

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

**YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR IDENTITIES: THE CASE OF DYSLEXIA AND
TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION**

ELENI-PANAGIOTA LITHARI

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University for the
degree of PhD in Education

Submitted: July 2014

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisory team, Chrissie Rogers, Hazel Wright and Christine Such for their continuous and invaluable support. They have offered their insight and comments during the planning, field work and writing up stages of this research, always helping me to develop. Chrissie has been with me since the beginning, believing in me and supporting what I wanted to do with this research. Hazel, who came in later, has also offered significant guidance and support. I am grateful to all of them, for everything they have done and the advice they offered.

This research would not have been possible without the help from all the participants. They opened their homes to me, offered their time, sharing their experiences and thoughts with me. Their interest in supporting dyslexia research and helping others with their narratives are overwhelming. Special reference has to be made to all the individuals who supported me in my search for participants by putting me in contact with suitable people. Although none of them can be named, I am ever so thankful for their help and hope that they know how much of a difference they have made.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents for their never ending support throughout my education. They have always been there for me, both emotionally and financially, enabling me to pursue my goals.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR IDENTITIES: THE CASE OF DYSLEXIA AND
TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

ELENI-PANAGIOTA LITHARI

July 2014

The present work investigates the gap in literature regarding the impact of secondary education experiences on the identity of dyslexic pupils. During the long-term context of the educational process, individuals face educational transitions as they move from childhood to adolescence. The transition related effects and educational experiences, in combination with dyslexic difficulties and experiences of support can have a severe impact on a learner's identity. This study reveals how young dyslexic learners experience this process and its effect on their identity, along with the corresponding psychosocial impact. The research also investigates the strongly interactive relationship between the individual's identity and his/her academic performance.

This qualitative study is predominantly based on semi-structured interviews with twenty English adults and young individuals. A small-scale research approach is adopted aiming to explore those aspects of secondary education in great detail.

The main issues discussed in this research are: transition to secondary education, parental and institutional support, their influences on identity construction and fractured academic identity. To present the findings of this research, identity theories based on Symbolic Interactionism are used in analysing the data. The conclusions are that parental help and support, both academically and emotionally, are critical and many participants said that this had the most significant impact for them.

Additionally, it was found that because educational experiences severely affect identity construction, educational institutions need to address the difficulties of dyslexia in a much more pragmatic way and provide meaningful support for their students. Schools that ignored their students' difficulties made them feel excluded and uncomfortable, and some described leaving school a relief.

Key words: dyslexia, transition, identity, support

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Defining dyslexia	2
Demographic	2
Dyslexia definition	2
Difficulties	3
Specific difficulties across the curriculum	4
<i>Mathematics</i>	5
<i>Science</i>	6
<i>Music</i>	6
<i>Modern foreign languages</i>	7
Dyslexia and ability	7
<i>Artistic talent</i>	7
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	8
Policy context	8
Thesis structure	16
Chapter 2: Identity construction in children with dyslexia	18
Symbolic Interactionism - theoretical perspectives of identity construction	18
Reviewing the literature	28
Constructing identities	28
Understanding identity	32
Identity, literacy and academic attainment in Western societies	34
<i>The status of literacy and academic attainment</i>	34
<i>Identity in relation to literacy and academic attainment</i>	36
Dyslexic identity construction and education	39
<i>Self-concept and educational achievement</i>	39
<i>The value of education revisited</i>	41
<i>Dyslexic identities and schooling experiences</i>	43
<i>Environmental influences on identity construction</i>	46
<i>Dyslexia labels and identity</i>	48

Identity re-construction during transitions	49
<i>Fears about transition</i>	50
<i>Links between schools</i>	51
<i>Decline in academic performance</i>	52
<i>The secondary school environment</i>	53
<i>School transitions and dyslexia</i>	55
Supporting identities during the primary to secondary education transition	57
Concluding comments	59
Chapter 3: The research process	62
Research rationale	62
Why conduct qualitative research?	64
Involving children in research	66
The ethics of research with children	67
<i>Implications of doing qualitative research with children and young people</i>	67
<i>Precautions during research with children</i>	69
<i>Vulnerability</i>	70
<i>Trust and confidentiality</i>	71
<i>Informed Consent and agreeing to participate</i>	72
Participant recruitment: process and difficulties	74
Who are the participants of this research?	78
Research methods	80
<i>Methods considered: audio diaries</i>	80
<i>Interviews</i>	81
<i>The interviewing process</i>	85
Data analysis	87
Methodology: strengths & weaknesses	90
Limitations	94
Concluding comments	95
Chapter 4: Transition from primary to secondary education	96
Anticipating transition to secondary education	97
<i>Academic preparation for transition</i>	100
<i>Emotional reactions to the anticipation of transition</i>	103
The new school	104
Transition and decline in academic performance	106

An overwhelming new environment	112
Vulnerability and bullying	116
The effects of secondary education assessment	120
Positive experiences from school transitions	124
Concluding comments	129
Chapter 5: Support for dyslexic learners in secondary education	132
Institutional support	133
<i>Support that pupils received well</i>	133
<i>Lack of support</i>	140
<i>Support negatively-received by pupils</i>	143
Support from family and friends	149
<i>Support from family</i>	149
<i>Support from friends</i>	157
Leaving school	159
Concluding comments	161
Chapter 6: Dyslexic identity construction in secondary education	164
School experiences and dyslexia	165
Effects of secondary education on dyslexic learners' identities	179
Self-esteem and school performance	190
Positive identity experiences	193
Concluding comments	196
Chapter 7: Conclusion	198
Transition and its effects on dyslexic pupils	199
Educational experiences and individuality: the importance of support	201
'Spoiled' identities and fractured academic identity	203
Suggestions for practice	209
<i>Recommendations for Policy</i>	215
<i>Recommendations for Practice</i>	215
Contribution to knowledge and future research	216
<i>Contribution to knowledge</i>	216
<i>Future research</i>	217
List of tables	vii
List of abbreviations	viii
References	219
List of appendices	ix

COPYRIGHT

This work may:

- (i) be made available for consultation within Anglia Ruskin University Library, or
- (ii) be lent to other libraries for the purpose of consultation or may be photocopied for such purposes
- (iii) be made available in Anglia Ruskin University's repository and made available on open access worldwide for non-commercial educational purposes, for an indefinite period.

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Children participants	79
Table 3.2: Parent participants	79
Table 3.3: Younger adult participants	80
Table 3.4: Adult participants	80

List of Abbreviations

BDA	British Dyslexia Association
COP	Code of Practice
ECM	Every Child Matters
LEAs	Local Education Authorities
NUT	National Union of Teachers
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator

List of appendices

1.	Definition of a ‘successful’ transition	248
2.	Participant Vignettes	249
3.	Researcher Safety	252
4.	Interview Schedule	254
5.	National Curriculum levels	256
6.	Adult Information sheet	257
7.	Parent Information Sheet	259
8.	Child Information Sheet	261
9.	Participant Consent Form	263
10.	Parent Consent Form	264

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research investigates and explores the psychosocial (both social and psychological) impacts of transition from primary to secondary school for dyslexic learners. It does this via interpretive qualitative research. Moreover, this work critically explores how the identities of dyslexic people evolve throughout this process and how everyday experiences influence both identity formation and future life choices. The research illustrates how particular important experiences during the secondary school period shape identity through the lens of dyslexic learners themselves. It also contributes to the understanding of and appropriate support for their education. Identity theories are drawn upon to understand the narratives of dyslexic young people with a view to contributing to knowledge in this area.

This research was inspired by a previous small-scale research project undertaken for my Master's dissertation. It investigated perceptions of year 6 pupils regarding their transition to secondary education, focusing on the viewpoints of pupils with dyslexic type difficulties. For this PhD research, participants' experiences were analysed via their narratives with a view to recognise this fragmented and difficult time and then appreciate their aspirations for the future. Dyslexic adults also contributed to this research as their reflections on choices they made during past transition periods compounded the data from young people. Narratives from parents of children with dyslexia were also explored to gain a more detailed and nuanced insight into the younger participants' lives. The narratives from all participants were critically analysed so as to understand how transition to and life at secondary education are experienced by dyslexic people.

This research is crucial, as the transition to secondary education coincides with other social and cultural milestones. These include but are not limited to: children entering adolescence, developmental changes (Pietarinen, 2000; Le Métais, 2003), academic assessment that affects entry to higher education (Rudduck, 1996a) and pressure to perform well in those assessments (Locker and Cropley, 2004); changing friendship networks and differing teaching styles. The difficulties faced by young people during that time are substantial (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). They are expected to make serious decisions about their future. They choose which school subjects to study and what type of career they might want for themselves and how to spend their time outside of the formal educational setting. Perceptions about dyslexia (Rowan, 2010) and school experiences can

impact their future educational choices (Undheim, 2009). Without appropriate support, children may not choose school subjects according to their career aspirations (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000; Ingesson, 2007), and dyslexic learners may avoid problematic subjects (Ingesson, 2007).

There is a need for further research into educational and transition experiences for dyslexic learners, largely due to the fact that, especially in UK and the global West, academic attainment is privileged over and above other forms of achievement, for example practical/creative (Slee, 2011; Rogers, 2005). Research on such issues tends to focus more on primary education and younger children. Consequently, research into student perceptions about their secondary education transition is limited (Akos and Galassi, 2004), confirming the need for this research. Moreover, existing research does not investigate these issues by utilising symbolic interactionism. According to Maras and Aveling (2006), having Special Educational Needs (SEN) increases the impact of certain stressors. Moreover, the issue of inclusion in schools needs to be further investigated (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Lindsay, 2007).

This study is based in England; all participants were white British and mostly middle class. This was determined purely by the range of people who volunteered to participate. Social class is not discussed in this research, since this is not the focus, although social and cultural capital can have a dramatic impact upon such transition experiences (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000; Reay, 2002).

Defining dyslexia

Demographic

According to the BDA (British Dyslexia Association) (2012), 15% of the population have a genetic predisposition for dyslexia, however current statistics suggest that by a conservative estimation (BDA, 2012), 10% of individuals have dyslexia (BDA, 2012; Dyslexia research trust, 2014; NHS, 2014).

Dyslexia definition

There have been many different definitions of dyslexia with leading ones until recently being from the British Psychological Society, the British Dyslexia Association and Dyslexia Action. In the past, definitions ranged from being too wide (resulting in the inclusion of a large amount of individuals), to being very specific with detailed

descriptions of the causes and effects of dyslexia (leading to the exclusion of many people). However, although all the above provided their own definitions of dyslexia, recently this has changed and the British Dyslexia Association (2013) and Dyslexia Action (2013) have started using a definition introduced with the 2009 Rose Report.

According to the Rose Report (2009), dyslexia includes the following key characteristics:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
 - Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
 - Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
 - It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
 - Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
 - A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.
- (Rose, 2009, pp.30)

In addition, the British Dyslexia Association adds the following to the above definition:

‘In addition to these characteristics, the BDA acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.’ (BDA, 2013).

Difficulties

From the above definition one can see that dyslexia is a spectrum and is not characterised by intellectual ability. This means that individuals with any level of IQ can be affected. According to the BDA (2014b), 35-40% of dyslexic people can experience visual stress when reading, which means that text can be perceived as distorted and words and letters can seem blurry, moving (BDA, 2014a), moving out of focus, can seem to shake, shimmer or have back to front appearance (BDA, 2014b). Both words and letters can seem to break

in two or appear double and there can be difficulty with glare from a white page and in tracking across a page (BDA, 2014b). White text background can also seem too bright, making print difficult to decipher (BDA, 2014a). Individuals with dyslexia may also suffer headaches as a result of reading and prefer larger, more widely spaced print to smaller and more crowded. Visual stress experienced by dyslexic people has also been confirmed by research; however, not everyone will experience the same symptoms, or respond to interventions in the same way (Singleton and Trotter, 2005). Dyslexic learners often use words without understanding their meanings, since dyslexia often causes them to be unable to remember their meanings and they also have handwriting and clumsiness problems (Davis, 2010).

Specific difficulties across the curriculum

Dyslexic pupils encounter a number of problems across the curriculum and can become discouraged if they do not initially succeed in school subjects (Thomson, 2007). According to Long, MacBlain and MacBlain (2007), cross-curricular difficulties associated with dyslexia include problems with study skills and examinations, which inevitably affect young people's grades. Indeed, study skills training is often received by dyslexic learners in place of support, especially for older children (Rose, 2009). Other challenges include problems distinguishing left and right, a poor sense of direction (BDA, 2005) and working memory problems (Jeffries and Everatt, 2004; Reiter, Tuch and Lange, 2004; BDA, 2005). Reading, writing, and as a result copying and note taking are going to be an issue for most subjects, since they are skills required across the curriculum (Thomson, 2007). Note-taking, copying from the board, expressing their ideas into words in assignments, problems with completing assignments on time (which calls for extensions) and using computers (Fuller *et al.*, 2007) are difficulties that transfer across the curriculum.

The dyslexia definition focuses on literacy challenges, which is the main and most prominent manifestation of dyslexia. It can be argued that dyslexic people have difficulty in spelling because of the way that they perceive written text. For example, confusion of similar letters, for example 'p', 'q', 'b', and 'd', 'w' and 'm'; also of similar words, such as 'on' and 'no', 'was' and 'saw' (BDA, 2005). Issues with personal organisation can be linked to specific well-known challenges for pupils. These include forgetting the books they need for each class and problems organising their time around their timetable (*ibid*). They can also have difficulty understanding instructions, writing down notes and organising and writing examination answers (*ibid*), which can be linked to their

reading/writing, language and concentration issues. In addition to those problems, there are also difficulties that can be associated with specific subject areas, which are discussed below.

Mathematics

From the dyslexia definition provided above, one can see that children with dyslexia can have mental calculation difficulties, which can cause problems with mathematics. Also, while children may have the ability to perform certain mathematics tasks, reading instructions can also cause problems, since they not be able to understand exactly what is asked. Distortion and shaking can also take place with numbers. According to Yeo (2003), there is very limited research about dyslexia-related challenges for mathematics. Dyscalculia is used as a term for specific learning difficulty with mathematics (Chinn and Ashcroft, 2007) similar to dyslexia (BDA, 2005), however its existence is challenged by researchers who believe it is a manifestation of dyslexia (Yeo, 2003). The relationship between dyslexia and dyscalculia is indeed a contested subject, since there are researchers who believe that dyscalculia is different to dyslexia because the former has a different cause; namely, ‘a deficit in the cognitive representation’ of the number module (Landerl *et al.*, 2009, p. 310). Moreover, in their research, Landerl *et al.* (2009) did not find any evidence that dyscalculia is associated with the phonological deficits that are representative of dyslexia. They also find, through relevant brain imaging studies, that different parts of the brain are under activated in individuals with dyslexia and dyscalculia. However, one could argue that although dyscalculia is not caused by this specific aspect of dyslexia, it could be related to the visual aspects of it. Other researchers believe that dyslexia-related phonological deficits do affect aspects of mathematics that also use verbal codes (such as counting speed and number recall), while aspects that do not use those codes will not be affected (such as estimation and subitising) (Simmons and Singleton, 2008).

Many dyslexic learners have difficulty with aspects of mathematics, however not all, since they can be ‘gifted’ problem-solvers despite their problems (Chinn, and Ashcroft, 2007). However, a lack of appropriate education can lead children to struggle with the early levels of mathematics, when they have the potential to progress beyond others to more advanced mathematics; therefore, if they are not supported, they will not be able to go beyond the basic levels of their mathematics understanding (*ibid*). A very common challenge with foundation mathematics knowledge is remembering maths facts, such as memorising times tables, and number place values (Yeo, 2003). According to Yeo (2003), a large number of

dyslexic learners have issues with mathematics and this is confirmed by the BDA (2005), who estimate it is 60%. The children with the most severe problems are those who do not make progress in the initial stages of mathematics teaching, however those with the most severe difficulty often acquire a dyscalculia label (Yeo, 2003). Working memory problems also aggravate learning in mathematics, as mathematical tasks require significant use of the working memory, with the need to hold several pieces of information simultaneously in the working memory. This causes problems when children forget what they were doing, what the task was and what the instructions were. Therefore, such difficulty hinders mathematical work for dyslexic children (*ibid*). Finally, sequencing issues also affect mathematics, since this skill is required for counting, instructions and general number work (*ibid*).

Science

According to Thomson (2007), children with problems in mathematics are likely to also have difficulties in science, especially physics, because those subjects also require mathematical skills. She discussed possible challenges for dyslexic children, which include problems with reading, understanding, drawing and generally using tables, charts and graphs. Scientific formulas, which require upper/lower case letters superscript/subscript numbers, scientific symbols, terminology (especially the dual meaning of words between a scientific and everyday context) are also difficult, while problems with abstract concepts and confusion of similar words are also common issues for dyslexic learners (Thomson, 2007). Difficulty locating necessary equipment, problems with remembering or misunderstanding instructions, performing actions in the correct sequence, struggle with reading scales and measurements, problems with similarly named equipment and substances and problems recording their data when they need to are also common. (Thomson, 2007)

Music

In terms of music lessons, dyslexic learners tend to have problems with rhythm, sight-reading, hand independence, fine motor control and notation, which are music challenges that stem from their dyslexia-related difficulties (Overy, 2000) described above. However, research suggests that music lessons can aid language and reading problems for children with dyslexia (Overy, 2000; Overy, 2003). This is also supported by Forgeard *et al.*, who found a strong relationship between ‘auditory musical discrimination abilities and language-related skills’ (Forgeard *et al.*, p. 387).

Modern foreign languages

For modern foreign languages, dyslexic learners often experience the same difficulties they have with English (Crombie, 2000) and the orthography (transparent or non-transparent) of each foreign language will contribute to the challenge it holds for the dyslexic learner (Csizér, Kormos and Sarkadi, 2010).

Dyslexia and ability

There are many accounts of the difficulties associated with dyslexia, which is often described as a disability. However, there are also positive aspects, since dyslexia has been linked to a range of skills: 'big picture' thinking, problem-solving and lateral thinking abilities, an instinctive understanding of how things work, originality, creativity and exceptional visual-spatial skills' and may even be characterised by strong determination and perseverance (BDA, 2014a). Although dyslexic people have been considered as having a deficit (Von Károlyi *et al.*, 2003) and low ability (Moore, 2004), the link between dyslexia and 'talent' has gained strength more recently (Von Károlyi *et al.*, 2003).

Several researchers suggest that some dyslexic individuals often have creative (Everatt, Steffert and Smythe, 1999; Chakravarty, 2009) and artistic talent (in music, drawing, acting, dancing) (Chakravarty, 2009). It has been argued that children with such talents should be encouraged to discover their talents (Von Károlyi *et al.*, 2003) and fully develop them (Chakravarty, 2009), so that they can have professions in which they can excel (Von Károlyi *et al.*, 2003), not be pressured during learning support classes (Chakravarty, 2009). In addition to the specific abilities described above, there are also two important positive aspects of dyslexia that have been gaining strength in recent research: artistic and entrepreneurial talent.

Artistic talent

There are not a great number of studies to support the notion that dyslexia is often related to artistic talent, although Wolff and Lundberg (2002) studied groups from two art academies with very strict admission requirements, which the researchers used as a genuine indicator that the students were talented and not simply avoiding academic subjects. They found the groups from the art academies to have a higher prevalence of dyslexia than other students of that university. Numerous studies also suggest much higher prevalence of dyslexia in professions that require spatial skills, such as architecture, art,

physics and engineering (Winner *et al.*, 2001), however Winner *et al.* (2001) did not find superior spatial skills when they compared dyslexic and non-dyslexic groups in their research, therefore they suggested that dyslexic individuals do not excel in visual-spatial skills. Clearly, research is not consistent in this issue since Von Károlyi *et al.* (2003) found a clear superiority of their dyslexic participants in visual-spatial processing ability. As a result, they believe that dyslexia should also be characterised by talent, not only by deficit.

Entrepreneurship

More recent research has also highlighted the entrepreneurial skills and talents of dyslexic individuals, many of whom have become very successful in that field (Logan, 2010). There is a higher percentage of dyslexia among entrepreneurs than among corporate managers both in the UK and US (Logan, 2009). Research suggests that dyslexic individuals choose to become entrepreneurs because they can control their environment and use their good interpersonal and complementary skills, which can be an asset for them as employers (Logan, 2010).

Dyslexic entrepreneurs may start their businesses with a disadvantage because of their difficulties but they can have strong intuition, and are able to visualise the future consequences of possible decisions. Another strong advantage is their ability to think differently to others, which further supports their very strong problem-solving abilities. Their difficulty can become an advantage in such situations. They have learned coping strategies early in life (including excellent oral communication and interpersonal/leadership and delegation skills) to help them deal with their dyslexia, which was an advantage they later had over non-dyslexic entrepreneurs (Logan, 2010). They also tend to be resilient and determined (Franks and Frederick, 2011) take higher risks than other entrepreneurs and grow their businesses faster (Logan, 2009). It seems that mentors play a key role for dyslexic learners to pick entrepreneurial careers, meaning that they had the unlimited support from people in their environment (Logan, 2009). The mentor role could be very important for the school setting.

Policy context

A brief account of SEN legislation and provision in England provides a policy context. This is important since it reflects how SEN is perceived in society. It is evident from the policy context below that initially SEN was not recognised but became a significant part of educational policy.

Inclusion was briefly mentioned by the Ministry of Education in the 1944 Education Act (MOE, 1944) which recommended that children with additional learning needs be included in mainstream schools when their difficulties were not serious or when it was impractical for them to attend 'special' schools. After the 1944 Education Act, the Warnock Report (DfES, 1978) was influential regarding educational provision (Barton, 1986) and promoted inclusion (Lindsay, 2003). Published in 1978, it was the result of the first government enquiry into provision for children with various types of SEN. The aim of the report was to find ways for teaching and learning to occur for learners who had difficulties.

According to the Warnock report, 'special' education at the time had mostly been for children with distinctive difficulties, for example visual and hearing impairments. Especially before the 1944 Education Act, it was common for children with additional needs to be educated in separate, 'special' schools (DfES, 1978; Lindsay, 2003). The Warnock report advocated integration and supported the discovery and assessment of children's special educational needs as early as possible. It recognised the need for a more flexible provision for those with learning difficulties and introduced the idea of keeping records of children's progress (and other relevant or confidential information) in all levels of primary, middle and secondary education, proposing ways to establish those records. At the time, it was estimated that one in five children would need 'special' educational support at some point during their school lives (DfES, 1978).

The report also introduced the concept of parents' right to request and receive multi-professional assessment for their children, facilitated by local authorities, and proposed guidelines about how this assessment should take place. It was suggested that the majority of children with learning difficulties should be taught in mainstream schools with appropriate provision (e.g. in-class support, additional resources, attendance of a mainstream school with periods in a separate classroom or the reverse). It recommended that teachers write action plans for children with difficulties and that they receive special training in this as part of their initial teacher training. This would ensure that teachers could support their pupils and recognise the importance of collaborating and involving parents in the educational process. Although the report aimed to eliminate segregation, it was recognised that 'special' schools were still needed for certain students who, for varying reasons, would not benefit from mainstream education, at least for a part of their

educational careers (*ibid*). Therefore, the Warnock report had great impact in the integration of children with SEN (Lindsay, 2003).

The Warnock report was followed by the 1981 Education Act (DfES, 1981), which made provisions for children with SEN (Barton, 1986). This was the first Act of Parliament that made provision for learners with all types of SEN, making schools responsible for teaching and including them (DfES, 1981). The Education Act described children with SEN as having learning difficulties that called for the use of ‘special’ educational provision. Children who were classified as having learning difficulties would fall into two major categories: those who learned significantly slower than most other children in their age and those who had a disability that would prevent or hinder their education. There was also a category for those under the age of five who were likely to fall into one of those two categories when they became older. ‘Special’ education provision was anything that was additional to/different from provision offered to children of the same age group. In the 1981 Act, there were guidelines about the identification and assessment of children with SEN that would be provided by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and for the duties of LEAs regarding the provision for those children. For children with SEN statements, the Act specified that proposed case-specific provisions in their statements were implemented in the school that they were attending.

The 1981 Education Act was followed by the 1988 Education Reform Act (DfES, 1988), which introduced significant changes to the education system, especially the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum includes ‘programmes of study’ (DfE, 2013) and ‘attainment target level descriptions’ (*ibid*) for subjects taught in primary and secondary schools. However, it was not met without caution or apprehension; some school authorities made changes so that they could adhere to the new guidelines while others continued with their previous practice (Campbell, 2001). It has also been argued that it gave governments control of the curriculum, while it also destroyed teacher professionalism (McCulloch, 2001).

According to the 1988 Act, the curriculum of a maintained school must promote multifaceted development for pupils and prepare them for adult life (DfES, 1988, p. 1). The National Curriculum (DfES, 2004) is a basic curriculum that is followed by all maintained schools and it is still used in updated versions. It consists of core and non-core foundation subjects and specifies the knowledge and skills learners of different abilities

should acquire by the time they complete each Key Stage. It defines what should be taught to students of different abilities in terms of skills and processes and how assessment should be undertaken so that what pupils have learned can be determined in comparison to the targets for each Key Stage. The first National Curriculum recognised the SEN statement provisions described in the 1981 Act. Although the National Curriculum set standards for pupil attainment (Campbell, 2001; Evans, 2011), there were research studies that argued it had failed to raise standards, even years after it was introduced (Campbell, 2001). With the National Curriculum one can see the beginning of uniform attainment testing and official target levels as they were perceived then. As it will be argued later, this is still firmly prevalent.

The 1996 Education Act (DfES, 1996) maintained the same SEN description as the 1981 Act. It declared the implementation of a Code of Practice (COP), the first of which was created in 1994 (DfE, 1994). The Education Act also declared the duty to educate SEN children in mainstream schools, unless their parents did not wish this, or was incompatible with the efficient education of other children. The Education Act stated that schools and LEAs had a duty to ensure that the support each child's learning difficulties called for were met and that those who taught them were aware of their difficulties and how to provide for them. The LEAs would provide goods and services to cater for those needs. Also, parents would be informed if there were any SEN provisions made for their child.

The COP distinguished levels of SEN and the labelling used as a practical matter, not discrimination (Norwich, 1996). Schools were obliged to meet the needs of all their pupils and provide them all with any additional support they needed, regardless of their having an SEN statement or not (DfE, 2001). For those who are identified with SEN, School Action (interventions provided by the teacher that are different from/additional to what is offered by the school curriculum) and School Action Plus (request for external services to become involved) were the steps to be used. According to the COP, all provision should be integrated so that it would appear 'seamless' (DfE, 2001, p. 39). When the above steps were not sufficient, then LEAs were involved. SENCos were to organise and provide appropriate support and teachers had to plan their lessons taking into account all individuals in their classrooms.

The requirement for mainstream provision for pupils with SEN was repeated in the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (DfES, 2001ba). Every Child Matters

(ECM), a Green Paper published in 2003 (DfES, 2003), was the foundation for the 2004 Children Act (DfES, 2004a). 'Every Child Matters: change for children' described crucial aspects of the government's 'reform agenda' (DfES, 2004b, p. 7). The education outcomes from ECM were: that children need to enjoy and achieve in school, contribute to their environments in a positive way (e.g. by contributing to decision processes) and to achieve economic well-being (by receiving training that will help them earn it later in life). Within the ECM document it was stated that schools had already adopted a personalised approach to children's learning so that they could help them reach the 'highest possible standards' (DfES, 2004b, p. 14), engage parents in their children's learning and ensure that children attended school. Local authorities were expected to ensure that all children in their area were supported and that the numbers of children who stayed in education until the age of 19 increased (*ibid*). Early intervention was also discussed in the Act (Reid, 2005). From this policy change, a governmental high standards discourse is apparent.

For children with 'special' needs, ECM promoted a wide range of high quality, multidisciplinary specialist support services to support children on an individual basis (DfES, 2003). Cooperation between services was stressed so that children could have fast and simple access to a wide range of people who could effectively identify their difficulties and support them. The 2004 Act implemented the 2003 ECM proposals that all children who needed support, emotional or academic, should receive it. It reflected the government's plan to improve society, stemming from a period of economic stability (Reid, 2005). This would be accomplished through the improvement of skills, reduction of educational failure and reduction of disadvantage, among other measures (*ibid*).

In time, the discourse about inclusion and ample support for everyone changed. Mary Warnock released a pamphlet in 2005 (Warnock, 2010), in which she explained that the purpose of statements was to ensure the right of SEN children to 'special' provision. She stated that the number of children who received them was about 20% of the school population, much higher than their expected 2% and they also had needs that statements did not address. One of the reasons for these unexpected numbers of statements may have been funding: LEAs were responsible for funding children with statements and funding could only come after statements were acquired (Farrell, 2001). For children on lower stages School Action and School Action Plus was initiated but did not require statements (*ibid*). Warnock (2010) claimed that some SENs could be met in mainstream schools but others were impossible to accommodate; within the concept of inclusion differences

between learners were overlooked. She described the idea of inclusion (where everyone is treated the same) as a good ideal that can be taken too far, since refusing to address differences can hinder attempts to meet children's needs and called for a government review.

Warnock described inclusion as a 'simplistic' (Warnock, 2010, p.13) ideal. Instead of having all children 'under one roof' (*ibid*), they should be placed 'wherever they can learn best' (*ibid*, p.14). This is in agreement with criticisms towards the COP for being limited to physically including children and not improving the practices so every child would be included (Farrell, 2001). Warnock argues that there are learners with needs that can be better met in smaller, specialist schools, where teachers know them well and they are not as prone to bullying. This was described as a new meaning for inclusion, meaning 'the feeling of belonging' (*ibid*, p.14) for children who feel excluded in mainstream schools. She also stated that the environment of inclusion in primary schools is better than in secondary, since younger children are more accepting. She argued that young people at secondary schools excluded children they accepted at primary. Warnock acknowledged that 'special' schools were regarded as a last resort for those with 'severe and complex disabilities' and parents avoided sending their children there, while children with milder difficulties were kept in the mainstream 'by hook or by crook' (Warnock, 2010, p.29). Warnock suggested that whether children with SEN participated more in mainstream or 'special' settings needed to be reconsidered. Finally, she stated that all children should be included in the same 'educational project' and not just be placed under the same roof, while the differences of those with SEN must be acknowledged (*ibid*, p. 33).

More recently, the government White Paper titled 'The importance of teaching - the schools white paper' (DfE, 2010) outlined reforms considered necessary for the English education system. There was recognition that although schools were good at meeting government targets, they often felt unable to do what they thought was best for their pupils because of government constrictions. As a result, the education system did not perform according to its potential, leaving room for improvement. The paper discussed the need to: free teachers from government constraints (by making schools more autonomous, improving their authority and further developing their skills and education), raise school and curriculum standards and free schools from external control but leave them responsible for their results. Improving children's literacy and numeracy skills was set as one of the most important targets. In an effort to increase literacy levels, reading assessment at the

age of six, early identification and teaching of systematic synthetic phonics were proposed in the Paper. This was so those who struggled would be offered support early. These actions aimed to address the problem that one in five children left primary school without having reached the expected literacy targets (DfE, 2010). The government decided that turning schools into academies would free them from bureaucracy (DfE, 2010). Indeed, by becoming academies, schools could act independently (NUT, 2011).

The 2011 Green Paper ‘Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability - A consultation’ (DfE, 2011a) argued that the SEN system was not sufficient. Based on a model which was introduced in the 1970s, it did not always work the way that it should for children with SEN or disabilities, although it had been significantly improved. Taking into account recommendations from the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009), the writers talked about the importance of early identification and intervention for children with SEN to give them a ‘fair start in life’ and the ‘best opportunities to succeed’ (DfE, 2011a, p. 4). They talked about making the assessment process easier, less time-consuming and including non-educational information about children in the statements. They argued for the reform of the assessment and statement systems, proposing that by 2014 children with SEN would have a single assessment process and receive support until they reached 25 years of age. Parental empowerment was also deemed important; parents should have the option to make decisions about their children’s education and support.

The paper also stated that families’ circumstances would be taken into account, which is not something that always happens in the current system. They believed that this would lead away from the bureaucratic system that can seem impenetrable and inefficient to parents, who felt that their child’s basic needs were not met by the available options. The paper argued that parental role in support decisions and funding for their child’s needs should become more important (DfE, 2011a). However, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) responded with concern regarding the assessment process. They stated their concern that children would have limited or no access to assessment if this process did not take place during their Early Years education, arguing that the opportunity to be assessed should be available throughout their school lives (NUT, 2011). Additionally, they stated that the local authority specialist support services would become fragmented, which would lead school authorities to be responsible for providing their own SEN assessments, something that would not be in the children’s best interests (*ibid*). From these two separate sources, it seems that this proposed scheme aims to liberate parents and children, but may

actually cause more problems for them by leaving them without a sound assessment process.

The paper proposed that parents have a choice between mainstream or ‘special’ schools, since many felt that this was often restricted. Either because the preferred school setting could not take the child, or because it was not offered as an option by the LEAs. The paper recognised that one of the most important decisions that parents make is which school their child will attend. In line with Warnock’s (2010) change of stance, the paper proposed to ‘remove the bias towards inclusion’ (DfE, 2011a, p. 17) and make parental choice stronger as long as their choice met the child’s educational needs. However, there were doubts whether these changes would offer choice to all parents or to a limited number (NUT, 2011). When it comes to teaching, ‘special’ schools were invited to share their expertise with other schools, which was also greeted with apprehension from teacher unions. One of the arguments they used is that this should be an additional support and not a substitution of professional support from local authorities (NUT, 2011). The Act stated that the number of learners with SEN statements has remained stable over the years but there has been an increase in those with SEN without statements. The figure was 10% of all pupils in 1995 but rose to 18.2% in 2005, or 1.5 million pupils.

The government responded to the 2011 Green Paper (DfE, 2011a) in 2012 (DfE, 2012a) and recommended that all schools must have the opportunity to become academies and that Free Schools will open to meet parental demand. This means that parents would have more options, e.g. maintained, Academies, Free Schools, again with the option between either mainstream or ‘special’ (DfE, 2012a). There were charities who welcomed those changes (I CAN, n.d.) and others that were cautious about its implications, for developing a market economy (RNIB, 2012). RNIB (2012) argued that schools that ‘shop around for services’ will not help children and their families, who need support from professionals they can trust (p.4).

This concludes the review of policies around SEN education in England that contextualises this research. The most relevant and recent policies described here will be revisited in the following chapters, since they are connected to the educational experiences of children with dyslexia.

Thesis structure

This first Chapter introduces the study and places it within a broader context. Chapter 2 provides an overview of symbolic interactionism, since it acts as a theoretical framework, and an account of relevant research in this field. Some of the issues discussed are the status and value of education in modern Western societies, difficulties that dyslexic learners face in the education system and identity construction. Chapter 3 is a research process chapter, giving a detailed account of the methods used along with a description of the participants.

The three subsequent chapters are data chapters, each discussing a main issue: transition to secondary education, support for dyslexic learners and identity construction. Chapter 4 discusses transition and engages with the environment and emotions that children experience once they enter secondary education. Transition, in the main, was described as difficult, causing multiple problems but also excitement. Transition stressors and their impact for dyslexic learners were also investigated. The general situation, environment at the new school and young people's reactions to the changes they experienced are documented.

Chapter 5 focuses on support and explores relationships between the support available for learners in secondary education and its influence in identity. The two basic sources of support available are from the school and from parents. Peers have a less important role in this matter, although their effect is not ignored or played down in any way. Support was a very significant issue for the participants and it influenced the way that they reacted to their education and difficulties. Chapter 6 considers identity and discusses the effects of secondary education experiences on young people's identity construction. Again, home and school experiences have a strong impact, along with the effect of dyslexia-related difficulties in a society that heavily favours academic attainment. Support had a predominant influence on identity construction for my participants, with many of their dilemmas stemming from absent or meaningless support.

Finally, Chapter 7, the conclusion, offers an overview of the research findings, linking them to symbolic interactionism and the answers to the research questions. It also offers a development of the symbolic interactionist framework in relation to academic attainment. Finally, although it was not in the initial research objectives, the results included suggestions for practice to improve dyslexic learner's educational experiences.

From the data it emerged that dyslexic adults followed two main paths: those who learned to work with their dyslexia and achieved academic success and those who decided to leave school as soon as they could. This research aids the understanding of factors contributing to educational decisions and how dyslexia and educational experiences influence self-perceptions. The motivation to achieve academic success and factors that contribute to individuals leaving their education are also investigated. Dyslexia had a formative impact on participants' lives, no matter which educational path they chose. Parental and school support was an issue that kept re-emerging in interviews. Clearly, it was an important issue in their lives and they were preoccupied with it. To fully understand the research process we need to consider the experiences of children in secondary education and symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is utilised here since it explains the relationship between social interaction and identity construction in relation to culture. Symbolic interactionism was used to aid data analysis but not as a methodological framework because this is an interpretive research process but not ethnographic.

Chapter 2: Identity construction in children with dyslexia

This chapter provides a context for my study by discussing existing research, theory and policy around dyslexia, identity and transition. It creates a foundation for each theme identified via the data. However, clearly there are links between these themes. This literature review is formed of two main themes: identity theories and dyslexia research. Identity construction is discussed, focusing on dyslexic people in Western societies. In addition to transition experiences, the importance of literacy and academic attainment in Western cultures is a key aspect in the exploration of dyslexic people's identities and how they are affected (Burden, 2008). This study contributes to the awareness about young people with dyslexia and supports the interventions (Eissa, 2010) that can be used to aid transition-aged youth. When participant's stories and experiences during this significant time of their lives are presented, school officials can alter and improve the way that they support dyslexic learners, leading to a more meaningful schooling experience for them.

Symbolic Interactionism - theoretical perspectives of identity construction

Symbolic interactionism was utilised in my research to aid understanding about identity construction. The emphasis of symbolic interactionism on meaning, how it is derived from social interaction, how it is handled and how humans act depending on meaning (Blumer, 1998) are important for this research. This theoretical framework is used to analyse the way dyslexic learners react to their lived experiences and difficulties. Goffman's (1990) notions of 'stigma' and 'spoiled identity' are especially significant for my research, since they are used to explain how dyslexic learners make sense of their difficulties in relation to their own cultural experiences. These frameworks are repeatedly referenced and revisited throughout this research since they are the basic tool for exploring participant's experiences.

A symbolic interactionist framework is utilised for data analysis. However, my research does not follow an ethnographic approach *per se* as Blumer (1998) advocates. Symbolic interactionism was used to aid an interpretive analysis of the qualitative data, as exploring the meaning making of experiences and interactions is critical for dyslexic people. The

theoretical discussion will begin with a description of the looking-glass self, a concept that precedes symbolic interactionism but is linked to it.

To begin with, identity is negotiated through interaction with others, one's self and sense-making processes (Monrouxe, 2009). What a person thinks of his/her own self is heavily influenced by what other people think of that person, their attitudes, approval or disapproval; these lead a person to play the roles that he/she is assigned to or assumes (Gerth and Mills, 1971). This internalisation of other's attitudes does not only lead to a person gaining new roles but also an image of himself/herself. This process was named the 'looking-glass self' by Cooley and it can be a true or distorted view of one's real self (*ibid*).

The 'looking-glass self' is a social self, created by imagining how one's self is perceived in another specific person's mind; the attitude attributed to the latter's mind will affect the self-feeling one acquires (Cooley, 1971). According to Cooley, this process of self-feeling involves three steps. First, one imagines his/her appearance to another person's mind, then imagines that person's judgement of the perceived appearance, and finally reacts to that judgement with a self-feeling. What causes feelings of pride or shame is not the reaction to one's own self but to the imagined self reflected back from another person. The strength of the effect will depend upon the importance the individual gives to this other person. By imagining the judgement of another mind, individuals share that judgement and this is something that happens with children as well as adults (Cooley, 1971). More recently, this process has sparked the development of 'reflected appraisal' (Sets and Burke, 2003; Wallace and Tice, 2012). According to reflected appraisal, individuals are influenced by the way others perceive them but this influence will depend on how those others are perceived (*ibid*). Both the looking-glass self and the reflected appraisal approaches agree that evaluations from people who are valued are likely to become incorporated into one's personality (Cooley, 1971; Wallace and Tice, 2012). However, it is also important to consider that those who are not valued can still have an impact on a developing identity, although it can be the opposite of their original appraisal (Sinclair *et al.*, 2005). Negative appraisals can lead to a strong desire to prove the people who offered it wrong (McNulty, 2003).

The main theoretical framework here is symbolic interactionism. It has its roots in pragmatism and sees 'living things as attempting to make practical adjustments to their

surroundings' (Hewitt, 2007, p.6). It was initially introduced by Mead in 1934 (Mead, 1967) who talked about human interaction and its meaning within society, introducing the key words 'symbol', 'meaning' and 'object'. Mead's framework was further developed by Blumer in 1969 (Blumer, 1998). The term symbolic interaction refers to 'the particular and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings' (Blumer, 1971, p. 139); it is used to explain how individuals are linked to the culture they live in (Hewitt, 2007). According to symbolic interactionism, individuals are products of their society, but at the same time the society can only exist because of its members (Hewitt, 2007).

As it sees individuals as products of their society, this theoretical approach is crucial when it comes to understanding dyslexia, identity construction and the stigma of not achieving academically or having poor literacy levels in cultures that privilege those attributes (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002; Burden, 2005; Slee, 2011). Dyslexia differentiates an individual from other learners; for a culture that values literacy, an inability to acquire it to an 'acceptable' level can constitute a stigma. For Goffman (1990), stigma is an undesirable characteristic that makes a person different from others and from what is socially acceptable. According to symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1998), interaction communicates the notion of stigma to social actors, who interpret it and react to its meaning (*ibid*). Desirable and undesirable characteristics are specified by a culture, while stigmatised individuals are likely to be considered inferior to other members of that culture (Goffman, 1990). Ultimately, dyslexic people can be stigmatised and feel inferior to others because they are not able to perform academically in the same way. This frame of thinking about dyslexic learners is culturally specific and as a result will influence the self-perception of dyslexic people.

According to symbolic interactionism, the self is made of 'social materials' (Ashworth, 2008, p.17); it is created via social interaction with their environment (Acton and Hird, 2004). To use one of the basic ideas behind symbolic interactionism, a dyslexic person and his/her identity are a product of their culture. The society they live in develops what the desirable/undesirable characteristics are and the stigma associated with the latter. A person is born into a culture, internalises its symbols along with its language (Ashworth, 2008). After a person with dyslexia becomes unable to acquire some of the desirable characteristics, in this case literacy and/or academic attainment, they may acquire a stigma. This process and the stigma that stems from it is a product of specific cultural expectations. This social process shapes a dyslexic person's identity. They learn the norms of their

society, apply them to themselves and are judged according to them (Sets and Burke, 2003).

Mead (1967) talked about the importance of the ‘vocal gesture’ in communicating with other human beings. It can easily be controlled, unlike facial expressions that one cannot see when communicating with someone else. He explained that the acts of humans adjust to one another through communication between them. This communication happens with the use of symbols and gestures. Meaning is an important factor in this adjustment; it is the relation between a gesture and the behaviour that follows it, as is indicated by the gesture to someone else. According to Mead (1967), the social process is responsible for the appearance of objects and the relationship between a gesture and another person’s response to that gesture. That is, the relationship between a (conscious or unconscious) gesture as the beginning of an act and its result. Since the acts of individuals adjust to one another via communication between those individuals, it can be understood how this process is important when researching identities of dyslexic learners.

In the context of my research, this process will take place in two basic contexts that are important for young dyslexic people: the school and the home. Because each social space has different expectations of dyslexic learners, interaction with each leads to different actions. Those actions lead to different adjustments from all sides but this research focused on the learner. According to symbolic interactionism, gestures from teachers have different responses from learners, depending on their previous interaction. Although the focus here is learners with dyslexia, this framework can be applied to other cases as well, for example class and the difference between children’s school and home environments (Reay, 2002). Symbolic interactionism aids the analysis of stigma and how it is perceived in a culture and other researchers have used it to explain social difference, for example stammering (Acton and Hird, 2004) and homosexuality (Kaufman and Johnson, 2004). Similarly to this research, the latter uses symbolic interactionism as a lens for exploring identity construction as it aids both analysis and maintenance.

For Mead (1967), the self is not present when a person is born; it originates through social interaction and is the result of experiences with other individuals. An individual experiences himself from the standpoint of others, or of the social group in which s/he belongs, and so becomes a subject to himself/herself. When someone is different from the social norm, in this case dyslexic learners, they will adopt the standards of the culture they

are born into and may consider themselves as not functioning according to their culture's standards (Goffman, 1990). Being different from the norm can create social problems, such as in individuals who are not acting in accordance with their social class (Reay, 2002). The person who has such thoughts may only have them for a short period of time. However, while they are in that frame of mind they may experience shame about their difference, especially in the presence of typical members of their society (Goffman, 1990).

For my research, this signifies that the presence of typically developing learners can cause self-esteem issues for dyslexic learners because of cultural expectations for academic performance. This is in part supported by Burden and Burdett (2005). Their dyslexic participants attended a specialist school for dyslexic students and had more positive feelings about their abilities than commonly expected from dyslexic learners in mainstream education. However, this could be attributed to specialist teaching and improved academic attainment, as well as interactions with their teachers. Blumer (1971) explained that when Mead talked about a person having a self, he thought that a person can be an 'object of his own actions' (Blumer, 1971, p. 140), meaning that they can act toward their own self in the same way that they would towards others. This ability to act towards one's own self is an important mechanism with which a person faces and deals with the social world (*ibid*).

According to Mead (1967), a person has multiple selves corresponding to different social reactions and those social processes create the self. This indicates that a personality is multiple. Self-consciousness as a cognitive function is an important part of the self. Self-consciousness involves individuals becoming objects to their own self by adopting the attitudes of others toward them. If that did not happen, humans would not be self-conscious or even have a self. There are two aspects of the self: the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is one's response to other's attitudes to a social situation and it offers a sense of freedom. The 'me' is others' attitudes that one adopts. The relation between the two is that the 'I' 'calls out the 'me' and responds to it' (Mead, 1967, p. 178). The interaction between the 'I' and the 'me' forms an act (Reynolds, 2003). Other's attitudes create the social 'me' and then the person responds to that 'me' with the 'I' (Mead, 1967). The 'me' will direct and act but it is the 'I' that causes the beginning of that action (Reynolds, 2003). Those two aspects of the self can act against each other. The 'I' will come into one's experience after that person has carried out an action (Mead, 1967, p. 178). Meltzer (1971) explained that the 'I' is the impulsive part of a human being; it is part of the spontaneous and unorganised self. On the other hand, the 'me' is described as the incorporated attitudes, definitions, understanding and

expectations. Every action 'begins in the form of an 'I' and ends in the form of a 'me'' (Meltzer, 1971, p. 11).

Blumer (1998) further developed Mead's framework, describing the basic principles behind symbolic interactionism. According to Blumer, the foundation of symbolic interactionism has three concepts. The first is that humans 'act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them' (Blumer, 1998, p. 2), meaning being the first key concept for symbolic interactionism. The term 'things' refers to anything that can be indicated in a human being's world and these are categorised to physical, social and abstract objects. The second is that 'the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows' (*ibid*), which in other words involves language. The third concept is that 'these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters' (*ibid*), which involves thought.

Meaning is the link between factors affecting human behaviour and the behaviour that arises as a result of those factors. Meanings that things have for humans are perceived as highly important and are created by 'the process of interaction between people' (Blumer, 1998, p. 4), meaning that a thing is defined for a person by the way others act toward it. This makes meaning a social process; it is formed and acquired by symbolic interaction after it is interpreted. This interpretation occurs after a person has communicated with their self by determining which things have meaning, followed by handling those meanings. Meanings are then used to form action (*ibid*).

Symbolic interactionism is further explored using the work of Blumer (1998). Symbolic interactionism involves the interpretation of other's actions, since humans mainly interact with each other by trying to understand the meaning of each other's actions. Blumer (1998) described the notions forming the basis of symbolic interactionism, which are as follows. Human groups consist of human beings who engage in action, which means that society and culture are a result of what humans do. The social world consists of humans who interact with each other and those activities are either in response or in relation to each other. For symbolic interactionism, social interaction has a vital importance because it forms human conduct. According to Blumer (1998), the worlds of humans are composed of objects, which carry varying meanings. Those meanings define how humans see, act towards and talk about those objects. Their environment consists only of the objects they

recognise around them and of objects that are social creations. For dyslexic learners, interaction can be with their teachers, peers and family. While they are in education, objects that hold significance can be literacy, academic performance (on a daily basis and as a whole) and the school itself. Those objects and their meaning are culturally created and highly important in a school environment, although they may not hold the same importance after a person leaves compulsory education. Consequently, objects such as educational attainment may be more important while in school, but not as significant after graduation.

According to Blumer (1998), in the same manner as other objects, the self is a result of social interaction where other members within a cultural context define a person to himself/herself. This happens when a person views their self from the other's viewpoints; those can be other individuals, groups or even abstract communities. It leads a person to see themselves as an object by the way that others define that person to himself/herself. This person also socially interacts and makes indications to their self and also reacts to those indications (*ibid*). Again, when it comes to school context, academic attainment and how others react to it has a significant impact in the way a dyslexic learner views himself/herself. For example, if others such as teachers and pupils define a dyslexic learner as a bad student or as intelligent, then that person sees himself/herself from their viewpoint; that viewpoint defines a self to the learner. Dyslexic people will view themselves as objects acting within a cultural context. If that culture privileges academic attainment, their reactions towards their self can be negative.

For a human being to act, s/he must first interpret a situation; therefore, humans construct their actions, directing them by making indications to themselves (Blumer, 1998). Group life means that actions are interlinked. Hence, organisation of a culture leads to conduct organisation for its members, which is the joint action that members of a society engage with. It originates from the interlinkage of actions but it does not have to be broken down to its components in order to be understood (*ibid*). When academic attainment and literacy are integral parts of a culture, steps are taken to ensure that members adhere to specific cultural expectations (Slee, 2011). Consequently, schooling teaches literacy and academic skills, while the society is organised in such a way that literacy will often be essential for the functioning of its members. Such privileging of literacy in England is evidenced in the Schools white paper (DFE, 2010): it explicitly states that learning to read is the most important skill that a child learns in school and that reading will help a child acquire all the

other benefits of education. As a result, acquiring those skills is essential and expected for all learners.

Humans do not merely react to each other's actions, they also define them (Blumer, 1971). They do not directly respond to actions, but to their meanings. Therefore, human interaction takes place via the use of symbols, interpretation and determining the meaning of each other's actions. Interpretation is inserted between a stimulus and a response (*ibid*, p. 139). Interpreting other's actions means that a person will tell himself/herself the meaning of a specific action. Individuals organise and guide their conscious actions by interpreting the significance of different things around them in relation to their own actions. They note, assess and give meaning to things around them, finally acting on the basis of that meaning. This is self-indication and it always takes place in a social context (Blumer, 1971).

According to Mead (1967), a social person is inevitably affected by others within his/her culture. A person adjusts their self to other's attitudes but also changes them. If one becomes a different individual by adjusting to their environment, this change has also affected that environment (*ibid*). A social world as a whole depends on individuals, since each one contributes something that no one else can. This individuality and 'functional difference' (Cooley, 1971, p. 153) give each member their importance to their society. Hence, a well-developed individual can only exist in and by a well-developed society and vice versa (*ibid*). For Cooley, society and individuals are not separate but different aspects of the same thing.

This is further explained with young people's identity construction according to Hewitt (2007). A child's identity is influenced and shaped by important others, culture, self-perceptions and the way they are received within their family. Beliefs about attributes and characteristics a child has stem from their family and culture. Similarly, a child's personality, family ground and 'belief systems' (*ibid*, p.84) influence how a family perceives the child. How 'parents and significant others act toward the child will shape the kind of object the child becomes to itself' (*ibid*, p.84). How a child is treated within a society also affects the kind of object he/she will become. Children are perceived differently within cultures. Many Western cultures see them as significantly different to adults. Others perceive them as small versions of adults and introduce them to adult ways of life (*ibid*). The presence of 'normal' in a cultural context creates the circumstances for

those different from it to be stigmatised (Goffman, 1990). If individuals learn and incorporate the norms of their culture about what is 'normal', they acquire certain identity beliefs that work for that culture. Stigmatised individuals will go through this process, eventually learning that they possess a stigma (Goffman, 1990). It happens because individuals acquire identity standards that are applied to their self, in spite of not being able to conform to them; as a result, they can feel unsure about themselves (*ibid*).

Cultural expectations are maintained via normalisation, the process of production and reproduction of three practices: implementation, embedding and integration (May and Finch, 2009). Certain ways of thinking, acting and organising are embedded within pre-existing social patterns, of knowledge and practice (*ibid*). These practices are produced and reproduced by the work of social actors and occur simultaneously. Normalisation explains how things become routine or not, rendering it useful for sociological studies of social construction and/or organisation (*ibid*). However, it is criticised for not being productive, since societies are filled with people who are very different from each other and have varying levels of ability (Rogers, 2010).

A child's idea of their self and the way he/she is treated by others are affected by definitions of important others about that child. Parents and siblings are important but young people are not only affected by their views (Hewitt, 2007). According to Hewitt, self-definitions are also affected by social definitions but children do not only perceive themselves as they are perceived by others. They can develop defence mechanisms so that they will not accept unwanted definitions (*ibid*). Also, children do not adopt all aspects of their culture, resisting it and developing identities that do not comply with specific cultural aspects (*ibid*). For children, school is a culture separate to that of their family. Therefore, values between the two can be different and clash. This clash of cultures between home, school and work can also be evidenced in research, for example, with young south-Asian women, (Khanum, 2013). In the context of my research at school, dyslexic learners can be given 'identity standards' (Goffman, 1990, p.130) they may be unable to conform to, resulting in uncertainties about themselves. Dyslexia can lead to stigmatisation in a school context because of the difficulties it is associated with, which may be undesirable. Riddick (2000) concurs, arguing that children internalise this type of stigmatisation from other children. According to symbolic interactionism and the looking-glass self, children can internalise views about themselves from teachers at the school setting as well.

Interpersonal situations exist within institutions, which create a social structure. For example, the head teacher of an institution is of key importance in this process and what they think of an individual, or what an individual perceives that person to think, is internalised. Other individuals' attitudes can also be internalised, forming parts of self-concept; however, the head of the most significant institution in an individual's life holds the most decisive view (Gerth and Mills, 1971). An individual who is stigmatised is at certain times likely to feel self-conscious, calculate what impression he/she is making on others and wonder what they are really thinking of him/her; however, this would also depend on the social context (Goffman, 1990). This translates into the notion that a dyslexic learner may be unsure about what others, such as teachers or classmates, think of him/her, while also feeling self-conscious while at school. The value each person places on their impression on someone else depends on the role of that individual in the person's life. For dyslexic learners in their school environment, classmates, friends and/or teachers can be important people in their life (Humphrey, 2003).

For symbolic interactionists, self-esteem is affected by an individual's response to 'appraisals' of others with whom he/she interacts (Hewitt, 2007, p.112). Social psychologists believe that the same process is followed for self-concept (Gecas and Burke, 1995). But those responses depend on how important those offering the appraisals are. Self-esteem is also formed by comparison to others; here, this 'self-objectification' (Hewitt, 2007, p.112) is apparent in cultures that privilege individual achievements.

Self-esteem is likely to increase or decrease depending on how others do in comparison, worse or better. Symbolic interactionists agree that human beings want to earn the approval of others, therefore are likely to value judgements from important others (*ibid*; Burns, 1982). Self-esteem is also affected by one's own appraisals of their performances, depending on how important each task is considered. If one does not succeed in a task perceived as important, he/she will not feel worthy. Self-esteem can also vary according to social experiences but there are limits to this variation. A person can have a level of self-esteem which fluctuates, depending on social situations and mood. Self-esteem is 'not simply the product of particular situations, but also of a continual process of reflection in which the person decides what standards and what others are significant' (Hewitt, 2007, p.113). The self is 'shaped by ideal conceptions of what the person ought to be' (Hewitt, 2007, p.127). The definition of an ideal person can vary between settings, which can lead

to conflicts between those settings. A few examples are familial and teacher expectations of a young person, or a child's ability to meet those expectations.

Reviewing the literature

The main themes in this research can be related back to the relationship between a learner's psychosocial identity construction and his/her educational experiences. For that reason, this relationship will be revisited numerous times throughout this chapter in reviewing the literature. There are several issues related to dyslexia and identity during secondary education; the characteristics associated with dyslexia are used in the interpretation of those issues. The discussion begins with an exploration of identity theories, which help in the explanation of identity construction. Identity construction theories are presented first, followed by research concerning transition from primary to secondary education for typically developing and dyslexic children.

The complex relationship between dyslexic identity, educational transitions and cultural context is explored below. This is crucial since most available research does not focus on the educational transition from primary to secondary education for learners with dyslexia and/or SEN. Most research about this transition focuses on typically developing children (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000; Lucey and Reay, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Akos and Galassi, 2004) while there is some research about transitions to (Maras and Aveling, 2006) and experiences at secondary education (Undheim, 2009; Rowan, 2010) for dyslexic or other SEN children. However, the relationship between the three factors mentioned above is not covered by existing research. My research investigates experiences of transition to and life in secondary education and how they shaped identity formation for dyslexic individuals. Research with dyslexic and non-dyslexic learners is discussed and utilised to enrich and support the data produced by my research.

Constructing identities

Before discussing identity construction it is important to clarify what identity, or the 'self' is, outside the context of symbolic interactionism. The explored theories have similarities with symbolic interactionism but provide additional perspectives to identity development, showcasing how some of its principles are utilised in other contexts. The following theories are essential in exploring how identity is formed, constructed and reconstructed, so that it can then be understood how it develops and interfaces with educational experiences. Some aspects of identity can change during a person's life but others, like self-perception

or self-worth tend to be resilient to change (Alexander-Passe, 2006). Therefore, paying attention to this while learners are still in compulsory education is important. Understanding identity in relation to who we are, how we understand our selves and what differentiates us from others is discussed, particularly within Western cultures (Jenkins, 2008). Layder (2004) suggests identity is how individuals see and behave towards themselves; the centre where their awareness and emotions are processed and their social circumstances are reflected and acted upon. According to Layder (2004), identity is psychosocial, meaning it can only exist in a social context and is flexible in terms of being able to change, evolve and develop. The consciousness of the self explains having an idea of personal identity throughout changes in life-history (Vesey, 1974).

The self-discrepancy theory explains the variance between ‘self-state representations’ related to emotional vulnerability (Higgins, 1987). This is significant for my research since these vulnerabilities and emotional states are related to dyslexia and literacy. According to this theory, identity has three domains. The first is the ‘actual’ attributes, individual’s or other people’s perception of the attributes an individual possesses and it is compared to one’s ‘ideal own’ attributes, which are what that person wishes or hopes to possess. The second is the ‘ideal’ attributes, which are what the individual believes significant others wish or hope he/she would possess. The third is the ‘ought’ attributes, which are attributes that the individual thinks significant others believe it is his/her obligation to attain (Higgins, 1987, p. 322-323; Higgins, 1989). Those who do not experience positive outcomes are prone to depression-related problems, while those who experience constant negative outcomes are prone to ‘agitation-related problems’ (Higgins, 1989, p. 107). For my research, these ‘ideal’ and ‘ought’ attributes are literacy and academic attainment.

