re)constructions of PCARs, and how they positioned themselves and others through their discursive constructions. Consequently, it was necessary for this researcher to identify an approach to data gathering which would elicit the action orientation of participant's talk and produce a corpus of data which could be analysed for various subject positions. Potter (1996) asserts that from a discursive psychology perspective, interviews have the potential to provide the researcher with a means of exploring with participants, a range of themes which would otherwise be difficult to do using more naturalistic data materials. Furthermore, the author comments that the use of interviews can be a highly effective way of capturing a wide array of discursive resources available to participants, as well as some of ways in which such resources are used strategically by participants to achieve interpersonal aims. The current research, therefore, utilised interviews as the primary means of data gathering.

Willig (2013) comments that there exists a continuum along which interviews can be conceptualised and deployed. Interviews can range from being highly structured with an interview schedule deployed in a rigid fashion, to completely unstructured where the researcher does not develop an interview schedule in advance. Viewed through a discursive psychology lens, language is seen as a form of social action which is highly situated and bound up in the context of a particular social encounter. Therefore, what is said and how it is said, is dictated by the conversational sequence of a given social interaction (Wiggins & Potter, 2017). Therefore, a structured interview approach was deemed inappropriate for the current research, as the strict adherence to an interview schedule would have had a potentially limiting effect on the range of responses available to participants. Wood and Kroger (2000) comment that the use of interviews within discursive psychology research bring with them particular theoretical and procedural differences which must be acknowledged and attended to, noting that it is good practice to encourage participants to speak fully. This approach is aimed at producing the kind of *variability* within and between accounts which discursive researchers view as being a central feature of discourse. Therefore, what is required is an 'active' approach to interviews, where the researcher as interviewer, and participant as interviewee, are seen as making an equal contribution to the co-construction of meaning. The responses that are produced are not seen as representing the correct version, but rather represent one version which is the product of the interaction. Therefore, the researcher who adopts a discursive psychology approach is not seen as being neutral. Rather, through probing and asking follow-up questions, the researcher provides opportunities for the participant to produce as full of an account as possible (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Wood & Kroger, 2000).

Consequently, this researcher utilised semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection. This allowed areas relevant to the aims of the research to be addressed, whilst also ensuring that the flow of talk was maintained and that participants could provide a full account which was not constrained.

3.8 Interview schedule design and pilot interview

Three separate interview schedules were developed for each participant group; student participants, family members, and members of school staff. The design of the final interview schedules (see Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively) reflected the overarching research questions regarding how autistic young people were positioned within their PCARs, and how participant's constructions of autism may have affected such positionings. The interview questions therefore were open-ended in nature and aimed to elicit a range of discursive resources from participants. The language used in the construction of the interview schedule also aimed to ensure that participant's accounts were not constrained, and several questions were developed which were of a similar construction. The use of questions of a similar construction was in response to Potter and Wetherell's (1987) assertion that such questions provide opportunities for participants to produce the fullest account possible by asking them similar things but in slightly different ways.

As part of the development of the interview schedule, a pilot interview was conducted with a young autistic person in Year 9 who had recently attended a PCAR. The aim of the pilot was to explore the extent to which the interview questions were accessible to young people, and whether any changes to the wording or structure of questions were required. The conducting of the pilot interview also afforded this researcher an opportunity to develop key interviewing skills and to reflect on changes to the interview approach and style. Following the completion of this pilot interview, several changes were made to the structure and content of the initial interview schedule (see Appendix 4). Firstly, the sequence of questions was revised following the completion of the pilot. The draft interview schedule had originally introduced the topic of autism at the start of the interview, which was then followed by a series of questions regarding the PCAR. Following the pilot interview and in collaboration with the Director of Studies, it was decided that introducing the topic of autism at the beginning would mean participant's subsequent responses would be oriented toward this area for the remainder of the interview. Introducing the questions regarding the PCAR itself first, followed then by topic of autism was deemed to be more appropriate. Following the completion of the pilot, two additional questions were added to the final interview schedule. These questions aimed at exploring with participants what they would have liked to have said but didn't, and why this may have been the case. It was deemed that these questions offered participants to consider possibilities and alternatives, and also reveal more completely how they may have been positioned by themselves and others.

The pilot interview also resulted in the development of several strategies aimed at supporting student participants to engage more meaningfully in the interview process. For instance, during the pilot interview, this researcher noted difficulties experienced by the young person in identifying the various attendees at their PCAR. In subsequent interviews, the use of visuals was deployed as a strategy to support young people's discursive constructions. These visuals included the use of a drawing technique to depict who was at the PCAR, what was said, and by whom. This visual strategy also provided a scaffold to explore with young people the various interactions which occurred throughout the PCAR process. In addition to this strategy, visual materials which had been produced during the PCARs, were also used within interviews to support young people's discursive constructions. A common feature of the PCAR process is for all attendees to write on large sheets of poster paper which have been placed on the walls as the meeting progresses. These large sheets typically include headings such as 'what do we like and admire about the young person?' and 'what are the young person's strengths?'. During the course of interviews, these materials acted as aides for young people (as well as adults) to refer to when discussing their PCARs.

3.9 Procedures used in this research

The current research was conducted across a Local Authority (LA) within an Inner-London borough where this researcher was completing a placement as part of their Doctoral training. The following sections outline the procedures utilised in the recruitment of schools and participants, and collection of the research data.

3.9.1 Recruitment of schools

As noted in Chapter 2 (see Ch. 2.3.3), there is emerging research evidence to suggest that local school culture and ethos may play a part in how young people's choice making abilities are viewed and the extent to which their personal agency is supported. Consequently, the current research aimed to recruit participants from across multiple settings in order to explore the possible effects differing local school cultures may have on young people's voice, choice and control.

The initial stages of recruitment involved identifying schools which routinely used PCP approaches within their Annual Review process, and currently had young people within the setting who met the inclusion criteria outlined previously (see Ch. 3.6). To identify possible schools, this researcher attended a forum for secondary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCos), where the research aims, and purpose were introduced. A survey was disseminated during this forum to determine which schools regularly used the PCAR model and if schools were interested in taking part in the research (see Appendix 5). The results were later collated, and possible settings identified. The results of this survey indicated a potential pool of eight schools. These settings were subsequently contacted by email to discuss the research further and ascertain eligibility of the young people within these settings. From this initial contact, six schools were identified which currently had young people who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to take part.

However, when progressing the recruitment procedure further, it was not possible to recruit participants from three of the six schools who had agreed to take part. In several instances, it was not possible to carry out interviews within the desired timeframe of two-to-four weeks following a young person's PCAR. In another instance, it was not possible to obtain informed consent from parents via the school. These factors resulted in the recruitment of eligible participants from three secondary mainstream schools, one of which had a specialist Autism Resource Base (ARB) on site.

A member of school staff from each school was assigned to support this researcher in obtaining consent and arranging interviews. An initial visit was arranged with members of school staff where an information sheet for headteachers (see Appendix 6) and an informed consent form for schools were provided (see Appendix 7). The process of obtaining informed consent was discussed, and the schools were provided with information sheets for young people, parents/carers and members of school staff (see Appendix 8, 9, and 10 respectively). The schools were also provided with informed consent forms for young people, parent/carers and members of school staff (see Appendix 11, 12, & 13 respectively).

3.9.2 Data collection

The collection of data was completed through the use of semi-structured interviews which were carried out within the school setting. All interviews were conducted within the same room where the PCARs had originally taken place. This measure was taken to support participant's recall of the PCAR event. It was also hoped that conducting interviews in a setting which was familiar to the young people would reduce any possible feelings of anxiety. Prior to interviews, the young people participants were briefed by the member of school staff designated to support the current research. On the day of the interviews taking place, the designated member of school staff introduced this researcher to young people participants, escorted the researcher and young person to the allocated room, and remained present throughout the interview process. A similar procedure was followed for adult participants, with the exception of the designated staff member being present during the interview process.

An introductory conversation was undertaken with all participants where this researcher disclosed their trainee status, discussed the role of the EP within schools, and highlighted the various activities which EPs typically engaged in. All participants were then reintroduced to the information sheet provided to them previously by the school. This was then followed by this researcher reading through the consent form with participants and checking that they still consented to taking part in the research. The setting up of the two audio recording devices was undertaken and the participant was made aware of this before any questions were asked.

All participants were asked several introductory questions (see Appendix 1) before moving to questions relating to the PCAR process. An interview schedule was utilised to support the conducting of the interviews but was not deployed in a rigid manner. Interview questions were adapted where it was deemed necessary to support participant's understanding. As discussed previously (see Ch 3.8), the use of visuals were also utilised for young people participants. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 20-45 minutes. The recorded audio data was later transcribed, and both the audio and text transcription formed the data corpus.

3.10 Steps in conducting a Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP) analysis

Wiggins (2016) comments that CDP does not have a clearly defined, universal, step-by-step approach to the analysis of data. There is no recipe to be followed. The conducting of a CDP analysis has been liked to a craft skill; a theoretical framework rather than an analytic method (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In order to achieve coherence and provide the analysis with a degree of structure, Willig's (2008) procedural guidelines for the analysis of discourse were utilised. The following sections outline the various stages used within the analysis. The application of these various stages was not carried out in a rigid, linear fashion. Rather, the analysis was an iterative process and moved in a cyclical manner throughout.

3.10.1 Transcription and reading

The first stage of the analytic process involved the verbatim transcription of the interview recordings. Hutchby and Woofiit (1998) note that from a CDP perspective, it is the audio recordings that represent the data, rather than the textual transcriptions. Within the current study, the transcripts represented a tool to aid the analysis rather than being the central focus. Each interview recording was listened to repeatedly while a simultaneous reading of the transcript was also carried out. Wiggins (2016) notes that the repeated process of listening and reading allows the discursive analyst to become intimately familiar with the *content* and *organisation* of the data; that is, what is said and in what order. This process also allowed this researcher to experience the data as a reader before conducting any form of analysis (Willig, 2013).

3.10.2 Coding

Coding involved the selection of materials from the interview transcripts and organising them into manageable chunks. These were then subjected to an interrogative analysis. This initial coding was carried out in light of the research questions, and the movement between coding and analysis was a cyclical and fluid process (Willig, 2013; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This research aimed to explore how young autistic people were positioned within their PCARs, and the potential effects of participants constructions of ASC on such positions. Thus, any references to possible positions (rights, duties, roles etc.) and references to ASC in its widest sense were selected for analysis. Instances which were indirectly or vaguely related to the research questions were identified and selected, including any implicit constructions (MacNaghten, 1993). This ensured that all material that was potentially relevant was included for analysis. Potter and Wetherell (1987) assert that CDP's main focus is to identify variability within participants discursive constructions and this initial coding operated *within* rather than *between* each interview transcript.

3.10.3 Analysis: resources, practices and positionings

The process of analysis proceeded on the basis of applying the theoretical principles underpinning CDP; namely the constructed/ive and action-oriented nature of discourse, which is situated sequentially, rhetorically and institutionally. This researcher followed the recommendations outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987), who assert that throughout the analytic process, the discursive researcher should ask, ‘Why am reading the passage in this way? What features [of the text] produce this reading?’ (p. 168). To achieve an in-depth and sustained analysis, a particular emphasis was placed on the context, variability and construction of participants discursive accounts. That is, this researcher attended to how participants constructed PCARs, the variation of such constructions across interactional contexts, and the consequential nature of participant’s talk (Willig, 2013). As noted previously (see Ch. 3.5.5), the analytic concepts of interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions were utilised within this stage of analysis.

3.10.3.1 Discursive resources

This stage of analysis focused on identifying the various discursive resources which participants drew upon in their discursive constructions. The application of the analytic concept of interpretative repertoires proved a fruitful means of identifying the various clusters of terms, metaphors, figures of speech and so on which participants deployed to characterise and evaluate various actions and events (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Throughout the analysis, this researcher developed central terms for these interpretative repertoires. As noted previously, people often draw upon divergent and contradictory repertoires in constructing their version of events. This provided a means of identifying variation and aided the hypothesising of possible functions of participant’s talk; that is, what was being accomplished and what were the possible effects.

3.10.3.2 Social practices and positionings

This stage of analysis was concerned with developing an understanding of the action-orientation of participant’s discursive constructions. The application of the analytic concept of ideological dilemmas provided a means of understanding how various discursive resources were drawn upon and pitted against one another within interactional contexts in the service of some performative action. Analysis also considered the various rhetorical and linguistic devices participants deployed in order to negotiate their position and account for their own and other's actions (Billig, 1991). Having identified various discursive resources and social practices within participant's constructions, the analytic concept of subject positions was utilised. Edley (2011) notes that identifying how participants locate/position themselves within their accounts is central to CDP, and that interpretive repertoires typically afford the speaker with a corresponding subject position. This stage of analysis included identifying the various positions which participants constructed and considered what was being accomplished in the pursuit of such acts of positioning. The identification of possible subject positions also provided this researcher with a means of describing the broader ideological context in which participant's talk was done (Edley, 2011).

3.10.3.3 Developing a coherent reading

This stage of analysis attempted to illustrate the relationship between the various discursive resources and social practices deployed by participants, and the subject positions contained within them. An examination was undertaken of the differing ways in which participant's discursive constructions of the PCAR process - and corresponding subject positions - supported or constrained young people's personal agency. This was the most speculative stage of analysis and attempted to consider the consequential nature of participant's positioning for young people's voice, choice and control. Examples from the analysis have been presented within the appendices (see Appendix 14).

3.11 Ethical considerations

All research that involves people has the potential to have an adverse effect on participants' wellbeing and impact upon them in a negative and harmful way (Willig, 2013). Consequently, ethical considerations were of paramount importance in the designing, conducting, and final reporting of the current research. The following sections outline how this researcher addressed a range of ethical issues associated with the current research.

3.11.1 Protection from harm and risk

To ensure the physical and psychological wellbeing of participants were maintained, the current research was designed, conducted and disseminated in accordance with the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Human research Ethics (2010) and Professional Practice Guidelines (2014), the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students (2016) and the University of East London's (UEL) Code of Practice for Research Ethics (2016). Ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London's Ethics Committee (see Appendix 15). A risk assessment was also conducted as part of the process of obtaining ethical approval and considered the level of risk of emotional, physical or psychological harm to both participants and the researcher. This researcher acknowledged their professional duty of care towards all participants throughout the research process and ensured that procedures were established in the event of a participant making a disclosure which caused concern (HCPC, 2016). These procedures included identifying members of school staff who were responsible for safeguarding and child protection within each school and reflecting upon any potential concerns with the researcher's placement supervisor and Director of Studies. As no concerns arose during the research, it was not necessary to instigate any of the above the procedures.

3.11.2 Informed consent and right to withdraw

Initially, informed consent was obtained from headteachers across school sites using a dedicated information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 6 and 7 respectively). Following this, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including family members, members of school staff, and students using dedicated information sheets (see Appendix 8, 9, & 10 respectively). All participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw before the start of the interviews. Student participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw before the start of the interview in the presence of a member of school staff who was considered to be familiar enough with the student to gauge their understanding and reaction.

All participants including family members, members of school staff and students were also provided with consent forms (see Appendix 11, 12, & 13 respectively) which were completed prior to the conducting of the interviews. Since the student participants were under the age of 16 with SEND, they were considered a 'vulnerable group' (BPS, 2010) and additional consent was also obtained from a parent(s)/person with parental responsibility (see Appendix 12). To ensure informed consent was obtained fully from student participants, the information sheets, consent forms and debrief sheets were adapted to accommodate the developmental and communication needs of these participants (BPS, 2010). In addition to being reminded at the start of interviews of the right to withdraw at any point, all participants were also made aware that they could choose to terminate the interview at any point or refrain from answering any questions. This was explained verbally and in written form using the information sheets and debriefing sheets (see Appendix 16, 17, & 18 respectively).

3.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The current research aimed to explore participant's constructions of PCARs as discrete social episodes after they had attended them within schools. This raised potential ethical issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity for participants and schools. To address these issues, any information which could identify the names of the participants or others, the school(s) involved, or the local authority in which the research was conducted were removed from the data transcripts. Pseudonyms were used at the point of transcription and all participants were made aware that no identifying information would be included in the final reporting of the research. All interviews were conducted on school sites where interviews could not be overheard. Participants were also made aware that confidentiality would only be breached if the researcher became concerned for their safety or the safety of others. All the above information was communicated to participants both verbally and in written format prior to, during and following interviews using the information and debrief sheets described previously.

3.11.4 Data protection

To protect against loss of data, two electronic devices – a smart phone and digital audio recorder - were used simultaneously to record interviews. The audio files were then transferred to a central computer and stored securely within encrypted files. Following transcription of the data, the original audio files from the smartphone were destroyed. Any paper information (consent forms, field notes etc.) were stored in locked cupboards.

It is anticipated that all recorded data will be destroyed within an estimated six months following the completion of the research. The anonymised data will be retained for a period of up to three years following the completion of the research. Participants were informed of the above using the information sheets and debrief sheets described previously.

3.12 Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research

Yardley (2000) emphasises that 'good' qualitative research necessitates the discursive researcher to deploy a range of quality control measures throughout the research endeavor. This should encompass every stage of the process including the design, implementation, analysis and final reporting. Within traditional psychological research - situated within a positivist paradigm - concepts such as validity and reliability are typically referred to ensure the quality of the research itself. However, the current research was situated within a paradigm which assumed a relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology. Consequently, the usual positivist criteria of validity and reliability were deemed to be incompatible. Instead, Guba and Lincoln (2000) assert that rigour within qualitive research should be achieved by adherence to trustworthiness. This, the authors contend, is broadly analogous to the positivist concepts of validity and reliability but is far more appropriate to the application of qualitative research. In achieving quality control in the current research therefore, this researcher was focused on ensuring that trustworthiness was developed and maintained throughout the process.

The guidelines developed by Elliott, Fisher and Rennie (1999) - which were previously referred to in Chapter 2 and utilised as a means to critically evaluate the literature (see Ch. 2.3) - were also deployed as a framework to ensure the current research's trustworthiness. The following sections outline how the current research sought to meet the seven criteria outlined within these guidelines.

3.12.1 Criteria used to achieve quality control

In *situating the sample,* this researcher sought to describe in detail the participants who took part in the current research, as well as to provide an explication of the social and cultural contexts in which the research took place (see Ch. 1.3, 1.4 & 3.6 respectively). The second criterion of *grounding in examples* was applied to demonstrate how the analytic procedures used led to the interpretative accounts which were generated. This was achieved through the inclusion of detailed extracts within the body of the final report, along with the accompanying interpretative accounts.

The criterion of *credibility* refers to the application of range of checks to ensure that the interpretative accounts developed are credible (Elliot, Fisher & Rennie, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 2000). One way this was achieved was through extensive engagement with the corpus of data. An iterative process of reading and re-reading the transcripts, as well as repeated listening to the audio recordings of interviews, allowed this researcher to remain close to the source material when developing interpretations. An additional check was achieved by paying close attention to participant's understandings during interviews. This was achieved through clarifying with participants, particular meanings in their use of talk. Further credibility checks were undertaken by sharing the analytic claims with outside parties who acted as external auditors. This included this researcher's Director of Studies who provided credibility checks across several stages of the analysis. In addition to this, this researcher enlisted peers who were also engaged in research projects, to review and comment on the analytic claims developed. The use of these external auditors also represented an iterative process, where subsequent feedback resulted in further analysis and amendments.

The criterion of *coherence* was achieved through developing a consistent account across the data, which included an analysis of the various discursive resources and subject positions within participant's discourses. Coherence was further enhanced by situating the analytic claims within the literature, which allowed this researcher to build upon the insights of those previous studies (see Ch. 5.3).

The *accomplishing of specific research tasks* necessitates the discursive researcher to ensure that they are clear about the aims and purpose of the research being undertaken. The current research was guided by a clear statement of aims and rationale (see Ch. 1.8 & 2.6) and sought to develop a greater understanding of the social processes underlying PCARS. Furthermore, the current research also ensured that a range of instances and settings were included in the study to provide sufficient scope to develop an increased understanding of PCARs as social phenomena.

The criteria of *resonating with readers* involves ensuring that the material presented in the final report leads to an increased understanding of the phenomena under investigation. It was hoped that providing a discursive analysis of an area which has received little research attention would offer readers new insight into PCARs as social phenomena. This researcher was also conscious of ensuring that the research findings would reach as many people as possible and thus maximise its impact. This was in keeping with the research's emancipatory aims and person-centred ethos. This researcher viewed the participants as being the most important stakeholders of the research. Consequently, this researcher intends to meet with young people, their family members and school staff at participatory schools to disseminate the findings and discuss how it may be applied. This researcher also intends to disseminate the findings with the Local Authority where the research took place.

3.12.2 Critical reflexivity: positioning the self as researcher

The criterion of *owning one's perspective* refers to the importance of the qualitive researcher disclosing their own personal values, assumptions, prior experiences, anticipations, and theoretical orientations and how the research may have impacted upon the researcher upon its conclusion (Elliott, Fisher & Rennie, 1999). This concept of ownership broadly corresponds with the idea of reflexivity, which can help enhance the overall trustworthiness of research through the researcher's continual engagement and monitoring of their role in the process (Willig, 2013) The concept of ownership and critical reflexivity is especially pertinent to the discursive researcher given the ontological and epistemological assumptions which underpin its methodology. This researcher placed particular emphasis on achieving a critical reflexivity throughout each stage of the research process, including the final reporting. Indeed, the process of achieving this critical reflexivity has been interwoven throughout the final report to place the reader as much as possible into the same position as this researcher. The personal anticipations and the researcher's position in relation to the focus of the research were provided in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.7). This researcher's theoretical orientation was also made explicit in Chapter 2 (see Ch. 2.5) and referred to across subsequent chapters. The effect of having engaged in the research endeavor and how this researcher's perceptions and understandings changed were provided in Chapter 5 (see Ch. 5.7).

The process of achieving a critical reflexivity was also supported by the keeping of a research diary throughout each stage of the research endeavor. Extracts from this diary have been provided in the appendices (see Appendix 19) to further aid the reader in judging how the findings were developed in relation to this researcher's evolving perspective.

Willig (2013) emphasises the importance of personal reflexivity within qualitative research as it further allows the reader to put themselves, as much as possible, into the position of the researcher in relation to the research materials. Personal reflexivity encompasses the researcher's own values, beliefs, assumptions, interests and prior experiences, all of which have the potential to influence the entire research process. (Willig, 2013; Potter, 1996; Georgaca & Avdi, 2011). A pre-research reflexive account which attempts to position this researcher - through the relating of their personal story and motivations - was developed and is provided below (see Box 1.). As noted above, a further account of critical reflexivity has been provided in Chapter 5 (See Ch. 5.8).

Box 1. Positioning the self as researcher: the author's story

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently completing my Doctoral studies in Educational and Child Psychology. I am also a white male who has lived in the UK for the last ten years. Given the focus of the current study, it is also important to highlight that I am neurotypical, that is, I do not have an ASC. It is through this lens that the current study has been conducted.

My interest in exploring how young people with an ASC experience their PCARs was based on both my professional experiences and emerging values to practice and research. My general interest in researching the experiences of individual with an ASC stems from my previous advocacy work with a national autism charity. A theme which I encountered during this time was one of marginalisation; an expression by many adults on the spectrum and their families that their voice was not being acknowledged or understood by society at large. It is these personal stories which have directed me toward this topic of study and a hope that research which places an emphasis on promoting autistic voice will bring about meaningful change.