The self is a product of an individual’s interaction with others (Jenkins, 2008) and their own self (Monrouxe, 2009). According to Burns (1982), identity is ‘a set of subjectively evaluated attributes and feelings’ (p.5) which are developed within one’s culture. It is affected by self-concept, which influences not only who a person thinks he/she is, but also perceptions of what he/she can do and become. This leads to the issue of self-evaluation and its importance. A positive self-evaluation is essential for one to have a positive identity. This process has three major parts, according to Burns (1982). First is the comparison between one’s self-image and an ideal self-image of what they wish they were. The second is comparisons with the judgment of society, which is how others see them. The third is an individual’s self-evaluation as a success or failure. This has strong links

with symbolic interactionism, considering how interactive the process of identity formation is in relation to culture and other's judgements. The first two parts of the process are also very similar to Higgins' (1987) theory and they both lead to one conclusion: a positive self-concept heavily depends on a positive self-evaluation.

According to the argument above, this is important since school children evaluate themselves according to the abilities they believe they possess versus what they believe others hope/believe they are obliged to possess. Regarding dyslexia, literacy is a very significant attribute to possess in order to function in modern Western cultures. If children do not acquire the desired level of literacy, they may evaluate themselves as failures (Burns, 1982) and suffer feelings of disappointment, shame, despondency, agitation and fear (Higgins, 1987).

In thinking about identity formation and a sense of self it can often be the case that someone is identified as being different, ill fitting, or undesirable due to their behaviour or physical difference (Goffman, 1990). In the context of my research, Goffman's (1990) construct can be applied to someone with a learning difficulty such as dyslexia, which makes a person different from typically developing learners. Young people who stand out have multiple problems, especially when this difference is emphasised in the classroom (Preece, 2009). This applies to multiple types of standing out as described in Reay's (2002) research, like a young person being academic when their culture is not accepting towards those aspirations. That person can struggle to create balance between what is accepted in his/her culture and what s/he wants to achieve, as the 'stigma' would be academic attainment (*ibid*). A similar case of conventional identity is that of girls who challenge typical feminine behaviour, adopting masculine elements. Characteristics acceptable for boys can lead to negative characterisations and stigmatisation if they are assumed by girls (Reay, 2001).

For Goffman (1990), 'undesirable' characteristics differentiate individuals from others and from what is accepted in their culture. This is a stigma, a characteristic that is 'discrediting' (*ibid*, p.13). Within a culture there are always stereotypes and expectations regarding members' conduct and character. Stigma echoes those stereotypes as it is developed as a way of explaining someone's inferiority because of their difference from the previously mentioned norms; as a result, it leads to discrimination and reduces one's life chances (Goffman, 1990, p.15). In other words, possession of an 'undesirable' characteristic, leads

to stigmatisation, depending on how a culture perceives that characteristic and what is desirable/undesirable. In a school context, dyslexia can be undesirable because it can contribute to lower academic attainment. For Reay's research (2002), being academic can be a discrediting characteristic in the culture of a working class male. All the above demonstrate that certain characteristics in different cultures can easily cause members to become stigmatised, although those characteristics are not always their 'fault'.

Goffman (1990, p.130) stated that stigmatised individuals obtain certain 'identity standards' which are applied to them despite them being unable to conform to these standards; inevitably, the individuals feel uncertain about themselves. For dyslexic children stigmatisation can stem from other children in their school, even when the word dyslexia is not openly used (Riddick, 2000). Even before dyslexia is diagnosed, problems directly associated with it can cause stigmatisation from classmates (*ibid*). Evaluations resulting from other children's comments can be internalised (Mead, 1967; Riddick, 2000) and become part of learners' self-perception. This applies to all learners; it is apparent with the in-class practice of classifying learner identities to those who are ideal, acceptable or unacceptable, or even safe, treatable or hopeless, depending on their ability and behaviour (Youdell, 2004). Both social and personal identities are part of other people's definitions about an individual (Goffman, 1990, p.129). When identity is constructed individuals develop their social identity along with everything else that can be associated with them (Goffman, 1990, p.84). Vesey, quoting Hume, described identity as 'a question about how our successive perceptions are 'united'' (Vesey, 1974, p.3). This can be linked with the previous theories regarding perceptions individuals have about themselves, perceptions of others and how they form identity.

According to Honess and Yardley (1987) identity is learned. It is also shaped from social interactions with others (Mead, 1967) and the importance of the first years of life is evident, since the influence of a learning difficulty such as dyslexia on identity construction begins early. Dyslexia may cause stigmatisation because people are different from the norm, from what is considered 'normal' in their culture (Goffman, 1990). The way in which dyslexia affects identity can be examined through the different factors that influence identity. Numerous terms are used in the attempt to describe the influences on identity construction. Limited literature on dyslexia is about 'the importance of self-concept', although it is important to understand the self-perceptions of these children since their self-concept, especially academic self-concept, is usually lower than that of typically

developing learners (Burden, 2008). This is significant because self-concept influences and is influenced by educational performance (Lawrence, 1996) and improvement of academic self-concept can be a good indicator of educational progress (Burden, 2008). Self-concept is separable from self-esteem (Burden, 2008) with the former being how a person perceives himself/herself and the latter being the feelings they have of those perceptions. Hence, the self is a product of 'self-determination, autonomy and choice' (Watson, 2002, p. 515). For Burden (2008), if a dyslexic identity is to be wholly understood then self-concept, global self-esteem, global self-worth and general self-esteem have to be taken into account.

An area that defines self-conceptualisation is academic competence (Burns, 1982, p.3) and dyslexia inevitably affects that, therefore influencing self-conceptualisation. This can also happen with other learners who are singled out in school or in a culture, such as the example of underachieving boys (Francis, 2006). The reasoning used for their underachievement is often different explanations of how their masculinity, for various reasons, does not work with the current educational system; an idea Francis suggests is not based on evidence. She argues that certain male behaviours were considered 'normal' some years back, but are now used to indicate failing boys as a problem for teachers and other pupils (*ibid*). This can lead groups of children to become stigmatised and cause teacher's expectations of them to correspond to that model (*ibid*). This illustrates the changing nature of culture.

Understanding identity

Identity formation does not take place without the influence of culture; this relationship is discussed below. Identification is a basic mechanism used by humans to 'sort out' themselves and others, both individually and as a whole, acting as a baseline for the organisation for the world (Jenkins, 2008). This causes pressure to conform to social roles such as gender and age, causing individuals to find themselves forced into unfamiliar patterns (Glover, 1988). Every form of society uses some kind of grouping for its members based on their identity, grouping 'identities within a system of social value' in 'normal or deviant' (Wortham, 2006, p. 16). According to Wortham (2006), the effects of this classification depend on how visible an identity is and how it conforms within that culture, this process being affected both by power and awareness. This leads to the formation of bureaucratic systems used for social classification, which change how people think about themselves and others and are implemented in everyday life (*ibid*). In a similar view, Goffman (1990) states that cultures determine how members are categorised and which

characteristics are seen as ordinary or natural. Regarding identities of people with disabilities, there have been multiple changes over time, something that is clear with the Warnock report (DFES, 1978). Modern Western cultures recognised that those with disabilities have the same right to participate and succeed as others, but this has not stopped discrimination, low expectations and barriers to participation (Russell, 2003; Rogers, 2010; Richards *et al.*, 2012).

Identity construction is an important part of a child's life for the following reasons. It depends on context, meaning the age and place an individual lives in, and on other's identities (Jenkins, 2008). Consequently, identity is formed by interaction with these circumstances. Each member of a society is deeply affected by that society (Mead, 1967; Goffman, 1990; Blumer, 1998) but since everyone is different, reactions to these circumstances are highly personalised (Layder, 2004). This is a reflection of identity that enables every member of a society to experience life in a different way (*ibid*). According to Burns (1982, p.13), it is impossible for a person not to be affected by culture; no one, no matter how independent, can be outside of it. People who, by the standards of their culture, are 'failing' to reach expected norms can gain self-esteem by rejecting those norms and entering another cultural group; however, even groups outside a 'normal' cultures have their own rules (*ibid*). Individuals are inevitably affected by their culture and are unable to exist without a society and vice versa (Mead 1967, Blumer, 1998).

Consequently, when individuals leave a social context because they do not fit within the cultural norms, they enter another that makes them feel better about themselves. This translates into the education and learning difficulty context, as children will want to feel good about themselves and seek ways to achieve that. Layder (2004) points out individuals can choose how to react to society's influence; therefore, a person is not completely trapped by their circumstances because humans can think and act independently, choosing how to react to certain situations. For example, someone can choose to accept unfavourable circumstances refusing to fight against them, or decide that he/she will fight them with determination (*ibid*). A dyslexic person may react to their poor academic performance by abandoning every effort to develop their abilities, or by trying as hard as they can to improve them.

The presentation self is also affected by the interaction between an individual and others and how others respond to the former's identity (Stryker 1987; Jenkins, 2008). Therefore,

if someone faces negative views from his/her classmates because of dyslexia, those views can be internalised (Mead, 1967; Riddick, 2000) and lead to a negative identity. However, this does not signify that every person with dyslexia will have a negative self-identity caused by others, since not everyone internalises how they are seen by others; some people reject those views, meaning that they are not affected by them (Watson, 2002). The following section explores the way individuals react to their academic identity, which very much depends on their own perception of it.

Identity, literacy and academic attainment in Western societies

The status of literacy and academic attainment

Artiles (2003) underlined the temporary nature of culture. What is valuable during a specific time may not have been as desirable in the past or may not be as desirable in another culture. This causes multiple variations in the characteristics and qualifications people in different cultures seek, which can change as fast as the culture changes. Similarly, the desirable levels of literacy in each society will vary depending on the society and the point in time (Payne, 2006).

In many 21st Century Western cultures, literacy is considered a very valuable skill (Payne, 2006; Burden, 2008, Slee, 2011) and education is a central part of young people's lives (Russell, 2003). Education is not only important for individuals, but for the prosperity of the nation those individuals live in (Rioux and Pinto, 2010). Arguably, the benefit of education is more important to the society as a whole than it is to the individual (*ibid*). Research suggests that within the rationale behind education policies and practices, economic issues are key (Barton, 1986). In England, the importance of literacy is apparent in government policies and interventions. For example, the introduction of age-related reading and writing standards (QCA, 2010) and Every Child a Reader, a programme that started in 2008 aiming to raise literacy levels of Key Stage 1 children to and above their age expectations (DfE, 2011b). The United Kingdom government also invests in improving the literacy skills of adult citizens, since it is believed that there can be economic benefits from up-grading the skills of the public (Payne, 2006).

If dyslexic people do not acquire functional literacy, feelings they have while they are in the education system may persist into adult life. Because in modern Western cultures literacy, along with numeracy and basic IT, is considered a basic skill that members need (Payne, 2006) with literacy being largely related with power (Rockhill, 1993). When

members of such cultures lack those skills, they can be stigmatised as ‘illiterate’, while the possibility of a ‘moral panic’ about this illiteracy is high (Payne, 2006). This ‘moral panic’ has led the British government to investigate the level of this illiteracy and spend more funds on those basic skills, since lack of such skills is undesirable and can be considered a social problem (*ibid*). This illustrates how important these basic skills are in Western cultures. Those who have not acquired literacy may have problems at school but once they have finished their formal education they can still experience embarrassment and social exclusion (Payne, 2006).

For this reason, inclusion of dyslexic learners is an important issue (Russell, 2003). Without literacy, they may not be able to access certain aspects of life within their cultures, such as completing compulsory education with formal qualifications (*ibid*) or access to higher education (Karen, 2002; Russell, 2003). Acquiring the desired level of educational achievement makes access to higher education more likely and pressure to achieve such educational goals can be intense during schooling (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Burden (2008, p.188) also supports the prominent position of educational achievement in Western cultures; he explains with the socio-cultural theory, which states that a person’s identity is inevitably affected by what is valued within their culture. He described typical contemporary society where literacy is a highly valued skill, a necessary advantage, and anyone considered unable to acquire it is highly likely to perceive himself/herself as less competent. Furthermore, educational achievement is a privilege in contemporary Western societies, visible in the publication of school league tables and intolerance for underperforming schools (Rogers, 2007a).

British governments release documents that talk about excellence; their notion of excellence is one that ‘insists on the eradication of failure across the school system’ (Lucey and Reay, 2002, p. 322). An example of these policy documents is ‘The importance of teaching - the schools white paper’ (DfE, 2010), which repeatedly refers to academic excellence. Similarly, ‘Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability - progress and next steps’, discusses excellence in SEN provision (DfE, 2012a). It is also apparent in research reports, such as Excellence in Cities (Kendall *et al.*, 2005) and incentives, such as the Quality Mark award (promoting improvement in literacy and numeracy in schools), the Beacon award and the London Schools Excellence Fund (both promoting excellent practice).

From the above it is apparent that this discourse is not only about academic attainment, but also about the notion that schools provide a service (Youdell, 2004). A service that needs to be efficient and effective, to which parents and children are consumers, signifying that education acts as a market place in many western societies (Youdell, 2004; Hornby and Lafaele, 2011). Schools compete with each other to attract students whose achievement will help them maintain their league table position, meaning that schools can operate with a 'market logic' (Slee, 2011, p. 71). This market logic works both ways: schools need to attract their target students, those with the desirable academic performance (Slee, 2011). Students and their families also choose their target schools, while trying extremely hard to be chosen back (by being accepted to attend), especially when settings utilise selective pupil intake (Lucey and Reay, 2000; Lucey and Reay, 2002). In this competitive environment, schools may consider disabled learners as a threat, since they may not be able to perform to their target standards (Slee, 2011).

Even within inclusive contexts, learners who do not achieve academic excellence are simply tolerated, while academic excellence is much preferred over average or non-academic attainment (Rogers, 2007a). The value of academic attainment is also apparent in pupil ability grouping; many parents choose to send their children to schools that use this type of teaching or put pressure on school settings to use it (Reay, 1998b); they want their children to be in the 'top set' of the class, while mixed-ability teaching is not considered attractive (*ibid*). This creates pressure for children to reach specific achievement levels, or risk being treated differently and having their self-worth diminish because of how their culture perceives them if they do not reach those standards - especially within the current culture of excellence (Lucey and Reay, 2002). League tables also lead schools to pressurise children to perform better so that they can reach their target standards (Keogh, Bond and Flaxman, 2006). If dyslexic young people become stigmatised they can feel very uncomfortable in a culture that does not accept difference (Goffman, 1990). This type of stigmatisation is applicable for multiple disabilities, physical or mental (Taylor and Bogdan, 1989; Barton, 1993).

Identity in relation to literacy and academic attainment

In privileging 'excellence' as described above (Kendall *et al.*, 2005; DfE, 2012a, Quality Mark award for schools), the education system attempts to minimise academic failure (Lucey and Reay, 2002). However, there are sympathetic individuals who will accept and not stigmatise a person because of their difference; the first people to do that are others

with the same difference (Goffman, 1990, p.31), in this case learning difficulties. If stigma is not resolved it becomes part of an identity and can cause shame (Goffman, 1990, p.84). Shame can lead children to deny support for their difficulties (Riddick, 2000), which hinders their academic progress. How much stigmatisation affects identity formation depends on how a culture perceives each stigma and how important it is considered to be.

Riddick (2000, p.664) points out that before 'mass literacy', dyslexia was not a widespread concept and claims that societal changes have created dyslexia. Arguably, dyslexic people were simply undiagnosed because they did not need to become literate. In order to eradicate stigmatisation, the way cultures perceive dyslexia have to fundamentally change. Glazzard (2010, p.68) supports this, recognising the importance of success in other areas to be valued so that dyslexic pupils can develop positive self-concept, self-esteem and not be considered 'failures'. Self-esteem needs to be improved so that individuals do not feel stigmatised; part of that process is recognising qualities other than fluency in literacy. Even if dyslexic individuals do not acquire a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1990) as a result of dyslexia itself, it could come as a result of stigma, if their culture is not supportive. Interestingly, negative views of learning difficulties are changing because of inclusive practices that enable cultures to accept difference, although there are still deeply entrenched problems (Topping and Maloney, 2005; Rogers, 2013).

A person has both personal and social identity; the kind of person s/he will become is influenced by their social setting, particularly how others categorise and assign roles to that person (Pollak citing Stevens, 2005). According to Burden (2005), dyslexic young people who have positive attitudes and believe in their capabilities have better chances of improving their academic performance and achieving the 'ultimate educational achievement' (p.22). Coleman and Hendry (2002) support this and suggest that low self-esteem is linked with adjustment difficulties, whereas those with high self-esteem are more likely to do well in different situations. Importantly, in their research Riddick *et al.* (1999) found that their dyslexic group had significantly lower self-esteem than non-dyslexic participants, which according to them can cause problems.

If they maintain a state of 'learned helplessness', dyslexic young people often will have a constant feeling that they cannot control what happens to them and may finally stop trying, thinking that they are not responsible for what happens to them (Burden, 2005). Although dyslexia can be associated with such negative feelings, pupils can get through the

educational system without developing them (Burden, 2005), especially if they live in a supportive and understanding environment. Environment is important from a very early age and it consists of educators, parents, peers and media, all of whom can shape the values and experiences of children and act as role-models (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). 'Bias can start from birth', if children learn to be helpless they focus on their perceived lack of ability instead of the ways they can solve their problems (*ibid*, p. 11). Motivation also plays a role (Layder, 2004) and it can come from social interaction, depending on people or settings that influence the child.

From the above it can be understood that the context in which identity construction develops does not only depend on culture, but also on peer groups, family, and other contexts, depending on each one's influence. In thinking about identity and dyslexic young people, it is suggested that an 'important contributor to self-esteem is the opinion of important others' (Coleman and Hendry, 2002, p.58). During childhood parents and kin networks often have a strong influence on self-esteem but as children grow this influence is somewhat reduced, giving way to influence from peers and other social groups (Humphrey, 2003). This, however, does not necessarily mean that this is the norm or that every young person values peer opinion more than parental, since parents can be considered better sources of advice (Nickerson and Nagle, 2005).

Similarly, as with pressure to conform to social roles related to gender and age (Glover, 1988; Holden, 2002), when a dyslexic person lives in a culture that privileges literacy, there is continuous pressure to conform (Burns, 1982; Powell, 1999). Especially for a young person who spends most of the day in a school, where most activities revolve around literacy (Burns, 1982) and other qualities are not considered as important (*ibid*; Rogers, 2007a). Burns (1982, p.13) discussed social rules, where 'members of a society find themselves judged by the rules of that society and if they want approval they need to excel in terms of their values'. In Western cultures, those are literacy and academic attainment. Education is considered a way to produce citizens with the desirable knowledge, skills and qualities, who have the same values as their culture (Slee, 2011). Therefore, if dyslexic learners want to be valued in a society that privileges literacy, they need to find a way to reach the standards set by the educational system. As a result, many dyslexic children have to 'face considerable difficulty in our education system and their self-concept and levels of self-esteem suffer' (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002, p.201).

Constant struggle to cope with educational demands can have a negative effect on self-evaluation, especially when there are comparisons between dyslexic learners and others around them with no such difficulties. Pressure to conform also depends on how a child's family values literacy and education and to what extent these beliefs are passed on to the child (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Cultural norms require the individual to change in order to conform (Glover, 1988) which leads to the importance of reconsidering those norms. Similarly, in families where education is the most important value, difficulty coping or even no desire to pursue it can cause conflict (Burns, 1982). This can not only damage self-esteem, but also family relationships (*ibid*).

Dyslexic identity construction and education

Before discussing the relationship between identity and education, it must be acknowledged that the social sphere and the education it offers to its members are strongly connected, since its values affect what is taught in schools and vice versa (Halstead, 2005). Members of a society contribute to that society by achieving certain desirable goals (Slee, 2011). Research suggests that in order for individuals to cope with cultural demands and develop the skills needed for good employment, literacy is privileged over any other form of communication although the desired literacy standards keep changing (Payne, 2006).

Schooling maintains and extends the ideas upon which a culture is built (Beane, 1993). It teaches young people cultural values, citizenship (Halstead, 2005), what is considered important and prepares them to become members of that society (White, 2004). Those values are not always homogenous or unchanging and they are affected by politics, parents and industry to name a few (Halstead, 2005); but literacy and numeracy are basic skills that are taught in schools (White, 2004). Since being productive members is important in Western cultures (Slee, 2011) and because of schooling aims described above, the means to achieve those aims will be offered through the educational system. It trains members to cope with those demands, with literacy being one of those tools. In this vein, individuals are seen as malleable in the hands of educators, so that they can reach 'production norms' (Shostak, 1983). Because of the direct connection between education and culture, some of the issues covered in the previous section are revisited here.

Self-concept and educational achievement

As children move through different developmental stages they are expected to reach specific 'developmental goals' (Burden, 2005, p.1); for children with learning difficulties,

these goals are harder to achieve (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006). Erikson and Rogers (in Burden, 2005) believe that the only way to establish a strong, positive identity (ego integrity) is by achieving these developmental tasks. Others refer to it as self-concept; it is made up of different selves, for example intellectual, physical, emotional, social, academic and moral (Burden, 2005). Research suggests that dyslexic children are most likely to have difficulties both in coping with school and socially, putting them at 'risk of developing distorted or damaged self-concepts' (Burden, 2005, p.2; Coleman and Hendry, 2002; Wortham, 2006).

Lawrence (1996, p.xi) stated that a very exciting discovery in educational psychology was finding that achievement levels are influenced by how people feel about themselves and vice-versa. This is important because that relationship can be utilised to improve achievement and explain problems. Young (1998) also supports this; he found that pupil's self-concept had strong effects on both their ambitions and their achievement in both urban and rural schools. This once again demonstrates the importance of self-perception for academic attainment, and schools need to take pupils' emotional well-being seriously so that they can be both successful and content (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006). Similarly, Young (1998) found that classroom environments significantly affected student ambitions and suggested that those with lower goals were offered programmes that enhanced self-concept. It is important to support those with learning difficulties since they can have lower self-efficacy, mood and hope compared to those without learning difficulties (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006).

Humphrey (2002a, p.30) suggests self-development is a 'social learning activity' and that indicates how children with 'special' educational needs may have problems in this area because of teasing/bullying or making potentially unrealistic comparisons with others. If a child's learning difficulties or self perception are not dealt with, they will not be resolved, and extend into later life. Also, as an individual's identity develops their self-approval is linked to approval from others, especially loved ones that are looked-up to because of their skills (Layder, 2004). This happens when individuals feel the need to be 'normal' and accepted by a specific group of people (Layder, 2004). This constant struggle to succeed (Lucey and Reay, 2002) has driven increasing numbers of parents and children to pursue a diagnosis that explains the child's difficulties within the education system (Riddick, 2000; Rogers, 2007a; Rogers, 2011). This could lead to too many labels in the system (education.gov.uk, 2012). Also, it does not always bring the support that parents expect,

since difficulties and their severity can be denied (Rogers, 2007a), while children can still be excluded within an inclusive system (Russell, 2003; Rogers, 2007a).

Humphrey (2002b) suggests that there are differences between the self-concepts of dyslexic and typically developing children, but this can partially be attributed to negative experiences dyslexic learners had which caused 'emotional baggage' (Humphrey, 2002b, p.5). Different children will respond to their difficulties in very different ways. Some children may become disruptive, while even more may become quiet, withdrawn, or put a lot of effort and energy into trying to hide their difficulties (Riddick, 2000). However, there is a completely different perception, the opposite of a damaged self-esteem because of dyslexia. As explained earlier in Burden's (2008) work, self-concept is how people perceive themselves and self-esteem is related to individual's feelings towards those perceptions.

Not all learners are affected by their difficulties; only when a task or activity is considered particularly important does success or failure in it directly affect self-esteem (Burden, 2008). Therefore, dyslexic learners are more likely to have negative feelings in cultures that privilege literacy, like 'contemporary Western societies' (Burden, 2008, p.192). Family values around education and pressure on a child to acquire it also affect this (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Nevertheless, children with learning difficulties have lower academic attainment and that alone can be a reason for lower self-perceptions (Humphrey, 2002b) because of comparisons with others or problems with peer group due to their difficulties (Humphrey, 2002a). According to Humphrey (2002b, p.3), 'the self is an important factor in motivation and achievement in learning situations'. Therefore, it is important to improve the self-concepts of dyslexic learners so that they are enabled to cope with academic demands better (Young, 1998; Lackaye and Margalit, 2006).

The value of education revisited

Returning to the cultural value of literacy, Burden (2005) and Slee (2011) describe its importance in contemporary societies. In cultures that privilege literacy, those with difficulties in acquiring it also have difficulties in developing positive academic self-concepts, especially if their self-evaluations are determined by beliefs about how others see them. Hence, people diagnosed with dyslexia are 'victims of the social and educational mores that prevail in a particular place at a particular time' (Burden, 2005, p.16) because social interaction always included 'social feedback' as part of its process (Pollak, 2005,

p.35). According to Burns (1982, p.201), this starts early in life, when children enter school already with an inclination integrated in them and every learner is 'already invisibly tagged'. This continues throughout children's educational career with constant 'events of classification', such as examinations and labelling, which demonstrate the type of person each pupil is seen as (Wortham, 2006, p.15).

Coping with the demands of an educational system can be very difficult for dyslexic people (Carroll and Iles, 2006). Singer (2007) interviewed Dutch children with dyslexia with the aim of exploring how they reacted to repeated academic failure, finding that many of them reacted by internalising their feelings and pretending that nothing had happened, and by hiding their feelings about it. The most common feelings mentioned in the interviews were feeling angry, sad, stupid, confused and ashamed. When they sought support it was parents who were the most important source, because they could reassure them that they were good learners (Singer, 2007). Dyslexic children can also react to school demands with avoidance (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002), feelings of inferiority, awareness that they are not achieving highly and eventually having their learning difficulties affect their academic and occupational choices (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Ingesson, 2007; Undheim, 2009; Rowan, 2010).

It seems that Western educational systems privilege academic attainment (Burns, 1982) and literacy over and above anything else (Burden, 2008; DfE, 2010) always rewarding them (Burns, 1982). This is evident in the 'excellence' culture (Lucey and Reay, 2002), the constant attempts by the education system to eliminate failure (Lucey and Reay, 2002; Rogers, 2005), the desire many parents have for their child to be in top sets (Reay, 1998b) or access desired selective schools, hoping it will ensure access to higher education (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Slee (2011) argues that education is a means of producing citizens with culturally valued qualities and those who are not able to acquire them are discouraged by school exclusions. Success in the educational system is not a guarantee for positive self-concept but it increases that possibility (Burns, 1982; Humphrey 2002a, Humphrey, 2002b). Especially since 'academic learning changes who we are, and because knowledge is an integral part of the general process of ontological change' (Wortham, 2006, p.25).

Therefore, the more education is valued by culture, parents and teachers, the more likely it is that educational success will result in positive self-image. The context a person lives in affects their values; for example working class children consider having certain culturally

accepted behaviours and life styles important, where academic success may not be as important (Reay, 2001; Reay, 2002). Similarly, middle class children are pressured to be accepted in certain schools and perform academically (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Success in formal examinations largely constitutes educational success but it does not stop there. Members of modern Western cultures need basic, functional literacy to socially function, hold desirable jobs and be treated fairly (Solomon, 1986). Education is considered the foundation for employability, while employability safeguards against poverty (Williams, 2004). Slee (2011) discussed the role of education in creating citizens able to produce valuable work and function in it in a desirable way. Therefore, success is not only about succeeding in examinations but also about acquiring abilities, literacy being one of them (Selfe, 1999).

This is important for contemporary Western societies where literacy, along with numeracy and, increasingly, technological literacy, is a 'basic' skill one needs (*ibid*). Pollak (2005, p.84) recognises the importance of academic success, arguing that 'there is straightforward pride in success' and pupils need to experience that in order to feel good about their schooling. Self-esteem at school is developed by being aware of strengths and successes (*ibid*). In Pollak's (2005) study the areas causing most difficulty and therefore emotional problems were reading, spelling and composition or writing. This means that a pupil with difficulties achieving desirable results in certain subjects will benefit not only from improving performance in those subjects but also from other forms of success. The importance of learning and achieving the desired level in tests is more prominent in secondary education, where future examinations required for entry in higher education progressively become a reality (Rudduck, 1996a; Locker and Cropley, 2004). Consequently, teachers and family begin to demand that pupils work hard in order to perform well in future examinations (Rudduck, 1996b).

Dyslexic identities and schooling experiences

The factors associated with academic success are numerous and there are a huge number of influences on achievement, learning and retention (Was *et al.*, 2009). Preece (2009), describing his own schooling experience, points out that young people who are different and stand out have multiple difficulties, especially when their difference is negatively emphasised in the classroom. Relationships with teachers can be difficult if teachers do not show understanding about dyslexia (McNulty, 2003; Pollak, 2005). Teachers can accuse pupils of being lazy, embarrass them by reading aloud their mistakes or may prefer not to

have dyslexic children in their class; such factors can aggravate the relationship between them and their pupils (Pollak, 2005). But such actions can have a different reaction, meaning if teachers tell dyslexic pupils that they cannot succeed academically, they can cause pupils to persistently struggle to prove them wrong (*ibid*). This determination influences their identity and is inspired by other people's expectations (*ibid*, p.89).

As young people develop, comparisons made with others and perceptions of how others see them influence the shaping of their identity (Burden, 2008, p.189). For dyslexic people, this affects their self-esteem (Burden, 2008) because the comparisons are made with people without difficulties and given the prominent role that literacy has in contemporary western curriculum, these comparisons can be constant. There is a great difference in academic self-concept between dyslexic and non-dyslexic learners (*ibid*); it is believed that dyslexia directly affects self-esteem (Singer, 2005). Riddick *et al.* (1999) suggest that dyslexia influences more than academic self-esteem. Also, studies about the effects of dyslexia should not be limited to self-esteem and self-concept because the self does not only consist of those two elements and the relationship between them (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002). Singer (2007) also stressed the difference between pupils with dyslexia from their non-dyslexic peers. Dyslexic children talked about the great efforts they made so that they could succeed academically. Some of them regretted the costs that they had paid (e.g. working very hard and missing play with peers) without receiving any results. Their regrets included studying every evening and the more painful experience of having to miss the joy of playing with friends after school because of their extra homework (Singer, 2007).

Parents and teachers see children who are 'bright' and enthusiastic but are 'not successfully learning to read and write' (Alexander-Passe, 2006, p.258), something that can influence their academic self-esteem. There is also the opposite case of children who use avoidance strategies to divert attention from their academic ability, something teachers may perceive as laziness. Avoided activities were those that required use of academic abilities because 'anxiety causes humans to avoid whatever frightens them, and dyslexia is no exception' (*ibid*, p.259). Dyslexic children with high self-esteem are more confident and try more new subjects than those with low self-esteem (Alexander-Passe, 2006), which can influence their educational future. Therefore, dyslexic learners need support so that they can improve their self-esteem and belief in their own academic abilities (Singer, 2007).

This situation can continue throughout a young person's academic career. In the research by Riddick *et al.*, (1999) dyslexic university students considered themselves much more anxious about academic work compared to their peers, which is also confirmed by Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars (2000). Even though their anxiety was reduced since secondary school, it was still higher than that of non-dyslexic students. They also found dyslexic students thought they did not perform academically as well as their peers and were more likely to believe 'that their written work did not reflect their true level of ability' (Riddick *et al.*, 1999, p.238).

Children with dyslexia are highly likely to make potentially unrealistic comparisons with their peers (Humphrey, 2002a). If they are not supported, their academic self-concept will remain the same or decrease, depending on factors such as the nature and degree of their difficulties, support and their understanding of their own difficulties (Burden, 2008). This is also supported by Glazzard (2010, p.64), who found that dyslexic pupils who compared themselves with their peers felt 'stupid', left-out and most regularly isolated because of their dyslexia, while most of them preferred that their work was not seen by others. Generally, the study demonstrated that comparisons with non-dyslexic peers hurt academic self-concept. Similarly, Nugent (2007) found that dyslexic children in segregated settings tended to be happier than those in mainstream settings.

Multiple factors influence this 'happiness', including having friends with similar difficulties, specialised teachers, smaller classes and therefore more attention to individual needs (Nugent, 2007). In Burden and Burdett's (2005) study, participants attended a specialist school for dyslexic students; therefore, children did not have non-dyslexic classmates to compare with, or face potential failure in mainstream settings. This acted as effective protection from negative comparisons. However, in mainstream settings some teachers can react negatively to dyslexia, often resulting in humiliating children (Glazzard, 2010, p.65), although 'educators have a duty to give to children the best possible start in life' (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002, p.201).

Nevertheless, I am not suggesting segregation is the best option for dyslexic learners, but the above is a good example of what happens when comparisons are with children who have similar difficulties and not with 'typically' developing children. Similarly, Humphrey and Mullins (2002, p.196) found that comparing performance with learners without

learning difficulties damages dyslexic learners' self-perceptions. They found that dyslexic children strongly associated good reading ability with intelligence and since dyslexic people tend to be poor readers, they are likely to perceive themselves as less intelligent. This will persist until they improve their reading to their desirable level (*ibid*). In the highly competitive world of secondary education it is not difficult to see how children without difficulties can cause dyslexic learners to consider themselves inferior (Ingesson, 2007).

Environmental influences on identity construction

Considering teachers can be significant others for their pupils, their reactions can potentially be either devastating or protective of a positive academic self-concept (Glazzard, 2010). It is crucial for teachers - and teaching assistants (Lacey, 2001) - to support struggling pupils (Shah, 2007; Glazzard, 2010). Teachers who were supportive either by understanding children's difficulties or responding to their needs were valued for doing so (Glazzard, 2010). Frequent contact with class teachers, not only the teaching assistants, ensures that learners are receiving appropriate levels of teaching, especially when teaching assistants are not trained to a high level (Shah, 2007). Disabled students who had experience from both 'special' and mainstream schools in Shah's (2007) research considered the lack of support in mainstream education a significant problem. This finding indicates how important adequate support is for learners in mainstream settings.

Importantly, Glazzard (2010) found links between bullying/teasing and comparisons with others. He also found that verbal or physical abuse is highly likely to affect the way a dyslexic person sees himself/herself. At school, dyslexic people are in an environment where their abilities are different to their classmates' and what seems easy for others is difficult for them; when they realise this, they become stressed (Alexander-Passe, 2006). Negative childhood experiences can persist in secondary school (Burden and Burdett, 2005). Alexander-Passe (2006, p.260) discussed dyslexic students who had negative feelings about themselves, stating that although most 'are not clinically depressed' they are at 'higher risk of intense emotional feelings of pain and sorrow'. He argued that because of their educational experiences, it is common for them to have low self-esteem, which explains why many, especially female, internalise their sorrow and pain. Indeed, research suggests that girls are more likely to experience a decrease in their self-esteem than boys (Crockett *et al.*, 1989; Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994; Coleman and Hendry, 2002; Maïano, Ninot and Bilard, 2004). The reasons contributing to this difference are multiple,

for example self-consciousness about academic attainment, perceptions about one's physical characteristics and familial environment (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994).

However, there is contradictory evidence to this theory, presented in Burden's (2008) work. Burden argues that most dyslexic children do not have significant general self-concept differences than their typically attaining peers, because of the multitude of factors that affect the 'overall sense of self' (Burden, 2008, p. 190). He acknowledges there is sufficient evidence that shows a clear relationship between dyslexia and low academic self-concept, but suggests that there are no signs that this relationship is unchangeable. This contradiction illustrates the complexity of identity formation in dyslexic young people. It demonstrates the multiple experiences that contribute to the self-perceptions of young people or children. Although the learning difficulties dyslexic people experience can contribute to low self-esteem, experiences like the value of academic attainment in a person's family, social background (Lucey and Reay, 2002), opinions of important others, and children's own ability to adjust (Coleman and Hendry, 2002) can influence self-perceptions and alter their sense of self. Again, the importance of support from people around dyslexic learners is highlighted here.

A positive environment, whether it is at home, in a peer group or at school, can help build a positive self-concept. Academic attainment is not privileged in all backgrounds and there are children whose academic attainment can act against them in some contexts, such as amongst classmates, setting them lower in the school hierarchy (Reay, 2002; Reay, 2006). Differences between personal or familial aspirations and social context often will lead a person to assume different behaviour depending on the context; such roles require hard work to upkeep (*ibid*). Social class, gender, ethnicity and academic ability influence how children present themselves to others and their self-perception (*ibid*). This highlights the importance of home environment in supporting children's choices and inclinations, helping them develop positive identities (Reay, 2002).

Was *et al.* (2009) support the previous outlook; they consider identity as context specific, meaning that a person's status can differ according to context. If a dyslexic young person has negative feelings in one context, they can amend them by entering a different environment where they feel confident and relaxed. When someone loses interest in schooling because of dyslexia-related difficulties, most education professionals and academics would agree that increasing motivation can help (Burden, 2008). Peer, parent or

teacher opinions are influential for young people, which can aid their motivation and therefore help them in choosing and committing to tasks (*ibid*).

Dyslexia labels and identity

Reactions to dyslexia labels are also to be examined. Pollak (2005, p.70) argues that being labelled dyslexic can cause highly differentiated reactions. Individuals may see themselves as having a disability, be relieved because it can explain what has gone wrong until then, or have mixed feelings. When attitudes towards a diagnosis are so diverse, effects on self-concept and self-esteem inevitably vary. Some embrace and others resent their identification as dyslexic (Pollak, 2005). The way an identity is developed and processed because of dyslexia impacts on academic attainment (Was *et al.*, 2009). Riddick (2000) acknowledges the viewpoint that labelling can lead to stigmatisation and prevent children from getting all the assistance they need because the label does not allow for individual differences.

Riddick (2000) found that the majority of her dyslexic participants found labels ‘helpful at a private level and many were quite emphatic about the importance of having such a label’ (2000, p.658). Although Riddick’s research shows the effects of a label on self-perception, many of Humphrey’s (2002b, p.6) participants with a dyslexia diagnosis said that it did not affect the way they perceived school. Humphrey (2002b, p.6) believes that the most possible explanation for that is a ‘defensive self-esteem’ caused by the pupil’s denial of their dyslexia. Interestingly, on a clinical level many adults with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, experience low self-esteem and anxiety (Riddick, *et al.* 1999). However, it has already been mentioned that this depends on the individual, how they perceive their situation and if they believe that dyslexia is keeping them from having the type of life that they would like.

A dyslexia label can have various effects on young people. According to Riddick (2000), labels can prevent negative attributions but learners can still make mistakes that they are ashamed of. A smaller proportion may not want to admit their dyslexia because others may think less of them or ridicule them. If a person is ashamed of their difficulties then he/she will not accept help as easily as those who are not (*ibid*). There is also the possibility of labels becoming internalised. Young people could see their difficulties as limitations, perceiving themselves as different to those who are considered ‘normal’ and evaluate their disability by the tasks they cannot perform (Singh and Ghai, 2009). However, they can still

recognise that they have abilities and can perform well in certain tasks (*ibid*). Singh and Ghai (2009) referred to children with mobility difficulties; the way identity formation was explained signifies that self-perceptions and understanding of their 'label' were heavily influenced by their culture, which is true for the labelling process as a whole. They demonstrate that whether a person accepts their label or not, their 'disability' leaves emotional scars (*ibid*).

Identity re-construction during transitions

In life individuals face numerous transitions which cause temporary or permanent changes in their existing life style (Braund, 2009). Life courses are marked by socially created and recognised turning points, for example adolescence, marriage or acquiring a job, which are age graded and common among the members of a culture (Kvalsund, 2000). These transitions can create difficulties or become points from which individuals can move on, which also applies to educational life (Braund, 2009). Young people have to face multiple transitions throughout their educational lives (Anderson, *et al.*, 2000; Braund, 2009). These changes are highly important for them because they represent changing phases of their life, with each phase taking significant amounts of time in one's life (Braund, 2009). Transition from primary to secondary school is the beginning of children's secondary education career and is important not just for children but also for their parents (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Arguably, the way parents support their children and the opportunities they offer can affect children's adjustment to the new environment and the transition itself (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994).

Transition to secondary school is stressful 'along several dimensions of the child's self-image' (Burns, 1982, p.152). Previous research has highlighted how transition feels for pupils without dyslexia. Before their transition, while they are in Year 6, children realise that they are about to experience significant changes in their lives, which are caused and 'metaphorically represented' by their imminent transition (Lucey and Reay, 2000, p, 194). Moving away from primary education had been associated with low self-esteem, decreased motivation, reduction in achievement and 'psychological distress' (Akos and Galassi, 2004, p.212). Transition is usually an automatic process but there are countries that do not separate primary and secondary education, using 'all-through 'compulsory' schools' instead (Le Métais, 2003, p.2).

Wortham (2006, p.17) argued in discussing transitions, that ‘classrooms are strange social places, in part because of the discontinuity in relationships from year to year’; especially when starting the first year of secondary schooling when neither teachers nor students know many people in the classroom. Because students and teachers do not know each other, there are no strong models of identity established yet and this will lead both parties to use broader models in order to interpret each other’s behaviour. When individuals enter a new social context, members of that context will automatically try to acquire information about them or use information about them they already have (Goffman, 1971). This can be worrying for young people who want to make a good impression on teachers and other pupils so that they can become part of a peer group and have good relations with teachers. Even if school officials aim not to have such identifications, they still exist, although they change as the school year progresses (Wortham, 2006).

Fears about transition

Some parts of a new school setting cause anxiety, only because they have not been explained to the pupils (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). According to Galton, Gray and Ruddock (2009), 12% of pupils have problems when moving through secondary school and first impressions can influence how pupils cope with the transition. Similarly, Chedzoy and Burden (2005) found that up to 10% of Year 7 pupils in their research, which looked at five different secondary schools, had not enjoyed their transition. New students can be concerned with various issues; homework, bullying, getting lost, making new friends are some of the most commonly referenced concerns (Ward, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Akos and Galassi, 2004; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008) which are similar to transition concerns of pupils in other countries (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003).

Anderson *et al.* (2000, p.327) agree that getting to classes on time, getting lost, fears of being teased, concerns about their safety, having lower grades, difficult classes, strict teachers and difficulty in making new friends are the most dominant concerns of primary school pupils before and after their transition to secondary education. What most participants in Singer’s research (2007) were concerned about were managing to feel good, not being teased or not having negative comparisons with their peers and improving their academic attainment by bringing it closer to school standards. Galton (2009) recognised that pupils worry about losing their current friends, being able to cope with the new subjects, teachers and new learning styles, which are usually unfamiliar to primary school pupils and could significantly affect enjoyment and interest in new subjects. They can

simultaneously look forward to new experiences and be unsure about coping with new demands. New pupils generally experience some anxiety mixed with excitement and anticipation (Rudduck, 1996, Lucey and Reay, 2000). Maras and Aveling (2006) found parallel experiences when they discussed research about the aspects of secondary education that stress pupils as they move from one school to another.

Research from the United States (where children attend middle school after primary, but this transition age is the same as in England) revealed that coping with new homework requirements and getting lost was the most important concern of middle school pupils, whereas in high school they were concerned with academic performance (Akos and Galassi, 2004). Similar findings from New Zealand confirm that before transition, children worry about the same basic issues, which in that case were social aspects, school work and school organisation (Ward, 2000). However, the anxiety that almost inevitably accompanies transition can also have a positive effect on children's identity by helping them develop coping strategies (Lucey and Reay, 2000). It has already been mentioned that there are many aspects of secondary education that learners may find difficult. Achieving good academic performance, coping with teachers, attending classes (Akos and Galassi, 2004) and homework (Lucey and Reay, 2000; West, Sweeting and Young, 2008) are perceived as the most difficult parts of secondary school. According to Lucey and Reay (2000), persisting anxieties can overwhelm children, hindering them from moving forward with their lives; helping pupils to be more successful and deal with problems is positive for their identity. The impact transition has on young people can also cause stress and concern for parents and teachers (Maras and Aveling, 2006, p.196).

Links between schools

Certain schools settings prepare pupils for the different learning styles they will encounter at their new school. Diack (2009) argues that schools which take care of pupils' needs throughout every stage of their education are mainly in the private sector and present transition as a positive experience. She also states that non-private schools consider facilitating similar models to make transition a more positive experience. Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) claim that existing links between school transitions are not sufficient, but schools are becoming better at preparing pupils and making them look forward to their transition. Before transition, most pupils will have an idea of what to expect since most primary schools have transition programmes that include visits to the future school and distribution of information about their new school (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999;

Lucey and Reay, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008). Some pupils have a more complete idea from siblings or friends who attend the secondary school; others will not, making it a new beginning for them (Rudduck, 1996a).

Academic competence in primary education enhances pupils' self-esteem during transition; it is students who are not academically prepared for the next educational level that have the most difficulty in making system transitions (Anderson *et al.*, 2000, p.328). The importance of primary education does not stop there; Lord, Eccles and McCarthy (1994) found that children confident about their academic, social and athletic abilities in Year 6 had a higher level of self-esteem after their transition. Academic performance in secondary education is affected by parental interest and involvement, either by supplementing (e.g. by hiring tutors) or talking about school (Anderson *et al.*, 2000), which highlights the importance of parents in this stage of a young person's life.

Decline in academic performance

In England, transition is part of schools' agenda, however schools need to be more organised, considering both social and academic factors contributing to it (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). Evidence consistently shows that there is a decline in educational achievement after transition from primary to secondary education (Pietarinen, 2000; Arthur *et al.*, 2010). School transitions are often difficult for students; at this point grades are likely to decline and behavioural difficulties to increase (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999, p.6) estimated that two out of five pupils do not make the expected progress after they change school and the allowed time of a 'summer dip' has passed. This decline in school performance is highest in the year following the transition, especially in urban areas, and failing at least one course during that year is to be expected (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) concur, revealing that the strongest evidence of this academic drop is in Ofsted's data around the time of this educational transition.

This attainment dip has multiple causes. Pupils may need help with time management or fear this dip and react negatively, which can cause further problems and lead to withdrawal (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). This dip can be caused by the gap between the two academic years and combined with the effects of puberty it can distract attention from school work, resulting in loss of progress (*ibid*). The situation is aggravated by changes in the academic and social environment. Grading standards are usually more thorough,

academic performance has important consequences and the relationships with teachers and peers change, becoming more distant than they were during primary education (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). Students are aware of changes in their relationship with their teachers (Ward, 2000). Also, the new environment is very different from that of a primary school (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994). Pupils with SEN are considered to be at risk after educational transitions (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999).

Difficulties are strengthened when students miss school days, since not attending classes can make it easy for pupils to fall behind. Not wanting to go to school can be caused by bullying or peer pressure for truancy (Rudduck, 1996a). According to Anderson *et al.* (2000), most students experience a decrease in their self-efficacy and self-esteem, a decline in grades and interest in school, which are usually small and short-lived. If transitions are particularly problematic then pupils are more likely to discontinue their education, especially if difficulties persist throughout secondary education (*ibid*). Effects of transition on well-being and attainment can persist even beyond secondary education (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008). Students who do not make successful system transitions are likely to be marginalised, not welcomed, respected or valued in the school community and there are few extrinsic rewards for them in the system (*ibid*). They may also feel rejected by the 'mainstream community' (*ibid*, p.329). Importantly, secondary school teachers can keep students motivated by not stressing the importance of grades or putting pressure on them (Wang and Holcombe, 2010). Instead, emphasising the importance of mastering knowledge and independence can help students achieve better, although achievement is also affected by a student's sense of belonging in their school (*ibid*).

The secondary school environment

The new aspects of secondary education can cause different reactions. Some look forward to their new life, while others have negative reactions to it. Having different teachers, friends and responsibilities, more subjects and freedom of choice between them, can cause varying and mixed feelings (Akos and Galassi, 2004). Children can enjoy the change into a new, more adult-oriented environment that offers a different, higher level of teaching and freedom to choose subjects (Rudduck, 1996a). Pupils may look forward to those new experiences but fear they may not cope with them or that their new teachers will be too strict (Galton, 2009). If a pupil's identity is negatively constructed then these changes can be harder. Adjustment difficulties can be caused by various reasons, such as unwillingness to be parted from friends, worries about bullying or about new school expectations - both

academic and in fitting in an adult oriented community (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). Whether pupils will mostly be concerned with academic or social matters also depends on the school and its reputation (Lucey and Reay, 2000; Akos and Galassi, 2004). Consequently, the school a pupil will attend is an important factor in how a transition is experienced.

The change in school settings disrupts young people's social networks, which can lead 'to impairments in their mental health, social behaviour and academic performance' (Coleman and Hendry, 2002, p.153). The continuity of a pupil's life is interrupted in various ways: 'organisational and social' discontinuities, increased school size, greater attention to behaviour and academic ability, a new less personal relationship with teachers and competition between pupils (Anderson *et al.*, 2000, p.326). Competition can disengage pupils from learning and decrease the value they place in schooling (Wang and Holcombe, 2010). Moving to secondary school during adolescence is a significant life event for children. They move from a small, protected elementary school, where there is usually one main teacher and one set of classmates and go to a much larger, competitive, impersonal secondary school where teachers, classmates, and classrooms are constantly changing, and teaching is not pupil-centred (Burns, 1982; Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994; Pietarinen, 1998; Ward, 2000). The comfortable feeling of primary school changes into a more impersonal environment (Anderson *et al.*, 2000) where teachers do not know students on a personal level (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994).

The difficulties pupils experience during the first year of secondary education are substantial (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). In their longitudinal study, Wigfield *et al.* (1991) found that when children undergo such a transition they experience a significant change in their social status. They change from being the eldest pupils with the most status who know the school premises well to being the youngest in a new environment with a completely different social structure. Their self esteem can be high during the last months of primary and plummet in the first year after transition (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). This happens at a time when young people are going through developmental changes as well (Pietarinen, 2000; Le Métais, 2003). In Rudduck's (1996a) research, pupils had a feeling of loss after leaving primary education, where they were familiar with most other pupils. In their new school they do not have the same sense of safety.

An aspect of secondary education not usually accounted for when considering the impact of transition is that the pupils have to start making their first career decisions, for example choosing between academic and vocational courses (Burns, 1982). They also choose subjects they will need for entry to higher education. Such choice is highly important without enough support children can make decisions based on factors other than what they would like to do with their future (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000; Ingesson, 2007). Dyslexic teenagers may avoid subjects they find difficult because of their learning difficulties (Ingesson, 2007) and choices can be regretted in retrospect.

School transitions and dyslexia

For students with SEN, the effects of transition can be different. Therefore, strategies or programmes designed to ease transition for typically developing students may need to be altered to accommodate young people with SEN (Maras and Aveling, 2006). This depends on how different transition effects are for young people with SEN. Such changes are more important to dyslexic pupils. It is agreed that children with SEN have increased vulnerability to the difficulties of transition (Cullen, Lindsay and Dockrell, 2009). Maras and Aveling (2006, p.198) argue that while having SEN will ‘not, in itself, increase the number or effects of stressors, but that different types of special educational needs may mean that particular stressors have a greater impact during transition’ (*ibid*, p.198). Tobbell (2003) described transition difficulties for dyslexic pupils: problems reaching classrooms on time, getting lost, confusion about where they have to be and at what time can be very stressful and confusing for all children, especially those with dyslexia, who can feel helpless. Having difficulty following the rest of the class can increase anxiety, especially in the first few months (*ibid*). Being late for classes can cause embarrassment and conflict with teachers, who usually only excuse late students during the first days (*ibid*).

Depression can affect academic performance (Andrews and Wilding, 2004). Research suggests that dyslexic pupils already have elevated levels of ‘emotional distress and deviant behaviour’ (Ingesson, 2007, p.574). Therefore, situations like these along with struggling to cope with school demands can add up and create a negative school experience and low self-esteem. Feeling inferior to classmates is a common feeling (Arkowitz, 2000; Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Ingesson, 2007; Singer, 2007; Eissa, 2010), while loneliness and being bullied are also experienced (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Ingesson, 2007). They perceive dyslexia as a significant part of their self that makes them

different from others in how they learn and it can eventually influence their self-esteem (Rowan, 2010).

Experiencing all these problems can heavily influence dyslexic identity construction but as argued by Ingesson (2007) children can realise that their learning difficulties are something that is separate and is not part of their identity. This can be an achievement that helps every aspect of a dyslexic child's life because of positive self-worth leading to a good sense of identity not too influenced by the new difficulties. All stressors Maras and Aveling (2006) found were confirmed by previous research. Children wanted to be aware of available SEN provision at the schools, for example a room dedicated to students with SEN, because it was important for them to know what to expect. Pupils also wanted others to have an inclusive mentality but attitudes to their own SEN could make them uncomfortable, despite other pupil's best efforts. Learning support assistants were considered important and in most cases were helpful; they needed to tend to each person's specific needs in order to be able to facilitate transition. A school's flexibility regarding the timetable was also helpful for the pupil's transition (*ibid*).

Some young people with SEN will manage to adapt and cope with their transition along with their 'typically developing' peers, while others will need more support (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Learners may also struggle despite receiving the appropriate support. Those who design a transition programme need to communicate with young people and their parents in advance; this communication is essential in ensuring that they can plan interventions which address 'individual needs and concerns' and meet the needs of learners with SEN (*ibid*, p. 201). Communication between parents and schools to improve transition experiences has been identified in other research (Defur, Todd-Allen and Getzel, 2001). It is also useful for students without learning difficulties (Eccles and Harold, 1996; Falbo, Lein and Amador, 2001), since parents can help their children with transition (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994; Falbo, Lein and Amador, 2001).

Returning to the importance of peer groups, adjusting to a new environment is influenced by social circles; if children have new peer groups in which they feel comfortable, they are more at ease with the new academic expectations as well, which often are the prior concern (Akos and Galassi, 2004). Friendships can heal negative perceptions and help children cope with difficulties and feel comfortable in the new environment (*ibid*). Rowan (2010) argues that friendships, along with family and teacher relations, shape children's attitudes

to learning and help them accept their learning difficulties. It is helpful if they go to the same school as one of their friends or if they already know someone there. Frederickson and Jacobs (2001) found that pupils with dyslexia did not feel any difference in social acceptance and were satisfied with the number of friends they had. In order to cope with the new environment children compare themselves with others, especially those who belong in their peer group. Consequently, starting new friendships during the first weeks of transition is important in accepting their new identity as secondary school pupils (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000). During adolescence 'relationship patterns and social contexts' change and peers and companions become more important (Coleman and Hendry, 2002, p.146) but during transitions the relationship with parents remains significant, even though peers are less likely to criticise or lecture and can offer 'personal validity, social status and interests' (*ibid*).

Supporting identities during the primary to secondary education transition

It has already been argued that the time of transition from primary to secondary education is a challenging one, especially for individuals experiencing problems with academic attainment (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005; West, Sweeting and Young, 2008) such as dyslexia, although this is not always the case (Lucey and Reay, 2000). It is considered as 'one of the most difficult in pupils' educational careers' (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003, p. 67). During this transition children undergo physical changes by entering adolescence and environmental ones by changing schools (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994; Pietarinen, 1998). This part of the chapter discusses ideas within the literature that may ease transition to make it less stressful, focusing on individuals with learning difficulties. Easing transition positively impacts young people's identities because some interventions aim to reduce negative perceptions, low self-esteem, and the dip in school performance.

According to Anderson *et al.*, (2000) if a transition is to be 'successful', pupils need certain abilities; the first is to be academically prepared for the next educational level. Research shows that both teachers and parents consider academic performance very important for adjustment to secondary education (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994). Pupils also need the ability to work independently without constantly requiring help from their teachers and to conform to adult behaviour and effort (Anderson *et al.*, 2000) and to develop coping mechanisms so that they can respond to prospective difficulties (*ibid*; Lucey and Reay, 2000). A 'successful' transition also depends on the support pupils are offered throughout the process: socio-emotional from peers, parents, and teachers or in the form of resources

and services from the setting (Anderson *et al.*, 2000). Children need to understand how their new school works academically and socially, have sufficient information and a transition team that helps them through it effectively (*ibid*, p.332; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008) because the less prepared they are the more difficult the transition is (Anderson *et al.*, 2000). However, if acquiring those abilities is essential for a 'successful' transition, it can be argued that those who do not acquire them will never have a positive transition and consequently suffer the negative repercussions it entails.

Humphrey (2003) strongly believes that classrooms should be accepting places where dyslexic children are equally included academically and socially that teachers should accept children's personalities and feelings and use 'reflective teaching' and encourage diversity. Also, consistent teaching methods combined with counselling can lead to increased self-esteem and achievement (*ibid*). However, Humphrey's suggestions are for children with low self-esteem as a result of their schooling experiences, who are somehow excluded from the classroom community. Arguably, not all children feel that way, which renders counselling useless for them.

A change in teaching methods, on the other hand, could prove helpful for dyslexic children. Research indicates gender differences, with females having lower general and academic self-esteem (Crockett *et al.*, 1989; Eccles and McCarthy 1994; Coleman and Hendry, 2002; Maïano, Ninot and Bilard, 2004; Alexander-Passe, 2006). Consequently, Alexander-Passe (2006) suggested young girls with dyslexia receive additional attention at school in order to increase their self-esteem. However, one should be cautious with such suggestions since gender alone cannot indicate a pupil will have lower self-esteem. Arguably, interventions should suit individual needs and such assumptions can lead to unnecessary labelling. Humphrey (2002a) found that difficulties in self-development for dyslexic children are highly dependent on individual experiences, types of difficulty and educational placements.

School settings can offer private spaces dedicated to pupils with SEN, which are not associated with punishment and are available when they are needed, even during break times (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Humphrey (2003) suggests that dyslexic learners using in-class peer support instead of out-of-class support are less likely to be considered different, but acknowledges that it can also have the opposite effect. Other dyslexic fellow pupils could offer mentoring because they can be more familiar with each other's needs

due to dyslexia and they can create more aspirations (Humphrey, 2003). Humphrey (2002a) also found that the problems dyslexic children face negatively affect their self-development and suggests that self-concept and self-esteem enhancement programmes are part of their secondary education lessons. In the same vein, research suggests that dyslexic students need to protect their self-esteem because enhancing self-esteem can help learners overcome their academic difficulties (Singer, 2007) and also help children resist peer pressure and deviant behaviour (Coleman and Hendry, 2002).

Undergoing transition with a group of children from the same primary school also eases the process of transition (Rudduck, 1996a). It offers a familiar feeling to a new, mostly unknown environment and protection from bullying (Lucey and Reay, 2000). School settings can help with bullying by utilising whole-school policies with all pupils. They can also include 'assertion training', 'social skills training' and emotional support (Humphrey, 2003, p.133). Bullied children can feel welcome and accepted if the school support service organises activities for affected children (Humphrey, 2003). This was highlighted in Singer's (2007) research. After being asked if they have advice to offer, most of Singer's participants talked about the importance of support from parents and teachers, followed by a good school support system.

Having something to look forward to can also help children with transition-related low self-esteem problems (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). For a 'successful' transition young people need to maintain their enthusiasm for learning, be confident and have a sense of achievement and purpose (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999; Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000), since students engaged in their schooling are more successful than those who are not (Wang and Holcombe, 2010).

Concluding comments

Dyslexia can cause multiple difficulties and problems for a young person during transition to secondary education. Difficulties that other learners are able to overcome seem more problematic and negative experiences can become part of their identity, which is at a critical stage of development because they are also entering adolescence. Western cultures privilege literacy, which makes it difficult for dyslexic people because if their difficulties are not overcome life chances can be limited. School transitions are considered more challenging for dyslexic learners, who need additional support. Appropriate support enables them to succeed and make positive developments in their lives, both educational

and personal. Both in schools and at home, support has a key role in this process. Support promotes 'successful' transitions and builds positive identities that are not defined by dyslexia-associated difficulties.

However, there is also the macro aspect of socio-cultural perceptions. It has been established that dyslexia and its effects, including lower academic attainment for some children, can be stigmatising. If this were to change, children would not have such negative self-perceptions when they are not able to perform. For those who are not able to achieve academically, cultural acceptance of other skills could potentially improve their self-perceptions, as their achievements would not be considered of a lesser importance and function.

According to symbolic interactionism and theorists discussed above (Layder, 2004; Jenkins, 2008), identity is developed within a social/cultural context and is immediately affected by social interactions. Social and cultural norms, adopted by members of a social sphere, affect perceptions about individual members. In England, those norms are centred around academic performance and 'excellence'. This can result in individuals with learning difficulties such as dyslexia acquiring negative self-perceptions caused by societal perceptions of their difficulties. Academic competence affects self-concept and children strive to achieve culturally-created performance goals. Inability to achieve them can result in the development of negative self-perceptions. This happens via social interaction with others, especially when children's difference is emphasised in the classroom; they acquire a stigma that does not only apply in a school setting but in their culture in general.

Importantly, transition to secondary education signifies the beginning of a new educational experience. Academic performance and grades begin to matter significantly and youths need to make serious decisions about their future. This point in their lives is decisive for their academic and work careers. It begins with a change that is experienced as abrupt, stressful and with negative performance outcomes, since most children experience an attainment 'dip'. Some children get used to this change more easily than others, but those who do not recover from it require careful school support so that they can achieve to their full potential. Secondary education experiences and individual responses to it can vary for dyslexic children in terms of the received support, attitudes from classmates and expectations from teachers and parents. Identity formation is influenced by those experiences and determines the educational path youths choose. This makes it more

important for school settings to offer support that goes beyond government guidelines, which can be broad. With appropriate support (Humphrey, 2003; Alexander-Passe, 2006), schools can assist children in overcoming their transition dip and the challenges of secondary school life, so that they can focus on their education and future choices without bias about subjects stemming from their difficulties (Singer, 2005).

Chapter 3: The research process

Research rationale

This research is a qualitative study focusing on how the identities of dyslexic people going through the educational transition from primary to secondary education are constructed and experienced. Symbolic interactionism is used as a theoretical framework for data analysis, while the methodological framework is interpretivism. Narratives provided by dyslexic young people, dyslexic adults, parents of children with dyslexia and a SENCo (an educational professional working with pupils identified with SEN) are used to capture how identity is constructed and how educational transition is experienced. The motivation for this research was conceived during my Masters dissertation, as explained in the introduction (Lithari, 2009). It studied the views of a small group of year 6 children regarding their forthcoming transition to secondary education. They were asked to describe their expectations and concerns and also give advice for other children about how they could have a 'successful' transition.

Researchers have continually identified a need for more research on educational transition. Burns (1982, p.152) acknowledged that 'only further research can determine what it is about the junior high school experience that is stressful for the self-image'. Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999, p.33), suggested a study to investigate how teachers could help young people 'who want to do well but who find it difficult to undo the negative perceptions of peers and teachers'. Zeedyk *et al.*, (2003) also noted the paucity of academic research into educational transition within the United Kingdom. Akos and Galassi (2004) called for more research into student perceptions of their transition to secondary education. More recently, Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, (2010) discussed the need for more insights and perspectives regarding the nature of transitions for young people throughout their school careers. More specifically, Burden (2008) noted the need for investigation 'into the connection between developmental learning difficulties of a dyslexic nature and the ways in which these can and do affect a person's sense of identity, possibly throughout their lives' (p.194). In the same vein, Glazzard (2010) argued there is limited knowledge regarding the influence of parents, teachers, peers and a dyslexia diagnosis on self-esteem, since most research in that area concentrates on learning and reading difficulties in general. Yet, consequences of a lack of recognition and support can be identified by looking at the

secondary education experiences of dyslexic learners (Rowan, 2010). By investigating those experiences, possible improvements can be examined (*ibid*).

Transition from primary to secondary education in England takes place when children are aged 11; support during this phase of their lives is required in order to ensure that it is as successful as possible. For learners with dyslexia, there are additional issues to consider: they can be emotionally distressed (Ingesson, 2007), while certain stressors, like getting lost and reaching classrooms on time (Tobbell, 2003), can have a greater impact (Maras and Aveling, 2006). They are more vulnerable to the effects of transition, which makes it even more important for schools and parents to understand how to support them (Cullen, Lindsay and Dockrell, 2009). Maras and Aveling (2006, p.198) conducted case studies focusing on the transition from primary to secondary education in the United Kingdom and suggest that having SEN does not in itself ‘increase the number or effects of stressors’, but depending on the SEN the impact of certain stressors can be greater. Research suggests that comparison studies between people with and without learning difficulties cannot help in understanding how stressors, for example fear of getting lost or homework develop during this transition (Kvalsund, 2000; Lucey and Reay, 2000). Maras and Aveling (2006) also highlight the need to investigate the differences between the ‘individual experiences of young people with differing types of special educational needs’ (p.198).

This research explores how identities are constructed after transition from primary to secondary education; it builds upon and goes much deeper into the evaluation of this identity construction. Children’s age during and after transition is formative for identity construction and it is important to demonstrate what young people experience during that time (Singh and Ghai, 2009). Interviews were utilised to explore how the change in school settings, prospective difficulties as a result of dyslexia, relationships with peers, parents and teachers shape identity and academic confidence. The objectives of this research were to provide an understanding of:

- the problems dyslexic pupils face during and after their transition to secondary education
- how they feel about their education
- how those experiences affect their identity construction
- how long those effects last and if there are significant differences between participants’ experiences
- to hear the participants’ voices.

In order to achieve the objectives of this research I addressed the following questions:

- How do dyslexic young people perceive and experience their transition from primary to secondary education?
- How do young people with dyslexia react to the psychosocial impacts, changes and experiences of secondary education in relation to their academic performance and school experience?
- How do dyslexic young people construct their identity in relation to their academic performance and school experience?

These main questions inspired and shaped the semi-structured interviews, and framed the basic method of this research. In addition, one further method was attempted. I utilised audio diaries which were intended to supplement and enrich the interviews and subsequent data, although this method did not progress as expected.

Why conduct qualitative research?

Silverman (2010) suggests that research methods are not what should drive a researcher, since methods should be chosen according to the research task itself, by the research problem. Qualitative research is useful when a researcher is trying to answer questions involving ‘why’ and ‘how’ (Marshall, 1996, p.522), which is the aim of this study. It is used when ‘a problem or issue needs to be explained’ (Creswell, 2007, p.39). It is used when the researcher needs to study a specific population, discover characteristics or listen to stories that are not heard (*ibid*). Qualitative research can offer a complex, detailed understanding of the research subject and the only way this can be accomplished is by talking with people and giving them the opportunity to express themselves and tell their stories without being influenced by what the researcher has read in the literature (*ibid*). Webster and Mertova (2007) concur that narrative research provides a rich framework through which researchers can investigate how participants experience ‘the world depicted through their stories’ (p.3). This process can empower individuals, who are able to tell their stories and make their voices heard while the power relationships between them and the researcher are as limited as possible (Creswell, 2007). Indeed, Rapley (2007) believes interviews can be a way of hearing stories that were previously hidden or silenced.

Qualitative research is also considered appropriate for research that is framed within symbolic interactionism (Ashworth, 2008). Critically for this research, qualitative interviews were used to capture and analyse life stories and record important life events in great detail (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Narratives allow the researcher to investigate how an experience affects participants and find out about important life events, which can make the researcher understand what is important in his/her study (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Importantly, qualitative interviews offer ‘a means of exploring the ways in which social actors interpret the world, and their place within it. These interpretations are often extremely complex and nuanced, and would be difficult to access through other means’ (Lawler, 2003, p.242). Indeed, the emotions associated with dyslexia can be complex and exploring what living with dyslexia means to children, understanding their world and their educational experiences, dictates the need for qualitative methods (Zambo, 2004).

Qualitative research is useful with young participants. With children, it produces good quality narratives when students are asked to ‘explore their experiences and express their feelings’ via semi-structured interviews (Tobbell, 2003, p.7). Other researchers in this area, like Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) have also chosen qualitative methods when interviewing children. Most research in this topic is qualitative and according to Silverman (2005), it is more effective to use the same methods as other researchers in this area have used. This type of research allows for a detailed study of children’s experience, produce more knowledge and provide ‘depth of information’ (*ibid*, p.7). It offers ‘a glimpse of the lived experience’ (Howell Major and Savin-Baden, 2009, p.15) which is beneficial in understanding complex issues like transition and produces extended narratives (Seale *et al.*, 2007). Clark (2004) highlights that qualitative research can be empowering and help in acquiring rich, high quality data, especially for in-depth research.

Thus, semi-structured interviews are useful for exploring individual’s experiences about complex and/or sensitive issues, while allowing for any required additional information to be added (Barriball and While, 1994). They help the researcher capture participant’s authentic experiences (Seale and Silverman, 1997) and voices (Koshy *et al.*, 2013). This type of research can add to theories which are not fully developed and do not fully capture the problem that is being studied (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, existing research can help form the questions that are asked (*ibid*), leading to deeper, richer data, advice that I followed when drawing up interview questions. The basic research aim was to understand lived experiences; therefore interpretivism was the most appropriate methodology since

this is what it was developed for (Snape and Spencer, 2003). For interpretivists, lived experience holds crucial importance since their ontology is that the individual and his/her surroundings cannot be separated; in addition, individuals' perceptions about the world are inseparable from their lifetime experiences (Weber, 2004). Arguably, there is reality beyond a person's perception of it, but the way that this reality is perceived, interpreted and acted upon separates phenomena into those that can be subject to interpretation and those that cannot (*ibid*).

Qualitative research offers rich information from a small number of people, which can be very valuable (Patton, 2002). A focus on subjectivity, voice and the authenticity of human experience is one of the most dominant aspects in qualitative research (Silverman, 2010). These aspects are central to my research, which makes interpretivism suitable. Quantitative studies focus on comparisons and variance of phenomena (*ibid*). Such disability studies can widely differ from the participant's lived experiences (Zambo, 2004). If the focus is on scores, numbers and patterns; all products of quantitative methods, we might not capture deep and meaningful experiences for children who have dyslexia (*ibid*). According to Zambo (2004), instead of measuring, there is a need to explain and find the meaning of children's experiences. It is not only about their difficulties; there is an emotional side that needs to be recognised and to do that one must talk to those children about their lives and their difficulties (*ibid*). It is not that qualitative methods are superior to quantitative since no methodology is 'intrinsically' better than the other (Silverman, 2010, p. 10), but this specific methodology served the purpose of my research appropriately. The focus was on individual experiences and this is clearly reflected in the research questions.

Involving children in research

Research suggests that in most studies on educational transitions the voices of people that are mostly affected by it are infrequently heard (Akos and Galassi, 2004; Grover, 2004). Those people are often students, parents and teachers (Akos and Galassi, 2004, p.212). Many researchers have advocated how important it is for those voices to be listened to (James, 2007). Earlier in this chapter it was explained that this research involves dyslexic adults who were asked to reflect upon their secondary education experiences, dyslexic young people who were still in school, some parents of dyslexic people and an education professional. The main aim was to listen to young people's stories so their views were central. Participants were seen as social actors who can be empowered through their narratives, especially if the research has an impact (Rogers and Ludhra, 2011).

The initial research design was to involve children in the first two years of secondary education. Since the transition process was recent for them, I believed that they would have much to say about it and would be able to reflect on the changes between the first and second years of secondary education. As the data collection process started and I read more about transition, my thinking developed. The effects of transition and dyslexia continue to shape aspects of young people's identities throughout their schooling and beyond. Moreover, they shape decisions about young people's work aspirations and choices (Ingesson, 2007).

Consequently, narratives were gained from adults as well and young people who wanted to tell me their story (Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003). Interestingly, older teenagers had a lot to say about the persistence of the transition effects (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008). They could be critically reflective upon those experiences but this does not mean that younger children were uncritical. The children who participated in this research were old enough to engage in meaningful interviews and were able to provide eloquent stories about their experiences (Modgil, Modgil and Brown, 1983; Mauthner, 1997). Acquiring views from young people of different ages provided deep data and the aim was to explore this variety and depth of experience (Patton, 2002; Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). Older teenagers in my research had either finished or were close to finishing their compulsory education, thus making them still able to reflect upon their transition. They all remembered it well and were able to provide rich, detailed narratives. They had more experience of schooling, which helped them provide fruitful data about how their lives and identity construction had been affected by experiences related to their dyslexia.

The ethics of research with children

Implications of doing qualitative research with children and young people

Researching children and young people was filled with ethical and methodological issues. These issues became more significant since my research participants had dyslexia and were more likely to have experienced more difficult or traumatic events than typically developing participants in that age group (Zambo, 2004). Moreover, there was always the possibility of participants becoming upset during interviews. Research suggests disabled children, including those with dyslexia, should be viewed as individuals and not as a homogenous group, because this does not acknowledge their diversity or ability 'to develop complex and multiple identities' (Lewis and Kellett, 2004, p.195). This was

accomplished through qualitative research, as developmental differences in children's levels of ability and understanding could be taken into account (Lewis and Kellett, 2004). This required preparation of the interview schedules and process, so that the approach used with each participant was the most appropriate.

As noted in Robinson and Kellett (2004, p.86), when researching children's experience, many researchers do not talk to the children they want to study. Researchers tend not ask people with learning difficulties about their views either, involving third parties like parents instead (Greene and Hogan, 2006). One of the drawbacks of not acquiring information directly from children is that third parties can only offer their inferences and assumptions (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, 2000, cited in Clark, 2004, p.5). Arguably, the most appropriate way to understand children's views is to ask the children themselves (Roberts, 2008); asking them about their experiences during an interview is more likely to produce valid data; otherwise, it is easy for views to be put on them (Mayall 1994; Roberts, 2008). Research can be empowering for the children who participate (Robinson and Kellett, 2004, p.86) when participation is active. Before participation in my research, children were offered a choice between phone and face-to-face interviews. Although this did not offer much freedom, it made taking part more enjoyable since participants had a say in how they were involved. The importance of offering children as much choice as possible has been documented elsewhere (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998; Hill, 2006).

Critically, there are power relations between the researcher and the researched and there are researchers who suggest participants often have little power or voice in the research process (Rogers and Ludhra, 2011). When researching children with difficulties such as dyslexia, I needed to consider how this affected the methods used. Dyslexic participants were more likely to choose to express their views verbally (Kirwan and Leather, 2011). If they had problems with the written language they may have been uncomfortable writing down answers, or omitted answers because of difficulties in writing them down. They could also feel that verbalising their thoughts assisted them in their higher order thinking (Kirwan and Leather, 2011). Finally, children may have been happy to participate, but I had to ensure that participation would have a minimal effect on their workload and regular activities (BERA, 2011). I did not ask for extensive audio diaries or for the participants to travel far for an interview; interviews were held at a place the participants chose so that that it would have minimal impact on their daily lives.

It was important for a pilot interview to take place (Koshy *et al.*, 2013), with a participant willing to help. As highlighted in Kirby (2004), that participant could also inform the planning of interviews by highlighting issues of a dyslexic person's life. The pilot interview was also part of my data. Especially during that first interview, I evaluated the interviewee's reactions to my questions and tried to see if I was clear with my questions, because it was important to understand what sort of narrative the interview schedule would produce (Barriball and While, 1994). The cycle of interviews, reflection and evaluation was an ongoing process developed from this first interview experience.

Precautions during research with children

The ethics of this research were shaped by its participants (Greig and Taylor, 1998) - children, young people and adults. The basic principles behind this type of research ethics do not only apply to children, but to adults as well; nevertheless, there were some additional issues that had to be dealt with (Mauthner, 1997), which are discussed in this section. The first difference between adults and children was that to gain access to children, I first needed to be granted permission by adult gatekeepers (Punch, 2002). Also, children were potentially more vulnerable to researcher/participant power relationships. That was because children are often in situations where adults maintain powerful positions and therefore do not expect to be treated equally (*ibid*). However as with adults and children alike the researcher ought to consider the research setting, to ask clear questions and not to impose views (*ibid*).

According to Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2007, p. 221), there are three key 'standard' ethical issues for qualitative research: assurance of confidentiality, building trust in the interviewer-interviewee relationship and informed consent. Children involved in research had the right to 'self-determination, privacy, dignity, anonymity, confidentiality, fair treatment and protection from discomfort or harm' (Greene and Hogan, 2006, p.65). The research ought to be carried out according to the best interest of the children (BSA, 2002; BERA, 2011); therefore I had to consider the children's rights: participants needed to be well informed and have their views listened to and respected (Fraser *et al.*, 2004). With this 'rights based research' children were not treated as objects but as equal to adult participants and the researcher (*ibid*). Before each interview I talked to the children about their rights and made certain that they understood them. All children were free to ask questions before, during and after the interview and to refuse to answer questions they did not want to answer (*ibid*). It was also made clear to them that they would remain

anonymous. The young participants involved in this research were not concerned with anonymity issues, but the adults sometimes were. Most participants never expressed any concerns or asked questions about anonymity. Before the interviews, all participants were informed that although every effort would be made to ensure their anonymity, it would not be possible for me to guarantee that they could not be recognised. Younger participants being unconcerned by these issues has also been documented in previous research, where participants wanted to be identified (Rogers and Ludhra, 2011) but researchers ought not to allow this (Greene and Hogan, 2006).

Vulnerability

Due to the nature of the interviewing process, both the researcher and the interviewee could be left in a vulnerable position (Richardson, 1996). Even though participants were given clear guidelines before an interview, they may have not been in a situation like that before, where the focus was entirely on them (Richardson, 1996; Seale *et al.*, 2007). There was also the potential risk of emotional distress if highly sensitive issues were discussed (Greene and Hogan, 2006). Interviewing is 'highly personal and interpersonal', therefore participants could see it as intrusive, especially if the issues discussed were very sensitive for them (Richardson, 1992). This put great pressure on my relationship with the interviewee (Rogers, 2003; Seale *et al.*, 2007), and I had to carefully think about what our exact relationship was and how it affected the course of the interview (Rogers, 2003).

My attempts to build trust were based on multiple actions: being sympathetic and respectful of any views, thoughts or perspectives expressed (Davies and Dodd, 2002; Hiller and DiLuzio, 2004) and expressing interest (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). Also, listening and making the participant feel valued, understood and accepted (Hiller and DiLuzio, 2004), being as approachable as possible and making explicit that every possible effort would be made to ensure that participants remained anonymous. At the beginning of each interview I had a general, informal conversation with the participants and stated that there were no right or wrong answers because I was interested in exploring views and experiences, and this helped relax nervous participants (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003).

For children with difficulties like dyslexia, sensitive issues could arise, with strong feelings and reactions (Farrell, 2005) and therefore building trust was very important. I wanted to ensure that all participants were comfortable and therefore they were reminded that they had the right to stop the interview at any time they wished (Richardson, 1992; Fraser *et al.*,

2004). Sense of comfort was very important for interview participants to share their thoughts without fearing the consequences, and this produced better quality data (Zambo, 2004). Participants chose the location, time and type of interview (phone or face to face) so that maximum comfort would be achieved.

Regarding the place of an interview, both parties had to come to a joint decision without jeopardising safety issues (Ryen, 2007). In order to reduce vulnerability for both sides, the interview room had to be chosen carefully. For example, being interviewed in a quiet room close to the head teacher's office could cause the child to think that he/she was in trouble at school (Howes, 2010). Also, being across a table with an adult who is asking questions could make children fear getting answers wrong and being punished (*ibid*) (a little like in a classroom situation). Arguably, the best positioning is side-by-side and not face-to-face (*ibid*), which was utilised during my interviews. In light of the aim to give children as much choice as possible about their participation, they could choose to have the interview in private or not, which was respected by their parents (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). With all participants, the identity, places and location of the research needed to remain confidential (Ryen, 2007).

Trust and confidentiality

Building trust helps participants feel in control during interviews (Farrell, 2005). For trust to be built, children needed to be treated as competent, aware, informed and active participants, who consented to the semi-structured interviews (*ibid*). Trust could also be increased by assuring interviewees that everything was confidential, including the identity, places and location of the research (Richardson, 1996; Seale *et al.*, 2007). Both in the information sheets and before interviews, participants were informed that they would be anonymous and their data would remain confidential (Greig and Taylor, 1998). It was also explained that anonymity could not guarantee confidentiality (SRA, 2003), for example there was always the possibility of someone recognising them through their narratives, although every measure to protect anonymity had been taken. Publishing intentions were also discussed and covered in the consent form (Aldred and Gillies, 2005).

Participant names were only written down for my own information and did not appear in any recordings. I also had to ensure that interviews could not be overheard by third parties. What was discussed in the room was not disclosed to anyone, so that confidentiality could be kept. After interviews all data was transferred onto a computer and the original

recordings were deleted. Precautionary measures had to be taken in case a participant did not want confidentiality or if it had to be breached. Confidentiality breach would only happen if a child disclosed that they or someone else was at serious risk and after the case was thoroughly discussed with the child (Greene and Hogan, 2006). If a child wanted to be named this was not enabled as it was against their best interests (*ibid*). All this was explained to the participants before the interviews (*ibid*) but there were no such cases.

Informed Consent and agreeing to participate

A key ethical issue was to what extent the purpose of a research was hidden or disguised, because this was 'against the principle of informed consent' (Greene and Hogan, 2006, p.69). However, there are researchers who feel some aspects of the research should be concealed because they may upset children or compromise the data by affecting what children say (*ibid*). This could happen when children try to please the researcher by saying what they thought he/she wanted to hear; the problem with concealing research elements is that some participants might change their minds if they knew the exact aims (Greene and Hogan, 2006, p.70). In informed consent children are aware of their choice to participate or not, their right to withdraw at any time and their exact role in the research (Greig and Taylor, 1998). I did not hide anything from the participants, as I wanted to see exactly how participant's identity was constructed by dyslexia and their transition. I was not aiming to validate certain theories, but to see how children perceived their school lives in relation to dyslexia.

For children to participate, informed consent needed to be documented. Guardians needed to read an information sheet and sign a consent form (Greig and Taylor, 1998). Information sheets had to be given to the participants and those for the children with dyslexia had to be reader-friendly. Instead of the standard information sheets normally used, coloured A4 sheets were divided into A5 leaflets. Pictures were used to make the information sheets more attractive and interesting and support potential reading difficulties. Care was taken to make information sheets look attractive without patronising children (Punch, 2002). Samples of the material sent to participants are provided in appendix 6.

Information sheets for parents provided more detailed information, enabling parents to explain and discuss the research with their children (Greig and Taylor, 1998). Following good practice, I sought agreement from both children and their parents for a child's

participation, but parents had the final word and therefore needed to be well-informed and gain confidence in me, otherwise access to the children would have been denied (Buchwald, Schantz-Laursen and Delmar, 2009). All participants could keep the information sheets and consent forms, study them in their own time and then come back to me as participants with dyslexia may need more time to study printed documents. This way, children could also give the information sheets to their carers so that any parts they did not understand could be explained to them. Both participants and guardians had to provide informed consent, which included them knowing their exact role in the research and that they could withdraw at any time. Asking for written parental permission is considered the only ethically acceptable approach to working with underage participants (Greene and Hogan, 2006). Even though children have the intellectual capacity to understand and agree voluntarily to take part in a research, the ‘collaboration and approval’ of guardians is still required (BSA, 2002; BERA, 2011, p.6-7).

When starting the research, it was essential for me to renegotiate participation and ask children if they wanted to go through with the interviews and other procedures (Flewitt, 2005; Robson, 2011). In the case of audio diaries, agreeing to work on the audio diary and send it to me constituted consent as the participant could easily delete material before sending diaries on.

Writing about adolescents, Stanley and Sieber (1992) highlighted potential conflict between adolescents’ need for privacy and autonomy and parental desire to exercise some control over them. A teenager could have wanted to participate in research without parental approval or telling their parents about their participation. This would have been difficult for me and could potentially have caused legal issues with parents. None of the children’s participation could be accepted without parental consent. Denial from either side would block children’s participation, as it ‘provides independent veto power by parent and minor in matters concerning the minor’s research participation’ (Stanley and Sieber, 1992, p.110). In cases where minors agreed to participate in research, even if the law allowed an adolescent as a ‘mature minor’ to make the informed decision to participate, I ought not accept it (Stanley and Sieber, 1992, p.123) and still sought parental permission. Research suggests that this should apply to participants who are under 16 years of age (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003).

Before the interviews I went through the leaflet with the children to ensure they understood everything (Fraser *et al.*, 2004). This also formed a bond and released tension, making the process more enjoyable for the children. If children did not want to participate, the interview would have been cancelled or rescheduled. During interviews with children, I explained what would happen and kept asking if they were happy to proceed. Consent was constantly revisited to check that children wanted to talk. All interviews ran smoothly without any problems. Both children and their guardians were polite and willing to help me, which made the process enjoyable for all parties.

Participant recruitment: process and difficulties

The number of participants required for qualitative research is small and ‘there are no rules for sample size’ (Patton, 2002, p. 244). My study covers the target participant number suggested in Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003), which is one to three participants for each criteria combination. However, although they initially suggest this, they then explain that the final numbers in such an approach could be unmanageable necessitating a reduction in participants, which in a way confirms Patton’s (2002) previous statement. The sampling of this research contains elements of both convenience and purposeful sampling (Marshall, 1996). Most of the sample came from volunteers (convenience sample element) (Teddlie and Yu, 2007), although the type of participants needed was specific and some participants were personally asked to volunteer (purposeful sampling element) (Patton, 1990; Marshall, 1996).

Most participants were volunteers who replied to advertisements asking for dyslexic research participants (O’Leary, 2004). Convenience sampling has been criticised with regard to credibility (O’Leary, 2004) and is considered the least desirable of recruitment methods, although it is very commonly used (Patton, 2002). However, my sample was not entirely based on convenience, mainly because participants had to fulfil certain criteria (dyslexia, age) and the advertisements placed called for a specific type of participant. Furthermore, a small number of individuals were approached because it was believed that they could contribute valuable insight, which is purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990; Marshall, 1996). Arguably, all qualitative samples are purposeful since they are chosen according to the needs of the study, but there are multiple sampling variations that can fall under the same general category (Coyne, 1997). Maximum variation is a form of purposeful sampling; it is used when the aim is to study common themes that emerge from widely different samples, which are of great interest (Patton, 2002; Ritchie, Lewis and

Elam, 2003). Stratified purposeful sampling is a form of purposeful sampling, where samples are created within samples so that comparisons can be made; these samples are fairly homogenous but present variation in a specific aspect and the purpose is to capture variations, not common themes (Patton, 2002; Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). Since types of purposeful sampling can be combined (Patton, 2002), one can create a maximum variation sample by utilising stratified purposeful sampling.

This was the initial intended sample regarding the participants' age. Although most participants answered an advertisement, they still fell into certain categories: dyslexic children, young people and adults. This created a good age variation of participants with different experiences and viewpoints, allowing for rich data with interesting common themes but numbers were not equal within the age categories. Parents and the single educator were included in the sample specifically to support and contextualise the children's narratives. All participants included in this study were located in England. Access to many of the participants was made possible via the internet, which can be used as a tool to extend one's reach by instantly transmitting information between individuals around the world, and therefore my research was not hindered by proximity (Markham, 2006). Many participants would not have been available or even approachable without the telephone (Fenig *et al.*, 1993) and internet, which provided an additional space that facilitated instant communication with potential participants (Markham, 2006). Six people were involved in the research but not included in the thesis. Four because they were not UK based (since this is not an international study) and two did not agree to participate but offered to discuss some of their schooling experiences.

The process of recruitment is explained here. Early in the study, I realised that my greatest difficulty would be accessing and recruiting participants (Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003). I did not have gatekeepers who could help me gain access to dyslexic participants or know people who could introduce me to potential gatekeepers or participants, especially young people. Knowing people who could help would have made the process much easier (Reeves, 2010). Access to participants is difficult, especially through organisations, since organisations may not be welcoming to outsiders and the sensitive questions they may ask as part of their research (Okumus, Altinay and Roper, 2007).

Recruiting participants was a process that took considerable time and effort and I used a range of methods simultaneously. Trying to gain access through schools was especially

difficult due to the need to persuade gatekeepers that the research is mutually beneficial. Research is not a priority for schools and even if they agree to allow access, it is difficult to get the research requests to guardians and gain their consent (Rice *et al.*, 2007). This was especially true for my research since most schools I approached either replied negatively immediately or ignored my efforts, which was a demoralising experience but not uncommon (Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003). This may be because gatekeepers, in this case school officials, may be unsure if participation is in the best interest of the children (Lewis and Porter, 2004). They may be protective towards children, fearing that the researcher could harm them, or unconvinced about the benefit of the research (Emmel *et al.*, 2007).

A secondary school gatekeeper whom I met in a different context became interested in my research and agreed to help by sending letters to the parents of dyslexic students at her school. However, not all households approached on my behalf responded to the request for participants. Ultimately, the secondary school gatekeeper found me five participants. By the time this happened I had adopted a different approach, placing advertisements in dyslexia-related sources, such as on-line forums and magazines.

Advertising my research on the internet generated interest directly from dyslexic adults or parents of dyslexic children and initiated the data collection process. Overall, adult volunteers were easier to recruit since they spent time on such sources and many of them were interested in supporting dyslexia research (O'Leary, 2004) and/or getting their story heard. It also led to the recruitment of parents of dyslexic children as well. I directly asked four people to participate. I became interested in them by reading the stories they had published online and I believed their narratives would be information-rich and valuable for the research (Patton, 2002; Marshall, 1996), which proved to be correct. Three participants were introduced to the research by acquaintances, but my relationship with those acquaintances is not discussed here since it could breach the participants' anonymity. Data collection with adults was not as complicated as it was with children; contact was direct, with no need for a parent to become interested and approach me. Recruiting participants was a long and on-going process (Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003) that eventually led to a satisfactory number of participants.

My lack of gatekeepers led to the decision that in addition to networking through dyslexia events, I would advertise my research on online forums (Worth, 2009) and magazines and

via flyers left at charities and organisations (*ibid*). The first participant volunteered to participate when I talked about my research to a group of people. Later I started searching for on-line discussion forums to advertise my research, since this method often proves successful (Koo and Skinner, 2005). After locating dyslexia forums, adverts were posted and led to discussions where members left comments and questions for me to answer. Through those websites I found participants genuinely interested in dyslexia research who were willing to help me, which happens in research based on volunteer participation (O'Leary, 2004). I was contacted by numerous people who replied to my requests for participants, both dyslexic adults and parents of dyslexic children. When carrying out interviews, the interviewer needs to contact others and secure their help, travel to unfamiliar places, engage in an intensive process which aims to reveal details of participants lives and then 'say good-bye' (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003, p.209). Establishing relationships and help from strangers can be the interviewer's most anxiety-provoking task (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003) because he/she asks those strangers to share intimate stories and the possibility of being rejected is always there, every time a new contact is attempted (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003; Rogers, 2003).

Recruiting participants through the internet (specialised websites, forums or discussion boards) has difficulties; some researchers approach specialist recruitment websites to increase their participant numbers (Koo and Skinner, 2005) although this was not needed in my research. For those who were invited to participate, I initially sent a short message explaining who I was, how I found them, what my research was about, and asked them if they would be interested in participating. When their reply was positive, they were sent an information sheet and consent form via e-mail (O' Connor *et al.*, 2008), which included my e-mail address and phone number so that participants could reach me and discuss any issues before they made their decision. These documents would ensure that participants were fully aware of the research and how data produced by their interviews would be utilised. Consent was acquired both via e-mail (*ibid*) and verbally at the start of the interviews. Although all participants were aware that they could withdraw at any time, no one did. Some people wanted to discuss the project by phone or e-mail before they could decide. Others were more comfortable to participate without asking many questions. Two of them were unsure about what they could offer to the study, of how useful their knowledge would be, but they were assured that their contribution would be valuable to this research (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003).

Sending a message asking a person I did not know to participate was initially an intimidating experience for me (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003) but later did not cause anxiety. Those interviews led to deeply interesting narratives. As this is qualitative research, I needed to establish a good working relationship with participants, who came from different backgrounds (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). They needed to be able to trust me and I had to show an interest in their situation while simultaneously conducting a good quality interview (*ibid*). If the interviewer is professional and comfortable with the situation, then trust is easier to establish (*ibid*). These issues were important in establishing a relationship and persuading people to participate in my research and I did everything I could to be flexible and establish their trust. Understandably this is difficult when the participants had never met me.

It was decided that the first interviews would be with adults, rather than young people, because they had time to reflect upon their educational journey in its entirety and could also provide feedback about the interview process. This enabled them to provide me with detailed and indeed reflective views of their whole educational experience, which was valuable for the interviews with children. This also gave me the opportunity to shape and improve the interview questions for the younger participants, both with emerging themes and personal opinions and experiences from the older participants.

Who are the participants of this research?

This part of the chapter provides a brief description of the research participants, presenting information about them and their educational experiences. The areas where the participants lived and the people who initiated contact with them are deliberately kept general, since being specific could breach their anonymity (especially for those who lived in small areas). All participant names used in this research are pseudonyms.

Table 3.1: Children participants

Children				
Name	Age	Area	Method of contact	Interview arrangements
1. Cody Year 8 pupil	12	Berkshire	Mother responded to web advertisement	Home interview
2. Emma Year 8 pupil	13	West Midlands	Mother responded to web advertisement	Telephone interview
3. Gabriel Year 7 pupil	12	London	Mother responded to web advertisement	Home interview
4. George Year 7 pupil	12	Shropshire	Mother responded to invitation letter sent via the school	Home interview
5. John Year 7 pupil	12	Shropshire	Mother responded to invitation letter sent via the school	Home interview
6. Katrina Year 7 pupil	12	Greater Manchester	Father responded to web advertisement	Home interview

Table 3.2: Parent participants

Parents				
Name	Age	Area	Method of contact	Interview arrangements
1. Jenna (Emma's mother) Teaching assistant	42	West Midlands	Web advertisement	Telephone interview
2. Christy (Gabriel's mother) Financial consultant	44	London	Web advertisement	Home interview
3. Katya (George's mother) Civil servant	49	Shropshire	Invitation letter sent via the school	Home interview
4. Mary (John's mother) Farmer	49	Shropshire	Invitation letter sent via the school	Home interview
5. Howard (Katrina's father) Carer	45	Greater Manchester	Web advertisement	Home interview

Table 3.3: Younger adult participants

Younger Adults				
Name	Age	Area	Method of contact	Interview arrangements
1. Erica College student	18	Essex	Asked to participate by acquaintance	Telephone interview
2. Faye University student	26	Cambridgeshire	Verbal request for participants	Interview in an office
3. Jeremy Entrepreneur	19	West Midlands	Personal invitation to participate	Telephone interview
4. Matthew Architect	26	London	Web advertisement	Telephone interview
5. Melanie College student	17	Essex	Asked to participate by acquaintance	Interview in an office

Table 3.4: Adult participants

Adults				
Name	Age	Area	Method of contact	Interview arrangements
1. Jack Architect	47	London	Web advertisement	Interview at a public place
2. Josephine University lecturer	41	Essex	Asked to participate by acquaintance	Home interview
3. Kimberly Secondary school SENCo	46	Shropshire	Offered to participate	Interview at her office
4. Mark Driver	54	West Midlands	Personal invitation to participate	Telephone interview

Short descriptions of the participants, along with information about their circumstances and experiences can be found in Appendix 3.

Research methods

Methods considered: audio diaries

The initial aim was to utilise both interviews and audio diaries because audio diaries are considered to provide good insights into complex experiences like capturing changing identities during transition (Worth, 2009). They are also considered to produce solid data for important events or transitions, when people experience constant change (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003). For children who had difficulty reading or writing, I wanted to avoid asking them to use pen and paper (Howes, 2010). I did not want children to perceive the diaries as something difficult, stressful, or as homework, therefore keeping them verbal was essential.

However, audio diaries did not prove to be a viable source of data. I could not make them ‘compulsory’ lest I added to the pupil’s workload and as a result, only one participant, Emma, produced an audio diary. Her mother, Jenna, explained she kept forgetting about it and her mother claimed she had to keep reminding her daughter to make an entry. All entries were created after her mother urged her to do so. The parents of the other children informed me that their children did not want to keep a diary. Data collection methods do not always go to plan. Difficulty in recruiting volunteers for diaries and having them continue to make entries has also been documented in other research (Leyshon, 2002; Boyd, Egbu, Chinyio and Lee, 2004).

The entries were only used as a guide, to inform and enrich the questions of the interview that followed, rather than being used as a method of collecting qualitative data (Hyldegård, 2006). Although the interview was enriched from the diary, for my purpose, it did not add value or depth to the interview and I cannot say that the interview itself would have been much different if the diary was omitted. Therefore, the process is only briefly described.

Interviews

Conducting research based on interview data required ‘substantial forethought and advance planning’ (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003, p.204). Also, when interviewing children, it had to be taken into account that children do not have the same attention-span, experiences or self-expression abilities as adults (Buchwald, Schantz-Laursen and Delmar, 2009). A general interview schedule was prepared before any interviews took place. This schedule changed for every participant to fit their age and experiences, since in qualitative research the interviewer does not have to always ask the same questions, just similar issues (Rapley, 2007). During an interview either the interviewer or interviewee can raise these same subjects during the discussion (*ibid*). It is a key rationale for qualitative interviews, ‘that they allow for different approaches on the same issue’ (*ibid*, p.18). Throughout the interview process the schedule was continually altered to ensure that appropriate questions were asked. This was necessary because the aim in qualitative research is to provide understanding of ‘complex psychosocial issues’ (Marshall, 1996, p.522). The schedule contained open-ended questions, to support interviewees who were not as talkative or comfortable with a completely unstructured interview. Open-ended questions are considered the most effective way of acquiring an authentic understanding of participant’s

experiences (Seale and Silverman, 1997) and have been previously utilised to capture episodes in pupil' learning careers (Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, 2010).

Inevitably, not all interviews produce the same quality and depth of data. Narratives from some interviews will be more useful than that of others.

‘No single interview, however revealing, can offer more than limited insight into general social forces and processes. Only by comparing a series of interviews can the significance of any one of them be carefully understood. And, in the long run, each interview will add to the final story’ (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003, p.211)

For dyslexic participants, interviews were a particularly suitable data collection method I could keep making sure that the questions were understood (Ingesson, 2007). In this research, a digital recorder was utilised because an audio record captures a wealth of information that hand written notes cannot. Using a recorder also helped achieve better communication between me and the participants, because we could talk and interact without being distracted (Rapley, 2007). Multi-tasking (listening and writing) could lower the level of communication and as a result the depth of the interview material as well. However, if any participants were uncomfortable with being recorded there would have been no other choice but note taking and writing down the rest of what could be recollected after the interview was completed (Rapley, 2007), but no participants refused to be recorded.

Critically, having one-to-one interviews was more likely to produce extended narratives but could also create tension between the interviewer and interviewee, as the interviewee could wonder whom they were speaking to (Macnaghten and Myers, 2007). That can happen because they do not know much about the interviewer. During the interview, I could talk with the participants about the subjects discussed, not just listen to what they had to say. This helped to improve the relationship between us, encourage the latter to talk more and generally create new paths in the discussion (Rapley, 2007). However, this does not necessarily mean that the interviewee was interested in what I had to say, since they could be taking part in the research because they wanted to get their stories out (Rogers, 2003; Rogers, 2005). This happened during some interviews, where participants were not keen on a conversation-style interview, but others welcomed it.

The interview schedules used here used open-ended questions that were initially shaped by relevant research and later by emerging themes. The starting point for the formation of a general interview schedule was the short open-ended questionnaire created by Zeedyk *et al.* (2003), which was also used in previous research undertaken for my Master's dissertation (Lithari, 2009). Results from Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) and my dissertation helped inform and shape the questions asked to the participants by providing information about what Year 6 children expect from their transition. The same questions were not used, but the themes that emerged from them were a starting point for further study. Some of the main interview discussion subjects were the following: how do dyslexic pupils see themselves during the change from primary to secondary education? Are they stressed because of difficulties related to transition or not (Carroll and Iles, 2006)? What impact do their perceptions have on their academic performance (Federickson and Jacobs, 2001)? How are they affected psychosocially (although this word was not used in interviews)? Do secondary school experiences affect future education/work choices? These are just some themes that formed the questions that were asked, although it was not the exact way they were asked; they were rephrased or split into multiple questions.

Each interview schedule was customised to the needs of each participant and the questions asked were also affected by the participant's responses. The general interview schedule was designed according to Arthur and Nazroo's (2003, p.114) guide. It called for an introduction, opening questions that are easy to answer and are about background and context, followed by core questions that are more in-depth, and finally ending the interview with 'winding down' questions about suggestions and looking to the future. One of my final questions asked participants to offer advice for other dyslexic pupils going through transition. It was a question inspired by other researchers (Dale and Taylor, 2001; Singer, 2007) who asked their dyslexic participants to offer advice for other dyslexic people, their parents and/or teachers. A sample of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix 5.

The interviews were richer with older secondary school students and adults because they were at an age that enabled them to further reflect upon their education, permitting narratives on transition, their educational journey and critical evaluations. Adults have this significant experience because they have lived longer and accumulated it, contributing to a basic difference between them and children (Knowles, 1988). Arguably, children are not as experienced as adults and may be unable to comment on their own experience (Mayall,

1994). However, most children were able to provide detailed narratives about their experiences, and were also able to be critical and make judgments about those experiences. Interviews with younger participants were also interesting and it was helpful to see that the same issues that were discussed with older participants concerned the younger ones as well. This is discussed in the three subsequent data chapters.

Semi-structured interviews were first scheduled with adults; not only because they could reflect on their educational experiences as a whole, but also about how these impacted their identity. Emerging themes from those interviews helped increase the depth of the interviews with children. After four interviews with adults, themes began to emerge, enabling me to sketch an idea of transition and its effects. These ideas and themes helped shape more precise questions for younger participants, so that they could be prompted to talk about their views whenever they were hesitant. Adults also talked about issues I had not included in the initial interview schedules (e.g. the extent of parental support). Talking about those themes with the younger participants helped me understand their experience better. My initial themes were addressed first but others were used in cases where answers were short or vague and needed to become more specific.

Younger children needed more support during interviews because they were potentially more vulnerable to the unequal power relationship between them and the adult researcher as they are used to not being seen as equals (Punch, 2002). Being specific could also encourage younger participants to talk more because some of them may not have had the same level of maturity as adults (Lewis and Kellett, 2004). The ‘cognitive and emotional functioning’ (Weithorn and Scherer, 1994, p. 132) of children has not reached adult levels of maturity (*ibid*), although my participants were not younger children. Twelve year old children have begun acquiring critical thinking abilities and moving towards the final level of cognitive development, the same that is reached by adults (Modgil, Modgil and Brown, 1983).

Similarly, adults and those in the later stages of adolescence had the ability to think more critically. In addition, they had experience throughout the education system, which gave them an overall perspective. It produced narratives that reviewed the whole process, whereas younger children described processes as they were happening to them. If a child did not respond to a question, that question would need to be rephrased and presented in a way that it could be understood and engaged with (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Even

though different types of questions might be more explicit, by not being leading they make children's answers more reliable (*ibid*). I was prepared to ask questions differently in case children could not understand them, but soon realised this was not an issue and used the same wording in all questions common between adults and children. In every case, questions needed to be phrased correctly so that they could be specific and clear enough, without imposing my views (Punch, 2002). To encourage children to talk freely and relieve pressure for a 'correct' answer, all children were told that there are no right or wrong answers (*ibid*).

The interviewing process

The interviews carried out for this research varied in terms of their location and medium. Participants could choose between phone and face-to-face interviews (Hanna, 2012). All face-to-face interviews were recorded using an mp3 recording device. Some were held in a private room, which provided privacy and a quiet place to talk and record the interview. Because the room was quiet and isolated, the interviewees did not worry about others overhearing and there was no external interference that could interrupt the interview or lower the quality of the recording. Other interviews were held at the participant's home, as it was not possible for them to travel to meet me and I did not want to disrupt their activities (BERA, 2011). My aim was for interviews to be as comfortable as possible for the participants and I did not want to take up more of their time by asking them to travel. Those who invited me to their home would set a date and time of their choice for me to visit them.

As already discussed, some participants were unable to meet face to face, which meant that the interview could only take place via the telephone. This combination of data collection methods has also been used by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) who had participants who were reluctant to the idea of face-to-face interviews and may have not participated if an alternative had not been offered. This increased participation for Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) and for me because in addition to hesitation, time constraints could deter participants. Telephone interviews depend on the telephone skills of both parties involved, but they can be enjoyable for the participants and produce rich, detailed data (Holt, 2010). They do not need to be considered 'second best' to face-to-face interviews since they can produce deep narratives (*ibid*, p. 120) and this medium can be used successfully (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004; Holt, 2010).

Phone interviews are not common in qualitative research but in some cases they become necessary, as they did for Sturges and Hanrahan (2004). Another advantage of phone interviews was that the relevant anonymity they offer could increase the validity of the data, especially when sensitive issues were discussed (Fenig *et al.*, 1993) although this is not proven (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). However, phone interviews do not allow for visual clues, the importance of which depends on the nature of the research, how important they are for data quality and if they could be compensated by verbal cues (*ibid*).

The initial thought was to utilise a landline telephone to call the participants but after considering the recording options it was decided that I would use my laptop and call them via *Skype*. The reason was that with a laptop I could use recording software that would provide a high quality recording. The same method was followed by Cater (2011), who also found it more cost-effective and convenient to use *Skype* and recording software for some of her phone interviews. Hanna (2012) also supports these benefits of internet technologies such as *Skype*. The internet is a very convenient tool that made communication with participants easy and cost-effective (Markham, 2006). After ensuring that the software would be suitable for the interviews, *Skype* was used to call the participants on their telephones on a date and time of their choice.

The recordings were carried out using software named *Call Graph*, which was created to work with *Skype* and produces high quality recordings with no time restrictions. Therefore, I could record as long a call as I needed, which was not the case with other available software that was free to use. Research suggests that voice interviews recorded using *Skype* can be treated and analysed in the same way as traditional interview recordings (Bertrand and Bourdeau, 2010). The phone/*Skype* interviews allowed participants to remain at a comfortable location, like their home, without having the interviewer intrude (Hanna, 2012).

Importantly for some, the researcher will also feel that they are not imposing (*ibid*). Since it was important for me that the participants were comfortable, the option of phone interviews and the participant comfort was vital. Consent for recording the phone interviews was first established via e-mail or a phone conversation that preceded the interview. Participants were asked again at the beginning of each interview so that I could be certain that they were comfortable with being recorded. After a call was established and introductions were made, I let the participants know when the recording started and at the

end when it was stopped. Conversations would often continue, and we would discuss issues that were not necessarily relevant to the research.

Debriefing after interviews was essential, especially if participants felt confused, concerned or emotionally charged (Richardson, 1992). Tension in the interviewer-interviewee relationship could be tackled by informing the participants that they were not obliged to answer questions that they did not want to answer and that they could also stop the interview to continue at another time or withdraw at any time they wished (ibid). Knowing that they could decide all this could help them feel in control and protected (ibid). After the interviews, participants had as much time as they needed to talk with me about any issues that raised concerns. They could also ask questions that emerged while the interviews were taking place, which could help if they felt emotional after the interview.

Data analysis

A symbolic interactionist framework was utilised to aid the interpretative analysis of the data. This framework was chosen because it aids the interpretation of how identities are constructed in relation to cultural context and interaction with others. Identity theories based on symbolic interactionism were used to approach the questions that were asked during interviews and they were used for the data analysis as well. The work of theorists such as Goffman (1970; 1991), Mead (1967) and Blumer (1998) regarding the formation of the self were utilised as a way to craft the questions and interpret the answers. One of the basic principles behind the data analysis was Goffman's notion of stigma and spoiled identity (1990), used within an educational context to explain identity construction within an educational system and in a Western culture that values academic attainment. This was reinforced by the data, which demonstrated that educational experiences, especially the support children receive at school, are strongly linked to their identity which can be 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1990) by negative experiences.

Participants were asked about their educational system and school so that teaching methods and available support could be understood. That was because as stated earlier, when identity is constructed, interactions and attitudes within the society (in a micro or macro level) are important. The type of difficulties participants experienced were also discussed, so that the severity of their dyslexia and implications from specific difficulties would be known. For participants who had completed their education when the interview took place,

it was very interesting for me to see what they chose to do after compulsory schooling and how that decision was affected by dyslexia. Children's aspirations and interests were important but could change by the time schooling was finished, whereas with adults their path had already been chosen and they were able to comment on it.

It was also interesting to see how participants overcame or dealt with their difficulties and how dyslexia affected their adult lives. It contributed to an understanding of the long-term effects of dyslexia on identity and enriched the data with full views of participant's educational lives. Those who were still in the education system when the interviews took place could offer more current views of their experiences, but their experiences were similar to those of the older participants. The way teaching in schools takes place has changed over time (Topping and Maloney, 2005). However, this change was not as dramatic for dyslexic participants because many of them cannot learn at the same rate as typically developing learners in an average classroom. This aspect of the education system was highlighted by Humphrey and Mullins (2002), who wrote that dyslexia is a 'problem' (p. 201) for children because teaching in schools has not yet been altered to suit their learning needs. They argue that early identification in conjunction with altered teaching will stop it being a 'problem' (*ibid*). The participants discussed such issues and the viewpoints from different age groups were informative.

Once data was collected, it was transcribed so that it could be further analysed. Transcriptions were usually completed shortly after each interview had taken place so that the workload would not become overwhelming and a better quality could be assured. The process chosen was thematic analysis, which was made possible via thematic coding. This process was chosen because unlike other similar analysis strategies (like discourse analysis), it is not bound to a specific theoretical framework or epistemological approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It allows the researcher to seek patterns within data items, even in just one interview, rather than only across the sum of data (*ibid*). It can be used with every type of qualitative research and it allows the researcher to develop themes and a thematic code (Boyatzis, 1998). It allows use of the gathered information in a systematic manner (Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe and Yardley, 2004) that increases the accuracy and sensitivity in interpreting the data (Boyatzis, 1998). A code was developed from raw data, so that the essence and richness of the data could be captured and an interpretation of the events and observations could begin (*ibid*). The code emerged from three very broad

themes (*ibid*) (transition, identity and support) that were created from data interpretation, and several sub-themes that fit into those broader categories.

A theme captures important aspects about the data in relation to the research question and demonstrates a level of patterned response or meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a pattern in the data; a code is something that is either directly apparent in the data, such as a specific word, or talk in which a subject is referred to (for example referring to that same word, but not saying it directly) (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Thematic analysis provides a rich engagement with the entire data set so that the reader acquires a sense of the predominant themes, although some of the depth and complexity of the data is lost via this method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis used here was inductive; the themes were linked to the data, meaning that the coding was created without the use of a pre-existing coding frame (*ibid*).

Every interview was transcribed verbatim to create a full picture of what was said during the interview. The transcription was a very time-consuming process that required great concentration and attention to detail, but this enabled me to listen carefully to what the participants were saying and to start defining emerging themes, analysing and interpreting the data (Boyatzis, 1998). The order in which the code was created was the following: transcription of the data (which helps with familiarization with it), generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing them after they were created, defining and naming them and finally producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

After the first three interviews I noticed that the theme of parental help was emerging persistently. Participants kept talking about how their parents supported them and how critical the parental role was for their life choices. Although there is research on transition that includes parents (Ward, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Akos and Galassi, 2004), I had not thought of the extent of their importance and influence, which was why it was not in the initial plan to have them as participants. One of the positive aspects of thematic analysis is that it allows for patterns to emerge and for the essence of the data to be captured (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a result, initial decisions about the participants were reconsidered. At this point, the sample was changed; parents of dyslexic children would also be included as participants.

I realised that seeing transition through the eyes of the parents would help me understand it better and create a fuller view of what it means to go through this transition while being dyslexic. Interviews with parents aided my understanding of children's lives since the issues that were discussed with parents were similar to those discussed with the children. This sample change also helped the dynamics of the relationship between parents and children to become clearer and supported the explanation of the decision-making process within a family. Parent's narratives provided a significant insight into how they perceived their children's difficulties and how they influenced and supported them so that the right decisions for each child can be made. The parental perspective facilitated a deeper understanding of individual children's experiences and how they felt about themselves. Participants talked about support from their schools so it was decided that it would be useful for the sample to include a professional, to capture the processes around support and perspective of the school. One very experienced SENCo who participated provided all the information needed. It was not necessary to interview multiple teachers since teacher's viewpoints were not the focus of the study. However, the interview provided vital information about the way that schools support children with SEN, the financial aspects of support and how decisions are made. The interview was used to inform the research, supplement existing information about the matter, and contextualise the narratives of the other participants.

Methodology: strengths & weaknesses

Qualitative data is considered trustworthy if the study has been carried out rigorously (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, human beings are the main instrument of data collection and their perceptions of reality are accessed directly with qualitative research; when rigour is perceived in this manner, then internal validity is very strong for this type of research (Merriam, 2009). There is no single generalisable 'truth' perceived by all humans and each one has a different perception (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011), which is an intrinsic characteristic of qualitative research. Some researchers argue that rigour is achieved if another researcher could perform the same data analysis and come to the same conclusions, while others believe that this is a threat to phenomenological validity and does not work with this methodology, because this is used in positivism (Rolfe, 2006).

Rigour, or *trustworthiness* in qualitative research terminology, (Morse *et al.*, 2002; Thomas and Magilvy, 2011) has been divided into: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Morse *et al.*, 2002; Rolfe, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Thomas

and Magilvy, 2011). These strands are described below, according to Thomas and Magilvy (2011).

Credibility (called internal validity in quantitative research) can be achieved by checking the representativeness of the data so others can immediately recognise the experiences described in the study (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). This can be achieved when the researcher reviews individual transcripts and looks for similarities within and across the participants. Spending time with interview techniques, participants and transcripts, while also using the words of the participants can help with credibility, which is very much dependent on the ability and the effort of the researcher (*ibid*).

This was followed very strictly for my research, since (as already described) the data analysis process started with the first interview and even led to changes such as adding parents as research participants. The interview technique used was also very important. I did not want to affect the participant answers in any way with possible preconceptions, although I did not feel I had a bias. However, I did not want my reading to affect the answers and therefore constructed the interview questions to be as neutral as possible. If I wanted to explore a specific area, I did ask about it - but in a manner that was not leading since I did not want to affect the answers. For example, many of the early participants spoke about support from their parents without being asked about it. As a result, I added a question about this since I wanted to find out if this was a consistent finding. In order to keep the interpretation of all responses accurate, I transcribed verbatim and used participant quotes as much as possible when presenting the data and findings. To further reduce any possibility of leading the interview, I encouraged the participants to talk but tried not to exhibit verbal or facial expression that would show my opinion or reaction to the participants' answers. Within in-depth qualitative research this is not always possible, however I tried to use this interview technique as much as I could.

Using these techniques strengthened this methodology, since great care was taken to produce credible data and to use what I considered the best method for each phase. This type of data is different to quantitative questionnaire data, since the participants are not led. With questionnaires, participants would have had certain answers in front of them (e.g. likert scales or a list of answers) that they would have to choose from and this would limit their answers. By asking them open-ended questions they were free to talk as much as they wanted to and if there were new subjects that I had not thought of earlier (e.g. the extent of

the role of the parents), they could be explored. Quantitative questionnaires do not offer this freedom and I could potentially miss highly important information about the extent and importance of the parental role. Finally, quantitative questionnaires are not as credible (internal validity) as qualitative, since results can be polluted by external factors (Winter, 2000).

Transferability (external validity for positivists) is the ability to transfer the research methods or results to other groups, which can be achieved by providing a detailed description of the population studied (e.g. demographics and geographic boundaries) (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). This is also named generalisability in qualitative research (Schofield, 2002) and it is further discussed below.

I have provided a very detailed account of who the participants were, how they were selected and all methods and methodologies used in my research. Because of its nature, it is not as transferrable as a quantitative project would be, which is a weakness for qualitative research in general. Replicability is the heart of interval validity, which is highly important for quantitative studies (Schofield, 2002). The goal for qualitative research is not to generalise and produce standardised results but to produce an illuminating description after careful study of a situation (Schofield, 2002; Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Many researchers even reject generalisability as a goal, or consider it irrelevant but generally the characteristics of qualitative research do not deem it generalisable (Schofield, 2002). However, research suggests that there is some generalisability to qualitative research because findings could be applicable to other situations due to comparability (the degree to which the study is described enough for other researchers to use it for comparisons) and translatability (the clear description of the theoretical stance and research techniques) (Schofield, 2002). Other researchers could use my methodology and methods or parts of them in their research projects, as I have been very transparent about what, how and why I conducted it. Qualitative research samples are small and not selected to be statistically representative and interviewing is often responsive and non-standardised (Lewis *et al.*, 2013). Reader generalisability and inferential generalisation from qualitative research projects is possible and generalisations can be context free and can achieve prediction (*ibid*). This can be a strong point for qualitative research and both findings and methods can be applied to other projects and practices. This is also true for my research, which could inform both future research and school practice.

Dependability (or reliability in quantitative research) is when another researcher can follow the same decision trail (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). This can be achieved by having others participate in data analysis or describing the methods used in detail (*ibid*). Again, this can be a weakness for qualitative research, as different individuals could come to different decisions and conclusions with the same data. My aim was to allow the data to 'speak' and see what it was that the participants were saying and use this in the analysis. Again, the purpose of the study, participant selection criteria, data collection/transcription processes interpretation of findings, and techniques to ensure credibility (*ibid*) have been clearly explained in detail so that the process is transparent in an effort to be as dependable as possible.

Finally, *confirmability*, (or objectivity in quantitative projects), is reached by establishing credibility, transferability and dependability (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). These have been established to the point that is possible in qualitative research and I have taken every practicable step to ensure that.

Reflexivity, which is the researcher admitting the degree to which their own preconceptions have affected the research, is also important (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Although I actively tried to not allow any preconceptions to affect the data collection and analysis and have already discussed the processes used, subjectivity is in the nature of qualitative research and being reflexive means recognising the need to incorporate the value of the researcher's subjectivity into the research (Long and Johnson, 2000). It is not possible to completely eliminate subjectivity for both qualitative and quantitative research (Davies and Dodd, 2002). Lack of responsiveness of the researcher is the greatest threat to trustworthiness (Morse *et al.*, 2002). Examples of my responsiveness have already been covered, namely the changes to participants and the ongoing process used for data analysis.