My decision to carry out research into the use of PCP approaches was partly based on my experiences of facilitating PCARs as an Assistant Educational Psychologist. My interest also grew out of my discussions with EPs within the service who had invested considerable time in embedding the approach across schools in the area. It was during this time that I was able to see first-hand the potential of the approach to empower young people to have greater agency and control in making decisions which affected their lives.

Having identified a topic of study for my research, I initially considered utilising a mixed-method approach with an emphasis on an evaluative research design. However, as I engaged with the research literature, a picture of PCARs as dynamic social episodes began to emerge. This prompted me to reconsider this mixed-methods approach. This also coincided with my critical reflections on my own ontological and epistemological position. My increasing awareness and interest in the role of language and discourse and the influence of social constructionism on my own thinking made me reconsider the appropriateness and compatibility of a mixed-methods design. This resulted in my shifting focus toward a purely qualitive approach, with an emphasis on the analysis of discourse. I saw this shift as not only being more congruent with how I viewed my position as a researcher, but also offering greater potential to develop a richer understanding of PCARs as complex, dynamic social phenomena. Ultimately, I saw this shift as allowing me to take up a position where my research was done *with* rather than *to* young people and their families and more closely aligned with my values as a scientist-practitioner.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an in-depth account of the current research's methodology. An overview of this researcher's position in relation to the research design utilised was presented, including the ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives which have been taken up. This was followed by a discussion of the rationale for the methods used in data collection and analysis. A justification for the strategies deployed in sampling were also given, including a detailed account of the procedures used in the recruitment of participants. Finally, the chapter closed with a detailed overview of the ethical assessment carried out within the research, and the framework utilised to achieve quality and rigour in the current research's design and final reporting. The following chapter will present the key findings developed from the analysis of participant's accounts.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

The following chapter presents the findings from the analysis of participant's discursive accounts in relation to the research questions, how young people were positioned in their PCARs, and how participant's talk of ASC featured in how young autistic people were positioned. Potter (1996) emphasises the importance within DA research of including thick and extended excerpts from the corpus of data within the final report, given the constitutive nature of talk. Furthermore, the inclusion of extended excerpts also supports the validation of the analysis itself and enhances the research's overall trustworthiness (Potter, 1996). Consequently, extended extracts of 'raw' data were included within the current chapter to support the reader's interpretation and evaluation of the analysis and its quality. To preserve as much linguistic detail as possible and to support the analysis, the transcription of data was undertaken using the Jefferson transcription system, as per Wiggin's (2016) recommendation for DA research. A transcription notation has been provided in the appendices (see Appendix 20).

Five key findings will be presented based on the interpretative analysis of participant's accounts, namely young people's identity positioning and negotiations of their assigned autism label; the negotiation of epistemic rights, primacy and authority; the discursive construction of autism as a 'difference' versus a 'deficit'; adult's negotiations of the 'severity of ASD'; and family member's negotiations of the boundary between 'advocate' and 'equal partner'. These findings were developed by drawing upon the analytic concepts of interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions; concepts which allowed for the identification of the various ways participants positioned themselves and others. In addition to these analytic concepts, particular attention was paid to the identification of various discursive devices deployed by participants to negotiate their subject position and account for their own and other's actions. To help orient the reader, the below subsection presents a brief overview of these key analytic concepts. This is then followed by the presentation of the findings from the analysis itself.

4.1.1 Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions

Interpretative repertoires represent a cluster of terms and metaphors which people flexibly draw upon to characterise and evaluate events and actions within the course of an interaction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). They can be thought of as being a series of books on a shelf in a public library which people can refer to when engaged in a piece of situated social interaction (Edley, 2011). Viewed in this way, interpretative repertoires represent the building blocks of conversation and are reliably coherent and stable ways of talking about the world. Whilst being relatively stable entities, interpretative repertoires are fluid concepts which can be utilised by people in various and sometimes contradictory ways in the service of some performative function, for instance to argue, disclaim, undermine, agree, and so on (Holt, 2011; Wiggins, 2016). This analytic concept was deployed within the current research to explore and identify the various discursive resources participants drew upon in their constructions of PCARS, and to examine their particular effects; that is, what was being accomplished by participant's talk and possible consequences for how young people were positioned.

The related analytic concept of ideological dilemmas was also utilised in the current research. Ideological dilemmas represent contradictory and oppositional ways of understanding the same concept, and people can actively use these dilemmas to argue for different positions (Wiggins, 2016). In identifying dilemmatic tensions within and between participant's discursive constructions, this researcher was able to consider how participants positioned themselves and others within their talk, and possible consequences for young people's personal agency. This analytic concept was particularly fruitful in addressing the current research's question of how participants constructed ASC and the possible effects of such constructions on how young people were positioned.

Edley (2011) asserts that the analytic concept of subject positions (Harré & Lagnehove, 1999) is central to CDP in that it connects the wider notions of interpretative repertoires and discourse to the construction of particular selves as moral actors. As noted in Chapter 2 (see Ch. 2.5), Positioning Theory maintains that people ascribe to themselves various rights and duties to carry out certain meaningful acts through their talk (reflexive positioning), and in doing so position others in various ways (interactional positioning). Identifying the various interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas within and between participant's talk allowed this researcher to locate how participants positioned themselves and others, what was being accomplished by their talk, and the possible consequences for young people's voice, choice and control.

4.2 Negotiating the possibilities of personhood

Within the business of everyday talk, the discourses we draw upon allow us to make sense of our experiences and through our discursive constructions, particular ways of being are enabled or limited. This idea of the constitutive nature of discourse is central to considering how identities are socially constructed (Andreouli, 2010; Harrè & Moghadam, 2003). The various ways individuals orient themselves to particular kinds of talk is not a neutral or passive process; individuals are continually engaged in actively constructing their lives and in so doing, position themselves in particular ways. The adoption or refutation of some conceptions of self - and how these are socially (re)produced - may offer different possibilities for being to those individuals. There is a moral imperative therefore for individuals to construct themselves in particular ways, as a failure to do so threatens those possibilities (Harrè & Moghadam, 2003). As Burden (2005) asserts 'those of us who possess characteristics considered to be socially undesirable will begin to perceive ourselves as undesirable or in some way wanting' (p. 196). The question of how such characteristics were managed - and by extension how the negotiations of identity were undertaken - was categorised as being a key feature of talk within young people's discursive accounts of their PCARs.

Extract 1 illustrates the ways Jack, a young person with the label of autism, works up a particular identity which is considered to be socially and culturally desirable. In doing so, he draws upon the discursive resources provided by adults as he gives an account of his PCAR meeting.

Extract 1:

R: Can you tell me a little bit about the meeting?

Jack: They took me out of engineering and we were talking about my review(.)how I've been doing how I am coping with everything(.4)I said it was okay(.4)everyones saying nice things(.)saying I'm really polite(.)Like very honourly and noble(.)because I'm a noble person(.)

(Jack, p.3 l.160-167)

In response to the open-ended question regarding his PCAR, Jack orients his talk towards the character assessments provided by adults (first assessment; line 4) and engages in his own assessment regarding being positioned in this way (second assessment; line 5). Assessments (evaluations) in interaction are often followed by second assessments; these are typically upgraded if they agree with the first statement (Pomerantz, 1984). In taking up the evaluations of others, Jack began to locate himself within his storied account of his PCAR, with the talk of others providing the discursive resources which he used to strengthen his positioning himself in a particular way. Jack reveals his personal agency in such constructions through his pronoun shifts 'we', 'I', 'my', 'everyone', which culminates in the declarative statement of 'I'm a noble person' (line 5). In Extracts 2 and 3, Jack continues to orient his talk toward the various attributes, characteristics and abilities offered by others in working up a particular identity position.

Extract 2:

1 R: Okay(.)So these other people that you haven't met before were saying really good
2 things(.)complimenting you?
3 Jack: Yeah(.4)they were(.)One of them said I was re:ally polite(.)and I'm always polite(.) and
4 I'm re:ally kind and I always hold the door for people. Some people don't even hold(.)or
5 say thank you(.)some te:achers even forget.

(Jack, p.11 l.606-611)

Extract 3:

1 R: Okay(.)yeah(.)When everyone was giving those compliments to you(.)how do you think
2 they see you now?
3 Jack: Polite, noble, loyal and truthful(.)

(Jack, p.12 l.671-675)

In Extract 2, Jack invokes a particular identity by drawing upon the discursive resources provided by adults whom Jack was unfamiliar with within his PCAR (line 3). Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs) are evident within Jack's talk in his use of 'really' and 'always' (lines 3-4) which are deployed to strengthen the credibility of his positioning himself as a moral actor. ECFs are often used to strengthen a claim and manage a speaker's identity in relation to what they are saying; as being a particular category of person (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986). In line 4, Jack further strengthens his claim of being ‘really kind’ by providing evidence ‘I always hold the door for people’. The use of contrast, ‘some teachers even forget’ (line 5), is deployed to invoke cultural notions of what is expected of a ‘moral person’. There is the implication in Jack’s talk that adults are expected to act in particular ways at all times, and the fallibility of some in this respect is used by Jack to further assert his reflexive positioning as a moral person. Extract 3 illustrates further how Jack locates himself as a moral person by drawing upon how others construe him; a discursive act of consensus which further consolidates his moral positioning, culminating in his declaration of his being a ‘polite, noble, loyal and truthful’ person (line 3).

A recurring feature across young people’s storied accounts of their PCAR was the working up of particular identity positions which carried social and cultural value; positionings which were constructed and strengthened by drawing the upon the discursive resources offered by the other actors within young people’s narratives. By reflexively locating themselves within particular categories which were socially and culturally valued, a series of associated rights and entitlements were made available (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). Thus, young people’s management of stake in their accounting carried with it the possibility of engaging in particular social practices.

Drawing upon this concept of categorisation and associated entitlements, the psychological notion of ‘pride’ was identified throughout young people’s narratives. Situated within a discursive framework, the invocation of ‘pride’ was deployed and worked up by young people to strengthen the credibility of their claims to being a particular kind of person. Emotion categories can be used in a range of social actions, such as managing one’s identity or accountability, or supporting the factuality or credibility of a claim (Potter, 1996; Potters & Edwards, 2001).

Extract 4 illustrates well how the psychological business of ‘pride’ was managed and worked up by Lucy, a young person with the label of autism, as she negotiated a particular identity position within her account of her PCAR.

Extract 4:

1 R: (.)But if you think your mum is here now(.)what do you think she would say about your
2 meeting?
3 Lucy: I think she’d say it would have gone really well (.)
4 R: OK(.)And why do you think your mum would say that?

5 Lucy: Because she’s (happy) what I’ve done(.)so far(.)And so(.)I think for that meeting(.4)she
6 was re:ally proud of what I’ve achieved so far(.)

(Lucy, p.12 l.711-720)

In the above extract, Lucy is presented with the hypothetical question of what her mother might say about her PCAR meeting, and orients her response around the emotion category of her mother being ‘really proud’ (line 6). Lucy’s inference as to her mother’s emotional state is considered as functioning to strengthen her account of the considerable progress she has made academically; something which featured heavily within her overall narrative. Indeed, the experience of pride which Lucy refers to is part of her wider construction of herself as a ‘successful and competent learner’, an identity position which she invests considerable time in working up within her account. By drawing upon an ‘imagined’ discursive resource from another person, Lucy accomplishes her positioning herself as a successful learner. In lines 5 and 6, Lucy’s repetition of ‘so far’ furthers strengthens her positioning of the considerable academic progress she has made, with the implication that more progress is to come. Lucy’s negotiation of her identity as a successful learner also brings with it associated rights and entitlements, specifically in relation to her having freedom to learn and freedom to achieve. The latter is particularly consequential for Lucy as her future aspirations featured strongly in her PCAR narrative.

Across young people’s accounts of their PCARs, the navigation and negotiation of specific identities was managed in different ways with a universal goal of invoking a particular kind of personhood; which carried with it particular kinds of rights and entitlements. In pursuit of this goal, the young participants oriented themselves toward the positive talk of others and deployed various discursive devices in acts of overt and more subtle forms of resistance. Considerable energy was invested by young participants in constructing such positions within their accounts of their PCARs. However, as young people located themselves within their storied accounts, the status of their autism label represented a potential challenge.

4.2.1 Negotiating the label of autism

The status of their autism and possible consequences for how young people located themselves presented a dilemma regarding how such an assigned label ‘fit’ within their discursive constructions of self. Within the interpretative repertoires of autism as ‘deficit’ and ‘difference’, an ideological dilemma was identified which young people negotiated within their storied accounts of their PCAR meetings. The dilemmatic tension lay in how young people oriented their talk toward the various constructions of autism which were on offer, and attempted to integrate these as they worked up a particular kind of identity. In situating themselves within an ‘autism as deficit’ discourse, the possibilities of different ways of being were called into question. However, within young people’s accounts the rejection of their autism label potentially meant a denial of a fundamental aspect of selfhood.

Extracts 5 and 6 illustrate well how Lucy navigated this dilemmatic tension whilst attempting to address the possible implications for her construction as a competent and successful learner.

Extract 5:

1 R: Is it something that you think is important to your life?
2 Lucy: Yes (.)Because if I didn’t notice it(.)I think my life would be harder(.)But if I noticed it as
3 I do now(.)I’d be able to go(.4)say if someone was like ‘What’s wrong with you? I’d be
4 like ‘Hey, it’s my autism, I can’t he:lp it’(.)

(Lucy, p.15 l.868-874)

Extract 6:

1 R: Can you tell me a little bit about what you think it is?
2 Lucy: I think it’s just not understanding wording(.)and(0.8)I think it’s just wording(.)
3 R: Yeah(.)understanding wording(.)And what do you think about your autism?
4 Lucy: Well(.)I don’t want to let it affect me much(.)Because well(.4)if I let it affect me(.)I don’t
5 think that I would get the grades that I would get now(.)

(Lucy, p.14 l.804-816)

In Extract 5, Lucy takes ownership of her autism when considering its importance and relevance in her daily life with her empathetic use of ‘Yes’ (line 2) and ‘my autism’(line 4). In line 4, Lucy reveals her agency by putting her autism ‘to work’ in eliciting greater understanding from her peers ‘Hey its my autism’. There is an implication in Lucy’s talk that her constructions of autism carry with it difficulties within her social relationships. By ‘noticing’ her autism (line 2), Lucy is able to take control and consequently engage in meaningful social practices and social life.

In Extract 6, Lucy navigates the taking ownership of her autism and the associated tensions within locating herself as a competent and successful learner. In lines 2-3, Lucy constructs her autism as being limited to ‘just wording’. Her repetition of the words ‘wording’ and use of minimisation ‘just’ (line 2) function to restrict the ‘effects’ of Lucy’s autism to a small part of her life. Minimisation as a discursive device is considered to act as means of downplaying the importance of an object, event, or behaviour (Wiggins, 2016). This restriction allows Lucy’s construction of herself as a successful learner to remain untroubled (lines 4-5).

In contrast, Jack oriented his talk toward the repertoire of difference when constructing his ‘autistic identity’ which was a recurring feature throughout his storied account of his PCAR. Extract 7 illustrates well how Jack constructed his autism and in so doing engaged in a discursive act of resistance to being positioned within a particular version of autism which may have a limiting effect.

Extract 7:

1 Jack: I know what one of my friends would say(.)
2 R: What would they say?
3 Jack: She would understand how her autism affects her(.)because I have an autistic friend(.)
4 R: Okay(.)
5 Jack: Autism is always different with other people(.)so you can never truly define it(.4)so that’s
6 why I find it hard(.4)Everyone is unique in their separate, different patterns.
7 R: Yeah(.)
8 Jack: So no one true autistic person is similar to another one(.)It’s like snowflakes(.)never the
9 same(.)

(Jack, p.20 l.1165-1175)

In the above extract, Jack works up a particular version of autism which is resistant to being categorised in one defining way (line 5), and in so doing positions himself as being immune to being categorized himself. By drawing on the repertoire of uniqueness (line 6), Jack engages in a subtle form of resistance to being placed within a deficits category by others, as he locates himself within his accounting of his PCAR. Jack negotiates his constructing of autism as unique by invoking the metaphor of a snowflake as a powerful discursive and rhetorical device (line 8).

Jack’s autism was something which was explicitly discussed during his PCAR. Consequently, there was much at stake for Jack in drawing upon this repertoire of difference to support his positioning himself as a moral person. The invocation of autism as unique was also deployed by Jack to make a claim to knowledge which only he and others with autism could make. This positioning of himself as having particular epistemic rights also functioned to enhance his personal agency within his PCAR account.

4.2.3 Summary

Within young people's PCAR narratives, how the psychological business of identity was worked up and managed came to be categorised as a key analytic issue. The negotiation of specific identities was undertaken in different ways by each young person, with a universal goal of invoking a particular kind of personhood; which carried with it particular rights and entitlements to engage in meaningful social and cultural practices. In pursuit of this goal, the young participants oriented themselves toward the positive talk of others, and deployed various discursive devices in acts of overt and more subtle forms of resistance to being categorised in particular ways. In offering social representations of themselves, young people also made claims to knowledge and thus asserted their epistemic rights and authority. The question of epistemic rights, their distribution, and how participants positioned themselves in relation to such rights will be the focus of the next section.

4.3 Negotiating epistemic rights, primacy, and authority

A recurring feature of talk identified across participants accounts concerned the distribution of knowledge and various rights, duties and obligations taken up by participants in making particular knowledge claims. The issue of epistemic rights and how people accountably know, how they know it, and whether they have the right to describe it is implicated in the organised practice of speaking (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that people have the epistemic right to talk about their feelings, experiences, and thoughts (Heritage, 2013). The issue of epistemic rights and their distribution was identified as being a primary focus of staff member's talk and was worked up within their discursive accounts to position themselves as having particular duties and moral obligations. In extending epistemic rights to young people, staff members drew upon the interpretative repertoire of 'young person as active agent', and in so doing positioned themselves as moral actors.

Extract 8 illustrates well how Danni, a member of school staff, oriented her talk toward to the importance of collaborative working which she used to construct subject positions for herself and young people.

Extract 8:

1 R: You mentioned that unless we include young people we're not going to get anywhere(.)
2 could you tell me a little more about what you mean by that?
3 Danni: Well(.)because it's their lives and I believe in inclusion(.)I don't believe in doing things to
4 young people(.)it's about working together(.)

(Danni, p.5 l:229-240)

In the above extract, Danni orients her talk to her personal beliefs regarding the importance of promoting young people's agency, thus constructing her own duties as moving beyond the professional toward the moral. This positioning of herself as having a moral obligation is strengthened in line 3 with her emphasis on it being 'their lives'. There is the implication that involving young people in making decisions needs to transcend a single PCAR, and acknowledge that these are decisions which will affect young people as they move into adulthood. Danni highlights that making decisions should not be undertaken by adults and done 'to young people' (lines 3-4). Throughout her overall account, Danni oriented much of her talk toward the importance of including young people at the point of transition within the process. There is the implication that being at the cusp of adulthood brings with it enhanced rights to be involved in making decisions. A right which may not be afforded to children to such an extent.

This was a distinction made across staff members accounts and used to strengthen their constructions of seeking views as being a moral issue. The positioning of young people as 'young adults' also suggested that adult participants drew upon cultural repertoires of knowledge and rights to claim such knowledge. Knowledge, in general, is normatively and culturally linked to the categories of persons in various ways. Particular categories of persons are oriented to as being entitled to know specific sorts of knowledge, with their descriptions often viewed as more or less credible based on such categories (Potter, 1996). In Western cultures, it could be argued that a defining feature of adulthood, as a social construct, is situated within the right to make claims about knowledge and make decisions. By positioning young people within the category of 'young adulthood', their rights to knowing and making decisions were enhanced, with adults taking up a corresponding duty to uphold those rights.

Staff members also oriented their talk toward the importance of ‘pupil voice’ as they drew upon the repertoire of ‘young people as active agents’. The importance staff members placed on promoting the voice of young people was integral to constructions of their duty to extend epistemic rights; as to invite young people to share their views also brought with it an invitation for them to make particular knowledge claims.

Extract 9 illustrates well how the issue of gathering the views of young people was managed and worked up by staff as both a professional and moral obligation.

Extract 9:

Nancy: Oh(.)to make it easier for young people(.)I think then making sure that they get their voice heard whichever way is best for them(.)so the majority of our young people probably can speak in the actual annual review but I still make them do the presentation because it makes them think about it before(.)

(Nancy, p.6 l.310-318)

In the above extract, Nancy, a member of school staff, describes the process which is undertaken to support young people to share their views within their PCAR. Within Nancy’s discursive account, she positions herself as having a moral duty to promote pupil voice (line 2) which brings with it an associated duty to support young people to achieve this by preparing a presentation. Implicit in her talk is her construction of young people as existing along a continuum of ability to express their views to varying degrees, ‘the majority of our young people can speak’ (line 2); an issue which needed to be addressed by school.

Across staff members accounts, the issue of seeking pupil views as a moral duty also brought with it pragmatic concerns. It was simply not enough to ask young people what their views were. The extension of epistemic rights to young people also placed an additional duty on staff to prepare pupils in advance of their PCARs, as well as to create conditions within the meetings which were conducive to the sharing of views. Staff member’s positioning of young people as having epistemic rights also introduced the possibility of ‘pupil voice’ being tokenistic. As staff located themselves as moral agents within their discursive accounts, they also oriented their talk toward the importance of young people's agreement. In positioning themselves as having a duty to seek views, an associated duty to seek agreement was also constructed by staff.

Extract 10 illustrates well how Danni managed the duty of seeking pupil views with the associated duty of agreement.

Extract 10:

1 R: You mentioned that unless we include young people we're not going to get anywhere(.)
2 could you tell me a little more about what you mean by that?

3 Danni: I think for young people to actually engage with interventions(.)to engage with their
4 learning(.)to engage proactively in things(.)you need to have the(.)for want of a better way
5 of putting it(.)buy-in to whatever you're doing(.)

(Danni, p.5 l.254-261)

In the above extract, Danni's use of listing (lines 3-5) is deployed to emphasise the range of expectations placed on young people and schools to accomplish. Implicit in her talk is that accomplishing such an array of tasks necessitates seeking pupil agreement, positioned as a core duty for staff. There is further implication in her talk that the issue of self-determination is constructed as both a moral and pragmatic concern in her relating the need to secure, 'buy-in to whatever you're doing' (line 5). The issue of self-determination versus control was a predominant feature of Danni's talk, which she oriented herself toward in working up her positioning as moral actor; a position which guided her professional practice.

The extension of epistemic rights as a core duty for staff was not a unidirectional position. Within staff members accounts, the role of giving information was also a feature of talk; with staff operating within their traditional roles as educators with an associated duty to provide professional knowledge regarding a young person's learning progress. In this way, staff retained their own epistemic rights which was constructed as being valuable. The position of staff member's professional knowledge in relation to that of young peoples and families required a delicate negotiation, as to assert primacy of such knowledge would jeopardise staff's positioning themselves as moral actors.

Extract 11 illustrates how Nancy negotiated the issue of epistemic authority and primacy as she reconstructed her own position within a PCAR; a discursive act she accomplished by referencing her role within a conventional review meeting.