Verification strategies ensure trustworthiness (Morse *et al.*, 2002). *Methodological coherence* is ensuring compatibility between the research question and methods, meaning that the question matches the method, which in turn matches the data and data analysis procedure (Morse *et al.*, 2002). This has been established here by using qualitative research questions, methodology and methods. *Sampling sufficiency* means involving participants who have a good knowledge or best represent the research topic, which will ensure saturation of categories and good data quality (Morse *et al.*, 2002). Saturation leads to replication of categories, which signifies completeness; in addition, including negative

cases ensures that non-obvious aspects of data are also in the analysis (*ibid*). For this research, it has already been discussed how participants were selected so that they would offer insight into the issues that were studied. Saturation also occurred and negative cases were used, since the invited participants seemed to have very different life experiences. *Collecting and analysing data concurrently* creates links between what is known and what the researcher needs to know and this interaction between the data and analysis is vital for trustworthiness (Morse *et al.*, 2002). *Thinking theoretically* means that ideas that emerge from data are confirmed in new data and verified in data already collected (*ibid*). This requires both micro and macro perspectives, checking and re-checking and moving forward without omitting cognitive parts to build a strong foundation (*ibid*). Again, these two verification strategies were accomplished by ensuring that data analysis was an ongoing process that influenced the course of the research. My data was analysed by theme to allow it to reflect the meanings of the participants. *Theory development* requires carefully moving between a micro perspective (data) and theoretical understanding (macro) (*ibid*) and was accomplished by keeping symbolic interactionism in mind during data analysis and presentation and by further developing the theory in the thesis conclusion.

Limitations

The methodological limitations for this research include the lack of generalisability (or external validity) (Schofield, 2002; Thomas and Magilvy, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2013) and dependability (or reliability) (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011) that are inevitably linked with qualitative research. The processes employed to counteract these limitations have already been covered above.

In terms of practical aspects, the limitations are that since there are human participants involved, there is always a possibility that they are not entirely truthful in their answers. In order to avoid the participants trying to please me (Greene and Hogan, 2006), I explained that I was not looking for a specific type of answer and that I was interested in all perspectives and experiences. There is also the possibility that participants concealed certain parts of their experience because they did not wish to discuss some aspects.

Such problems can occur with all types of research where human participants are involved. For example, using a questionnaire cannot guarantee truthfulness in answers since participants can still lie, conceal or alter their experiences and/or randomly pick their answers. My efforts not to be leading so that answers would not be affected by me in any

way have been described. This can be a problem during interviews and as a result a limitation for interview projects which are highly dependent upon the ability of the researcher (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011).

Concluding comments

To conclude, this is qualitative research focused on the experiences and identity construction of dyslexic learners during and after their transition to secondary education. Like all qualitative research, it is subjective (Weber, 2004) and the sample used is too small to allow for generalisation (Patton, 2002). The criteria for inclusion in the research, mainly being dyslexic or the parent of a dyslexic child, made participants difficult to reach. Difficulties were encountered in recruiting participants, but they were overcome with the use of advertisements calling for participants who fulfilled the required criteria. Creativity in the way that participants were reached, recruited and participated was a significant step, since I was not acquainted with gatekeepers who could provide access to this group of people. The use of the internet along with acquaintances and one gatekeeper was what made access to potential participants possible and aided the completion of this research.

The parent participants contributed to the understanding of their children's lives, the impact that dyslexia had on their daily lives and how they actively supported them. Interviews were used to capture the lived experience of those individuals, who were all struggling with their schooling in some way. Some proximity and time constriction issues were solved by using phone interviews, which were the only option with some participants. After data from each participant was collected and transcribed, thematic coding and data analysis began. Although this process started with the first interview, thematic analysis was fully utilised after all data was collected, allowing a complete view of the themes. The data resulting from this research was interesting and helped in the understanding of the complex process of this educational transition and how it affects dyslexic pupils. Interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection, since they allowed participants to fully express their views, without any direction from my own views and assumptions, which would not have been possible via other methods. Importantly, there were multiple issues that concerned both children and adults who participated. In the three subsequent chapters, the experiences of the participants are discussed in response to three overarching themes: transition, support and identity.

Chapter 4: Transition from primary to secondary education

Transition from primary to secondary education is considered ‘one of the most difficult in pupils’ educational careers’ and its success can affect children’s academic performance, well-being and mental health (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003, p.68). Therefore, it is a highly significant event in children’s lives (Topping, 2011). This chapter engages with the transition experiences of the research participants and explores the challenges of dyslexic learners during this stage of their educational careers. The first part of the chapter engages with children’s anticipation and preparation for secondary education and their reactions to the new school environment. It continues with a critical discussion concerning young people’s initial experiences related to secondary education and how they felt about it. The new environment, participant reactions to it and the changes it brought to their academic experiences are examined. The chapter continues with school assessment since it becomes more important in secondary education and affects entry to higher education (Rudduck, 1996a). Finally, although negative experiences dominate the chapter, it ends with the narratives of participants who considered this educational transition a positive experience.

In England, most children encounter school transitions at least twice (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Transition to secondary education usually takes place at age 11, with Year 7 being the first year of their secondary education (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000; Tobbell, 2003; direct.gov.uk, 2012). If attending a middle school, this age of transition will vary as schools cover different age groups (DfES, 1996; NMSF, 2013). Learners need time to adjust to their new setting (McGee *et al.*, 2003) since transition is experienced as abrupt and disruptive (Barder and Olsen, 2004). Research suggests this transition is a significant milestone for most students, not just those with dyslexia (McGee *et al.*, 2003), although it can be more challenging for learners with SEN (DfES, 2001b) and it was a highly important change for my participants. Starting with their time in primary education, children reacted differently to the prospect of a new life in secondary school. There were participants who eagerly anticipated this change, looking forward to the new experiences and others who found it stressful and worried about what they would encounter.

When faced with this educational transition, pupils experience a variety of changes. The most obvious is the change from a class teacher system to that of a subject teacher system, while other significant changes are to social groups, pedagogical practices, having to actively organise their own day (Pietarinen, 2000), school location and size. Each person's experience of their learning environment is unique and pupils have to cope with those difficulties at their own pace, while it is not clear how each person will react to those changes (Pietarinen, 2000, p.391). Learners with SEN are likely to find this educational transition more difficult but according to Lucey and Reay (2000) this does not apply to all of them.

Transition is such a critical aspect of children's educational journey that existing government policies and directives need to be looked at. This brief presentation of existing policies links to the research data later on, since there are multiple descriptions of school practice. Many local authorities have a transition programme (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003) and currently local authorities and school settings are responsible for their own transition programme (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008) so they vary widely across England. They usually involve primary schools trying to prepare their pupils for their new school (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). It is not the purpose of this research to provide detailed numbers of how many schools follow a transition programme, but to present the experiences of dyslexic people who undergo transition, but it is useful to consider the range of transition practices. According to the report by Evangelou *et al.* (2008, p.ii-iii); these include: booklets about the secondary schools, open days (including talks by staff, tours of the school and meetings with teachers and/or children), talks/visits by the secondary school teachers, meetings between students and school staff. Children have first days at the secondary schools with no other students in attendance. There is curriculum continuity between primary and secondary schools and primary school teachers prepare children by discussing changes they will face. Secondary schools organise additional lessons for primary school pupils and mentoring by existing secondary school students. Those steps that assist students in their transition are also employed in other countries (McGee *et al.*, 2003).

Anticipating transition to secondary education

Anticipation of this transition can be daunting, especially for learners with low self-esteem, lower ability, who are victimised, not well-prepared academically, or more concerned about their transition (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008). Schools want to help their students have a positive transition experience (Diack, 2009) and therefore use transition

programmes to support them. The school that Kimberly worked at offered a transition programme that familiarised students with the school before they started attending it. School facilities like the swimming pool, sports field, leisure centre and clubs were shared with primary schools in the area. That familiarised many children with the school building before they became students without being part of a transition programme. Similarly, Kvalsund's (2000) participants used facilities in the secondary schools they were going to transfer to, which helped dissolve certain myths and rumours associated with transition, such as bullying. Visits to the secondary school when only the new students and their mentors are present were also used. They could help alleviate fears but this does not always work and may even cause anxieties (Lucey and Reay, 2000).

Galton (1999) suggests that those at risk of having problems need to have additional interventions designed to support them. Kvalsund (2000) found that the main worries children in his research had were homework, getting lost and bullied. Lucey and Reay (2000) also had similar results, with bullying being an important stressor for children. Such concerns and problems tend to be temporary (Ward, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003) and are similar across different countries (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). Still, there can be variations. For example, Ward (2000) found that academic issues were not the most important concern for his participants. Narratives from my participants described organised efforts to introduce transition gradually, in order to make it easier for the children. Future students were shown around the schools, introduced to school staff and for John and George, existing students and staff were briefed about their needs and difficulties. Such processes were also followed by Gabriel's and Jeremy's schools. Their approach aimed to familiarise them with the new environment but despite the efforts made, students would still worry about their transition. Indeed, Tobbell (2003) acknowledged that nothing primary school pupils are told can prepare them for life in secondary; their lack of similar experiences means they cannot fully understand it.

Fears of bullying can be alleviated by having friends who already attend the school or transitioning with friends, which offers protection against bullying (Lucey and Reay, 2000) and stress (Topping, 2011) at the new school. Examining existing research on the general school population (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Ward, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Akos and Galassi, 2004; Ashton, 2008; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008) and on students with SEN (Tobbell, 2003; Maras and Aveling, 2006) indicates that students with learning difficulties do not appear to be different when it comes to their worries about their upcoming transition.

Additionally, Maras and Aveling (2006) state that having SEN does not increase the number of stressors but for some students with learning difficulties, certain stressors have greater impact; for example, homework might be more worrying than getting lost or bullying.

These concerns were confirmed by my participants, some of whom were especially anxious about specific aspects of transition:

‘In my primary school I didn’t get much homework and [...] I don’t like too much to do homework and I find it hard [...] that was the only thing that I was sort of worried about.’ (Gabriel)

‘I was a bit worried...’cause I wasn’t very good at reading, and I found it difficult that people would laugh at me at secondary school. So I was a bit worried about what people might think of me.’ (Cody)

As we can see from the narratives, Cody was worried that other children would laugh at her reading out loud and Gabriel was anxious about coping with homework. The three main worries of getting lost, being bullied and homework were common difficulties for most participants. This concurs with Zeedyk *et al.*, (2003) who found that these worries were the most consistent outcome in their research. Bullying and getting lost were the first two and workload the third aspect that their participants believed worried children. In addition, Zeedyk *et al.*, (2003), found that parents shared the same worries as their children although they did not find the getting lost as one of their main worries. This indicates that this educational transition is significant not just for children but also for their parents, who were concerned about its effects on their children (Maras and Aveling, 2006).

Moreover, concerns that the parents from my research had, although not about transition *per se*, was their children’s educational performance. A good example is that of Mary, John’s mother, as was demonstrated by her narratives below and can also be seen in an interaction she had with him:

John: ‘Geography I know I don’t need, History I know I don’t need, PHSE [personal, social, health and economic education] I don’t know I do need.’

Mary: ‘You do.’

John: ‘No, really, I don’t need.’

Mary: 'But it's nice to know.'

'Well I know what he wants to do [...] wants to be a farmer like his dad [...] But he's still got to learn...to fill in the paperwork.' (Mary)

Mary strived for him to acquire as much as he could from his secondary education and was firm about the importance of schooling. She clearly wanted John to learn what the curriculum offered and was concerned about his literacy level, which she considered important, although his occupation would not require higher education. Yet as she said, would require some reading and writing skills.

Academic preparation for transition

It has been established that worrying about the impending transition is almost inevitable for both parents and children, and a good preparation for this change can help with possible difficulties. Preparation for secondary education can take place at two levels: academic and emotional. The first to be discussed is emotional preparation. Not all participants here were prepared for their transition while they were in primary school. In recent years, transition programmes are offered by most schools and before starting the data collection I only expected older participants to talk about going through it without any preparation.

However, this was not the case since this theme came from both younger and older participants. For example, in Cody's primary school the transition programme was not for everyone; they only offered it to pupils that school officials thought were very worried about it. At that time, Cody was not worried and as a result did not participate in it. Before her transition, she knew which school she was going to attend and only became anxious when she physically started at that school. Another example is Erica's school, which did not offer a transition programme at all and she felt that they did not prepare her academically either.

'I don't think that they prepared me personally, I don't think they prepared me at all. I didn't get much support throughout anything that I'd done, so I've gone in from basically knowing nothing to having to know pretty much the basic information and stuff and I didn't know any of it.' (Erica)

In contrast, Jeremy participated in a transition programme but did not feel that it prepared him at all for his rather unpleasant transition:

‘We had a two day visit probably a couple of weeks before the summer holidays. So [it] literally was ‘here’s the big school, this is where you’re gonna be going, let’s go there at lesson time when it’s nice and quiet, walk around the school and show you where it is. And then go back’. And then we go back the next day and show you the other parts of the school and that’s it.’ (Jeremy)

It has already been stated that school visits do not work for everyone (Lucey and Reay, 2000) and this is what happened with Jeremy. From his experience it is apparent that not all children benefit from transition programmes. This type of preparation is what most participants (those whose schools had a transition programme) described when they were asked about it. In contrast to Jeremy, both George and John were happy with the way they were prepared for their transition. For George, knowing which school he was going to made transition much easier.

The worries that the participants of this research mentioned were: making new friends, what assessment would take place at the new school, homework, what the teachers would be like, having to change classrooms, bullying, being laughed at because of spelling/reading difficulties, that secondary would be more difficult than primary school, school size and being held back because of their difficulties.

‘I didn’t get very-very high grades in like the last Year 6...exams so I thought that I wouldn’t be able to, like, cope at all in senior school [...]. I always thought that people would take the mick out of me for not being able to spell, so that was ...something I was worried about a lot of the time.’ (Erica)

‘[I was worried] that I would...have to hold back a year because...I used to struggle quite a lot with some lessons like English.’ (John)

The fears and anticipations noted by participants here are similar to those in other research (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Akos and Galassi, 2004; Maras and Aveling, 2006; Pollak, 2005; Singer, 2007; Galton, 2009) and are not uncommon among young people who are about to transition to secondary education (Galton, 2009). As noted by Akos and Galassi (2004), feelings of distress are associated with transition for children without learning difficulties as well. Moreover, Pietarinen (1998) revealed that children from both rural and city schools were fearful of the new, larger school’s culture and

customs. Therefore, the area that young people live in does not necessarily make a difference in terms of worrying about transition.

Kvalsund (2000) also confirms these results as he reveals that before their transition, children expected secondary school to be more difficult and demanding in terms of homework, marking and subject requirements. As a result, all participants had doubts about their ability to cope. The primary school size did not affect those feelings and expectations about transition. Fears are likely to be aggravated by stories children hear about the new school from others, such as peers and siblings, but those stories are usually dissolved when children visit their future school (Lucey and Reay, 2000).

In terms of academic preparation, if learners are not prepared they can find secondary education more difficult (Anderson *et al.*, 2000). For participants who were worried because of their difficulties, it is possible that they did not feel as academically prepared as other children who did not have learning difficulties. It is agreed that academic preparation for the next educational level is essential for a 'successful' transition (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Children need to be able to work on their own and the less prepared they are, the more difficult the transition will be (Anderson *et al.*, 2000). Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) found that pupils and their parents regarded academic ability as an important asset for managing their transition to secondary education.

Taking this into account, it is not difficult to see how dyslexic young people can have problems with this aspect of their transition. When entering secondary education their literacy is likely to be at a lower level than other children of the same age. Being aware of their difficulties makes it more difficult. This is why Cody and Erica were so concerned about experiencing negative behaviour from their classmates, because they were not able to perform like other pupils. If they made mistakes in tasks that seemed simple to their classmates, they would stand out in a negative way and possibly be laughed at. In addition to those difficulties, there are new subjects added to the curriculum which can be worrying for some pupils but something to look forward to for others (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). The following narrative shows that new subjects can make anxiety and fear worse. For Jeremy, new subjects were not welcome:

'I think I had so many problems with lessons anyway at primary school. The thought of actually adding more lessons was incredibly scary.' (Jeremy)

West, Sweeting and Young (2008) found that learners who were not well-prepared for secondary school or were victimised were more concerned with transition, confirming Jeremy's narrative. An opposite example was Matthew's school that academically prepared him well for the impending transition. They provided additional tuition so that he could improve his achievement levels and work independently; when it was time to leave primary education he looked forward to attending the new school. Academic preparation for secondary education does not only take place at the primary school. Parents can start preparing their children long before the official school preparation starts, in the form of researching possible schools and hiring private tutors to support children with future entrance examinations (Lucey and Reay, 2002).

Emotional reactions to the anticipation of transition

For Chedzoy and Burden (2005), most participants looked forward to attending secondary school. This is in part similar to my participants; some were simultaneously worried and looked forward to it or some aspects of it. Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) also found that many participants in their research were not worried about any aspect of their transition. Even though young people about to undergo transition may have feelings of worry, there are those who are excited about it or have mixed feelings (Rudduck, 1996a; Akos and Galassi, 2004). Lucey and Reay (2000) had participants with learning difficulties who presented very different outlooks to their upcoming transition, with comments ranging from having nothing to anticipate and not wanting to go, to being excited about the prospect of a new life. Here, mixed feelings were the most common reaction, with participants describing their worries along with excitement and anticipation. A very popular anticipation was new teachers and new subjects:

'I kind of looked forward to it. Because [in] primary school [...] you spend all day with one teacher [...] [I looked forward to] new subjects, getting into more depth. Perhaps slightly bigger environment.' (Matthew)

'I looked forward to it but I always felt like a bit worried.' (John)

As already mentioned, these feelings of excitement can be combined with anxiety, which is not uncommon amongst transition-aged pupils (Topping, 2011). Having new teachers and subjects was exciting for some participants. Matthew looked forward to engaging with subjects that would be more academically challenging, where he would learn more of what

he enjoyed in primary education. Even after transitioning, George still looked forward to meeting the new teachers he would have in the next school year.

There were also participants who were not at all worried about their upcoming transition. One of them was Jack, who did not receive any institutional preparation but still had no worries. Indeed, some children awaiting their school transition do not feel anxious (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003), which could make the initial transition phase easier; they start secondary education without anxieties. Research suggests that when settling into a new social environment, being acquainted with people who are already there can help (Ward, 2000; West, Sweeting and Young, 2008) and increase pupil's confidence about the transition (Ward, 2000). It seemingly eases the process of getting used to a new environment by adding familiarity. Having siblings or friends at the same school can give children a good idea of what to expect (Rudduck, 1996a). Those who had older siblings who had already undergone this school transition were more relaxed about going to secondary education (Ward, 2000). It was something that encouraged Matthew, Mark and Gabriel, as illustrated by Mark's narrative:

‘I had older siblings that had already gone that way and I was going to the same school so from that point of view I suppose I didn't feel worried about it because I knew people already there...’ (Mark)

Josephine was relaxed about her transition without having siblings at the school and so was George, who had experienced school transfer at primary school, so he felt used to changing schools. He was a little nervous on his first day because he had not met the new teachers but after that he felt comfortable and needed the first week to get settled in his new environment. Since George was a very social person, he looked forward to making new friends, which he did, and this can be a positive aspect of transition for many young people (Akos and Galassi, 2004). Finally, another participant who was calm before transition was Katrina, who stated that she did not really worry about anything and looked forward to joining the new school.

The new school

Participants described their first days at the new school as a difficult time for them. The change in environment was sudden and even though many of them were prepared for secondary education, it was still difficult to some extent. The new school expectations

were different from what the pupils had already experienced. Pupils are aging and entering adolescence, which is also accompanied with a change in cultural expectations (Kvalsund, 2000). It can be that this educational transition marks the transition from childhood to adolescence (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000) and can also be seen as a long-term, eventual transition from childhood to adulthood (Kvalsund, 2000). Since pupils underwent both institutional and personal developmental changes, the success or failure of their school transition could be influenced by both those factors (Pietarinen, 2000).

‘I think after like a couple of weeks it was just...you got used to it, just getting used to it, isn’t it? And meeting new people and getting to know people, you seem to think ‘maybe this is alright!’’ (Melanie)

‘It was quite nerve wrecking, when you go in and see...’cause my primary school was quite small, [the secondary school is] really big...having to know your way around and [getting] lost...’ (Gabriel)

‘First couple of years not so good, but you get solace the last couple of years, so you get to relax a bit more, and get there easier.’ (Jack)

‘I think every child has kind of a dream what secondary school’s like. And they kind of want it to be that way but...no.’ (Cody)

The above narratives indicate that the beginning of secondary education is more difficult and children can face multiple difficulties. Some pupils adapt to it faster, while others may need years to do so because they react to and overcome their problems in different ways. Research suggests that pupils who are more vulnerable to this educational transition tend to be younger, less able, more disruptive, disengaged and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008). Dyslexia affects a person’s ability to cope both academically and in terms of organisation. This brings dyslexic learners to the category of those who might be less able to cope with the new demands and therefore be more vulnerable to this transition. Chedzoy and Burden (2005) concur that those of higher academic ability and positive self-image tend to settle in the new school much more quickly.

Some participants, like Emma and Jeremy, had great difficulty in secondary education even though those difficulties were not always academic (for example organisation). Emma’s mother, had to remind her of what she had to do when it was not written in her planner, otherwise she forgot. The level of available support is not the same in every

school and support levels can be a problem. For example, before transition, Jeremy was promised extensive support, including a Dictaphone, a laptop and a support teacher. Once he was there, staff did not offer what was promised, which is an issue that will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Transition and decline in academic performance

It is universally agreed that there is lower grade attainment after transition from primary to secondary education (Arthur *et al.*, 2010). Numerous children experience it and some of them have persistent problems with it for their remaining school career (Tobbell, 2003). It is generally agreed that this dip exists due to the academic and social changes children go through (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999; Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010), although other researchers suggest those changes would have happened even without a change in schools (Weiss and Bearman, 2007). Pietarinen (2000) found that most students in his research had some type of difficulty related to their transition, which was reflected in student's schoolwork. He argued that although decline in academic attainment is seemingly related to transition, grades and report cards are not sole indicators of pupils' adaptation, and the complexity of assessment has to be accounted for.

Motivation is important because it can affect academic attainment, while achievement can open or close the path to future careers (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). Evidence shows that many pupils' motivation decreases during transition; it could be explained by the 'mismatch' between the school's learning environments and children's awareness of their 'emerging adulthood' during early adolescence (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000, p.426). This indicates that sustaining their motivation aids learners in getting the most of their education. For transitions to be successful, maintaining enthusiasm for learning, being confident and having a sense of achievement and purpose are considered vital (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). Loss in motivation and decline in performance can persist, with years 7 and 11 being the two occasions where students are most engaged and Year 8 when students are most likely to lose interest (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). Those are affected by transition and 'routine breaks in learning', which need to be taken into account in order to help children (*ibid*, p.426). All the above, regarding academic and social changes in children's lives linked with the performance dip have been confirmed by the narratives of my participants:

‘I got like, maybe like a little bit lower than I did probably in Year 6 when I started in Year 7 .[...] I felt, like, annoyed, because I know I could’ve done better.’ (Emma)

‘It did get harder because we’re doing higher levels. But I have improved with my levels quite a lot, which is good. And I understand it, like, some of the lessons much better...’ (Cody)

‘Years 7, 8 and 9, all they want to do is be with their friends and be the same as their friends. Always. There’s nothing else that really they care about. Again, this is not students with learning difficulties, particularly; this is just Year 7, 8 and 9 students. They just always want to socialise, it seems to be the main job of a teenager, to get that sort of bit of their personality sorted. And then by Year 10 and 11, they’ve sorted that bit and learning again becomes interesting and paramount, and where they’re gonna go after they finish school, and what they’re gonna do with their lives, that becomes their next job to take care of, but... Yeah, I wouldn’t say that they like the lessons particularly but if you ask them ‘did you like that lesson’ they’ll say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. Um, but it’s always...what do you like about school is always friends. Friendship issues are the key.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

Kimberly’s perception is supported by existing research. During adolescence the significance and nature of friendships change (Wargo Aikins, Bierman and Parker, 2005). Adolescents consider their peers more important (Coleman and Hendry, 2002; Topping, 2011) and need approval from them (Wigfield *et al.*, 1991). The previous narrative illustrates how secondary school children feel about their friends and how this shift in focus makes it easier for them to become disengaged with their studies, hence causing a drop in achievement. Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000), concur, stating that at Year 11 pupils are most engaged with learning, while the narrative asserts that after Year 9 they regain interest in their studies.

In my research, most participants reported a decline in their grades; however, not all of them experienced it in the same way. Secondary schools can be further away geographically than previously attended primary schools, requiring that pupils travel and have a longer working day (Tobbell, 2003). A long commute to school combined with the workload can be stressful and exhausting for pupils (Lucey and Reay, 2002). If learners become tired they have less energy to focus on their studies, which was what happened with Melanie. For her, Year 7 was at a school located some distance from her home. This resulted in her taking a bus at 6 am to reach the school and was already exhausted by the

time she arrived (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Her mother then realised that Melanie needed to change schools so that she could get the most out of her education, which occurred during the following academic year. A long commute to school combined with the additional effort dyslexic pupils need to put into their school lives can make them very tired, which of course has a dramatic impact upon their everyday life (*ibid*).

Factors contributing to school achievement are complicated; my narratives suggest that subject enjoyment and willingness to learn affect it. Matthew performed well in subjects that interested him and not as well in ones he did not enjoy, like English, although admittedly this was also affected by his dyslexia. The only participant who had an immediate increase in school grades was Katrina, although her case was different because she constantly repeated the same lessons in primary education, which led to boredom. School officials would not let her move on in English (especially with spelling words using the phonics system), unless she fulfilled the school goals. However, she could not understand phonics and had severe difficulties because teachers insisted on teaching her in that way. Her father explained that if, for example, she was assessed and could spell 24 words when the minimum requirement was 25, she would be taught the same lessons again until she could spell 25. On one hand there is reason behind the demand to reach the minimum goal but continuously repeating the same words was not working for her, since she lost all interest and became de-motivated (Galton and Morrison, 2000). Almost reaching school goals and repeating the same lessons happened multiple times and led her to become very distressed, bored and unable to perform well, which can happen with large amounts of revision (*ibid*). It seems like it was poor practice, school staff could have concentrated on teaching her a few more words so that she could progress to the next level, instead of repeating the entire lesson. This came to an end in secondary education, leading to a renewed interest in school and much improved performance. Katrina's case is also revisited in Chapters 5 and 6. Other participants, like Cody and Emma, experienced a dip and improved their performance further into the school year.

According to the narratives, changes to homework quantity can affect how children perform since they move from a rather relaxed atmosphere and suddenly face a stricter environment, which demands significantly more homework than they were used to previously. Indeed, many students find homework to be one of the most difficult parts of their new school (Akos and Galassi, 2004), which can be distressing during transition:

‘It was quite hard to cope at first, but then you sort of get used to having much homework. [At primary] I got one [in a] whole month or something like that...and then coming in to...[secondary] school with six pieces of homework per week. It’s quite hard.’ (Gabriel)

‘Year 7 it was *loads* of homework. But now in Year 8 it’s kind of run down.’ (Cody)

The above narratives confirm Chedzoy and Burden’s (2005) findings that the majority of their participants did not like homework and this was not only in Year 6 but persisted in Year 7. Their participants were not dyslexic and one can easily understand that if homework is difficult for ‘typically’ developing learners, for those with dyslexia it is even more distressing and time-consuming. This difficulty is revisited in the following chapters, since the way that homework is engaged with largely depends on the students’ identity construction and then how they in turn engage with their education, making it a relational and cyclical experience. Secondary education introduces students to new requirements and higher levels of learning (Kvalsund, 2000), a sudden change for children who have become used to completely different learning styles from attending primary education. As explained by participants here, it can take time for them to get used to it.

‘When I started I found it really difficult to cope with [...] the different changes of levels of education. So I had to basically just go home and re-learn everything again. [...] It was more like sort of reading of different classes and the words that they gave us and the worksheets and things, ‘cause some of the words were really difficult and a really difficult way to understand. So that’s what I found difficult, it’s that I didn’t understand what those worksheets were about, ‘cause I couldn’t understand what the words meant on it.’ (Erica)

The addition of a modern foreign language in the curriculum can be a shock for children with dyslexia. Teaching modern foreign languages is not compulsory in primary schools, which leaves the decision between teaching them, or not, to schools officials. Nevertheless, it is compulsory in secondary education (DfE, 2012c). Consequently, if a child had previously attended a primary school that did not teach modern foreign languages their first such experience is in Year 7. It is already suggested that foreign languages are often a struggle for dyslexic children (Crombie, 1999; Marshall, 2009). Only one participant from

this research, Cody, enjoyed being taught a foreign language (French) and the rest had very negative attitudes towards the language they had to learn. Many participants talked about the difficulty of learning a new language, how much they disliked it and how difficult it was for them to learn it, as summarised below:

‘I couldn’t write English comprehension, let alone French comprehension!’
(Josephine)

This dislike of foreign languages that most participants talked about could be related in part to their dyslexia-related difficulties. Humphrey (2002b) found that for his participants, their least favourite subjects were almost always those that dyslexia caused difficulties with, such as English.

Dyslexia-related difficulties contribute to making achieving at secondary education problematic. The academic level taught becomes higher (Kvalsund, 2000) and dyslexic difficulties make learning more difficult.

‘Being dyslexic became much more noticeable. I think in primary school, probably towards the end of primary school it became noticeable, but then it really started to shout out [...] when I went to secondary school, probably the first couple of years didn’t make that much difference. But [...] as you start to move up to the exams and things like that then it starts to make quite a lot of difference.’ (Jack)

Many participants missed certain aspects of primary education, with the teachers and the support that pupils received from them being a common theme amongst them. Cody, Emma and Gabriel all mentioned how supportive their primary school teachers were, which they missed:

‘I miss some of my friends who haven’t come to the school I’m at. And I kind of miss some of the teachers who helped me...’ (Cody)

‘I miss all the teachers ‘cause all the teachers really liked me. And they would actually pick on me and stuff like that.’ (Gabriel)

Transitions that challenge young people’s sense of belonging either within their peer group or their pupil-teacher relations are considered very important and can cause a mixture of

feelings (Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, 2010). In some children this caused them to miss their friends and teachers. John missed his younger friends who still attended primary school, knowing where everything was and being able to occasionally walk out of the classroom. He missed the support from primary school, where he stayed with one pupil group throughout the day. His group had one adult that helped three children and he perceived that as being easier than secondary school conditions, where each class had one teacher and one teaching assistant. Subsequently, John went from a very familiar, small group that received much support to an environment where he had to rely more on himself. Because of this sudden change, children can feel that they miss significant teachers from their past. Chedzoy and Burden (2005) support this, stating that friends and teachers were what most of their participants missed from their previous school. However, George reflected fondly on a different aspect: break time activities. He had difficulty adjusting to the new environment and discussing break time said:

‘It’s just long as I can’t...I don’t get it and I’m just stressed about it and can’t do it really.’ (George)

George’s viewpoint is supported by one of Kimberly’s comments regarding children with learning difficulties:

‘Students with dyslexia really appreciate the lunch hour quite often ‘cause it’s a bit of downtime, and they get really-really tired, compared to - and I’m using inverted commas here for the benefit of the tape - ‘normal’ students. But if you’ve got a student with...a touch of dyslexia, and a touch of other difficulties, and they’re often co-morbid, so then actually the fact that there’s no structure out there is completely scary. So...I mean, again, 7, 8 and 9 tends to be worse than Year 10-11, and by Year 10-11 they tend to find a place to go, and each to hang out with [...] but for Years 7, 8 and 9 it’s just...a complete lack of structure and they don’t know what to do with themselves.’ (Kimberly)

All the above statements are reflected in Pietarinen’s (1998) findings, who researched Finnish learner’s responses to their transition from primary to secondary education. In his description, the Finnish school and transition system is similar to the English. There are primary schools, often very small when located in rural areas, with a class teacher based system. Those schools then become ‘feeder’ schools to large secondary establishments

with a subject teacher based system. Pietarinen found that the environmental changes, teacher behaviour, social relationships and learning/teaching processes require considerable adaptation from the pupils. He acknowledges how crucial it is for teachers to understand the importance of transition, take into account pupil's previous educational experiences and the importance of cooperation between primary and secondary establishments. Similarly, in English schools representatives of the secondary settings attend pupil's annual reviews although it is not compulsory (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008).

An overwhelming new environment

As already mentioned in this chapter, there are schools that prepare their students well for transition. Faye was one of the participants who felt well-prepared by her primary school but when she started attending the new school, it was still a striking experience for her:

‘It was quite a culture shock though, I was quite quiet when I started and it was pretty overwhelming.’ (Faye)

She continued by explaining what helped her get used to the new setting:

‘Because it was an all girls [school]...quite a few of the girls were quite nervous so, you know, we kind of backed in together...in nerves! So it wasn't that intimidating which was quite nice.’ (Faye)

Furthermore examinations are also a significant source of stress around transition. In addition to the regular tests, there are also those that educational institutions set up upon entry, in order to assess the new students' level of attainment (DfES, 2001b). Emma found this difficult and talked about being nervous, especially about English tests.

‘It was quite hard, there was like lots of spelling tests and I didn't really wanna do it because I knew that I wouldn't be able to do that well in them.’ (Emma)

Organisational skills are also often more problematic but clearly an apparent necessity in secondary education. Largely because young people are responsible for recording their homework in writing, reaching classrooms on time and having everything they need for the class. We see this here with Melanie.

‘Where in junior school you’ve got one class and you’ve got your pen, you got your desk and your pen and your pencil but having to carry your books and get to different classes on time, and having to have...make sure you’ve got all the correct equipment and stuff like that.’ (Melanie)

It has already been discussed that John talked about only working with one group and having few teachers. Gabriel also talked about the same issue. Primary schools have a more familiar feeling, as they are much smaller and especially comfortable for Year 6 children who are the eldest pupils.

‘At primary...you knew everybody, and you knew where everything was...’ (John)

This idea that you know everyone and everyone knows you, as well as being the oldest and more responsible members of the school is a significant step change in secondary school. This is summarised well by Jeremy, who gave a good description of how this feels for new students:

‘The biggest thing, and I’m sure it’s the same for any student, is the *incredible* difficulty you go through, and I know lots of my friends, as well, and some of them had dyslexia as well...is you’ve just come from primary school, and you’ve only just spent a year at the top of the school. You know, you’re the oldest pupils in the school, you feel like you run the place...you only spend a year there and then suddenly you’re literally just sort of chucked into secondary school and you’re all the way at the bottom again. I think that it’s probably for any student, whether dyslexic or not. So that’s the first thing you go through.’ (Jeremy)

Kvalsund (2000) suggests this in his work. In his research, before transition there was anxiety among primary school students, as they were worried about becoming the youngest in the school. He described this transition as a significant ‘social descent’ (*ibid*, p.411), a fall that happens very suddenly as pupils lose their feeling of ‘social mastery, status, power and security’ (*ibid*). Wigfield *et al.* (1991) document similar changes in young people’s lives and link them to a decline in self-esteem. Moreover, Tobbell (2003) discussed the discontinuity between primary and secondary education, where children move from knowing and socialising with everyone, like being in a big family, to only socialising with one group of friends. She also found that children felt they were looked after better in

primary school and that in secondary they are treated like adults, which was not always welcome.

Furthermore, Jeremy described how he went from a very small village primary school to a very large secondary, because the area he lived in was vast and the only non-private school that was in his catchment was the one he attended. He found going from a small local primary school to a 'huge' secondary school with thousands of children difficult. Cody echoed Jeremy's narrative:

'I thought it [the school] was very big. And everyone was quite scary, because they were quite a lot taller and it's quite strange from being the oldest to suddenly being youngest. Yeah, so I didn't really like that...' (Cody)

This narrative kept emerging with the participants. In addition to losing a familiar environment, the change in status was a difficult change that was not well received. Taking into consideration all narratives, there seemed to be a feeling of loss affecting many children who left primary school. This did not only occur with those who were happy there, but also with children who wanted to move to the next educational level. This sudden change in school size is described in other research discussing children moving from a smaller, more personal and supportive environment to a larger, more impersonal and intimidating school (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008; Arthur, *et al.*, 2010).

Wigfield *et al.* (1991) support the above data, stating that the first years are worse than the last. Schools have systems in place to support students but they cannot continuously do so. Children have to adjust to the new environment and look after themselves. The changes accompanying transition are: primary school is protected, small and with one main class teacher, while secondary is large, impersonal, with changes in classrooms and teachers (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994; Pietarinen, 1998; Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Ward, 2000). The nature of secondary education is competitive, formal and impersonal, teaching is not pupil-centred, teachers do not have close relationships with students and knowing each one personally is not common, something children had been used to before their transition to a different teaching system (*ibid*).

Separation from school friends can also contribute to the shock of secondary school. Melanie, describing her feelings about the new school, said that it was scary being taken

out of her comfort zone, away from the small class of people she grew up with and was classmate with since infant school. In the same vein, Jeremy was taken away from his primary school friends, which is very likely to happen when pupils attend secondary education:

‘I’d only got four friends from primary school [...] then suddenly in secondary school I was taken away from three of them. So we both found that incredibly difficult, you know, we only saw each other in breaks, and then, you know, naturally, then as things go on you sort of get further apart. And, you know, for the short time that I was there, you know, for the first time in years we didn’t really talk as much.’ (Jeremy)

Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars (2000), whose participants had few friends and generally experienced problems socially, support Jeremy’s narrative. Changing schools usually means losing friends (*ibid*) and this is difficult for children. This clearly relates to Kvalsund’s (2000) work, who found that his participants were relieved when they found out that they would transition with pupils from their primary school group. For them, transition was threatening to destroy the close friendships they had developed over the years, which is echoed in Jeremy’s narrative. Pietarinen (2000) also found peer groups to be important during this educational transition and support from peer groups was utilised by children as a coping strategy during their transition. Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000) discussed feelings of separation and their negative effects on adjustment and performance, which were in agreement with my participants. Schools can help children form good peer relations in primary school and help them maintain those relationships in secondary (Wargo Aikins, Bierman and Parker, 2005). According to the above, this can increase their chances of a positive transition, and shows that for cases like Jeremy’s it could have potentially made a significant difference in wellbeing.

Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000) argue that teachers can use friendships to ease the stress of transition. However, there is a practice that students are often not aware of. Primary school teachers and children’s parents are consulted so that certain students are separated after transition. Friendship groups can also be separated by teachers because they obstruct academic progress, something that they found happened most often with girls’ groups. On the other hand, when students know that their friendships hinder their academic progress, once they are comfortable in their new environment and focused on their

learning, they may choose to be separated so that they can progress further (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000) but this is different to a forced progression. Understandably, this practice may be necessary for some cases but it can come with a minimal emotional and/or academic cost to the student.

Vulnerability and bullying

Bullying did not affect all participants and it seemed also to depend on the setting, with some schools having more bullying problems than others. This research focuses on bullying related to dyslexic difficulties. Bullying can inhibit ‘successful’ transitions and children with SEN are more likely to be bullied (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008). Research suggests that dyslexic children are often bullied and they tend to feel different (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Eissa, 2010). This is replicated via some of the participants’ stories, particularly Jeremy’s experience of bullying.

When Jeremy transitioned to secondary education bullying became more of a problem. The way he experienced learning support highlighted his learning difficulties to the other students, which aggravated the bullying. His dyslexia was identified a few weeks before he left primary, therefore he did not have any previous support experiences, either in-class or out-of-class. This made secondary education even stranger for him. He was already bullied at primary school but this escalated at secondary school.

I was, you know, bullied for a long time in primary and ended up getting...bullied again in secondary school. [...] Ever since my, sort of pre-school, you know, we had problems right away through into primary. [...] And it only got worse in secondary.’ (Jeremy)

Children who experience chronic bullying have been documented to look forward to a new start offered by the new school, which offers an escape from their existing situation (Lucey and Reay, 2000). Similarly, Jeremy was excited about attending secondary education, hoping that it would offer him more in terms of his education and possibly anticipating a fresh start. Jeremy attributed this constant bullying to him always feeling that he was different and always being in the bottom set in all the classes. He explained that this singled him out even before he was diagnosed with dyslexia and started receiving out-of-class support.

‘I think for...for me, having dyslexia, I was quite embarrassed to begin with, because of the way that they were dealing with what they called the special needs students. ‘Cause they literally would turn up at your class and call you away. [...] [I had] an increased problem with students, because of the way I was being taken out of class, and it got to the point where I was being bullied really quite badly. And, um, somebody pushed me down some stairs in the lecture theatre.’ (Jeremy)

Research indicates that children who are different (even for requiring additional support) are at risk of being targets for bullies (Rivers, Duncan and Besag, 2007). Not having the desired social skills can make a child become ‘unpopular’ and Jeremy said he was not a popular student (Read, Francis and Skelton, 2011). Being on their own in a hostile classroom is a very frightening experience of education for dyslexic children (Dale and Taylor, 2001) and this is what happened to Jeremy, since he was mostly alone in those classrooms. Similarly, Jack attributed his bullying to the same reason as Jeremy, which was being different. Again, bullying worsened when he received out-of-class learning support.

‘I remember getting bullied because of going out of class and being different, which is like...just because I was being different, really, not anything to do with being dyslexic, just because I was doing different things than anybody else.’ (Jack)

Rivers, Duncan and Besag (2007), suggest that those who are perceived as different from the mainstream are more likely to be bullied. For Jeremy and Jack, gaining out of class support was stigmatising since their classroom society was telling them that they are different; their difference was first conceptualised by that culture and then classified as something that mattered, something that was indeed a difference and finally a stigma (Goffman, 1990). This discrediting characteristic was what caused others to bully them (*ibid*).

Individuals with learning disabilities can experience loneliness at school because of low levels of acceptance by other pupils and/or their sensitivity and poor self-concept (Yu, Zhang and Yan, 2005). However, this does not mean that those characteristics apply to every person with learning difficulties. Josephine had an experience which did not stem from students but from a teacher, who seemed to want to humiliate her in the classroom but failed. The teacher asked her to reproduce a Mathematics problem that had been erased

from the board after telling the class he was certain she could not. She easily completed the task, which was a positive experience, but the teacher's inappropriate behaviour is apparent. Such behaviour from teachers can have a negative effect on self-esteem (Glazzard, 2010) and identity construction and this type of teacher behaviour is well-documented in other dyslexia research (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Dale and Taylor, 2001; Glazzard, 2010; Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011).

All this research indicates that dyslexic learners can become victims of bullying and inappropriate behaviour by teachers, especially when there is a lack of understanding about dyslexia, since some educators deny that their students have a genuine problem. How parents and teachers perceive dyslexia, undoubtedly depends on the point in time when a dyslexic person attends school and the awareness linked to that time. Similarly, reactions to dyslexia described in Dale and Taylor (2001), like caning, were culturally acceptable at the time when their participants were pupils. This demonstrates how understanding and awareness about learning difficulties changes how such pupils are treated.

Melanie suffered one bullying episode because of her dyslexia when a classmate became aggressive towards her and used her dyslexia as a means of attacking her. That was because he was frustrated and had problems with a teacher for not completing his homework, when Melanie had. The teacher reacted intensely to the incident but Melanie was not at all affected. Similarly, John had the same attitude to bullies that Melanie did; he said there are people who might call you names but he does not care about it. Although ignoring attempts of bullying were helpful for Melanie and John, research shows that it can lead to the opposite, causing an increase in bullying intensity (Sheras, 2002). Mark stated that every child gets bullied at some point during their school life. In his case it reached the point where he could no longer tolerate it and attacked his bully by hitting him, ending the problem. Christina was bullied on one occasion and her father expressed his views on bullying caused by learning difficulties:

‘It [bullying] bothers a lot of children now. It’s a shame because they’re sitting there with no idea. They’ve gone through the system without, you know, without being noticed. As a lot of them do. And then they get, of course, ‘You’re an idiot’, you know what I mean? [...] Which is wrong. But it’s just the way kids are. They’re cruel.’ (Howard, parent)

Research suggests that being different can cause bullying. Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, (2000) talked about children who felt different, like Jeremy and Jack, explaining that bullying problems were partly because of them being different from other children. This can be explained through Goffman's description of stigma, which is a culturally-specific discrediting attribute, something that the majority of the members do not have that causes its bearers to be considered inferior (Goffman, 1990). Dyslexic children can be teased and bullied for their difficulties (Eissa, 2010) and children with SEN can be an easy target for bullies (Humphrey, 2003). According to Goffman's notion of stigma, children are targeted for being different from mainstream society, not always for dyslexia *per se*. Their difference is their problems with academic performance and literacy, making them stand out from the majority of their classmates. Humphrey's (2003) statement applies to all the mentioned bullying cases, even Josephine's, which was caused by a teacher. Bullying can influence young people's behaviour, even when they are not directly affected by it. Cody was aware of the possibility of bullying but never had such an encounter.

'There are bullies at school. I guess that you always have bullies at school and it's quite a small majority of children, most of them aren't in my year which is good, so I won't have lessons with them. I don't really come in contact with them, I won't talk to them because I just know that they'll start probably on me if I talk to them, so I just leave them alone.' (Cody)

This avoidance of bullies was also how John dealt with it and this is common in bullied children (Ma, Stewin and Mah, 2001). Pietarinen (2000) suggests that bullying should be seen as a school-wide problem, not something to be solved by individual pupils and teachers.

The narratives discussed show that young people may fear being bullied. In addition, there is the possibility of negative attention because of dyslexia-related difficulties that can lead to bullying or comments from classmates. As a result, it is difficult for some learners to use dyslexia resources in secondary school because they feel that it will attract negative attention. Indeed, standing out from other children in the classroom can cause bullying (Rivers, Duncan and Besag, 2007). This was the case with Emma, who according to her mother stopped using her coloured overlays in class because it drew attention to her differences.

The effects of secondary education assessment

Assessment is an important aspect of secondary school life and it often defines school days (Hall *et al.*, 2004). Upon entry, schools administer tests to determine children's level of attainment, so that they can build upon the knowledge they already have from primary school (DfES, 2001b). With the heightening of National Curriculum targets and Key Stage examinations (SATs) children are pressurised to succeed in school examinations at progressively younger ages, which can be distressing (Locker and Cropley, 2004). Additionally, as they progress towards the end of their compulsory school careers, they also have to perform in GCSEs, which are important because they influence pupil's future education and employability (*ibid*). As described by the participants, school examinations can cause anxiety and difficulties for dyslexic learners if they are not done correctly. Furthermore, anxiety and emotionality can affect learners both while preparing for and taking examinations, reducing their performance (Cassady and Johnson, 2001).

School examinations were a sensitive subject for all participants. The main reasons behind this were their difficulties and their awareness that they would not perform as well as they would have liked. Faye and Erica were worried about what kind of assessment they would encounter at secondary education after undertaking SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) at primary and Erica believed she would not be able to cope at all in secondary education. Her beliefs were reinforced by her secondary school, where in Year 10 it was estimated that she would not pass any of the examinations she was going to take. Emma and John did not want to take tests because they believed that they would not perform well in them. For Emma the spelling part of the CATs (Cognitive Abilities Test) was more difficult although she understood why the school administered those tests. John was especially negative about subjects he did not enjoy, for example French. All the above relates to existing research that suggests poor examination results can cause learners to feel that they lack ability. They perceive their difficulties as personal defects which they cannot alter and as a result stop investing effort in their learning (William and Black, 1998). Negative examination experiences can cause reluctance to repeat the process because of disappointment (*ibid*).

Test anxiety can occur in people of all ages and can be expected when one has to be graded, evaluated or assessed (Lufi, Okasha and Cohen, 2004). For my participants there were additional issues with school assessment, mainly in relation to their difficulties. Matthew claimed that school tests scared him and was worried about them. He believed

that when it came to subjects he was good at, his grades, as opposed to his verbal performance in class, were never on par with his abilities and those feelings were also shared by Jack and Melanie.

‘The grades don’t normally demonstrate how good I was because I think the exams always used to get in the way a bit for me. But I knew sort of verbally in class, [...] I was pretty good.’ (Matthew)

‘Obviously I found it a lot more difficult in class and stuff like that [...] with my dyslexia and obviously quite very frustrating that I wanted to write...I knew these things in my head but I couldn’t put them down on the test paper or in an essay or something like that. Which [...] was really stressful.’ (Melanie)

Riddick *et al.* (1999) revealed similar narratives from dyslexic university students - that performance on written assessment did not correspond to dyslexic people’s actual abilities. Those university students still struggled with written work and had lower self-esteem than non-dyslexic students. Difficulty with written assessment was also expressed by John, who preferred assessment where he could demonstrate his knowledge (such as science) and Katrina, who was provided with a scribe to compensate for her difficulties. Another difficulty Josephine experienced during school assessment was explaining what she understood on paper. She understood what teachers wanted her to do and was under the impression that it was what she had written but eventually her answers would highlight that she had not written down what was expected of her.

‘I’d feel like I understood it and I’ve done exactly what they wanted but they all said that I didn’t.’ (Josephine)

Research suggests that when children have a strong sense of failure in examinations, they can give up trying (Burden, 2008). This happened with Josephine. She solved Mathematics problems but was unable to explain how she found the answer, which was also a problem during assessment. These difficulties, combined with the additional time she needed but did not receive to complete the tests, resulted in her achieving below her potential in school examinations. Trying to finish school tests felt a race against time for Josephine, who did not receive exam concessions as many learners do in the 21st century. Melanie had a similar experience to the other participants. She avoided subjects that were based on essays

for coursework (history and geography) and did not take her history examination because she was unable to cope with it.

‘Geography, in the end I didn’t go to because I just...I couldn’t do it. You know, write all these essays, and stuff like that, I just couldn’t do. So I didn’t go to Geography. I didn’t go to History, I didn’t even sit my History exam. ‘Cause that was all essays and stuff.’ (Melanie)

The fact that Melanie skipped her History examination is related to her avoiding the subject and its homework throughout the years. Pupils who do not appreciate the purpose and significance of homework are unlikely to cope with the demands of examinations (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999). This also relates to the difficulty that all the participants in this research had, which was the difficulty expressing their knowledge in writing.

In terms of school support, Christy believed that the school did not care about Gabriel’s dyslexia and did not provide the support he needed, especially the additional time during school examinations and quizzes. Additional time, about 15 minutes, was only provided for tests that were considered important. This led Gabriel to perform lower than he potentially could on the remaining tests, which his mother felt was unfair and bad for his self-esteem. Again, this relates to Burden’s (2008) finding that if children keep under-performing and not passing examinations, they develop learned helplessness and stop trying. This increases the significance of Christy’s statement, since the support offered to Gabriel was not enough, which reduced his confidence. Consequently, he was already acquiring a sense of ‘failure’ that could have been avoided, or at least reduced since additional time is a necessity for dyslexic learners (Shaywitz, 2005) and occasional use of this concession was not helpful. As in many of the above narratives, when Gabriel undertook a test, he had difficulty recording in writing what he had learned at home:

‘That’s what I do [work extremely hard] but it’s just really annoying when you, like, you learn it, [...] you learn it for *ages* and then when it comes up in a test, it...you just can’t remember anything [...] you can remember, like, how to spell it off and then you just can’t remember the rest...which is really annoyin’.’ (Gabriel)

Poor performance can cause concern for pupils because it can lead to embarrassment or show others that they are not intelligent whereas good performance can help children look good in front of classmates (Ryan *et al.*, 2007). However, performing well does not always lead to a good reputation between peers (Reay, 2002) but depending on the context it might well do (Ryan *et al.*, 2007). In Gabriel's case, he wanted to achieve good performance but had difficulties. The previous narratives illustrate such difficulties, since dyslexic learners have to demonstrate their knowledge through means they have difficulty coping with. This can be a very difficult time for pupils, who were used to being treated in a completely different way in primary education.

In a more extreme case, for Mark tests were only a sheet of paper that he put his name on and could not do the rest because he was unable to read it. He coped with other school demands by having a very good memory which compensated for his difficulty in writing. However, assessment was different because he was on his own without any institutional support. Mark was not diagnosed with dyslexia while he was at school, even though he described himself as 'very dyslexic'. Mark attended school at a time when dyslexia was not as widely discussed but even so, there are people of a similar age involved in this research who were diagnosed and offered support at their schools. For example, Jack and Frank, a non-participant who briefly discussed his school life with me. Frank was diagnosed early and offered support at a primary school. Lindsay's (2008) research documents that schools in England and Wales offered inclusive practices in the 1960s and 1970s. Interestingly, not having a diagnosis can be used as an excuse for some schools officials not to provide support but other schools have a different approach. The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b) explicitly states that support must be offered to children that the SENCo identifies as having SEN, but does not stipulate that they also need a statement.

In contrast to the anxiety and distress that has been described so far, George had a different approach to assessment. He admitted getting a little nervous about upcoming tests and that he did not like them, but focused on how he performed and on how he could do better in the future, instead of concentrating on the grade. He tried not to think about his achievement, but focused on how he could improve. Similarly, Cody wanted to improve but also concerned to acquiring better grades as well, which was not always possible.

The above illustrates that all participants had problems with school assessment. Their difficulties made it problematic for them to respond to the assessment requirements and to

perform without the necessary support was difficult. Interestingly, there were schools that the younger participants attended, that offered insufficient support too. Understandably, school settings do not have unlimited funds to offer the exam concessions required but as documented in the narratives, it is not always funding that caused the lack of support. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, school examinations were another way in which dyslexic participants felt different within the classroom culture. Assessment is another activity that they have difficulty with because of their dyslexia. Having this difficulty, along with undertaking examinations in a different room can potentially be stigmatising and make children feel self-conscious (Goffman, 1990). This can be especially true in school cultures where performance is privileged. This is an issue that will be revisited in the next chapter.

Positive experiences from school transitions

Research suggests that pupils find that the quality of their school environment, academic, personal and interpersonal functioning decrease with every grade transition (Barder and Olsen, 2004). However, other relevant research contradicts this with showing both improvements and degradations (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). In Barder and Olsen's research (2004) the transition to middle school (US) was a positive one, the only positive transition children in their sample experienced, although they did have a dip in their grades and experienced a decline in the following years. They attributed this very different result to the protected nature of the first year of middle school, which was not maintained in the following years. This contradicts most other research discussed here, however transitions can present learning and development opportunities for pupils, who can renegotiate their position at the school community (Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, 2010). In fact, transition to another school can offer young people a positive fresh start (Weiss and Bearman, 2007).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, not all participants perceived their secondary education as a completely negative experience. Similarly, Tobbell (2003) found that although most secondary school students she studied did not perceive their transition as a positive experience, there were some that did. Different people manage their transition in different ways (Tobbell, 2003) and therefore experiences vary. For some participants transition was positive, while others found certain aspects to enjoy. To begin with, narratives from those who only had some aspects that they enjoyed are discussed:

‘The only thing that was probably a little bit better was...was a little bit more freedom.’ (Jeremy)

‘I liked the more, like, social, there was more people to talk to. So that was pretty much it.’ (Erica)

‘In Year 7 I didn’t really like it but it’s got better now.’ (Emma)

Jeremy’s narrative regarding the freedom in secondary education is supported by Lucey and Reay (2000), who had similar narratives from participants who were attending Years 5 and 6 and looked forward to having more freedom at their new school. From the previous narratives, one can see that these individuals were not completely satisfied with their school experience but did manage to find something that they enjoyed. Other participants had more positive experiences:

‘I had a close sort of circle of friends and we had a laugh, and got some GCSEs out of it.’ (Melanie)

‘I think my secondary school was absolutely spectacular. It had a very good headmaster who was very keen on, you know, solving up problems and that kind of thing. And whatever minor issue would occur he was very quick and everyone was very quick in putting it right.’ (Matthew)

Matthew was happy to leave primary school and said that secondary education suited him much better. He said that their vision worked for him and he got along better with everyone there. He enjoyed the way that learning in secondary education was not based on memorising but on applying knowledge, which suited him. As a result, he improved his performance and attended ‘gifted and talented’ classes, which meant that he was in the 5-10% of top-ability students in his school (Casey and Koshy, 2013). Importantly, he talked about school staff who acknowledged the area his profession would be within, and therefore concentrated their efforts in getting his English to a level where it would not hold him back. He was grateful that school staff knew his strengths and difficulties and tried to accommodate for his future career without fixating on what he was not able to achieve in English, which happened in primary. Similarly, John’s mother, Mary, said that her son had ‘had enough’ of the primary school and was ready to move on when the time came. Indeed, many young learners are excited to move to the next educational level although they can also be nervous about it (Rudduck, 1996; Galton and Morrison, 2000; Lucey and Reay, 2000). Mary said that John enjoyed secondary school from the first day he was there and

looked forward to going every day. Significantly, what he enjoyed most about his new school was having several teachers, although he did not like all of them.

Similarly, George was happy with the new school because classes were large; he could use lockers (Akos and Galassi's, 2004), there were high quality computers and science experiments he enjoyed. George's narrative is supported by Pointon (2000), who researched young people's perceptions of their new secondary education environment and found that many of them enjoyed changing classrooms and having specialist rooms. This can be related to George's excitement about science classes, which were different from those in primary school. Importantly, he received much more support than he did in primary and therefore felt that he was coping much better, even though he perceived lessons as both more difficult and easier at the same time. He explained this by saying that at first lessons were much more difficult but as he got used to them they become easier. The institutional support made both him and his mother happy since during primary education the school did not offer any, or acknowledge George's difficulties. Katya, his mother, was not aware that he had such difficulties with English before he joined the secondary school, when she received a letter saying that he was receiving additional support. After that, he started improving and his parents were happy with the way his difficulties were dealt with.

'[He is getting] a lot-lot better now they do seem to be picking up and helping him which is great for the kids [...] I just see I already know it's the school, [...] that's the thing, is that, you know, it could obviously be totally different, other schools might not be what [this school] is, so they seem to be doing very well, [...] from what I've learned through experience so far.' (Katya, parent)

'That [school] was his first choice, so obviously that's helped him probably in his transition to senior school, because he's got the school he wanted to go to...' (Katya, parent)

Other transition research suggests that children can be worried if they are not accepted into their first choice school (Ashton, 2008). This supports Katya's belief that her son's transition was made easier because he went to the school of his choice. Such methods where primary settings hide dyslexic pupil's problems and the difference they experience in secondary schools that recognise their problems and offer support have also been documented by Riddick (1996). Like George, Katrina described secondary education as

simultaneously harder and easier. She had similar experiences, being offered better support at her new school.

The higher academic level can make secondary school feel more difficult, although well-suited support can alleviate difficulties. Katrina's case is similar to George's but her change in academic performance was much more pronounced. At the start of her secondary education she was underperforming but rapidly improved within the first three months (from a 2B to a 3C - an explanation of the national curriculum levels is provided in appendix 7). Although this was still lower than the average secondary school pupil, it signified that she had the ability to attend higher level teaching. Both Katrina and her father, Howard, were very happy with this change, which was not only in Katrina's achievement but in her school enjoyment as well. She still had Key Stage 2 lessons to 'catch up' with but her main education was at Key Stage 3 level. Her father described what he believed made the difference with the secondary school:

'This is where I've got to start asking the questions as a parent, 'How can a child suddenly [...] do so well in a similar situation?'. They are being taught the same education, they're being taught the same way, and yet for some reason primary school and high school are totally different. She's kept in a classroom, she's amongst people not just on her own ability but above her ability. I mean, that's another thing they seem to do in primary school, they keep the ability children together instead of keeping them all together. Because it makes their life easier by keeping the children who have special needs on one table and the gifted on another table and the rest obviously spread between the tables. Here [at the secondary school], you don't have that. You literally get, I would say, thrown into the fire and you get on with it. As life should be. So in high school this is where the ethos is different.' (Howard, parent)

This narrative can be related to research which highlights that school inadequacy can, to some extent, cause a decline in pupil functioning, not only academic but psychosocially as well (Barder and Olsen, 2004). This demonstrates the importance of the school environment for young people's general wellbeing, considering the large amounts of time they spend there (*ibid*). In Katrina's case, she progressed from a school that was not catering for her needs to one that did and experienced a positive effect, which was an increase in her performance and sociable skills. At the time of the interview, Howard was a

parent governor at his daughter's school and was very involved in her education. He acknowledged that Katrina was very unhappy at primary school because of her lack of progress and in her case the new school offered a much needed fresh start (Weiss and Bearman, 2007). However Howard felt that he was pressurised to acquire a statement for her, even though he did not want to do so.

'This is the thing with the statement problems. When they go into high school, if your child hasn't got a statement whatsoever, they're basically, as I said, thrown to the wolves. They were given a couple of weeks of help to help them move on and then basically you get thrown into the classroom with no help and get on with it. I was pressured into getting a statement because of that. Because I wasn't expecting my child to be such - I didn't want her to walk into that classroom with a 2B and not understand a single thing.' (Howard, parent)

The school offered support for Katrina but not in the same way as in the primary school. They did not teach phonics, which was a very welcome change for her since she found phonics difficult and tedious. She continued having difficulties with her spelling but it did not prevent her from making significant academic progress.

Similarly, Cody's transition was generally a positive experience. She enjoyed the building, which was new and the available equipment, especially the computers. Cody's case was similar to some of the other participant's, like Katrina, in terms of how she perceived secondary education. She, too, said that it felt more difficult but she was also improving and felt she was coping much better than she did in primary education:

'It did get harder because we're doing higher levels. But I have improved with my levels quite a lot, which is good. And I understand it, like, some of the lessons, much better because I remember at primary school Maths was quite a weak subject for me, and now it's quite a strong subject, which is good. [...] I think I cope much better with school now, which is good, and I also cope with kind of like learning, it's much better with me now, which is good.' (Cody)

Progressing to the next educational level does bring higher academic requirements (Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, 2010) and that is what Cody was referring to. During that first year in secondary education children can also report doing more homework but

acquiring lower grades (Barder and Olsen, 2004). This was the case here, where participants (like Cody and Gabriel) talked about the heavy workload. It has already been stated that Cody was the only participant who enjoyed the compulsory modern foreign language lessons, in her case French, although she did not enjoy it in primary education. This was a surprise for me since I did not expect any participants to enjoy foreign languages.

Concluding comments

My findings regarding enjoyable aspects of secondary education concur with Chedzoy and Burden (2005), who found that new subjects, teachers and friends were what their Year 7 participants enjoyed most. These positive experiences evidence how transition can affect a learner's life in a positive manner, especially when providing a welcome change from primary education. When there is meaningful support and a good environment where children's difficulties and subject performance are not used and pointed out as deficits, secondary education can offer a new world for learners and cultivate their talents and abilities, preparing them for life outside compulsory schooling. The new school has the potential of being an exciting place for the learner and transition does not have to be traumatic or stressful (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Transition can be experienced as a positive and progressive part of student life, but even for learners without learning difficulties there can be problems related to it (Pietarinen, 2000).

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, transition signals a change in young people's cultural experiences. Children progress from an intimate primary school setting to a more impersonal one. This change in culture and status can influence their daily lives and self-perceptions, since the relations they have with people around them become different. They worry about other people's perceptions of them, which is explained here by utilising Cooley's looking-glass self (1971). Individuals' self-feeling is affected by imagining how they are perceived by different people, like classmates or teachers. Important others also change and evolve with this transition, which means that young people will be affected by their views as well. Young people change by adjusting to their environment and other people's attitudes (Mead, 1967) which happens intensely during transition. For some learners their difficulties do not interfere much with their interaction, while for others it is a very significant characteristic that changes their reactions to their circumstances.

The academic and social changes children experience when they transition to secondary education can make a significant difference to their lives and identities. The findings from this chapter support Goffman's (1990) notion of spoiled identity (and fractured academic identity, which is discussed in Chapter 7), since children can face multiple difficulties in secondary education. Learning difficulties linked to dyslexia lead to fractured academic attainment as children do well in some subjects but not in others. If children are left unsupported, this severely affects their identity (this relationship is further explained in Chapter 6). The most important change is that academic attainment is a highly important aspect and the main focus of secondary education. Therefore, children are conditioned into thinking that it is one of the most important aspects of their life. If they are unable to fulfil this 'duty' and believe that their teachers and classmates have negative perceptions about them, they have problems with their self-esteem, especially academic self-esteem, and self-perception. The confusion over their ability can also become a permanent part of their identity, leading to individuals who are confused about their academic ability, and have negative preconceptions around their schooling and their sense of self.

Narratives from the participants did not reveal differences between age groups. There were people from different generations who were anxious about their impending transition, and there were some who were not concerned about it. Reported difficulties and general experiences after transition were also consistent throughout the age groups, although the children tended not to present their situation as intensely as the other participants did. This may be related to the lack of experience of younger participants, since they were either in Year 7 or 8 when the interviews took place. Consequently, all other participants had significantly more years of educational experience and could reflect on the overall process. They could comment on the whole process of education and how they felt in primary, secondary and/or further education, which was a critical aspect of this research. Although the focus is still on transition, in the two subsequent chapters there is a short discussion of what happened after the participants left compulsory education.

The narratives portrayed the intense emotions that dyslexic learners go through when they enter secondary education, which is in agreement with existing transition research. However, the majority of research that has been reviewed, mostly focuses on the general school population, with very little being on dyslexia. This chapter has illustrated that such difficulties can be experienced much more intensely when the transition is teamed with dyslexia-related difficulties, and difficulties that many children outgrow and overcome can

persist for those with dyslexia. Participants who had negative experiences in primary school, like John and George, were happy to leave the old school and start afresh. This is a common feeling shared with the adult participants, who were in turn happy to leave behind the bad experiences of secondary school and pursue employment or further education.

Chapter 5: Support for dyslexic learners

in secondary education

School has a central role in children's lives and schools' ability to provide a supportive environment with positive ethos is vital for children with disabilities (Russell, 2003). It is universally agreed that children deserve to be educated in a way that enables them to reach their full potential (Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012). Children with learning difficulties require support with multiple aspects of their educational lives, such as the enhancement of their academic self-efficacy, developing hopeful thinking so that they can develop appropriate and alternative goals, expectations, mood, effective and alternative strategies and learning skills (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006). Research suggests that they are likely to have problems with those areas compared with other students, and need support in enhancing them, which in turn helps improve their academic careers (*ibid*). Moreover, support is essential for children who are underachieving and have low goals, since it enhances their self-concepts (Young, 1998).

The previous chapter highlighted support differences between primary and secondary education, as part of the transition experience. This chapter revisits and investigates support that dyslexic learners receive in secondary education since it was a significant aspect contributing to the participants' schooling experience and identity construction. There are three main categories in this chapter; support offered within schools (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006), family (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Rowan, 2010) and friends (Dale and Taylor, 2001). Finally a reference is made to participants who chose to leave compulsory education early, since their decision can be linked to the support offered by the education system (Undheim, 2009). This final category is shorter since only two participants were attributed to it, limiting the amount of available data. School support is divided into three sections, depending on its type and the way it was experienced by the participants. The first to be discussed is support that was well-received and was welcome by the participants, followed by the lack of support. The final type is support that was negatively received for various reasons. Importantly, negative support experiences can influence later life and there are many dyslexic people who recall embarrassing, hurtful or frightening experiences and others who had been embarrassed by their teachers (Nalavany *et al.*, 2011).

Relationships with teachers, peers and family members for dyslexic pupils are key to children's educational development. How these significant others interact with them can impact upon their own acceptance of their particular difficulties (Rowan, 2010). Indeed, participants in Rowan's research positively identified people who had supported them in their education. Certainly, according to the SEN code of practice, teaching learners with SEN is the responsibility of the whole school (DfES, 2001b).

There are certain aspects of support that need to be mentioned separately. The first is the importance of support in children's least favourite school subjects; dyslexia can affect which subjects are enjoyed or not, even though this connection may be denied by dyslexic learners (Humphrey 2002b). No matter what type of support schools offer, remembering that dyslexic young people have to work harder than typically developing ones to achieve the same results is also important (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). Many young people are willing to work harder and use any strategy that can help them overcome their difficulties in order to achieve their desired results, even though they struggle to do so (Meltzer *et al.*, 2004). That they are willing to put great effort into their work even though it is tiring for them, demonstrates how important academic attainment is to them. This can be influenced either by their parents (Lucey and Reay, 2002), culture (Burden, 2008), or both. Research reveals that children find the difference between the way they are taught in primary and secondary education difficult (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000) and therefore need support with it. It is also important for professionals to consider that in-class discourse is often around ability, conduct and ideal, acceptable and unacceptable learner identities; this can cause individual students to be viewed as safe, treatable or hopeless and in a way are not considered responsible for their own academic outcome (Youdell, 2004). Often, the result is negative stereotyping for students.

Institutional support

Support that pupils received well

Institutional support can significantly affect young people's educational achievement. Pupil-teacher relations are one of the most important elements for pupil functioning at school (Barder and Olsen, 2004) and support from knowledgeable teachers is a welcome, positive influence for dyslexic learners (Rowan, 2010). Encouragement and positive comments from teachers can boost learner's academic-self-concept, which in turn increases their willingness to work hard and improve their academic performance (Meltzer

et al., 2004). According to symbolic interactionism, self-concept is affected by what an individual believes that he/she ought to be (Hewitt, 2007). For many students, academic attainment is very important since it is prioritised within their cultural context and they have internalised this belief. By receiving support and being able to improve achievement, they not only receive better attitudes from others sharing their beliefs, but they also improve their self-worth. When individuals are unable to conform to cultural norms although they have adopted them, they can feel ambivalent about themselves (Goffman, 1990). Support, often resulting in improved performance at those norms, can ease dyslexic pupils' ambivalence.

The perceived degree of teacher support influences pupil's functioning both inside and outside the school setting (Barder and Olsen, 2004). This part of the chapter discusses how institutional support affected dyslexic learners. The way schools offer support can be flexible and customised according to individual needs, while children can be involved in this process by having a say in the planning of their educational targets (DfES, 2001b). It is also the school's responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils with learning difficulties and the way support is offered depends on the learner's abilities (DfES, 2001b). This indicates the importance of the relationship between the teacher and students when it comes to supporting progress in the classroom (Tobbell, 2003).

When additional support is offered during classes, it can affect how dyslexic pupils perceive those subjects and alter their enjoyment (Gorard and See, 2011). This highlights the importance of school support, since it could alter children's educational paths. It can also affect school enjoyment, since most differences between pupils who enjoy school and those who do not enjoy it can be related back to their personal educational experiences and whether they find lessons interesting (*ibid*). Many dyslexic learners are disappointed when their hard work is not noticed in the classroom, or when their own expectations of themselves are not met (Nalavany *et al.*, 2011). In line with the previous chapter, schools also need to offer balance between social and academic matters after transition, to pay attention to student's explanations of why they lose interest at certain points during their education (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000) and make them feel that homework is still relevant and worthwhile (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005).

For Faye, support from teachers came at a time when it was urgently needed. With the increase of formal testing and examinations, Faye experienced her education as more

difficult and became anxious. She told me as a result of this she was unable to pass her 'mock GCSEs' and began avoiding school. Importantly, in larger schools this behaviour can go unnoticed and create the wrong impression about the children, such as them being lazy (Alexander-Passe, 2006). Eventually, Faye's behaviour became apparent. After teachers realised she was having severe difficulties, one-to-one support was offered, which made a clear difference to her coping and academic attainment. She received additional support with school assessment as well, with teachers preparing her for examinations and explaining what she needed to do.

'[In years 9 and 10] My grades dropped quite a lot [...] when I was kind of avoiding doing quite a lot of work that I didn't understand. So I tended to just kind of let it pile up and it all got on top of me. I didn't tell anyone and then it all came out and they were just like 'Uh!' that helped! [...] But they couldn't have helped me before because I didn't let them know, so...it's not their fault!' (Faye)

Hiding one's difficulties has also been highlighted in other research (Mc Nulty, 2003; Singer, 2007). It happens for various reasons, for example to avoid comparisons with others or to hide academic failure from significant others (Singer, 2007). Faye explained that her anxiety was relieved after her problems were revealed and she received support, as the fact that she was academically behind and was not coping had reached a point where she could not hide it any longer. After this, she could enjoy school again and had an improvement in her school performance. Another good experience in her school career was when she received a prize for trying hard at school, which she perceived as a very positive and motivating experience. She was unaware that there was a prize to be offered, or that anyone was paying attention to her efforts and was shocked when she received a book as a prize. Similarly, after not attaining the recognised pass mark for her mathematics test, Josephine received support from her teacher, who was aware that Josephine was not fast enough during assessment. Therefore, the teacher decided to help her by training her to be faster:

My teacher used to just sit me down and instead of teaching math she'd just give me lots and lots of papers, past papers, and just make me do them 'till I got quicker at doing them, to the point I got quick enough to get as much of it done as possible [...] You see, nowadays, if you've got dyslexia you get extra time in exams and if

I'd had that I'd have been fine, I probably might have passed maths first time...'
(Josephine)

The above narrative highlights how crucial additional time is for dyslexic learners, yet it is not always offered to them. For dyslexic people, simply writing what they want and making it presentable is exhausting and anxiety-provoking (Fuller *et al.*, 2007), which can be eased by additional time.

Melanie received support from her school which had a separate department dedicated to people with learning difficulties, where the support was provided. With help from her school, Melanie was able to improve her reading and writing skills. She was confident that she received the support she needed and that her school was good at providing it - a significant change from her primary school, which provided minimal support. Something that worked well for her was choosing to have fewer teachers, so that she could explain and make them aware of the kind of support she needed from them. She was comfortable approaching her teachers and telling them whenever she could not do what they asked; she also asked them to find other ways for her to complete her tasks. Overall, she believed that she performed well academically after she received support, which was a positive change from primary education where she was behind academically. Erica improved in a similar fashion when she was in college, because her viewpoint changed and she was able to ask teachers questions:

'I don't think it [dyslexia] affects me as much as it used to, because I think I found a way to...getting around it. Like if I don't understand something, [...] [I] don't mind asking what it actually means, because I don't feel like I'm being judged for it at college.' (Erica)

'I could go to these teachers and stuff and say that I don't get this, I can't put this down on a piece of paper, you're gonna have to find some other way for me doing it...' (Melanie)

The narratives demonstrate that by having a say in what teaching they receive, learners can improve their academic performance. Emma also found that asking teachers for help whenever she needed it was a way to cope with the lack of additional support from her school. Cody, too, revealed that she was not shy about her dyslexia and was comfortable asking for help. Of all the participants who improved their school performance after they

attended secondary education, Katrina made the most dramatic improvement, both in terms of level and speed of change. Asking for help directly from teachers is especially useful when there is no other form of institutional support but at the same time, teachers cannot cope with all needs individual students have. This openness to asking for help can be conceptualised by Goffman's (1990) explanation of difference. He argues that it is a social construction and in order for difference to matter, it must be first conceptualised by a culture. For the young people who asked for support, it could be that culturally they did not perceive their difference as important or altogether as a difference. This is vividly illustrated by Erica, who was reluctant to ask for help while she was at secondary school and was conscious of other people's opinions. However, she found that her dyslexia was less significant at college as her peers and tutors paid less attention to it. This enabled her to gain the confidence to ask for support.

Gabriel was offered learning support at his school and also received exam concessions, including taking examinations in a separate room and additional time, which he found useful. He also received some in-class support for English, which he found positive since he had dyslexia-related memory difficulties and would forget instructions, which the support teacher repeated for him. Although Gabriel was not concerned with the way the school was supporting him, Christy, his mother, was more critical about their policy. She said that they did not care much about dyslexia, stating that he needed more help than the school was providing. According to Christy, this was especially significant with school tests because he only received additional time in 'important' tests, which reduced his overall scores and lowered his self-esteem. However, as explained later in this chapter by Kimberly, school officials often make such decisions because of financial reasons.

Some participants received more meaningful support. Matthew's difficulties had been evaluated throughout his school life, but testing frequency was reduced when he was 14 years old. He felt lucky that he was diagnosed as a young child and received institutional support, but did not have a good relationship with his specialist teachers because he did not feel comfortable standing out in class. On the other hand, he appreciated receiving photocopied versions of class notes, instead of having to copy them from the blackboard. School officials did not offer him in-class support and Matthew believed that it was because they knew he would never have accepted it. Instead, he received out-of-class support and missed one lesson, usually art, to attend a learning support class. Similarly,

Cody missed one lesson a week to attend a learning support class specifically designed for dyslexia, which she found helpful:

‘At the moment, they’re [the school] doing like a dyslexia support group that I go to, so I miss one lesson. And we do kind of like dyslexia skills that will help us overcome dyslexia. So like, one of them was like to put your hand in a bag and feel a letter and guess what letter it was and we do stuff on the computers and we do some tests to see if we’re improving or not.’ (Cody)

Importantly, school officials ensured children did not always miss the same lessons for the dyslexia learning support, therefore it took place on different days of the week.

Kimberly’s school also had good support structures in place. Among other types of support, Kimberly described useful strategies for learners with dyslexia:

‘We have a homework club here. So every lunchtime, there’s a room that’s set aside for homework, and it has laptops, it has teaching-assistants manning it, it has glue, scissors, etc., etc. So if students are having problems with their homework they can go there. Sometimes students need...persuading [...] so that might involve a home phone call [...] We invite students [to the homework club] who appear to need a bit of a sanctuary. And they come and they play board games and stuff. But that can be, you know, that sort of hour of lunch, where there’s no structure, and it’s all very loud and noisy, can be very menacing, and seem to stretch interminably for some students.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

The system that Kimberly described could be used by any child who had difficulties and could be a subtle way of supporting those who did not like standing out. Such rooms for SEN pupils have been previously noted in research, with favourable results (Maras and Aveling, 2006). She stated that they tried not to withdraw children from their class whenever it was possible, because it would make them stand out. She believed that children hated that, although since many children had different teachers for the same subject, it was not very noticeable when a child attended learning support. This supports other research signifying that of children who receive in-class and out-of-class support, the former are more socially accepted (Wiener and Tardif, 2004).

The homework club was created especially for young people who were uncomfortable during lunchtime, something that was described in the previous chapter. Stress during lunchtime does not occur in every person with dyslexia. Kimberly stated that dyslexic students tend to appreciate lunchtime which can be a time of relaxation for them, especially since they get very tired compared to other students (Undheim, 2009). The spaces Kimberly described were similar to those Maras and Aveling (2006) discussed, where pupils with SEN benefitted from private spaces, even during break time, so that they could relax and access support when they needed it. Receiving appropriate support can make a tremendous difference in the lives of both parents and children (Rogers and Weller, 2013). Critically, support can both make a difference in young people's lives and also be the only aspect of schooling they enjoy (Laurent, 2013).

John, who attended the school Kimberly worked at, described colour coded schedules that students received. Colour-coding timetables to match teaching areas ensured students knew where to go, minimising getting lost. He described it as helpful although it took some time for him to get used to it, a finding supported by Lucey and Reay (2000). They found that a fear of getting lost affected both high and low achievers, so colour-coding areas of the school can be helpful for many learners, not only those with difficulties. This type of support is simple, inexpensive, and can be available to everyone. Consequently, individuals who need it are discreetly supported, while other learners also benefit from it. Children who fear getting lost can spend lessons worrying about getting from one class to the other, which causes stress and anxiety that can take up their cognitive capacity (Tobbell, 2003). Colour-coding the school building can help alleviate those feelings because it helps children navigate.

Vertical tutoring was also appreciated. Such groups included pupils from different year groups and older students acted as tutors for the younger ones. For John, when he was anxious about something that he did not want to discuss with the teachers, he could go to one of the older students. John also mentioned that he attended a separate class for English which only included five people, something he appreciated, because since there were fewer students he received more help from the teachers. George, another student at the school where Kimberly worked, was also happy to attend separate English classes:

'I'm in spelling group and English group. There's only about 5 to 6, [...] of us, but it's a lot of fun really as well.' (George)

George's English class took place at the same time as other English lessons and he explained that he only missed a part of his French lessons to attend the additional spelling programme. Having to miss parts of his French lessons was something that he 'loved' because he did not enjoy French. Both boys also had to practise at home, which was part of the approach offered by the school.

In-class support was welcome by Katrina, who worked with a teaching assistant as necessary. Whenever she felt comfortable and confident she could tell the teaching assistant to go, continuing with the lesson on her own. Also, Katrina described an additional indirect support: the stickers system, whereby children collect stickers for their work. Each sticker corresponds to points that the child can collect and later redeem towards activities of his/her choice. This was motivating for Katrina and was something she enjoyed. She also enjoyed on-line studying that ran parallel with the school curriculum, whereby children competed with each other to gain points. On-line learning was enjoyable because it was visually attractive and could be completed from her home, using a computer. Collecting points was also a significant motivator, providing immediate rewards for her academic efforts.

Keeping pupils motivated is vital for their school performance; increased motivation, achieved with appropriate interventions, can increase examination performance and improve mental health (Keogh, Bond and Flaxman, 2006). This intervention targeted the general school population but it shows that there is a clear connection between motivation and school performance. In Katrina's case, it highlights the importance of motivation for struggling pupils. Within a symbolic interactionist interpretation I can see that there is a crucial element of support in the construction of a healthy sense of self. Support helps learners deal with their difficulties and eases their school days. Critically, the changes that schools make and resources they offer can have great impact on how children learn. The narratives have illustrated how support is a crucial part of young people's daily lives and they are keen to receive it.

Lack of support

According to English government guidelines, schools are obliged to employ different approaches so all pupils' achievement is maximised and individual schools are responsible for the choice of the methods to be used (DfES, 2001b). It is essential that all pupils are

able to follow the curriculum so that they are not disadvantaged, which will only become aggravated if they are unable to follow lessons (Tobbell, 2003). Humphrey and Mullins (2002) suggest that it is crucial for educators to alter their teaching to suit children's learning styles, changing the learning experience so that dyslexia no longer presents a 'problem' for those children. They advise it is a teacher's duty to offer learners the best start in life that they can (*ibid*). It is also believed that if children with disabilities are not offered a meaningful education, their employment prospects are reduced and they could face poverty (Rioux and Pinto, 2010).

Although the SEN code of practice dictates that all learners receive the support they need, it seems that this is not always the reality in schools. There are many cases where, according to the narratives from my participants, there was little or no support provided. Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars (2000) confirm they found that most of their participants received less support and understanding in their secondary schools than they did in primary. Here, this did not only happen with participants who were older and therefore had different schooling experiences, but also with younger ones. It is understandable that resources and personnel are not always available, however consistent lack of support leads to deep problems for those with learning difficulties. Leaving the full weight of support to parents is an option that can lead to multiple problems, especially if the parents are not able to support their children for any reason, be it lack of time, knowledge, funds or neglect.

According to Slee (2011), the purpose of schooling is to educate children and create competent members within a given cultural context. This is a basic element in their education. Considering the importance education has in modern cultures (Rioux and Pinto, 2010), it has a central role in children's lives (Russell, 2003). Research reveals that parents do take matters into their own hands whenever they can by hiring tutors, contacting teachers and using behaviour strategies with their children to help them succeed (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). Establishments with an ethos negative or intolerant towards dyslexia can reduce the motivation of teachers who want to help dyslexic children (Gwernan-Jones and Burden, 2010). The lack of recognition and support for dyslexia can affect young people's learning success (Rowan, 2010) leading parents who can do so to intervene.

Mark never received any support from his school. When learners were not able to keep up with lessons, they were placed at the back of the class without an explanation as to why

this happened. George had the same experience at his primary school but since moving to secondary education he received support and improved his school performance.

‘I know he’s getting a lot better, obviously years ago [it] wasn’t picked up on ‘im and the children were sort of...left [at] the back of the class type thing, weren’t they? They would, sort of be ignored a bit and [teachers would] get on with the kids that were coping...’ (Katya, parent)

A contrary case was Emma, who was offered additional support in primary but not in secondary education as her school did not provide it unless pupils had a statement or were severely under-performing. Therefore, Emma received no support, because although she had great difficulty, especially with her spelling, she was able to perform above the level classed as severely under-performing. Her mother, Jenna, did try to talk to school officials about it but was unable to achieve results. The only option was to work on Emma’s difficulties at home. However, what worried Jenna most of all was school examinations and how Emma would cope without concessions. School professionals do not always recognise that children’s problems are dyslexia-related and this, as in Emma’s case, leaves it to the parent to pursue a diagnosis (Glazzard, 2010). In contrast, Kimberly’s school setting employed a different approach to children with difficulties:

‘In many ways, what we do for dyslexic students and what we do for students with any learning difficulties converge. Because, you know, if you do exam concessions, we put exam concessions in place here, it’s about their performance on the test. Not about the cause of their performance on the test. So if they’re writing slowly then they will get extra time in the exam. Doesn’t matter if they’re writing slowly ‘cause they’ve got a broken arm, or if they’ve got a physical problem, or if they’ve got a processing problem, you know, it matters that they write slowly. The same for spelling. If they’re spelling badly, then they will get somebody to write for them, it doesn’t matter what the *cause* of the bad spelling is, so...we have several students who, I would say, have no dyslexia, but have very low spelling ages because their attendance at school has been 50%. So, you know, you could say that that is the cause of their poor spelling, but it doesn’t matter, because their spelling is low, so they still get someone to write for them, it doesn’t matter what the cause of it is.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

However, this strategy is not without drawbacks:

‘If I’m assessing for exam concessions and I find too many then I get it in the neck from the management ‘cause they’re gonna hire extra people in to come and do the exam concessions. And obviously, anybody who’s got a reader and a scribe, has to be in a room on their own because they are talking the answers, so they have to have an invigilator as well. So it’s two adults for one child doing the exams. So...you know, there’s only a certain amount of times you can do it, it takes all the teaching assistants away from...everything, and the school has to hire in extra bodies, so...yeah. There’s lots of pressures on there!’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

Kimberly’s narrative indicates that in some cases, support is not offered because of the cost, not because of a lack of interest from school officials. However, this does not justify the lack of support that Christy described earlier in this chapter. The above method is in agreement with the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b), which clearly says that statements are not required for examination concessions to be offered to students with SEN. According to this, Emma could receive exam concessions without requiring an official statement, however her school did not offer any support without one. Research reveals that schools can be dismissive, overlook children’s difficulties or their dyslexia (Griffiths, Norwich and Burden, 2004). Parents are also blamed for overreacting or for causing their children’s difficulties (*ibid*). This, in part, happened with Emma. Therefore, the only available option was to seek support privately, which is what other parents have done when they could not convince the school officials to arrange an assessment with an educational psychologist (Griffiths, Norwich and Burden, 2004). This is problematic for parents who cannot afford such options and can potentially leave children who are the most vulnerable unsupported. Without support, children can develop very negative self-perceptions and become overwhelmed by their difficulties and school expectations. Since support aids the construction of a healthy sense of self, lack of support can significantly damage children’s academic attainment (a visible effect) and self-development (a less visible effect).

Support negatively-received by pupils

There are cases where schools offer support, but it is not received well by pupils. There are children who find school support condescending, humiliating or embarrassing; the same can happen if they are singled out in class and asked if they understand everything,

something that can be very uncomfortable for them (Rowan, 2010). According to symbolic interactionism and Goffman (1990) in particular, pupils react in that way because teacher actions and support are stigmatising for them, highlighting their difficulties to their peers. Victoria (2013) suggests that teachers have to choose their classroom language carefully so that they can be respectful and caring of their students. Training professionals is important for the creation of a supportive environment and for reducing misunderstandings (McNulty, 2003). This education also relates to another issue. Many teaching assistants in all tiers of education who spend time supporting children with SEN are not fully trained (McLachlan, 2012; Rogers, 2007a). When there are teaching assistants providing in-class support, they can reduce the amount of interaction between the qualified teacher and the child (Shah, 2007). Consequently, that child is taught by sub-standard teachers (*ibid*), which contributes to the school not being fully inclusive (Rogers, 2007a; Shah, 2007). This was an issue that Kimberly was keen to discuss, explaining that the teaching assistants hired at her setting were qualified in their fields, stressing that they were not a ‘mum’s army’.

Jeremy’s narrative revealed that his school did not offer satisfactory support to SEN pupils:

‘The only thing that they ended up sort of saying that they could do was putting me in this special needs class, which was basically a collection of people with all sorts of levels of learning disabilities, so dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD, a real collection of pupils on the same room, which, of course, you know, teaching for one style of disability does not always fit them all.’(Jeremy)

Rioux and Pinto (2010) discussed this style of teaching, where all SEN students are moved in one classroom. They argued that if students are simply moved from one classroom to another and there is still negative stereotyping against them, expectations for them are still going to be lower than those for typically developing students. Also, they argued that when the needs and interests of learners with SEN are ignored, their dignity is hurt, which they described as a ‘breach of their fundamental human rights’ (Rioux and Pinto, 2010, p.627). Arguably, those students are segregated, not included in those schools. This type of mixed classroom was also documented in ‘special’ schools by Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars (2000), who believed that it caused problems for some of their participants. From the above research and Jeremy’s narrative it can be argued that treating SEN pupils in this way is not productive or helpful for them because their needs are not met. Arguably, their sense

of identity would benefit more if they stayed in mainstream classrooms. It would be better for their identity construction since they are not seen as a 'collection', to use Jeremy's word, of problematic or stigmatised pupils. According to symbolic interactionism, self-perceptions are heavily influenced by other's opinions (Gerth and Mills, 1971). If this perception of stigma is internalised, both by dyslexic learners and important others around them, then it will negatively influence their self-perceptions. This also applies to the following issue with Jeremy. He not only found attending a learning support class difficult, but also the transition between the learning support and mainstream classroom.

'For you to be sort of sitting there, and your friends are in the same class and then suddenly you get called away to a special class. [...] That was a very difficult thing to go through. [...] I tried to...to learn as best as I could within the, um, sort of special needs class but the problem was [...] among my peers I felt like I was sort of singled out. But then on top of that, the sort of, let's say special needs [...] would be going on at exactly the same time as my normal school work. And then I found that impossible, literally, to do, because I'd be doing the sort of phonics, spellings for...four hours and then suddenly I'm back in a normal science class [...] that's the way that...I looked at it through my school life, is...if any child was different in any way, shape or form, if you couldn't just fit in to it, the main group, ah, you were an outsider and then you were singled out. And taking out of class made that even worse than it was already.' (Jeremy)

This notion is confirmed within existing research, where it was found that people who were being bullied were those who were perceived as in some way different from the majority of children (Sweeting and West, 2001).

Other participants did not have problems with the type of support they were receiving but were dissatisfied with the amount of support:

'[I] had to go down one lesson a week to their learning support place and do spellings, but [...] I think they could've supported me a lot better, they didn't give me any, like, guidance during my other lessons, it was just that one lesson [...] there would just be one, that one day a week they'd give me support. [...] The support they gave me was helpful but it could have been more helpful if I had more.' (Erica)

Clearly, Erica needed far more support from the school but did not receive it, which annoyed her. She did not mind going to a separate learning support classroom but was uncomfortable with her classmates asking questions about the class and why she went there. There were some occasions when Erica received one to one in-class support, which she also found difficult and uncomfortable. She explained that she preferred not to be treated differently because she did not like the idea of being judged because she had a teacher with her. She had multiple difficulties and received exam concessions like additional time and undertaking assessment in a separate room, which was all very welcome:

‘I preferred it [taking exams in a separate room] because I was able just to relax a little bit more [...] [I] always felt like when I was with loads of people [that] they were looking about what I was doing, even though they probably weren’t, but I found it always so much more easier having my own sort of room and doing it then.’ (Erica)

The issue of examinations being potentially stigmatising was discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, within symbolic interactionism, the school culture can render attending a learning support class or taking examinations in a separate room stigmatising. This was strongly felt by Erica, who felt that her peers were watching her whenever she was examined in the same room as them and preferred to be in a separate room. Cooley (1971) talked about the imagined reflection of one’s self on someone else and how individuals react to it, offering a theoretical explanation for Erica’s perception. Similarly, research with dyslexic university students, found that they experienced both the segregation of receiving additional time and being in a separate examination room to be stigmatising (Fuller *et al.*, 2007). However, this does not mean that additional time is not essential. Effective support systems can arguably be credited for helping learners work at the same pace as those without difficulties (Holloway, 2001).

Like Erica, Matthew did not react well to in-class specialist support offered at his school. He did not want to stand out from his classmates.

‘I suppose the only thing I didn’t enjoy was [...] the special needs dyslexia style of teaching. I think it’s always gonna be a very sensitive area for me in terms of...you

know, how it's sort of approached 'cause, you know, it's not the kind of thing you want to...vent [...] You need to sort of have people that approach you in the right way [...]. And I definitely struggled to get on with the [...] one to one teacher for the sort of the three years they would be with me at secondary school. [...] So I think [...] that was, where they would let me down a bit. In that...maybe it might have sort of been more into just ticking instead of trying to help myself with that side. (Matthew)

It seems that Matthew was very defensive and never accepted additional support that would make him stand out, although he did not have such a reaction to out-of-class support. Similarly, research suggests that pupils can be uncomfortable with in-class support feeling that it is invasive of their personal space and peer relationships (Shah, 2007).

The above narratives are supported by Rowan's (2010) research. Regarding school support, the comments his dyslexic participants made suggested that they did not feel comfortable with the process. One of them believed that she was being taught like a young child and found the style of teaching condescending. Another found it humiliating and embarrassing to be singled out in class by being asked if he/she understood everything. However, support from teachers who were considered knowledgeable came as a positive influence.

Although these feelings are understandable, it is nevertheless necessary for school officials to provide support for dyslexic learners.

'There's not a lot to be done, really. If you leave them to flounder, that's not very good for them either. But, in-class support, unless it's somebody with severe and complex needs, good practice is our in-class support goes round the whole class [...]. We do have in-class support but it is good practice to sort of float around the classroom. [...] You can't leave them to fail. But there are some children who are so resistant to it, there's nothing to be done. Because it will just cause an argument [...] it's just easier not to mention it and let him get on with it! Because...having him do that in front of his friends and disintegrating in front of his friends is not good either.' (Kimberly, SENCo)

Support might not be something that children welcome, but especially when a child is shy and unable to communicate well with teachers, like some of the participants were, school staff need to take action.

Interestingly, not all participants reacted negatively to in-class support, some of them welcomed it. John commented on an in-class teaching assistant who was there for one of his classmates but also helped others. He was happy to receive support from that teaching assistant, who also encouraged him to finish his homework, and even mentioned that he would have liked dedicated support as well. Katrina was appointed such support for most of her classes and was comfortable with it. Her father shared her view and preferred his daughter to take the regular classes with in-class support to attending separate learning support classes. Similarly, George often sat next to the person teaching assistants were there to help so that he could receive additional help.

‘I get quite a lot of support. ‘Cause I just ask [the teaching assistant]. Well, [she] is a lot of help. [...] I sit next to him [the boy the teaching assistant is there to help] quite a lot as well. ‘Cause we both need really badly help. [...] I don’t like to go and ask the teacher, because [...] I just feel nervous when I ask the teachers. Like, I don’t wanna take up their time and things, but I ask the teacher assistant, they are like, I think it’s a lot of help...’ (George)

‘The best thing about this secondary school is that they still stick her into the main classrooms with the help...’ (Howard, parent)

The above indicates that children can be aware of their difficulties and focus on the support they need, rather than fear that they are standing out. However, as confirmed by the narratives, not all learners welcome their support. Therefore, it would be better if in-class support is only offered to those who accept it well, while others attend out-of-class support.

These contrasting viewpoints strongly indicated that in-class support is not perceived negatively by all learners and can depend on individual needs and preferences. John, George and Katrina did not mind how others perceived them and chose to concentrate on the fact that they needed help. That help was provided from teaching assistants and additional classes. Participants with different personalities, like Erica and Matthew never wanted to stand out and would not accept visible in-class support. When a person is uncomfortable with in-class support, or when they are too shy or timid to communicate

with their teachers, a conversation with the SENCo or personal tutor can resolve those problems. The latter can inform class teachers about how to support those learners, which takes this responsibility off the child. This highlights the importance of having SENCos and personal tutors who keep files for each child and work with the children to determine the best approach for them. It does not mean that the child will be deciding the approach, but their input can be beneficial for school staff, who can choose an approach after considering what the child is comfortable with and how he/she feels about the available approaches. All children I interviewed had an opinion about school support and what type of support they would like to receive. Utilising their personal experience along with the knowledge of staff can lead to highly effective interventions and support that makes the transition to, and years within secondary education a better experience.

Support from family and friends

Support from family

Parents have a crucial role in their children's education (LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011); dyslexic learners consider parental support a positive experience (Rowan, 2010). It is a very important part of young people's education and school officials can work together with families so that a joint approach to learning can be made (DfES, 2001b). Parents can also positively affect a child's global self-worth, helping them distinguish this from poor academic performance (Dale and Taylor, 2001). Having friends is also important for both support and school enjoyment (Gorard and See, 2011). Parental help can be the most important source of support for children (Dale and Taylor, 2001) and this is especially valuable when institutional support is failing. In some cases parents are the only ones supporting their children and fighting for their wellbeing (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000).

This was confirmed by the parental narratives from my research; parents would pay for their children to have a diagnosis and in three cases (Christy, Mary and Jeremy's parents), pay for tutors to offer their children additional support:

'I've also paid for a lady to come in and do extra with 'im, which he enjoys [...]. I may do it again. So it's just...to give 'im a bit of a push, you know, a bit of a boost.'
(Mary)

Support from tutors could be perceived as supplementing school lessons and special provision or compensating for the absence of it (Reay, 1998a). Research reveals that children feel happy that their parents could pay for specialist lessons, especially when they received no institutional support (Glazzard, 2010). Parental help can be the most important for a person's self concept, more than support from friends and teachers (Kloomok and Cosden, 1994). It can assist children in reaching academic excellence (Roberts Gray and Steinberg, 1999), privileged within the educational system (Lucey and Reay, 2002; Rogers, 2007a).

According to Dale and Taylor (2001), learners internalise labels attributed to them at school, which is in agreement with symbolic interactionism. Parents too can perceive their children and themselves as stigmatised or deny that they or their child are stigmatised; their perceptions also depend on how others react to their child's difficulties (Gray, 1993). This renders parental support even more important, since they can help counteract negative labels that their children internalise from other sources, like their school. As important others, parents influence their children's self-perceptions (Hewitt, 2007). Their support is viewed warmly by young people and helps them be more positive about their school achievement, their position in society and about life in general (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). Parental involvement has been associated with better school attendance, reading and mathematics scores and graduation rates (LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011).

Importantly, parent participants, like Jenna, also tried to acquire institutional support by battling with schools. Other research also described that parents had to constantly 'fight' with the school to acquire the support that their children needed (Russell, 2007; Rogers, 2007b; Rogers, 2011), a process which led them to become angry and frustrated (Rogers, 2007b). Alternatively, parents may expect LEAs to help them achieve support and for this reason they can be reluctant to engage in a fight (Rogers, 2011). The battle between parents and schools is also recognised by the English government as a problem to be addressed by the proposed education reforms of 2014 (DfE, 2012b). Delays in acquiring a diagnosis and support are common and this creates social barriers for children (Russell, 2003). If they do not have access to the services they need, disabled students can have behaviour and attainment problems, and also limited chances to access further education or vocational training (*ibid*). An early diagnosis is essential for children to receive the support they need so that they can maximise their abilities (*ibid*).

In Emma's case, her mother supported her in any way that she could: by trying to acquire institutional support, proofreading her work and paying for her to be assessed by an educational psychologist so that she could acquire a diagnosis, leading to support. Similarly, Howard, Katrina's father, was also involved in the school and in his daughter's learning. He acknowledged that the school was very good at supporting her difficulties:

'Everyone has a block, you know. So they will then find a way of helping her go past that, that's what high school's good at.' (Howard, parent)

Although he acknowledged their support, he did not accept all their suggestions, especially about her attending a 'special' school one day a week:

'A lot of children have been pushed along that line, but it's up to the parents themselves to say 'no'. We do have a right to say, 'no, you're not going to do that.' And we do have that automatic right, and that's been said in the reports. You know, if I don't feel it's right, sorry, it stops here. [...] There's a criteria that I've actually set with the high school, is that she must never, ever go [to the SEN school] on her own. And that's not by a teacher going and then dropping her off, there must be other pupils there of her class. She has two others that go with her. So she must never go on her own. That was one of the criteria that I set as a parent. If she's the only one that's on that bus she gets off it and goes into school. As I said to them before the statement, is that, 'Do not think this will add on as a two day a week, three day a week. It's one day and that is it. Any more it will be stopped.' Because that's when I start feeling as a parent that this school are manoeuvring the children. You know, they're not teaching the child, they'd rather just move [them].'
(Howard, parent)

This indicates that not all parents are comfortable with their children attending an SEN school (Rogers, 2007a; Rogers, 2007b). Howard's daughter, Katrina, did not enjoy attending the SEN school. He was adamant that it would only be temporary and gave his permission to implement that plan for two years, after which he would re-evaluate the situation. This also demonstrates that he did not want his daughter to be singled out from her schoolmates. Similar to a participant in Rogers' (2007a; 2007b) research, Howard felt that this type of school was good for certain types of SEN children but not for his daughter.

Importantly, some children prefer specialist schools, or understand they are necessary in their case, while others are unhappy there and feel humiliated when they have to travel to them (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). Stigma is strongly linked with the feelings of humiliation (Gray, 1993) that attending a 'special' school causes for some children (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). This was the reason behind Howard's persistence that his daughter was never alone on the bus taking her to the specialist school. For Howard, his concern stemmed from how Katrina and her peers would perceive her attending an SEN school. His thoughts revolved strongly around stigmatisation and the effort to avoid it. Practically, even when SEN school settings provide high quality specialist teaching, the disadvantage is that children with SEN will only have other children of similar abilities to compare themselves to and retain memories of failure in mainstream settings (Burden and Burdett, 2005). When leaving SEN settings to progress to the next educational level or work environment, those children can have anxieties and potentially still be held back by their difficulties (*ibid*). Howard felt that there was good communication between him and the school. He felt that if he was concerned about something, the school would understand and listen to him, as with the SEN school issue.

In addition to supporting Katrina in school, Howard also tried to support her at home, his main approach being to help her help herself when facing difficulties. Melanie also received support from her parents and friends. Parents helped with her homework, especially with writing and spelling and friends helped with spelling. She was not shy about asking her friends for help and they eagerly provided it. Josephine's parents were also very supportive of her whenever that they could. They were not aware of her dyslexia, since she was not diagnosed until after compulsory education, but they told her not to worry if she could not achieve academically and that she would be good at something else. This relates to cultural expectations about academic attainment and Josephine's parents did not pressurise her to achieve. Gabriel's family were also supportive, with his parents helping with homework or preparation for upcoming tests and hiring a tutor to support him with literacy and mathematics. When asked about the support she offered Gabriel, Christy replied that there are not enough hours in the day to do everything she had to do, which included support for Gabriel. Since she believed that the school was not doing enough to support him, tutoring at home was a good solution.

Jeremy also received support at home from a tutor and it was his tutor who realised that he was dyslexic. After that, Jeremy was assessed privately and received a formal dyslexia statement. John's parents also hired tutors to provide private lessons. Hiring tutors to offer at-home support was a step that helped the young people very much and was received well by both them and their parents. When institutional support is not sufficient, parents take school into their home by offering the materials and tutors their children need (Griffiths, Norwich and Burden, 2004). Clearly, not all parents can afford tutors so the support offered by the education system remains vital. Another form of support from parents is ensuring that children do not neglect school work, although this is not something specific to children with SEN.

All participants discussed how their parents helped them with homework and preparation for tests. For example, Emma's mother checked her assignments helping Emma correct grammar and spelling mistakes. She could also help with Emma's general learning skills, which ultimately helped her during school hours. Matthew's parents supported him by showing interest in his education and encouraging him with various activities. However, not all parents are able to provide this since they may lack the academic experience (Koshy *et al.*, 2013). In Emma's case, the school only supported severely underperforming learners and those with statements, failing to adhere to the SEN code of practice (DfES, 2001b). Mark shared the view that parents face difficulties in getting their children assessed for dyslexia. He believed that those who had the education and knowledge could acquire a diagnosis but those lacking that knowledge or with limited means struggled with the process, while the cost of assessment contributed to this difficulty.

Reading overlays were utilised by many of the participants and some of them also used tinted glasses. Although most young people chose not to use those aids in the classroom because they were not comfortable standing out, Katrina was happy to use her glasses at school. She did not wear them at home but found them very helpful in the classroom, because they helped her with reading from books and the whiteboard. Teasing can contribute to children not wearing tinted glasses in the classroom (Speld, 1989). Indeed, children who are perceived as different are at risk of victimisation (Sweeting and West, 2001). Again, as with in-class support, choices very much depend on the learner's personality, how secure they are in the classroom and the classroom culture. Parents supported their children by providing these aids but they may be reserved for home use only because of the possibility of bullying or teasing by classmates.

Support by means of technology needs to be discussed as well. For many participants, technology, in the form of both software and hardware, offered much-needed help. It helped pupils improve their school achievement and eased their difficulties. It can improve children's schooling days and help them increase their self-esteem. This type of support is not available in all countries and schools or for all individuals who need it. However, participants who had access to it offered favourable comments. For younger participants, technology was offered by their parents. Jeremy and Mark constantly used technology in their daily lives and Emma found great motivation since receiving an iPod touch. She used it to revise or check her writing, while Mark used the same methods with his Smartphone. Emma also used a computer for writing her schoolwork, which helped her correct her spelling mistakes, but her work significantly improved after she started using an iPod. She used quizzes and applications (apps) to aid her learning, like flash cards for German lessons. The computer and iPod were preferable tools for writing because mistakes could be minimised. Erica's parents also provided her with other equipment, like a pocket spell checker and a laptop:

‘[My parents] supported me throughout all of my education basically, they got me all the different things that I needed, [...] they supported me through everything, they tried all the equipment that would support me with my learning so that was really helpful. [...] They were always there for me.’ (Erica)

Although technology does help, it does not solve all problems for people with dyslexia. Emma's mother, Jenna, considered acquiring an official statement because Emma would not receive institutional support otherwise. Jenna perceived secondary education as one of the most important periods of her daughter's life and was concerned about official assessment and the additional time she would need. Although she was not convinced Emma would receive much institutional support after a statement, she believed additional time during assessment would be enough reason to acquire one, although initially they wanted to avoid an official diagnosis. Although a statement is not needed for children to receive those concessions (DfES, 2001b), this was not an option at Emma's school. Often, parents have to ‘fight’ for their children to be assessed and believe that the LEAs do not want to spend the money assessment requires (Audit Commission, 2002). Jenna's point of view is reasonable since learning and performing well in tests becomes more important in secondary education, especially since examinations for entry in higher education are

getting closer (Rudduck, 1996a). This causes teachers and family to demand that pupils work harder so that they can perform according to societal expectations (Rudduck, 1996b).

Many parents are aware of the connection between diagnosis and resource provision (Dale and Taylor, 2001) since a label can remove barriers to acquiring resources (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). This justifies parental efforts to obtain an official diagnosis and use the label to acquire help for their children (Tomlinson, 2012). However, this does not always mean that the interventions employed after a statement will be suitable to the child's needs (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). Tomlinson (2012) believes many parents pursue a diagnosis to access specialist services because of the nature of education in modern societies. Qualifications and entry to higher education are considered necessary for members to function in an economy which is very much based on knowledge (Rogers, 2007a).

Since such societies are driven towards academic excellence, many parents work extremely hard to secure a place in higher education for their children and eliminate their chances of failure (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Acquiring institutional support can help SEN children achieve that goal. Although a diagnosis leads to labelling and labelling can lead to stigmatisation, which is the negative aspect of labelling (Riddick, 2000), there are many parents who see its positive side and the support it helps them acquire for their children, as revealed by their narratives. Importantly, a label can also be the first step to directing parents towards the right groups and agencies that can help their children (Farrell, 2001), and parents (Griffiths, Norwich and Burden, 2004), because although they want support, many parents do not know how to acquire it (Rogers, 2011).

Howard acquired a diagnosis for his daughter, because she would not receive institutional support without one. He did not want Katrina to face learning at a secondary level without any help, because he understood she would struggle since she was performing at a low level at primary school. Both Howard and Jenna initially wanted to avoid a dyslexia label for their children but changed their minds because of the support issue. There are educationalists who view labelling as harmful, because it leads to stigmatisation (Riddick, 2000) and parents are likely to share the same views. However, the issue of support was more important:

‘If your child walked in there with 2B and needs that help, without the statement you don’t get nothing.’ (Howard, parent)

George's parents also provided support for him, both with homework and by encouraging him to help himself.

'We do speed words at an evening, there are sort of 30 words he has to read, we have to time that sort of every day.' (Katya, parent)

'If he wants help with homework, or he'll come and ask how to spell a word and things like that, you know, which I usually tell 'im to try google first, 'cause that obviously he'll try how [he thinks] it is and it'll try and bring the words up, won't it? Or obviously you got spellchecker on and things like that. But otherwise, if he comes and asks then we're...quite happy to tell 'im how to spell a word...' (Katya, parent)

Katya believed that there was good communication between her and her son's school, with information about him sent home. She believed that if she wanted something for George school officials would listen to her, adding that if they did not listen she would keep pushing them until they did. Similarly, support Cody received from her parents was in the form of helping her spell words, reading texts to her whenever she could not understand them by reading them herself and occasional help with homework. Whenever there was a problem that made Cody anxious, her mother could talk to the SENCo and it would be dealt with. This indicates that there was good communication with the school.

Kimberly also stressed the importance of parental support. She believed in parents and school establishments working together to support children with learning difficulties.

'Parents can be my worst nightmare or my best friend. We have some really sensible parents, who know *how* much support to give and when to step back and when to let the child take the consequences of their actions and how much to make them, you know, do things. But we have other parents, where...they come in Year 7 and they've got a reading age of say 7 and a half, and we say, 'well, you need to read with your child every day for 10 minutes'. And they don't! And then they wonder why their child's not making any progress!' (Kimberly, SENCo)

Indeed, even schools with good intentions, that strive to develop pupil's full potential, need help from parents and community because they cannot educate a child on their own

(LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011). The ethos around reading in a family is crucial for the way that children will read (Millard, 1997) and a simple way that parents can support their children is by helping them edit their school work. Parents can take on this role during their children's primary and secondary education and once children leave compulsory education they can be replaced by friends. Many of the participants stressed how important this step is and were able to establish good working relationships with their parents or friends.

Support from friends

Friendships can help young people adjust to their new environment after transition (Wargo Aikins, Bierman and Parker, 2005), make the schooling experience more tolerable (Eissa, 2010) and can be the one of the most satisfying aspects of transition (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Children are influenced by peers as soon as they enter school (Hewitt, 2007) and this influence can be positive when it comes to peer support. Most of the participants did not rely on their friends for academic support. For them, friendships offered psychological support, acting as a safe place for the young people to be themselves. Friendships were also comforting during the time of transition, since participants felt more reassured when they transitioned to a school where they knew other students. For Cody, transition became much easier once she made more friends:

‘Now it’s just so much easier, I know quite a lot of people in the year above me and the year above that. So I don’t have much trouble like mingling around and...there are some people that I just keep away from ‘cause they’re not exactly very nice but, um, yeah, it’s much better.’ (Cody)

Some participants did receive academic help from their friends, like Gabriel who exchanged help with a class partner. Yet he was surprised when she reciprocally asked him for help in mathematics, which was a strong subject for him. He could have been unaware that he could offer academic support in return for her help. Erica felt that her friends supported her but she mostly talked about emotional support and believed that the fact that she is a sociable person helped her throughout her school years. Katrina's and Cody's friends also offered moral support, not academic. However, when a friend introduced Cody to brain-training books, she found them very useful. Emma had a group of friends who were highly capable in English and were able to help her whenever she made spelling mistakes. For John, support from his peers was more than just emotional, since one of his

friends always encouraged him to do his homework when he was reluctant to do it. Having a dyslexic friend in his peer group was also helpful for John because it provided him with additional support:

‘[My friend has] nearly every class the same as me...he is dyslexic as well, so we just try and help each other as best as we can. We mostly ask [the teaching assistant]. With a friend that’s like the same as me [...] we both are dyslexic so we just take everything in our own stride.’ (John)

Friends can be helpful sources of advice:

‘Sometimes it’s quite useful if you get advice from someone else. [...] Some of my neighbours go to the same school I do, so they gave me some advice and I have quite a lot of friends who are in the year above me so I talk to them and they give me some advice.’ (Cody)

Peers can understand what those with learning difficulties are going through and offer them emotional and educational support (Dale and Taylor, 2001). An increased interest in socialising is also part of the adolescent’s coping mechanisms (Ward, 2000). Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000), found that students can lose interest in school, especially in the end of Year 7, Year 8 and sometimes Year 9, since they can become distracted by social activities. This is not only a dip in motivation, but in attainment as well (*ibid*). Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) also agree that the ends of Year 7 and Year 8 are when pupils are not as committed to their learning. Learning will not be as interesting for many young people, who start finding excitement in other activities, but learners are likely to regain interest in their studies in years 10 and 11, when 16+ examinations become a reality (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). This engagement with their studies is driven by a focus on examinations.

Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000, p. 428) refer to this change in young people’s interest in learning as ‘twin peaks’ in engagement, those peaks being Year 7 and Years 10 and 11. During transfer students are engaged with school both academically and socially because of the change in settings, new opportunities and experiences. This engagement is likely to decrease in the following years and peak again in Years 10 and 11, because students aim to succeed in the examinations. Recognising this, it is important for school

officials to support students by keeping them motivated and paying attention to their social interactions. Finally, friends offer support to dyslexic learners in a social environment where they are treated as equals, not as different or as stigmatised individuals. In cases where children feel stigmatised by the support they receive, peers can offer a smaller and more intimate environment where stigma is not part of the experience.

Leaving school

For learners with dyslexia, internal motivators along with achievement through hard work are what drives and leads them to become academically successful and continue to study at university (Rowan, 2010). For individuals with a difficult schooling experience, leaving school can be a relief and attending higher education can be a burden that they do not want to have (Undheim, 2009). Higher education may also seem to be something they cannot achieve and they may take lower-level courses, which can be based on societal expectations of their learning difficulties (Rowan, 2010). Leaving the compulsory education system was an experience most participants welcomed. This part of the chapter focuses on cases where learners discontinued their education.

‘I did feel a lot of stress [at school], yeah, incredibly happy to leave, [because of] the amount of pressure they put on...’ (Erica)

‘Ever since my, sort of pre-school, you know, we had problems right away through into primary. My parents were always down at the schools, because I’d been in some fight or something, [...] so they were...let’s say never a fan of schooling and it only got worse in secondary. [...] I think they were just at the end of their tether really, they’d been doing it for so long, and that is why they...it was almost quite an easy decision that it got so bad in secondary, they just said ‘right, that’s it, we’re gonna take you out of school’. ’ (Jeremy)

According to Rudduck (1996a), if transitions are very problematic learners are more likely to discontinue their education, which happened with Jeremy. For Jeremy the decision to leave secondary education and be home schooled came after both he and his parents learned about home schooling from his tutor, an option they had not been aware of. Their decision was based upon Jeremy’s increased problem with bullying, which had escalated to being very serious, and the lack of institutional support. Jeremy’s school’s support was the SEN class that has already been discussed, although his family had been promised a laptop, dictaphone and a support teacher who would provide one-to-one support. After a final

argument with school officials, his parents decided to take him out of mainstream education and offer home schooling instead. This decision was also supported by the educational psychologist who assessed Jeremy:

‘His advice said ‘I don’t think it would be right for Jeremy to go back into education, I think he needs something that’s more suited’ [...] I was unlucky to be in an area where there were a lot of problems at the school, um, you know, we...there were police turning up...every week, to...to deal with some sort of problem. I think, you know, that was one of the unfortunate factors, that I was at, you know, quite a...quite a bad school to begin with.’ (Jeremy)

There were not any good options for attending another school either, because the nearest alternative was roughly an hour away, an option he was not happy with, or a private school which his family could not afford, although they did consider scholarship programmes. Alternatives like Rudolf-Steiner schools were also considered but were rejected since it was believed he would still have problems with the other students. After a discussion with Jeremy’s tutor, who specialised in learning difficulties, and Jeremy himself, his parents made their decision and chose home schooling. For them, there was no other viable option and that was the best choice. The important others in Jeremy’s life at the time were his parents and the educational psychologist, whose opinion mattered to him. Their opinion, along with his experiences, enhanced his belief that home schooling was the best choice for him. Mark also left the education system early and was relieved at his decision:

‘I left at the first opportunity available [...]. So I left when I was 15. (Mark)

After leaving school, it took Mark some time to decide what he wanted to do but he soon found employment as a driver’s mate, which was something he thoroughly enjoyed and learned from.

Support is heavily linked to participant’s decision to discontinue their education. In both cases, this decision could have been different if they received the support they needed and schooling had not been such a frustrating experience. Especially for Jeremy, support could have had a significant impact, since him leaving school was not the first choice for his family.

The participants who continued into further or higher education were happy to do so, since it was their choice and not something they were obliged to do, unlike schooling. However, what made a real difference for them was that they could choose what they wanted to study, follow their interests and what they could understand and not engage with multiple subjects that they were unable to cope with. For those who attended university, it was a very good experience since they could pursue their interests, although they still had dyslexia-related difficulties. All participants described leaving compulsory education as a relief or similar. In modern Western societies where learning is privileged, discontinuing compulsory education can constitute a stigma. When learners leave the system and their decision is influenced by the lack of support, then those individuals are stigmatised as a result of poor institutional support.

Concluding comments

Children with dyslexia can become detached from education in multiple ways: academically, socially and emotionally (Zambo, 2004), which highlights their need for institutional support. The desire or necessity to leave the public mainstream school system has been highlighted in previous research (Zambo, 2004; Burden and Burdett, 2005) and by participants in my research (Jeremy and Mark), although Jeremy's choice is not possible for most pupils. This chapter highlighted multiple issues concerning educational and familial support. Also, the importance of parents and children having a level of 'choice' in the type of support they receive was considered. The narratives revealed variation in school support and its availability and this is supported in other research (Russell, 2003). There are parents who prefer that their children attend mainstream education, like Howard, while others are convinced their children will be better educated in SEN schools (Rogers, 2007a).

Future educational choices can be affected by the support children receive (Undheim, 2009), highlighting its importance. The narratives in this chapter explored the range of available institutional support, but even though the support can be well-intended and organised, it can still make pupils uncomfortable. How support is received depends on the young person's personality; the narratives revealed cases of children who were comfortable with in-class support and others who preferred receiving it in separate classrooms. Both of these types of support are already offered in schools. According to Lackaye and Margalit (2006), schools officials have to find ways to empower students, both those with unique abilities and those with disabilities and difficulties and to create a

socially accepting school environment. In a more accepting school environment, children will not be stigmatised because of their academic performance or for receiving support. Support is a very significant factor that influences dyslexic young people's sense of self. If offered correctly, it can enhance children's identities and self-efficacy because it enables them to believe that what is taught in class is not beyond their grasp.