Extract 11:

1 Nancy: I think its partly about changing the dynamics(.)so you have a different type of conversation
2 and its more collaborative with them a:nd the parents(.)Because I think with the old
3 ones(.)and especially with statements when you were reviewing them(.)depending on what
4 parental experience was like(.)it wasn't necessarily(1.4)I don't know(.)it just feels more
5 like a productive(.)collaborative conversation(.)and that's what it should be about(.)the
6 school-family partnership(.)It helps create that dynamic and you can say anything(.)and it's
7 not ju::st about the written feedback that people have also given(.)

(Nancy, p.15 l.877-895)

In the above extract, Nancy describes how PCARs represent a preferred way of working with young people and families, which offer a, 'different type of conversation' (line 1). Nancy deploys the use of contrasting as a discursive device to strengthen this claim (lines 2-4), which she punctuates by asserting PCARs as being a more, 'productive collaborative conversation' (line 5). Her repetition of the word 'dynamic' (lines 1 & 6) suggest that decision-making powers and duties within conventional review meetings lie with professionals; a position which is perhaps undesirable. This is supported by her use of the word 'should' (line 5) as a modal verb to assert the school-family partnership as being a preferred state of affairs; a discursive act of moral positioning by Nancy.

The distribution of epistemic rights to young people was identified as being a core feature of talk within staff members accounts and was situated within staff positioning themselves as having a professional and moral duty to uphold those rights. The question of how young people took up the position on offer, and how this was managed and worked up within their storied accounts was identified as key analytic issue.

4.3.1 Epistemic rights and young people's reflexive positioning

Positioning theory (PT) maintains that acts of reflexive positioning results in the positioning of others (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999). Within their storied accounts, adults positioned themselves as having a moral duty to seeks the views of young people and extend epistemic rights. In doing so, a corresponding position was constructed for young people to take up. PT maintains that the taking up of a position is contingent upon an awareness that such a position exists. Findings from the analysis of young people's discursive accounts suggest that young people were aware that such a position was being offered. Moreover, as young people oriented to the talk of adults, they also constructed a position of enhanced agency. In negotiating such a position, young people drew upon the knowledge offered by others as a discursive resource.

Extract 12 illustrates well how Jack, a young person with the label of autism, takes up the position of enhanced epistemic rights.

Extract 12:

1 R: How do you think other people see you now that you've had the meeting?
2 Jack: Maybe(.)understanding me a bit more(.4)that's my wildest guess(.)
3 R: Yeah they understand you a bit more(.)Okay(.)Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
4 Jack: It's hard to explain(.4)Ma:ybe they understand how I think a bit more(.4)and how people
5 in my situation maybe think(.)

(Jack, p.15 l.889-901)

In the above extract, Jack orients his talk toward considering the purpose of sharing his views with adults, a discursive process he undertakes hesitantly, evidenced in his use of hedging talk 'maybe', 'bit', 'wildest guest' (line 2). In lines 4-5, Jack expands upon his original response to also position adults as having a duty to understand, not only how he thinks, but also how others with the label of autism think, which he refers to as 'people in my situation'. Throughout Jacks account, he draws upon a repertoire of 'autism as difference' and the above extract indicates that by taking up the position to share his views, he places a corresponding duty on adults to understand this different cognitive style.

Extract 13 illustrates how Lucy, another young person with autism, constructed a position of enhanced agency.

Extract 13:

1 R: OK(.)How do you think it was helpful then?
2 Lucy: Just to know my grades and see where I'm at(.)
3 R: Ah(.)yeah(.)
4 Lucy: So(.)I could pu:sh myself harder to get the grades I want(.)

(Lucy, p.14 l.812-816)

In the above extract, Lucy orients her talk toward the knowledge provided by adults (line 2), which she utilises as a discursive resource to enhance her own agentic action and to direct her future academic activities; illustrated in line 4 with her assertion that she can use this information to ‘push’ herself ‘harder’. The above extract is representative of Lucy’s overall construction of herself as a successful and competent learner, and her orientation to the talk of others was drawn upon as a source of motivation to achieve her future goals.

Extracts 12 and 13 above illustrate well how young participants took up the position of enhanced epistemic rights which were offered within their PCAR. In so doing, young people also located themselves as having increased rights to engage in meaningful social practices, such as the freedom to achieve and the freedom to be understood. Locating themselves within such a position also resulted in expectations by young people that the sharing of their views would produce meaningful actions by adults; creating reciprocal acts of positioning.

Extract 14 illustrates how Jack, a young person with the label of autism, engaged in this reciprocal act of positioning as he located himself within his discursive account.

Extract 14:

1 R: Okay. Another question about the meeting is, now that you’ve had the meeting how do
2 you think things might change?

3 Jack: Um(.)maybe the things we discussed will get put into place(.)for example(.)I really don’t
4 like mandarin(.)

5 R: Mandarin(.)okay(.)

6 Jack: Because I find languages quite hard(.)So: thinking maybe take me out mandarin to do
7 something else(.)another subject that I might enjoy(.)

(Jack, p.12 l.686-696)

In the above extract, Jack considers the outcomes of his PCAR meeting and orients his talk toward the academic aspects of the discussion. In line 3, Jack constructs his PCAR as being a collaborative endeavour with his reference to ‘we’, which is followed by an expectation that changes will be made. In line 4, Jack provides an example of PCAR discussion topic which is deployed to strengthen the credibility of his account that his views were sought and valued by adults; thus taking up the position of enhanced epistemic rights which were made available. In lines 6-7, Jack makes a knowledge claim regarding subjects he finds difficult and offers an alternative, and in so doing reveals his personal agency. As Jack locates himself within his account as having increased voice, choice and control, there is an implication that the sharing of his views brings with it expectations that these will be acted upon by others.

4.3.2 Social contract

Across participants accounts, PCARs were presented as potentially offering a social context in which new knowledge could be co-constructed and where a climate of empowerment and enhanced agency for young people could be created. The taking up of the position of enhanced epistemic rights by young people also brought with it the anticipation that adults would enact changes which were collaboratively agreed upon. Within participants accounts, these reciprocal acts of positioning were constructed as a ‘social contract’. This social contract was managed within staff accounts as an extension of their duties to seek young people’s views and functioned to fulfil staff’s positioning of themselves as moral actors. In situating themselves as having a professional and moral duty to promote young people’s voice and self-determination, an additional duty was constructed by staff to ‘follow-through’ on young people’s views and wishes.

Extract 15 illustrates how Nancy, a member of school staff, managed this social contracting and in so doing, also enhanced her own agentic action.

Extract 15:

1 R: Do you think anything changed with that format(.)compared to the more conventional
2 ones?

3 Nancy: I think you have a better discussion at the beginning and because you’ve had that discussion
4 there(.)then when you look at the targets(.)you think(.)o:h that links to that and we need to
5 do this or actually(.)we haven’t said anything about(.4)it might draw your attention to a
6 target you might need to re-write(.)so that it can be helpful in that way(.4) If you’re only
7 ever looking at the paperwork(.)and the outcomes on an EHCP(.)its quite a reduced
8 conversation.

(Nancy, p14 l.843-853)

In the above extract, Nancy orients her talk to the inclusion of young people and the seeking of their views as providing a positive frame which results in a ‘better discussion’ (line 3), and directs the course of the meeting in a positive way (lines 3-5). In drawing upon the collective knowledge of young people and families, Nancy highlights that this produces a deeper understanding of how the various strands of support weave together; which also provides a platform for further action by school staff, evidenced by asserting, 'we need to do this' (lines 4-5). Her frequent reference to 'we' illustrated throughout the above extract is deployed by Nancy to construct an additional duty to make changes to various aspects of the support on offer. The construction of this additional duty is presented as something which is desirable by Nancy, with the knowledge provided by young people being seen as being 'helpful' (line 6) to the review process. There is also the implication that seeking the views of young people also provided a more holistic understanding, which Nancy supports through her reference to conventional review meetings producing a more 'reduced conversation' (line 8). The taking up by young people of their epistemic rights was constructed by Nancy as being accompanied by a duty from staff to follow-through, thus strengthening her overall positioning as moral actor within her overall account.

4.3.3 Summary

The seeking of pupil views in the form of extending epistemic rights was constructed by members of staff as being a core professional duty which brought with it associated obligations to secure pupil agreement, promote decision-making powers and create conditions for involvement. The construction of these duties were situated within staff member's overall positioning of themselves as moral agents as they oriented their talk toward the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness'.

The taking up of the position by young people of enhanced epistemic rights also brought with it the possibility of increased personal agency, with young people also placing an associated duty upon adults to 'follow-through'. The by-product of these various acts of positioning was the potential construction of a 'social contract'; which staff oriented toward as representing a call to further action. The claims to knowledge made by young people as they asserted their epistemic rights brought with it the potential for positive social consequences. However, the potential social consequences of 'no knowledge' claims by young people also presented a dilemma to members of school staff and their positioning of themselves as moral agents. This dilemma and how it was negotiated by adults formed the basis of the following section.

4.4 'Autism as deficit' versus 'autism as difference'

Within the storied accounts of school staff, an ideological dilemma was identified as staff oriented their talk toward the competing and contradictory interpretative repertoires of 'autism as deficit' and 'autism as difference'. Drawing upon this variety of contradictory repertoires created tensions and dilemmas within staff member's talk; which brought with it implications for how young people were positioned and how staff worked up and managed their own professional and moral duties.

The dilemmatic tension for staff lay in drawing upon a 'deficits' view of autism, which was talked about in terms of cognitive abilities, intellectual functioning, social communication, reciprocal interaction and so on. The locating of young people by staff within a 'bio-medical' and 'deficits' construction of autism consequently called into question young people's capacities for self-determination and related decision-making rights and abilities. This in turn 'troubled' staff member's own constructions of themselves as having a professional and moral obligation to seek the views of young people and to promote their voice, choice and control within the PCAR; for in order to fulfil such obligations, staff needed to reformulate their own constructions of autism.

Within staff members PCAR narratives, this reformulation took the form of constructing autism as a 'difference', thus allowing staff to position themselves as moral actors as they drew upon the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness.' The consequence of such a construction was the legitimisation of young people's 'ways of knowing' which permitted staff to fulfil their duty to extend epistemic rights. However, the construction of autism solely as being a 'difference' brought with it added tension for staff, as to position young people in such a way would be to imply that they did not have any 'problems' which required additional support; and therefore would call into question the very nature of their SEN status and the need to carry out an Annual Review.

Extract 16 illustrates how Danni, a member of staff, draws upon the repertoire of 'autism as deficit' as she describes the nature of an individual young person's autism, and in so doing invokes her own professional knowledge.

Extract 16:

1 R: I also noticed several times you referenced her autism(.)being on the spectrum(.)Can you
2 tell me a little bit more about your understanding of Lucy's autism?

3 Danni: So(.)I guess they would describe her as(1.4)she would have been in the olden days be
4 called aspergers(.)But she's high functioning in a sense that her social communication is
5 better than a lot of young people(.)Cognitively she is below average(.)but not horre:ndously
6 below average(.)So we've got another young person in school who doesn't have any EHCP
7 whose CAT scores are through the roof(.)and who is 'Aspi' as she describes herself(.)But
8 Lucy is not cognitively as able as that(.)

(Danni,p.17 l.978-991)

In the above extract, Danni orients her talk toward a 'bio-medical' view of autism, characterised by the historical classification of ASD into various categories; which Danni alludes to in line 5 with her reference to Lucy's form of autism as being 'Aspergers'. Danni also provides an assessment of Lucy's level of functioning with her reference to 'high-functioning' (line 4) and her cognitive ability, which she highlights to be 'below average' (line 6). In offering such an assessment, Danni invokes a particular professional identity and corresponding professional knowledge; which is legitimised through her reference to young people's performance on psychometric tests and their 'CAT [cognitive ability test] scores' (line 7). This is followed by Danni's use of contrasting as a discursive device, as she compares Lucy's cognitive ability to that of another young person with autism whose scores 'are through the roof' (line 7). Danni's use of contrasting strengthens the credibility of her account that Lucy - due to the nature of her autism - requires additional support and that her SEN status is therefore warranted.

4.4.1 'It's implicit in everything' - Prepositioning and implications for ways of knowing

Within their narratives, staff members frequently drew upon repertoires of 'deficit' in their general descriptions of young people's autism. The use of contrasting as a discursive device was deployed across staff accounts to strengthen the credibility of their locating young people along a continuum of ability; thus justifying young people's SEN status. In drawing upon an 'autism as deficit' repertoire, staff positioned themselves as having epistemic primacy. That is, staff made claims to particular forms knowledge regarding young people's abilities and in so doing, legitimised this way of knowing by invoking the category of 'professional'.

The tensions in claiming this epistemic primacy came as staff oriented their talk toward PCARs which raised the issue as to the legitimacy of young people's knowledge given their autism status. A by-product of staff member's 'prepositioning' of young people within a deficits category was the potential 'closing off' of particular ways of knowing and particular ways of being. Viewed through a Positioning Theory lens, 'prepositioning' as a discursive practice involves 'listing and sometimes justifying attributions of skills, character traits, biographical "facts," deemed relevant to whatever positioning is going forward (Harré & Moghaddam, 2009, p. 10). The prepositioning of young people in terms of deficiencies, incapacities, vulnerabilities and so on potentially revoked their rights to take part in the PCAR process; which, in turn, threatened staff member's constructions of their duties to uphold those rights. In attempting to reconcile this dilemmatic tension, staff members engaged in various discursive activities aimed at minimising a young person's autism label or orienting their talk toward the construction of autism as a 'difference'.

Extract 17 illustrates how Nancy, a member of school staff, negotiated the dilemmatic tensions of positioning young people within a deficits category during their PCAR.

Extract 17:

1 Nancy: I think its implicit in everything you discuss because that's why you're having the discussion
2 in the first place(.)because if you didn't have those things you wouldn't be having that
3 meeting anyway(.)And the targets are built around the difficulties that come with those
4 diagnoses(.)So(.)I think its implied throughout the conversation.

(Nancy, p.13 l.740-748)

In the above extract, Nancy orients her talk toward young people's 'diagnoses' (line 4) bringing with it 'difficulties' (line 3) which require adult support and intervention. Her emphasis on young people's autism being 'implicit' (lines 1 & 4) throughout the PCAR discussion presents a contradiction for Nancy; as within other parts of her account, she oriented her talk toward the value of including young people and their families, which she constructed as bringing a deeper and more holistic understanding of their strengths and needs (see Extract 15). There is a suggestion of uncertainty and ambivalence within

Nancy's narrative constructions of her own role and duties. On the one hand, the placing of young people at the centre of the process is positioned as a moral duty. On the other hand, such a focus on pupil voice may mean that adult's duty to ensure that support is in place to meet the difficulties associated with a young person's autism are not fully explored or addressed.

Extract 18 illustrates how Danni, in returning to her account of Lucy's PCAR, offers an alternative version of her autism; a version which she constructs to be more congruent with her own moral and ethical position of inclusion and empowerment.

Extract 18:

1 Danni: The feedback she got was so positive(.)So(.)she is different. You know(.)I suppose unique
2 (.)But she's clearly different and the way she communicates is different(.)but for some
3 reason in the last two years it's not been(.)Because she's not so::(1.4)her emotions and her
4 ability to manage the difficulties in a mainstream secondary school(.)

(Danni, p.18 l.1087-1091)

In above extract, Danni orients her talk toward the reports which had been provided by other members of school staff regarding Lucy's academic and social progress within her PCAR, which she describes as being 'so positive' (line 1). In presenting the evaluations of others, Danni strengthens the factuality of her own account regarding Lucy's progress; something which she accomplishes through a discursive act of *corroboration* and *consensus*. Through describing the positive gains Lucy has made in the academic, social and emotional aspects of school life, Danni works up an alternative version of Lucy's autism as she orients her talk toward her being 'different' and 'unique' (lines 2 & 3). This construction of Lucy as being 'different' allows Danni to accommodate the progress which Lucy has made whilst still maintaining the integrity of her autism status; as to be 'different' does not imply a deficiency and thus allows for potential. There is a suggestion in Danni's overall accounting that the drawing upon a repertoire of 'difference' functioned to reconcile the dilemmatic tension in locating all young people with the label of autism within a deficits-only category; a repertoire she also drew upon at points within her narrative, as illustrated in Extract 16. There is a suggestion in Danni's talk that the constructing of Lucy's autism as being a 'difference' was worked up and managed by Danni by drawing upon the discursive resources provided by Lucy's teachers and indeed, Lucy herself, within the PCAR; a suggestion which is also illustrated in Lucy's own storied account (see Extracts 4 & 13).

4.4.2 Summary

Within the storied accounts of school staff, an ideological dilemma was identified as staff oriented their talk toward the competing and contradictory interpretative repertoires of 'autism as deficit' and 'autism as difference'. This dilemmatic tension was further heightened as staff also drew upon the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness' to position young people as having particular rights to participate and make decisions within their PCAR. Drawing upon a 'bio-medical' repertoire of autism and related repertoire of 'vulnerability' called into question young people's decision-making powers and capabilities; which in turn 'troubled' staff members positioning of themselves as having a moral and professional responsibility to promote young people's voice, choice and control.

4.5 Negotiating the 'severity of ASD'

Within staff member's accounts, how autism was constructed presented a dilemma regarding the positioning of young people in terms of their epistemic rights. A core duty worked up and managed within staff member's accounts was the positioning of themselves as having professional and moral obligations to seek the views of young people. By expressing a view, young people also made claims to knowledge which created an associated duty for staff to act upon those views. However, staff members also provided accounts of instances where young people were seen to not take up the position of enhanced epistemic rights. The claims to 'no knowledge' by these young people were categorised as a source of additional tension within staff member's talk, as it presented a challenge to their own constructions as moral actors.

Attribution as a discursive practice was identified within staff member's accounts which functioned to reconcile this dilemmatic tension. As staff drew upon the repertoire of 'autism as deficit', staff also oriented their talk to the associated construction of autism as being a spectrum disorder; and in so doing located young people as having varying capacities to claim self-knowledge and make decisions. This 'attribution talk' by staff was undertaken in the form of negotiating the severity of young people's autism in terms of levels of functioning, social competencies, capacities for future-oriented goal-setting, capabilities for self-awareness and self-knowledge and so on.

Extract 19 illustrates how Mike, a member of school staff, orients his talk toward the notion of autism as a spectrum disorder in describing the capacities and capabilities of some young people to take up the position of enhanced epistemic rights within the context of their PCAR. In situating some young people along this continuum of ability to express their views - a discursive act of attribution - Mike also calls into question the veracity of some young people's knowledge claims, which are also linked to the severity of their autism.

Extract 19:

1 Mike: I don't think you always get the kind of truthful student views(.)I mean(.)things can be(.4)
2 I suppose especially with some children with autism(.)when they go home(.)things that
3 might have happened or occurred in school are perhaps conveyed in a way that is maybe
4 slightly different to what really happened(.)The perception that maybe is built up by the
5 parent of what is occurring on a daily basis in the school can be slightly warped by the
6 student's perhaps misjudged version of what might be going on in the day(.)

(Mike, p.24 l.1454-1464)

In line 1, Mike invokes the notion of their being 'ways of knowing' which are considered to be more objective - and consequently more legitimate - with his reference to PCARs as not always eliciting 'truthful student views' (line 1). In lines 2-3, Mike engages in a discursive act of prepositioning, as he orients his talk toward the spectrum nature of autism; and implies that objective claims to knowing are beyond the reach of 'some children with autism' (line 2). Accordingly, the locating of some young people within a particular version of autism calls into question their epistemic authority. In lines 2-4, Mike continues to work up the construction of autism as a spectrum disorder, which affects the way some young people can accountably know; a discursive act accomplished through his references to their perceptions being 'different', 'warped', and 'misjudged' (lines 4, 5 & 6). In situations where young people did not make claims to knowledge, or indeed made claims which were out-of-step with those of adults, staff members attributed this to the nature of their autism; a powerful discursive act which brought with it implications for staff member's positioning of themselves as moral actors.

As highlighted in Section 4.4, staff's orientation toward a bio-medical construction of autism created an ideological dilemma within the context of PCARs. In building upon this construction, an additional dilemma was created by staff, as to locate some young people as being unable to take up their epistemic rights also 'troubled' staff's constructions of themselves as having a duty to promote all young people's voice, choice and control. This was compounded further as staff described uncertainties and hesitations regarding the accuracy of their attributions around some young people's capacities and decision-making powers; and how such attributions were evaluated within the context of the young person's PCAR.

Extract 20 illustrates how Nancy, a member of school staff, presents an evaluation of Sam's PCAR; an evaluation which is untaken with some uncertainty. Within her overall account, Nancy worked up a version of Sam as having difficulties in formulating and communicating his thoughts and feelings to others; difficulties which were attributed to the nature of his autism.

Extract 20:

1 Nancy: And as(.)I suppose then being in a meeting with lots of people(.)But then Sam [young
2 person] knows everybody(.)so I'm not sure if that had a negative effect on him or not. It
3 seemed he was writing the post-it notes with his TA. So(0.4)I thi:nk it was fine(.)

(Nancy, p.7 l.75-82)

In the above extract, Nancy orients her talk toward the social aspects of Sam's PCAR and considers their possible effects on his levels of participation; an evaluation which is delivered with some ambivalence, by stating 'I'm not sure' (line 2). Nancy's reporting of Sam sharing his views via post-it notes is used as evidence for her evaluation of his levels of participation being 'fine' (line 3), which is delivered again with some hesitancy denoted by Nancy's various pauses. There is a suggestion in Nancy's account that Sam not using spoken language to communicate his views presented a challenge to adults in evaluating his level of involvement; with the implication that young people's use of spoken language presents a stronger indication of their capacities to assert their epistemic rights.

The attributing of 'no knowledge' claims to young people's levels of functioning was undertaken by staff as they worked to maintain their own position as moral agents.

In so doing, staff reformulated their own professional duties to encompass the making of decisions which were considered to be in the young person's 'best interests'. Within staff members accounts, 'best interest' decisions were worked up and accomplished through staff invoking their professional knowledge and experience; thus asserting their epistemic primacy. However, whilst professional knowledge was constructed by staff to have legitimacy, this did not alleviate the tension and conflict they experienced in adopting such a position. Staff called into question the extent to which they were acting in a 'person-centred way' in such situations. This line of self-questioning also prompted staff to consider their own abilities and competencies in successfully eliciting the views of young people whom they had positioned in a particular way; which in turn gave rise to doubts as to whether their own positioning as 'person-centred practitioners' was mere rhetoric that failed to manifest in practice.

Extracts 21 and 22 illustrate how Mike, a member of school staff, attempts to reconcile the tension between the rhetoric of PCP and it's actual practice as he provides an account of a young person with the label of autism who is positioned as having had difficulty in participating in his PCAR.

Extract 21:

Mike: Yeah(.)exactly he [young person] couldn't do that at all(.)Like I say that is quite unusual(.)
but I do feel that annual review processes often fly above the head of the student(.)Is it that
we're just getting them to agree what we think(.)with these documents? I will manipulate
the meeting to a degree where I kind of want them to(.4)the things I know I want to put in
as strategies and support(.)I will kind of lead them I suppose(.)because actually it can be
really hard for them to vocalise(.)like we talked about before(.)what they really think about
what's working(.)what's not working what will help them(.)

(Mike, p.13 l.753-770)

Extract 22:

Mike: So(.)person-centred is absolutely wonderful and it's definitely the way forward in how we
should do things(.)but at the same time are we doing it in a way that they can access? And
can they really give their views and opinions? I'm not too sure(.)