The notion of spoiled identity is again confirmed here, especially in relation to institutional support. Children who received meaningful support did not develop a spoiled identity. On the other hand, those who did not receive any, or received support that was not helpful, had more problems with their identity construction. Consequently, the notion of fractured academic identity (discussed in Chapter 7), has its roots here, with the issue of support. Meaningful support is immensely important, since it can improve and positively support learning, enabling children to achieve across the curriculum. Lack of support (and support that is not meaningful) can lead to fractured academic attainment that in turn fractures the identity development of young dyslexic learners. Support is the one aspect of their lives that can have a significant impact on the quality of their school life and level of educational achievement. Given the difficulties dyslexic children have, support is the only part of their educational lives that can be flexible and alter their educational outcomes, significantly impacting children's future. With the right support, children can avoid developing a spoiled identity (or fractured academic identity) and overcome their difficulties or part of their difficulties.

A key finding of this study that could be implemented more generally is that it is empowering for children with dyslexia and other SEN to include them in discussions about what works for them and what type of support they would like. This is similar to the personalised learning system, in which students are given voice and can make decisions about their own learning (Robinson and Taylor, 2013). In secondary education, children are expected to make subject choices and play an active role in their learning (Pietarinen, 2000) and this freedom could be extended to choices of learning support. Adults can present pupils with specific choices according to their needs and what is possible. To offer or enforce forms of support that are considered embarrassing is ineffective in comparison to well-received methods. This is especially demonstrated in Matthew's narrative, which showed how he refused to cooperate with anyone who would cause him to stand out. If children have a voice, a say in which option they prefer, it could save them the embarrassment and the psychological effort unwanted support causes. If children are

comfortable with what they are engaging with, it can take away any distraction that unwanted support can bring. Finally, the type of support children receive and the way they are treated in the education system heavily contributes to a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1990), since uncomfortable and negative experiences contribute to stigma and negative self-perceptions. This is further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Dyslexic identity construction

in secondary education

In most modern Western societies, individuals are subject to and judged by certain values and regulations, one of which is completing compulsory education. This education will ensure that members of those societies possess knowledge and qualities that are culturally specific and desirable in a particular time frame; those who do not acquire those qualities can be excluded from schooling (Burden, 2005; Slee, 2011). Literacy is one of the most basic abilities learners are expected to acquire by the time they finish their compulsory education, but for dyslexic learners acquiring literacy can take considerable time and effort. According to a recent white paper, 'learning to read is the first and most important activity any child undertakes at school. Having this basic foundation unlocks all the other benefits of education' (DfE, 2010, p.43). Yet this same white paper reports that one in five children leave primary school without being able to read and write to the expected level. Crucially, literacy may not be acquired to the level of a typically developing learner, at least while a child is still in compulsory education. In addition to literacy, the education system in England is also aimed towards specific standards (which means high standards) and academic excellence (Francis, 2006), something that can be very apparent in classrooms (Lucey and Reay, 2002).

Achieving the educational goals set out in an educational system can be 'extremely difficult' for those who have dyslexia (Carroll, and Iles, 2006, p.652). As a result, the identity of children, young people and adults with dyslexia is influenced by their educational experience because of the value that literacy and education have in modern Western cultures (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002; Burden, 2005; Slee, 2011). Rowan (2010) argues that dyslexia can contribute to the formation of self-esteem while more specifically, Riddick *et al.* (1999) found a strong relationship between low reading performance and low self-concept or self-esteem for school children. In terms of school transitions, students who are vulnerable (meaning those who are frequently absent) have behavioural difficulties or academic deficiencies and may not be able to adjust to the new environment as well as those who are not vulnerable (Safer, 1986).

Children with low academic performance living within cultures that privilege this type of achievement are likely to experience emotions like anger, envy and self-attack when they are in an academic environment where only excellence is acceptable (Lucey and Reay, 2002). School transitions influence both children's well-being and motivation (Tuominen-Soini, Salmela-Aro and Niemivirta, 2012), while emotional experiences they have dealing with their difficulties as young people affect their adult lives (McNulty, 2003). Discussing qualitative studies, West, Sweeting and Young (2008) described transition from primary to secondary education as an experience that greatly affects young people's identities and well-being. They found that learners of lower ability were more likely to have poorer school transitions, something that can apply to dyslexic learners who have not found ways of coping with their difficulties. Moreover, they found that when lower ability was combined with low self-esteem, the likelihood of a poor school transition became even greater, while higher self-esteem indicated a better school transition.

In this chapter it is necessary to look holistically at some narratives, so there can be a more clear illustration of how different factors interact. The participants' stories showcase different approaches to their education experiences, with a good number of them developing negative feelings about themselves and others being determined to succeed in the goals they set for themselves. Negative experiences from childhood, painful even, are not easily forgotten and can influence adult life (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011), which makes school experiences crucial for young people's development. Critically, identity construction is an on-going process throughout childhood and beyond, but this chapter focuses on the transition to secondary education. It illustrates the various ways in which the research participants were affected by their educational experiences in terms of their identity. Their experiences are linked to the previous chapter discussing support, since as it has been argued, support influences identity construction.

School experiences and dyslexia

According to symbolic interactionism, and in agreement with Burden (2008), young people's sense of competence and well-being is affected by comparisons between them and others around them and the way that they understand other people's perceptions of them. School enjoyment for dyslexic people can be severely affected by their dyslexic difficulties. Self-esteem, perceptions about their dyslexia (Rowan, 2010) and school experiences can affect future occupation choices, since if children have continuous negative experiences further education may seem like a heavy burden (Undheim, 2009).

The above can also affect young people's approaches to learning (Rowan, 2010), while aspirations can influence learning, academic motivation and achievement (Young, 1998). Experiencing academic 'failure' in a public context, like the classroom, can induce feelings of shame and humiliation in dyslexic children, who can also feel self-conscious about their learning difficulty (McNulty, 2003). Lack of understanding from others can also add loneliness to those feelings (*ibid*).

According to Ingesson (2007), children with dyslexia often protect themselves by avoiding academic subjects at school and choosing occupations where they do not have to face their difficulties. It is also likely that students 'learn their place' through their positive or negative school experiences, find their 'academic identity' and ultimately their 'occupational identity' (Slee, 2010, p. 138). Their identities develop and are influenced by their experiences with others around them (Mead, 1967), like peers and teachers. Multiple relationships with such individuals develop in a school setting, where academic competence and achievement are central. Therefore, identities are partly shaped by the young person experiencing his/her self from other individual's standpoints (Mead, 1967), which can have negative consequences if they are not academically proficient. Many participants explained that they were anxious about going to school and some developed negative self-perceptions. As previously explored in the discussion about identity construction through the lens of symbolic interactionism, a culture outlines desirable characteristics and most members want to acquire them. Being unable to acquire those characteristics, in this case academic performance and literacy, can cause discomfort and stigmatisation. The participants evidence this below:

'I didn't want to go in when I was really behind and I didn't understand things so I kind of used to take a lot of sick days. You know, just to avoid it. [...] I was avoiding school and I didn't feel that brilliant about myself but once I got the support I needed I felt much better.' (Faye)

'I always went to school but I never wanted to. It was one of those things that always, like, you're made to do but I've...if I could've not gone, I wouldn't've. 'Cause I just didn't feel like it was for me at all. I think that dyslexia had a big impact in it, because I felt that it was so, like, draining, like, each time that I went in, I was having to try and remember everything that I'd done, which I found difficult. And re-write stuff and do essays within an hour. I found it quite difficult so I think that's what had a big impact on it.' (Erica)

‘So at school I was just...I was just really shy, unconfident, felt really stupid [...] So yeah, I didn’t enjoy school. I didn’t enjoy school at all.’ (Josephine)

Clearly, reluctance to attend school was related to dyslexic difficulties for the participants, which is also supported by existing research (McNulty, 2003). Research concurs with Erica’s narrative about finding the schooling experience draining. Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick (2011) found that dyslexic people need more time and energy to manage their lives, including school, which can be exhausting for them. The narratives revealed that the participants found certain school activities challenging to perform. This is confirmed by Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000), who found that avoiding situations that seem threatening, where they fear that they will ‘fail’, is a coping strategy that young people develop so that they can maintain a positive self-image, both towards their peers and for themselves. Avoidance of something that is perceived as frightening can also be caused by anxiety (Alexander-Passe, 2006). It can act as a self-protection strategy for dyslexic people (Ingesson, 2007; Undheim, 2009), since by avoiding activities at which they are not performing well, they also avoid negative feedback (Undheim, 2009) or teasing and bullying from their classmates (Singer, 2007).

In Faye’s and Melanie’s cases (Melanie’s narrative is in Chapter 4), they avoided certain subjects that they did not understand or were not performing well in. The vast majority of Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars’s (2000) research participants, who were all dyslexic, developed negative coping strategies for their difficulties. Similarly with my research, avoidance was one of those strategies. Avoidance can be used by dyslexic children as a method of diverting attention from their difficulties, but teachers can perceive it as laziness (Alexander-Passe, 2006).

In the other narratives presented here, a strong desire to avoid schooling is apparent although the participants did not actually avoid school. Their identities were protected by avoiding activities that made them feel inadequate. When learners avoid school or certain aspects of it, it means that they miss parts of the curriculum. Tobbell (2003) argues that this leads them to become disadvantaged on those aspects of the curriculum and that disadvantage is aggravated as they become unable to follow lessons. Realising that they are unable to follow lessons can lead students to lose their sense of achievement. Yet maintaining a sense of achievement and confidence as learners is important in secondary

education (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). Therefore, it is crucial for schools to support those who avoid subjects and are left behind.

Reading aloud in front of others caused anxiety for most participants, which is in agreement with McNulty (2003), whose participants experienced it as traumatic. Alexander-Passe (2008b) also found that dyslexic people can react to it by trembling and sweating. When individuals could not perform a culturally privileged task that was easy for others around them, this caused feelings of inadequacy. In a similar vein, Kimberly talked about how it feels for children with learning difficulties to be at school, where reading and writing are a key part of the day:

‘I think it [dyslexia] probably bleeds further into their private lives as well. But it’s easy to avoid at home, isn’t it? If you’re not very good at something, at home, you just don’t do it. Whereas here [at the school], there’s very little...I’m constantly amazed at how amenable many children with dyslexia are. Because they spend five hours a day doing something they can’t do. And I’d be bloody evil, if somebody made *me* do something [I can’t do] five hours a day. [...] I’d be horrible [...] And...I think...I’m constantly amazed at how good-natured they are, really. But it’s not just dyslexia, it’s, you know, anybody with *any* learning difficulty, really. And certainly, students with dyslexia, there *will* be parts of the timetable or the curriculum that they find easier. [...] It’s [dyslexia] part of their identity, and hidden away in there is gonna be all the tears and frustration, I find it very difficult to see that it’s gonna be a happy part for them. [...] If you’ve got *any* learning difficulties, school’s just a terrible time, it’s a toxic time for a lot of kids.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

This narrative is echoed by the earlier ones, where participants described how dyslexia-related difficulties made school life difficult and how they disliked being at school. From the above narratives it is apparent that learning difficulties reduced schooling enjoyment, which participants considered would have been much more pleasurable had they not had dyslexia. For pupils, school performance is a strong source of feedback about their abilities and positive feedback is considered to contribute to their school satisfaction (Verkuyten and Thijs, 2002). This is because a perceived sense of competence creates links between performance and school satisfaction; an example of that would be a child who considers himself/herself as intelligent because he/she is good at certain school subjects and good grades provide the satisfying feeling of academic competence (*ibid*). Considering how

important education and academic excellence are in Western cultures (Lucey and Reay, 2002; Rioux and Pinto, 2010) and how central education is in the lives of children (Russell, 2003), it is not difficult to link the sense of academic attainment with satisfaction about one's self and abilities.

The issue of anxiety was also discussed by the participants, as indicated here:

'I was nervous more [about my] work and my grades. But as soon as I was diagnosed it was such a relief to me.' (Jeremy)

'When I'm at home I feel like, all the pressure goes off, 'cause from tests and things, and I just relax doing, um, what I enjoy.' (George)

Riddick *et al.*, (1999) support these narratives in their findings, where dyslexic pupils had significantly higher levels of anxiety about their academic work than non-dyslexic participants. This is also confirmed by Carroll, and Iles (2006) and by Eissa (2010), who found both anxiety and depression was higher in poor readers. The anxieties participants discussed could be related to their inability to cope with the higher academic level. Safer (1986) concurs that this is a stressor for learners with academic 'deficiencies'. Undheim (2009) found that learners with dyslexia tended to take on heavy workloads to compensate for their difficulties, which could cause them to be more stressed than other children. Emma felt anxious and annoyed during reading and writing tasks:

'I felt stressed because if I'm doin' like an essay, and...and mum went through it with me, I get like annoyed because I've done it all...like...loads of it wrong and...it was all actually in the wrong tense and stuff.' (Emma)

As she got older, her interview taking place at Year 8, she found that her anxiety diminished somewhat and she was not as nervous as she was in Year 7. Similarly, Cody was occasionally anxious about her homework:

'Sometimes I felt a bit stressed from having a bit too much homework. And, um, I had quite a lot sometimes and I had to do it over...like...I went to bed quite late doing homework, but, and, I think that was kind of...the bit that I got a bit stressed about. [...] I wasn't, like, scared, but I knew if I hadn't done it, then it was over my shoulders. And I keep on telling myself, "you know you've got to do this

homework” and then I’d say “no, no, I won’t till later”. So...it was a bit like...I had to do it at that time, ‘cause out of my head.’ (Cody)

Apart from completing her homework on time she was not anxious at school, except for days when she undertook examinations. She explained that the reason she was worried about examinations was that she wanted to perform well in them. However, being performance-oriented in school can lead to preoccupation with ‘failure’ and cause burnout for pupils (Tuominen-Soini, Salmela-Aro and Niemivirta, 2012). From her narrative it seems that Cody was performance oriented, which is linked to feelings of anxiety (Linnerbrink, 2005; Daniels *et al.*, 2008) similar to those she described.

Specifically, Daniels *et al.* (2008) found that having high-performance goals increases a learner’s susceptibility to anxiety. As was explored in Chapter 4, even in primary education, Cody was worried about people laughing at her because of her difficulties. This fear of being laughed at is also found by McNulty (2003), whose participants found such experiences traumatic. Although her fear did materialise, she believed that in secondary school her dyslexia was not as important because most classmates, especially her friends, understood her situation. She enjoyed school, was happy to attend and always looked forward to the next day, but this does not always happen for people with dyslexia. Difficulties that vulnerable learners face during secondary education are not only due to the new environment, but also because they are finding it difficult to cope with higher anxiety levels (Safer, 1986). Other participants, like Josephine and Mark, did not enjoy school at all because dyslexia-related difficulties had a profound impact on their feelings about school.

‘[I was stressed] all the time. I hated it. I mean...to say that I hated school is an understatement. I really-really hated it. I’ve never been back and, I just...no, didn’t like it at all. Not at all.’ (Josephine)

‘I hated school full stop. [...] Just hated it. Probably because I was frustrated and couldn’t do anything.’ (Mark)

Similarly, Jeremy said that there was nothing he enjoyed about school, apart from having a backpack for his personal items. It seems that the backpack enabled him to carry non-school-related items that he enjoyed using. For example, his games console, which could

offer some rest and escape from experiences he could not tolerate. From the above narratives it is clear why leaving school can be a relief for dyslexic people.

Although not every participant said that they ‘hated’ school, they were still happy to leave when the time came. Similarly, other dyslexia research also presents leaving school as a relief (Undheim, 2009). Ingesson (2007) suggests that the first six years of schooling are the most difficult for dyslexic people’s self-esteem and well-being. My research shows that primary school was not always a good experience for the participants. It could be because during those first years dyslexia begins to become apparent, while the challenge for a child to learn to read is at its peak (Arkowitz, 2000). After the first six years in primary education, dyslexic people may find ways to succeed (Eissa, 2010) and make themselves feel better (Ingesson, 2007).

As children grow older they tend to find ways to cope with their difficulties:

‘I think as I got older [...] I learned to understand it, and I sort of learned how to deal with it. Yeah, I mean, like, being dyslexic is frustratin’ at times, you know, trying to write things down and stuff like that. But...it’s not frustrating now [that] I understand it...’ (Melanie)

On the other hand, there were participants who enjoyed attending school, like Katrina, John, George and Cody. Melanie was somewhere in the middle, since she did not ‘hate’ school, but also did not find it to be an experience she would want to revisit.

‘I had fun [at school]. I enjoyed it. Obviously it wasn’t that bad ‘cause I made it to further education, so yeah. Would I want to go back to school? No.’ (Melanie)

My participants demonstrated a difference between age groups, with the youngest participants having a more positive outlook towards schooling. This could be because they have not had a complete experience; after more years in the education system their perceptions could change.

For John, his dyslexia-related difficulties caused mistakes in his reading, writing and also his understanding of school subjects, which was frustrating. Despite his difficulties he enjoyed school from the beginning and looked forward to going there, while he also

enjoyed reading books. Indeed, dyslexic learners can become engaged in reading interesting books and enjoy the experience (Fink, 1995). Josephine was also this type of person, who always very much enjoyed reading books. John and Josephine's narratives indicate that dyslexic readers who are interested in reading still engage in it even when they find it tiring (Fink, 1995).

Although dyslexic people can enjoy reading or writing, like some participants did, there are problems associated with literacy that need to be addressed in secondary education. A combination of factors can contribute for a learner to become a shut-down learner. Factors include discouragement and disconnection with school, core 'deficiencies' in reading, writing/spelling, minimal gratification from school, dislike of reading/writing and anger with school (Selznick, 2009). These stem from basic 'deficiencies' in the child's learning that have not been addressed or even detected, which is aggravated in secondary education when the amount of school work and school demands increase considerably (*ibid*). Important others believing that behaviour issues, not dyslexia, are behind a child's behaviour in class can upset children (Hales, 2001). Josephine's difficulties disturbed her sense of self:

'All my time growing up, I always felt like my point of view, my way of life, my way of thinking was unacceptable to other people.' (Josephine)

Her narrative is clearly associated with Goffman's (1990) stigma, since she always felt different and did not fit into her school's cultural norms. Losing interest in one's studies can happen after transition (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Burden, 2008). Melanie had a similar reaction to Josephine, but she began to skip classes she found difficult and as she got older this behaviour became worse. She explained that as she got older and her understanding improved, her way of coping with dyslexia also improved. In addition, once she could explain to others what she could not understand, this helped her cope better.

Gabriel reacted to his difficulties by becoming annoyed and frustrated, especially when he felt that teachers ignored him and did not choose him to answer questions in class. He admitted being impatient, which led him to 'call out'. Nevertheless, he was able to reflect on his actions and was unhappy with his behaviour. He was also annoyed with his reading, as well as his handwriting, which he described as 'terrible'. Indeed, powerful feelings can

arise in children who have dyslexia, including feeling annoyed (Burden and Burdett, 2007) and angry (Ashton, 2001).

‘I just find it really annoying, that my brain works differently and like, I have all these problems with everything, and it just really annoys me, like, when I’m reading occasionally, a word would flip over if I’m using my green thing [overlay], but...it just really annoys me [...] when I don’t have my green [overlay] with me and, like, when I lost it, [...] reading is just so annoying.’ (Gabriel)

Emma also felt annoyed when she felt that she could have performed better in school tests. These feelings of annoyance relate to Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars’s (2000) research, who found that dyslexic people can have problems with aggression and stress. Annoyance is not aggression, but it is linked to it (Denson, 2009). Likewise, Singer (2007) found that many of her participants felt angry at school, but the majority did not reveal their feelings in the school context and tried to hide them from their peers. Lucey and Reay (2002) agree that when individuals are not performing according to cultural expectations they can experience anger. Josephine had problems with school officials who could not understand her difficulties and stopped trying to explain her subject knowledge to teachers:

‘I was really bad in my [music] lessons but if I was on my own I was fine. And I suppose in a way that describes my whole school life [...]. I suppose in hindsight because I couldn’t express myself and I couldn’t do what they wanted me to do, I couldn’t produce what they wanted me to produce, I gave up trying [...]. So I used to just do things for myself and I didn’t use to do things for other people ‘cause it didn’t see the point.’ (Josephine)

This has similarities to the learned helplessness described in other work and is about not trying to improve academically (Burden, 2008).

‘I did understand things but [...] the problems I had was explaining what I understood to other people. [...] I used to give up trying to explain that I understood so, you know, somebody would say something, I’d think ‘oh, yeah, I get that, I understand that’ and then when I’d hand in an essay, everything would come back as wrong.’ (Josephine)

Josephine also talked about giving up trying to explain her knowledge in Physics, which was a subject she could understand. Ultimately this altered her perception of schooling and hurt her grades, since she believed that she had the potential to perform much better, but could not do so without support. In Chapter 4, Melanie had the same problem in expressing her knowledge, which caused anxiety.

It has already been discussed that identity in dyslexic learners can be affected by in-class experiences and relations with others. Worrying about making mistakes in the classroom can be a serious, anxiety-provoking issue for them:

‘I don’t think they realised I was dyslexic and I said a word wrong and they all [classmates] thought the word was funny and they laughed. [I felt] quite upset. But, [...] I know now that if I laugh along with them they might not think it’s funny and stop laughing.’ (Cody)

The feelings Cody expressed are understandable (although she did not have problems with other in-class activities, like answering questions) and apprehension to reading out loud in the classroom is something many participants shared. Similarly, Emma was uncomfortable with reading at school because she was aware that she was not at the same reading level as her classmates and her reading did not sound ‘right’, which worried her. In Cody’s school, students had to read paragraphs in front of the class; in order to feel safe, she tried to read ahead and prepare for her turn so that she could avoid mistakes. When Cody’s classmates laughed she was upset but managed to hide it by laughing along with them, a strategy to discourage this behaviour. Likewise, Jack described reading out loud at school as ‘awful’, and was ‘embarrassed’ and ‘scared’ when he had to do it.

George mentioned breaking down because he felt that he could not understand or do Mathematics, but this did not happen often and did not affect his school enjoyment. These examples demonstrate how inability to perform certain tasks in class is a public ‘failure’ that is a very negative experience for dyslexic people (McNulty, 2003). George was still happy with his school and enjoyed it and felt that he could perform well if he focused, which is why he felt confident in the classroom. He looked forward to attending school, especially when he felt bored at home. His mother, Katya, supported his statements, saying that he was always in good mood and not easily upset. According to Katya, he was not upset with difficulties at school, never perceived his difficulties as a problem and his

position about it was to try his best. George's personality helped him with the perception of his difficulties because he was a happy and positive person. He was also popular at school and very sociable, which he utilised to his advantage, not being afraid of asking for help or shy about the additional support he received. However, the difficulties my youngest participants perceived as not upsetting could be considered as such in the future. This could explain why older participants were much more negative in their comments about their schooling experience.

School enjoyment for dyslexic learners is also affected by the fact that they have to work harder to achieve their goals, since they have to learn at the same level as their classmates, while dyslexia-related difficulties hinder their abilities and progress. Indeed, children with dyslexia (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000) and those with other learning difficulties (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006) often believe they have to work harder than others. This is discussed by participants later in the chapter. The additional effort they need to invest can cause pupils to become tired (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011). All this makes their ability to concentrate on what they have to learn more difficult since they have to overcome their learning difficulties at the same time. The most straightforward example of this is the difficulties participants faced when they had to write for a test or school work. They simultaneously concentrated on the act of writing and structuring their answers, which was not always possible. Without support their understanding would not always be articulated on paper, which was reflected in their grades. The same can happen with reading and both these cases have been covered in previous Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 5 it was established that some participants (Emma, Gabriel) refused to use reading and writing aids at school, especially visible ones which highlighted their learning difficulties. This signifies that these aids were considered stigmatising. Importantly, Gabriel felt lucky he was in a special literacy programme at his school but also felt he had to work much harder than other children. This is related to a previous comment from Erica, who accurately described having dyslexia and being at school as 'draining'. In the same vein, Jenna also talked about how much Emma had to work to improve her grades and levels:

'She works really hard, she's constantly revising, so, I know that she's putting effort in, she's always trying to put the effort in, but, it's just really difficult, 'cause I think the amount of effort she puts in, she should actually be getting [...] in some

circumstances higher levels. She's done really well in her Science but that's because she's revised and revised. So that's how she moved up there. [...] Funnily enough her Maths isn't really affected by it at all. The Maths is good. But it's just the literacy side, which...you know, the literacy kind of feeds into everything so she's only got to misread a question and that could scupper the whole answer, really.' (Jenna, parent)

John's mother, Mary, also stressed that if he overcame his reading and spelling difficulties, he would also improve his overall performance:

'I'm concerned, [...] you know, once you can understand and read...well, then everythin' else will come I think, you know. But it's...if he can't understand or can't read it, then it's holding him back, isn't it? Which is where it is with John. I think.' (Mary, parent)

Emma had already improved her grades from the previous academic year and aimed to improve even more, which she attempted with constant work. It was a difficult task, since she suffered headaches if she read for longer than 20 minutes and migraines if she looked at a whiteboard for long periods of time. Because of these difficulties it is clear how challenging it was for her to constantly revise and move up another level in Science, a subject she enjoyed. Cody was also aware that she worked more than her classmates although she did not always notice it, a perception that was reinforced by her mother:

'I do work a bit more because every time my mum keeps telling me, "You might not think you're working harder than the average person, but you're actually working harder than the average person because you've got to take in more information and then go round it, and then it comes out with the answer." So I do work a lot harder, yeah.' (Cody)

The concept that dyslexic people have to work harder than typically developing learners has been highlighted in existing research (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Lackaye and Margalit, 2006).

To return to an earlier point, children with dyslexia tend to feel different from others (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; McNulty, 2003; Eissa, 2010; Nalavany, Williams

Carawan and Rennick, 2011) and Kimberly explained how children feel when their difficulties are highlighted to others:

‘I still find that kids don’t want to have it [dyslexia]. But I think largely that’s to do with not being different. I think, you know, if you have anything that’s different, even like the wrong trainers or the wrong coat, they don’t want that. [...] I don’t think it’s really seen as a stigma. [...] I think *they* see themselves in a negative way because they can’t read and spell. But in their head it’s not necessarily dyslexia that’s the issue, it’s they can’t read and spell.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

Kimberly’s description of how children feel can be explained using symbolic interactionism. Despite her rejection of the term, Goffman’s notion of stigma (1990) is exemplified in Kimberly’s description: the cause of children’s negative feelings because they cannot do what others can, especially when it is culturally privileged. Even when they may not see it as stigma *per se*, they experience emotions associated with it. Research suggests that children’s self-esteem is ‘very vulnerable to feelings of being different’, especially in the first years of schooling and in matters as important as reading and writing (Eissa, 2010, p. 21). Kimberly’s narrative is supported by Riddick (2000), who found that dyslexic people internalised negative evaluations because of their reading and spelling difficulties, not because of their dyslexic label. Similarly, Jeremy believed that being different and standing out was not received well by his classmates:

‘The unfortunate thing about let’s say school students and peer groups, is that it is a very-very unforgiving environment and if...if you are different, you’re in trouble, basically.’ (Jeremy)

Perceiving one’s self as different and being seen as such can create social problems in a school environment (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). Learning difficulties can cause young people to struggle (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011) or feel alienated socially (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006), which is reflected in Jeremy’s narrative but did not happen with the majority of my participants. Other research also suggests that the difficulties dyslexic young people have can negatively influence their peer relations and cause bullying (Eissa, 2010). Learning-disabled children can be perceived as less acceptable than other children and can be rejected by peers (Yu, Zhang and Yan, 2005).

According to Barton (1993), when disability is perceived as inability to function, it can lead to unfavourable identifications of those who have it, considering them problem people. However, it does not mean that people with disabilities always feel different from others (Watson, 2002). Reluctance to be seen as different is the reason why many of the participants were not comfortable with using reading and/or writing aids, being taken out of class or receiving visible in-class support. Interestingly, it made them stand out from the other children, which they wanted to avoid. Kimberly explained that as children grow older, their need to be the same as everyone else disappears and they therefore start to accept help, look for it and are glad to receive it, which does not necessarily happen at the beginning of their secondary education. She believed that delays in their desire to receive help, because they do not want to be different, acts negatively since bad habits become more established with time, making them harder to ‘un-learn’.

My data suggest that having multiple difficulties at school can lead children to seek escape from their difficulties. Josephine found multiple ‘escape routes’ to help her with her frustration while she was in full-time education. She started with play while at primary school, continued with excessive reading even though she read slowly, and by playing music on her own. As she got older, her coping mechanisms escalated into negative behaviour:

‘I found it very difficult [being at boarding school]. I used to self-harm when I was at school. ’Cause I used to get so upset about things, I used to cut my hands or stuff, and...by the time I was in the sixth form I was anorexic, because that was...I felt I could control [...] that. But yeah. I didn’t...I didn’t like anything about school, I just...I hated it.’ (Josephine)

After graduating from school, anorexia, excessive reading and exercise were her continuing escape routes. Her perpetual frustration while she was at school led her to harming behaviour, although she overcame this later in her life. Thus, she developed harmful aspects in her identity because she was constantly distressed. Josephine’s case highlights the need for support for dyslexic young people, as argued in previous research (Humphrey, 2003; Alexander-Passe, 2006). Even if school culture and society perceptions do not change, and dyslexia is still perceived as stigmatising, small support actions can make a difference in children’s lives since they can aid them with their difficulties. According to Stryker, emotions are indicators of adequacy for performance in certain roles

(Turner, 2013). Participants who found their performance unacceptable developed negative feelings about themselves, for example Josephine.

Effects of secondary education on dyslexic learners' identities

The most immediate and significant impact of the primary to secondary education transition on young people's identities is during its early stages, as it is with the 'dip' in educational attainment (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008). Some of the participants were aware of their dyslexia but still blamed themselves for their difficulties, finding ways of explaining their mistakes or difficulties as their fault. Gabriel felt this way because he omitted words and letters during literacy tasks.

'I don't know why that is. I don't know if it's just I'm not concentrating or I just get mixed up but I don't know that. That's really annoying, 'cause I always do that.
(Gabriel)

Both in England and other countries (such as the United States), students are placed according to ability in each subject (setting). This can be distressing for dyslexic learners. Josephine, for example, found multiple classification confusing:

'When I went there [secondary education], I was placed in the bottom division for maths and English. But they put me in the top division for the sciences and art [...] and music. It was really weird. So to certify, they're saying...they couldn't see that I *did* have intelligence but I couldn't do certain things [...] and that was really weird.'
(Josephine)

She discussed the varying teacher expectations and how they made her feel about herself:

'It was really disorientating, actually, because I wasn't put in a class and I was with everybody because ...we were split into different divisions of whether you were good or average or poor and for some things I was in the good division and some things I was in the bad division. So we would have different classrooms and different teachers and it was...it was disorientating because I was never quite sure what was expected of me, you know, one minute they seemed to be expecting me to be intelligent and ok and the next minute they seem to think that I was really stupid and didn't know how to do things and... so I found that quite disorientating,

and it also meant that I was always being put with different students, so it was difficult to make friends. And that was another thing, which I found quite difficult.’
(Josephine)

Alternating between classrooms and classmates was difficult for Josephine and it could have also been affected by her difficulty with organisational skills. On the other hand, according to Kimberly, such changes can help children hide the fact that they are attending a learning support class. Thus, it can be positive for those who are embarrassed about being different. Many adults, especially those who are important figures, can affect the identities (Hewitt, 2007) of dyslexic learners. Teachers can confuse lack of performance with lack of intelligence (Kloomok and Cosden, 1994) and awareness about learning difficulties is important to avoid this.

As already established in this chapter, education professionals have certain expectations of their students and provide feedback to parents about it and this affects identity. Teachers are important others in the lives of children who attend school (Humphrey, 2003; Glazzard 2010) and positive or negative comments from them can influence the way dyslexic learners perceive themselves (Glazzard 2010) and the subjects those teachers teach. Pre-existing uncertainties dyslexic people have about themselves can be aggravated by others (Ingesson, 2007). However this does not mean that teachers as a group can be blamed for the low self-esteem of dyslexic learners, but merely that some of them, either consciously or unconsciously, can affect it through their comments or actions. This is related to the culture of schooling, where excellence is the desirable outcome (Lucey and Reay, 2002; Rogers, 2007a) and pupils who do not achieve those expectations are only tolerated (Rogers, 2007a).

It cannot be denied that teachers can affect learner’s self-perceptions, which is confirmed by the data from my research. Arguably, teachers’ relationship with dyslexic learners can have positive or negative effects, depending on how teachers react to those dyslexia-related difficulties (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Glazzard, 2010). According to symbolic interactionism, other people’s positive or negative reaction to an individual’s performance can significantly impact on the emotions the individual experiences, which in turn affect identity formation (Turner, 2013). For people with learning disabilities, Kloomok and Cosden (1994) found that the most important influence was from parents, with teachers having an insignificant contribution to self-esteem. However, comments made by teachers

and peers can affect dyslexic learners and if the effect is negative, it can act against positive parental support (Glazzard, 2010). Therefore, teachers can also improve the way that dyslexic people feel about themselves (Singer, 2007).

This section presents both positive and negative effects and provides examples, since participants talked about their own experiences with teachers and the way they were influenced by them. The first to be discussed are negative experiences.

‘My parents were told that my brother and I, and my brother is also dyslexic, were too stupid and we needed to go to a special needs school.’ (Josephine)

After this, Josephine’s parents took their children to a private school. She explained that she did not enjoy primary education either, because she felt ‘stupid’. Every day before break time, every child had to learn to spell a word or write down a number, not being allowed outside before this was done. She continued to feel ‘stupid’ throughout her schooling since she struggled with her learning:

‘I used to write poetry and essays and stories and things but I always used to get really low marks and the teacher used to complain to my parents on the parents day that...that my handwriting was really-really bad and terrible and she couldn’t read what I’d written and all of this sort of stuff.’ (Josephine)

The narratives also reveal that some participants felt ‘stupid’ because of difficulties they experienced at school:

‘So I just thought I was stupid, I thought I was stupid the entire time I was at school.’ (Josephine)

‘I thought I was stupid, basically [...] I think that especially in the first years of school I felt like I was quite stupid. ‘Cause I wasn’t at the same level as everybody else. [...] [This changed] towards the end of school, where I was getting like the highest marking for coursework in my class [...] out of everybody and it was quite nice to be able to say, “well, I’ve got a learning difficulty and I’m still at the top, so it can’t be too bad!” ’ (Erica)

Through the above narratives it is apparent that some participants had low self-perceptions, which concurs with Humphrey's (2002b) research, who found that one-third of their dyslexic participants who attended mainstream education felt 'lazy, stupid or thick'. Similarly, Zambo (2004, p. 87) found that many children with dyslexia felt 'stupid' or 'lazy'. Poor academic performance can indeed lead a person to believe that they are not intelligent (Kloomok and Cosden, 1994). Activities that seem easy for their classmates are difficult for those with dyslexia (Burns, 1982; Alexander-Passe, 2006), which can make them feel anxious (Alexander-Passe, 2006).

Crucially, research indicates that dyslexia can lead to varying feelings of inferiority (Arkowitz, 2000; Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Alexander-Passe, 2006; Ingesson, 2007; Singer, 2007; Eissa, 2010) and many dyslexic learners feel 'stupid' (Humphrey, 2002b; Zambo, 2004; Ingesson, 2007; Singer, 2007; Eissa, 2010), as did some of my participants. Importantly, those who experience educational 'failure' can interpret it as a personal 'failure' (Dale and Taylor, 2001) and therefore feelings of inferiority are reinforced. Such self-perceptions can be linked to dyslexic learners having lower academic attainment than their peers (Humphrey, 2002b). Also, they can be related to memories of being laughed at by other children, fear of giving wrong answers in class and other's perceptions that those children are 'on the thick side' (Dale and Taylor, 2001, p. 1000).

This type of learned helplessness can happen with dyslexic people (Thomson, 2003), especially when their sense of 'failure' is very strong (Burden, 2008). It is important for children to have a positive self-image in front of peers (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). It is also important to sustain learner's motivation (*ibid*) and therefore comments about dyslexic children's writing or reading need to be made in a way that does not discourage them. From the narratives it can be understood that participants who believed they were 'stupid' or had many corrections and comments about their literacy skills, were discouraged from attending certain classes and in some cases were apprehensive towards attending school.

The narratives below demonstrate inappropriate teacher behaviour, which has also been explored in the previous chapters and shows that dyslexic learners can have negative experiences with individual teachers. Such relationships are well-documented in existing research (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000; Dale and Taylor, 2001; Glazzard, 2010; Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Negative relationships do not only

involve dyslexic learners, but also occur in the general school population (Gorard and See, 2011). They can either depress children's ambition (Gorard and See, 2011) or have the opposite effect (McNulty, 2003), which is discussed in Melanie's narrative below. According to Singer (2007), teachers must be careful how they treat dyslexic people in front of their peers and raise dyslexia awareness within their peer group. Ultimately, negative teacher behaviour can be imitated by students, which can lead to bullying problems (Dale and Taylor, 2001). However, it does not mean that teachers are the only ones who affect this aspect of dyslexic people's identity construction.

A number of participants received negative comments from teachers that were very personal. Those were Josephine (her case is described in the Chapter 4 and involved a teacher's attempt to ridicule her) and Melanie. Melanie's negative interaction with a teacher at her primary school initially affected her identity, but ultimately she reacted to it in a positive manner. She was unsure why that teacher behaved in such manner but believed that it was affected by her being a poor child at a school with children from predominantly wealthy families.

'When I was at primary school, my, my headmistress of my primary school decided to tell me, quite nicely, that I was an idiot and I'd never amount to anything, so that really helped for the self confidence [...] I just thought I'll prove you wrong [...] I'll never forget that day, when she was terrorising me...' (Melanie)

Melanie's reaction is echoed in McNulty (2003), who found that such conflicts with others can provide significant motivation for dyslexic learners, who try to prove them wrong. Indeed, according to reflected appraisals, when a person who is considered undesirable offers an appraisal, it can push one's self-views towards the opposite direction (Sinclair *et al.*, 2005). This does not come without drawbacks, since it can cause significant concerns or denial from dyslexic people, who may even refuse useful resources (McNulty, 2003).

Melanie's case, confirms Humphrey's work (2002b, p. 5), who found that half their dyslexic participants, especially before an official diagnosis, 'had been persecuted' by teachers who did not believe that their problems were dyslexia-related. It is also noted that in mainstream schools, children can be perceived by others or even themselves as not trying hard enough (Zambo, 2004). Such experiences can cause learners to adopt those beliefs about themselves and strengthen existing ones. Teachers may also have negative

expectations of students because of their dyslexia label and the stigmatisation it can lead to (Riddick, 2000). Thus, while dyslexic learners are in mainstream education their self-esteem and self-concept levels can suffer, creating unhelpful 'emotional baggage', but it does not always influence learner's perceived competence in all subjects (Humphrey 2002b, p. 5).

For Melanie, this belief was strong during primary education and although it improved during secondary, it still existed. She explained how she felt when she could not cope in the classroom:

'I went to lessons, like, I enjoyed...I went to English, I didn't go to Maths, didn't like Maths, I just didn't understand it, and I just felt like a bit of an idiot, not being able to understand it, and it, like, my whole class understood it and we'd move on and I'd sit there thinking "yeah, I really don't get what you're on about" so I didn't enjoy maths for that reason so I just didn't go in the end.' (Melanie)

According to Melanie, her perceptions changed when she started improving her skills, as evidenced below:

'My volunteerin' and obviously getting help with my dyslexia and stuff like that, my confidence and stuff built, and the fact that I, you know, I slowly began to realise that I wasn't an idiot and I could actually do this stuff, I just needed to...the help to write it down and read it and stuff like that.' (Melanie)

Although Melanie was diagnosed early, she was unaware of her dyslexia. Both her parents and school officials were aware of it but withheld this information from her. Importantly, it was her right to be informed about being assessed and the outcome of her assessment. As evidenced in her narratives, not knowing she had dyslexia contributed negatively to her confidence and academic attainment. Finding out she was dyslexic impacted on her self-esteem, since she realised that many of her difficulties were dyslexia-related and not caused by a lack of intelligence. Awareness also enabled her to learn about dyslexia, understand it, learn how her brain works and how she could address her difficulties (Zambo, 2004). Arguably, the teaching delivery that does not suit the learning style of a dyslexic person could also contribute to the problems (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002).

A diagnosis can provide relief, or in some cases shame, to dyslexic people (Ingesson, 2007; Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000) but here, none of the participants expressed shame about their dyslexia. A diagnosis can help the learners understand why they experience difficulties (Ingesson, 2007; Glazzard, 2010) although they could internalise their label (Singh and Ghai, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 2, labelling can cause diverse reactions from children. For some it can lead to stigma but it can prove helpful for others (Riddick, 2000). Glazzard (2010) concurs with the positive effects a diagnosis can have on self-esteem, with the diagnosis having a much more positive effect on self-image than other factors, such as teachers or peers.

Labelling can also aid dyslexic people to overcome their difficulties after seeking information about it, like Melanie did. Her narrative illustrates the importance of support for learners with dyslexia, since her confidence began to increase after she received the support she needed. Also, as she became older her attitude towards dyslexia improved. The reason why she believed the bullying episode described in chapter 4 did not affect her was that she was older (it happened at the final year of her secondary education). She explained that if she were younger when the incident took place, she would have probably taken it wrongly. Indeed, older children are more likely to ignore bullies than younger ones, who may cry or run away (Smith, Shu and Madsen, 2001). Melanie also attributed her not being affected by the person who attempted to bully her to her being used to similar situations with her siblings.

Even when children are not labelled, they tend to do it for themselves when they come into contact with other children. Comparing their work to others' contributes to that. Gabriel also talked about his confidence increasing when his work was better than others', which happened in subjects he was performing well in. Crucially, he was very happy when he was able to complete tasks correctly, but when he made mistakes his confidence was reduced again. He was also confused about his dyslexia and being different from others lowered his confidence. At the time of the interview, he was in the process of understanding his diagnosis and finding out about dyslexia, since he was diagnosed in Year 6. Although Gabriel did compare his work to that of his classmates, he did not compare his handwriting. Similarly, Matthew only compared his performance with others in areas he was confident in, ignoring areas he was not performing well in.

‘[I] almost subconsciously, deliberately failed to compare myself in what I was bad at.’ (Matthew)

My data suggest that this would be a good defence mechanism for children who tend to compare themselves to others, since literacy is a crucial part of schooling and comparisons in it could act negatively for their self-esteem. For example, Emma compared her work to that of others in her year with negative outcomes for her self-perception:

‘They’re really good at something and I’m comparing myself to them and I’m thinking “Oh, I’m rubbish at that and everything”.’ (Emma)

Comparing work to that of classmates commonly happens and Kimberly believed that it would be strange if it did not. The narratives suggest that comparing can act both positively and negatively, depending on children’s approach to it and how they use it. For Mark, the most important difficulty for his identity construction was being aware that he could not read and write as well as everyone else, which did not only affect him during compulsory education but throughout his life. He was frustrated, especially with individuals who perceived dyslexic people as ‘stupid and thick’, where in fact as he said they only need to find themselves. Jack had experiences that both increased and decreased his confidence but ultimately he was relatively confident at school. His negative experience was that he described himself as ‘top of the stupid class’, which was later reversed by a dyslexia test that included an IQ test, where his score was high and resulted in a ‘big ego’.

In terms of teachers increasing student confidence, Josephine had a positive experience within secondary education. It was with a teacher who helped her increase her confidence in English, a subject that she struggled with. She considered choosing English for A-level only because she deeply enjoyed reading but was not confident that she could perform well. But during a lesson, students started asking the English teacher how she thought they would perform if they chose English for A-level. This led to the teacher discussing how she thought each person in the class would find the assessment:

‘The only thing that I remember that made me feel good about myself was [...] she went around the class and said, you know, “you’ll find it difficult, you’ll find it easy” or this and she came to me and she said “oh, you’ll find it a breeze, Josephine!” And I was SO shocked! Really shocked! Because I’d been in the third

division for English, I wasn't expected to pass my O levels or anything like that, so I couldn't believe that she thought I'd find it easy to do. And what she realised was that I could understand, that I understood things but I wasn't very good at writing. [...] And I remember that, because I just thought yeah, "oh she'll say oh, you'll really struggle, you'll find it difficult" and you know, "you're not good at writing and you can't spell" and all of this sort of stuff and she says "oh, you'll find it a breeze". And I liked English from that point onwards, I really enjoyed it.' (Josephine)

Similarly, Gabriel had a conversation with his teachers that increased his confidence:

'[My confidence] It's increased because, like, I've been told that I'm good at it, like, I had [a] parents evening, on Thursday and, like, I was told that was good at the subjects I was good at, so...so that's what boosts your confidence [...] when someone tells you that you're good at it. (Gabriel)

Taking this and the previous narratives into account, encouragement by important others such as teachers can significantly improve dyslexic learner's belief in their own selves. Importantly, Singer (2007) had dyslexic participants who relied on parents and teachers to feel better about themselves. How feelings about themselves are constructed does not stop there. Research suggests that dyslexic learners can attribute their successes to external factors, not their abilities, which indicates that they feel they are not in control of their learning (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002; Glazzard, 2010). Nevertheless this notion does not come unchallenged; other research supports the idea that dyslexic learners believe that effort leads to academic success (Burden and Burdett, 2005). Importantly, there can be truth in both views.

For Matthew, experiences with teachers varied, with individuals with negative attitudes in the final years of his primary education but understanding ones in secondary education. Some of his primary education teachers perceived his dyslexia as a 'problem' rather than 'an opportunity', which is linked to Jeremy's viewpoint about his dyslexia, which was positive (discussed later in the chapter). Other research indicates that people with difficulties appreciate and remember teachers who were good with them (Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars, 2000). Young people's identities are also affected by the way others see them and the way they encourage or discourage them. Those who can affect how young people

see themselves are people who are considered important by the young people and their opinions are valued. Parents and teachers can therefore significantly affect identity formation. Kimberly discussed dyslexic learners in general and how they feel about their dyslexia:

‘I think it [dyslexia] does upset them. And sometimes you get kids who just become very tearful when they think about it. But usually they will avoid thinking about it as much as possible. And then you get the other way, you get kids whose parents have built them up so much...we have got students like this, who...it’s like...well, learning isn’t important, you can’t do it, it doesn’t matter. And they are actually really bolshie in the classroom. And really, quite unpleasant to try and help, ‘cause they won’t take any help we invite on. Especially for teaching assistants who they perceive as having less status than teachers. [...] If their parents have said, you know, it doesn’t matter, you’re never gonna be any good at it anyway, or you’ll be fine when you leave school, [...] [they’re just] resistant. Or even obstructive sometimes, from the road get go, really. A lot of it is down to parents. There’s very few parents who see dyslexia as a challenge to be overcome. Whereas many of them will either see it as...as their child is a victim, and therefore school is bad or they will see dyslexia as making their child special and so [...] normal rules don’t apply. And then when the normal rules don’t apply, the normal rules don’t apply to them here and they’re just getting into trouble all the time, ‘cause they won’t do anything.’ (Kimberly, SENCo)

This also relates to the narratives that were presented earlier, where the importance of other’s support for dyslexic people’s identities was highlighted. Josephine was never confident while she attended school and George had problems when he could not understand lessons:

‘I was a very unconfident child, you know, I didn’t have any confidence or any self-esteem and I...I found it difficult to talk to people, and all sorts of things. I was just very lacking in confidence, very shy, and didn’t really interact very well and just kind of lived in my own little world most of the time, and the friends I made, I made very slowly and then they became very good friends, I wasn’t somebody who made loads and loads of friends. I think eventually I became verbally much more able, I was able to communicate better talking.’ (Josephine)

‘Sometimes in Maths, ‘cause...I really don’t get it and feel like I can’t do it and break down. So...this happens from there sometimes if...I don’t get it and break down. [...] But most of the time I’m actually ok. [then when asked, he stated that he didn’t think about his difficulties too much]’ (George)

Mark faced negative experiences from individuals who could not understand him. As in Dale and Taylor’s research (2001), there were people in the classroom who perceived him as ‘thick’. He was not diagnosed with dyslexia while he was at school and did not receive any support at the time.

‘I always knew there was something...but you could never say “it’s that” or “it’s this”. You know, because, everyone thinks “oh, you’re rather thick, stupid” or whatever. Or idle, ah, and that’s not necessarily true. It’s a fact that I don’t see things in the same way that everyone else does. [...] I’ve never honestly thought I’m thick. Which is probably...a lot of dyslexic people do think “oh, there’s something”...you know, they’re thick and stupid and all the rest of it. And I don’t, um, I’ve never thought I’m thick, [...] I’m stupid. The only thing I do know for definitely is that it’s held me back career-wise.’ (Mark)

‘I was diagnosed in primary school but no one bothered to tell me. [...] It wasn’t until I went to senior school. So you thought it was your fault and it was your...I just thought I was an idiot. [...] And I was diagnosed quite early but, um, I don’t know, the school never bothered to point anything out like that to me.’ (Melanie)

Jack had a similar experience, although he was at primary education when he was diagnosed. Before his diagnosis, he was aware that he was somehow different from others:

‘I just think...I didn’t know what’s going on. Before I was tested had no idea...I knew there’s something wrong but I didn’t...you know, had no idea why.’ (Jack)

This feeling participants had, that there was something ‘wrong’ with them, is supported by McNulty (2003), who found that those feelings can result in low self-esteem and in some cases can feel traumatic. For example, Jack used to compete with other children about who could write the most pages and noticed that others wrote significantly more pages than he could and that he had multiple red marks on his writing. After his diagnosis he understood the reason for his difficulties, but also admitted to using dyslexia as an excuse for ‘getting

away' with work. When he was aware of his dyslexia, he saw himself as different from others and at that time it was in a negative way:

'You feel very different. So you don't really know...why...what's going on [...] I didn't feel, like, stupid, [...] you feel like you're not quite in the same...you know, the academics system, so you don't feel part of that.' (Jack)

This feeling of being different, shared by many of the participants, is supported in Rowan's (2010) work, where dyslexic participants felt different from others. Feedback and reactions from others can either reinforce or weaken this identity perception. This is influenced by children trying to improve or change their performances in a specific role (Turner, 2013), in this case their school performance; this leads to the next section.

Self-esteem and school performance

This section investigates how school achievement influenced self-esteem for my research participants. Self-esteem can be affected by dyslexia (Rowan, 2010), although dyslexia did not affect this aspect of identity in all participants. Most of them did experience a change in their self-esteem, albeit temporary. However, for some it had a profound effect, as documented by Josephine's and Erica's narratives.

Ability groups (in her case, setting) used in her secondary school affected Emma's confidence negatively, since she had to be in some low ability groups because of her difficulties. Contrary to those who were put off by ability groups, these groups were not viewed negatively by all learners in my research. George and John were happy there because of the additional support they received. Interestingly, Although Emma was in some low ability groups, she believed that she could improve, and so did Cody. According to Lackaye and Margalit (2006), when individuals have a belief in themselves, it contributes to the effort they invest towards their goals.

'I'll always try and get higher every time with my levels...' (Cody)

Her narrative indicates that Cody put great effort towards improving and believed that she could achieve her goal, confirming Lackaye and Margalit's (2006) finding. Matthew also experienced ability groups in secondary education and was part of the 'gifted and talented' groups in mathematics and science, which increased his confidence to the point where he

became, as he said, arrogant in those subjects. He was not in such groups during primary education, which he attributed to the different learning style. He explained that in primary school, learning was based on memorisation, whereas secondary education focused on applying knowledge, which increased his achievement. He was self-aware and only confident within his comfort zone and not in subjects he was did not perform well in:

‘I knew sort of verbally in class, [...] in the maths side, I was pretty good. I mean I knew I was crap at, you know, English and French. And I didn’t really have a problem with that ‘cause that wasn’t really where I [...] wanted to go. I knew I needed to be up to sort of an acceptable standard to sort of get through...’
(Matthew)

The only part of secondary education he did not enjoy was the learning support classes for his dyslexia, since he believed he was not approached in the right way and struggled in his relationship with his specialist teacher. This issue was also addressed in the previous chapter.

For Katrina, secondary education was a positive change. Her self-esteem improved significantly because, as explained in Chapter 4, she was not constantly repeating the same lessons and learning outcomes. Her lesson repetition can be explored with research about pupils who repeat an academic year. Research suggests that repetition of an academic year creates multiple problems: negative effects on the children's mental health and increased chances of dropping out of school (McGrath, 2006), school alienation, embarrassment, impaired peer relations (Brophy, 2006), and does not aid academic outcomes (Brophy, 2006; McGrath, 2006). However, some educators believe that if students are allowed to pass classes without having successfully fulfilled certain requirements, their learning struggles are simply pushed to the next educational level without being solved (Westbury, 1994), which could have been what Katrina’s teachers feared. On the other hand, repeating a grade can cause emotional strain, leading to lower self-esteem. There is no way of knowing which children will benefit from repeating and which will not (Westbury, 1994).

Importantly, in Katrina’s case it was obvious that she was not benefiting from the repetition since she could not progress, which ought to have prompted her teachers to use another approach. Repetition of whole school years is not entirely similar to Katrina’s repetition of the same exercises and levels. Nevertheless, the stigma (Fertig, 2004; Brophy,

2006) and low self-esteem (Brophy, 2006; McGrath, 2006) associated with repeating a class led to similar feelings for Katrina, since other children in her class were able to progress and she was held behind, constantly repeating the same levels. In other words, she could still witness others moving up, while she was held behind. After entering secondary education she was offered support and was not repeating the same lessons. This led to a new interest in school and she was keen on having new homework and classes.

Her father described it as what sounded like a liberating experience for her. She was suddenly not held back, which led to an overwhelming increase in her grades and general school performance, although she still struggled with her spelling. This, however, does not mean that Katrina found secondary education easier. Burden's work (2008) highlights that dyslexic difficulties can cause students to lose their interest in schooling. Therefore, learners can be discouraged and lose interest due to their difficulties, although it did not happen with Katrina. She could enjoy her school experience more, improving her grades at the same time. Howard also said that in primary school she was not able to interact well and would not defend herself whenever there were problems, which changed at her secondary school:

'She seems to be a lot more happier, more outgoing, where before [...] she wouldn't interact very well. But that's because she's forever getting told, "You're wrong. Go back again."' (Howard, parent)

By working with pupils from all ability levels, she became much happier and started to enjoy schooling. Her spelling difficulties did not diminish her school enjoyment. Since entering secondary education, her difficulties were no longer at the centre of her learning and daily school activities. This made her happier to learn, allowed her to progress with her lessons and improved her self esteem:

'It's [improved (the self-esteem)] because she's been let to do what she thinks she needs to do for herself and progress. She's progressing how she thinks she should progress, you know, with a little help saying, "You should be doing this." Instead of being told, "No, you're going back to this level." [...] The high schools have a better ethos of throwing you into the fire and seeing how you cope and then helping you if you can't. Where the primary schools, if you're not doing well they keep you down. You know, you must meet this tick box, instead of saying, "Well, you can't do that, well see if you can catch up on that."' (Howard, parent)

She changed from being a child that did not have friends or interact well with others, to being a more sociable person who frequently earned ‘stickers’, which were used by the school as a reward when students performed well. Similarly, Cody was also motivated to improve and always tried to do achieve higher performance every time there was a test, although she was not always able to achieve that.

It is important that learning difficulties and self-esteem issues are addressed as well as possible during compulsory education because otherwise they persist after learners graduate and attend university (Riddick *et al.*, 1999). Dyslexic participants from the research by Riddick *et al.*, who all attended university, still felt the effects of the negative experiences they remembered from their time at school on both how they felt and on how they performed when engaging with literacy tasks (*ibid*, p. 241). The narratives demonstrated how positive or negative reinforcement can affect children’s identities and how their emotions motivate them to commit to certain roles (Mead, 1967; Turner, 2013). How individuals adopt cultural expectations and try to perform according to those expectations (Goffman, 1990) was also demonstrated in children’s attempts to improve their grades and general academic performance. Participant narratives have so far demonstrated a fractured academic attainment, as a result of their difficulties and educational experiences.

Positive identity experiences

Burden and Burdett (2005) argued that true adjustment to a condition comes when that person no longer wishes that they did not have the condition, which can come when they become successful in what is important to them. This cannot only be linked to academic attainment, but also to success in other aspects, like work. Here, there were many participants who attributed positive aspects of their self to dyslexia. None of the participants said that they wished they were not dyslexic. They considered dyslexia something that made them different and was a significant part of their self. Other research also shows that dyslexia is a very important part of children’s selves, and that they believe that they are different from others in some parts of their ‘self’ (Rowan, 2010). Conversely, disability research has shown that some people do not perceive their disability as something that identifies them (Watson, 2002), but this may be a difference that relates to physical disabilities and not learning difficulties, suggesting that the way people perceive themselves can vary, depending on their disability. Nalavany, *et al.* (2011) argue that those who are resilient and accept their dyslexia can lead successful lives by identifying and

using personal strengths and developing strategies that compensate for their difficulties. Participants in my research described both the difficulties dyslexia brought them but also other aspects of their character, however small, that might not have been there had they not been dyslexic.

‘I think it makes me like kind of special, that I got like a thing, but it’s like a...I’m trying to do, like still do everythin’ I want with my dreams and...it’s how I like to be.’ (John)

Echoing the argument by Nalavany *et al.* (2011) about the importance of accepting dyslexia and identifying personal strengths, Jeremy’s perception of what being dyslexic had offered and taught him was slightly different from other participants. His work environment was not forgiving and dyslexic difficulties could cost him, which caused him to find solutions to his problems. He also believed that dyslexia offered him more in terms of character:

‘I think it’s gone from being something that I didn’t understand, something that was a problem [...] at school to now being such a large part of my identity that...I write many-many times that I attribute my success to dyslexia and dyspraxia. Because of the way that it has led me in my life to, you know, be a bit of an outcast, and then taken out of school and actually end up in the very strange career that I am. But I wouldn’t be sitting here today if it wasn’t for those learning disabilities. I mean, I hate calling them disabilities, they’re not, I go so far as to say in every one of my speeches that it’s an ability. Whatever life takes me it gives [...] and I think that’s absolutely true for dyslexia. And more people need to look at it in that way, that we as dyslexic people have a different outlook on life. Because we see the world through different eyes, because we look at things differently because of the way that our brains work [*explains he is very persistent with his work and explaining that he has come up with multiple new products*] So it was that persistence I think that dyslexia had taught me, you know, in life you sometimes do have to just do things until you get it right. [...] I’m thankful of dyslexia for giving me that [...] I think we’ve [dyslexic people] got a very large capacity for being successful in business because we just don’t think along traditional lines. And most of our ideas are incredibly simple, it’s just that the finer details that we see that other people don’t.’ (Jeremy)

From the above narrative, it is clear that Jeremy did not perceive his dyslexia as a disability that could hold him back from what he wanted to do. How other dyslexic people perceive it varies, and in Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars (2000) the majority of participants considered dyslexia a disability. Importantly, Matthew perceived his dyslexia as an inherent part of his personality, and realised that being dyslexic offered both strengths and weaknesses. He knew about his dyslexia at a very early age, perceiving it as something that was part of his self and aided him in his work.

‘In my company where I work, I reckon there are probably...at least a quarter is dyslexic. And there’s this sort of view that [...] dyslexic people have an easier light of [...] their sort of strength in visual side tends to make [...] the architecture side of things [...] easy almost. [...] It’s almost positive for me. To be honest. [...] I’d say it’s just an advantage in seeing things differently.’ (Matthew)

‘When I was in primary school I used to think it was a big issue in my life and I wouldn’t be able to do everything everyone else does, but there’s always like the plus-side to dyslexia and I’m creative, and I’m imaginative which is good because I’m really good at art and I always think of like what to draw and stuff, and drama pieces, if you have to improvise I can just do it on the spot without thinking. [...] At the time I didn’t really realise what it was until mum explained it to me and then I felt a bit down with myself because I felt like if I’d improved myself when I was younger and had done more things in education, I might have been okay. But then I realised that it wasn’t about that, it was something that you’re born with and sometimes it can be a gift, or it can be something bad.’ (Cody)

Cody’s narrative can be linked to Kimberly’s, where she talks about young people in the first years of secondary school having the desire to be the same as their friends. Cody was originally upset about being different but later realised that this was not something negative or absolutely true. The notion of creativity kept reappearing in my narratives, but it does not by any means imply that all dyslexic people have those tendencies. The above narratives showcase how participants found new ways to perceive themselves and their dyslexia. This change in their mind-set helped them improve their self-esteem and see their dyslexia as something positive, not a problem.

Concluding comments

This chapter has shown that the way that participants felt while in secondary education affected their identity in both positive and negative ways. A good number stated that they could not enjoy their time at school simply because they had significant difficulties in coping with school demands. Since acquiring the required skills was such a difficult task for them, tiredness and constant struggling were what most participants had to face. For some it led to the desire to leave school as soon as they could, while for others it did not change their aspirations to study further and attend higher education.

Dyslexia has been shown not only to affect the way a person learns, but also their personality (Arkowitz, 2000), self-esteem and well-being (Eissa, 2010). In cultures that privilege literacy, there is continuous pressure for children to conform to those cultural expectations, especially in a school environment where every day revolves around literacy (Burns, 1982). Children also have to conform to parental expectations (Coleman and Hendry, 2002). Dyslexic learners want to protect their self-esteem and feel good about themselves, not 'stupid' (Singer, 2007, p. 329). The narratives from my research portrayed both extreme feelings of anxiety and feelings that they are 'stupid', as well as cases of young people who did not want to go to school. On the other hand, there were participants who enjoyed their schooling. Pupils can be ridiculed for their reading and spelling difficulties and feel very bad about themselves for not being able to do what others do; other children can also stigmatise them for their difficulties (Riddick, 2000). The above is explained using symbolic interactionism, according to which cultural norms and important others significantly influence identity formation. Interestingly, negative mood, academic attainment and belief in one's abilities can contribute to their effort in school (Lackaye and Margalit, 2006). The narratives, especially those from the section discussing positive identity construction, demonstrate how a societal change in the way dyslexia is perceived can help young people. The way that their self-perceptions changed was significant in participant's lives. If this change had happened earlier, through their schooling, it could have potentially helped them develop fewer negative self-perceptions.

Again, the findings from this chapter confirm the notion of spoiled identity. Multiple expectations from parents, teachers and children themselves impact how those children perceive themselves in relation to their academic attainment. The cultural norms regarding academic achievement are so valued and prominent that 'failure' creates a stigma that 'spoils' children's identities. Children who are unable to reach the required standards in all

subjects, because their needs and difficulties were not addressed to the required level or with meaningful support, achieve fractured levels of academic attainment. The result of the dynamics between support and identity development lead to a fractured academic identity, which begins as a result of dyslexia but is established by the lack of meaningful support.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research meets the need for further investigation into the transition experiences for children with dyslexia and their identity construction in relation to education experiences. It is unique in that it utilises symbolic interactionism to examine this relatively unexplored issue and how it is influenced by social interaction and culture. This chapter provides answers to the research questions over three sections, which cover the themes of transition, support and identity construction. It also develops the notion of fractured academic identity and provides suggestions for school practice in order to support dyslexic children. Chapter 1 covered relatively recent key government documents around SEN education. It provided an overview of government approaches and options for parents and children. Chapter 2 discussed symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework for this research, and relevant transition literature which provided a theoretical background to the research. Chapter 3 explained how an interpretivist approach was utilised, with interviews as the main data collection method. Chapter 4 explored the first main theme, discussing how the participants felt about the new environment and how they experienced their transition. Chapter 5 investigated the issue of support, institutional and familial, and how pupils perceived it. Chapter 6 discussed how dyslexic young people constructed their identities in relation to their experiences. This chapter revisits main findings in relation to symbolic interactionism and school practice.

My research has highlighted the links between transition to secondary education, support during and after that time and identity construction. It found that meaningful support, both emotional and educational, is the most important factor contributing to a healthy identity construction. Important others like parents and teachers significantly affected the self-perceptions of dyslexic learners. Importantly, support offered by the school setting also made an immense difference to how children perceived their schooling, causing widely differing experiences. Those varied from leaving school early to feeling satisfied and 'lucky' to have had a positive schooling experience. Dyslexic children's difficulties fragmented their transition to secondary education. However, the support they received there made the most significant difference to their lives, choices and self-perceptions. There have been multiple government policy documents that emphasise the importance of support for children with SEN, however although it has progressed it is still not efficient for a large proportion of children.

The key themes in my thesis were transition, support and identity construction, with each research question corresponding to one data chapter and theme. Below, the research questions are answered in relation to the theoretical framework - symbolic interactionism.

Transition and its effects on dyslexic pupils

Transition can be a positive (e.g. Katrina, John, George, Matthew) or negative (e.g. Josephine, Erica, Gabriel) experience or a mix of the two. The transition to the next educational level is difficult for many dyslexic learners. The changes experienced are not only educational but also cultural. Their social world is radically altered: they are separated from their peer groups, routine and familiar settings while entering adolescence. It is a significant change from the style of teaching children experience in primary school, to the school size, way of working, peer groups and social status (Pietarinen, 2000). The school environment becomes more challenging and dyslexia in the current system causes difficulties, even for children who might manage well with primary education demands and had good literacy levels (Marshall, 2009). These difficulties are not only related to dyslexia, but more often to the environment children live in: Western culture and the education system. Since literacy and academic attainment are privileged within those interconnected contexts, any dyslexia-related difficulties are aggravated, both academically and psychosocially.

Many of my participants found the prospective transition scary (e.g. Jeremy), others were excited (e.g. Matthew), and some had mixed feelings (e.g. John), and this pattern is similar to findings in existing transition research (Rudduck, 1996a; Lucey and Reay, 2000; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003, Akos and Galassi, 2004; Topping, 2011). Learners who are not prepared for transition (Erica) tend to find it more difficult (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008), since academic preparation is important for a 'successful' transition (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Most participants experienced a drop in their academic attainment, which is well-documented in research (Arthur *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, there were some participants who achieved better grades. Katrina was able to perform better almost immediately and Emma achieved that in Year 8. Personal motivation plays a key role in children's academic attainment, which had significant consequences for children's future careers (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). Many of the participants worked very hard on their school work, being determined to improve their academic

attainment and fulfil their goals. The amount of homework was difficult and contributed to their difficulty in coping.

In other words, the transition to secondary education can be very difficult for dyslexic learners and the new environment can be a shock (e.g. Faye). They face similar types of problems to other children, but their difficulties make many of those issues harder for them because they need to spend additional energy concentrating on their reading and spelling. An example of this is Emma's case, whose revision work was hindered because she suffered headaches when she read longer than 20 minutes. This can be a very difficult challenge, since young people have to compensate for their difficulties and perform to the target academic level, which is a very stressful experience. Culturally, during transition children are expected to improve their academic performance and begin working towards their future career and education paths, which can be difficult when they experience a combination of learning difficulties and transition anxieties. Therefore, their position within their social world is changed, since they are expected to make decisions and work towards them. Importantly, these are culturally-specific milestones and norms that children are expected to conform to, otherwise there is the possibility of acquiring a stigma. According to symbolic interactionism, this is because within their cultural context, members are judged via those norms. Deviation from those norms constitutes a stigma; especially since academic attainment and literacy are highly privileged and children learn those norms early in their lives and apply them to themselves. Inability to acquire those characteristics is negatively perceived both by most children and other members of their social world.

Secondary education can be stressful for pupils; anxieties can persist well after the initial transition period is over, so schools must take pupils' needs seriously (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). Transition is the first aspect of secondary education children experience and the changes described above are experienced with a mixture of feelings. Secondary school can be an ordeal for many dyslexic learners, causing immense anxiety. The difference between groups of participants in the way that they experienced the impact of their secondary education experiences, were strongly linked to the support that they received. Those who did not receive support in primary education were happy to move on (e.g. John, George, Jeremy). Some of them found support in their new school (e.g. John, George) while others did not (e.g. Emma), which contributed to significant differences in their schooling perceptions. Children without support found it even more difficult and those with support

were more positive towards it. This demonstrates the significance of support and how it can change learners' lives, which is analysed in the next section. Young people can also be overwhelmed by the amount of work and responsibility expected from them, both by their parents and school officials. They are expected to undergo formal examinations that impact on their future, which is also anxiety-provoking, especially when they aspire to reach a certain performance target, which is also dependent on their cultural background. Nevertheless, for most participants, even for those who were not happy at school, there were certain aspects of secondary education that they enjoyed.

Educational experiences and individuality: the importance of support

Support is vital for dyslexic children's education although it does not in itself explain the full variety of educational outcomes or school enjoyment. Because of the difficulties participants experienced as a result of the transition process, they reacted by feeling a strong need for support. Support comes in different places and forms, affecting children's educational attainment, school experience and self-perceptions. For all pupils support was vital but this could be at primary (e.g. Emma), secondary (e.g. Matthew), from the school (e.g. John and George) or a specific teacher (e.g. Josephine), from parents (for most participants), friends (e.g. Melanie), a combination or all of those sources. Even with support in place, some tactics could be counterproductive for some (e.g. Katrina, Jeremy) while others acquire it to positive effect (e.g. Matthew). Children may feel good with the support they are receiving (e.g. John, George, Katrina) while others do not (e.g. Jeremy) and can feel ashamed (e.g. Erica). Some schools offer support more easily (e.g. George, John) while others offer it in special cases, making a statement necessary (e.g. Emma).

This research has demonstrated how widely educational experiences vary for dyslexic learners. The cases explored signify that children with dyslexia can have highly different schooling experiences, which are heavily influenced by school support. Jeremy's case highlights the catastrophic effects that non-meaningful support can have on schooling. Although he had a successful career after leaving school, cases like his are not the norm considering his experiences. The narratives revealed that children react to their educational experiences in highly diverse ways and schooling experiences can vary. It has already been explained that some were happy with the support that they received while others were not. Those who were unhappy were often embarrassed by institutional support. A common reason for embarrassment was standing out from the rest of the class. For some, this was caused by in-class support; for others, it was out-of class support that caused it because

they had to leave the main classroom and attend a different class. Some participants expressed that they would have liked different types of support than what they received.

According to the looking-glass self (Cooley, 1971) children were embarrassed by the school support because they imagined that their peers were judging or otherwise perceiving them negatively because of it. Importantly, Jeremy was bullied because of the support he received, which indicates that such negative evaluations did occur in some cases. Contrary to those experiences, there were participants who were happy with their support, like Matthew. Those experiences highlight the importance of school support and how crucial it is for it to be meaningful for each child. School officials can develop practices that help pupils understand and process changes they experience, using them as opportunities to learn and develop further (Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini, 2010). The variety of experiences clearly identifies a need to give children a voice.

Most participants found leaving school to be a relief (Undheim, 2009), since they constantly struggled with school demands. Interestingly, both participants who chose to leave their education before they could graduate did not receive meaningful support. One of them (e.g. Mark) received no support at all and the other (e.g. Jeremy) received support he was very uncomfortable with, while also having multiple and profound problems with his schooling. Mark judged himself using the literacy norm both as a pupil and an adult since his literacy problems persisted, indicating that even after compulsory schooling those norms still affect dyslexic people's lives. Importantly, there is a tendency for members of a cultural context to scorn poor spellers (Riddick, 2001) and therefore Mark could not entirely escape the stigma poor literacy entails. Jeremy managed to find ways to overcome or accommodate his difficulties and was much more confident. From his narrative, he seemed to be more relaxed after leaving school. For both participants, the combination of their difficulties and lack of meaningful support led them to discontinue their schooling because they found the experience too distressing. None of the participants felt that literacy was unimportant. They had all internalised and were affected by its cultural value in some way, supporting the strong influence such deep-rooted culturally-specific norms have on individuals.

Dyslexia-related difficulties can affect how capable of undertaking higher education a person feels (Rowan, 2010) and also their desire to undertake it; it was not always welcome for my participants (Undheim, 2009). From those participants who completed

secondary education, the majority pursued higher education, although not everyone did so immediately after graduating from secondary education. As a result of their difficulties and experiences, especially relating to support, young people can react by altering their employment and further/higher education aspirations, therefore support during this time is crucial. Importantly, school days revolve around tasks which have literacy as their foundation. Dyslexic learners who have literacy difficulties have limited access to these subjects due to their difficulties and teaching practices inappropriate for dyslexia. This was confirmed by the participants, whose difficulties in reading/writing hindered their performance in subjects other than English. Aspirations can be affected by important others and children's own self-perceptions, both of which are influenced by cultural expectations, which leads to the next issue.

All the above create a link between received support during secondary education and identity construction. When support is well-placed and effective, children's identity construction is positively influenced. Critically, if the way they are treated and supported at school is not right for them, or if there is no support, then their identity is 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1990). Without meaningful support, young people are led to believe that there is something wrong with them because they are not able to achieve what their peers can, even when they invest significant amounts of effort and time in trying. Importantly, participants were pressurised to acquire the culturally defined levels of academic performance and when they were unable to do so they developed negative self-perceptions. As discussed above, those cultural norms are deeply ingrained, both for learners and important others, like parents and teachers. Lack of meaningful support negatively contributed to participants' academic attainment, which in turn affected their self-perceptions. Those who were happy with the support they received had much more positive perceptions about themselves and their schooling, which highlights the importance of support, both for academic attainment and self-perception.

Dyslexia, 'spoiled' identities and fractured academic identity

Dyslexic learners are prone to negative academic comparisons with their peers. This can be either about literacy, or general performance in class. In many cases here, comparisons led to frustration and negative self-perceptions (e.g. Emma, Melanie) which were difficult to overcome. However, some participants only made comparisons with others in subjects they were confident in, avoiding those in which they struggled (e.g. Matthew). This protected them against negative comparisons, which in turn was positive for their self-perceptions.

Comparisons influenced their self-evaluations since they saw that other learners performed better at subjects that were considered important in school culture. According to the participants, such comparisons caused feelings of annoyance and frustration because they could not achieve the same as others. Comparisons seemed to affect children's perceptions about what they should be like (Hewitt, 2007) in terms of academic performance, since others around them had higher academic attainment. Therefore, their self was negatively influenced when they were unable to reach those idealised perceptions. When they receive support and begin to perform better academically, their confidence tends to increase because high academic performance is culturally privileged. This confidence can also come from important others like parents and teachers, which is confirmed by existing research (Singer, 2007) and my participants' narratives. According to participants, teachers and especially parents are important others in children's lives, influencing young people's self-perceptions (Hewitt, 2007) and identity construction.

Dyslexia has a profound effect on identity construction, since it fractures academic attainment, which is a cultural expectation. All the above signify that it affects self-perceptions and for some participants those self-perceptions were only improved after they left compulsory education. Since school days revolve around literacy and academic attainment, those who are not performing according to expectations can feel they are 'defective'. Such feelings not only stem from their own self-evaluations, but also from where they perceive themselves within the school community. Since certain abilities like literacy and academic attainment were considered highly significant, children could evaluate their attainment level against other pupils' and what was desirable by their school. The participants seemed aware of their position within the class in terms of attainment, which relates to the above analysis regarding comparisons.

The above self-evaluations, along with those from teachers and parents, contributed to children feeling 'defective' and stigmatised with a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1990). In chapter 6, I mentioned the notion of fractured academic attainment in relation to academic experiences. This is apparent in the chapters 4, 5 and 6 in multiple ways, in terms of impaired academic achievement. For example, Gabriel struggled but managed to learn his lessons but had problems writing during assessment. Emma also had significant difficulties learning but persevered, despite her difficulties (which included migraines) and Jeremy was unable to cope with the teaching methods at his school. Collectively, the notion of fractured academic attainment leads to the notion of 'fractured academic identity', since

pupils become confused about their abilities, which vary considerably depending on subject and context. Institutional support, classroom environment, peer and familial support all influence individual's academic identities, contributing to such variations. Dyslexic students have to come to terms with failure, apparent and real, and often with achievements that vary across the range of subjects taught, creating confusion about their ability. Consequently, individuals can be unsure about where they belong within a classroom. This is exemplified particularly in Josephine (p. 167-168), Melanie (p. 172) and Matthew (p. 179). This variation was especially difficult for Melanie, who could not cope with the different levels and expectations. Contrasting views of pupils as 'bright' or 'poor' contribute to their 'fractured academic identity'.

Out of all the participants, Jeremy seemed to have had the most rapid repair of his sense of self. Other participants also constructed healthy identities (such as Josephine, Matthew, Melanie), however Jeremy's case was different. He rose above his difficulties, 'repairing' his identity and changed from being a distressed and overwhelmed child to being a young person with a healthy sense of self, without negative self-perceptions or embarrassment about his difficulties. Other participants also experienced this process, however for most it took at least a few years to reach that stage. For Jeremy it happened much earlier and his transformation was more intense. Interestingly, he was removed from school early and it could be argued that he had a healthy identity construction so early because he did not spend as many years in an environment that fractured his identity. A similar case of a confident participant was Matthew, although he did not experience the difficulties that Jeremy did. Again, it can be argued that Matthew was happier while he was at school because he received meaningful support.

The notion of 'fractured academic identity' adds to Goffman's 'spoiled identity' because it is a similar concept to utilise for children with dyslexia (or other SEN) in education settings. It is an up to date, specialist version of 'spoiled identity' that fits well with current educational practices, particularly with children who have SEN. According to symbolic interactionism, interactions between members of a culture (school and/or family) define the dyslexic person to himself/herself and cause him/her to make indications to himself/herself and react to those indications (Blumer, 1998). Such indications could also be influenced by the comparisons mentioned above and individual's perception of their position within their class, causing dyslexic learners to negatively perceive themselves because they cannot achieve culturally-specific academic expectations. Due to the prevalent performance-

oriented culture, their difficulties are constantly highlighted and can be the centre of their school lives. Because both support and achievement expectations concentrate on what many dyslexic learners are not able to do, contributing to those feelings. Importantly, with the right support those difficulties are overcome, however it takes both time and effort and young people can still become stigmatised both in their peer and school communities. Arguably, in a society where academic attainment is not privileged, dyslexic people's self-perceptions would be higher. Because, according to Riddick (2001), cultural norms around literacy determine the degree to which dyslexia-related difficulties become a disability within a given cultural context. Similarly, if English was phonologically transparent, dyslexic learners in England would face significantly fewer difficulties (*ibid*).

Importantly, the acquisition of a diagnosis can help dyslexic children understand why they are experiencing difficulties (Ingesson, 2007; Glazzard, 2010) and improve their self-esteem (Glazzard, 2010), which makes getting diagnosed an important part of children's educational lives. It is also important because it leads to resources (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007) and support groups (Farrell, 2001). Many participants felt 'stupid' (Erica, Josephine) or hated their time in school and did not want to attend it (Jeremy, Josephine) (McNulty, 2003) because of their difficulties and how tiring it was for them (Erica) (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Participants avoided certain aspects of school life, like homework (Faye), or other situations that may lead to negative feedback or teasing (Ingesson, 2007; Undheim, 2009). Arguably, those subjects highlighted their difficulties and avoiding them helped against negative self-perceptions. Dyslexia and children's perceptions about it can even affect future life choices, like educational and occupational choices (Ingesson, 2007, Undheim, 2009; Rowan, 2010). Those perceptions are the result of internalised cultural norms and perceptions about what pupils believe they ought to be (Hewitt, 2007). If individuals decide that literacy and academic attainment norms are significant (*ibid*) which the participants did, they often will judge themselves, produce a negative outcome and perceive themselves as 'stupid'.

Some participants constructed positive identities (e.g. Matthew, George, John) while others developed negative feelings (e.g. Erica, Josephine). Some of those feelings were in response to their educational experiences (e.g. Erica) while for others it was a result of direct contact with school officials (e.g. Melanie). Therefore, when the time to leave school comes, dyslexic people are relieved since schooling can be a struggle for them (Undheim, 2009). By leaving school, they leave behind a time of their lives where literacy and

academic performance are at the centre of daily activities and find relief when those norms and the struggle they entail cease to be the focus of their activities. According to Cooley's (1971) looking-glass self, by leaving school children's self-evaluations are also freed from teacher's perceptions. They no longer live in a context where they are judged by their academic attainment and their perceptions of teacher's thoughts about them are no longer as significant because they have left that community. Interestingly, most participants were able to positively develop their identities after leaving compulsory education.

The experiences analysed here have been explained using a symbolic interactionist framework, explaining how cultural context can contribute to identity construction. To conclude, when pupils make the transition from primary to secondary education, they experience a significant change in their social status (Kvalsund, 2000) and environment. Cultural expectations (Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994), school society and important others (teachers and peers) also change. In a culture where academic attainment (Slee, 2011, Rogers, 2005) and excellence (Lucey and Reay, 2002) are privileged, those who are unable to reach it are stigmatised. According to symbolic interactionism, this signifies that many of the problems dyslexic learners face are caused by cultural expectations (Goffman, 1990). If school settings also celebrate non-academic attainments then the disappointment dyslexic learners feel could be improved, since they will find an additional sense of achievement in non-academic tasks. Additionally, if the lack of academic skills was not stigmatising then children could be more relaxed about their difficulties. However, this change in the academic system is not likely to happen, given existing government goals that very much focus on academic excellence (DfE, 2010; DfE, 2012a). In fact, this could move towards the opposite direction, with the lack of academic skills becoming a very significant culturally-specific stigma.

My research introduced the concept of 'fractured academic identity', which demonstrates how identity construction for dyslexic young people is influenced by academic attainment and school experiences, especially support. Critically, according to the symbolic interactionist framework, multiple societal interactions influence identity formation (Hewitt, 2007). Interactions with teachers and parents cause children to evaluate themselves. If they are met with contempt due to their difficulties (Riddick, 2001), those perceptions can be internalised and form part of the self. Such societal interactions can be with other children, teachers and parents. However, evaluations from others who are considered as most important matter most (Gerth and Mills, 1971). Young people's

reaction to their school performance was influenced by cultural norms and expectations. Those expectations are also communicated by important others, who are crucial in identity construction (Mead, 1967; Hewitt, 2007). Discrimination and social barriers are still present in Western societies (Russell, 2003; Rogers, 2010; Richards *et al.*, 2012). If others' perceptions do not change, then dyslexic people's identities are going to be negatively influenced, potentially inducing feelings of extreme distress and negative self-perceptions.

The research questions have revealed how individuals' lives are affected by their educational experiences. Importantly, symbolic interactionism studies how identity is negotiated via individuals' interactions with others (Monrouxe, 2009) and the internalisation of those perceptions (Gerth and Mills, 1971). Through symbolic interactionism, my research explored how other individuals' perceptions influence and shape dyslexic learner identities (Mead, 1967; Cooley, 1971; Goffman, 1990; Blumer, 1998), with interesting results. Children often imagined their appearance in other people's minds as very negative. Comparisons with others also contributed to this, since they highlighted dyslexic individuals' difference from the cultural norm. According to symbolic interactionism, culture is internalised, along with the tendency to privilege academic attainment, which happened with the participants. If they are not able to acquire certain culturally-specific abilities they are stigmatised by other members of a cultural context. Dyslexia does not cause individuals to be visibly different; however it affects multiple levels of their lives.

Schooling and culture are linked, while the privileging of academic attainment is clearly visible in the schooling system. Self-concepts were influenced by educational achievement; difficulty or inability to reach the expected attainment often led to self-concept problems because those norms and expectations were internalised. There was constant interaction between cultural expectations and individual ability and internalisation. Transition signified the start of a new phase in children's lives, where academic achievement became increasingly important. My study demonstrated the difficulties dyslexic learners had in their daily school lives during and after transition. Received support, both from family members and school officials had a formative effect on their identities. The daily lives of the participants, who were from different backgrounds, showcased that how they are perceived by important others and how they place themselves in relation to cultural expectations, has a very significant effect on their identity construction. Feelings of self-consciousness or embarrassment from the way they were

supported at school were very prevalent. No matter what age the participants were in during their interviews, they strived to adhere to cultural norms about achievement and literacy. Life choices were affected because of difficulties, educational experiences and relations with others.

Dyslexic learners experience stigma related to their academic attainment and literacy because of cultural norms, which are reflected in school practices. Their fractured academic attainment is highly apparent during schooling and can negatively affect their self-image. Although this can be alleviated when they graduate, negative feelings can persist. Those effects tend to be highly important during compulsory education, while difficulties can be emphasised in a classroom context (Preece, 2009). Because of transition difficulties, dyslexic children need more support and they feel this need very intensely. Without it, their difference is more pronounced since their academic attainment and literacy levels are not in their full potential, which creates self-perception problems. Such problems occur both in the classroom and outside, since both parent's and teacher's targets for children can be above their current attainment level. Such targets are products of specific cultural expectations, since Western countries privilege academic attainment, especially academic excellence. If learners are able to achieve those expectations, their self-perceptions improve. If, either because of profound difficulties that alter their ability level, or a lack of appropriate support they do not achieve such targets, they are stigmatised and develop negative self-perceptions. These are all culturally-specific experiences that vary according to each person's background and experiences. Importantly, individual resilience to stigma affects such experiences, since children do not always perceive their experiences as stigmatising. However, this was a small number of participants, with the majority experiencing stigmatising situations as embarrassing or traumatic.

Suggestions for practice

Suggesting changes to practice was not one of the initial aims for this research. However, participant's experiences led to a consideration of the efficacy of existing practices. I found that children do not benefit from just any support, they need the right kind of support that is meaningful for them, rather than whatever the school offers. This part of the data was not directly sought; its strength is that it was implicit in the narratives, which arguably makes it more valid. Their narratives helped form suggestions about how their transition and support experiences can be improved. The widely different experiences of transition, support, identity and educational experiences are illustrated by revisiting three participant

cases. Two of those participants were polar opposites in their education experiences and the third is a more 'average' case of a pupil who did not experience a lack or a multitude of difficulties.

The first case to be revisited is Jeremy's, who had multiple and complex problems with his secondary education. He did not only have problems with institutional support, which was neither well-arranged nor welcome by Jeremy, but also with bullying and getting used to his new life. During the time he spent there, he never adapted to his new environment and was very unhappy. This led him to leave mainstream education after six weeks, choosing another path that was more suited to his needs and personality. A second case, completely opposite to Jeremy's, is Matthew. Although Matthew was not exceedingly happy during primary schooling, he attended a secondary school that according to his narrative was very good. He did not enjoy all the support that he received but was able to perform very well in the subjects that were interesting to him and he would need in the future in order to gain entry at university. He was also able to perform to the acceptable level in his other subjects and was happy with the out-of-class support he was receiving. His secondary schooling experience was very positive and he successfully entered and finished university, having studied architecture, his first choice. A less extreme case is Melanie's. She was happy with her school and received support from them. There were both lessons she enjoyed and could cope with and some where she felt unable to complete the required work. This resulted in her not taking some of the examinations for those courses, although she did attend college and planned to go to university. Her overall experience was not extremely good or bad, including her reactions and self-perceptions.

Something that also highlights the complexity of support is setting. Setting contributed negatively to Josephine's school experience; she was confused by the widely different teacher expectations. It could also be because setting required use of organisational skills, which are often hindered as a result of dyslexia. Setting also separated Josephine from a stable supportive group of both teachers and peers, further confusing her sense of identity. Josephine could have been more comfortable in a mixed-ability classroom without having to change. Arguably, in her case streaming would have been better than setting, since she would at least have a steady set of classmates. On the other hand, Matthew was comfortable with setting and enjoyed the way he was taught.

Similarly, John and George and Cody were very happy with their learning support class.

Cody's school had a class specialised for dyslexia and she enjoyed attending it. From their narratives, those classes were small, well-organised and offered valuable support. However, Jeremy's narrative showcased bad organisation and caused more problems for him. Therefore, a class where children with all difficulties are taught is not always a good choice. Arguably, if children are left in a mixed-ability class they could be learning better than in an unorganised class where every pupil with difficulties is placed.

This indicates that due to individual differences such practices can be problematic for dyslexic children. However, not all practices are justified and this is illustrated in Katrina's case. Holding a child back for very long periods of time indicates either poor practice or additional factors affecting the curriculum. Teachers could have possibly been prejudiced or punitive because Katrina was not responding to their practice. This research yielded several practical results that could be used to support young people with dyslexia in secondary education. Below, some changes for school practice are suggested to ease the transition and learning experience for dyslexic pupils.

Reading policy

To begin with, teachers could choose reading materials carefully bearing in mind that interest is a decisive factor in reading enjoyment (Flink, 1995). It can reduce self-consciousness while reading, which can help them on a cognitive level as well (*ibid*). This was prevalent in the narratives, since many participants enjoyed reading books despite their difficulties. Enjoyment stemmed directly from their interest in the book's contents. Stress management interventions can also benefit young people with dyslexia. The majority of the participants reported having anxieties during secondary education, one of them to an extreme level. Research on general school population has evidenced that such interventions not only improve mental health, but they also improve motivation and GCSE results (Keogh, Bond and Flaxman, 2006). Therefore, a whole-school intervention could not only help all children, but also discreetly support dyslexic learners. A combination of psychological and educational interventions can also help with difficulties associated with dyslexia (Eissa, 2010).

Choice of support

As discussed in Chapter 5, there were types of support that were unhelpful for the participants. Their efficacy was often an individual issue; therefore choice of support was an important finding. Importantly, some types of support (like setting for Josephine or in-

class support for Matthew) were meant to help children but had the opposite effect, creating a pedagogic paradox. Therefore, support for dyslexic learners can be problematic for teachers and it can certainly be influenced by cost and resource availability issues. There is also the possibility of certain practices to be influenced by hidden factors, such as prejudice or class. For example Katrina could have been held behind because of teacher's prejudice, which could also have been affected by her class.

For participants who were unhappy with the support they were receiving, their problem could have been solved if they had experienced two types of support and had the option to choose the one that they were comfortable with: in-class or out of class. Having this choice could potentially eliminate the feelings of embarrassment and stigmatisation that participants experienced, since they would choose the support that they felt was best for them. They would also be able to concentrate on their learning and not the embarrassment caused by unwanted support. However, there is always the possibility that children could be negative to any type of support, or still feel embarrassed after making their choice. Sampling both types of support for a limited amount of time can also convince children that the initial plan chosen for them was the best option, leading them to accept it.

Some participants were happy with out of class support (John, George) while others had multiple difficulties with it not only because they felt it highlighted their difficulties (Erica), but also because it was not always well-structured (Jeremy). On the other hand, Matthew was very happy with out of class support and extremely negative to any in-class interventions because for him, in-class support was what highlighted his difficulties. It is impossible to predict children's reactions to institutional support, but offering them the opportunity to sample both and have a say in the choice of support they receive can offer them a voice, which can prove useful for their education. I am not suggesting only children ought to decide which approach is used. Simply that after a discussion between the SENCo, pupils and parents, all voices can be heard so that the approach will be more individualised (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Parents can offer insight into how children could be supported (Gwernan-Jones and Burden, 2010; LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011) and therefore their opinions could also be useful. Importantly, resources are not unlimited and as a result SENCos could propose available options for individual children at a school setting. After children sample the available approaches (mainly in-class, out of class or a combination of both) they could express their opinions and perspectives about them. Feelings specific interventions evoke can be discussed with school officials and

parents, so that not all decisions are made for young people without considering their personal input.

Personalised support

Regarding transition, some young people adapt along with their peers without SEN, while others need additional support (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Adopting a personalised approach to this support can help children by addressing their individual motivation, academic well-being and adjustment (Tuominen-Soini, Salmela-Aro and Niemivirta, 2012). Many participants stated that they felt ‘stupid’ while at school. Meaningful, personalised support can help them because it helps them overcome their difficulties, negating the cause of such feelings. Dyslexia-related difficulties have been associated with multiple problems with self-worth and school life (Burden, 2005, p.2; Coleman and Hendry, 2002; Wortham, 2006); overcoming the former can help diminish the latter and therefore support is of paramount significance. Therefore, school officials can offer support that addresses individual needs, adjusting the type and intensity offered to each child.

Personalised teaching

All children with SEN do not benefit from the same services; again, individual needs ought to be addressed instead of teaching SEN children as a homogenous group (Maras and Aveling, 2006). High-quality teaching that goes beyond phonemic awareness and multi-sensory approaches, managing to address all needs of a child is extremely important for dyslexic pupils to be able to progress academically (Burden and Burdett, 2005). Katrina’s case clearly indicates that not all children benefit from phonics teaching. Jeremy also discussed this and disagreed with his secondary school’s policy to teach phonics and believed that although this method works for some children, it made his difficulties worse. Taking this into account, teachers ought to alter this practice for individuals who do not respond to it and employ alternative approaches for those who do not respond to phonics. However, the importance of phonics in the English education system is prevalent with the compulsory administration of phonics screening checks by all schools (education.gov.uk, 2013), which was strongly opposed by the teacher’s union (NUT, 2013). Government guidelines demonstrate a strong belief that teaching phonics is the best way to teach all children how to read, although it is also stated that wider teaching skills are important as well (education.gov.uk, 2013). With recent government papers like the 2010 white paper (DfE, 2010) it is clear that this policy will remain.

Teacher training on SEN can help in offering more flexible and sensitive approaches to children (McNulty, 2003) and in understanding of their problems (Nalavany, Williams Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Supportive services for those with dyslexia are also very important because there are both social and environmental barriers to their personal growth and success (*ibid*). Well-trained school staff are important for this, however no matter how good schools are they still fail some pupils (Burden and Burdett, 2005). However, this number of pupils can be kept to a minimum and not become a perpetually increasing number of unnecessarily failed pupils.

Structural changes

The narratives revealed several options that are already in use and school officials could adopt to support children with dyslexia. The first was colour-coding school areas and adding those colours to children's time-tables. In that way, it would be much more difficult for them to get lost since they would have the colours that correspond to each school area and find the school section that carries that colour. This can be an inexpensive way for schools to discreetly help children who need this type of support. School officials could choose the new colours when the buildings are due to be repainted and as a result it would not put additional strain on their budget. It can potentially ease a major stressor both before and after transition, since children would spend less time worrying about getting lost in the school building. Another aspect of support that could help children with SEN is the homework club that Kimberly described. It can be helpful for children who have difficulty completing their homework; however, it would require staff and the use of one room within the school premises. Research suggests that rooms dedicated to pupils with SEN reassure both children and their parents (Maras and Aveling, 2006).

Finally, some of the participants believed that dyslexia offered them creativity and a different way of thinking, which could put them at an advantage compared to non-dyslexic individuals. Several of them held important jobs (architect, entrepreneur) and for them the long-term effects of dyslexia were eventually positive, although they were not always so during compulsory education. They were able to utilise this aspect of dyslexia (although it does not occur with all dyslexic people) to their advantage. Some children who were pupils at the time of the interview also commented on their creative skills, either directly by stating that they are creative (Cody) or indirectly by expressing their enjoyment of creative activities (Cody, John, Katrina). School officials could encourage these skills in dyslexic

children who possess them and help them cultivate their creative, spatial and problem-solving skills.

The discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrates that a lack of or unwanted support was often the main reason for fractured academic attainment and subsequently identity. Therefore, we should consider changes to practice that could offer much-needed improvements to the support system. The additional implications for practice are as follows.

Recommendations for Policy

Parents could be empowered if there was a system they could use to complain to LEAs if they believe that their school is not offering good quality and meaningful support. Cases could be followed-up by an LEA official, who, after examining the case, would oblige those schools to offer certain types of support.

It is essential for all teachers and teaching assistants to be obligated to have a relevant university and teacher training degree in order to work at schools. Currently, teaching assistants need not be properly qualified; some are local mothers with minimal training who are paid low wages to ‘help’ children.

Special education should be a mandatory part of teacher training, which would offer more knowledge to practitioners. This could also apply to existing teachers, as a teacher training upgrade. It would enable teachers to offer better solutions and support for pupil difficulties.

Recommendations for Practice

The recommendations for practice that have been suggested so far are the following: changing the school reading policy to incorporate books that pupils choose and enjoy; introducing whole-school stress management interventions; offering children choice so they can have a voice regarding the support they receive; development of a personalised support system that is adjusted for individual children; flexible, personalised teaching because SEN is not a homogenous group and not all children benefit from the same services; and structural changes (colour-coded school areas that match colour-coded timetables, homework clubs).

In addition to the above, schools could offer regular meetings between the SENCo and teachers, where teachers could discuss individual pupils' difficulties when they feel that those pupils are not making enough progress. This is understandably difficult in large classes; however, with the help of the SENCo, teachers could discuss individual pupils so that all teachers have a clear view of individual abilities and difficulties and use the information to better support them.

Perhaps schools could find ways of developing independent group activities to free teachers to work more closely with those students who need additional help. Currently, such students receive more contact time from unqualified support assistants than from teachers themselves (Shah, 2007).

The SENCo could have a more active role and assist teachers more to organise support for individual children. The SENCo is likely to know what individual children need and provide more support for other teachers, making individual classes easier for children with dyslexia.

Contribution to knowledge and future research

Contribution to knowledge

This research investigates the effects of school transitions and how they affect individual's identity development. As already explained in Chapter 4, the change in settings means a higher academic level and difficulties for the children, which are often experienced as very difficult. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the main result from this experience is a strong need for support, which is not always offered by the schools, leading to strong difficulties and stress for the dyslexic learners. Therefore, lacking support or receiving inappropriate support, many learners fail to achieve in some subjects (fractured academic attainment) and develop a fractured academic identity. Those children who received support felt much better about themselves and had a better, even a positive educational experience. Those who did not were the learners who developed the most fractured academic identities. This, contemporary development of Goffman's (1990) concept of spoiled identity into the notion of fractured academic identity is the main contribution to knowledge of this research.

In addition, the research described and explained the experiences of dyslexic learners in secondary education, uncovering many difficulties that arise from a lack of good practice.

The participant narratives illuminate the nature of dyslexic children's difficulties and can be used to develop both future research and practice. Variance between government legislation and practice in terms of the support offered to learners has also been discovered. Suggestions for practice were made based on the narratives, which discussed what really matters for dyslexic learners and where school practice could be improved. This is the practical aspect of the contribution to knowledge, which could be used by teachers and head teachers to improve their practice and schools. It is equally important to the theoretical contribution. Knowing exactly what children would want could help schools make small and practical changes that can make a real difference for dyslexic pupils. The suggested changes to practice could potentially improve both the educational outcomes and experiences for dyslexic learners, who have the potential to achieve but are often failed by the system.

Future research

It would be useful to investigate if there is any connection between number perception (dyscalculia or difficulties with maths) and children who reverse letters, have visual processing difficulties and/or visual stress. Dyscalculia is under-researched (Yeo, 2003), and such research would help us to teach mathematics more efficiently and increase performance in one of the most important subjects that individuals need to function in society. In terms of talents related to dyslexia, future studies could compare groups of dyslexia and non-dyslexic entrepreneurs (Logan, 2010) to see if there are ideas that could be incorporated into the school curriculum or education more generally.

It would also be useful to conduct qualitative research that investigates the efficacy of the above practice changes and how they can impact the education experiences and learning for dyslexic learners. It would also be useful to document the viewpoints of school officials, especially SENCOs, regarding this issue. Their perspective can potentially lead to a better understanding as to why school officials make certain choices when it comes to institutional support and how this system can be improved. Combined with the narratives and results from this research, it can add to the improvement of support practice for children with dyslexia.

According to recent government publications (DfE, 2011a; DfE, 2012a), inclusion will cease to be at the centre of the educational ethos in England. It is claimed that the 'bias towards inclusion' 'obstructs parent choice' (DfE, 2011a, p.17), stating that parents of

children with SEN want to send them to 'special' schools but are not able to do so because mainstream settings are not equipped to offer it or because there are not enough SEN units available. The publications discuss giving choice to parents, who will be able to 'express preference' of which schools are best for their children and the available choices will include 'special' schools (DfE, 2011a, p.17). However, it is yet to be seen if those voices are going to be listened to. Arguably, there may not be much choice for the majority of parents (NUT, 2011). Although parents are considered important, their involvement and empowerment are not always welcome and there are efforts to limit them (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011). This is apparent in government initiatives that promote parental involvement while at the same time 'pursuing the politics of educational consumerism' that does not aid cooperation between schools and parents (*ibid*, p. 49), when cooperation can help maximise student potential (Koshy *et al.*, 2013).

According to the publication, parents' preferences will be followed through, unless their choice of school does not meet their children's needs. Arguably, this could be the point where parental voices will not be listened to, since their preferences could be considered as not meeting the child's needs. Rhetoric about empowerment has existed since the 1980s (Rogers, 2011), therefore it is not a new concept. There is a mismatch between the rhetoric of options for parents, return to segregated settings and academic excellence. Arguably, segregating children of lower ability could be linked to an agenda to help the remaining children reach the 'mass' excellence (Lucey and Reay, 2002) expectations that are being promoted. With future research, it would be interesting to investigate how these changes are implemented, how they affect children with SEN and their parents and if they feel their lives have been improved as a result from those changes.

References

- Acton, C. and Hird, M. J., 2004. Toward a sociology of stammering. *Sociology*, 38(3), p. 495-513.
- Akos, P. and Galassi, J., 2004. Middle and high school transitions as viewed by students, parents, and teachers. *Professional School Counselling*, 7(4), p. 212-221.
- Aldred, P. and Gillies, V., 2005. Eliciting research accounts: re/producing modern subjects? In: Mauthner, M., Birch, M., Jessop, J. and Miller, T. 2005. *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Alexander-Passe, N., 2006. How dyslexic teenagers cope: an investigation of self-esteem, coping and depression. *Dyslexia*, 12(4), p. 256-275.
- Alexander-Passe, N., 2008a. Coping with dyslexia. *Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group Quarterly*, 67, p. 12-19.
- Alexander-Passe, N., 2008b. The sources and manifestations of stress amongst school-aged dyslexics, compared with sibling controls. *Dyslexia*, 14(4), p. 291-313.
- Anderson, L. W., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S. and Splittgerber, F., 2000. School transitions: the beginning of the end or a new beginning? *International journal of Educational Research*, 33(4), p. 325-339.
- Andrews, B. and Wilding, J. M., 2004. The relation of depression and anxiety to life-stress and achievement in students, *British Journal of Psychology*, 95 (4), p. 509-521.
- Arkowitz, S. W., 2000. The overstimulated state of dyslexia: perception, knowledge, and learning. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 48(4), p. 1941-1520.
- Arthur, J., Davison, J., See, B. H. and Knowles, C., 2010. *Character in transition - consistency in values: the transition from primary to secondary school*. Project Report. University of Birmingham, Birmingham.
- Artiles, A. J., 2003. Special education's changing identity: paradoxes and dilemmas in views of culture and space. *Harvard Education Review*, 73(2), p. 164-202.
- Ashton, C., 2001. Assessment and support in secondary schools - an educational psychologist's view. In: Peer, L. and Reid, G., eds, 2001. *Dyslexia-Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*. Abingdon: David Fulton Publishers.
- Ashton, R., 2008. Improving the transfer to secondary school: how every child's voice can matter. *Support for Learning*, 23(4), p. 176-182.
- Ashworth, J. A., 2008. Conceptual foundations of qualitative psychology. In: Smith, J. A., 2008. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Athur, s. and Nazroo, J. 2003. Designing fieldwork strategies and materials. In: Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J., eds. 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Audit Commission, 2002. *Statutory assessment and statements of SEN: in need of review?* Wetherby: Audit Commission Publications.
- Bailey, C., A., 2007. *A guide to qualitative field research*. Second edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Barder, B. K. and Olsen, J. A., 2004. Assessing the transitions to middle and high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 19(3), p. 3-30.
- Barriball, K. L. and While, A., 1994. Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 19(2), p. 328-335.
- Barton, L., 1986. The politics of special educational needs. *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 1(3), p. 273-290.
- Barton, L., 1993. The struggle for citizenship: the case of disabled people, *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 8(3), p. 235-248.
- BDA, 2005. DFS [online] Available at: <<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/DFS-English-Update.pdf>> [Accessed 13 June 2014]
- BDA, 2012. Adults and Dyslexia, 40 years on . . . [online] Available at: <<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/Adults-and-Dyslexia-report-2012.pdf>> [Accessed 12 June 2014]
- BDA, 2013. *BDA definition of dyslexia*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/further-information/dyslexia-research-information-.html>> [Accessed 2 June 2013].
- BDA, 2014a. Dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties in Adults. [online] Available at: <<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/dyslexia-and-specific-learning-difficulties-in-adu.html>> [Accessed 12 June 2014]
- BDA, 2014b. Eyes and Dyslexia. [online] Available at: <<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/further-information/eyes-and-dyslexia.html>> [Accessed 12 June 2014]
- Bean, R. A., Bush, K. R., McKenry, P. C. and Wilson, S. M., 2003. The impact of parental support, behavioral control, and psychological control on the academic attainment and self-esteem of African American and European American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18(5), p. 523-541.
- Beane, J., 1993. *Middle school curriculum: from rhetoric to reality*. National Middle School Association.

- BERA (British Educational Research Association), 2011. Ethical guidelines for educational research. [online] Available at: <<http://www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines>> [Accessed 24 June 2011].
- Bertrand, C. and Bourdeau, L. 2010. Research Interviews by Skype: a new data collection method. In: Esteves, J., ed., *Proceedings of the 9th Conference in Research Methodology for Business and Management Students. IE Business School, Madrid, Spain, 24-25 June 2010.*, p. 70-79.
- Blumer, H., 1998. *Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blumer, H., 1971. Society as symbolic interaction. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N. eds. 1971. *Symbolic Interaction: a Reader in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bolger, N., Davis, A. and Rafaeli, E., 2003. Diary methods: capturing life as it is lived. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54(1), p. 579-616.
- Bolton, P. 2012. Education: historical statistics, Standard Note: SN/SG/4252. House of Commons Library.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. C. 2000. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Boyatzis, R. E., 1998. *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Boyd, D., Egbu, C., Chinyio, E. and Lee, C.C.T., 2004. *Audio diary and debriefing for knowledge management in SMEs*, Proceedings of the ARCOM 20th Annual Conference, 1st-3rd September 2004, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), p. 77-101.
- Braund, M., 2009. Progression and Continuity in learning science at transfer from primary to secondary school. In: Perspectives on education: primary-secondary transfer in science. *The Wellcome Trust, Issue 2*.
- Brophy, J., 2006. *Grade repetition*. UNESCO education policy series. Paris: the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and Belgium: The International Academy of Education (IAE).
- BSA (British Sociological Association., 2002. Statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association. [online] Available at: <<http://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf>> [Accessed 1 February 2013].

- Buchwald, D., Schantz-Laursen, B. and Delmar, C., 2009. Video diary data collection in research with children: an alternative method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), p. 12-20.
- Burden, R. and Burdett, J., 2005. Factors associated with successful learning in pupils with dyslexia: a motivational analysis. *British Journal of Special Education*, 32(2), p. 100-104.
- Burden, R. and Burdett, J., 2007. What's in a name? Students with dyslexia: their use of metaphor in making sense of their disability. *British Journal of Special Education*, 34(2), p. 77-82.
- Burden, R., 2005. *Dyslexia and Self-concept: Seeking a Dyslexic Identity*. Chinchester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Burden, R., 2008. Is Dyslexia necessarily associated with negative feelings of self-worth? A review and implications for future research. *Dyslexia*, 14(3), p. 188-196.
- Burns, R. B., 1982. *Self-Concept Development and Education*. London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Buswell Griffiths, C., Norwich, B. and Burden, B., 2004. Parental agency, identity and knowledge: mothers of children with dyslexia. *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(3), p. 417-433.
- Call Graph, 2009, software, version 1.3, Sedna Wireless.
- Campbell, J., 2001. The colonisation of the primary curriculum. In: Furlong, J. and Phillips, R., eds., 2001. *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Carroll, J. M. and Iles, J. E., 2006. An assessment of anxiety levels in dyslexic students in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(3), p. 651-662.
- Casey, R. and Koshy, V., 2013. Gifted and talented education. The English policy highway at a crossroads? *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 36 (1), p. 44-65.
- Cassady, J. C. and Johnson, R. E., 2002. Cognitive test anxiety and academic performance. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 27 (2), p. 270-295.
- Cater, J. K., 2011. Skype - a cost-effective method for qualitative research. *Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators Journal*, 4 (2), p. 3-6.
- Chakravarty, A., 2009. Artistic talent in dyslexia - A hypothesis. *Medical Hypotheses*, 73 (4), p. 569-571.
- Chedzoy, S.M. and Burden, R. L., 2005. Making the move: assessing student attitudes to primary-secondary school transfer. *Research in Education*, 74(1), p. 22-35.

- Chinn, S. and Ashcroft, R., eds, 2007. *Mathematics for Dyslexics: Including Dyscalculia*, 3rd ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Clark, J., 2004. Participatory research with children and young people: philosophy, possibilities and perils. [online] Available at: <http://www.ecls.ncl.ac.uk/publications/Clark%5E2004Participatory_research_with_children.pdf> [Accessed 3 April 2010].
- Coleman, J. C. and Hendry, L., 2002. *The Nature of Adolescence*. Sussex: Routledge.
- Cooley, C. H., 1971. False separation of individual and society. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N. eds. 1971. *Symbolic Interaction: a Reader in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Cooley, C. H., Looking-Glass Self. 1971. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N. eds. 1971. *Symbolic interaction: a reader in social psychology*. USA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Coyne, I. T., 1997. Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26 (3), p. 623-630.
- Creswell, J. W., 2007. *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches. Second Edition*. London: SAGE publications.
- Crockett, L. J., Petersen, A. C., Graber, J. A., Schulenberg, J. E. and Ebata, A., 1989. School transitions and adjustment during early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9(3), p. 181-210.
- Crombie, M. A., 2000. Dyslexia and the learning of a foreign language in school: where are we going? *Dyslexia*, 6(2), p. 112-23.
- Crombie, M., 1999. Bad language or good? Modern foreign language learning for the dyslexic pupil. In: Smythe, I., Ed., 1999. *The Dyslexia Handbook*. Reading: British Dyslexia Association.
- Csizér, K., Kormos, J. and Sarkadi, A., 2010. The Dynamics of Language Learning Attitudes and Motivation: Lessons from an interview study of dyslexic language learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(3), p. 470–487.
- Cullen, M. A., Lindsay, G. Dockrell, J., 2009. The role of the Connexions service in supporting the transition from school to post-16 education, employment training and work for young people with a history of specific speech and language difficulties or learning difficulties. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 9(2), p. 100-112.
- Dale, M. and Taylor, B. 2001. How adult learners make sense of their dyslexia. *Disability & Society*, 16(7), p. 997 - 1008.

- Daniels, L. M., Haynes, T. L., Stupnisky, R. H., Perry, R. P., Newall, N. E. and Pekrun, R. 2008. Individual differences in achievement goals: A longitudinal study of cognitive, emotional, and achievement outcomes. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33(4), p. 584-608.
- Davies, D. and Dodd, J., 2002. Qualitative research and the question of rigor. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12 (2), p. 279-289.
- Davis, R. D., 2010. *The Gift of Dyslexia: Why Some of the Brightest People Can't Read and How They Can Learn*. 3rd ed. Souvenir Press Ltd. USA: Perigree
- DCSF, 2009. Lamb inquiry: Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence. London: Department for Children Schools and Families.
- De Castell, S., Luke, A. and Egan, K., eds, 1986. *Literacy, society and schooling: a reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Defur, S. H., Todd-Allen, M. and Getzel, E. E., 2001. Parent participation in the transition planning process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 24(1), p. 19-36.
- Demetriou, H., Goalen, P. and Rudduck, J., 2000. Academic performance, transfer, transition and friendship: listening to the student voice. *International Journal of Educational Research* , 33(4), pp. 425-441.
- Denson, T. F., 2009. Angry rumination and the self-regulation of aggression. In: Forgas, J. P., Baumeister, R. F. and Tice, D. M., 2009. *Psychology of Self-Regulation: Cognitive, Affective, and Motivational Processes*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Dey, I., 2007. Supported Theory. In: Seale, C., Gobo, G. Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. Eds., 2007. *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- DfE, 1994. The Education (Special Educational Needs Code of Practice). London: HMSO.
- DfE, 2010. The importance of teaching - the schools white paper. London: TSO.
- DfE, 2011a. Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability - a consultation. London: TSO.
- DfE, 2011b. Evaluation of every child a reader (ECaR) London: Department for Education
- DfE, 2012a. Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability progress and next steps. London: Department for Education.
- DfE, 2012b. Government proposes reforms to SEN system. [online] Available at: <<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/b0075344/government-proposes-reforms-sen>> [Accessed 5 May 2013].
- DfE, 2012c. Modern foreign languages (MFL). [online] Available at: <<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/primary/b00199137/mfl>> [Accessed 23 January 2013].

- DfE, 2013. Secondary national curriculum until 2014. [online] Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary> [Accessed 5 February 2013].
- DfES, 1978. Special educational needs: report of the committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 1981. Education act. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 1988. Education reform act. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 1996. Education act. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 2001a. Special educational needs and disability act. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 2001b. Special educational needs code of practice (Reference DfES/581/2001).
- DfES, 2003. Every child matters. London: TSO.
- DfES, 2004. National curriculum handbook for secondary teachers in England. London: HMSO.
- DfES, 2004a. Children act. London: The Stationery Office Limited.
- DfES, 2004b. Every child matters: change for children. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Diack, A., 2009. A smoother path: managing the challenge of school transfer. In: Perspectives on education: primary-secondary transfer in science. *The Wellcome Trust, Issue 2*.
- Direct.gov.uk, 2012. [online] Available at: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG_10013877 [Accessed June 2012].
- Dyslexia Action, 2013. *What is dyslexia?* [online] Available at: <http://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/whatisdyslexia> [Accessed 2 June 2013].
- Dyslexia research trust, 2014. Dyslexia - Facts & Figures [online] Available at: <http://www.dyslexic.org.uk/aboutdyslexia15.htm> [Accessed 12 June 2014]
- Eccles, J. S. and Harold, R. D., 1996. Family involvement in children's and adolescent's schooling. In: Booth, A. and Dunn, J. F., 1996. *Family-School Links: How do they Affect Outcomes?* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
- Education.gov.uk, 2012. Government proposes reforms to SEN system. [online] Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/b0075344/government-proposes-reforms-sen> [Accessed 13 April 2013].
- Education.gov.uk, 2013. Phonics screening check FAQs. [online] Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a00198207/faqs-year-1-phonics-screening-check#faq25> [Accessed 2 December 2013].

- Eissa, M., 2010. Behavioral and emotional problems associated with dyslexia in adolescence. *Current Psychiatry*, 17(1), p. 17-25.
- Emmel, N., Hughes, K., Greenhalgh, J. and Sales, A. 2007. Accessing socially excluded people - trust and the gatekeeper in the researcher-participant relationship. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(2). [online] Available at: <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/2/emmel.html>> [Accessed 10 April 2013].
- Erikson, E. H., 1994. *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Erikson, E. H., 1998. *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. and Siraj-Blatchford, I., 2008. Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education 3-14 project (EPPSE 3-14. What makes a 'successful' transition from primary to secondary school? [Research report] DCSF-RR019. London: DCSF.
- Evans, L., 2011. The 'shape' of teacher professionalism in England: professional standards, performance management, professional development and the changes proposed in the 2010 White Paper. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), p. 851-870.
- Everatt, J., Steffert, B. and Smythe, I., 1999. An eye for the unusual: creative thinking in dyslexics. *Dyslexia*, 5(1), p. 28-46.
- Falbo, T., Lein, L. and Amador, N. A., 2001. Parental involvement during the transition to high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 16(5), p. 511-529.
- Faris, E., 1971. The retrospective act and education. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N. eds. 1971. *Symbolic Interaction: a Reader in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Farrell, A. Ed., 2005. *Ethical Research with Children*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Farrell, P., 2001. Special education in the last twenty years: have things really got better? *British Journal of Special Education*, 28 (1), p. 3-9.
- Feldman, M. S., Bell, J. and Berger, M. T., 2003. *Gaining access: a practical and theoretical guide for qualitative researchers*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Fenig, S., Levav, I., Kohn, R. and Yelin, N. 1993. Telephone vs face-to-face interviewing in a community psychiatric survey. *American Journal of Public Health*, 83(6), p. 896-898.
- Fertig, M., 2004. Shot across the bow, stigma or selection? The effect of repeating a class on educational attainment. *IZA Discussion Papers*, No. 1266.

- Fink, R. P., 1995. Successful dyslexics: a constructivist study of passionate interest reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 39(4), p. 268-280.
- Flewitt, R., 2005. Conducting research with young children: some ethical considerations. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175(6), p. 553-565.
- Forgeard, M., Schlaug, G., Norton, A., Rosam, C., and Iyengar, U., 2008. The relation between music and phonological processing in normal-reading children and children with dyslexia. *Music Perception*, 25(4), p. 383-390.
- Francis, B., 2006. Heroes or zeroes? The discursive positioning of 'underachieving boys' in English neo-liberal education policy, *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(2), p. 187-200.
- Franks, K. and Frederick, H., 2011, Dyslexic and entrepreneur: typologies, commonalities and differences. *Journal of Asia entrepreneurship and sustainability*, XI(1), p. 95-115.
- Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellett, M. and Robinson, C. Eds., 2004. *Doing Research with Children and Young People*. London: Sage & The Open University.
- Frederickson, N. and Jacobs, S., 2001. Controllability attributions for academic performance and the perceived scholastic competence, global self-worth and achievement of children with dyslexia. *School Psychology International*, 22 (4), p. 401-416. SAGE Social Science Collections.
- Fuller, M., Healey, M., Bradley, A. and Hall, T., 2004. Barriers to learning: a systematic study of the experience of disabled students in one university. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(3), p. 303-318.
- Galton, M. and Morrison, I., 2000. Concluding comments. Transfer and transition: the next steps. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(4), P. 443-449.
- Galton, M., 2009. Moving to secondary school: initial encounters and their effects in perspectives on education: primary-secondary transfer in science. *The Wellcome Trust, Issue 2*.
- Galton, M., Gray, J. and Ruddock, J., 1999. The impact of school transitions and transfers on pupil progress and attainment. *DfEE, ANNEX 21, Research Report No. 131*.
- Galton, M., Morrison, I. and Pell, T., 2000. Transfer and transition in English schools: reviewing the evidence. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(4), pp. 341-363.
- Ganeson, K. and Ehrich, L. C., 2009. Transition into high school: a phenomenological study. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(1), p. 60-78.