(Mike, p.14 l.824-831)

In Extract 21 above, Mike provides an assessment of one specific young person who was deemed to have not been able to participate in his PCAR (line 1), which is deployed by Mike as evidence to support his overall accounting as to the efficacy and appropriateness of PCARs for some young people on the spectrum; a position he strengthens further with his use of rhetorical questioning in lines 2-3. In being presented with a young person who does not take up their epistemic rights, Mike orients his talk toward having to 'manipulate' and 'lead' (lines 3 & 5) to secure pupil agreement, thus invoking his epistemic primacy as a professional. There is a suggestion in Mike's talk that asserting such a position is an undesirable one within the context of a PCAR but is a position which is borne out of necessity. In lines 6-7, Mike orients his talk toward young people's difficulties to 'vocalise' their views (line 6), thus invoking a category of autism as being characterised by difficulties in social communication; a discursive act which functions to justify Mike's taking-up of the position of epistemic primacy. Implicit within his account is the tension and conflict Mike experiences in addressing the claims to 'no knowledge' by the young person with the construction of his own professional and moral duty to seek such views. A point which Mike revisits within the sequence of his account, as illustrated in Extract 22. In lines 1-2, Mike's affirmation of PCP as being 'the way forward in how we should do things' is used to infer what constitutes moral and ethical professional practice; and is so doing strengthens his own positioning of himself as a moral actor. The establishing of himself as a moral person provides a secure platform for his questioning of whether there is a gap between PCP's rhetoric and practice for some young people with the label of autism; and whether such young people can ever truly access their PCAR due to their level of functioning.

4.5.1 Summary

In ascribing certain rights to young people within their PCAR, staff members positioned themselves as moral agents; a discursive act undertaken by staff as they oriented toward the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness'. There is a suggestion that this moral position-taking was reinforced through young people taking up the corresponding position of epistemic rights, afforded to them by staff. However, claims to 'no knowledge' by some young people presented a challenge to staff members' moral positioning; and brought with it social consequences in terms of staff member's attributions. For staff, young people's 'failure' to take-up their epistemic rights was constructed as being a consequence of their autism. Attributions as a discursive practice therefore, functioned to justify both the withdrawal of epistemic rights and the asserting of staff's own epistemic primacy. As staff oriented their talk toward such attributions to account for certain actions - often in an attempt to preserve their own moral and ethical position - this also produced tension and conflict. In positioning some young people within a deficits discourse, staff presented accounts in which there existed a significant gap between the rhetoric of PCP and it's actual practice; a situation which potentially gave rise to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity amongst staff regarding their roles, duties, skills, competencies, abilities and so on as 'person-centred practitioners'.

4.6 Negotiating the boundaries between 'advocate' and 'equal partner'

The issue of how parents positioned themselves in relation to their child's rights and entitlements within the PCAR process was a recurring feature of talk across parental accounts; which involved parents undertaking a delicate, and at times emotional, negotiation between moving from their role as 'advocate' toward a reformulation of their position as 'equal partner' in the process. A defining feature of PCP's values framework is the principle that the young person is at the centre of the process. This underlying principle aims to enable the control and power in the process to shift from professionals toward the young person and their family. This is accompanied by the second principle that family members are equal partners within the process, who bring a depth of knowledge and richness of understanding around their child's hopes, dreams, fears, aspirations and so on to the meeting (Sanderson, 2000).

Within parent's accounts, the interpretative repertoire of 'parent as advocate' was drawn upon by parent's when reformulating their own position from 'advocate' to 'equal partner'. This reformulation required a delicate negotiation by parents, as they moved away from their duty to advocate for their child whilst at the same time maintaining the integrity of their right to make knowledge claims i.e. to retain their right to contribute to the process and invoke the position of 'parent as expert'. For some parents, this shifting in how they positioned themselves - and how they were positioned by other adults - was constructed as something which was desirable. For these parents, acting as their child's advocate was presented as a duty borne out of necessity rather than by choice; constructed as a response to a system which did not necessarily uphold their own child’s rights and entitlements. Furthermore, this duty was situated in relation to their child’s additional needs which were presented by parents as impacting on children’s abilities to self-advocate. Within some parent’s accounts of the PCAR process, this duty to advocate was presented as being no longer a requirement, as the nature of the process meant that their child’s voice was valued and promoted by others.

Extract 23 illustrates well how Ruby, a parent of a young person with the label of autism, drew upon the repertoire of ‘parent as advocate’ when speaking about her experiences of conventional meetings; which served as counterpoint to her experiences of her child’s PCAR which she also drew upon in repositioning herself as ‘equal partner’.

Extract 23:

1 R: Going back to the meeting and just annual review meetings in general(.)Is that kind of
2 how you see yourself and your role?

3 Ruby: Yeah(.)A bit of a warrior(.)Yeah(.)There’s been times that I’ve come up to the
4 school(.)and I’ve felt like I’m going into battle because something’s happened(.)But to
5 come out of that meeting(.) having the discussions that we did(.)I did come out of there
6 feeling really positive and more relaxed(.)

(Ruby, p.6 l.354-361)

In the above extract, Ruby invokes the powerful metaphor of ‘going into battle’ (line 4) to strengthen her account of the necessity to advocate on her child’s behalf when an incident has occurred at school. There is the implication in her talk that such a position is a duty which she takes up as a result of some misunderstanding, failure, or injustice. This is followed in lines 5-6 by Ruby’s use of contrasting as a discursive device to highlight that the PCAR process allows her to withdraw from her advocacy role, implying that such a position is not always desirable or wanted by her. There is also further implication that how others interacted with her son within the PCAR setting also meant that her role as advocate was not required; evidenced in her reference to leaving the meeting feeling ‘positive and more relaxed’ (line 6) which she deploys as an emotion category to strengthen this claim.

In addition to drawing upon the repertoire of ‘parent as advocate’ in reformulating their position to ‘equal partner’, parents also drew upon a wider cultural repertoire concerning the role of parents of young people at the point of transition to adulthood. This cultural repertoire included normative assumptions regarding the rights and decision-making powers and capabilities of young people. That is, in drawing upon this cultural repertoire, parents invoked culturally imbedded notions that transitioned-aged young people should begin making decisions for themselves regarding their future. Drawing upon this repertoire also brought with it culturally and socially imbedded expectations that parents take a 'step back' from their role as advocate, as their child transitions to adulthood. This was worked up and managed within parents accounts of their child's PCAR as an additional duty, one which brought with it added tension. The tension lay in balancing these normatively situated cultural demands with parent's constructions of their child's additional needs; the latter being construed by parents as potentially requiring continued advocacy.

Extract 24 illustrates how Pat, a parent of a young person with the label of autism, negotiates the boundary between 'advocate' and 'equal partner' as she provides an account of her daughter's PCAR. In response to a question regarding how the other adults interacted with her daughter within her PCAR, Pat provides a positive evaluation of such interactions which she locates within wider normative assumptions regarding young people's decision-making rights and capabilities.

Extract 24:

1 R: What are your thoughts of that kind of way of viewing her?

2 Pat: I think it's great(.)She responds really well(.04)I baby her(.)The last thing she needs is
3 more people babying her(.)I'm her mum(.)I'm going to be doing that until she's 30(.)

4 R: Yeah(.)

5 Pat: I think it helps Lucy feel more like she's part of the table rather than(.)'my mum's here(.)
6 my mum talks to the teachers and I just sit and nod'(.)

(Pat, p.14 l.819-831)

In the above extract, Pat's reference to 'babying' (line 3) her daughter is deployed as an Extreme Case Formulation to strengthen her account of parent's continued involvement in advocating for young people as being viewed to be undesirable by others within the immediate setting of the PCAR, as well as wider society. By drawing upon a repertoire of 'normal' developmental ability, there is the implication that her daughter - having now reached a certain stage of development - has also acquired particular decision-making capacities and associated rights. However, there is a further implication in Pat's talk that withdrawing from her advocacy role also brings with it tension, as she locates herself between these normative assumptions and her daughter's autism; evidenced by her reference to being involved 'until she's 30' (line 3). In lines 5-6, Pat deploys the use of active voicing/reported speech to further strengthen her accounting that young people having more voice, choice and control is something which is not only culturally desirable, but is also desirable by her daughter.

4.6.1 'Evaluation talk' as a discursive activity

Across parents accounts, reference to what was 'normal' for all young people to be able to do in terms of making decisions and what they should be allowed to do, was drawn upon by parents as they reformulated their role from 'advocate' to 'equal partner'. However, for some parents, their child's capacity to make decisions as being a 'normal' stage of development was constructed as aspirational; set against the back-drop of their autism which was constructed as potentially having an impact on such capacities. Within parent's accounts, their 'evaluation' of the PCAR process - and of other adults' abilities and intentions to seek their child's views effectively and authentically - was also drawn upon in navigating the boundary between 'advocate' and 'equal partner'. Situated within the critical discursive psychology framework underpinning the current research, this 'evaluation talk' was treated not as an 'objective' assessment by parents. Rather, consideration was given to how parents used this talk to work up and manage their various subject positions. That is, consideration was given as to the performative function of parents 'evaluation talk' within their storied accounts. Therefore, 'evaluation talk' was undertaken by parents as a discursive activity which they oriented toward in navigating the boundary between 'advocate' and 'equal partner'. For those parents who moved away from their advocacy role and repositioned themselves as 'equal partner', their 'evaluation talk' was positive in nature and was typically directed toward the other actors involved within the PCAR process.

Extract 25 illustrates how this positive 'evaluation talk' was oriented toward by a parent as she reformulated her position within her account of her son's PCAR

Extract 25:

1 Ruby: There're different things like, 'How does Simon feel that he is doing?', 'What would he
2 like to change and do better in?', 'What does he feel he's doing well in?'(.)In this one that
3 we had he said that he liked doing Geography(.)and he did also say to Mr G [member of
4 school staff] that he doesn't like noise(.)he doesn't like shouting(.)he needs people to be
5 more understanding of his feelings(.4)I don't know(.4)with this meeting(.)when Mr G
6 [member of school staff] spoke to him(.)he seemed to get a lot more quite grown up
7 answers from Simon(.)

(Ruby, p.9 l.475-490)

In above extract, Ruby orients her talk toward a positive assessment of how a member of school staff interacted with her son during his PCAR. In lines 1-2, Ruby deploys active voicing/reported speech to strengthen her accounting of her son's views being successfully sought by others and of his being placed at the heart of the process. Ruby orients her talk toward the format and structure of the PCAR being more effective in eliciting her son's views, with her emphasising that 'this meeting' (line 5) produced a depth of response she had not seen her son show before; with the implication that conventional review meetings did not achieve this and consequently required Ruby to act as *proxy* advocate. Ruby also orients her talk toward how the PCAR process - and how other's interacted with her son - produced 'quite grown up answers' (lines 6-7), invoking a construction of adulthood as being defined by an individual's capacity to choose, makes decisions, claim self-knowledge, and self-advocate. In orienting her talk toward her son's demonstration of his self-advocacy abilities, Ruby also reformulates her own position, with the implication that the taking-up of her historic role as advocate was not needed within the setting of the PCAR.

Positive 'evaluation talk' was a recurring discursive feature across most parental accounts, which parents used to reformulate their own subject positions to that of 'equal partner'. However, negative 'evaluation talk' was also undertaken by one parent to strengthen her account of her son voice's being suppressed, and by extension used to highlight how her own right to advocate was also revoked. For this parent, her use of negative 'evaluation talk' was utilised to highlight the gap between the rhetoric of 'person-centeredness' and it's actual practice.

Extract 26 illustrates how Jane, a parent of a young person with the label of autism, orients her talk toward a negative evaluation of the PCAR process to highlight how the transferring of particular rights to her son to self-advocate also entailed the withdrawal of her own rights to act as proxy advocate; the intendent result being that both voices were 'lost.'

Extract 26:

1 Jane: They didn't ask him to expand on any of his post-it note questions that I can
2 remember(.)They did talk to him(.)I felt it was more talking at him 'Alex you enjoy this
3 don't you'(.)

(Jane, p.10 l.513-517)

In the above extract, Jane orients her talk toward how the various actors interacted with her son within his PCAR; an interaction which was adult-led, illustrated by Jane's reporting of adults 'talking at him' (line 2). Jane's use of active voicing/reported speech is deployed as a discursive device to strengthen her accounting of how the talk of others was presented more as rhetorical statements rather than genuine inquiry (lines 2-3). Implicit in Jane's account, is that her own position as advocate was marginalised.

Within parent's accounts, the position of 'advocate' was constructed as both a *duty* and a *right*; a position which was invoked based on parent's evaluations of the PCAR process and of the other actors involved within that process. There is a suggestion that the role of advocate, and how it was constructed by parents within their accounts, was deeply intertwined with that of their role of 'parents as experts'. Thus a boundary between the position of 'advocate' and 'equal partner' was identified, which required a delicate negotiation by parents as they located themselves within their storied accounts. However, the boundary between these two positions were potentially blurred and obscured from parent's view. As speaking rights flowed toward young people, the resulting ebb for parents may have been constructed as a withdrawal of *all* rights; including the right to claim parental knowledge. This raised the issue of 'awareness' for parents and the extent to which they were aware that alternative positions may have been 'on offer'.

Extracts 27 and 28 illustrate how the issue of awareness was worked up and managed by Jane, as she attempted to locate herself within her storied account of her son's PCAR.

Extract 27:

1 Jane: He’s anxious because I felt he was put on the spot to give written feedback(.)
2 R: Okay(.)
3 Jane: But I can also see the positive on that(.)That’s an opportunity for him and they’re
4 involving him in that(.)

(Jane, p.14 l.787-795)

Extract 28:

1 Jane: Unfortunately not the right way around(.)and I will ask more questions before(.)prior(.)I
2 don’t know if this is right or not but is that my role? Is it not their role to provide me with,
3 ‘we’re doing a review, and this is what’s going to happen’(.)

(Jane, p.16 l.885-892)

In Extract 27, Jane uses an emotion category to describe her son as ‘anxious’ (line 1) within his PCAR, implying that she has a level of insight into his emotional state which is not shared by others; thus invoking her position of ‘parent as expert’. Jane demonstrates her awareness of the underlying principle of person-centeredness and the value in seeking young people’s views which she refers to as being a ‘positive’ (line 3). In framing her son’s involvement as being a positive, she also takes up a moral position with the implication that such involvement is only a positive when properly executed.

Whilst Jane illustrates her awareness and agreement in seeking her son’s views - and thus takes up a moral position - this is quickly followed by her description of being disoriented by the process, as illustrated in Extract 28. In line 2, Jane makes use of a question as a rhetorical device to strengthen her accounting of the confusion she experienced in knowing what her role was within the PCAR; and whether she was permitted to ‘give’ her knowledge regarding her son or whether she was allowed to ‘seek’ knowledge from others about the support he was receiving. This is followed by further use of questioning and active voicing as rhetorical devices to further strengthen her account that no information was offered from others about what her role was; a duty which she places upon staff as being ‘their role’ (line 2), which is deployed as a modal verb.

4.6.2 Summary

Jane’s account of the uncertainty as to her own duties and rights within the context of her son’s PCAR suggests that the negotiation of the boundary between ‘advocate’ and ‘equal partner’ was a complex one. There was further suggestion that traversing this boundary required an awareness that an alternative position was available; and that this alternative was constructed to be accessible and acceptable by parents, as they located themselves and others within their storied accounts. Positioning Theory highlights that within everyday interactions, the adoption of a new position in contingent upon an actors awareness that such an alternative has been made available. As parents drew upon the repertoire of ‘parent as advocate’ and wider culturally situated repertoires of parental involvement, they engaged in a discursive process of reformulating their own position; a process which involved a delicate negotiation as parents ‘gave up’ their duty to advocate whilst maintaining the integrity of their right to invoke their ‘parent as expert’ knowledge. Situated within the values framework of PCP and its associated rhetoric, such a reformulation can strike the sensitive balance between the promotion of young people’s voice and the genuine engagement of family members as equal partners. However, where such an awareness may not occur, there may be implications regarding the extent to which such acts of positioning are contested; with a potential for the disempowerment and disenfranchisement of families as a whole.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented findings from the analysis of participant’s discursive accounts in relation to the research questions, how young people were positioned in their PCARs, and how participant’s talk of ASC featured in how young autistic people were positioned. The analysis within this chapter was undertaken by drawing upon the analytic concepts of interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions. Five key findings were presented based on this analysis.

Within young people’s PCAR narratives, how the psychological business of identity was worked up and managed was categorised as a key analytic issue. The negotiation of specific identities was undertaken in different ways by each young person, with a universal goal of invoking a particular kind of personhood; which carried with it particular rights and entitlements to engage in meaningful social and cultural practices.

In pursuit of this goal, the young participants oriented themselves toward the positive talk of others, and deployed various discursive devices in acts of overt and more subtle forms of resistance to being categorised in particular ways.

Within staff member's narratives, the seeking of pupil views in the form of extending epistemic rights, was constructed as being a core professional duty. This also brought with it associated obligations to secure pupil agreement, promote decision-making powers and create conditions for involvement. The construction of these duties were situated within staff member's overall positioning of themselves as moral agents as they oriented their talk toward the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness'.

The taking up of the position by young people of enhanced epistemic rights also brought with it the possibility of increased personal agency, with young people also placing an associated duty upon adults to 'follow-through'. The by-product of these various acts of positioning was the potential construction of a 'social contract'; which staff oriented toward as representing a call to further action. The claims to knowledge made by young people, as they asserted their epistemic rights, brought with it the potential for positive social consequences. However, the potential social consequences of 'no knowledge' claims by young people also presented a dilemma to members of school staff and their positioning of themselves as moral agents.

Within the storied accounts of school staff, an ideological dilemma was identified as staff oriented their talk toward the competing and contradictory interpretative repertoires of 'autism as deficit' and 'autism as difference'. This dilemmatic tension was further heightened as staff also drew upon the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centeredness' to position young people as having particular rights to participate and make decisions within their PCAR. Drawing upon a 'bio-medical' repertoire of autism and related repertoire of 'vulnerability' called into question young people's decision-making powers and capabilities; which in turn 'troubled' staff members positioning of themselves as having a moral and professional responsibility to promote young people's voice, choice and control.

For staff, some young people's 'failure' to take-up their epistemic rights was constructed as being a consequence of their autism. Attributions as a discursive practice therefore, functioned to justify both the withdrawal of epistemic rights and the asserting of staff's own epistemic primacy. As staff oriented their talk toward such attributions to account for certain actions - often in an attempt to preserve their own moral and ethical position - this also produced tension and conflict. In positioning some young people within a deficits discourse, staff presented accounts in which there existed a significant gap between the rhetoric of PCP and it's actual practice; a situation which potentially gave rise to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity amongst staff regarding their roles, duties, skills, competencies, abilities and so on as 'person-centred practitioners'.

Within parent's narratives, a boundary between the position of 'advocate' and 'equal partner' was identified which required a sensitive, and at times emotional, negotiation. A significant finding from this aspect of the analysis was the suggestion that traversing this boundary required an awareness that an alternative position was available; and that this alternative was constructed to be accessible and acceptable by parents. As parents drew upon the repertoire of 'parent as advocate' and wider culturally situated repertoires of parental involvement, they engaged in a discursive process of reformulating their own position; a process which involved a delicate negotiation, as parents 'gave up' their duty to advocate whilst also maintaining the integrity of their right to invoke their 'parent as expert' knowledge.

The next chapter will provide an interpretative narrative of the analytic issues identified and will be discussed in relation to the research presented throughout the current report. This narrative account will also be presented in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning the current research and as such, the interpretation provided will be situated within a critical discursive psychology perspective.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter overview

The following chapter discusses the findings of this research in order to consider implications for how young people are positioned in their PCARs. An interpretative narrative is presented and discussed in relation to the existing research in the area. This narrative account is also presented in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning the current research and as such, the interpretation provided is situated within a critical discursive psychology perspective. Limitations and future directions for research are explored. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the possible implications for EP practice.

5.2 Structure of the findings presented

The following sections present a narrative account of the findings derived from the analysis presented in the previous chapter. The structure of the narrative is also presented in relation to the main research questions.

5.3 How are young people with ASC positioned within their PCARs?

This research question sought to explore how transition-aged autistic young people were positioned, both by themselves and others, within their PCAR. As highlighted previously (see Ch 2.5), a position represents a cluster of rights and duties which individuals ascribe to themselves and others. It is based on the idea that not everyone in a social episode has equal rights and duties to perform certain kinds of meaningful actions (Harré & van Lagenhove, 1999). As such, this research question aimed to explore what positions were made available to young people to adopt or refute as a result of the PCAR process and considered the extent to which this impacted upon their agency, status and overall decision-making powers.

5.3.1 Negotiating the possibilities of personhood

The overarching aim of the PCP approach is to open up a better understanding of the focal person in terms of their capacities, strengths and skills, through a collaborative process which places them at the heart of decision-making. PCP's underlying values-framework emphasises the importance of recognising and celebrating the focal young person's unique personal qualities, their family and the resources available to them to achieve their vision for the future (Sanderson, 2000; Corrigan, 2014). It is this increased understanding and recognition - and the social-psychological processes that make it possible - which hold particular significance in relation to young people's identity positioning.

Within their PCAR narratives, how the psychological business of identity was worked-up and managed by young people was categorised as being a key analytic issue. As young people constructed their PCAR accounts, they also presented a particular version of themselves; a discursive process which was undertaken by drawing upon the talk of others. The interpretative analysis suggests that young people's negotiation of specific identities was undertaken in different ways but with the universal goal of invoking a particular kind or personhood; which brought with it, particular rights and entitlements to engage in meaningful social and cultural practices. For instance, within Jack's PCAR narrative he worked up a social representation characterised by his being a moral person, relating that he was 'polite, noble, loyal and truthful' (p.12). It could be argued that Jack's reflexive positioning of himself as a moral person permitted him to engage in meaningful social practices, as the type of personal attributes he invoked are those which are valued in contemporary Western culture. It is also significant that the personal attributes which Jack referred to were those which were expressed by others within his PCAR.

There is a suggestion therefore that, within the PCAR setting, young people's discursive constructions of self may be socially mediated and that PCARs potentially offer a social context in which the co-construction of new knowledge is made possible. There are two strands contained within this proposition which warrant further discussion and have particular relevance within the context of the research presented in Chapter 2. The first strand is concerned with the contribution of the PCAR process to the promotion of young people's self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-efficacy in relation to the wider construct of self-determination. The second strand, which is a corollary of the first, is concerned with how young people's identity constructions were undertaken as a discursive activity, accomplished through orienting toward the talk of others. This second strand is discussed in relation to young people's sense of personal agency and agentic action.

5.3.1.1 Identity positioning, self-knowledge and self-determination

In drawing upon a Positioning Theory (PT) perspective, Andreouli (2010) presents a conceptualization of identity as involving a discursive process of identifying oneself as well as being recognized by others. The author asserts that the construction of oneself can be viewed as being 'embedded in social relations and as dynamic, contextual and relational' (p. 14.1). It is possible therefore that young people's construction of *coherent* selves is made possible through the linguistic resources provided by others within the PCAR setting; and through these new linguistic resources, self-knowledge and self-awareness are enhanced. As highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.2), a characteristic feature of PCP approaches is the inviting of all attendees to make contributions regarding the focus young person's strengths, what they like and admire, what's working well, what progress they have made and so on. Furthermore, these constructions are made by a range of stakeholders (parents/carers, teachers, etc.) across the different contexts in which young people live their lives. This holistic view, and associated linguistic resources, may therefore contribute to young people locating themselves in particular ways within their PCAR narratives. Situated within a discursive framework, Potter and Wetherell (1987) assert that any socio-psychological image of self, and the possibility of constructing a coherent self-concept, is inextricably contingent upon the linguistic practices and resources used and drawn upon in everyday life to make sense of our own and others' actions. The enhancement of young people's ways of knowing (self-knowledge and awareness) and its contribution to ways of being (social identity) has particular relevance to the promotion of self-determination; a construct highlighted by a number of studies exploring PCARs, as being central to increasing young people's voice, choice and control (e.g. Whitney-Thomas et al., 1998; Fayette & Bond, 2018; Hagner et al., 2012).

Self-awareness and self-knowledge are often presented within the extant research as being core dimensions of the wider theoretical construct of Self-determination Theory (e.g. Wehmeyer & Schwartz 1998; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Weymeyer et al., 2010). It is possible that the enhancement of young people's self-awareness and self-knowledge, accomplished through the linguistic resources offered by others, may also enhance young people's self-determination skills. This supports the findings presented by Hagner et al. (2012) who identified that the application of PCP approaches lead to increases in the self-determination skills of transition-aged young people with the label of ASC. It is interesting to note that the findings presented by Hagner et al. (2012) were attributed to the use of a multi-component intervention design. The current report has presented young people's increased self-knowledge and self-awareness - and their contribution to a coherent construction of self - as being a discursive accomplishment, potentially enabled through the social-psychological processes underlying PCARs as social phenomena.

Future directions for research therefore may wish to explore further the role of self-determination as it relates to young people's self-awareness and self-knowledge within the PCAR setting. Future research may also benefit from exploring related dimensions within the wider construct of self-determination, such as goal-directed behavior, motivation, choice-making abilities, and self-advocacy (Wehmeyer et al., 2010; Carter et al., 2013). The use of self-determination as a theoretical framework within such future research may also be enhanced by integrating Positioning Theory to enable a social-psychological perspective to be accomplished.

5.3.1.2 Identity positioning, emotions and the talk of others

An interesting finding within the wider analysis of young people's identity positioning was the invocation of emotion categories; specifically young people's orientation toward the psychological notion of 'pride'. The identification of young people's use of positive affect in constructing their PCAR narratives is significant as it compels us to consider, from a discursive perspective, what young people were accomplishing in their talk. It is possible that the invocation of an emotion category such as 'pride' was deployed and worked up by young people to strengthen the credibility of their claims to being a particular kind of person. That is, it served a performative function and formed part of young people's wider identity positioning. Previous discourse analytic research has suggested that emotion categories can be used for a range of social actions, such as managing one's identity (Potter, 1996; Edwards & Potter, 2001). For instance, within Lucy's PCAR narrative, she related that her mother would be 'really proud' (p. 12) of her academic progress; with her use of this emotion category being considered as strengthening her positioning of herself as a 'successful and competent learner'.

Positive affect, as a feature of young participants PCAR narratives, also supports findings from previous studies. Corrigan (2014) presents findings from a thematic analysis of multiple stakeholder perspectives who viewed PCARs as producing a positive, hopeful and optimistic climate. Similarly, Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) identified the ‘positive tone’ presented by adults as potentially increasing levels of student participation. It is possible that the positive talk of others within the PCAR setting provides discursive resources which indirectly produce additional resources in the form of positive emotions. Indeed, future directions for research may focus on the experience of positive affect within the context of the PCAR setting and how this may contribute to young people’s personal agency and agentic action. For example, Lewis (1993) provides findings from exploratory research into positive affect, specifically the experience of ‘pride’ in terms of strengthening social relationships and its contribution to vision-building. The researcher suggests that ‘pride’, which is experienced following personal achievements, can lead to an increased desire to share such achievements with others and strengthen their envisioning of similar achievements occurring in the future.

The analysis of young people’s PCAR narratives also indicated that their discursive constructions of a preferred self - that is, their identity positioning - was accomplished by drawing upon the positive talk of others from their PCAR meeting. It is possible that the emphasis on recognising the various strengths, skills, abilities, positive personal qualities and so on - undertaken as a collaborative process within the PCAR setting - gives rise to a ‘discursive site’ (Edley, 2001) which provides new ‘linguistic resources’ (Harré, 1985). It is also possible that such linguistic resources are drawn upon by young people to construct ‘holistic selves’, incorporating the academic, social, moral and so on aspects of daily life. The construction of these preferred and holistic selves carry with it associated rights to engage in meaningful social and cultural practices (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). This supports findings by Taylor-Brown (2012) who identified that the PCAR setting provided a framework for all stakeholders to perceive young people in a more holistic way; a process which resulted in ‘alternative stories’ to be introduced by adults onto the ‘social plane’ (Vygotsky, 1978). The researcher suggests that the introduction of these ‘alternative stories’ provided opportunities for young people to hear and construct new narratives about themselves, thus increasing their sense of agency and agentic action. Taylor-Brown (2012) also suggests that the construction of new and alternative stories have particular relevance for young people at the point of transition, given the possibility of changing identity. Within the context of the current research, the suggestion that PCARs, as social phenomena, provide a discursive climate for autistic young people's construction of themselves as active agents may be especially significant.

As highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Ch 1.6), there is a growing body of research which suggests that young autistic people are particularly vulnerable to poor transition outcomes, experience poorer outcomes as adults across key life domains, and that poor adult outcomes are potentially linked to poor transition experiences (e.g. Howlin, 2008; Beresford et al. 2013; Hendricks & Wehman, 2009). Consequently, PCARs - and their potential to contribute to young people's positioning of themselves as active agents - may have a key role to play in cultivating more positive transition experiences and related positive outcomes into adulthood.

5.3.2 Negotiating epistemic rights, authority and primacy

Sanderson (2000) asserts that a key characteristic of PCP approaches is the incorporation of a range of features which aim to ensure that the young person stays at the centre of the planning process. This also enables the control and power in the process to shift from the professionals towards the pupil and their families. A central tenet of PCP's underlying philosophy is the view that young people are 'experts in their own lives' (Sanderson, 2000, p. 88). Interpretative analysis revealed the negotiation of epistemic rights as being a recurring feature of talk across participants PCAR narratives. Epistemic rights refer to how individuals accountably know, how they know it, and whether they have the rights to describe it and are implicated in the organised practice of speaking (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). The issue of epistemic rights and their distribution was identified as being a primary focus of staff member's talk and was worked up within their discursive accounts to position themselves as having particular professional duties and moral obligations to seek the views of young people. There is a suggestion that the positioning of young people as having enhanced epistemic rights - and staff member's related duties to uphold those rights - was accomplished by drawing upon the interpretative repertoire of 'young people as active agents', situated within the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centredness'. Viewed through a discursive lens, Edley (2001) asserts that interpretative repertoires afford a corresponding subject position. It is possible therefore, that staff member's orientation toward PCP's underling core value principle of 'child as expert' gave rise to their positioning of themselves as having a duty seek out young people's 'ways of knowing' and for young people's claims to knowledge to be seen as having legitimacy.

Findings from the analysis of staff members accounts also revealed that the positioning of young people in relation to enhanced epistemic rights produced knowledge which was authentically valued; and was constructed by staff as making a meaningful contribution to the PCAR process, with one staff member relating that the process produced a 'different type of conversation' (Nancy, p.15). The positioning of young people by staff to make claims to knowledge - and for that knowledge to be seen as being legitimate and valued - supports findings from the study conducted by Corrigan (2014). Within the accounts of school staff, Corrigan (2014) identified key themes including the importance placed on collaboration and the valuing of young people's contribution which was perceived to produce a deeper and more holistic understanding of needs. Findings from the current study, in conjunction with those of Corrigan (2014) regarding the legitimacy of young peoples 'ways of knowing', adds to the conceptualisation of PCARs as potentially offering a social context for the co-construction of new knowledge.

The seeking of pupil views - in the form of extending epistemic rights - was constructed by members of staff as being a core professional duty which brought with it associated obligations to secure pupil agreement, promote decision-making powers and create conditions for involvement. It is possible that staff member's discursive constructions of their professional and moral duties in relation to epistemic rights may also guide their activities within the PCAR setting itself; and lead to the promotion of young people's voice, choice and control. This suggestion is supported by the findings from Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) who identified that the behaviour of others within the PCAR setting can impact upon the levels of student participation. Findings from the study by Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) suggest that adults who supported young people to 'take the lead' resulted in increased levels of student engagement. It is possible therefore, that how staff construct their professional roles and associated duties may impact on how they approach the PCAR meeting itself. Consequently, staff who draw upon the 'philosophy' of PCP as a discursive resource may also construct their own duties and obligations to encompass the valuing of young people's 'ways of knowing' and direct their activities accordingly.

5.3.2.1 Reflexive positioning and the ‘social contract’

Within their PCAR narratives, staff positioned themselves as having a moral duty to extend epistemic rights to young people. In doing so, a corresponding position was constructed for young people to take up. Findings from the interpretative analysis of young people’s PCAR narratives suggest that young people were aware of and took up this position of enhanced epistemic rights. There is a suggestion that the adoption of such a position also shifted the balance of power in terms of young people’s rights to make claims to knowledge and for such claims to be viewed as being legitimate. Positioning Theory (PT) proposes that positions, as discursive acts, are always relational (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). That is, by positioning someone in a certain way, someone else is thereby positioned relative to that person. It is possible therefore that young people’s right to ‘ways of knowing’ is enabled through adults’ explicit acts of positioning. PT also maintains that the adoption of a position is contingent upon an individual’s awareness that such a position is on offer. It follows that young people’s awareness of their rights to make knowledge claims within the PCAR setting is of vital importance, and that such awareness can be made possible through the talk of others.

A significant finding also identified from the analysis was young people’s construction of a corresponding duty placed on adults to acknowledge and act upon the views they expressed. It is conceivable that the construction of this duty was made possible through young people taking up the position of enhanced epistemic rights. That is, by making a claim to knowledge, a series of reciprocal positions were created with a suggestion that this also promoted young people’s agency and shifted the balance of power. This supports the findings by Taylor-Brown (2012) who identified that the transference of power was enabled through young people’s expectation of *reciprocity*; conceptualised by the researcher as young people’s expectations that their views would be seen to be legitimate and acted upon by others. It is interesting to note that the findings presented by Taylor- Brown (2012), were based on the interpretative analysis of young people’s accounts only and did not include adults as participants. The interpretative analysis undertaken in the current study suggests that young people’s expectations of reciprocity were taken up by staff as an additional duty; constructed as their having to ‘follow-through’ on young people’s views and wishes. Consequently, the findings regarding reciprocal positions outlined in the current study - and their potential contribution to young people's empowerment and personal agency - may be viewed as building upon and extending the findings presented by Taylor-Brown (2012).

The possible by-product of these various acts of reciprocal positionings may be the construction of a 'social contract', wherein young people's taking-up of enhanced epistemic rights produces a corresponding position for adults to act upon young people's expressed views and wishes. O'Brien and Lovett (1993) assert, the PCP process involves 'paying attention to people's unique capacities, listening better to what really matters to them and striving to follow through more directly on what we hear' (p. 482). There is a suggestion that the establishing of this social contract is contingent upon a complex interplay between adult's discursive constructions of their role, duties and obligations and young people's awareness of the positions being offered by others within the PCAR setting. This finding may add to our understanding of PCARs as social phenomena - underpinned by complex, dynamic interpersonal processes - which have the potential to offer a social context in which new knowledge is co-constructed and where a climate of empowerment and enhanced personal agency can be engendered.

5.3.3 Negotiating the boundaries between 'advocate' and 'equal partner'

A defining feature of PCP's values framework is the principle that the young person is at the centre of the process. This underlying principle aims to enable the control and power in the process to shift from professionals toward the young person and their family. This is accompanied by the second principle that family members are equal partners within the process, who bring a depth of knowledge and richness of understanding around their child's hopes, dreams, fears, aspirations and so on to the meeting (Sanderson, 2000). Interpretative analysis revealed parent's positioning of themselves, in relation to their child's rights and entitlements within the PCAR process, to be a recurring feature of talk across their PCAR narratives. The accounts provided by parents highlighted that they undertook a delicate, and at times emotional, negotiation between moving from their traditional position of 'advocate' toward a repositioning of themselves as 'equal partner' within their child's PCAR. This reformulation of their positioning from 'advocate' to 'equal partner' also entailed the maintaining of the integrity of their own rights to make knowledge claims; that is, the 'giving-up' of their right to advocate for their child also required parents to ‘hold on’ to their right to contribute to the process and to share their own views.

A key finding from the interpretative analysis was parent’s orientation toward wider cultural repertoires concerning parental role, which they drew upon in traversing the boundary between ‘advocate’ and ‘equal partner’. This cultural repertoire included normative assumptions regarding the rights and decision-making powers and capabilities of young people. That is, in drawing upon this cultural repertoire, parents invoked culturally imbedded notions that transitioned-aged young people could and should begin making decisions for themselves regarding their future. Drawing upon this repertoire also brought with it culturally and socially imbedded expectations that parents take a ‘step back’ from their role as advocate, as their child transitions to adulthood. Findings from the analysis also revealed possible tensions in parental accounts as they oriented toward these socially and culturally embedded notions of parental role. The tension lay in balancing these normatively situated cultural demands with parent’s constructions of their child’s additional needs; the latter being construed by parents as potentially requiring continued advocacy.

It is possible that parent’s construction of their role within the PCAR setting is influenced by their child’s life stage, perceptions of their child’s self-determination skills and decision-making capacities, and wider social and cultural norms regarding parental role. Within the context of the PCAR setting for transition-aged young people at the point of adulthood, parent’s reformulation of their role from ‘advocate’ to ‘equal partner’ may be constructed as taking on greater importance when set against this social and cultural back-drop. Thompson, Bolte, and Girdler (2018) provide findings from a study exploring the perceptions of parents of young people with an ASC as they transitioned to adulthood. Within the study, parents viewed the role of advocate for transitioned-aged young people as being better served by a professional such as a mentor; with parents highlighting that where the role of advocate fell to them, it potentially had a negative impact on their relationship with their child. This has possible implications for professional practice in terms of professionals being sensitive to micro-level factors (such as parent’s perceptions of their child’s additional needs), as well as macro-level influences (such as social and cultural influences) which may impact upon parent’s constructions of their rights and duties within PCARs more generally (Bernier, Mao, & Yen, 2010). Future directions for research may be directed toward exploring possible social and cultural influences on parent's constructions of their role within their child's PCAR in relation to differing educational stages, for instance from primary to secondary education, and secondary to post-16 education.

Findings from the interpretative analysis also revealed parent's evaluations, undertaken as a discursive activity, were used in reformulating their position from 'advocate' to 'equal partner'. Parents who negotiated the boundary between advocate and equal partner typically provided positive evaluations of the process and focused their talk around the extent to which other adults valued and successfully elicited their child's views. It is possible that parent's reformulation of their advocacy role was based on the extent to which they perceived such a role was required. Within the PCAR setting, successfully promoting the voice of their child may mean that parents do not consider their positioning of themselves as advocates to be needed. However, a significant finding identified within this aspect of the analysis suggested that the role of advocate was deeply intertwined with that of the role of 'parent as expert'. As speaking rights flowed toward young people, the resulting ebb for parents may have been constructed as a withdrawal of *all* rights; including the right to claim parental knowledge. It is possible therefore, that parent's successful negotiation of the boundary between 'advocate' and 'equal partner' depends upon their *awareness* that the position of 'equal partner' is 'on offer'. Positioning Theory (PT) highlights that within everyday interactions, the adoption of a new position is contingent upon an actor's awareness that such an alternative has been made available (Matthews & Singh, 2015). It could be concluded that parent's awareness of the process and philosophy underlying PCARs is important, but so too is an awareness of their own rights and duties. This is supported by the findings presented by Corrigan (2014), who identified that parent's positive evaluations of PCAR process were based on its collaborative nature, which included the valuing of all stakeholder contributions and the supporting of equal voice. Similar findings are also presented by White and Rae (2016), who identified that parent's positive experiences of PCARs, as being collaborative and empowering, were enabled by the sharing of their child's views as well as their own.

A possible direct consequence therefore of parents being unaware of what their role, rights and duties are within the PCAR setting may be the marginalisation of their voice and a loss of the wealth of knowledge and understanding they bring about their child to the process. This may also indirectly affect young people's own levels of involvement, decision-making powers and related positioning; particularly in instances where they may not take-up their epistemic rights. Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998) identified that where attendees did not participate, this had a negative effect on wider group processes and consequently an indirect negative effect on young people's levels of participation. Corrigan (2014) also identified that a potential barrier to the effective development and implementation of PCPs was a lack of focus on the needs of young people within the home context, with the researchers concluding that a key aspect of the process was the importance of collaboration amongst all stakeholders. Implications for professional practice therefore relate to ensuring that parents and family members are aware that the position of 'equal partner' is available to them, as well as professionals demonstrating a sensitivity to how parents and family members may construct their role within the PCAR setting. Several studies have highlighted the importance of preparation for young people with an ASC in advance of their PCAR meeting (e.g. Hagner et al., 2014; Whitney-Thomas et al., 1998; Barnard-Dadds & Conn, 2018). Based on the findings from the current study, it seems important also that advanced preparation for family members be undertaken by professionals, with a particular focus on exploring rights, duties, roles, expectations and so on.

5.3.4 Summary of how young people were positioned within their PCAR

Overall, the findings presented within the current report suggest that PCARs have the potential to empower and emancipate young people with an ASC through the cultivation of a discursive climate in which new understandings can be acquired by all involved. The analysis revealed several key areas across participant's narratives which were considered to be significant in developing our understanding of the social-psychological processes underlying PCARs as dynamic social episodes. For young participants, the process of PCARs produced a discursive climate in which new linguistic resources were made available by all involved; enabled by the focus placed on considering young people in a holistic way. The collaborative process of recognising and celebrating the focus young person's unique strengths, abilities and personal qualities produced new language which young people drew upon in constructing a preferred self; which brought with it the possibility of their experiencing enhanced personal agency and self-determination.

Findings also suggest that the PCAR process may result in a shift in the balance of power, accomplished through the positioning of young people as having the right to make claims to knowledge and to be seen as experts in their own lives. This positioning of young people to claim epistemic rights was enabled by staff, who constructed their own role and duties to encompass the championing of pupil voice; a discursive act undertaken by staff as they drew upon the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centredness'. Analysis also revealed the possibility of the formation of a 'social contract', accomplished through a reciprocal process in which young people's active participation served to affirm the moral and professional positioning of staff and strengthen their commitment to act upon the views and wishes expressed by pupils.

Furthermore, the redistribution of decision-making powers toward young people necessitated family members to reposition themselves from 'advocates' to 'equal partners'. Of particular significance, was the identification of the importance for family members in being aware that such a position was available to them. The current research highlights the need for practitioners to remain sensitive to how family members perceive their role within the PCAR setting and ensure that time is dedicated to preparing them in advance.

5.4 How do participants talk about ASC and in what way does this feature in how young autistic people are positioned within their PCAR?

This question aimed to explore the various ways participants talked about ASC and possible effects on how autistic young people were positioned in their PCARs. As highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.5), there are dominant macro-level discourses surrounding ASC, which researchers and commentators have suggested result in the subjugation of autistic individuals. This 'deficits discourse', according to these researchers and commentators, constitutes a particular version of ASC and this research question attempted to explore the extent to which participants drew upon such discourses in their own discursive constructions and their possible implications.

5.4.1 Negotiating the label of autism

As highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Ch. 1.5), critics of the medicalised view of autism argue that the discourse of pathologisation and labelling results in the loss of individuality and a potential limiting of adult's and young people's expectations of what that young person can achieve (e.g. Molloy & Vasil, 2002). The interpretative analysis of young people's PCAR narratives revealed that the status of their autism presented a potential dilemma regarding how such an assigned label 'fit' within their wider discursive constructions of self. Findings suggest that young people's negotiation of an 'autistic identity' was not undertaken in a universal way, for instance in a complete rejection or denial of their autism status. Rather, findings indicate that young people actively constructed a particular version of their autism which was congruent with their invocation of a preferred self; a discursive process which for some young people involved minimising or limiting their autism to a small aspect of their daily lives or drawing upon an 'alternative' conceptualisation of autism which subverted a medicalised view.

It is possible that young people's negotiation of a particular version of their autism, which was congruent with their wider constructions of a preferred self, was enabled through the emphasis placed within the PCAR setting on recognising young people's unique strengths, abilities, positive personal qualities, capabilities and so. That is, it is possible that the 'taking-up' by all stakeholders of PCP's philosophy of viewing the young person holistically - enacted through their talk within the PCAR - may create a discursive climate in which young people can actively 'choose' a version of their autism which is compatible with a preferred self. Drawing from a discursive psychology perspective, Burr (2003) argues that individuals have a degree of choice in the discourses which they identify with but notes that escaping from dominant discourses is often very difficult and subject to heavy restriction. Similarly, McDermott et al. (1996) asserts that any 'choice' and exercising of personal agency is restricted to those discourses available in a given social context. It is possible therefore that PCARs create a social context in which young people are permitted to actively 'choose' an autistic self, enabled by a 'shift' in the discourses of adults away from a deficits-focus toward a holistic view of the individual. This 'shift' may entail the introduction of new discursive resources which young people draw upon in positioning themselves in relation to their autism and consequently their wider constructions of self. This supports the findings presented by Taylor-Brown (2012) who identified that the focus on a holistic understanding of young people within the PCAR setting gave rise to the introduction of 'alternative stories' by adults. These 'alternative stories' supported young people identified as presenting with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) to create new stories about themselves and ‘re-author’ their own personal narratives, which the researchers suggest allowed young people to view their assigned labels in new, more positive ways.

There is a suggestion therefore that PCARs have the potential to provide a social context in which young people can not only construct new knowledge about themselves, but also invoke a version of their assigned autism label which transcends a deficits-only conceptualisation. Consequently, PCARs may also have potential emancipatory effects for these young people. This may have significant positive implications for those young people who view their autism solely through a deficits-only lens and by extension hold a negative self-concept. Similarly, there may be positive implications for young people who perceive others as holding a negative view of their autism and consequently a negative view of them as individuals. Reid and Valle (2004) argue that discourse ‘defines what can be said’ (p. 466). Within the context of the PCAR setting, the recognition and celebration of the ‘whole person’ may create a discursive climate in which young people can (re)define what can be said about their autism, both by themselves and others.

5.4.2 ‘Autism as difference’ versus ‘autism as deficit’

Critics of the bio-medical model of autism argue that its emphasis on a deficits-only view of individuals results in the disempowerment of young people, the marginalisation of their voice and a limiting of other’s expectations of what those young people can achieve (Bagatell, 2007; Milton, 2012; Molloy & Vasil, 2002). PCP approaches, with their roots in the social model of disability, promotes a transfer of power - away from professionals to young people and their families - and puts the young person first before any medical label they have been assigned (O’Brien, O’Brien & Mount, 1997; Sanderson, 2000). Interpretative analysis of staff member’s PCAR narratives revealed an ideological dilemma as staff drew upon the contradictory and competing interpretative repertoires of ‘autism as deficit’ and ‘autism as difference’; a dilemma which was further compounded by staff also drawing upon the wider discourse of ‘person-centredness’. The dilemmatic tension experienced by staff lay in their drawing upon a ‘deficits-only’ view of autism in their general talk, which brought with it potential implications for the construing of young people’s capacities for self-determination and related decision-making rights and abilities within their PCARs. The positioning of all young people within a ‘bio-medical’ and ‘deficits-only’ conceptualisation of autism also complicated staff member’s own positioning of themselves as having a moral and professional duty to promote young people’s voice, choice and control.

Findings from the analysis suggest that staff attempted to reconcile this dilemmatic tension by drawing upon an ‘alternative’ version of autism as representing a ‘difference’ rather than a ‘deficit’. Findings also indicate that this reformulation was undertaken for those young people who were perceived to have actively participated in their PCAR and who made claims to knowledge; that is, those young people who took up the position of enhanced epistemic rights offered by others. It is possible that staff members ‘shifting’ from a ‘deficits-only’ view of autism was accomplished by the introduction of new discursive resources by the various actors, including young people, within the PCAR setting. The emphasis placed on recognising and celebrating the individual strengths, skills, and positive personal qualities of the young person - who also contributed to this collaborative endeavour - may have created a discursive climate in which staff also repositioned young people in relation to their autism. This suggestion may support and extend the findings presented by Taylor-Brown (2012), who identified that the PCAR encouraged talk of all aspects of the young person, which gave rise to the construction of ‘alternative stories’. The researchers conclude that adults’ constructions of these alternative narratives supported young people with the label of SEBD to create new stories about themselves. Findings from the current study therefore, suggest that the co-construction of these new narratives may also influence staff member’s discursive constructions of young people’s autism and consequently how young people are positioned in relation to their assigned label.

Positioning Theory asserts that positions are not fixed and a feature of an individual person, but rather are a discursive act which can be subject to challenge and change. Resistance to change therefore, is not seen as the result of an individual or group. It can be the result of an absence of the language which individuals and groups need to effectively engage in the new discourses required for such change to occur (Matthews & Singh, 2015; Harré & van Lagenhove, 1999). It is possible therefore that PCARs provide a social context for the introduction of new language which enables adults, as well as young people, to take-up alternative ways of viewing autism. This in turn may also bring new ways of viewing young people in relation to their assigned autism label which may have emancipatory effects. However, there is also a suggestion that staff member's reformulation of autism, and consequently how young people are positioned in relation to their label, is influenced by the extent to which young people are perceived to actively participate within their PCAR. Conversely, young people's claims to 'no knowledge' may create an absence of the new discursive resources required for staff to effectively engage in shifting from a deficits-oriented conceptualisation of autism.

5.4.3 Negotiating the 'severity of ASD'

Within staff members PCAR narratives, interpretative analysis identified further dilemmatic tension for staff when presented with young people who were perceived to have not actively participated within their PCAR. Staff related instances in which young people were seen to have not taken up the position of enhanced epistemic offered to them. The claims to 'no knowledge' by these young people represented a potential challenge to staff member's own positioning of themselves as having a professional and moral duty to promote pupil's voice, choice and control. A significant finding within this aspect of the analysis was staff member's use of attribution as a discursive practice, undertaken as they drew upon a 'bio-medical' discourse and associated construction of autism as being a 'spectrum disorder'. For those young people who did not make claims to knowledge, staff attributed this to the severity of their autism which was constructed in terms of their levels of functioning, social competencies, capacities for future-oriented goal-setting, capabilities for self-awareness and self-knowledge and so on.

The potential consequence of staff members use of attribution as discursive act - and related positioning of young people along a continuum of ability - may be the reduced likelihood of staff considering possible alternative explanations for some young people's decreased levels of participation. That is, staff may be less likely to identify possible factors within the social context of the PCAR which may affect young people's taking-up of their epistemic rights, including their own and other adult's interactions with pupils. This suggestion supports findings presented by Barnard-Dadds and Conn (2018), who identified an imbalance in talk within one autistic young person's PCAR meeting. The researchers suggest that this asymmetry in speaking may have been the result of a 'transporting' of the power dynamics by all actors from the classroom into the PCAR setting, given that the facilitator of the PCAR was also the young person's teacher. Based on findings from the current study, it is possible that staff member's orientation toward a bio-medical discourse - and related attributions - may obscure from their view the possible effects of PCARs wider 'interactional ecologies' (Barnard-Dadds & Conn, p. 8).

Findings from the current study also suggest that staff member's 'attribution talk' was also undertaken as an act of 'prepositioning', where some young people were positioned along a continuum of ability prior to their PCAR meeting taking place. It is possible that such acts of prepositioning may also affect how staff interacted with pupils within the PCAR itself; with staff being unaware that they may inadvertently change their interactional style based on such prior assessments of young people's abilities. This suggestion may contribute to the findings presented by Whitney-Thomas et al. (1998), who identified that the behaviour of others - manifest in the language used by adults - presented a barrier to young people's levels of participation. Such acts of prepositioning therefore, may be particularly significant where PCARs are carried out internally by members of staff who take on the role of facilitator and who are already familiar with and to the focus young person. Those young people who may be prepositioned prior to their PCAR as lacking the capacity to actively participate - and subsequently fail to do so - may result in a strengthening of staff member's later attributions, thus giving rise to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Brophy, 1983; Leigh, 1977).

A related consequence of staff member's attributions - as a by-product of their drawing upon the dominant 'discourse of deficits' surrounding autism (Molloy & Vasil, 2002) - may be a reduced likelihood of staff engaging in creative and innovative approaches to PCARs, as they may construe some young people's autism as giving rise to an inability to actively engage. Based on their investigations into young people's PCAR experiences, Taylor-Brown (2012) recommends that what is needed is an embracing of both the 'tools' and 'philosophy' of PCP if young people's agency and decision-making powers are to be promoted. Findings from the current study indicate that for autistic young people, an additional barrier may be the dominant discourses surrounding autism which shape adults meaning-making and related causal attributions (Milton, 2012). The consequences of such acts of meaning-making may be the reduced likelihood of adults shifting from 'within-child' explanations toward an interactionist perspective when presented with young people who make claims to 'no knowledge' within their PCAR.

Miller (2008) highlights that attributions are influenced by the wider social and cultural practices in which they occur. The suggestion that staff member's attributions are linked to a wider deficits discourse surrounding autism supports and builds upon the findings presented by Fayette and Bond (2018), who identified a disparity between two special educational settings for young people with autism in regards to the extent to which they involved young people during their transition meetings. The researchers highlight that whilst both settings invested considerably in both the 'philosophy' and 'tools' of PCP, there existed a significant gap in how each school included young people in their reviews. This prompted the researchers to recommend that what is required is the recognising and challenging of attitudinal barriers by adults regarding how they perceive the decision-making capacities of autistic young people. However, findings from the current study suggest that staff member's 'attribution talk' also functioned to justify their taking-up of the 'expert role' when presented with young people who made claims to 'no knowledge'; which in turn also functioned to justify their actions in terms of making 'best interest' decisions. This shifting in position was not undertaken lightly and was constructed by staff as being undesirable within the preferred construction of their roles as 'person-centred practitioners'. A possible consequence for staff in being presented with young people who do not participate - and subsequently require staff to take up the position of 'expert' - may be increased feelings of disempowerment, uncertainty, and insecurity regarding such a position and a questioning of their competencies and skills as 'person-centred practitioners'. It may be that staff's attributions as a discursive practice may also function to alleviate such uncertainties and insecurities.

Anderson and Williams (2001) argue that some discourses are so entrenched that they become regimes of truth; hegemonic discourses which are very hard to challenge. Ivanic (1998) also asserts that people may draw upon discourses to identify themselves and in doing so position others; a discursive process which can be undertaken unconsciously. In applying these author's assertions to the findings within the current study, it may be the case that staff member's attributions are undertaken by orienting toward a version of autism which has come to be known as the definitive version at the expense of possible alternatives. The consequence of this may be a limiting of alternative explanations for young people's reduced participation, including interactional factors within the PCAR setting itself.

5.4.4 Summary of participant's 'autism talk' and potential implications for how young autistic people are positioned within their PCAR

Overall, findings from the current study suggest that PCARs have the potential to provide a social context in which young people can not only construct new knowledge about themselves, but also invoke a version of their assigned autism label which transcends a deficits-only conceptualisation. Consequently, it is argued that PCARs may also have potential emancipatory effects for these young people. Similarly, analysis of staff member's narratives indicates that PCARs provide a social context for the introduction of new language which may enable adults to take-up alternative ways of viewing autism. However, for those young people who were perceived to not actively participate, staff attributed this to the severity of their autism. A possible consequence of such causal attributions may be the reduced likelihood of staff considering the interactional ecology within the PCAR and its potential effect on young people's levels of participation.

It will be important therefore that professionals are supported to critically interrogate their own practice and assumptions and their influences on young people's possibilities for being and doing within their PCAR. Such a critical interrogation also depends upon professional's sensitivity to the wider social and cultural influences which shape their own assumptions; including the dominant discourses surrounding autism and possible implications for how professionals position some autistic young people within their PCAR.

5.5 Limitations and future directions for research

Elliott, Fisher and Rennie (1999) highlight the importance for qualitative researchers in offering a clear explication of possible limitations in extending findings across contexts, given the aim of such research is to garner a deeper understanding of the experiences and actions of individuals as they encounter, engage, and live through situations. The current research aimed to explore the underlying processes within PCARs as social-psychological phenomena and utilised Positioning Theory - situated within a Critical Discursive Psychology framework - as an interpretative lens to identify the various discursive resources and practices participants deployed within their talk. Larkin et al. (2006) highlight that the interpretative accounts presented within qualitative research are invariably co-constructed between the researcher and the participant. In recognition of this limitation, the current research has been careful to not make definitive claims regarding the generalisability of the findings across contexts. Attempts have also been made to address this limitation by adhering to the guidelines for qualitative research outlined by Elliott, Fisher and Rennie (1999) throughout the research endeavour (see Ch. 3.12). This researcher also invites the reader to consider the context in which the research was undertaken when considering the relevance and utility of the findings to their own particular area of interest.

A related limitation which is particularly pertinent to the discourse analytic approach adopted within the current research concerns the use of 'researcher-generated data', such as that derived from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A contemporary debate within the field of discourse analysis is focused on the relative status of different kinds of data, with some researchers arguing for a privileging of more 'naturalistic data' over more structured means of data collection, such as interviews (e.g. Edwards & Stokoe, 2004; Griffin, 2007; Potter & Hepburn, 2007). Proponents of 'naturalistic' forms of data base their argument on the view of language as being context-bound and embedded within a sequence of interaction and caution that 'researcher-generated data' may tell us more about how individuals behave in interviews than it does about their interactions within the area under investigation. A possible limitation of the findings presented within the current report therefore may be the extent to which the various discursive resources and practices identified within participant's accounts come to be manifest within the PCAR setting itself. However, other researchers - in drawing upon more critical discourse analytic perspectives - argue that 'researcher-generated data' in the form of interviews and focus groups and so on, helps inform our understanding of the broader ideological context in which talk is accomplished and allows us to consider possible wider social implications (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Litosseliti, 2018). It is the latter view which informed the current study's selection of semi-structured interviews as the primary data-gathering method. In light of this contemporary debate, future directions for DA research in this area may benefit from a synthesis of data-gathering methods, to include both 'researcher-generated' (e.g. interviews or focus groups) and 'naturalistic' (e.g. audio or video of the PCAR meeting) data to form the data corpus. PCARs, as discrete social episodes, may be particularly suited to such a synthesis of data-gathering methods.

Furthermore, interviews within the current research were carried out typically within two weeks of young person's PCAR taking place. Therefore, the extent to which staff member's positioning of themselves as having a professional and moral obligation to act upon the views and wishes expressed by young people - and whether such commitment was realised and sustained over time outside the immediate setting of the PCAR - was not explored within the current study. Philip and Brown (2017) provide promising accounts from their own professional practice in this area, noting that teachers reported having greater clarity and purpose when planning class activities across the year following a young person's PCP meeting. However, these author's reports were drawn from their own professional practice experiences and not based in research. Future research therefore may be directed toward conducting longer-term follow-up on the extent to which young people's views and wishes are acted upon and sustained over time by adults.

5.5.1 Participant sampling

In total, 8 participants were recruited to the current study, in-line with the recommendations regarding sample size for DA research proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). However, the inclusion of multiple stakeholders (young people, family members, and school staff) resulted in an imbalance in the number of adults recruited compared to the number of young people; with a greater number of adults being included the sample. This imbalance was further compounded by challenges in gaining access to and recruiting young participants. The relatively small number of young participants therefore may have implications for the range of discursive resources and practices - and related acts of positioning - identified within the current study.

Furthermore, while young participants represented a mix in terms of gender, young participants were excluded where it was identified that they would have difficulties in accessing the interview situation, for instance, young people with an ASC who also presented with an associated learning disability. The inclusion of young people with an ASC who may also present with additional needs within future research may be particularly important given the possible implications for how this population may be positioned by others within the PCAR setting. Young people and family members from ethnic minority groups also did not make up the participant sample which may have implications for the transferability of the current study's findings. This is particularly relevant given the findings which suggest that social and cultural factors may exert an influence on how family members position themselves in relation to their own roles and duties. Future research therefore should seek to recruit participants from multiple and diverse cultural backgrounds and explore the extent to which participant's discursive constructions may vary across different populations.

5.6 Implications for EP practice

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE], DoH, 2014) emphasises the need for professionals to place a stronger focus on the active participation of children and young people and their families and recommends the use of PCP approaches in fulfilling this requirement. This includes the recommendation for the use of PCP approaches in Annual Reviews for transition-aged young people with an EHCp. Fox (2015) asserts that EPs are well placed to support stakeholders in accomplishing such legislative requirements given the emphasis placed on the core values of autonomy, beneficence and social justice within many EP's approach to practice. EPs are also well positioned to support the PCAR process through the viewing of young people as being part of a complex, interacting system of people, events and contexts which takes account of wider school, home, and community influences (Cane, 2016).

At an individual level, EPs may be able to support young people to be more readily able to take up the position of enhanced epistemic rights through the provision of preparation sessions in advance of their PCAR meeting. EPs are experienced in utilising a range of psychological techniques and tools in eliciting the 'voice of the child' which may support young people's self-determination and self-advocacy skills prior to their PCAR meeting taking place (Hagner et al., 2014; Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000). The importance of such advance preparation - and the potential contribution by EPs in this area - seems particularly pertinent given findings from the current study of the possible social consequences which young people's claims to 'no knowledge' may have for adult's causal attributions and related acts of positioning.

Related to the above is the significant finding that young people were active agents in the discursive construction of their own identity and related negotiations of their assigned autism label. Such identity positioning, accomplished in part by drawing upon the discursive resources provided by adults, may have implications for young people's voice, choice and control which extend beyond the immediate confines of the PCAR setting itself. EPs may be able to support young people's construction of a 'preferred self' by utilising alternative 'critical perspectives' of autism which move beyond a 'deficits-only' conceptualisation. Such perspectives may inform EP's direct work in supporting young people's development of their sense of self at an individual or group level, for example in developing a psycho-educational programme which encompasses a strength-based view of ASC.

Within the current study, young people's PCARs where carried out internally by members of school staff who took on the role of facilitator within the meeting following training in the use of PCP approaches by the local EPS. Sanderson, Thompson and Kilbane (2006) assert that providing professionals with training to act as facilitators is a beginning but may not be enough, given the range of needs which individual young people can present with. Based on findings from the current study, it seems important therefore that those who act as facilitators are provided with on-going support to ensure that a gap between PCP's rhetoric and actual practice does not materialise. EPs may be able to support key members of school staff as facilitators by providing them with regular consultation, supervision and coaching sessions. These sessions may provide a reflective and containing space for staff where they can: (1) consider possible barriers to young people's levels of participation, including the interactional context of the PCAR; (2) consider where to position family members along the continuum of involvement; (3) achieve greater clarity and depth of understanding regarding their own role, responsibilities and assumptions regarding the decision-making powers of pupils with an ASC.

Findings from the current study suggest that while PCP approaches have the potential to promote the voice, choice and control of young autistic people, the impact of PCARs - and the extent to which they are effective - will vary across people, contexts and life domains. Consequently, it will be important therefore that robust approaches to evaluation and monitoring of outcomes are undertaken which provide all attendees, including young people, opportunities to contribute. EPs may be able to support in the development and implementation of such monitoring systems and ensure they are embedded throughout the process. For example, in exploring multiple stakeholder perspectives on the use of PCP approaches over time, Corrigan (2014) utilised the Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME; Dunsmuir et al., 2009) as a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress against individual targets. Indeed, Dunsmuir et al. (2009) highlight that TME as a system and mechanism to providing target-oriented feedback can also accommodate the involvement of children and young people which, the authors suggest, may also contribute to improved motivation.

EPs may also be able to support schools to more effectively embed PCP practices at an organisational level and enhance staff skills and competencies as facilitators through the development and delivery of bespoke training packages. Training could be developed specifically around the use of PCP approaches for young people with an ASC, including presenting ‘alternative’ perspectives of autism. This could, for example, encompass a transactional view of ASC which maintains that the actions of others are as important as those of autistic individuals in promoting understanding, communication and interaction (Jordan, 2003). The integration of PCP training with existing approaches which espouse this transactional view, such as the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support (SCERTS) model may be a helpful way forward (Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin & Laurent, 2003).

Findings also suggest that practitioner’s orientation toward a deficits-only conceptualisation of autism may have negative social consequences for how young people are positioned. Such acts of positioning may have implications for young people’s personal agency and control which extend beyond the limits of the PCAR meeting. EPs may be well positioned to promote a ‘critical autism’ understanding amongst other practitioners, such as members of school staff. This could include engaging other professionals in critically reflecting on the various teaching and ‘treatment’ approaches routinely used within educational settings, including possible negative consequences for young people; supporting others to identify and develop interventions which take account of interactionist perspectives and the wider ecology; and shifting responsibility for change away from the young person with autism toward a collective responsibility which encompasses the wider contexts in which young people live their lives.

5.7 Reflections on the research journey

The process of engaging in this piece of research has been both a challenging and rewarding endeavour. At a local level, the exploration of the experiences of all those involved in the PCAR process has revealed not only the complexity associated with the meeting itself, but also the considerable variation across participant's experiences. Encountering such differences has increased my own awareness of the potential bias which I brought into the research process. That is, my choosing to research PCARs was based on my assumption that it was universally considered by all to be a positive process and that the outcome of my investigations would be a confirmation of this. However, the exploratory process produced a more complex and nuanced picture of PCARs which in turn challenged me to reconsider my 'pre-research' assumptions; and compelled me to be open to the alternative views expressed by participants. The requirement to be 'open to possibilities' presented significant challenges during the analysis phase and represented a key learning outcome from the research endeavour as a whole. Rather than framing such bias as undermining the research itself, I viewed it as potentially enhancing its overall trustworthiness as it afforded me the opportunity to 'own my perspective'; a key criterion to ensuring quality in qualitative research as outlined by Elliott, Fisher and Rennie (1999) and previously referred to in Chapter 3 (see Ch. 3.12.1 & 3.12.2 respectively).

At a more global level, undertaking a research project of this scale has also deepened my understanding of the 'researcher I want to be'. Through critically reflecting on my ontological and epistemological position, my 'world view' has been brought into sharper focus. Indeed, the research process has allowed me to achieve greater clarity around my identity as a researcher as being situated within a social constructionist perspective, which takes as the object of inquiry the lived experiences of others. The research process has also enhanced my understanding of what it means to carry out research ethically and the importance of 'doing no harm'. Finally, the completion of the research project has strengthened my commitment to move from being a mere consumer to a producer of research and reflects the positioning of myself as a 'scientist-practitioner'.

5.8 Conclusion

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE], DoH, 2014) emphasises the need for professionals to place a stronger focus on the active participation of children and young people and their families and recommends the use of PCP approaches in fulfilling this requirement. This includes the recommendation for the use of PCP approaches in Annual Reviews for transition-aged young people with an EHCp. A defining feature of PCP's values framework is the principle that the young person is at the centre of the process. This underlying principle aims to enable the control and power in the process to shift from professionals toward the young person and their family. The current research supports previous work, which conceptualises PCARs as social phenomena, characterised by highly dynamic, interpersonal processes where interactions may influence young people's levels of participation (Whitney-Thomas et al., 1998). The current report has presented a interpretative analysis of the assorted discursive resources and practices deployed by the various actors involved to illustrate how young people were positioned within their PCAR meeting.

Overall, the findings presented within the current report suggest that PCARs have the potential to empower and emancipate young people with an ASC through the cultivation of a discursive climate in which new understandings can be acquired by all involved. However, potential barriers to the promotion of young people's voice, choice and control were also identified. The analysis revealed several key areas across participant's narratives which were considered to be significant in developing our understanding of the social-psychological processes underlying PCARs as dynamic social episodes.

For young participants, the process of PCARs produced a discursive climate in which new linguistic resources were made available by all involved; enabled by the focus placed on considering young people in a holistic way. The collaborative process of recognising and celebrating the focus young person's unique strengths, abilities and personal qualities produced new language which young people drew upon in constructing a preferred self; and thus increased the possibility of their experiencing enhanced personal agency and self-determination. Findings also suggest that the PCAR process may result in a shift in the balance of power, accomplished through the positioning of young people as having the right to make claims to knowledge and to be seen as experts in their own lives. This positioning of young people to claim epistemic rights was enabled by staff who constructed their own role and duties to encompass the championing of pupil voice; a discursive act undertaken as they drew upon the wider ideological discourse of 'person-centredness'. Analysis also revealed the possibility of the formation of a 'social contract', accomplished through a reciprocal process in which young people's active participation served to affirm the moral and professional positioning of staff and strengthen their commitment to act upon the views and wishes expressed by pupils. Findings also suggest that the redistribution of decision-making powers toward young people necessitated family members to reposition themselves from 'advocates' to 'equal partners'. Of particular significance, was the identification of the importance for family members in being aware that such a position was available to them. The current research highlights the need for practitioners to remain sensitive to how family's perceive their role within the PCAR setting and ensure that time is dedicated to preparing families in advance.

Whilst the PCAR process has the potential to position some young people as being experts in their own lives, adult's constructions of autism may represent a potential barrier. For those young people who were perceived to not actively participate, staff attributed this to the nature of their autism. A possible consequence of such causal attributions may be the reduced likelihood of staff considering the interactional ecology within the PCAR and its potential effect on young people's levels of participation.

Overall the current research suggests that PCARs have the potential to offer a social context in which new knowledge is co-constructed and where a climate of empowerment and enhanced personal agency can be engendered. However, for young people with the label of autism, the cultivation of such a climate requires practitioners to critically interrogate their own practice and assumptions and their influences on young people's possibilities for being and doing within their PCAR. The current report argues that such a critical interrogation also depends upon practitioner's sensitivity to the wider social and cultural influences which shape their own assumptions, including the dominant discourses surrounding autism. It is important therefore that practitioners reflect on how the dominant medicalised view of autism may impact on young people's positioning within their PCAR meeting.

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Appendix 1.

Interview schedule for young people

Interview agenda for young people

Rapport building questions

a) I'd like to learn a little about you. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

b) What was the best thing about your weekend?

c) What was the best thing about your day at school yesterday?

(additional questions- where were you?, who was there?, what were you doing?)

Let's talk about your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words] on [insert day]……

(A) How young people positioned themselves

1. Tell me about your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words] that you went to on [insert day]

2. **Why** did you think you were at the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

3. **What** did you do and say at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

Prompt: direct young person's attention toward visual displays, such as a diagram of a room or materials developed from the PCAR

4. What would you have liked to have said, but didn't? Tell me about why you didn't say/do that?

5. If you had a chance to have your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words] again, what would you say that might be different from the last time?

Follow-up question- Why do you think you didn't say that at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words] on [day]?

(B) How young people positioned others

1. Who else was at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

Prompt: direct young person's attention toward visual displays, such as a diagram of a room or materials developed from the PCAR.

2. Why did you think [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] say about you at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

5. Think about how [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] talks about you at other times. Prompt: use examples such as at home, in class. How was it different from the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

6. What did [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] ask you at the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

7. What happened at the end of the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

8. Now that you've had your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words], how do you think things will change?

9. Now that you've had your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words], do you see yourself differently?

10. How do you think others [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] see you now? Prompt: if [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] was here now, what do you think they would say?

If ASC is not referred to following the asking of the above questions, consider the below question-

'Now that you've told me about your PCAR and what it was like for you, I'd like to now learn about your ASC. Remember, it's okay if you don't want to answer some of my questions.'

(C) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is? [use the young person’s words]

2. What do you think about your ASC? [use the young person’s words]

3. How did you find out about your ASC? [use the young person’s words]

4. What do other people say about your ASC? [use the young person’s words]

Prompt: What does your [parent] say about your ASC? What does your teacher say about your ASC? If [parent] was here now, and I asked them about your ASC, what do you think they would say?

5. If you had to explain to another person what ASC [use the young person’s words] was, what would you say?

Appendix 2.

Interview schedule for parents

Interview agenda for parents/carers

(A) How parent/carer positioned themselves

1. Tell me about [insert child's name]'s PCAR.

2. Why did you think you were at the PCAR?

3. What did you do and say at [insert child's name]'s PCAR?

4. What would you have liked to have said, but didn't? Tell me about why you didn't say/do that?

5. If you had a chance to have your child's PCAR again, what would you say that might be different from the last time?

Follow-up question- Why do you think you didn't say that at your PCAR on [day]?

6. How was the PCAR different from other reviews you've attended for [insert child's name]?

(B) How parent/carer positioned others

1. Who else was at [insert child's name] PCAR?

2. Why did you think [child, staff member, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [your child, staff member, other professional] say at your PCAR?

4. Think about how [staff member, other professional] talks about your child at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

5. Think about how [insert child's name] talks about him/herself at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

6. What did [your child, staff member, other professional] ask you at the PCAR?

7. What happened at the end of the PCAR?

8. Now that you've attended [insert child's name]'s PCAR, do you think anything will change?

9. How do you think others [staff member, other professional] see your child now? Prompt: do they see him/her differently? In what way?

10. Now that you've attended [insert child's name], how do you see your child now? Prompt: do you see him/her differently? In what way?

(C) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is?

2. Where do you get information ASC from?

3. In light of that, how do you think [insert child's name] experiences his/her ASC?

4. How did you find out about [insert child's name] ASC?

5. What do other people say about [insert child's name] ASC?

6. If you had to explain to another person [prompt: other parent, professional, your child] what ASC was, what would you say?

Appendix 3.

Interview schedule for school staff

Interview agenda for school staff

(A) How school staff member positioned themselves

1. Tell me about [insert child's name]'s PCAR.

2. Why did you think you were at the PCAR?

3. What did you do and say at [insert child's name]'s PCAR?

4. What would you have liked to have said, but didn't? Tell me about why you didn't say/do that?

5. If you had a chance to attend [insert child's name] PCAR again, what would you say that might be different from the last time?

Follow-up question- Why do you think you didn't say that at your PCAR on [day]?

6. How was the PCAR different from other reviews you've attended for [insert child's name] or other children?

(B) How school staff member positioned others

1. Who else was at [insert child's name] PCAR?

2. Why did you think [child, parent/carer, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [the child, parent/carer, other professional] say at the PCAR?

4. Think about how [parent/carer, the child, other professional] talk about [insert child's name] at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

5. Think about how [insert child's name] talks about him/herself at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

6. What did [the child, parent/carer, other professional] ask you at the PCAR? How

was this different from other reviews you’ve attended?

7. What happened at the end of the PCAR?

8. Now that you’ve attended [insert child’s name]’s PCAR, do you think anything will change?

9. How do you think others [parent/carers, other professional, the child with ASC] see [insert child’s name] now? Prompt: do they see him/her differently? In what way?

10. Now that you’ve attended [insert child’s name] PCAR, how do you see [insert child’s name] now? Prompt: do you see him/her differently? In what way?

(C) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is?

2. Where do you get information ASC from?

3. In light of that, how does [insert child’s name] experience his/her ASC?

4. What do other people say about [insert child’s name] ASC?

5. If you had to explain to another person [prompt: other parent, professional, the child with ASC] what ASC was, what would you say?

Appendix 4.

Pilot interview schedule

Interview agenda for young people

Rapport building questions

a) I'd like to learn a little about you. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

b) What was the best thing about your weekend?

c) What was the best thing about your day at school yesterday?

(additional questions- where were you?, who was there?, what were you doing?)

(A) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is? [use the young person's words]

2. What do you think about your ASC? [use the young person's words]

3. How did you find out about your ASC? [use the young person's words]

4. What do other people say about your ASC? [use the young person's words]

Prompt: What does your [parent] say about your ASC? What does your teacher say about your ASC? If [parent] was here now, and I asked them about your ASC, what do you think they would say?

5. If you had to explain to another person what ASC [use the young person's words] was, what would you say?

(B) How young people positioned themselves

1. Tell me about your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words] that you went to on [insert day]

2. Why did you think you were at the Person-centred Annual Review [use young

person's words]?

3. What did you do and say at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]

(C) How young people positioned others

1. Who else was at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

2. Why did you think [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] say about you at your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

4. Think about how [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] talks about you at other times. Prompt: use examples such as at home, in class. How was it different from the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

5. What did [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] ask you at the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

6. What happened at the end of the Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words]?

7. Now that you've had your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words], how do you think things will change?

8. Now that you've had your Person-centred Annual Review [use young person's words], do you see yourself differently?

9. How do you think others [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] see you now? Prompt: if [parent/carer, staff member, other professional] was here now, what do you think they would say?

Interview agenda for parents/carers

(A) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is?

2. Where do you get information ASC from?

3. In light of that, how do you think [insert child’s name] experiences his/her ASC?

4. How did you find out about [insert child’s name] ASC?

5. What do other people say about [insert child’s name] ASC?

6. If you had to explain to another person [prompt: other parent, professional, your child] what ASC was, what would you say?

(B) How parent/carer positioned themselves

1. Tell me about [insert child’s name]’s PCAR.

2. Why did you think you were at the PCAR?

3. What did you do and say at [insert child’s name]’s PCAR?

4. How was the PCAR different from other reviews you’ve attended for [insert child’s name]?

(C) How parent/carer positioned others

1. Who else was at [insert child’s name] PCAR?

2. Why did you think [child, staff member, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [your child, staff member, other professional] say at your PCAR?

4. Think about how [staff member, other professional] talks about your child at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

5. Think about how [insert child's name] talks about him/herself at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

6. What did [your child, staff member, other professional] ask you at the PCAR?

7. What happened at the end of the PCAR?

8. Now that you've attended [insert child's name]'s PCAR, do you think anything will change?

9. How do you think others [staff member, other professional] see your child now? Prompt: do they see him/her differently? In what way?

10. Now that you've attended [insert child's name], how do you see your child now? Prompt: do you see him/her differently? In what way?

Interview agenda for school staff

(A) Constructions of ASC

1. What do you think ASC is?

2. Where do you get information ASC from?

3. In light of that, how does [insert child's name] experience his/her ASC?

4. What do other people say about [insert child's name] ASC?

5. If you had to explain to another person [prompt: other parent, professional, the child with ASC] what ASC was, what would you say?

(B) How school staff member positioned themselves

1. Tell me about [insert child's name]'s PCAR.

2. Why did you think you were at the PCAR?

3. What did you do and say at [insert child's name]'s PCAR?

4. How was the PCAR different from other reviews you've attended for [insert child's name] or other children?

(C) How school staff member positioned others

1. Who else was at [insert child's name] PCAR?

2. Why did you think [child, parent/carer, other professional] was there?

3. What did the other people [the child, parent/carer, other professional] say at the PCAR?

4. Think about how [parent/carer, the child, other professional] talk about [insert child's name] at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

5. Think about how [insert child's name] talks about him/herself at other times. How was it different during the PCAR?

6. What did [the child, parent/carer, other professional] ask you at the PCAR? How was this different from other reviews you've attended?

7. What happened at the end of the PCAR?

8. Now that you've attended [insert child's name]'s PCAR, do you think anything will change?

9. How do you think others [parent/carers, other professional, the child with ASC] see [insert child's name] now? Prompt: do they see him/her differently? In what way?

10. Now that you've attended [insert child's name] PCAR, how do you see [insert child's name] now? Prompt: do you see him/her differently? In what way?

Appendix 5.

Survey to schools

SENDCo Forum Survey: The use of Person-Centred Planning approaches in your school.

Date: 7.12.17

Dear SENDCo,

This survey is being carried out in order to gather information on how schools in Xxxx currently use Person-centred Planning approaches.

Person-centred planning approaches aim to explore what is happening from the child's or young person's perspective and puts them at the centre of the process. It is often used at a child's or young person's review and looks at what's working and not working, what's important to the person now and in the future, and agrees outcomes for change.

It is hoped that the information you provide will create a better understanding of what additional support schools may need in using Person-Centred planning effectively.

This survey is being carried out by a Trainee Educational Psychologist as part of the preliminary stages of a research project. Your responses will help shape the nature of this research.

If you have any questions or comments about this survey or would like to learn more about the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Jason Power

Trainee Educational & Child Psychologist

Email: Jason.power@xxxx.gov.uk

Please tick as appropriate:

Q.1 Do you use Person-centred Planning approaches in your school?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q 2. If yes, what approaches does your school use?

☐ PATH (Planning for Alternative Tomorrows Today)

☐ MAPs (Making Action Plans)

☐ One Page Profiles

☐ Please specify:

Other

Q 3. When might you use a Person-centred planning approach?

☐ Annual Review

☐ Reintegration Meeting following an exclusion

☐ Transition planning (e.g. to post-16, primary to secondary)

☐ Creating an IEP or similar

☐ Please specify:

Other

Q 4. Do you think your school could benefit from additional support in using Person-centred planning more effectively?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify:

(e.g. additional training in PCP approaches, guidance in facilitating PCP reviews)

Q 5. Would your school be interested in taking part in a research project in this area in the future?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide contact details:

Name: School: Email:

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 6.

Information sheet/invitation letter for headteachers

SCHOOL INVITATION LETTER

Your school is being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Title of research: *An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review*

My name is Jason Power. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for the Local Authority's Educational Psychology Service. I am currently training with at the University of East London and will be conducting research in the Local Authority.

What is the research about?

I would like to invite members of school staff, students with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and their families to take part in a research study which explores the Annual Review process from the perspectives of both young people and parents/carers as well as members of school staff themselves.

The involvement of students with an ASC, their families as well as members of school staff is important because there are few robust pieces of research which report from the perspectives of everyone involved.

The research aims to give students with an ASC and their families a voice in the use of person-centred approaches, provide an opportunity for all to reflect on and more fully understand the process and highlight ways in which in we may better facilitate the Annual Review process.

Please read over the following information carefully as it outlines what the focus of the research is and what your participation will involve.

Who can take part?

I am looking to work with students with ASC, their families and members of school staff after they have attended an Annual Review for a child with ASC in their school.

What will participation involve for students and members of school staff?

1. Students with an ASC and members of school staff will be able to be participants in the project. Students with an ASC, their families and members of school staff who agree to participate will be provided with further details of the research and details of how to get into contact with myself and the University of East London.

2. You will be asked to sign a consent form where you agree for this project to take place at your school. Consent will also be obtained from students, their families and members of school staff.

What happens next?

Following the return of these forms, I will arrange to meet with a student(s) and a key member(s) of staff at your school. During these meeting I will conduct an interview with which should take up to 45 minutes each. Participants will be reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any time. They will be asked questions about their experience of having attended a child's Person-Centred Annual Review such as how the review was different from others they have attended and what they noticed about others during the review. They will also be asked questions about ASC.

Important Information:

I will record what is said during the interviews using an audio recorder. This will be stored securely and typed into a word document by myself. Participants' details will be anonymised using *pseudonyms*. Anything which they say will be completely confidential. The only time I would break this confidentiality is if they were to tell me something that puts them or somebody else in danger.

What happens to the information gathered from the interviews?

I will analyse the data for meaning from a psychological perspective. This will involve looking at patterns across a number of student, parent, and staff member interviews. I will then develop an overall interpretation of the experience of the Annual Review from the perspectives of the students, parents and members of staff.

What happens to this information afterwards?

All information will be anonymised and stored securely on encrypted devices which will only be accessible to myself. This information and *anonymised* data will form a report for a Doctoral thesis. This report will be shared with participating schools, the Educational Psychology Service in the Local Authority, and the University of East London. Once data has been analysed, all files containing personal information (names, contact details etc.) will be destroyed securely. The anonymised data may be retained for a period of up to three years following the completion of the analysis.

What if I or the participants want to withdraw?

The school and/or the participants are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Participants may also request to have data removed up until the point I begin my analysis. After this time, all data will have been anonymised and amalgamated, and it will not be possible to remove the data provided.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jason Power

Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk
Phone:

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact my research supervisor Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
(Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 7.

Consent form for schools

Consent form

Name of school:
…………………………………………………………………………………………

This is the form which you need to complete to indicate that you consent to both a young person(s) and member(s) of school staff from your school to participate in the research project:

'An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review'

Researchers name:
Jason Power - Trainee Educational Psychologist
Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk

Please indicate your responses with an X in the appropriate box

- I have read the Participant Information Sheets and understand the nature and purpose of the research project:

	Yes
	No (I would like more information about the research

- I consent to the participation of a *young person(s)* in my school in the research project, pending consent from both a parent/carer and the young person themselves:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to the participation of a *member(s) of school staff* in my school in the research project, pending consent from the member of school staff themselves:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to the use audio of recording of the young person(s) and member(s) of school staff's responses during interviews.

	Yes
	No

Signed…………………………………………………………........(Head Teacher)

Print name………………………………………………………
Date………………………….

Researcher's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Date………………………….

Appendix 8.

Information sheet for students

Hello, my name is Jason.

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist and work with children and young people in schools.

1. I am doing a project on what it is like for young people with autism to go to a review meeting and I would like to speak with you about it.
2. If you would like to take part I will come to your school to talk with you more about my project. You can ask me any questions you have about my project. We can also talk about things which you like to do in and outside of school.
3. If you are happy to take part in my project then on another day we can talk with each other about going to your review meeting.
4. I will ask you some questions about what it was like going to your review meeting. I will also ask some questions about what it's like to have autism.
5. If you don't want to do my project anymore, you can tell me or an adult at your school at any time.
6. You can choose an adult in your school you would like to come with you when we talk.
7. I will not tell anyone what your answers were unless it puts you or someone else in danger.
8. My name is ………………… and I am happy to talk with Jason for his project.

Thank you.

Appendix 9.

Information sheet/invitation letter for parents/carers

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

You and your child are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Title of research: *An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review.*

My name is Jason Power. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for the Local Authority's Educational Psychology Service. I am currently training at the University of East London and will be conducting research in the Local Authority.

What is the research about?

I would like to invite students with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and their families to take part in a research study which explores the Annual Review process from the perspectives of both young people and parents/carers as well as members of school staff.

The involvement of students with an ASC and their families is important because there are few robust pieces of research which report from the perspectives of both students and their families.

The research aims to give students with an ASC and their families a voice in the use of person-centred approaches, provide an opportunity for all to reflect on and more fully understand the process and highlight ways in which in we may better facilitate the Annual Review process.

Please read over the following information carefully as it outlines what the focus of the research is and what participation by both you and your child will involve. You may wish to discuss this with your child prior to my introduction.

Which students can take part?

I am looking to work with students with a clinical diagnosis of ASC and their families after they have attended an Annual Review. A key part of the project will involve my discussing with your child their ASC so it will be important that they are aware of their diagnosis and are comfortable in talking about it.

What will participation involve for parents?

1. Parents will also be able to be participants along with their child. Parents will be provided with further details of the research and details of how to get into contact with myself and the University of East London.

2. You will be asked to sign a consent form to enable both you and your child to participate which you can return to your child's school.

What happens next?

For your child:

Following the return of these forms, I will arrange to meet with your child on two occasions at his/her school. I will work closely with a member of school staff who knows your child well.

These meetings should take up to 45 minutes. During the first meeting, your child and I will devise a plan for how best to conduct an interview. I will also speak with staff about your child's preferred ways of communicating.

During the second visit I will conduct the interview with your child. Your child will be asked again if they would still like to take part in the study and reminded they can withdraw at any time. Your child will be asked questions about their experience of their Person-centred Annual Review such as who was there and what they noticed about how others spoke about them. Your child will also be asked questions about their ASC and what it means to them.

For parents/carers as participants:

I will also arrange to meet with you separately at your child's school or, where this is not possible, at the family home. During this meeting I will conduct an interview with you which should take up to 45 minutes. You will be asked if you still agree to take part in the study and you will be reminded that you can withdraw from the study at any time. You will be asked questions about your experience of having attended your child's Person-centred Annual Review such as how the review was different from others you have attended and what you noticed about others during the review. You will also be asked questions about your child's ASC and what it means to you.

Important Information:

I will record what is said during the interview with both you and your child using an audio recorder. This will be stored securely and typed into a word document by myself. The details of both you and your child as well as your child's school will be

anonymised using pseudonyms. Anything which you or your child say will be completely confidential. The only time I would break this confidentiality is if you or your child tells me something that puts you/your child or somebody else in danger.

What happens to the information gathered from my and my child's interviews?

I will analyse the data (what has been said) for meaning from a psychological perspective. This will involve looking at patterns across a number of student, parent, and staff member interviews. I will then develop an overall interpretation of the experience of the Annual Review from the perspectives of the students, parents and members of staff.

What happens to this information afterwards?

All information will be anonymised and stored securely on encrypted devices which will only be accessible to myself. This information and *anonymised* data will form a report for a Doctoral thesis. This report will be shared with participating schools, the Educational Psychology Service in the Local Authority, and the University of East London. Once data has been analysed, all files containing personal information (names, contact details etc.) will be destroyed securely. The anonymised data may be retained for a period of up to three years following the completion of the analysis.

What if I want to withdraw myself and/or my child?

You are free to withdraw either yourself, your child or both from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. You may also request to have your and/or your child's data removed up until the point I begin my analysis. After this time, all data will have been anonymised and amalgamated, and it will not be possible to remove the data provided.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jason Power

Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk
Phone:

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact my research supervisor Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

(Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn,
School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 10.

Information sheet/invitation letter for staff

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Title of research: *An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review*

My name is Jason Power. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for the Local Authority's Educational Psychology Service. I am currently training with at the University of East London and will be conducting research in the Local Authority.

What is the research about?

I would like to invite members of school staff, students with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and their families to take part in a research study which explores the Annual Review process from the perspectives of both young people and parents/carers as well as members of school staff themselves.

The involvement of students with an ASC, their families as well as members of school staff is important because there are few robust pieces of research which report from the perspectives of everyone involved.

The research aims to give students with an ASC and their families a voice in the use of person-centred approaches, provide an opportunity for all to reflect on and more fully understand the process and highlight ways in which in we may better facilitate the Annual Review process.

Please read over the following information carefully as it outlines what the focus of the research is and what your participation will involve.

Who can take part?

I am looking to work with members of school staff after they have attended an Annual Review for a child with ASC in their school.

What will participation involve for members of school staff?

1. Members of school staff will be able to be participants in the project along with students with ASC and their families. Members of school staff who agree to participate will be provided with further details of the research and details of how to get into contact with myself and the University of East London.

2. You will be asked to sign a consent form which you can return to a key member of staff who is supporting me with my research.

What happens next?

Following the return of these forms, I will arrange to meet with you at your school. During this meeting I will conduct an interview with you which should take up to 45 minutes. You will be asked if you still agree to take part in the study and you will be reminded that you can withdraw from the study at any time. You will be asked questions about your experience of having attended a child's Person-Centred Annual Review such as how the review was different from others you have attended and what you noticed about others during the review. You will also be asked questions ASC.

Important Information:

I will record what is said during the interview using an audio recorder. This will be stored securely and typed into a word document by myself. Your details will be anonymised using *pseudonyms*. Anything which you say will be completely confidential. The only time I would break this confidentiality is if you tell me something that puts you or somebody else in danger.

What happens to this information afterwards?

All information will be anonymised and stored securely on encrypted devices which will only be accessible to myself. This information and *anonymised* data will form a report for a Doctoral thesis. This report will be shared with participating schools, the Educational Psychology Service in the Local Authority, and the University of East London. Once data has been analysed, all files containing personal information (names, contact details etc.) will be destroyed securely. The anonymised data may be retained for a period of up to three years following the completion of the analysis.

What if I want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. You may also request to have data removed up until the point I begin my analysis. After this time, all data will have been anonymised and amalgamated, and it will not be possible to remove the data provided.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jason Power

Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk
Phone:

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact my research supervisor Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
(Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 11.

Consent form for students

Hello, my name is Jason.

This consent form is to make sure you would like to take part in my project.

1. Do you understand what Jason's project is about?

○	○	○
Yes	A little bit (Tell me more)	No

2. Are you happy to do the project and talk to Jason about your review meeting?

○	○
Yes	No

3. Is it okay for Jason to record us when we talk so that he can remember what we said to one another?

○	○
Yes	No

4. Name:

Thank you.

Appendix 12.

Consent form for parents/carers

Consent form

Name of parent/carer:

……………………………………………………………………………………….

Name of child:

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

This is the form which you need to complete to indicate that you consent for both you and your child to participate in the research project:

'An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review'.

Researchers name:
Jason Power - Trainee Educational Psychologist
Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk

Please indicate your responses with an X in the appropriate box

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature and purpose of the research project:

☐	Yes
☐	No (I would like more information about the research

- I consent to the participation of *my child* in the research project, pending consent from them:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to *my* participating in the research project:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to the use of audio recording of *my child’s* responses during interviews:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to the use of audio recording *my* responses during interviews:

	Yes
	No

Signed…………………………………………………........(parent/carer)

Print name…………………………………… Date………………………….

Researcher’s Signature

………………………………........…………………………………………………

Researcher’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)...

Date………………………….

Appendix 13.

Consent form for staff

Consent form

Name of member of school staff:

………………………………………………………………………………

Name of school:

…………………………………………………………………………………………

This is the form which you need to complete to indicate that you consent to participate in the research project:

'An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review'

Researchers name:
Jason Power - Trainee Educational Psychologist
Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk

Please indicate your responses with an X in the appropriate box

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature and purpose of the research project:

	Yes
	No (I would like more information about the research

- I give my consent to participate in this research project:

	Yes
	No

- I consent to the use audio of recording my responses during interview.

	Yes
	No

Signed…………………………………………………………………….......

Print name………………………………………………………

Date………………………….

Researcher's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………

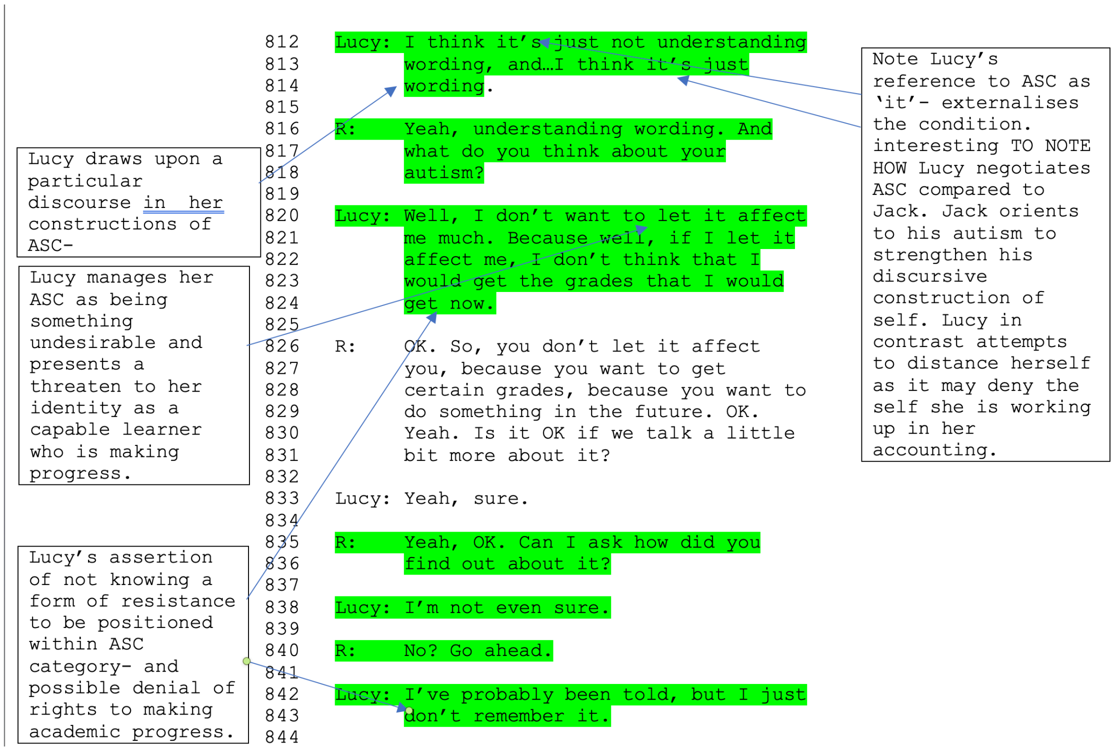
Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Date………………………….

Appendix 14.

Examples from the data analysis



Lucy draws upon a particular discourse in her constructions of ASC-

Lucy manages her ASC as being something undesirable and presents a threaten to her identity as a capable learner who is making progress.

Lucy's assertion of not knowing a form of resistance to be positioned within ASC category- and possible denial of rights to making academic progress.

Lucy: I think it's just not understanding wording, and…I think it's just wording.

R: Yeah, understanding wording. And what do you think about your autism?

Lucy: Well, I don't want to let it affect me much. Because well, if I let it affect me, I don't think that I would get the grades that I would get now.

R: OK. So, you don't let it affect you, because you want to get certain grades, because you want to do something in the future. OK. Yeah. Is it OK if we talk a little bit more about it?

Lucy: Yeah, sure.

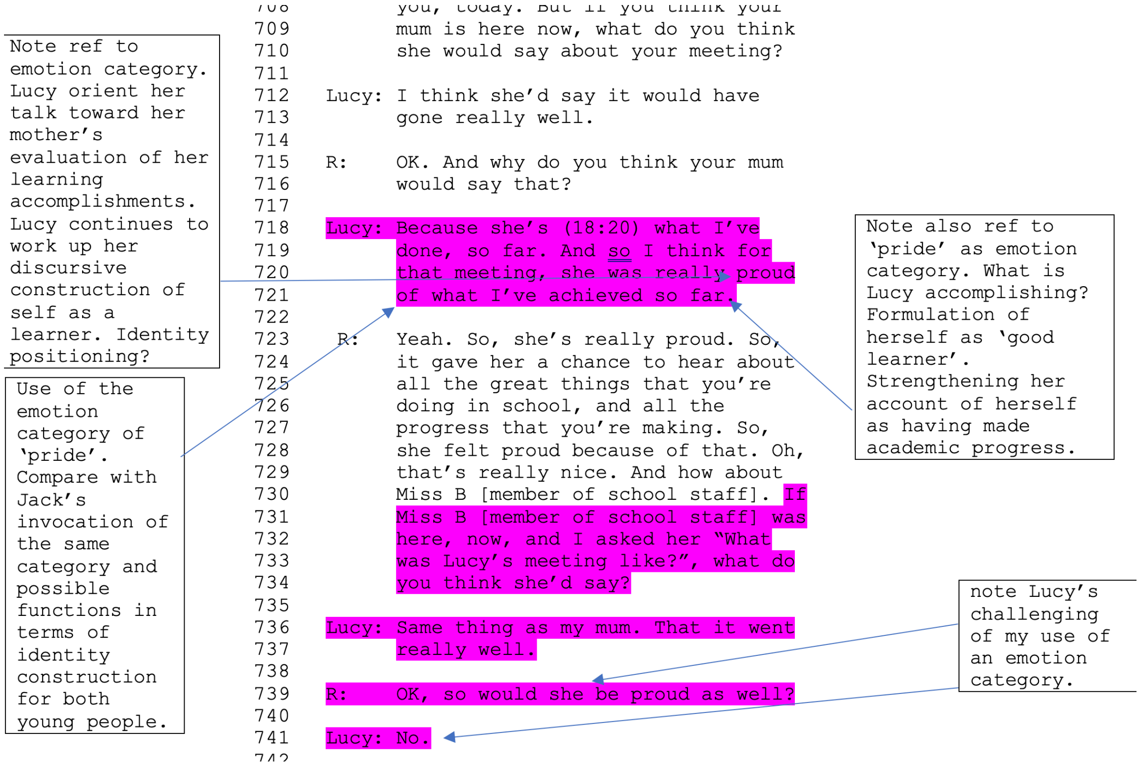
R: Yeah, OK. Can I ask how did you find out about it?

Lucy: I'm not even sure.

R: No? Go ahead.

Lucy: I've probably been told, but I just don't remember it.

Note Lucy's reference to ASC as 'it'- externalises the condition. interesting TO NOTE HOW Lucy negotiates ASC compared to Jack. Jack orients to his autism to strengthen his discursive construction of self. Lucy in contrast attempts to distance herself as it may deny the self she is working up in her accounting.



Note ref to emotion category. Lucy orient her talk toward her mother's evaluation of her learning accomplishments. Lucy continues to work up her discursive construction of self as a learner. Identity positioning?

Use of the emotion category of 'pride'. Compare with Jack's invocation of the same category and possible functions in terms of identity construction for both young people.

you, today. But if you think your mum is here now, what do you think she would say about your meeting?

Lucy: I think she'd say it would have gone really well.

R: OK. And why do you think your mum would say that?

Lucy: Because she's (18:20) what I've done, so far. And so I think for that meeting, she was really proud of what I've achieved so far.

R: Yeah. So, she's really proud. So, it gave her a chance to hear about all the great things that you're doing in school, and all the progress that you're making. So, she felt proud because of that. Oh, that's really nice. And how about Miss B [member of school staff]. If Miss B [member of school staff] was here, now, and I asked her "What was Lucy's meeting like?", what do you think she'd say?

Lucy: Same thing as my mum. That it went really well.

R: OK, so would she be proud as well?

Lucy: No.

Note also ref to 'pride' as emotion category. What is Lucy accomplishing? Formulation of herself as 'good learner'. Strengthening her account of herself as having made academic progress.

note Lucy's challenging of my use of an emotion category.

Appendix 14.

Examples from the data analysis continued

Time code: (3:50)

Note pronoun use/footing shifts-

Reference to characterisations by others and self-including agreement

Jack: Yeah.

R: Can you tell me a little bit about the meeting?

Jack: They took me out of engineering, and we were talking about my review, how I've been doing, how I am coping with everything. I said it was okay, everyone's saying nice things, saying I'm really polite. Like, very honourly and noble, because I'm a noble person. People just saying (3:58-4:00) grateful about (4:02) case and they never are worried about dropping it.

R: Okay. So they were saying really nice things about you, you were noble…

Jack: Being kind.

R: Being kind.

Jack: And so it was just like that. Then afterwards, they gave me a choice if I wanted to continue on with the

Reported speech

Jack's correction of the omission of 'kind' from summary

Note use of 'student' rather direct reference to self. Resists being categorised as needing 'help'

Implies others ie adults already provide help. Positive evaluation of the role of adults generally

Positions himself in relation to epistemic knowledge. Assertion of epistemic rights.

R: Why do you think they're important?

Jack: I think the reason why they're important is, so the teachers and the staff can know what's working and what's not working and how they can help even more with the student in particular.

R: Okay. So you have a better understanding about what works and what doesn't work?

Jack: Yeah.

R: Is there anything else about why you think you were there?

Jack: Also so I can give a valid reason, and maybe to get me out of the stuffy classroom. Because I was in engineering, it was hot, and we had to do supergluing for a project.

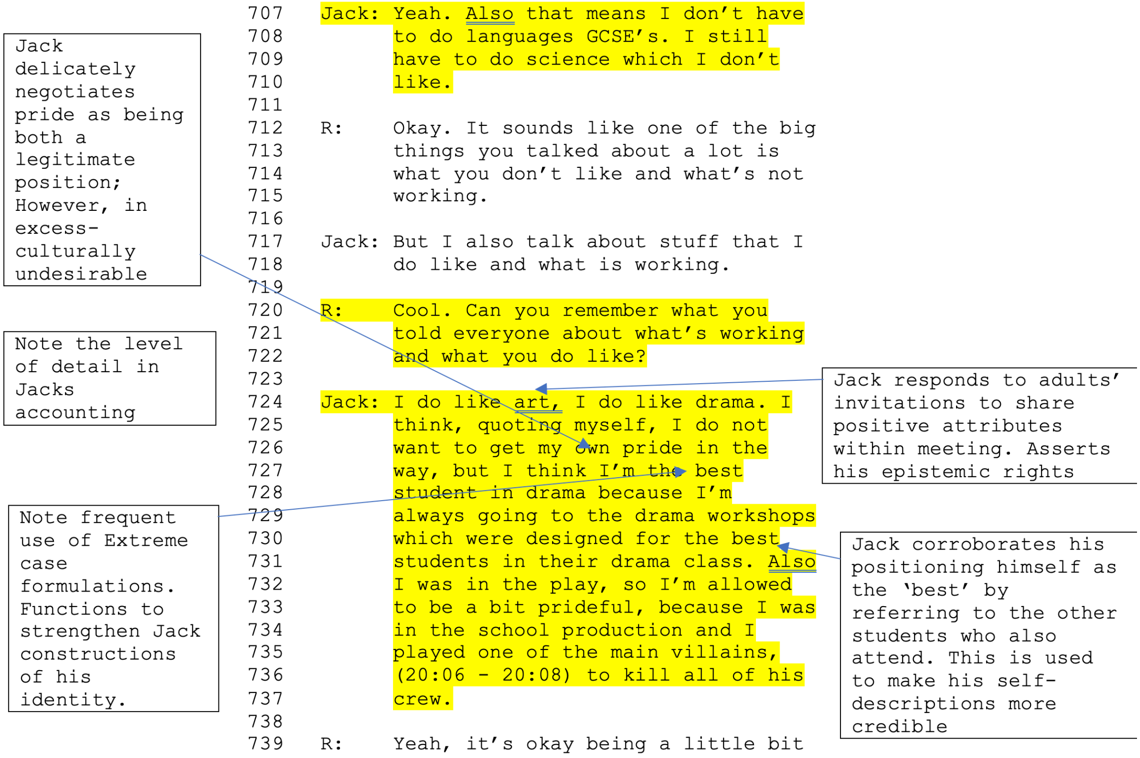
R: Okay, so it was a nice break from a very hot, stuffy engineering class?

Note variations in pronoun use. In response to q re. importance, Jack refers to others rather than himself.

Positioning of others referring to duties

Appendix 14.

Examples from the data analysis continued



Jack: Yeah. Also that means I don't have to do languages GCSE's. I still have to do science which I don't like.

R: Okay. It sounds like one of the big things you talked about a lot is what you don't like and what's not working.

Jack: But I also talk about stuff that I do like and what is working.

R: Cool. Can you remember what you told everyone about what's working and what you do like?

Jack: I do like art, I do like drama. I think, quoting myself, I do not want to get my own pride in the way, but I think I'm the best student in drama because I'm always going to the drama workshops which were designed for the best students in their drama class. Also I was in the play, so I'm allowed to be a bit prideful, because I was in the school production and I played one of the main villains, (20:06 - 20:08) to kill all of his crew.

R: Yeah, it's okay being a little bit

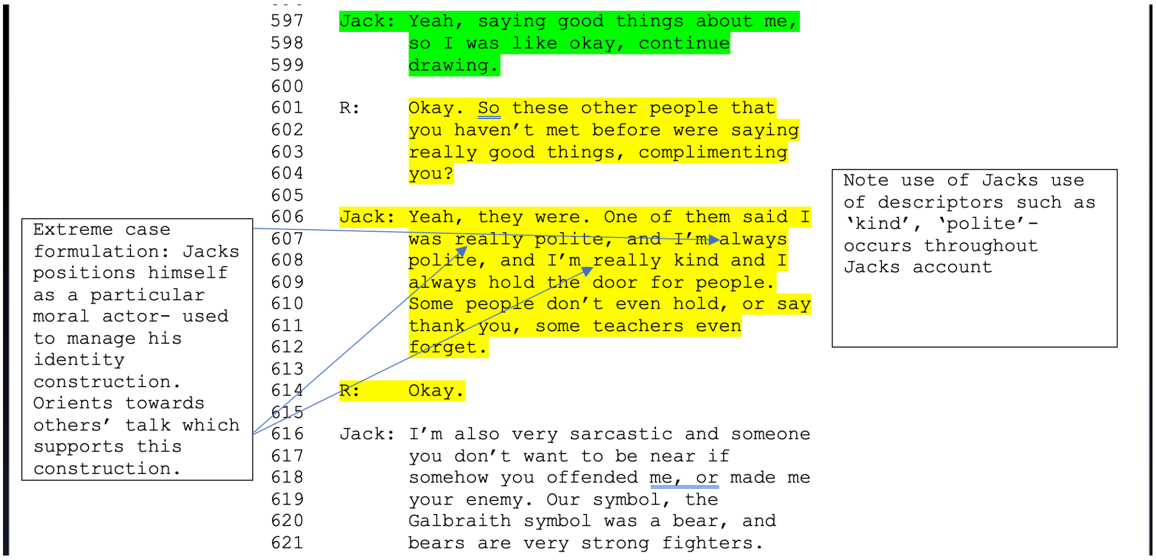
Jack delicately negotiates pride as being both a legitimate position; However, in excess- culturally undesirable

Note the level of detail in Jacks accounting

Note frequent use of Extreme case formulations. Functions to strengthen Jack constructions of his identity.

Jack responds to adults' invitations to share positive attributes within meeting. Asserts his epistemic rights

Jack corroborates his positioning himself as the 'best' by referring to the other students who also attend. This is used to make his self-descriptions more credible



Jack: Yeah, saying good things about me, so I was like okay, continue drawing.

R: Okay. So these other people that you haven't met before were saying really good things, complimenting you?

Jack: Yeah, they were. One of them said I was really polite, and I'm always polite, and I'm really kind and I always hold the door for people. Some people don't even hold, or say thank you, some teachers even forget.

R: Okay.

Jack: I'm also very sarcastic and someone you don't want to be near if somehow you offended me, or made me your enemy. Our symbol, the Galbraith symbol was a bear, and bears are very strong fighters.

Extreme case formulation: Jacks positions himself as a particular moral actor- used to manage his identity construction. Orients towards others' talk which supports this construction.

Note use of Jacks use of descriptors such as 'kind', 'polite'- occurs throughout Jacks account

Appendix 15.

Ethics review decision letter

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

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

REVIEWER: Kirstie Soar

SUPERVISOR: **Mary Robinson**

STUDENT: Jason Power

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Title of proposed study: An exploration of how autistic young people are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review

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 <u>BEFORE</u> THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is <u>not</u> required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made <u>before</u> 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):*

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

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

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature): Jason Power*
Student number: 1622660

Date: 07.03.18

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

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

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

☐ HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐ MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

☒ LOW

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

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

Date: 09/02/18

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

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, 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 a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

Appendix 16.

Student debrief letter

Dear ______________________________

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

1. I have recorded the things that you have said, and I will listen to them again, along with things that other people have said.

2. I will then find themes in what young people, their families and school staff have told me and come to some conclusions about what it's like for young people with autism at their reviews. I hope this will help young people with autism to have a bigger say in making decisions about their lives.

3. I am then going to write this up in a project but remember I will not use your name and no one will be able to identify you.

4. I will come back to your school in September 2019 to tell your parents and school staff about what I found out. Remember, no one will be able to tell it was you who spoke with me.

5. You are very welcome to come along also, and you will be told more about this closer to the time.

6. If you feel that you do not want me to include the things that you have said in my project, please let ___________ know and they will tell me. Then your views will not be included in my project. If you have any questions later on or if anything we talked about has made you upset, you can talk with ___________. They will try and help you.

7. There are also some organisations that you can get in touch with if you want more information or help. I've included their details below.

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

Kind regards,

Jason

Organisations that can help:

- SENDIASS (The Special Educational Needs & Disability Advice & Support Service)

  Tel:
  Email:
  Website:

  SENDIASS can give you information about what rights and entitlements you have with your education. They may also be able to offer you a person (sometimes called an advocate) to help you look through information or come along to meetings with you if you don't feel listened to.

- The National Autistic Society's Autism Helpline
  Tel: 0808 800 4104
  Website: www.autism.org.uk

  The Autism Helpline can offer lots of information related to autism; like what autism is, what help is available and what rights people with autism have at school, college or in work. They can also give details about local autism groups and services, such as groups for young people with autism.

Appendix 17.

Debrief letter for parents/carers

Title of research: *An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review*

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my research project. I am extremely grateful for you taking the time to speak with me about you and your child's experiences.

I will be taking the recordings I have made with you and your child and will begin listening to and analysing what has been said about the Person-Centred Annual Reviews.

I will hope to have completed my project by September 2019. I will contact you again by post to feedback what my findings were. I will also be feeding this information back to your child's school and local authority.

Should you decide you would like to withdraw from the project, please contact me using the contact details below. If you have any further questions to ask me about the project, or if there is anything that we discussed in the interview, that you'd like to discuss further, feel free to contact me on:

Should you feel you need further support relating to your child's special educational needs or would like to learn more about ASC and what help is available to families, the below organisations may be of help:

- SENDIASS (The Special Educational Needs & Disability Advice & Support Service)
  Tel: 02079746264
  Email:
  Website: www.sendiass.gov.uk

- The National Autistic Society's Autism Helpline
  Tel: 0808 800 4104
  Website: www.autism.org.uk

- The National Autistic Society's Education Rights Service
  Tel: 0808 800 4102
  Website: www.autism.org.uk

Thank you for again for your time. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jason Power

Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk
Phone:

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact my research supervisor Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
(Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 18.

Debrief letter for staff

Title of research: *An exploration of how autistic students are positioned in their Person-Centred Annual Review*

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my research project. I am extremely grateful for you taking the time to speak with me.

I will be taking the recordings I have made and will begin listening to and analysing what has been said about the Person-Centred Annual Reviews.

I will hope to have completed my project by September 2019. I will be contacting your school again to feedback my findings. An invitation will be extended to you closer to this time and I hope you will be able to attend.

To withdraw from the research project, please contact me using the contact details below. If you have any further questions to ask me about the project, or if there is anything that we discussed in the interview, that you'd like to discuss further, feel free to contact me on:

Email: u1622660@uel.ac.uk
Phone:

Thank you again for your time.

Kind regards,

Jason Power
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact my research supervisor Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
(Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 19.

Research diary extracts

Research diary extract 1

Date: June 2018

A key activity undertaken this week was the conducting of a pilot interview with a young person with diagnosis of autism after he had recently attended his PCAR. The main aim of the pilot interview was to gain key skills and experience in conducting interviews with young people. A secondary aim was to determine the extent to which the interview questions included in the current schedule were accessible to young people. Overall, the interview was positive and produced a rich account of the young person's PCAR experiences and their perceptions of their autism. All the questions appeared to be accessible to the young person. Reflecting on the experience, it will be helpful to change the order of the questions to place the discussion of autism at the end; as introducing it at the start seemed to 'lead' the conversation in a particular direction and detracted focus from the PCAR discussion itself. It may also be helpful to include additional questions around what young people would like to change about the PCARs as this may produce more insight into their experiences of the actual meeting itself. Also, while the questions themselves seemed accessible, the young person had difficulty in recalling who attended and what they said.

It will be helpful to consider how to support young people's recall in future interviews. This could be using the materials, such as the poster paper, developed in the meeting itself. It may also be helpful to use visuals more generally, such as drawing out the meeting itself with the young person. I noticed that I relied on the interview schedule too much during the interview, and perhaps was too inflexible in the order I presented the questions. This may have 'led' the interview too much and limited what could be said by the young person. It will be important that I internalise the questions for future interviews so I can more readily respond flexibly to what participants say. It will also be important that I prompt participants to expand upon their responses where possible, whilst also be attuned to how they are feeling in the moment.

Research diary extract 2

Date: November 2018

This week involved the conducting of my first interview with a parent of a young person with autism. The interview itself presented me with some unexpected issues. The interview was an emotional experience for the parent as she became upset at various points, particularly when discussing her son's future. There was a sense of tension and ambivalence in her talk. She saw the PCAR and the seeking of her son's views as being a positive. However, the prospect of an unknown future beyond secondary school was clearly a source of deep anxiety. From my own perspective, it was somewhat challenging to focus the interview on the PCAR itself whilst also being sensitive and empathetic to the parent's worries for the future. I noticed that my role as a researcher and practitioner became blurred as I had a strong desire to 'follow' the parent's story around her concerns for the future. It was helpful that I dedicated time at the end of the interview proper exploring what the parent could do next and the support potentially available, including directing her toward the services which I had included on the debrief sheet. The interview itself also challenged some of my preconceived notions that the PCAR would be generally viewed as being a positive experience by all. It will be important therefore that I continue to reflect on what I am 'bringing into the interview situation' to aid my critical reflexivity.

A strong theme from my own reflections on this interview concerns the issue of ethics. It will be important that I continue spending sufficient time before the interview clearly outlining the right to withdraw, that participants are under no obligation to answer any questions, can stop the interview etc. It will also be important that I ensure that there is adequate time to debrief participants at the end of the interview and ensure they are aware of possible sources of support and know how I can be contacted if they have any further questions or concerns.

Appendix 20.

Jefferson transcription table

Jefferson Transcription Notation	
(.)	A micro-pause (less than two-tenths of a second).
(1.2)	A pause or silence, measured in seconds and tenths of seconds.
ye::s	Stretched sounds in talk; the more colons, the longer the sound.
wrong	Emphasised words, or part of words are underlined.
.hh	Indicates audible intake of breath.
(unclear)	Words in single brackets are either inaudible or there is uncertainty regarding their accuracy.
[young person]	The use of square brackets is to provide clarifying information or details which have been changed to protect anonymity.

Adapted from: Wiggins, S. (2016). Discursive psychology: Theory, method and applications. London: Sage.