- Gerson, K. and Horowitz, R., 2003. Observation and interviewing: options and choices in qualitative research. In May, T., Ed. *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Gerth, H. and Wright Mills, C., 1971. Institutions and persons. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N., eds. 1971. *Symbolic Interaction: a Reader in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Glazzard, J., 2010. The impact of dyslexia on pupil's self-esteem. *Support for Learning*, 25(2), p. 63-69.
- Glover, J., 1988. *The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity*. London: The Penguin Press.
- Gobo, G., 2007. Sampling, representativeness and generalizability. In Seale, C., Gobo, G. Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. Eds., 2007. *Qualitative research practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Goffman, E., 1971. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E., 1990. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gorard, S. and See, B. H., 2011. How can we enhance enjoyment of secondary school? the student view. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(4), p. 671-690.
- Gray, D. E., 1993. Perceptions of stigma: the parents of autistic children. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 15(1), p. 102-120.
- Greene, S. and Hogan, D. Eds., 2006. *Researching Children's Experience: Methods and Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Greig, A. D. and Taylor, J., 1998. *Doing Research with Children*. London: Sage Publications.
- Greig, A. D. and Taylor, J., 2007. *Doing Research with Children*. London: Sage Publications.
- Grover, S., 2004. Why won't they listen to us? : on giving power and voice to children participating in social research. *Childhood*, 11(1), p. 81-93.
- Gwernan-Jones, R. and Burden, R. L., 2010. Are they just lazy? Student teachers' attitudes about dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 16(1), p. 66-86.
- Hales, G., 2001. Self-esteem and counselling. In: Peer, L. and Reid, G., eds, 2001. *Dyslexia-Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*. Abingdon: David Fulton Publishers.

- Hall, k., Collins, J., Benjamin, S., Nind, M. and Sheehy, K., 2004. SATurated models of pupildom: assessment and inclusion/exclusion. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(6), p. 801-817.
- Halstead, J. M., 2005. Values and values education in schools. In: Halstead, J. M. And Taylor, M. J., eds, 2005, *Values in education and education in values*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Hanna, P., 2012. Using internet technologies (such as Skype) as a research medium: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 12(2), p. 239-242.
- Hellendoorn, J. and Ruijsenaars, W., 2000. Personal experiences and adjustment of Dutch adults with dyslexia. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(4), p. 227-239.
- Hewitt, J. P., 2007. *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology*. 10th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Higgins, E. T., 1987. Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94(3), p. 319-340.
- Higgins, E. T., 1989. Self-discrepancy theory: what patterns of self-beliefs cause people to suffer? *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 22, p. 93-136.
- Hill, M., 2006. Children's voices on ways of having a voice: children's and young people's perspectives on methods used in research and consultation. *Childhood*, 13(1), p. 69-89.
- Hiller, H. H., and DiLuzio, L., 2004. The interviewee and the research Interview: analysing a neglected dimension in research. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*. 41(1), p. 1-26.
- Holden, C., 2002. Contributing to the debate: the perspectives of children on gender, achievement and literacy. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 3(1), p. 97-110.
- Holloway, S., 2001. The experience of higher education from the perspective of disabled students. *Disability & Society*, 16(4), p. 597-615.
- Holt, A. 2010. Using the telephone for narrative interviewing: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 10(1), p. 113-121.
- Honess, T. and Yardley, K., 1987. Cognitive, affective and contextual aspects of self. In: Yardley, K. and Honess, T., 1987. *Self and Identity: Psychological Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. and Sandler, H. M., 1997. Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), p. 3-42.
- Hornby, G. and Lafaele, R., 2011. Barriers to parental involvement in education: an explanatory model. *Educational Review*, 63(1), p. 37-52.

- Howell Major and Savin-Baden, M., 2009. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Synthesis: Managing the information explosion in social science research*. London: Routledge.
- Howes, N., 2010. Here to listen! Communicating with children and methods for communicating with children and young people as part of the assessment process. In: Horwath, J., 2010. *The Child's World: The Comprehensive Guide to Assessing Children in Need*, 2nd ed. Gateshead: Athenaem Press.
- Humphrey, N. and Mullins, P., 2002. Personal constructs and attribution for academic success and failure in dyslexia. *British Journal of Special Education*, 29(4), p. 196-203.
- Humphrey, N., 2002 a. Teacher and pupil ratings of self-esteem in developmental dyslexia. *British Journal of Special Education*, 29(1), p. 29-36.
- Humphrey, N., 2002b. Self-concept and self-esteem in developmental dyslexia: implications for theory and practice. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 2(2), p.1-13.
- Humphrey, N., 2003. Facilitating a positive sense of self in pupils with dyslexia: the role of teachers and peers. *Support for Learning*, 18(3), p. 130-136.
- Hyldegård, J., 2006. Using diaries in group based information behavior research - a methodological study. Proceedings of the 1st international conference on Information interaction in context.
- I CAN, n.d. *I CAN Response to government's report support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability - progress and next steps*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ican.org.uk/sitecore/content/ICAN2/Global/Components/Rendering%20Elements/Press%20Releases/I%20CAN%20Response%20to%20Governments%20report%20Support%20and%20aspiration.aspx> > [Accessed 11 September 2013].
- Ingesson, S. G., 2007. Growing up with dyslexia: interviews with teenagers and young adults. *School Psychology International*, 28(5.), p. 574-591.
- James, A., 2007. Giving voice to children's voices: practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), p. 261-272.
- Jenkins, R., 2008. *Social Identity*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Joffe, H. and Yardley, L., 2004. Content and thematic analysis, In: Marks, D. and Yardley, L., eds, 2004. *Research methods for clinical and health psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Kanowles, M. S., 1988. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. Revised edition. Cambridge Book Co.
- Karen, D. 2002., Changes in Access to Higher Education in the United States: 1980-1992, *Sociology of Education*, 75(3), p. 191-210.
- Kaufman, J. M. and Johnson, C. 2004. Stigmatised individuals and the process of identity. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 45(4), p. 807-833.
- Kendall, L., O'Donnell, L., Golden, S., Ridley, K., Machin, S., Rutt, S., McNally, S., Schagen, I., Meghir, C., Stoney, S., Morris, M., West, A. and Noden, P., 2005. Excellence in cities: the national evaluation of a policy to raise standards in urban schools 2000-2003. [Research Report No 675A] Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Keogh, E., Bond, F. W. and Flaxman P. E., 2006. Improving academic performance and mental health through a stress management intervention: outcomes and mediators of change. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 44 (3), p. 339-357.
- Khanum, H., 2013. Culture and Identity: embracing two worlds. *Sociology Review*, 23(2).
- Kirby, P., 2004. 'A guide to actively involving young people in research: for researchers, research commissioners, and managers'. INVOLVE.
- Kirwan, B. and Leather, C., 2011. Students' voices: a report of the student view of dyslexia study skills tuition. *Support for Learning*, 26(1), p. 33-41.
- Kloomok, S. and Cosden, M. 1994. Self-Concept in children with learning disabilities: The relationship between global self-concept, academic "discounting," nonacademic self-concept, and perceived social support. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 17(2), p. 140-153.
- Koo, M. and Skinner, H., 2005. Challenges on Internet recruitment: a case study with disappointing results. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 7 (1) [online] Available at: <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1550633/>> [Accessed 15 January February 2012].
- Koshy, V. and Pinheiro-Torres, C., 2012. 'Are we being de-gifted, miss?' Primary school gifted and talented co-ordinators' responses to the gifted and talented education policy in England. *British Educational Research Journal*, Early View (Online Version of Record published before inclusion in an issue).
- Koshy, V., Brown, J., Jones, D and Portman Smith, C., 2013. Exploring the views of parents of high ability children living in relative poverty. *Educational Research*, 55(3), p. 304-320.

- Kvalsund, R., 2000. The transition from primary to secondary level in smaller and larger rural schools in Norway: comparing differences in context and social meaning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33 (4), pp. 401- 423.
- Lacey, P., 2001. The role of learning support assistants in the inclusive learning of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, *Educational Review*, 53(2), p. 157-167.
- Lackaye, T. D. and Margalit, M. 2006. Comparisons of achievement, effort, and self-perceptions among students with learning disabilities and their peers from different achievement groups, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 39(5), p. 432-446.
- Landerl, K., Fussenegger, B., Moll, K., Willburger, E., 2009. Dyslexia and dyscalculia: Two learning disorders with different cognitive profiles. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 103(3), p. 309–324.
- LaRocque, M., Kleiman, I. and Darling, S. M., 2011. Parental involvement: the missing link in school achievement. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 55(3), p. 115-122.
- Lauchlan, F. and Boyle, C., 2007. Is the use of labels in special education helpful? *Support for Learning*, 22(1), p.36-42.
- Laurent, U., 2013. Revisiting care in schools: Exploring the caring experiences of disengaged young people. In: Rogers, C. and Weller, S., 2013. *Critical approaches to care: understanding caring relations, identities and cultures*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Lawler, S., 2003. Narrative in social research. In May, T. Ed. *Qualitative research in action*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Lawrence, D., 1996. *Enhancing Self-Esteem in the classroom*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Layder, D., 2004. *Social and Personal Identity*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Le Métais, J., 2003. Thematic probe: transition from primary to secondary education in selected countries of the INCA website. *National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER. & International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Archive*, July 2003.
- Legard, R., Keegan, J. and Ward, K., 2003. In-depth interviews. In: Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. Eds. 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Lewis, A. and Porter, J., 2004. Interviewing children and young people with learning disabilities: guidelines for researchers and multi-professional practice. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 32 (4), p. 191-197.

- Lewis, J., Ritchie, J., Ormston, R. and Morrell, G., 2013. Generalising from qualitative research. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C. and Ormston, R., 2013. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and researchers*, 2nd ed., London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Lewis, V. and Kellet, M., 2004. Disability. In: Fraser, S. Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellett, M. and Robinson, C., Eds, 2004. *Doing Research with Children and Young People*. Sage & The Open University.
- Leyshon, M. 2002. On being 'in the field': practice, progress and problems in research with young people in rural areas. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 18(2), p. 179-191.
- Lindsay, G., 2003. Inclusive education: a critical perspective. *British Journal of Special Education*, 30(1), p. 3-12.
- Lindsay, G., 2007. Rights, efficacy and inclusive education. In: Cigman, R., 2007. *Included or Excluded? The Challenge of the Mainstream for Some SEN Children*. Oxon:Routledge.
- Linnerbrink, E. A., 2005. The dilemma of performance-approach goals: the use of multiple goal contexts to promote students' motivation and learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(2), p. 197-213.
- Lithari, E., 2009. A review of provision for pupils with dyslexic type difficulties in view of the transition from primary to secondary school (Unpublished master's thesis). Institute of Education, London, United Kingdom.
- Locker, J. and Cropley, M., 2004. Anxiety, depression and self-esteem in secondary school children. an investigation into the impact of standard assessment tests (SATs) and other important school examinations. *School Psychology International*, 25(3), p. 333-345.
- Logan, J., 2009. *Dyslexia*, 15(4), p. 328-46.
- Logan, J., 2010. Unusual talent: a study of successful leadership and delegation in dyslexic entrepreneurs. [online] Available at: http://www.cassknowledge.com/sites/default/files/article-attachments/Dyslexic%20Entrepreneurs%20and%20Business%20Leaders%20Delegation%20and%20Leadership%20skills_v9_18Nov10.pdf [Accessed 21 June 2014]
- Long, L., MacBlain, S. and MacBlain, M., 2007. Supporting Students with Dyslexia at the Secondary Level: An Emotional Model of Literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(2), p. 124-134.
- Jeffries, S. and Everatt, J., 2004. Working memory: Its role in dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties. *Dyslexia*, 10(3), p. 196-214.

- Long, T. and Johnson, M., 2000. Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing*, 4(1), P. 30–37.
- Lord, S. E., Eccles, J. S. and McCarthy, K. A., 1994. Surviving the junior high school transition: family processes and self-perceptions as protective and risk factors. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14(2), p. 162-199.
- Lucey, H. and Reay, D., 2000. Identities in transition: anxiety and excitement in the move to secondary school, *Oxford Review of Education*, 26(2), p. 191-205.
- Lucey, H. And Reay, D., 2002. Carrying the beacon of excellence: social class differentiation and anxiety at a time of transition. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(3), p. 321-336.
- Lufi, D., Okasha, S. and Cohen, A., 2004. Test anxiety and its effect on the personality of students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 27(3), p. 176-184.
- Ma , X., Stewin, L. L., and Mah, D. L., 2001. Bullying in school: nature, effects and remedies. *Research Papers in Education*, 16(3), p. 247-270.
- Macnaghten, P. and Myers, G., 2007. Focus groups. In Seale, C., Gobo, G. Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. Eds., 2007. *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Mañano, C., Ninot, G., Bilard, J. 2004. Age and gender effects on global self-esteem and physical self-perception in adolescents. *European Physical Education Review* February. 10(1), p.53-69.
- Maras, P. and Aveling, E. L., 2006. Students with special educational needs: transitions from primary to secondary school. *British Journal of Special Education*, 33(4), pp. 196-203.
- Markham, A. N., 2006. Internet communication as a tool for qualitative research. In: Silverman, D., 2006. *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Marshall, A., 2009. *When your child has...dyslexia: get the right diagnosis, understand treatment options, and help your child learn*. Avon: Adams Media.
- Marshall, M. N., 1996. Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice*, 13(6), p. 522-525.
- Martinez, I. and Garcia, J. F., 2007. Impact of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem and internalization of values in Spain. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 10(2), p.338-348.
- Mauthner, M. 1997. Methodological aspects of collecting data from children: lessons from three research projects. *Children & Society*, 11(1), p. 16-28.

- May, C. and Finch, T., 2009. Implementing, embedding, and integrating practices: an outline of normalization process theory. *Sociology*, 43(3), p. 535-554.
- Mayall, B., ed. 1994. *Children's childhoods observed and experienced*. London: The Falmer Press.
- McCulloch, G., 2001. The reinvention of teacher professionalism. In: Furlong, J. and Phillips, R., eds., 2001. *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- McGee, C., Ward, R. Gibbons, J. and Harlow, A., 2003. Transition to secondary school: a literature review. Report to the ministry of education. New Zealand: the Ministry of Education.
- McGrath, H., 2006. To repeat or not to repeat? *WORDS: Journal of the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association*. [online] Available at: <http://www.bounceback.com.au/sites/default/files/To%20Repeat%20or%20Not%20To%20Repeat%3F_0.pdf> [Accessed 1 June 2013]
- McLachlan, B., 2012. '*Learning for excellence*': professional learning for learning support assistants within further education. PhD thesis, Anglia Ruskin University.
- McNulty, M. A., 2003. Dyslexia and the life course. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36(4), p. 363-381.
- Mead, G. H., 1967. 14th ed. *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meltzer, B. N., 1971. Mead's social psychology. In: Manis, J. G. and Meltzer, B. N. eds. 1971. *Symbolic Interaction: a Reader in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Meltzer, L., Reddy, R., Sales Pollica, L., Roditi, B., Sayer, J. and Theokas, C., 2004. Positive and negative self-perceptions: is there a cyclical relationship between teachers' and students' perceptions of effort, strategy use, and academic performance? *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 19(1), p. 33-44.
- Merriam, S. B., 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Millard, E., 1997. Differently literate: gender identity and the construction of the developing reader. *Gender and Education*, 9(1), p. 31-48.
- Miller, J. and Glassner, B., 1998. The 'inside' and the 'outside': finding realities in interviews. In Silverman, D. Ed. *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Modgil, S., Modgil, C. and Brown, G., Eds, 1983. *Jean Piaget: An Interdisciplinary critique*. London: Routledge & Kegan Publications.
- MOE, 1944. Education act. London: HMSO.

- Monrouxe, L. V., 2009. Negotiating professional identities: dominant and contesting narratives in medical students' longitudinal audio diaries. *Current Narratives*, 1(1), p. 41-59.
- Moore, E. J., 2004. Deficits in dyslexia: barking up the wrong tree? *Dyslexia*, 10 (4), p. 289-98.
- Morrow, V. and Richards, M., 1996. The ethics of social research with children: an overview. *Children & Society*, 10(2), p. 90-105.
- Morse, J.M., Barrett M., Mayan M., Olson K. & Spiers J., 2002. Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), p. 1-19.
- Nalavany, B. A., Williams Carawan, L. and Rennick, R. A., 2011. Psychosocial experiences associated with confirmed and self-identified dyslexia: a participant-Driven Concept Map of Adult Perspectives. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 44(1), p. 63-79.
- NHS, 2014. Dyslexia [online] Available at: <<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/Pages/Introduction.aspx>> [Accessed 12 June 2014]
- Nickerson, A. B. and Nagle, R. J., 2005. Parent and peer attachment in late childhood and early adolescence, *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(2), p. 223-249.
- NMSF, 2013. *UK middle schools contact details*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.middleschools.org.uk/ukms.php>> [Accessed 2 February 2013]
- Norwich, B., 1996. Special needs education or education for all: connective specialisation and ideological impurity. *British Journal of Special Education*, 23(3), p. 100-104.
- Nugent, M., 2007. Comparing inclusive and segregated settings for children with dyslexia - parental perspectives from Ireland. *Support for Learning*, 22(2), p. 52-59.
- NUT, 2011. *The response of the national union of teachers to the green paper: support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/13634>> [Accessed 11 September 2013].
- NUT, 2013. Phonics. [online] Available at: <<http://www.teachers.org.uk/phonics>> [Accessed 2 December 2013].
- O' Connor, H., Madge, C., Shaw, R. and Wellens, J., 2008. Internet-based interviewing. In: Fielding, N., Lee, R. M. and Blank, G. Eds. 2008. *The handbook of online research methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Okumus, F., Altinay, L., Roper, A. 2007. Gaining access for research: reflections from experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(1), p. 7-26.
- O'Leary, Z., 2004. *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Overy, K., 2000. Dyslexia, temporal processing and music: the potential of music as an early learning aid for dyslexic children. *Psychology of Music*, 28(2), p. 218-229.
- Overy, K., 2003. Dyslexia and music. From timing deficits to musical intervention. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 999, p.497-505.
- Palen, L. and Salzman, M., 2002. Voice-mail diary studies for naturalistic data capture under mobile conditions. Proceedings of the 2002 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work.
- Patton, M., 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Patton, M., Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Payne, G., 2006. Re-counting 'illiteracy': literacy skills in the sociology of social inequality, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57(2), p. 219-240.
- Perrine, N. E. and Aloise-Young, p. A. 2004. The role of self-monitoring in adolescents susceptibility to passive peer pressure. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37 (8), p. 1701-1716.
- Pietarinen, J., Pyhältö, K. and Soini, T., 2010. A horizontal approach to school transitions: a lesson learned from Finnish 15-year-olds. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(3), p. 229-245.
- Pietarinen, J., 1998. Rural school students' experiences on the transition from primary school to secondary school. In: *European Conference for Educational Research*. University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 17 -20 September 1998.
- Pietarinen, J., 2000. Transfer to and study at secondary school in Finnish school culture: developing schools on the basis of pupils' experiences. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(4), pp. 383-400.
- Pointon, P., 2000. Students' views of environments for learning from the primary to the secondary school. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(4), pp. 375-382.
- Polkinghorne, D. E., 1998. Narrative knowing and the human sciences. State University of New York Press.
- Pollak, D., 2005. *Dyslexia, the Self and Higher Education: Learning Life Histories of Students Identified as Dyslexic*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books Ltd.

- Powell, R., 1999. *Literacy as a Moral Imperative: Facing the Challenges of a Pluralistic Society*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Preece, S., 2009. *Posh Talk: Language and Identity in Higher Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Punch, S., 2002. Research with children: the same or different from research with adults? *Childhood*, 9(3), p. 321-341.
- QCA, 2010. The national curriculum: level descriptions for subjects. Coventry: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. [online] Available at: <<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10747/1/1849623848.pdf>> [Accessed 12 March 2013]
- Rapley, T., 2007. Interviews. In: Seale, C., Gobo, G. Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. Eds., 2007. *Qualitative research practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Reay, D., 1998a. 'Cultural reproduction: mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling.' in Grenfell, M. and James, D. *Bourdieu and education: acts of practical theory*. London: Falmer.
- Reay, D., 1998b. Setting the agenda: the growing impact of market forces on pupil grouping in British secondary schooling, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 30(5), p. 545-558.
- Reay, D., 2001. 'Spice girls', 'nice girls', 'girlies', and 'tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom. *Gender and Education*, 13(2), p. 153-166.
- Reay, D., 2002. Shaun's story: troubling discourses of white working-class masculinities. *Gender and Education*, 14, No.3, p. 221-234.
- Reay, D., 2006. 'I'm not seen as one of the clever children': consulting primary school pupils about the social conditions of learning, *Educational Review*, 58(2), p. 171-181.
- Reeves, C. L., 2010. A difficult negotiation: fieldwork relations with gatekeepers. *Qualitative Research*, 10(3), p. 315-331.
- Reid, K., 2005. The implications of every child matters and the children act for schools. *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 23(1), p. 12-18.
- Reiter, A., Tuch, O. and Lange, K. W., 2004. Executive functions in children with dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 11(2), p. 116-131.
- Rice, M., Bunker, K., Kang, D. H., Howell, C. C., Weaver, M., 2007. Accessing and recruiting children for research in schools. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 39(4), p. 501-514.

- Richards, D. A., Watson, S. L., Monger, S. and Rogers, C., 2012. The right to sexuality and relationships. In: Griffiths, D., Owen, F. and Watson, S. L., eds, 2012. *The human rights agenda for persons with intellectual disabilities*. New York: NADD Press.
- Richardson, J. T. E., 1996. *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and social sciences*. New Jersey: BPS Blackwell.
- Riddick, B., 1996. *Living With Dyslexia: The social and emotional consequences of specific learning difficulties/disabilities*. London: Routledge.
- Riddick, B., 2000. An examination of the relationship between labelling and stigmatisation with special reference to dyslexia. *Disability & Society*, 15(4), p. 653-667.
- Riddick, B., 2001. Dyslexia and inclusion: time for a social model of disability perspective? *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 11(3), p. 223-236.
- Riddick, B., Sterling, C., Farmer, M. and Morgan, S., 1999. Self-esteem and anxiety in the educational histories of adult dyslexic students. *Dyslexia*, 5(4), p. 227-248.
- Rioux, M., H. and Pinto, PP. C., 2010. A time for the universal right to education: back to basics. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(5), p. 621-642.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. and Elam, G. 2003. Designing and selecting Samples. In: Ritchie and Lewis, eds, 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Rivers, I., Duncan, N. and Besag, V. E., 2007. *Bullying: A Handbook for Educators and Parents*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- RNIB, 2012. Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability. Progress and next steps (Department for Education): RNIB's initial analysis. [online] Available at:
https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&cad=rja&ved=0CE8QFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rnib.org.uk%2Fprofessionals%2FDocuments%2FSupport_and_aspiration_next_steps-rnib_briefing.doc&ei=E8swUvfQEJCJhQechYHwAQ&usg=AFQjCNGPydpdTio-M4tbJk3BfJ4jm7zMSgQ&bvm=bv.52109249,d.ZG4 [Accessed 11 September 2013]
- Roberts Gray, M. and Steinberg, L., 1999. Unpacking authoritative parenting: reassessing a multidimensional construct, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61(3), p. 574-587.
- Roberts, 2008. Listening to children: and hearing them. In: Chtistensen, P., ed., 2008. *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*. Oxon: Routledge.

- Robinson, C. and Kellett, M., 2004. Power. In: Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S. Kellett, M. and Robinson, C., Eds., 2004. *Doing Research with Children and Young People*. London: Sage & The Open University.
- Robinson, C. and Taylor, C., 2013. Student voice as a contested practice: Power and participation in two student voice projects. *Improving Schools*, 16(32), p. 32-46.
- Robson, S., 2011. Producing and using video data in the early years: ethical questions and practical consequences in research with young children. *Children & Society*, 25(3), p. 179-189.
- Rockhill, K., 1993. Gender, language and the politics of literacy. In: Maybin, J., ed., 1993. *Language and literacy in social practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matter Ltd.
- Rogers, C. and Ludhra, G., 2011. Research ethics: participation, social difference and informed consent. In: Bradford, S. and Cullen, F., eds, 2011. *Research and Research Methods for Youth Practitioners: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Rogers, C. and Weller, S., 2013. *Critical approaches to care: understanding caring relations, identities and cultures*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Rogers, C., 2003. The mother/researcher in blurred boundaries of a reflexive research process. *Auto/Biography*, XI (1&2), p. 47-54.
- Rogers, C., 2005. *A sociology of parenting children identified with special educational needs: The private and public spaces parents inhabit*. PhD. University of Essex.
- Rogers, C., 2007a. Experiencing an 'inclusive' education: parents and their children with 'special educational needs', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(1), p. 55-68.
- Rogers, C., 2007b. *Parenting and inclusive education: Discovering difference, experiencing difficulty*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogers, C., 2010. But it's not all about the sex: mothering, normalisation and young learning disabled people. *Disability & Society*, 25(1), p. 63-74.
- Rogers, C., 2011. Mothering and intellectual disability: partnership rhetoric? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32(4), p. 563-581.
- Rogers, C., 2013. Inclusive education and intellectual disability: a sociological engagement with Martha Nussbaum. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(9), p. 988-1002.
- Rolfe G., 2006. Validity, trustworthiness and rigour: quality and the idea of qualitative research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(3), p. 304-10.

- Rose, J., 2009. Identifying and teaching children and young people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. an independent report from Sir Jim Rose to the secretary of state for children, schools and families June 2009. DCSF Publications.
- Rowan, L., 2010. Learning with dyslexia in secondary school in New Zealand: what can we learn from students' past experience? *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, Vol.15, Issue 1, pp. 71-79.
- Rudduck, J., 1996a. Going to 'the big school': the turbulence of transition In: Rudduck, J., Chaplain, R. and Wallace, G., 1996. *School Improvement: What Can Pupils Tell Us?* London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Rudduck, J., 1996b. Getting serious: the demands of coursework, revision and examinations in Rudduck, J., Chaplain, R. and Wallace, G. 1996. *School Improvement: What Can Pupils Tell Us?* London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Russell, P., 2003. 'Access and achievement or social exclusion?' Are the government's policies working for disabled children and their families? *Children & Society*, 17(3), p. 215-225.
- Ryan, K. E., Ryan, A. M., Arbuthnot, K. and Samuels, M., 2007. Students' motivation for standardized math exams. *Educational Researcher*, 36(1), p. 5-13.
- Ryen, A., 2007. Ethical issues. In: Seale, C., Gobo, G. Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. Eds., 2007. *Qualitative research practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Safer, D. J., 1986. The stress of secondary school for vulnerable students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 15(5.), p. 405-417.
- Schofield, J. W., 2002. Increasing the generalizability of qualitative research. In: Huberman, A. M., and Miles, M. B., eds., 2002. *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Seale, C. and Silverman, D., 1997. Ensuring rigour in qualitative research. *European Journal of Public Health*, 7 (4), p. 379-384.
- Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D., 2007. *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage.
- Selfe, C. L., 1999. *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-first Century: the Importance of Paying Attention*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Selznick, R. 2009. *The Shut-Down Learner: Helping Your Academically Discouraged Child*. Boulder: Sentient Publications.
- Sets and Burke, 2003. A sociological approach to self and identity. In: Leary, M. and Tangney, J. P., 2003. *Handbook of self and identity*. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Shah, S., 2007. Special or mainstream? The views of disabled students, *Research Papers in Education*, 22(4), p. 425-442.
- Shaywitz, S., 2005. *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*. New York: Vintage.
- Sheffield Hallam University, n.d., Researcher safety: risk assessment discussion points. [online] Available at: <<http://www.shu.ac.uk/assets/pdf/Researcher-Safety.pdf>> [Accessed 12 June 2013]
- Sheras, P., 2002. *Your Child: Bully or Victim? Understanding and Ending School Yard Tyranny*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Shostak, J. F. 1983. *Maladjusted Schooling. Deviance, Social Control & Individuality in Secondary Schooling*. Oxon: The Falmer Press.
- Silverman, D., 2010. Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook. 3rd ed. SAGE.
- Simmons, F.R. and Singleton, C., 2008. Do weak phonological representations impact on arithmetic development? A review of research into arithmetic and dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 14(2), p. 77-94.
- Sinclair, S., Huntsinger, J. and Skorinko, J., 2005. Social tuning of the self: consequences for the self-evaluations of stereotype targets. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(2), p. 160-175.
- Singer, E. 2007. Coping with academic failure, a study of Dutch children with dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 14(4), p. 314-333.
- Singer, E., 2005. The strategies adopted by Dutch children with dyslexia to maintain their self-esteem when teased at school. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38(5), p.411-23.
- Singh, V. and Ghai, A., 2009. Notions of self: lived realities of children with disabilities, *Disability & Society*, Col. 24(2), p. 129-145.
- Singleton, C. and Trotter, S. 2005. Visual stress in adults with and without dyslexia. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 28(3), p. 365–378.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., 2004. Educational disadvantage in the early years: how do we overcome it? Some lessons from research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 12(2), p. 5-20.
- Skype, 2013, software, version 6.10.0.104, Skype.
- Slee, R., 2011. *The irregular school: exclusion, schooling and inclusive education*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, P., K., Shu, S. and Madsen, K., 2001. Characteristics of victims of school bullying: Developmental changes in coping strategies and skills. In: Juvonen, J., and Graham,

- S., Eds., 2001. *Peer harassment at school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimised*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Snape, D. and Spencer, L., 2003. The Foundations of Qualitative Research. In: Ritchie and Lewis, eds, 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Social Research Association, 2013. A Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers. [online] Available at: <http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/safety_code_of_practice.pdf> [Accessed 2 March 2013].
- Solomon, R. C., 1986. Literacy and the education of the emotions. In: De Castell, S., Luke, A. and Egan, K., eds, 1986. *Literacy, society and schooling: a reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Speld, S. A., 1989. Tinted lenses and dyslexics—a controlled study. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Ophthalmology*, 17(2), p. 137-141.
- SRA (Social Research Association), 2003. Ethical guidelines. [online] Available at: <<http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ethics03.pdf>> [Accessed 24 June 2011].
- Stanley, B. and Sieber, J. E., 1992. *Social Research on Children and Adolescents: Ethical Issues*. London: Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. and Cobrin, J., 1998. Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for developing supported theory. London: SAGE Publications.
- Stryker, S., 1987. Identity Theory: Developments and Extensions, in Yardley, K. and Honess, T. 1987. *Self and Identity: Psychological Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
- Sturges, J. E. and Hanrahan, K. J., 2004. Comparing telephone and face-to-face Qualitative interviewing: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 4(1), p. 107-118.
- Sweeting, H. and West, P., 2001. Being different: correlates of the experience of teasing and bullying at age 11. *Research Papers in Education*, 16(3), p. 225-246.
- Taylor S. J. and Bogdan, R., 1989. On accepting relationships between people with mental retardation and non-disabled people: towards an understanding of acceptance, *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 4(1), p. 21-36.
- Teddlie, C. and Yu, F., 2007. Mixed methods sampling: a typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), p. 77-100.
- Thomas, E. and Magilvy, J. K., 2011. Qualitative Rigor or Research Validity in Qualitative Research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 16(2), p. 151–155.
- Thomas, N. and O'Kane, C., 1998. The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children & Society*, 12(5), p. 336-348.

- Thomson, M., 2007. *Supporting dyslexic pupils in the secondary curriculum: dyslexia and science subjects (biology, chemistry, physics)*. East Kilbride: M&A Thomson Litho Ltd. [online] Available at: http://www.dsse.org.uk/resources/2_10ScienceSubjectsP.pdf [Accessed 10 June 2014]
- Tobbell, J., 2003. Student's experiences from the transition from primary to secondary school. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 20(4), p. 4-14.
- Tomlinson, S., 2012. The irresistible rise of the SEN industry. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(3), p. 267-286.
- Topping, K. and Maloney, S. Eds., 2005. *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Inclusive education*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Topping, K., 2001. Primary-secondary transition: differences between teachers' and children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14 (3), p. 268-285.
- Tudge, J. and Hogan, D., 2006. An ecological approach to observations of children's everyday lives. in Greene, S. and Hogan, D. Eds.. *Researching Children's Experience: Methods and Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Tuominen-Soini, H., Salmela-Aro, K. and Niemivirta, M., 2012. Achievement goal orientations and academic well-being across the transition to upper secondary education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22(3), p. 290-305.
- Turner, J. H., 2013. *Contemporary sociological theory*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Undheim, A. M., 2009. A Thirteen-year follow-up Study of young Norwegian adults with dyslexia in childhood: reading development and educational levels. *Dyslexia*, 15(4), p. 291-303.
- Verkuyten, M. and Thijs, J., 2002. School satisfaction of elementary school children: the role of performance, peer relations, ethnicity and gender. *Social Indicators Research*, 59(2), p. 203-228.
- Vesey, G., 1974. *Personal Identity*. London: Macmillan.
- Victoria, M., 2013. A discourse analytic study of power as caring relations in Philippine university classrooms. In: Rogers, C. and Weller, S., 2013. *Critical approaches to care: understanding caring relations, identities and cultures*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Von Károlyi, C., Winner, E., Gray, W., Sherman, G. F., 2003. Dyslexia linked to talent: Global visual-spatial ability. *Brain and Language*, 85(3), p. 427-431.
- Wallace, H. M. and Tice, D. M., 2012. Reflected appraisal through a 21st-century looking glass. In: Leary, M. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Handbook of self and identity*. 2nd ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Wang, M. T. and Holcombe, R., 2010. Adolescents' perceptions of school environment, engagement, and academic attainment in middle school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(3), p. 633-662.
- Ward, R., 2000. Transfer from middle to secondary school: a New Zealand study. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33 (4), p.365-374.
- Wargo Aikins, J., Bierman, K. and Parker, J. G., 2005. Navigating the transition to junior high school: the influence of pre-transition friendship and self-system characteristics. *Social Development*, 14(1), p. 42-60.
- Warnock, M., 2010. Special educational needs: a new look. In: Warnock, M. And Norwich, B., 2010. *Special educational needs: a new look*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Was, C., Al-Harthy, I., Stack-Oden, M. and Isaacson, R. M. 2009. Academic identity status and the relationship to achievement goal orientation. *Electronic Journal of Educational Psychology*, 7(2), p. 627-652.
- Watson, N., 2002. Well, I know this is going to sound very strange to you, but I don't see myself as a disabled person: identity and disability. *Disability & Society*, 17(5), p. 509-527.
- Weber, R., 2004. The rhetoric of positivism versus interpretivism: a personal view. *MIS Quarterly*, 28(1), preceding p.1, p. iii-xii.
- Webster, L. and Mertova, P., 2007. *Using narrative inquiry as a research method*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Weiss, C. C. and Baker-Smith, E. C., 2010. Eighth-grade school form and resilience in the transition to high school: a comparison of middle schools and K-8 schools. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20(4), p. 825-839.
- Weiss, C. C. and Bearman, P. S., 2007. Fresh Starts: Reinvestigating the Effects of the Transition to High School on Student Outcomes. *American Journal of Education* 113(3), p. 395-422.
- Weithorn, L. A. and Scherer, D. G., 1994. Children's involvement in research participation decisions: psychological considerations. In: Grodin, M. A. and Glantz, L. H., eds, 1994. *Children as Research Subjects: Science, Ethics & Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- West, P., Sweeting, H. and Young, R. 2008. Transition matters: pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the west of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research Papers in Education*, 25(1), p. 1-29.

- Westbury, M., 1994. The effect of elementary grade retention on subsequent school achievement and ability. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 19(3), p. 241-250.
- White, J., 2004. Shaping a curriculum. In: White, J. ed., 2004, *Rethinking the School Curriculum: Values, Aims and Purposes*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Wiener, J. and Tardif, C. Y., 2004. Social and emotional functioning of children with learning disabilities: does special education placement make a difference? *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 19(1), p. 20-32.
- Wigfield, A. Eccles, J. S., Mac Iver, D. Reuman, D. and Midgley, C. 1991. Transitions during early adolescence: changes in children's domain-specific self-perceptions and general self-esteem across the transition to junior high school. *Developmental Psychology*, 27(4), p. 552-565.
- William, D. and Black, P., 1998. *Inside the black box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment*. London: GL assessment Limited.
- Williams, F., 2004. What matters is who works: why every child matters to new labour. commentary on the DfES green paper every child matters. *Critical Social Policy*, 24(3), p. 406-427.
- Wilmot, A. Designing sampling strategies for qualitative social research: with particular reference to the office for national statistics' qualitative respondent register.
- Winner, E., Von Karolyi, C., Malinsky, D., French, L., Seliger, C., Ross, E., Weber, C., 2001. Dyslexia and Visual-Spatial Talents: Compensation vs Deficit Model. *Brain and Language*, 76(2), p. 81-110.
- Winter, G., 2000. A comparative discussion of the notion of 'validity' in qualitative and quantitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(3&4). [online] Available at: <<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/winter.html>> [Accessed 13 June 2014]
- Wolff, U. and Lundberg, I., 2002. The prevalence of Dyslexia among art students. *Dyslexia*, 8(1), p. 34-42.
- Worth, N. 2009. Making use of audio diaries in research with young people: examining narrative, participation and audience. *Sociological Research Online*, 14(4)9. [online] Available at: <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/14/4/9/9.pdf>> [Accessed 1 February 2011].
- Wortham, S. 2006. *Learning Identity: The Joint Emergence of Social Identification and Academic learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yeo, D., 2003. *Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Mathematics*. London: Whurr Publishers Ltd.

- Youdell, D., 2004. Engineering school markets, constituting schools and subjectivating students: the bureaucratic, institutional and classroom dimensions of educational triage, *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(4), p. 407-431.
- Young, D. J., 1998. Ambition, self-concept, and achievement: a structural equation model for comparing rural and urban students, *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 14(1), p. 34-44.
- Zambo, D. 2004. Using qualitative methods to understand the educational experiences of students with dyslexia. *The Qualitative Report*, 9(1), p. 80-94.
- Zeedyk, S. M., Gallacher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B. and Lindsay, K. 2003. Negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school: perceptions of pupils, parents and teachers. *School Psychology International*, 24(1), p. 67-79.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Definition of a 'successful' transition

'The definition of a 'successful' transition for children is that they have:

- o developed new friendships and improved their self esteem and confidence
- o settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents
- o shown an increasing interest in school and school work
- o got used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease
- o experienced curriculum continuity.'

(Evangelou *et al.*, 2008, p. 16)

Appendix 2

Participant Vignettes

Parents and Children

1. Name: Cody

Method of participation: Interview at her home

Additional Information: Cody was in Year 8 and contact was initiated by her mother after seeing an on-line advertisement. Cody was interviewed but her mother was unavailable at the time.

2. Name: Emma and Jenna

Method of participation: Telephone interview and audio diary

Additional Information: Emma was in Year 8 at the time of the interview. I was contacted by her mother, who saw my request for participants on a website. After agreeing on the method of participation, I sent them all the necessary equipment for the audio diary and scheduled an interview after the diary entries were received. Jenna, Emma's mother, who worked as a teaching assistant, was also interviewed after the interview with the daughter.

3. Name: Gabriel and Christy

Method of participation: Interview at their home

Additional Information: Gabriel participated after I was contacted by his mother, Christy, who responded to one of my advertisements on a website. Gabriel was in Year 7 at the time of the interview. The interview took place at their house, and after Gabriel the interview with Christy followed.

4. Name: George and Katya

Method of participation: Interview at their home

Additional Information: George was also in Year 7 when he was interviewed. Initial contact was established when they received a participant information pack that was sent by the school to the homes of children who could be potential participants. They responded by sending me a signed consent form via post. After that letter, I acquired the mother's phone number by the school and called her to make arrangements, during which they chose a face-to-face interview.

5. Name: John and Mary

Method of participation: Interview at their home

Additional Information: John was in Year 7 at the time of the interview. Contact and participation were established in the same way as the aforementioned pair, via the school.

6. Name: Katrina and Howard

Method of participation: Interview at their home

Additional Information: Katrina was in Year 7 when she was interviewed. Her father contacted me after he came across one of my advertisements on a website and decided to e-mail me. During the first contact, Katrina was in Year 6, in primary school, and could not be interviewed. A year later, I contacted Howard again to see if they were still interested in participating, which they were.

Younger Adults

1. Name: Erica

Method of participation: Telephone interview

Additional Information: I was introduced to Erica by an acquaintance, and at the time of the interview she was in the final months of her college education. I was later informed that she did well in her school examinations but decided that she preferred to work for some time instead of attending University.

2. Name: Faye

Method of participation: Interview in a private room

Additional Information: Faye was 26 years old at the time and was diagnosed with dyslexia while studying at university. However, she was able to reflect upon her schooling experience and how her difficulties affected her. She approached me after I talked to a group of people about my research and she became interested taking part.

3. Name: Jeremy

Method of participation: Telephone interview

Additional Information: Jeremy was approached after I read his story on his website. I contacted him in order to ask if he would be interested in participating in my research. After he agreed, a phone interview was scheduled since he was unable to meet in person. He left school very early, in Year 7, because he could not cope with his multiple problems. Instead of traditional schooling it his family chose home schooling and vocational training. Two years later he started his own business with the full support of his parents.

4. Name: Matthew

Method of participation: Telephone interview

Additional Information: Matthew was an architect who became interested in participating in my research after seeing one of my requests on a website. The interview took place through the phone, as his schedule was very busy and he was unable to meet face-to-face.

5. Name: Melanie

Method of participation: Interview in a private room

Additional Information: An acquaintance put me in contact with Melanie, a 17 year old young woman. At the time of the interview she was at the beginning of her college studies, which meant she had left secondary school a few months earlier. She aspired to attend University and study Drama.

Adults

1. Name: Jack

Method of participation: Interview in a public place

Additional Information: Jack worked in an architecture office and contacted me after he read a request for participants on a website. The interview took place in a mutually agreed public place in his neighbourhood. He attended University and earned his Bachelor's degree in Architecture, but was unable to continue his studies and acquire the postgraduate qualification that would allow him to work as a qualified architect. The reason was he was unable to produce the written work that the qualification required, something he had extensive difficulties with while studying for his Bachelor's degree.

2. Name: Josephine

Method of participation: Interview at her home

Additional Information: Josephine was introduced to me by a common acquaintance. She taught at university and was interested in participating in the research. I visited her at her home, where the interview took place.

3. Name: Kimberly

Method of participation: Interview in a private room

Additional Information: Kimberly was a secondary school SENCo, but she had teaching experience in all levels of compulsory education. She became interested in my research and approached me offering to help me in my search for participants. She acted as a gatekeeper at her workplace and also agreed to be interviewed. Her interview took place at her office, where she worked.

4. Name: Mark

Method of participation: Telephone interview

Additional Information: Mark was contacted after I read a story he made public about his dyslexia at a forum. After discussing the research during a phone call, he agreed to take part. He did not finish secondary education and chose to leave as soon as he could to start working. He agreed to be interviewed as long as his data was not included in a book or lead to any form of income for me.

Appendix 3

Researcher Safety

A Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers

(Social Research Association, 2013)

Planning for safety in research design

Researcher safety can be built into the design of proposals.

- Choice of methods - include safety in the balance when weighing up methods to answer the research questions. Challenge research 3 specifications which take for granted face-to-face interviews in potentially risky sites.
- Choice of interview site - consider whether home interviews are necessary for the research. Interviews in a public place may be acceptable and safer substitutes; for example, meeting a working person during the lunch break rather than at home in the evening.
- Staffing - consider designs where it is possible to use pairs of researchers to conduct an interview, or to interview two members of the household simultaneously.
- Choice of researchers - consider whether the research topic requires the recruitment of researchers with particular attributes or experience. Research managers may have to decide against using existing staff if the content of the interview will arouse strong feelings or cause distress.
- Recruitment methods - where possible, design methods of recruitment to allow for prior telephone contact. This provides an opportunity to assess the respondent and their circumstances.
- Time-tabling - take account of the tiring effects of spells of intensive fieldwork. A more relaxed schedule may mean that researchers are more alert to risk and better able to handle incidents.

Assessing risk in the fieldwork site

Once the fieldwork site has been selected try to reconnoitre the area before fieldwork starts. Questions to ask include:

- Is there reliable local public transport?
 - Are reputable taxis firms easy to access?
 - Is it safe to use private cars and leave them in the area?
 - Is there a local rendezvous or contact point for researchers?
 - Are there appropriately priced and comfortable hotels within easy reach?
 - Are there local tensions to be aware of such as strong cultural, religious or racial divisions?
 - What do local sources, such as the police, say about risks in the research territory?
-
- It may be useful to prepare the support by:
 - meeting local 'community leaders' to explain the research and gain their endorsement.
 - informing other significant local actors, such as statutory and community organisations in touch with potential interviewees
 - notifying the local police in writing about the purpose and conduct of the research and asking for a contact telephone number.

Risk and respondents

The topics for discussion in many social research interviews - for example, poverty, unemployment, relationship breakdown, social exclusion, bereavement and ill-health - may

provoke strong feelings in respondents and 4 prompt angry reactions. Some research may be concerned explicitly with phenomena where the threat of violence is likely - investigating criminal behaviour, working across sectarian divides or studying homophobic violence, for example.

Some respondents may present a greater possibility of risk than others. Some research involves people who have a history of psychological disturbance or violent behaviour. If such characteristics are known in advance, the researcher and supervisor should be as fully briefed as possible on the risks involved and understand the precautions they need to undertake.

Issues of race, culture and gender may impact significantly on the safety of researchers. Lone female researchers are generally more vulnerable than lone males. More orthodox cultures may be hostile towards them. Certain racialised contexts may make the conduct of non-ethnically-matched interviewing more fraught than otherwise. Risk situations of these kinds may be avoided by contacting respondents in advance to ask about preferences and expectations.

Setting up fieldwork

Wherever possible, interviewers should try to obtain prior information about the characteristics of selected respondents, their housing and living environments.

- Study a map of the area for clues as to its character. Look for schools, post offices, railway stations and other hubs of activity. Think about escape routes from dense housing areas.
- If doubts about safety are indicated, reconnoitre the vicinity in advance to assess the need for accompanied interviews, shadowing and prearranged pick-ups.
- If the design allows, telephone in advance to assess the respondent and enquire whether any other members of the household will be at home.
- If 'cold-calling' in a potentially risky area, travel in pairs to set up interviews.
- Arrange alternative venues, already assessed for safety, if security is in doubt.

Interview precautions

Research managers should instruct interviewers to take precautions to minimise risk in the interview situation and ensure that help is at hand. The following practical tips might be considered.

- Avoid going by foot if feeling vulnerable. Use convenient public transport, private car or a reputable taxi firm. Plan the route in advance and always take a map.

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule

The following questions are a sample of general interview schedule that was used with both adults and children, with wording being changed to fit the age group. It is worth mentioning that not all the questions were asked in the same sequence and these were not the only questions used. The responses that participants gave were often followed up with additional questions and many times there were other issues that were discussed in addition to those that had already risen. Nevertheless, all of the following questions were either asked during in interviews or the information they were designed to acquire was provided by the participants without the questions.

Questions asked at every interview:

What is your date of birth? Where did you (do you) go to school?

When were you diagnosed with dyslexia?

What sort of difficulties do you have? Are those different from the time you were in school (omitted for those who were in school at the time of the interview)?

Can you describe what worried you about moving from primary school to secondary education?

Did any of these worries actually happen when you started secondary school? In what way?

Were there any other problems?

Would you like to talk about how you generally felt about moving from primary to secondary school?

Is there anything in particular that you would like to share about this experience?

What is it that you liked (like) about your new school?

How did you feel about yourself during the beginning of your time in the new school?

Did you feel stressed at any point?

What about your parents, how did they (do they) react to your transition?

Did (has) any of these feelings you or your parents had change as time passed? At which point?

Is there anything that you missed (miss) from your previous school?

Are you happy about the way you were prepared for your transition?

What about the support you were given during your first days in the new school?

Did you see (have you seen) any changes in the way you felt about school? Did (do) you see it in a different way after going to the new school?

Did (do) you enjoy school?

Let's talk about your grades, was (is) there any difference before/after you went to secondary school?

Do you think that there was a change in your academic confidence?

Did (do) you feel that because of dyslexia (your difficulties) you were (are) missing out in comparison to your classmates and friends?

Did (do) you compare yourself with your classmates and friends?

Did (do) you feel confident in the classroom, answering questions, reading or taking tests?

Do you feel that you coped (cope) as well as you did in primary school?

How was (is) your confidence during that time (now)?

How did (does) the new school feel?

Was (is) your school life what you would want it to be?

Can you talk to me about your friends? Did (do) they help you cope with the new school?

Did (do) your parents help you with your school work/life?

Is there anything else that helped you with getting used to the new setting?

Overall, how do you see the process of transition to secondary school? (if applicable) Did you enjoy it or not?

Is there anything about your transition that you would like to change?

Do you have any recommendations, something that you would like to be done in the future to ease this process? Do you have any recommendations for dyslexic pupils going through transition now?

During (at) school, do you feel that being dyslexic had (has) an impact on the way you saw yourself?

Did (does) academic performance affect the way you saw (see) yourself in any way?

How about after you graduated school and now? Does it change the way that you see yourself? (for those still in school - Does dyslexia change the way that you see yourself?)

How did you feel about being diagnosed?

What did you choose to do after you graduated from school? (What do you want to be when you leave school?)

Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix 5

National Curriculum levels

Each level is divided into three sub levels, for example 3A, 3B and 3C.

- C means that the child has started to work at the level
- B means that the child is working well within the level
- A means that the child has reached the top of the level and is working towards the next level.

	End of Year 2 Age 7	End of Year 3 Age 8	End of Year 4 Age 9	End of Year 5 Age 10	End of Year 6 Age 11	
Level 6				Exceptional (Top 1% achieve)	Exceptional (Top 1% achieve)	
Level 5A			Exceptional		Beyond expectations Approx' Top 10% achieve 5b or above Approx' Top 15% achieve 5c or above Approx' Top 25% achieve 4a/4b or above	Beyond expectations Approx' Top 10% achieve 5b or above Approx' Top 15% achieve 5c or above Approx' Top 25% achieve 4a/4b or above
5B		Beyond expectations Approx' Top 75% achieve level 3b or above		Beyond expectations Approx' 25% achieve		
5A						
Level 4A	Exceptional	Beyond expectations	At level expected	At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 3b or above		
4B					At level expected	Below expectations
4C		Beyond expectations	At level expected	Below expectations		
Level 3A	At level expected				Below expectations	
3B						Below expectations
3C		Below expectations				
Level 2A	At level expected		Below expectations			
2B				Below expectations		
2C		Below expectations				
Level 1	Below expectations		Below expectations			
				Below expectations		
		Below expectations				

Available from: <http://www.devon.gov.uk/fostering-national-curriculum-levels.pdf>

Appendix 6

Adult Information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The Research Project

'Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education'

You are invited to participate in a research that will try to investigate identities of children with dyslexia and how their transition to secondary school forms their identity.

We are interested in how children with dyslexia perceive and experience their transition from primary to secondary education and what their views on it are. The emotional responses to this transition will be explored in relation to their identity formation and education. This transition is a period that can be stressful for any pupil. What we want to do is explore the emotional responses of dyslexic children's identity perception in relation to their academic performance and identify and evaluate the emotional impacts of change for dyslexic children through transition to secondary education.

We very much hope you would like to take part, but before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. This information sheet tells you about our work and we hope it will be useful. Please note that during sessions you can stop or resume at any time.

This project is organised by Eleni Lithari, a full-time research student at Anglia Ruskin University and supervised by Dr. Chrissie Rogers, Director of the Childhood and Youth Research Institute at Anglia Ruskin University. Please feel free to contact Eleni if you have any questions. You can also contact Dr. Chrissie Rogers by email on xxxx@anglia.ac.uk. **Eleni Lithari will be interviewing children and meeting with participants and they are working on this project under the supervision of Dr. Chrissie Rogers at Anglia Ruskin University.**

The results of the study will contribute to a PhD thesis to be written by Eleni Lithari.

Contact for further information

You may contact Eleni Lithari by phone on XXXX, e-mail xxxx@student.anglia.ac.uk, or at Sawyers 106, Faculty of Education, Rivermead Campus, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1SQ, United Kingdom.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why have you have been invited to take part?
We will choose approximately 10 dyslexic adults and 20 dyslexic children attending years 7 and 8 at random from schools in England to take part in this research.
2. Can you refuse to take part?
It is up to you whether or not to take part. At the end of this information sheet there is a form for you to sign if you wish to give consent to take part.
3. Can you withdraw at any time, and how?
Anyone who signs a form is still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. After deciding to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

4. What will happen if you agree to take part?

A researcher would meet with you in a meeting that will last approximately 10 to 15 minutes. In this initial session the project will be discussed and after you agree, you will be asked to have an interview which will be recorded using an audio recorder, unless you do not want to be recorded.

5. Whether there are any risks involved and what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety?

There is the potential risk of some emotional distress if highly sensitive issues are discussed but this will be dealt with by giving you the choice not have to answer questions you do not want to and can either withdraw or continue another time. Agreement to participate in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong

6. Are there any special precautions you must take before, during or after taking part in the study?

The researcher and participant will never be completely alone together. The interview will take place in a room with glass windows so that people inside can be seen but not heard so there is no confidentiality problem. Also there is the choice of other people being free to enter the room but interviewing will pause for then because third parties should not hear what the participants have to say.

7. What will happen to any information/data/samples that are collected from you?

All information and results are kept in a secured and password protected computer or locked compartment at Anglia Ruskin University. After the data is transferred in the computer, all tapes will be destroyed. The data produced will be written up for the researcher's thesis and quotations might be used. There is the possibility of the data or findings from this research being published (e.g. in a journal) but you will remain anonymous and it will not be possible for anyone to connect you with what will be written in any publication.

8. Are there any benefits from taking part?

There are no financial benefits from taking part in this research but the overall benefits will be an insight into understanding transition for children with dyslexia. That could lead to helping future generations with this part of their lives.

9. How will your participation in the project be kept confidential?

The information we collect is kept strictly confidential and participants are identified by a code number only.

**YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM**

Appendix 7

Parent Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The Research Project

'Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education'

You are invited to participate in a research that will try to investigate identities of children with dyslexia and how their transition to secondary school forms their identity.

We are interested in how children with dyslexia perceive and experience their transition from primary to secondary education and what their views on it are. The emotional responses to this transition will be explored in relation to their identity formation and education. This transition is a period that can be stressful for any pupil. What we want to do is explore the emotional responses of dyslexic children's identity perception in relation to their academic performance and identify and evaluate the emotional impacts of change for dyslexic children through transition to secondary education.

We very much hope you would like to take part, but before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. This information sheet tells you about our work and we hope it will be useful. Please note that during sessions you can stop or resume at any time.

This project is organised by Eleni Lithari, a full-time research student at Anglia Ruskin University and supervised by Dr. Chrissie Rogers, Director of the Childhood and Youth Research Institute at Anglia Ruskin University. Please feel free to contact Eleni if you have any questions. You can also contact Dr. Chrissie Rogers by email on xxxx@anglia.ac.uk. **Eleni Lithari will be interviewing children and meeting with participants and they are working on this project under the supervision of Dr. Chrissie Rogers at Anglia Ruskin University.**

The results of the study will contribute to a PhD thesis to be written by Eleni Lithari.

Contact for further information

You may contact Eleni Lithari by phone on XXXX, e-mail xxxx@student.anglia.ac.uk, or at Sawyers 106, Faculty of Education, Rivermead Campus, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1SQ, United Kingdom.

Frequently Asked Questions

10. Why have you have been invited to take part?
We will choose approximately 10 dyslexic adults and 20 dyslexic children attending years 7 and 8 at random from schools in England to take part in this research.

11. Can you refuse to take part?
It is up to you whether or not to take part. At the end of this information sheet there is a form for you to sign if you wish to give consent to take part.

12. Can you withdraw at any time, and how?
Anyone who signs a form is still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. After deciding to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

13. What will happen if you agree to take part?

A researcher would meet with you in a meeting that will last approximately 10 to 15 minutes. In this initial session the project will be discussed and after you agree, you will be asked to have an interview which will be recorded using an audio recorder, unless you do not want to be recorded.

14. Whether there are any risks involved and what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety?

There is the potential risk of some emotional distress if highly sensitive issues are discussed but this will be dealt with by giving you the choice not have to answer questions you do not want to and can either withdraw or continue another time. Agreement to participate in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong

15. Are there any special precautions you must take before, during or after taking part in the study?

The researcher and participant will never be completely alone together. The interview will take place in a room with glass windows so that people inside can be seen but not heard so there is no confidentiality problem. Also there is the choice of other people being free to enter the room but interviewing will pause for then because third parties should not hear what the participants have to say.

16. What will happen to any information/data/samples that are collected from you?

All information and results are kept in a secured and password protected computer or locked compartment at Anglia Ruskin University. After the data is transferred in the computer, all tapes will be destroyed. The data produced will be written up for the researcher's thesis and quotations might be used. There is the possibility of the data or findings from this research being published (e.g. in a journal) but you will remain anonymous and it will not be possible for anyone to connect you with what will be written in any publication.

17. Are there any benefits from taking part?

There are no financial benefits from taking part in this research but the overall benefits will be an insight into understanding transition for children with dyslexia. That could lead to helping future generations with this part of their lives.

18. How will your participation in the project be kept confidential?

The information we collect is kept strictly confidential and participants are identified by a code number only.

**YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM**

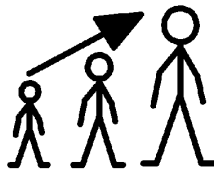
Appendix 8

Child Information Sheet



Anglia Ruskin
University

Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education



You are invited to participate in a research that will try to investigate identities of children with dyslexia and how their transition to secondary school forms their identity.

You can participate by having interviews with me, focus group discussions and by keeping an audio diary.

If you are dyslexic and want to talk about your experience with transition, you are invited to take part in this research. You are also welcome if you are not dyslexic but wish to take part in a focus group.

You can choose the method you prefer:



Interviews



Audio diaries



Data from this research may be published!



Anglia Ruskin
University

If you want to participate, you can ask your parents and then contact me. I will come and meet with you to discuss this project further.

You are free to invite your friends to participate!

If you decide to participate, it will be a very friendly chat, NOT a formal discussion!



Keep in mind...

- It is up to you to decide if you want to talk to me
- You do not have to say 'yes'
- If you do say 'yes' you do not have to do the whole interview
- We could stop when you want to, or have a break
- If you do not want to answer some of the questions, you can just say 'pass'
- Before you decide whether to help me, you might like to talk about this project with your parents or a friend
- I keep tapes and notes of the interviews in a safe, lockable place
- When I talk about the research and write reports, I always change people's names, to keep their views anonymous
- I would not talk to anyone you know about what you have said, unless you talk about the risk of someone being harmed. If so, I would talk to you first about what could be done to help.

Thank you!

*This page is a quotation from Fraser et al., 2004, p. 106

Appendix 9

Participant Consent Form

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: *'Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education'*

Main investigator and contact details: Eleni Lithari xxxx@student.anglia.ac.uk

Members of the research team: Dr Chrissie Rogers xxxx@anglia.ac.uk

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
6. I give the researcher ownership of data produced, the right to publish findings and the right to use quotations from my interviews.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant

(print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness

(print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

¹ "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges

Appendix 10

Parent Consent Form

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: *'Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education'*

Main investigator and contact details: Eleni Lithari xxxx@student.anglia.ac.uk

Members of the research team: Dr Chrissie Rogers xxxx@anglia.ac.uk

1. I give permission for my child to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
6. I give the researcher ownership of data produced, the right to publish findings and the right to use quotations from my child's interviews, focus groups and/or audio diaries.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant

(print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness

(print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: Children and their identities: the case of dyslexia and transition to secondary education

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____

¹ "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges