Creating Virtuous Cycles:

Using Appreciative Inquiry as a Framework for Educational Psychology Consultations with Young People

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. (Proust)

‘Don’t confront me with my failures, I have not forgotten them’

(Jackson Browne – These Days)
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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS
AI – Appreciative Inquiry
AIC – Appreciative Inquiry Consultation
BPS – British Psychological Society
CYP - Children and Young People
DCFS – Department for Children Families and Schools
DfE – Department for Education
DfEE – Department for Education and Employment
DfES – Department for Education and Skills
EP – Educational Psychologist
EPS – Educational Psychology Service
HoY – Head of Year
ICT – Information Communication Technology
LA – Local Authority
LM – Learning Mentor
LMP – Learning Mentor Programme
LSOA – Lower Super Output Area
OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education
PAR – Participatory Action Research
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SENGO – Special Needs Co-ordinator
SMD - Social Model of Disability

SMT – Senior Management Team
Abstract
This research project explores and evaluates the usefulness of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a methodological framework for Educational Psychology consultations with young people. A significant part of the role of an Educational Psychologist (EP) can be to hold consultations with young people in secondary schools who are perceived to be experiencing difficulties or challenges. These difficulties can often prevent young people from engaging positively in the learning opportunities available to them putting them at risk of under achievement and possible exclusion from school.

AI is more commonly known as an organisational development methodology, however by drawing explicitly from the philosophical and theoretical paradigms of social constructionism and the social model of disability, this project’s unique contribution to knowledge is to reconfigured AI as a framework to engender the inclusion and participation of young people in identifying positive changes at school.

AI is a change methodology that begins with the premise that within any system or organisation there already exist success, positive experiences, and strengths that are life giving and life affirming. The nature of the exploration is centred on uncovering narrative accounts of what is already working in order to inform any future change.

The project was based within a secondary school and was designed specifically to run concurrently with an ‘in house’ programme of support run by the school’s Learning Mentor, so that data from the AI consultations could be used to inform and support the work of the Learning Mentor.

The findings (both content and process) indicated that AI consultations with students can support their inclusion and participation. Students identified change through co-constructing alternative narratives that challenged the ‘authority’ view of the students’ difficulties. The process of using AI as a methodology in this way is described as a multidirectional cycle (differing from traditional AI cycles which are presented as unidirectional). Being fluid, flexible and emancipatory the AI consultation framework is considered both useful and appropriate in providing an epistemological basis for Educational Psychology practice.
Declaration

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the students that I worked with throughout this project. Without their willingness, trust and humour I would not have had the opportunity to develop and reflect on my practice in this way.

Special thanks is also accorded to the Learning Mentor from the school, his commitment to the young people he works with continues to remain unswerving, his outlook positive and his desire to support them to achieve their potential is unremitting.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement. Special thanks to Michelle for giving me the space and time to complete this journey. Thanks to my parents for their belief and support throughout. I would also like to thank Stewart Taylor for all his invaluable technical advice and encouragement.

Finally thanks to Dr Garry Squires for his careful and supportive consideration of my work.
1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Rationale

The rationale of this research project is representative of my professional development to date. I decided early on during my undergraduate degree that I wanted to become a teacher, and having completed my Post Graduate Certificate in Education, I spent seven years teaching in a secondary school for children who were defined as having severe and complex learning needs. The 1990’s zeitgeist within special education was characterised by the drive towards ‘integrating’ followed by ‘including’ children with special needs in mainstream schools. Developing inclusive practices in education represented a political, philosophical, and professional challenge to engage with; a challenge that remains with me to the present day.

During my time as a classroom teacher, I decided to compliment my experience with a return to university to study for a Master’s Degree in Inclusive Education. I then had the opportunity to work within an academic setting as the course leader of a Masters in Inclusive Education. This position gave me the space to immerse myself in disability discourse and research. Ideas around participatory and emancipatory approaches to research began to greatly influence my practice as I took up a new position as a Research Associate. Up until this point I felt that research and practice had always been separate ventures in my life, either I worked in academia as a researcher ‘looking in’ or as a teacher practitioner not having the opportunity to engage in research. My keenness to blend these two separate ventures led me to train as an EP – a role that enabled me to realise my passion for research while being able to synthesis it with direct work alongside children, young people (cyp), teachers, and families. Throughout my on-going studies, I have continued to be committed to developing my practice as an EP in
ways that are congruent and consistent with an emancipatory approach and this led me to become interested in AI as a methodology.

As an EP I currently work in two secondary schools where I am often requested to work with students who are at risk of or have already experienced fixed term exclusions due to the difficulties they appear to have in engaging positively in the educational experiences provided by the schools. These consultations can often become difficult, with senior school staff and the students rarely achieving agreement about the presenting difficulty. This situation led me to explore ideas around how AI as a methodology for change could inform the consultation practice of an EP.

1.2 Introduction
This study aims to explore the use, adaptation, and application of an AI (Appreciative Inquiry) methodology to promote the participation of young people in the processes and intervention planning of a secondary schools’ Learning Mentor programme (LMP). The LMP is an ‘in house’ intervention designed by pastoral staff in a secondary school to support young people who are considered to be experiencing behavioural difficulties in school, which are making them vulnerable to poor educational outcomes and possible fixed term exclusions.

The LMP is a short term, early intervention package designed to respond quickly to the needs of young people. It comprises regular, weekly meetings over the course of a term with the centre’s Learning Mentor, who seeks to resolve issues with the young people as and when they arise.
The AI project was designed to run parallel to the LMP. The broad study aims of the AI project include both content and process foci. The aims are summarised in Table 1 below;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>To evaluate AI as a methodological framework for promoting the participation and the perspectives of young people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>To evaluate the involvement and participation of the young people in the AI project and the impact this had on the support offered through the LMP.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

This chapter will seek to contextualise the AI project by addressing the following areas;

- Introducing the epistemological origins of the project – By making explicit the theoretical links between the social constructionist paradigm and related ontological and methodological issues, AI is presented as a legitimate and coherent framework that can guide the type of action research that seeks to promote the participation of young people in seeking solutions to challenging situations in educational settings.
- Discussing the international, national and local context – from macro to micro level, an understanding of the contexts at these levels will provide an understanding of the particular political issues that impact real world research.
- Outlining the key research questions – details of the questions guiding the research will further inform the reader of the project’s raison d’etre.
- Discussing the role of the EP and the distinct contribution this project seeks to make.
1.3 Epistemological Basis of the Project

1.3.1 Social Constructionism

Drawing heavily from the social constructionist paradigm and being informed by the theories of the social model of disability (Dewsbury et al, 2004, Terzi, 2004) and participatory/emancipatory research (Heron and Reason, 1997; Dick, 2004; Park, 2006), the project seeks to explore how AI as a distinct methodology maybe applied to facilitate the practice of an EP.

Social Constructionism has become increasingly popular amongst psychologists and sociologists alike as a way of explaining ‘reality’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘truth’ on the basis that all are socially constructed (Criab, 1997; Gergen, 1999, 2001, 2009). Burr (1995) suggests that there are four key assumptions that are central to social constructionist thought: first a critical stance towards a tacit acceptance of knowledge and knowledge production; second a belief in historical and cultural specificity; third that knowledge is sustained through social practices and processes and finally that knowledge and social action are inexplicably linked.

The philosophical/epistemological coalescence of such ideas provides a robust critique of traditional processes of obtaining truth and knowledge primarily from the positivist paradigm. From a social constructionist standpoint, it is possible to contest positivist assertions of the existence and attainability of ‘objective’ or ‘unitary’ truth. Truth and knowledge are thus perceived as constructions rooted in a particular time, place, and culture and invariably belong to those in society who hold relative positions of power and status. The status quo is perpetuated by uncritical processes that allow those enabled by their privileged position and
relative power to conduct research on and about the lives of (subordinate) others.

1.3.2 Social Model of Disability

Alongside philosophical debates around the nature of truth and the processes undertaken to ‘uncover/discover’ it, came other objections to positivist and post positivist methods of knowledge production (research). Some of these objections originated from within the disability rights movement and have continued to ignite and illuminate debates not only regarding challenges to previous traditional knowledge production methods but also on more pragmatic issues of policy and resource/provision planning and delivery.

The Social Model of Disability, in its many forms, is currently the dominant model for researching issues relating to disability (Dewsbury et al., 2004). By placing disability within a socio-political framework that is underpinned by the social constructionist perspective, those living and working within the field of psychology and education have attempted to re-frame, re-position and redress unequal power relations within systems and organisations in order to revolutionise how we think, live, talk about and work with disability in its broadest sense.

The challenges laid down for a move away from the medical/deficit model are great; mainly due to the pervasiveness of the medical model itself as well as ongoing critiques of the social model from within the disability rights movement (Race, Boxhall and Carson, 2005; Dewsbury et al, 2004).
The ‘social model’ encompasses a range of epistemological, theoretical and methodological perspectives, but broadly speaking, the main premise contends that it is the way society is organised that disables and oppresses certain social groups. With its foundations rooted in the idea that we socially construct notions of normality, (dis)ability and (more recently) impairment; the structures, environments and systems based on these constructs represent and replicate power relationships and underpin oppressive practices (Goodley, 2001).

The social model came about as an antidote to the medical/deficit model of disability which located the problem/impairment/disability within the individual without acknowledging the disabling effect society has on those that differ from what is considered ‘normal’. From the medical model perspective disability is viewed as a ‘personal tragedy’ and disabled people are prescribed ‘victim’ status through the social constructions of societies that then treat them with ‘sympathy’ (Oliver, 1990). Ostensibly, the onus was put on the individual, who had to be modified, treated and remediated in order for them to take their place (however marginalised) in society.

With disability (and related oppressive structures) viewed as a social phenomenon or construct to be eradicated by social change through reconstruction, deconstruction and revolution (Goodley, 2001) energies continue to be focused on the concept of disability and inclusion within education as well as more broadly in society as a whole. Pathologising, medicalisation/diagnosis, individual deficit model based practice, ‘labelling’ and ‘treatment’ are however still highly prevalent and many educational structures, procedures and practices continue to support (tacitly or otherwise) medical model views of disability. Children and young people defined as having ‘special educational needs’ and who
then go through the statementing process are positioned at the sharp edge of the medical/deficit model. Diagnosis/assessment of such ‘need’ greatly influences decisions that are taken by professionals on what constitutes appropriate educational placements for children and young people (i.e. mainstream or special). The process of identifying educational needs and securing additional funding to support such needs can result in children and young people collecting a raft of labels and diagnoses that describe how deficient they are in relation to the ‘normal’ population. Operating within this system the EP is uniquely positioned to challenge some of these underlying perceptions by supporting the development of more inclusive and emancipatory practices.

1.3.3 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
AI has become an increasingly popular organisational change methodology (van der Haar and Hosking, 2004) and recently its practice has grown at an exponential rate with increasing numbers of consultants and organisations using AI (Bushe, 2005; Dick, 2004).

Originally developed as a specific organisational development tool, increasingly practitioners and researchers have been developing expertise in applying the methodology to further social research (Carter, 2006; Richer et al., 2009; Reed, 2007; Reed et al., 2002; Grant and Humphries, 2006). This project represents an attempt to explore further research possibilities by seeking to identify opportunities to employ AI in new and innovative ways through adopting an AI framework for consultations with individual young people.
Utilising AI as a means of engaging in social research shapes the entire exercise in a particular way from the very conception of the idea, as rather than seeking to explain and explore ‘problems’ that may exist within a system, the researcher(s) seek to illuminate and illustrate what is/has already been successful.

One of the underlying philosophical foundations of AI is that realities and knowledge are constantly being created and constructed through the understanding and articulation of experience, perceptions and core beliefs and this explains the direct lineage from social constructivism. Pre-existing ‘truths’ are not recognised with the AI process. Attempts to uncover a desired reality are constructed on participants’ experiences and aspirations (Bellinger and Elliot, 2011).

This epistemological standpoint seeks to explain ‘reality’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ as being temporal; a product of the moment, fluid and ever changing (Criab, 1997) and something that is sustained and reinforced through social practices and processes. Therefore knowledge and social action are inexplicably linked (Burr, 1995) and are expressed through the narratives developed by people existing within the systems with which they operate in. Hence the stories people tell each other every day become ‘a knowledge’ and their experiences become ‘a truth’.

Narratives are constantly being edited, re-structured and co-authored. The words and topics that we choose to talk about have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, shared understandings and ‘worlds of meaning’ (Ludema, 2002; Bushe, 2001). By seeking to make such stories
explicit and by using the power that exists within such narratives it is suggested that research activities can promote positive organisational change (Bushe, 2001a). Narratives operate in a multi-layered way, reflecting relative structures and power relationships within organisations. Usually there is dominant storyline, or *macro narrative*, used to understand the past, present and future of an organisation; however a change in such a storyline can occur if dozens of *micro narratives* are collected and repositioned as being equally valued, enabling a new dominant storyline to emerge (Ludema, 2002).

Cooperrider (1987) argues that deficit-thinking behaviour epitomised by problem focusing/solving based inquiry only serves to amplify what is inadequate or not good enough and can in itself produce resistance to change. He suggests that by reframing the very process of inquiry, change can be inclusive, empowering and sustainable. Table 2. below suggests a framework by which to reconstruct the process of change.
Table 2. Process of Systemic Change: A comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Methodology</th>
<th>Problem – a deficit</th>
<th>Solving</th>
<th>AI Methodology</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Problem</td>
<td>Appreciating and valuing the best of what already exists and works</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Causes</td>
<td>Envisioning &quot;what might be&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of possible solutions</td>
<td>Dialoguing &quot;What should be&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning (Treatment)</td>
<td>Innovating &quot;What will be&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlying assumption: An organisation is a problem to be solved.</td>
<td>Underlying assumption: An organisation is a mystery to be embraced.¹</td>
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</table>

1.4 The International, National and Local Context

1.4.1 International Political Context

Eliciting the views of children and young people has acquired a strong, influential and powerful voice underpinned over twenty years ago by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations 1989). This document called for State parties to: ‘assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’ (Article 12).

¹ Adapted from Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) "AI into Organizational Life" in Pasmore and Woodman (Eds.), Research in Organizational Change and Development. Vol. 1 JAI Press.
Ratification by all except two nations, Somalia and the US (the US signed, but not ratified the Convention) led to close monitoring by the UN and the global public nature of the subsequent reports provided an important lever for campaigners across the world.

Since then a huge international body of researchers, policy makers and pressure groups (governmental and voluntary) grew up in response to Article 12. These groups coalesced around a firm conviction to recognise the importance of involving children in decision-making in various wide ranging contexts. However over two decades on, much disagreement exists on the real impact of such a profound document. Many ratifying counties have used the impetus gained from the convention to instil values around children’s rights in policies pertaining to education health and the juvenile justice system (Earls, 2011), but commentators have also pointed to the limited nature and impact the children’s rights agenda has had other than in superficial terms (Freeman, 2006).

1.4.2 National Political Context
The challenges presented to schools from an increasingly diverse population require a careful, considered and skilful response to attempt to provide an appropriate inclusive learning environment. Listening to children and young people’s views and experiences of education is becoming a key strategy in meeting their needs; this trend was evident in the previous government’s agenda for education (May, 2005). Engaging children and eliciting their views was detailed in a dedicated action plan (DfES, 2002a) and was an integral part of the Green Paper Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003). The Education Act of 2002 includes a section entitled ‘consultation with pupils’ (DfES, 2002), and assigned a chapter and toolkit item in the revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES,
However as May (2005) suggested these political documents focus on organising professional practice in order to guarantee a semblance of pupil participation, making little (or no) reference to how pupils bring about or influencing their own participation, let alone encouraging them to do so. The emphasis remains on consultation without a recognition of the underlying power structures and dynamics that influence participation. This can render pupils reliant upon professionals for the regularity of their participation, the topics about which they are consulted and for the accurate interpretation of their responses. Ultimately, the governmental publications listed before can serve to empower practitioners to ascertain, manage, and represent the pupils’ voice, rather than encouraging practitioners to empower the pupils themselves.

The need for the early identification of children vulnerable to under performance at school and possible permanent exclusion was one of the priorities within the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003). Through the early identification of need and the targeting of appropriate services and support, it was suggested that children and young people may be prevented from experiencing poor educational outcomes and alleviate the need for further intervention from specialist services.

Often it is behaviour in school that triggers concerns pertaining to wider needs relating to the individual child, their family and community. These multi-factorial concerns often require an eco-systemic approach to addressing need, seeing the child as part of a number of complex social systems - school, family, peer group, local culture and community (O’Connor, Collins, Supplee, 2012).
Providing such a holistic response to need can be difficult for in-school services alone. Concerns regarding behaviour, especially when linked with issues out of school, can lead to poor outcomes such as lower attainment, persistent absenteeism, exclusion from school, negative peer association, entry into the youth justice system, NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) status and risk of becoming looked after (Daniels et al., 2010).

Recent Government policy has sought to strengthen teachers’ positions in relation to dealing with issues around behaviour. The Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching (2010) addresses specific concerns regarding increasing individual teacher’s authority to search pupils as well addressing issues concerning the process of permanent exclusions, strengthening the school’s position in relation to that of the pupil, with regards to appealing a decision to permanently exclude.

1.4.3 Local Political Context
As context, time and culture have been previously cited as key elements in shaping the research process, the following section provides some contextual information about the locality in which this project was based. The LA features amongst the most disadvantaged in all measures of national social and economic deprivation. One measure that can be used is the relative ranking of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs are homogenous small areas of relatively even size (around 1,500 people), of which there are 32,482 in England. The LA in this study has 99 LSOAs of which 45 are in the most deprived 10% of the country. Meaning that almost half of the LA in terms of population is living in areas ranked in the 10% most deprived areas of the country. 63 of the LA’s 99 LSOAs are within the
20% most deprived in England. Population estimates for 2005 show 62.2% of the local population reside in these areas (93,960 people). 

Intergenerational worklessness is a key concern reflected within the coalition government’s agenda (Shildrick et al, 2012) as well as at a LA level. Forty three per cent of all people of working age within the LSOA where the school is based are claiming a key benefit, compared to the national average of 15% of the population. Twenty two per cent of the population of the LSOA where the school is based are claiming Incapacity benefit, compared to the national average of 7%. 

Within the LA as a whole, 3.2 % of the school population are in receipt of a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) which is higher than the national average (2.8%); 25.6% of pupils in the LA are deemed to have SENs but are not in receipt of a Statement, compared to the national average of 17.8%. 

The school where the project is based has 530 students on role. 51.6% of students are eligible for free school meals; 2.6% of students are in receipt of a Statement of SEN and 45.6% of the students are either deemed to have either 


SEN or be vulnerable to underachievement but are not in receipt of a Statement. They are all identified as requiring and receiving additional teaching interventions to support their attainments.

Since July 2009, the LA’s DCFS services (Department for Children Families and School services) have been discussing how they might work in partnership with the secondary schools to offer a more integrated and co-ordinated response to children, young people and their families, where vulnerability and additional needs are identified by schools, triggered by concerns about behaviour. In April 2009 all Local Authorities received increased funding to support the introduction of the following:

- Think Family practice - making sure that the support provided by children’s, adults’ and family services is coordinated and takes account of how individual problems affect the whole family (Cabinet Office Social Inclusion Task Force, 2008)
- Targeted support for parents and families - such as Family Intervention Projects and Parenting Early Intervention programmes designed to provide evidence-based support to families experiencing problems (Rose et al., 2009)

Success in supporting schools in the primary sector through the development of co-located, multi professional support teams had become a well-established and well regarded practice within the LA. Each multi professional team was based within the three areas of the LA and included professionals such as EPs, Behaviour Support Specialist teachers, Educational Social Workers, Specialist Literacy Support teachers and Inclusion Support Workers.
As a result of the perceived successful practice in the primary sector, attempts were made to replicate the delivery of such services within the LA’s secondary settings. In 2010 a pilot project was devised to run in one secondary school with the aim of offering a more integrated and co-ordinated response to children, young people and their families. Students considered to be vulnerable to exclusion and/or poor educational outcomes were identified by senior managers in the school, triggered by concerns regarding behaviour within school and/or in the community, were referred to a multi professional panel of representatives, in order for a package of support to be built around the student/family.

This project ran for 12 months but was not extended beyond the pilot phase and subsequent on going spending reviews and pressure on Local Authority budgets have seen the emaciation of such multi professional, co-located teams. These multi professional area support teams no longer offer a Behaviour Support service to schools and the Educational Social Work team has been subsumed into pre-exiting Social Care teams, hence there is no social work service in the LA with an educational perspective. As a result of these changes the Educational Psychology Service is increasingly the only school facing service readily accessible as a centrally funded agency which offers the school an allocation of time each term. Even this time has been drastically reduced due to unremitting financial pressures and part of the EPS is now directly traded with schools. The reduction of such centrally funded specialist teams has significantly limited the opportunities of working within a ‘team around the child’ framework, leaving surviving services and schools to develop innovative ways to overcome funding short falls and gaps in provision.
With increasing pressure on limited centrally funded resources, this AI project was structured by way of negotiations with members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) from the school (namely the Assistant Principal and Inclusion Officer) so as to avert the need for four separate requests for the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service for individual students. Instead the four students in question were all selected to be part of the AI project along with two other students who were also considered to be at risk of fixed terms exclusions. Working in a more systemic, group orientated manner was considered by the SMT a better use of the limited time available to the school.

As the substantive EP for the school, I had already established good working relationships with the SMT and the LM. I have worked in the school under its various guises (it was renamed and rebuilt in 2009) since 2005 and therefore I have established myself as a familiar outside professional with certain long standing members of staff.

These existing relationships proved beneficial in terms of gaining access in to the school as well as access to the SMT in order to gain approval for the project itself. Having a pre-existing professional position however also presented me with the ethical issue of holding both the position of ‘outsider’ researcher and LA employee simultaneously. I therefore had to be aware of the possibility of one role encroaching, impeding or compromising the other. This issue will be explored in greater detail within the methodology chapter.
1.5 Academic Research Context

Children have been historically marginalised in research, with narratives about their perspectives and experiences distorted by derivation or told by proxy (Carter, 2009). A new era in research however has underscored the need to involve, include and encourage the participation of children in research. This burgeoning interest has resulted in a plethora of research projects considering the voice of the child (Armstrong, Galloway & Tomlinson, 1993; Davies et al., 2009; Leitch and Mitchell, 2007).

There are an increasing number of publications promoting the participation rights of the child (Save the Children, 2011; Alderson, 2000; Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997). Interest in the topic is also apparent in the number of professional teaching materials available offering ways to advance pupil participation (for example, Fajerman, Jarrett & Sutton, 2000; Save the Children 2000).

May (2005) suggests there is a growing acceptance by researchers for the need to attend to the pupils’ agenda. Fielding (2001) supports this by arguing that activities in school are a legitimate focus of enquiry both from the position of the students as well as the teachers. Activities focused on eliciting views of children and young people have acknowledged the benefits of opting for participatory approaches and developing ideas around pupils’ as co-researchers. With the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) funding large scale projects concerned with increasing pupil participation, pupils have been involved in shaping and constructing research agendas that attend to their views and experiences of school policy (Rudduck & Flutter, 2001)
There have been other ways in which pupils have been encouraged to put forward their agenda or to initiate inquiry as part of the research process. These include developing project using methods to enable the pupils to lead the discussion, such as through story telling (Lewis, 2002) or by using digital photographs. Also multi-method approaches have increasingly been employed to conduct research into pupil participation. A variety of methods have been used to supplement interviews with pupils, including multimedia methods, drawings, questionnaires, observations and grid completion (Lewis, 2002; Leitch and Mitchell, 2007).

Research developments have signified an epistemological and methodological shift with a number of ESRC funded projects working with student identified agendas and encouraging pupil initiations through involving pupils as co-researchers (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004; Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Rudduck & Flutter, 2001). This research embraces the concept of ‘student as researcher’ and makes explicit the distinction between pupils being consulted, taking part and being in control of research projects designed to promote their participation.

1.6. Key Research Questions
The previous discussion has outlined the developmental thought processes that preceded the conception of the AI project. Grappling with ‘meta’ epistemological questions underpinned by social constructionist ideas, led me to explore applied methodological issues around how research may be structured and constructed. Shaped significantly by protestations emanating from the disability rights movement and reading around theories informed by the social model of disability, I conducted more research around new and innovative ways of engaging with children and young people as they also often experience similar
subjugation of their perspectives. The development of AI from a purely organisational development tool to a more radical way of conducting research provided a coherent way of continuing this exploration.

AI continues to be an increasingly popular organisational change methodology with practice growing at an exponential rate with increasing numbers of consultants and organisations using AI (Bushe and Kassam, 2005; Dick, 2004). Initial literature searches in this area revealed a paucity of examples of AI being used directly to encourage and promote the participation of children and young people in order to affect positive change in their own lives. A body of literature exists related to increasing student/pupil participation in various contexts e.g. schools, communities and learning in its broadest sense, however there are limited examples of projects explicitly using an AI framework to facilitate this type of research. I was unable to locate any examples of AI being used to structure individual consultation work with children or young people.

More specifically, the role of the EP is inexplicably linked with eliciting the views and perspectives of children and young people in order to improve their social, educational, emotional and spiritual development. Using AI to promote the participation of children at risk of exclusion and to affect positive outcomes can therefore also be considered as contributing in a unique way to a growing understanding of AI principles and how they may be adopted to foster positive outcomes for children and young people. For this reason I feel that the project makes an original contribution to knowledge in this area.
Table 3. reiterates the overall process and content objectives of the AI project and details the specific research questions that fit within each objective.
Table 3. Project Objectives and Related Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process: To evaluate AI as a methodological framework for promoting the participation and the perspectives of young people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRQ1 – Is the AI consultation framework useful in helping students locate successful/positive times in their educational experiences? (PRQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRQ2 - Can the AI consultation support students to construct ideas about the best they can be in school and the best the school can be? (PRQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content: To evaluate the involvement and participation of the young people in the AI project and the impact this had on the support offered through the LMP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRQ – Can the AI consultation framework facilitate students to construct ideas about how the LM can support them to make changes they identified as important?</td>
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1.7 AI Project Structure

The main intervention model that has come to be associated with AI is the 4-D cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Ludema et al, 2001; Coughlan et al., 2003). The 4-D cycle is an elaboration of the principles for the practice of AI described in Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987). The cycle begins with discovery, (appreciating what is), moving on to the dream stage (imagining what could be), which is followed by design (determining what should be) and then delivery (creating what will be). The cycle can iterative, there are no definite exit points as the cycle can be continuous (Willoughby and Tosey, 2007).
1.7.1 Overview of AI Project Structure

This AI Project sought to adopt and adapt AI principles and the 4D cycle into a framework for consultation by matching each AI phase with an individual consultation involving each of the students, below is an overview of each of the phases/consultations;

1.7.1.1 AI Consultation 1 (AIC1) - Discovery Phase

This initial phase involved holding an individual consultation with each young person in order to discover the best of what has happened in the past, and what is currently working well. Generative questions and a technique base on solution-focused approaches were used with the young person to support them in identifying times, places or events when they have felt successful.

1.7.1.2 AI Consultation 2 (AIC2) - Dream Phase

In this phase, a second individual consultation attempted to discuss ideas of “what might be”. Using the positives examples and successes identified in the Discovery phase, and employing the Personal Construct Psychology technique the Idea Self (Moran, 2001) constructions of a preferred future in school were elicited.

1.7.1.3 AI Consultation 3 (AIC3) - Design Phase

The Design phase looks at the practicalities needed to support the visioning Dream phase. The development of ‘provocative statements’ shaped by the previous consultations were used to inform future plans.
1.7.1.4 AI Consultation 4(AIC 4) – Deliver Phase

The final individual consultation was used to draw up implementation ideas to support changes identified by the students from the previous phases. These stages will be elaborated in greater detail in the literature chapter.

1.8 The Role of the EP and the Distinct and Original Contribution to Knowledge

Psychology as a discipline is primarily involved in activities of theory construction, hypothesis testing, research and action. Within traditional models of psychology and research practices, concepts of power and power relations have been seen as variables existing ‘outside’ those that it is possible to identify, observe and investigate. The pursuit of explaining certain phenomena can take place from a claimed position of value-neutrality and objectivity. However proponents of AI and other participatory research paradigms have critiqued this position by suggesting that the pursuit of ‘truth’ is anything but neutral, rendering any drive towards achieving an objective understanding of truth illusionary.

Proponents of a social constructionist perspective choose instead to be explicit about power and power relations; viewing them as key variables to be engaged with as well as acknowledging that such variables indelibly mark the processes by which knowledge and truth are created (Henriques et al., 1984; cited in Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

Power is understood as multi-faceted, multi layered and dynamic (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002) and refers to the capacity and opportunity to promote or diminish personal, relational or collective needs. With this in mind proponents of AI are
well placed to identified and address power imbalances and oppressive situations in the applied situations in which they work.

EPs hold a distinct position in being able to evaluate the values, assumptions and practices within the education system from macro (systems стратегический) level to micro (classroom/individual pupil) level. I am suggesting that by adopting AI informed approaches, EPs have an opportunity to challenge traditional methods of inquiry, by reframing the questions that are asked to represent an epistemological, ontological and methodological shift. These challenges sit comfortably within the consultation model of service delivery which seeks a move away from individual case referral by placing more emphasis on capacity building within classrooms, schools and LA.

Each time EPs define problems, assign roles to themselves and to the people they work with they are enacting values and assumptions with multiple consequences; when the problem is directed at an individual pupil, the social/environment domain can go unchallenged (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Positive and appreciative approaches by definition look to move away from deficit/problem orientated models where individuals may have been pathologised in order to receive support for perceived failure.

Identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating approaches (plan-do-review cycles) that seek to move away from tradition approaches that identify the child/young person as someone that requires fixing, while the broader system (the school) remains unchallenged, can be seen as valuable in itself. Such critiques seek to enable teachers, pupils and other related professionals such as
EPs to build effective, supportive and collaborative relationships. These new relationships signify a break from the traditional ‘teacher – pupil – expert model’ where teachers who are having difficulties with individual pupils call in ‘experts’ (such as EPs) to ‘fix’ the problem. Creating a climate more conducive to capacity building encourages those that are involved in interactions on a daily basis (the teachers and pupils), to no longer feel obsequious in their dealings with the previously perceived ‘experts’ (the EP). By altering such relationships, teachers and pupils may therefore become increasingly skilled and confident at identifying areas of for development and implementing interventions that may support positive developments to take place, with outside professionals such as EPs working in a facilitation role (Fox, 2009).

In summary this thesis is primarily an exploration into the evolution of AI as a social research methodology, as a vehicle for engaging with young people and as an epistemological framework for EP practice. It therefore embodies discursive but related research ambitions; to develop a critical research stance which explicitly seeks to promote the participation of young people who are identified by schools as requiring support from additional agencies, with an emancipatory objective that identifies and engages with the power differentials that exist within schools as organisations.

Discussion in the subsequent literature review sections seeks to critically analyse and reflect on the literature that relates most directly to the development of the AI project. The following headings were used to organise and structure my thinking and reflections;

- Epistemology and Ontological issues
- Ideas on Participation of Young People
- The development of AI as a research tool
- The role of the EP
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The objectives of the following chapter are varied and multi factorial. An examination of the philosophical and epistemological developments in social science aims to contextualise and situate the AI project within the broad and discursive landscape of qualitative research. Whilst not seeking to provide an exhaustive account of social constructionist theory; I will provide a coherent rationale for the AI project, linking various ideas around knowledge creation directly to this study. This will provide a generative platform for the AI project, ensuring that it is able to build upon previous scholarly endeavour, in order to provide a coherent sense of research integrity (Boote and Beile, 2005).

The literature review allows for a narrowing of the focus in order to conduct a more detailed examination of the body of literature that relates to the development of the Social Model of Disability and participatory research paradigms. From a personal philosophical journey, ideas around the social model of disability were hugely formative in shaping my professional identity and informing the direction my professional training has taken. It is from here that constructs that relate more directly to the content of the AI project are explored such as participation in decision making and research, the inclusion/exclusion dyad and ideas around challenging behaviour.

Being acutely aware of the need for the literature to connect the theoretical with the applied it was incumbent on me to include literature that commented directly on the role of the EP and reviewed examples of professional ventures most closely related to AI or similar. In doing this I have provided a critique of what has
gone before and therefore a more convincing rationale for this AI project. The review of literature starts from a broad ‘meta’ theoretical perspective and gradually narrows the focus to become applied and specific as depicted in Figure 1

**Figure 1. Literature Review Structure**

![Literature Review Structure Diagram](image)

**2.2 Epistemological Foundations**

**2.2.1 Social constructionism**

From a historical perspective, positivist psychological thought developed as a by-product of cultural modernism (Gergen, 2001) borne from a period of marked philosophical activity known as ‘the age of Enlightenment’. At this time new assertions began to challenge medieval ideas of religion and royal assent by asserting the power and privileging the position of individual thought and knowledge. This new way of generating knowledge was achieved through the process of scientifically examining the world, seeking to obtain empirical ‘truths’ and used language as a transmitter of these truths (Burr, 2003). One set of paradigmatic rules began to replace another.
Leading the evolutionary challenge to the prevailing school of traditional positivist thinking, social constructionism as a world view seeks to explain ‘reality’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ as being temporal; a product of the moment that is constantly changing (Criab, 1997). Proponents from across the landscape of the social sciences began to suggest that far from being obtainable, the quest for ‘truth’ as a singular concept, through the process of seeking ‘knowledge’ and ‘understanding’ was not only flawed but deeply problematic.

There are four central assumptions that characterise social constructionist thinking: first a critical stance towards a tacit acceptance of knowledge and knowledge production; second a belief in historical and cultural specificity; third that knowledge is sustained through social practices and processes and finally that knowledge and social action are inexplicably linked (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009).

As well as contesting traditional positivist assertions of the existence/possibility of obtaining ‘truth’, social constructionist critiques reconfigure concepts such as the universality of truth, essentialism and the notion of objectivity, thus highlighting the hidden power relations that lurk deceptively behind processes and research activities that profess to be value neutral.

### 2.2.2 Language and power

An examination of language and its relationship to knowledge helps to situate one element of the social constructionist challenge to positivist thought. Likewise the centrality of language to the AI project will become more evident as a key theme in throughout this thesis. Language as a vehicle of conveying meaning is
dependent on interaction between people (Wittgenstein, 1953) based on a shared understanding of the meanings behind this symbolic interaction. Idiosyncratic language cannot exist in any meaningful way and therefore ‘making sense’ – understanding language, is a form of social engagement and communal participation (Potter, 1996). Burr et al. (2012) suggest that it is through these interactions that meanings are shared and realities are constructed. Meanings however are temporal and culturally dependent and are therefore not universal.

For example consider the concept of autumn, an observable natural ‘truth’ of our experience in this country. When we discuss autumn with our neighbours, friends and fellow UK citizens certain characteristics are communally understood e.g. leaves on deciduous trees changing colour and then falling to the ground; the first signs of frost; and the cultural celebrations/rituals such as Halloween and bonfire night. These observations and understandings furnish our experiences of what autumn means. There are indisputable observable facts that constitute the natural phenomenon of autumn. However these facts (natural and otherwise) are context specific and may not be easily understood by other communities, such as those in the Sahara or the Arctic Circle. The truth around the nature’s iterative, annual cycle is therefore geographically and culturally specific. Language assists in generating and/or sustaining certain forms of cultural practice (Gergen, 2001). If language is dependent on shared cultural understandings then it becomes legitimate to critically analyse the processes behind the formations of these understandings.

In his extensive contributions to social constructionist and post-modernist thought, Foucault locates the struggle for power within discourses of knowledge. For Foucault language is a critical feature that underpins and upholds power
relations (Foucault 1980). If truth is always partial, culturally constructed and temporal, he suggests that it becomes critical to lift the veil on the power relationships that enable some in society to proclaim to be asserting ‘truth’. By claiming to know ‘truth’, Foucault suggests that dominant voices create dominant theories that structure and mediate social practice. By creating dominance, others are therefore subjugated and maybe rendered ‘voiceless’, consequently having no access or claim to ‘truth’. Accounts of what constitutes truthful experience therefore remain partial and primarily constructed by those in society that have the necessary power to get their voices heard, legitimised and accepted.

Foucault’s work offers an alternative understanding of standard systems of knowledge, by revealing how it is built on exclusion and confinement. He also highlights how hidden forms of knowledge actually uncover the limits of the ‘knowledges’ which disqualify them (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault’s theses were primarily concentrated on the medical field of knowledge and power, relating specifically to the discipline of psychiatry. Within these communities, discourse developed around constructs of normality/abnormality and sanity/insanity. These constructs and their related meanings have been subsumed into common parlance where they are supported and protected by the sacrosanct place afford to medical (scientific) knowledge particularly within western societies. As a consequence there has been a propensity towards an acceptance of such constructs as the unchallengeable truth. The language we use to label phenomena in the social world is infused with social beliefs and values that are embedded within the hierarchies of power that, in turn, structure all
social systems; language invisibly and unconsciously co-constructs our experience (Richardson, 2012).

The logical development of Foucault’s suggestions may be to abandon all attempts to organise, categorise and define. Gergen (2009) asserts that whilst these activities may be considered unavoidably problematic, damaging and perhaps at times insidious, it is possible to suggest and locate some positive social capital (the value that social networks bring in developing cohesiveness between members of society; Dekker and Uslaner 2001; Uslaner 2001) to be gained from this process. In an increasingly fractured world, which has seen changes within traditional family units, local communities and other socially constructed identities, ‘labelling’ may offer a positive form of social cohesion. If we take the medical world as an example, great strides have been made in understanding the experiences of people diagnosed as having Autistic Spectrum Conditions, via not only the discourse of those presented as the ‘professionals’ (medics) but also and perhaps even more profoundly by those who self-identify as people with autism, such as the writer and academic Temple Grandin (Grandin, 2009). Labelling, categorising and defining are pursuits that may indeed offer something positive but they are also pursuits that inevitably engage directly with power relationships in society. As Gergen (2009) suggests, it is not possible to step outside of meaning or avoid ordering of any kind, but the very act of rejecting or refuting one form of discourse can open the possibilities of new understandings ‘the invitation is to generate alternative understandings of great promise’ (Gergen, 2009 p. 49). The interaction of opposing perspectives therefore generates new understandings.
2.2.3 Critique of Social Constructionism

Assiduous debate permeates the world of social constructionist thought as by definition, there is never an achievable endgame to knowledge and understanding, rendering this process inexorable. It is beyond the realms of this literature review to provide an exhaustive account of the plethora of critiques of social constructionist thinking; however it is necessary to consider some broad overarching critical themes that colour discussion.

Social constructionism as a world view, presents a significant challenge to traditional forms of psychological practice. The exploits of employing a traditional ‘scientific’ approach to further ‘understand’ essential elements of an individual’s mind and/or behaviour runs contrary to the central tenets of a social constructionist position. Burr (2003) suggests that the gauntlet has been laid down to those from a social constructionist persuasion to develop a ‘new psychology’ that is able to embrace the notions of an ever changing sense of reality. However this venture does not come without inherent tensions, contradictions and ironies.

Burr (2003) proposes many ways in which both macro (at a societal level) and micro (at an individual level) social constructionist thought is problematic. Presenting the ‘death of subject’ at both levels taken to its logical conclusions, social constructionist thinking can render the subject within research as either invisible or superfluous. At the macro level, if no processes operating at the individual level have any explanatory power beyond the critique of generalisability, then the very purpose and merits of the exercise are bought into question; ‘once we have understood the workings of discourse at the level of
society, we need look no further for an understanding of ourselves (Burr, 2003 p.179).

Whereas at the micro level she considers that a reliance on discursive power alone to provide explanations at the expense of a holistic humanistic appreciation of existence, obviates the need to grapple with how drivers such as individual wants, motivations, hopes and desires add a critical dimension in explaining reality. The difficulty however remains in how or if it is possible for the researcher to provide a robust rationale on how they have been able to adequately excavate, translate and explain these complex idiosyncratic dimensions in a meaningful way.

One potential threat to advocating research from a social constructionist position identified by Heron (1996) is the tendency to slip into a spiralling solipsistic trap;

‘...if reality is nothing but an internal mental construct, no warrant can be given for supposing that other people being studied actually exist, let alone for supposing that the researcher’s view of them adequately represents their own view of their situation.’

(Heron 1996, p.10)

The notion and existence of ‘self’ as a unified concept and the dyadic relationship with constructions of reality is a prickly one. In their critique of Gubba and Lincoln (1994), Heron and Reason (1997) confront this epistemological conundrum by presenting a participatory inquiry paradigm. This seeks to address the deficiencies they feel exist within Gubba and Lincoln’s presentation of the ‘self’ and its connection with ‘knowing’. Heron and Reason (ibid) suggest that it is Gubba and Lincoln’s (op cit.) failure to adequately explain what they mean by
‘tangible entities’ in relation to explaining how ‘reality’ is constructed, that poses a significant epistemological question. Heron and Reason (1997) posit that their participatory paradigm acknowledges more readily the experiential element of knowing, which involves an acceptance of a reality beyond that of subjectivity. As they explain ‘we take the view that the mind’s conceptual articulation of the world is grounded in its experiential participation in what is present, in what there is’ (p.227).

It is within this paradigm that Heron and Reason (1997) articulate ideas on the subjective-objective element of experiential knowledge. For them the very process of perceiving has to have a transactional element with what is already there, and therefore they insist ‘to experience anything is to participate in it.’ (p. 278). The recognition of participation and its position of being crucial to a form of knowing is a foundational principle for the development of participatory methodologies. The positive and confident presentation of ‘self’, ‘experience’ and ‘participation’ in knowledge and knowledge production, has prompted radical challenges to more traditional methodological approaches. This conceptual understanding of participation within the research process will be explored later in this review.

2.2.4 Standpoint Methodologies
The central positioning of language and power in the process of knowledge creation has led many to explore how the privileging of accounts of experience has far reaching implications to how society is construed and constructed, which reflects cultural norms, practice and social policy. Feminist, Black, Marxist, Queer and Disabled proponents of standpoint epistemologies continued to mount further significant challenges to traditional/positivist methods of enquiry and
knowledge production. Critiques from these quarters also exposed the espoused neutrality and objectivity of traditional research and theory as at best illusionary and at worst oppressive. They also seek to explain how these accounts can legitimise oppression, prejudice and inequality in public policy.

It is suggested that traditional social science has produced a partial and distorted view which reflects an androcentric/white/middle class/heterosexual/able bodied bias in its methodology and therefore fails to appropriately represent the experiences of women, black, working class, disabled and queer communities (Freire, 1996; Harding, 1993, 2004; Harding and Norberg, 2005; Stanley and Wise, 1993;). Proponents of these radical standpoint methodologies developed the work started by Foucault by seeking to raise the consciousness and experiences of members of society previously not afforded such privileged positions.

Both Prilleltensky et al. (1997) and Richardson (2012) directly link this contemporary research with efforts that seek to challenge the status quo in order to provoke, instigate and become a catalyst for social engagement and change. As Harding and Norberg (2005) eloquently describe;

‘In challenging conventional epistemologies and their methodologies, both of which justified problematic understandings of research methods, feminists have contributed to the epistemological crisis of the modern West, or North. No longer is what the ruling groups in the North think and do regarded as the legitimate standard for what the rest of the world should think and do, if it ever was so regarded anywhere except
among such groups. The epistemological crisis is also a political, economic, social, and ethical crisis. The point of good research, for feminists as well as for many conventionalists, has always been to advance social progress. Of course, feminists and conventionalists disagree over what constitutes such progress, as well as over the best procedures to achieve it’.

(Harding and Norberg, 2005 p. 2010)

The role that values, morals and ethics play in research, knowledge production and psychology and how this connects to social action and change are ideas that will be explored further in this chapter.

2.3 Methodological Paradigm

2.3.1 Social Model of Disability (SMD)

Key objections mounted from the disability rights movement have had a profound impact on the development of methodological practice and such critiques have continued to spearhead the challenges to previous traditional knowledge production methods (research) on disability issues. The central assertion is that traditional forms of inquiry are ultimately flawed as they fail to adequately reflect the experiences and voices of disabled people. Research is perceived to be conducted uncritically on disabled communities by able bodied researchers rather than with disabled people or more radically by disabled people themselves. The knowledge that had previously prevailed is therefore considered at best a non-disabled researcher’s construction of the experiences of disabled people (Oliver 1990, 1992) and at worst research that props up, tacitly accepts and by association augments the oppressive structures in society that disable people (Oliver, 1992).
Research ‘starting points’ that do not explicitly engage in the socially constructed nature of a disabled persons reality, namely that disability is a socially constructed phenomena, are considered doomed to replicate the unequal power relationships and oppressive systems previous traditional research attempted to describe. Like other oppressed and marginalised populations, disabled people came to regard academic discourse by non-disabled researchers with suspicion (Shakespeare, 1996). The disability rights movement continues to critically interrogate the motivations and implications of researchers (however subliminal or unintended), stressing the way in which scholarship has been used to legitimise the social and spatial exclusion of people with disabilities.

The SMD although not unitary in concept, is considered the dominant paradigm for researching issues relating to disability (Dewsbury et al 2004, Terzi 2004). By placing disability within a socio-political framework, with its social constructionist philosophical and epistemological foundations, there has been a concerted effort by some professionals and people that identify as disabled to re-framing, re-drawing and revolutionising how we think, live, talk about and work with disability issues. The assertion is unequivocal and imperative; a total rejection of the medical/deficit model of disability which has historically pervaded the construction of disabled experience (Light 2003, Shakespeare 1996,).

As mentioned earlier, the SMD cannot be regarded as a monolithic theoretical response to the medical/deficit model; encompassing as it does a range of epistemological, theoretical and methodological perspectives. Broadly speaking it can be defined as the idea that it is the way society is organised that disables and oppresses certain social groups. With its foundations rooted in socially
constructed notions of normality, (dis)ability and impairment, the structures, environments and systems based on these constructs represent and replicate power relationships and underpin oppressive practices (Goodley, 2001).

By positioning ‘disablement’ as a societal construction the problem/impairment and disability is no longer located within the individual. Consequently the default position of viewing disability as a ‘personal tragedy’ becomes outmoded and disabled people are powerfully repositioning themselves to challenge attributions such as ‘victim’ which provoke responses of pity or sympathy (Oliver, 1990).

Disability is therefore regarded as a social phenomenon to be profoundly challenged by engagement in social research and consequently eradicated as a result of social change (Goodley, 2001). This has resulted in a great deal of rethinking around the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Consider for example, the position of children and young people defined as having ‘Special Educational Needs’ (SEN) who are assessed via the statementing process. This is the legal process outlined in the Code of Practice (DfES, 1994), by which Local Authorities assess children to determine the level of their educational need. They are positioned at the sharp edge of the medical/deficit model. Some of these children may be furnished with a ‘medical diagnosis’ e.g. Autism or Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder, as a result of the assessment process that is used to explain the reasons why they may be experiencing difficulties at school. The difficulty is therefore located within the individual (an individual deficit); the context (the school community or learning environment is unchallenged). Some children labelled with such a ‘diagnosis’ could be considered pathologised, deficient or damaged in such way that requires treatment (medication) or remediation in separate specialist placements (special schools), where they are able to access
specialist support. Education for these children therefore falls outside what is considered *normal* and is therefore beyond mainstream provision.

The whole process of assessing, identifying and explaining needs and individual difference relates directly to the one statutory responsibility of an EP. Irrespective of the method of service delivery (consultation, problem solving, psychometric assessment etc.) the individual EP’s perception of disability/difference will play a significant part in determining a particular course of future action; which could consist of individual assessment or work at a more systemic level which seeks to challenge and change the learning environment, or a mixture of both.

The process of identifying ‘SENs’ as per the Code of Practice (DfES, 1994, 2004) and securing extra funding to support such needs can result in some children and young people collecting a raft of labels and diagnoses that describe how ‘deficient’ they are in relation to the ‘normal’ population. The literature on the SMD provides a significant insight into adult experiences of the socially constructed realities of disability, which contrasts sharply with literature relating to children and young people. Only few attempts have been made to explore how far it provides an adequate explanatory framework for their experiences (Conners and Stalker, 2007). To illustrate this point a specific literature search of various databases (PsychInfo, Educational Resource Information Centre and British Education Index) produced no appropriate references that related the role of the EP and the SMD.
The SMD as a philosophical template continues to be redefined and developed both from within the disabled community as (an insider perspective) and from outside the community by non-disabled theorists. Terzi (2004) who writes from the position of an outsider to the disabled community provides a further level of analysis by suggesting that by conceptualising disability as unilaterally socially constructed, a partial and flawed understanding of the relationship between impairment, disability and society is propagated.

Gabel and Peters (2004) provide a significant and powerful postmodern critique of what they term ‘a strong social model’ as proposed originally by Light (2003) and Oliver (1996). They outline the contradictions and tensions that have plagued the theoretical debate surrounding the relevance and applicability of a ‘meta’ grand narrative that seeks to explain the experiences of disability. They argue that the attempt to provide a ‘strong’ all-encompassing model has possibly had the unintended consequence of being reductionist and has failed to adequately reflect the various and nuanced experiences of disability;

‘We believe the social model poses an ethical risk to its adherents.
In its emphasis on collective solidarity, the social model runs the risk of developing a form of oppression from within to justify liberation from without’. (Gabel and Peters, 2004 p. 596)

These postmodern challenges to a unitary model of disability encourage a more eclectic position that seeks to draw from and include other standpoint theories (feminist, queer etc.), creating space for a more nuanced critique. Some have suggested that these challenges have had the damaging effect of diluting and refracting the central SMD message (Light, 2003). Rather than watering down the message a more inclusive theoretical position that incorporates ideas of
resistance theory and other standpoint methodologies (feminist, queer etc.) raises the possibility of a more panoplied critique of medical/deficit models.

The challenge remains for disability theorists to respond to what may be considered evolutionary pressures to shift paradigms and subsequently shape and modify theory (Kuhn, 1962). From within the disability movement there have been calls to take into account contemporary developments in capitalist economic systems (Thomas, 2005). Additionally, postmodernist and feminist critiques have continued to question the appropriateness of relegating the significance of culture and other cultural processes in the creation and construction of disability. Such critical analysis of the continued relevance of the SMD underlines the importance of perpetual movement required in the process of knowledge/theory production. These pressures can be seen as recognition that a particular theory has reached a certain level of acceptance and maturation, perhaps even an element of mainstreaming. Further theoretical refinement is therefore necessary to maintain a radical and critical edge, as illustrated by Gabel and Peters (2004, p.597).

‘A growing number of disabled people and theoreticians are using eclectic theories that move across and operate between paradigms while they are identifying their work as within the social model. Rather than weakening the social model, this trend actually strengthens it’

The following section focuses on participation in research and knowledge production; the supposition being that if truth, knowledge and realities are multi-
dimensional and constructed, and previous traditional methods of inquiry have precluded and marginalised certain members of society, then expanding participation in research and knowledge production will have a profound impact on what we know and how we know it.

### 2.4 Participation

The previous sections have explored ‘meta’ philosophical, ontological and epistemological issues that are associated with knowledge and knowledge production. By presenting social constructionist positions on these issues it sets the scene for a legitimate interrogation of the processes behind knowledge production. Contemplating these theoretical issues was fundamental in igniting my interest to learn more about innovative methodologies that fit within this paradigm and in turn led to my professional interest in AI.

The following section seeks to link these theoretical positions to the central concept of participation in knowledge production through an exploration of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Reason and Bradbury (2006) suggests that PAR can be helpfully understood as a ‘family’ of different methodological approaches that share common themes. Through further interrogation of the literature, I will illustrate that AI shares many of the characteristics seen within the PAR family and therefore can therefore be legitimately positioned within this research community.

Literature on participation of children suggests that it can be viewed from three distinct perspectives; the social justice/human rights perspective, national government level and as an integral part of the broader concept of wellness.
2.4.1 The Social/Human Rights Perspective

The social justice/human rights perspective sets the global platform for an understanding of participation and has been enshrined in doctrines agreed by supranational organisations. The first declaration of rights was adopted by the International Save the Children Union in Geneva in 1923, and endorsed by the League of Nations General Assembly in 1924, as the World Child Welfare Charter (Checkoway, 2011). The Declaration of the Rights of the Child was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1959, and was the basis for the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Article 12 states that children have the right to participate in decision making processes relevant to their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard, especially in schools or communities. It affirms that children are fully fledged persons who have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight. It also recognises the potential of children to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of social change. This is related to the right that children should have the necessary information about options that exist and the consequences of such options so that they can freely make informed and decisions. Providing information enables children to gain skills, confidence and maturity in expressing views and influencing decisions. In addition, Article 15 states that children have the right to create and join associations and to assemble peacefully. Both imply opportunities to express political opinions engage in political processes and participate in decision-making.

The positioning of children as active agents who should be engaged with directly chimes with the theoretical movement within the research community to view
children as fellow human beings rather than different or ‘other’ (Christensen, 2004; Powell and Smith, 2009). The social construction of childhood acknowledges that just like other constructions, the concept is not a unitary one and although there may be common elements across societies its nature is dependent on cultural and temporal frames and is often shaped by the interests of an adult orientated society (Aubery and Dahl, 2006; Powell and Smith, 2009).

2.4.2 National Government Level

The national governmental agenda, informed by the human rights perspective has sought to enshrine these ideas of participation within national statue and legislation. Recent political developments have seen a growing trend for the active involvement of children and young people in the development and delivery of both health and social care services. These are underpinned by a range of UK government policies that stress the requirement to listen to and consult with children and young people (O’Brien and Moules, 2007). As a result participation at a national level is characterised as an active embodiment of democracy as well as a civic duty and responsibility. This mainstreaming of the need to involve and include children in decision making has alerted some to the superficiality of these processes.

The drive to engage children and young people in democratic processes in school has also been supported by researchers who believe such activities have intrinsically positive outcomes. Fielding and Bragg (2003) detail these benefits as including improved academic and social performance and well as an improved sense of self efficacy, motivation and engagement with school. They further assert that the benefits also extend to staff, suggesting that engagement with students can improve teacher-student relationships teachers. Additionally,
MacBeath et al. (2003) add that such projects can help foster a strong sense of inclusive membership, tolerance of diversity and mutual respect within schools. These suggested outcomes have obvious merits and are therefore seductive to educationalists and politicians within the current climate. However discussions and conjecture remain as to what actually constitutes meaningful engagement. The processes via which pupils are meaningfully involved in such ways are not always well understood in mainstream schools, let alone specialist provision for children experiencing Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) (Sellman, 2009). Davies (2005) highlights that there have been many studies about mainstream children’s voice and agency but relatively few specifically about or with pupils from schools or other provision for students with SEBD.

2.4.3 The Wellness Perspective

As part of the wellness perspective, participation is viewed on one level as regarding oneself as having agency and this is equated with positive self-regard and self-determination. This however would locate the idea of participation as merely a personal individual pursuit. Commentators and protagonists from the critical psychology stable, view participation as an integral active ingredient in the drive towards community wellness. Prilleltensky (2010) conflates ideas on inclusion and participation and presents them as prerequisites of child wellness. He argues for the necessity of a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes inclusion and rejects the narrowing divisive discourse that he believes ‘compartmentalises various aspects of inclusion’. This more integrative approach to the concept advocates a ‘macro’ appreciation of the need for social action. Kellett (2010) also suggests that at the social level its antonym, exclusion diminishes social cohesion and opportunities for civic engagement.
Prilleltensky (2010) further contends that without a holistic appreciation of social inclusion that accounts for the economic, political and psychological positions of groups within society, the proposing arguments become partial and less coherent and therefore vitiate the inclusion agenda.

It is from within this ‘wellness’ perspective that Prilleltensky (2012) with his critical and community psychological credentials at the fore, challenges psychologists to evaluate their endeavours on how they may address inequalities and injustices. For him it becomes critical to address participation in relation to power, justice and fairness. He defines ‘wellness’ as a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of diverse objective and subjective needs of individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities (p.2).

Prilleltensky (2010, 2012) and Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) continue by characterising wellness as a hierarchical concept. By taking a ‘Russian doll’ approach the needs of the child/individual are presented as being predicated on the satisfaction of needs of the family. The needs of the family, in turn, depend on community welfare, which is based largely on the level of social wellness.

He chooses by means of a powerful example the importance of adequate parenting skills and suggests that the ability to parent appropriately is connected not just to the emotional, social and economic situation of the individual family in isolation because ‘wellness’ in this sense has to be connected more broadly to the wider ‘community wellness’.
‘The wellness of the family as a whole is closely related to the level of community safety which relates to issues such as the availability of recreational facilities, and to access to health and human services. The quality of education, transportation and housing has a lot to do with community welfare. These factors, in turn, are closely related to social policies dealing with allocation of resources, employment opportunities, fiscal policies, and the like. Wellness at one level is therefore closely tied to wellness at other levels of analysis’ (Prilleltensky and Nelson, p.92 2000)

Participation in the broadest sense is therefore characterised as a benevolent force at individual, group and systemic levels and is connected inextricable to concepts relating to social change, social action, fairness and equality. It is from this position that the development of Participatory Action Research as a paradigmatic methodology is explored with particular reference to involving children in research. As Kellett (2010) notes;

‘The experience of participating as active researchers is an empowering process that leads to a virtuous circle of increased confidence and raised self-esteem, resulting in more active participation by children in other aspects affecting their lives’

(Kellett, 2010 p. 9)

In summary, the case for developing research that actively engages children and young people is predicated on the principles that there is a reciprocal and multi directional relationship between inclusion, participation and wellness.
2.4.4 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

From the historical origins of Lewin (1946), action research characterised by the features of the self-reflective spirals of planning, acting, observing and reflecting has evolved through four generational phases (Baum, MacDougall and Smith 2006; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2006). Within this broad church which encompasses a plethora of methods and a diversity of foci and emphases (Dick, 2004; Reason and Bradbury, 2006), it is possible to identify three characteristics that help to differentiate Participatory Action Research (PAR); the attempt to address hierarchical power relations that have characterised more traditional research by recognising the importance of a shared ownership of the research project and process; the local focus of the analysis of social issues and finally the explicit orientation toward community action (Reason and Bradbury, 2006).

2.4.4.1 Researcher/Researched Binary Relationship

The development of PAR has provided researchers with alternative models of practice from which they can engage and by contesting the premise that research is the exclusive domain of academics, proponents have sought to develop a discourse around democratising and redressing the inequalities inherent in the process of creating knowledge;

‘The transformation of knowledge production is one of the central processes characterising the societies of the advanced, industrialised world. Knowledge production is less and less a self-contained activity. It is neither the science of the universities, nor the technology of industry...Knowledge production, not only its theories and models but also its methods and techniques has
The legitimacy of these proclamations requires close examination. Researchers working from this participatory paradigm are meticulous in their attempts to address the issues of control and power in research. Power is located in the following ways; how the topic of the research is chosen, how the research questions are constructed and developed; how the role of the researcher is perceived by the participants involved in the research; how and from whom consent is sought; how data is collected, analysed, reported and disseminated; and who it is disseminated to (Arieli et al., 2009; Christensen, 2004; Heron and Reason, 2001). All of these questions are even more pertinent when applied to research with populations, such as children, that have historically been excluded implicitly or explicitly from the research process.

Christensen (2004) highlights many of these issues, in her ethnographic participatory study of children’s decision making with regards to health and illness. She articulates with clarity and alacrity the issue of her role as an adult ‘outsider’ in the social world of the children. She was well aware that presenting herself without conscious regard to the reflexive position of the researcher may well have had a deleterious effect on her project. This conscious engagement with the issue led her to develop an adult persona that appeared to move away from the conventional role of adults in school (teachers, staff or parents). In creating a novel adult space, she felt that she was able to gain acceptance from
the children, allowing her entry into a world she felt would have been closed to her otherwise.

This was achieved primarily through a conscious re-training of her adult attention; she attempted to immerse herself as much as possible in the social engagement of the children by attending to what the children were attending to and by acknowledging what they seemed to deem important. By doing this she wanted to avoid attempting to gain access by ‘apeing’ the activities of the children – something that may have led to accusations of patronising or condescending behaviour from her participants. This strategy appeared successful in enabling Christensen to access the social world of the children however, other issues proved more inextricable.

Through engaging with her participants she realised that they were at best far from enamoured with the focus of the study;

‘However, it was only in later interactions with children, when they knew and trusted me, that I learned that our first encounters had been conditioned by children’s initial discomforts. Then I had been a ‘stranger’ and an ‘adult’, but also, as they now confided, they thought the subject of our conversations (everyday health) was sometimes ‘peculiar’, ‘rubbish’ or simply ‘boring’. The problem this presented me with was how to understand children’s puzzled, though not altogether disengaged, responses to my interest in their experiences of health and the everyday management of an illness. On reflection, it became obvious to me that the children’s openness and engagement had been restricted by their shyness and occasional mild disapproval of the subjects we talked about,
both in the spontaneous group discussions sparked off among the children while making the drawings and in the conversations I had with them individually afterwards. Whilst I was able to carry out the interviews because of the children’s cooperative and accepting manner, I began to reflect seriously on what needed to be taken into account when researching children’s perspectives.’

(Christensen, 2004 p.168)

Although Christensen highlights this as a serious issue she does not provide an extensive explanation as to how she overcame this difficulty which poses a significant issue for those researchers wishing to engage in participatory research. Deciding the focus of the project and designing and developing the questions that are asked may put the researcher in the position of building a project around the constructions and assumptions of an ‘outsider’.

Arieli et al. (2009) highlight these ‘paradoxes of participation’ which are defined by Arieli (ibid) as ‘a situation in which action researchers, acting to actualize participatory and democratic values, unintentionally impose participatory methods upon partners who are either unwilling or unable to act as researcher’ (p.275). Outsiders may be at risk of imposing an agenda that is either mystifying or considered irrelevant to those participants it hopes will engage. The funding, governance and overall rationale for conducting research if left unchecked, may combine to create an almost irrepressible force that could ride roughshod over the participatory principles, rendering them meaningless.
Carter (2009) further examines some of the philosophical and methodological issues related to developing research that seeks to fully include children in knowledge production, by highlighting the tensions, contradictions and characterisations inherent in the process. Carter (ibid) presents difficulties that arise within a participation/protection dyad, by suggesting that children are often presented as ‘vulnerable’, making researchers fearful of including them in the research process. Participation is therefore only afforded to groups of children that may be considered ‘less vulnerable’, with those perceived to be more vulnerable subjected to further marginalisation. Challenges therefore exist to develop appropriate methodologies that can offer meaningful participation and inclusion.

2.4.5 Values
The promotion of the axiology inherent in PAR addresses both outcome and process objectives; as an outcome, it fulfils a need; as a process, it reflects a value; both of which are fostered by PAR with children and young people (Prilleltensky, 2000). This represents a significant and important departure from other qualitative forms of inquiry as there is a heightened obligation to be transparent and candid about the central role values play in the research process. Rather than support the illusionary concept of robust research striving to be as value free and neutral as possible, there is a moral, philosophical and political imperative to articulate the values that undergird the research. This notion is often understood as reflective knowledge – which supposes that human knowledge should not merely seek to understand the world but also attempt to action change. It is this drive towards change that is underpinned by values (Park, 2001)
2.4.6 Situational context

PAR can operate at an individual, group and systemic level however some proponents from the critical psychology field have suggested that many PAR interventions are limited by the predilection to concentrate efforts at an individual level at the expense of channelling efforts to challenge more systemic structures and therefore risk slipping back into replicating and reinforcing individual deficit models.

Prilleltensky (2010) argues that most social and preventive interventions are ameliorative rather than radical in nature; focusing on remediating, repairing or redressing individual deficits. By working at an individual level there is a tendency to locate ‘problems’ within the individual and pathologise individual experience. This support (tacit or otherwise) is therefore less likely to explore, address and challenge power relations that may lead to social inequalities and furthermore unlikely to recognize the power imbalances between the researched and the researcher.

Working in areas characterised by high levels of social deprivation and therefore by large gaps between groups in society, the level of need for interventions can often be overwhelming; so great that the pull to support individuals is irresistible, leaving the systems that produce these conditions unchallenged and therefore free to replicate the conditions which subjugate some members of the community. All of this amounts to a form of impotence that reduces the capacity for radical societal change (Prilleltensky, 2010).
Although it is laudable to demand a more systemic focus for research and intervention, one can often ignore the pressures and drivers within systems to operate at an individual level. Mackay (2000) supports in general the importance of mounting a systemic challenge to address societal inequalities and inadequacies, by adopting a participatory action approach. However he is all too aware of the tensions and pressures on professionals in the field to operate in ways that may reinforce the status quo, rather than challenge it. He identifies the commissioning, structuring and evaluation of services (and professionals within them) as ways in which the status quo may be preserved. He also suggests that professionals working at the ‘coal face’ do not have the luxury of articulating a political and moral preference to work at a systemic level. His fire fighting analogy outlines the importance of continuing to operate at an individual response level; ‘No matter how important the role of the fire prevention service, we still must have people to put out fires’ (Mackay, 2000 p.114).

2.4.7 Critiquing the social construction of student voice

Seeking to elucidate ‘voice’ as a representation of participation in research is also not without its problems. Cruddas (2007) implies that the presentation of pupil voice in research drifts in to essentialism by invoking naive and ‘monologic’ accounts of experience. Bakhtin (1984) contests the representation of voice as a unitary, spontaneous or authentic articulation of self, implying that its origins are deeply rooted in the social-ideological and historical and therefore cannot be regarded as a fully present, coherent, rational, fixed picture of self;

‘There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even past meanings, that is those born in the
dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) - they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context).

(Bakhtin, 1984 p.170)

This particular critique of pupil voice is pertinent and challenging to researchers engaged in projects that seek to elevate ‘voices’ (perspectives) that are presumed to be subjugated by their relative silence or marginalisation in the traditional sense. The dangers inherent in such projects that attempt to address these power imbalances are that they give a semblance of a redistribution of power, leaving actual unequal power relations unchallenged and arguable in a stronger position than before, having ‘engaged’ in research that attempted to be inclusive and possibly emancipatory (Hartas, 2011). Even initiatives that offer pupils genuine empowerment frequently underestimate the degree, complexity and magnitude of cultural transformation required to instigate profound change (Sellman, 2009). Research ventures may flounder, ultimately compromised within and by existing powerful systems, processes and procedures that are determined by adults (Wyness, 2006).

2.5 Inclusion/Exclusion
Discourse that seeks to characterise the ideals of inclusive research practice allude to overarching debate relating to the inclusion/exclusion dyad. Fergusson
(2004) draws attention to the some inherent problems located within the constructs of inclusion/exclusion and participation/marginalisation by suggesting that the language used to understand these binaries/polarities has become increasingly politicised. As inclusion in education beyond the age of 16 years old becomes mandatory young people who ‘fail’ to make successful transitions between the relative stages of education and subsequently into employment are increasingly characterised as dysfunctional, their behaviour is pathologised and on occasion criminalised. Ferguson (2004) suggests that competing political agendas around the implications of the exclusion/inclusion and participation/marginalisation debate only serves to mask the hidden complexities of social phenomena that impact structural poverty and patterned inequality. Polemic political discussion tends to caricaturise complex situations, leaving little room for considered and nuanced interpretations and understandings. Hence young people who are considered NEET (not in education of employment) after finishing secondary education run the risk of either being pathologised or patronised depending on the political position taken.

Issues relating to inclusion and exclusion generally in school continue to exercise educationalists nationally and locally (Kanabar and Rae, 2010; McCluskey, 2006). Nationally, the DfE’s Statistical First Release (SFR) for 2010/11 provides information about permanent and fixed period exclusions from primary, secondary and special schools and exclusion appeals in England during 2010/11 as reported in the School Census. The following key points give an indication of the current picture;
Number and rates of permanent and fixed period exclusions;

• In 2010/11 there were 5,080 permanent exclusions, equivalent to 7 pupils in every 10,000. The number has decreased by 11.5 per cent since 2009/10, continuing the recent downward trend.

• In 2010/11 there were 324,110 fixed period exclusions (some pupils received more than one fixed period exclusion). This is a decrease of 2.2 per cent since 2009/10 and continues the downward trend.

• 174,280 pupils received one or more fixed period exclusions, equivalent to 233 pupils per 10,000. The number has decreased by 3.0 per cent since 2009/10, continuing the downward trend.

• The most common reason for exclusion was persistent disruptive behaviour, accounting for 33.7 per cent of permanent exclusions and 24.8 per cent of fixed period exclusions from all schools.

• Boys are around three times more likely to receive a permanent or fixed period exclusion than girls (similar to the previous year).

Although exclusions appear to be on the wane there are some that view the data with scepticism and cynicism. Parkes (2012) suggests that an examination of the data supports the idea of disproportionality, with children and young people from certain groups more likely to experience exclusion from school including those from certain ethnic minority groups, as well as those with disabilities and special educational needs. Others suggest that these figures fail to capture the true levels of exclusion, as informal exclusions are never recorded or reported by schools (Contact a Family, 2013, Schools Exclusion Inquiry, 2012).
Further complexity in this area relates to the undulating political public policy landscape. Burton et al. (2009) suggests that contradictions and tensions inherent in the inclusion verses standards debate have caused significant confusion for educationalists working with the population of children and young people who experience significant SEBD at a LA level. Using a case study approach Burton et al. (ibid) attempted to track and measure the impact of processes and policies at both local and national levels on the practice of professionals working in the field. The findings suggested that inconsistency and contradictory messages have hampered the provision of effective support for children and young people who experience such difficulties.

The obligation for Local Authorities to provide appropriate support for children to access mainstream provision outlined in the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and Removing Barriers to Achievement document (DfES, 2004), was presented as being at odds with the pressure head teachers are under to raise the achievements and standards in their schools, the implication being that children and young people with SEBD have a negative impact on the education and achievement of the broader school population. Behaviour in schools continues to be characterised as a significant concern to both central Government and teachers in general (Ellis & Todd, 2009); there have been several reports commissioned by the previous government exploring the issues relating to the behaviour of children at school; Managing Challenging Behaviour (Ofsted, 2005) and the Steer Report (DfES, 2005). Seemingly always high on the agenda, the relationship between behaviour and inclusion continue to characterise the debate (Ekins and Grimes, 2009). Macbeath et al (2005, p.60) suggest teachers broadly support the inclusion agenda however the main threat to developing and implementing successful inclusive practice was considered to be the ability of
school to provide a suitable education for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs.

The present government has continued the focus on promoting good behaviour in schools through a number of key policy documents; The Importance of Teaching (DfE, 2010) articulates concern regarding the impact poor behaviour may have on other pupils in the school and also recognises the stress teachers may experience when having to manage difficult behaviour in the classroom and the impact behaviour has on recruitment and retention of teaching staff. The intricacies of this debate highlights how tensions and contradictions in the education system can coincide to produce an uncertain landscape which practitioners have to navigate as part of their daily professional lives.

2.6 Appreciative Inquiry

2.6.1 Origins of AI

The journey thus far has established the theoretical foundations of this project exploring the social construction of reality and the epistemological ramifications of a constructionist world view. The following section explores the development of AI and presents it as a congruent, appropriate and emancipatory research methodology which can be employed to support positive changes for young people in schools.

Developed initially as a research technique related to increasing the generative quality of grounded theory research and then subsequently and more readily known as a framework for promoting organisational development (Cooperrider, 1986), AI is informed by the seminal work of Gergen (1982). Cooperrider (2001)
'Recognizing the symbolic and socially constructed nature of the human universe, we now find new legitimacy for the mounting wave of socio-cognitive and sociocultural research, all of which is converging around one essential and empowering thesis: that there is little about collective action or organisation development that is pre-programmed, unilaterally determined, or stimulus bound in any direct physical or material way. Seemingly immutable ideas about people and organisations are being directly challenged and transformed on an unprecedented scale. Indeed, as we move into a post-modern global society we are breaking out of our parochial perspectives and are recognizing that organisations in all societies exist in a wide array of types and species and function within a dynamic spectrum of beliefs and lifestyles. And according to the social constructionist viewpoint, the possibilities are infinite’. (Cooperrider, 2001 p.22)
Srivastva (1995) suggest that ‘what’ and ‘how’ researchers choose to inquire about creates as much as it discovers of the world.

Cooperrider’s unique contribution to knowledge prescribed in his study (1986) was to propose a rationale for inquiry that always started from a position of exploring and possibly unearthing what already works within a system. Elliott (1999) characterises this approach in the following way;

‘What the appreciative approach seeks to achieve is the transformation of a culture from one that sees itself in largely negative terms – and therefore is inclined to become locked in its own negative construction of itself – to one that sees itself as having within it the capacity to enrich and enhance the quality of life of all its stakeholders – and therefore move towards this appreciative construction of itself. (p.12)

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) suggested that preponderance towards traditional methods of changing systems that relied on the evocation of a problem orientated perspective limited the power of the exercise. He suggests that this approach merely encouraged deficit-based thinking. He claimed that inquiry based on this traditional problem orientated model can be damaging to the system that is undergoing change by serving to amplify what is inadequate or substandard. This in turn produces resistance and a reluctance to change from those who operate within the system. By undertaking a fundamental reframing of the process of inquiry, through using an appreciative lens, change can become
inclusive, emancipatory, positive and sustainable (for an overview of reframing the process of systemic change see Table 3 on p 23).

For Prilleltensky (2001) this challenge is crucial in creating the space for researchers to explicitly and politically engage with research. He suggests that the recognition of the potential power encapsulated in this type of research relationship requires the application of a praxis framework; referring to the unity of theory and action. Prilleltensky (ibid) refers to a cycle of activity that formalises recourse to philosophical, contextual needs, and pragmatic considerations.

The opportunities AI affords the research relationship epitomises a primary motivation to further develop such practices as an action research methodology. Reed (2007) details the movement of AI from an organisational development tool to a vehicle for social research. My unique contribution to knowledge is in the application of AI as a framework for EP practice, used to consult with young people in school. A detailed search of the literature relating to the development of AI as a research tool established that, at the time of writing this thesis, there were no published works relating to AI being applied in this way.

The idea that beginning the change process from a position of appreciation particularly interested me; anecdotal evidence gained from my eight years of experience of consulting with young people who are experiencing difficulties in school has led me to feel instinctively that exploring a young person’s perspective of previous successes in school is a useful starting point for engagement. The main driver therefore was to explore the appropriateness and effectiveness of such a methodology in a more systematic and robust fashion.
2.6.2 Applications of AI

AI as a change methodology has been employed in a diverse range of contexts with a variety of foci and applications (Callabrese, 2006; Carter et al, 2004; Carter, 2006; Cullen and Ramoutar, 2003; Farrell, Douglas and Siltanen, 2003; Goldberg, 2001; Keefe and Pesut; Lavender and Chapple, 2004; Liebling et al., 2001, 2004; Peel III, 2006; Reed, Pearson, Douglas, Swinburne and Wilding, 2002; Reed, 2007). It has also provided the methodological foundations for other applications such as Appreciative Pedagogy (Yballe and O’Connor, 2000) and some useful starting points and frames of reference for other studies (Doveston, 2007).

Despite significant interest in AI interventions, empirical research relating to the evaluation and effectiveness of such a methodology appears limited in the literature (Bushe and Kassam, 2005; Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). A discussion of the evaluation of AI as a methodology appears later in the section devoted to the critique of AI.

2.6.3 Principles of AI

Bushe (2005) presents AI as a flexible and malleable approach which has steered practitioners away from the confines of a specific set of prescribed guidelines. He suggests that this intentional decision by the early proponents of the methodology helps to avoid a formulaic and mechanical application. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) identified 8 different approaches that have been used under the AI banner. These “forms of engagement” range from using project teams in organisations to conduct the Appreciative Inquiry, to having everyone in an organisation at an off-site location spend 2-4 days engaged in Appreciative Inquiry. Even though there is a great deal of experimentation with AI in practice,
engagement with a set of principles has characterised AI ventures. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) detail these principles in the following way;

1. the inquiry begin with appreciation
2. the inquiry is applicable
3. the inquiry is provocative
4. the inquiry is collaborative

Therefore an AI project should focus attention on merits, strengths and virtuosity within a system thereby aligning the approach with other psychological change models such as solution focused approaches (de Shazer, 1988) and Positive Psychology perspectives (Seligman, 2002). AI recognises the strengths that already exist in the system, locates possible change from within and seeks to illuminate examples of best practice, values and aspirations in order to facilitate positive change (Coghlan, et al 2003). Principles relating to applicability and collaboration are also found within more traditional action research models; however the concepts of appreciation as a starting point and harnessing provocative elements as a requirement are more unique to AI (Reed, 2007).

2.6.4 AI and Theories of Change
Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) in an attempt to crystallise the defining attributes of an AI intervention proposed a set of guiding principles which relate to the character and emphasis of AI in managing and facilitating change. These are as follows;

- the constructionist principle
- the principle of simultaneity
• the poetic principle
• the anticipatory principle
• the positive principle

2.6.4.1 The constructionist principle

The constructionist principle reaffirms the theoretical basis of AI, elucidating that ‘how’ we know and ‘what’ we do intrinsically connect. The theoretical basis of AI links directly back to the constructivist socio-rationalism of Gergen (1982, 1994, 2001). From this epistemological perspective, inquiry constructs a constantly shifting and dynamic reality.

“Human Knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven. We are constantly involved in understanding and making sense of the world around us-doing strategic planning analysis, environmental scans, needs analysis, assessments and audits, surveys and focus groups, performance appraisals, and so on. To be effective executives, leaders and change agents must be adept in the art if understanding, reading and analysing organizations as living, human constructions’

(Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005 p.49)

Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett (2001) suggest that human systems grow and construct their future realities in the direction of what they most actively ask questions about. The narratives that are developed in response to such questions represent the realities of social systems, underlining the power of the positive question. For Ludema, Cooperrider and Barratt (ibid) an AI position represents a
faster and more straightforward approach to promoting change, as it enables those involved to focus energy, commitment and enthusiasm on a positive outcome.

This suggestion can be linked to Cooperrider’s ‘heliotropic hypothesis’ which is considered somewhat unsubstantiated by perceived gaps in the literature (Bushe, 2005). Cooperrider (1990) suggests that social systems evolve towards the most positive images and narratives that are constructed about them, therefore creating the climate for positive affirmation is a key element in facilitating positive change. Cooperrider (ibid) contends that the more a group is affirmed by these constructions, the more firmly they hold the group to a pattern of being prescribed by the theory/idea/image the group has of itself at its very best. When incongruence or dissonance occurs between how a group sees itself and the wider requirements of the social system, Cooperrider (ibid) continues to suggest that rational attempts to ‘fix’ the problem will not be successful until the underlying "affirmative image" of the group is changed. AI, therefore, attempts to create a new and better affirmative image for the social system, one better aligned with the organisation’s critical contingencies (Bushe, 2005). A further discussion of the internal validity of the heliotropic principle can be found later in this chapter, in the section relating to the critique of AI.

The constructionist principle places narrative and language at the centre of inquiry. Organisational realities are expressed through the narratives developed by people existing within the system through the language people use to tell their everyday stories of life within the system. This narrative construction is perpetual, dynamic and constantly being edited, re-constructed and co-authored. The words and topics that we choose to talk about have an impact far
beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, shared understandings and ‘worlds of meaning’ (Ludema, 2002; Bushe, 2001). An AI inquiry seeks to make these multi layered narratives an explicit vehicle for facilitating change (Bushe, 2001). Narratives and the language used to construct also operate in a multi-directional way, reflecting structures and power relationships within organisations. Dominant constructions (macro narratives), may exist in certain public and official spaces, contemporaneously with subjugated/private micro narratives that may exist within certain groups that operate within the larger system. The exploration and to a certain extent privileging of these micro narratives may enable a new dominant storyline to emerge (Ludema, 2002). Bushe (2005) describes this process as unearthing a system’s inner dialogue;

‘When people talk in the hallways and over coffee it is often stories of past events that they use to justify the interpretations and judgements of current events. These stories get passed on and embellished with time and their historical veracity is irrelevant to the impact they have on how people make sense of organizational events. From this point of view AI can change an organization if it changes the stories that circulate in the organization’s inner dialogue. (Bushe, 2005 p.4)

2.6.4.2 The principle of simultaneity
Returning to the belief that inquiry is intervention, the principle of simultaneity is seen as a key element in organisational change. The very exercise of inquiry precipitates change;
“The seeds of change—that is, the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future—are implicit in the very first questions we ask.” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p.21).

This principle refutes the traditional action research model, which holds inquiry as a separate entity from change itself - whereby first we do the inquiry, diagnose the system, generate and select change options and then implement the change.

AI theory positions questions as determinist, and therefore change begins as soon as the system contemplates engagement in inquiry. The concept of reflexivity is central to the principle of simultaneity. The notion that observation itself, spending considerable time and effort to identify what the inquiry is about and to pay close attention to the exact wording and provocative potential of the questions that will be asked right from the very beginning of the inquiry will instigate and affect change.

2.6.4.3 The poetic principle
As detailed earlier AI organisations are viewed by the stories that are told about and within them. Life within social systems is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, the words and topics that are used have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, understandings, ‘worlds of meaning’ (Bushe, 2005) and ultimately construct the systemic reality of an organisation, it is here that the power of the language used to describe a system’s function, purpose and existence comes to bear. In relation to inquiry this
means that the language has important outcomes in and of itself. In all phases of
the inquiry, effort is put into using words that point to, enliven and inspire the
best in people. Elliott (1999) locates this principle in the power of the metaphor;

‘the power of metaphor to shape the way we understand (at the
intellectual level), relate to (at the affective level) and perform in
(at the interactive level) our organizations is almost impossible to
exaggerate. It is the function of metaphor to give us a handle on
complex phenomena that would otherwise dissolve into
unintelligible fragments. This explanatory function, however, is
complemented by a revelatory function; that is, it is the nature of
metaphor to surprise us with a glimpse of something we were not
expecting; to point us in a direction we otherwise would not have
thought of looking. This is a poetic function, not in a romantic or
prettifying sense, but in the sense of making us look through a lens
we would not have normally chosen and appreciating what we see
through that lens.

(Elliott, 1999 p.14)

Organisations make themselves understandable to their members and
stakeholders through the stories they tell (Ludema, 2002) and members make
sense of their experience in organisations through the stories they tell each other
(Bushe 2001b). A change in the stories that are told and used for sense-making
can, therefore, lead to change in the informal organisation or “inner dialogue” of
the organisation (Bushe, 2001a).
There may be inherent risks in uncovering, amplifying and uplifting micro narratives which have to be considered. Excavating micro narratives in the Foucaultian sense (as a form of resistance), may lead to clashes and contradictions at many levels of an organisation. For Foucault, power was not necessarily seen as merely a top down, monolithic repressive force but something that operated in an irreducible and heterogeneous fashion, which flows in every direction with the social fabric of a system (Medina, 2011). The process of uncovering these micro narratives would have to reflect on and be aware of the possibility of multi-directional power relationships, making the co-constructing of a composite narrative story, a less than straight forward process. Without adequate sensitivities applied it is possible that a new dominant macro narrative may just replace another without any positive change taking place. Within this AI project I employed the use of a research diary as a way of being mindful of how such dynamics may affect the inquiry. This provided a means of reflecting on the various power relations I felt were integral to the study.

2.6.4.4 The anticipatory principle

Using the placebo metaphor borrowed from the medical world, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) see the anticipatory principle as the way in which a positive future image can guide and reshape current behaviour within a system; succinctly this principle states that what we do today is guided by our image of the future.

“Much like a movie projector on a screen, human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. To inquire in ways that serves to refashion
anticipatory reality—especially the artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis—may be the most prolific thing any inquiry can do.”

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.52)

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) also draw on other ideas such as the power of the self-fulfilling prophecy (sometimes known as the Pygmalion dynamic) which refers to the phenomenon in which the greater the expectation placed upon people, often children or students and employees, the better they perform.

The anticipatory principle as a driver of change is encapsulated as the “possibility-centric versus a problem-centric” approach to organizational change (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Bushe, 2011). Boyd and Bright (ibid) argue that problem-centric processes assume that there is an expectation that the inquiry will have to remediate or fix a system that is in some way deficient. The positioning of the anticipatory principle therefore attempts to ameliorate resistance that might occur during the change process by focusing on positive possibilities that support and build trust in relationships, which create a climate more conducive to enabling change to take place.

2.6.4.5 The positive principle
The positive principle states that momentum required for sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). Pointing to research on positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001; 2005), AI theorists argue that sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy are central to the change process (Ludema, Wilmot & Srivastva, 1997).
Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) go further by suggesting that there may be a direct causal link between how the question is framed and the nature and quality of the change itself;

“What we have found is that the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort.... The major thing we do that makes the difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question.”

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p.22)

Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) continue to support the principle of positivity by suggesting that inquiry into what people appreciate strengthens their relationships and increases positive emotions, providing a vital active agent in the change process. Isen (2000) details studies showing positive feelings lead people to be more flexible, creative, integrative, open to information, and efficient in their thinking. Frederickson (2001, 2006) suggests that there is a positive correlation between resilience and experience of positive affect suggesting that positive regard enables people to cope better with adversity and fosters flexibility and openness to change.

2.6.5 AI framework - 4 D Cycle

The main intervention model that has come to be associated with AI is the 4-D cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, Ludema et al., 2001). The 4-D cycle is an elaboration of the principles for the practice of AI described in Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987). The cycle begins with discovery, (appreciating what is) then goes onto dream (imagining what could be) which is followed by design (determining
what should be) and then delivery/destiny (creating what will be). The cycle is designed to be iterative and participants can decide how they wish to enter or leave the cycle (Willoughby and Tosey, 2007) see Figure 2.

**Figure 2. The AI Cycle**

*Discovery* - uncovering and illuminating the best of what already exists

As has been mentioned earlier, the process of inquiry that perhaps most defines AI practice is the collection of “stories” from those people operating directly within the system and from other stakeholders about their best experiences. (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2000) This focus on ‘insider-narrative’ has particular resonance during the Discovery phase. Activities focus on constructing knowledge around the ‘affirmative topic’ by asking questions that are designed to encourage thinking on what is working within a system or organisation.
Dream projecting ideas of what might be and sharing these dreams

In the second phase, the focus is shifted towards constructing ideas around possibilities for the future thinking about what more is possible. Similar to a solution focused approach participants are encouraged to think about ‘ideas’ and not to be limited or restrained by convention, precedent or previous barriers.

Design - designing an ideal future by drafting possibility statements

Watkins and Mohr (2001: p.141) describe possibility statements as ‘a set of unique statements that paint a picture of the group’s vision of the organization’s most desired future’.

Deliver - sustaining the changes

A further prescription of AI that proffers distinctness as a method of instigating change is to avoid creating plans and processes for implementing agreed upon changes. Instead focus is drawn to creating plans and processes that encourage and nurture improvised action by system members. Early on in the evolution of the 4-D model the final phase was called “deliver”. This was changed to “destiny” as practitioners reported more transformational change the less they tried to guide it.

“What we discovered, quite honestly, was that momentum for change and long-term sustainability increase the more we abandoned “delivery” ideas of action planning, monitoring progress, and building implementation strategies”
This framework was used to inform the planning and structure of the data collection techniques during this project; however, I decided to retain the term *deliver* for the final stage of the process as I felt that the students would more easily understand this.

### 2.6.6 Centrality of Transformation

It is the specific outcomes of an AI project that perhaps differentiate it more obviously from other change methodologies. From the literature there appears to be two interrelated but distinct outcomes that claim to be integral to AI (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). The first is that an inquiry that has been successfully true to AI principles should result in the creation of new knowledge, models, and/or theories. From an epistemological standpoint this again connects AI to social constructivist origins but there is also a more radial element to consider. Instead of a hierarchical knowledge creation structure, whereby theories and models are driven by ‘outsiders’ the ‘researcher-experts’, knowledge is co-constructed, ‘research-experts’ co-construct theory alongside ‘insider-participants’. The resulting knowledge therefore has a more egalitarian and pluralist hue, and in this way such inquiries claim to be more participatory, emancipatory and radical;

‘The transformation of knowledge production is one of the central processes characterising the societies of the advanced, industrialised world. Knowledge production is less and less a self-contained activity. It is neither the science of the universities, nor the technology of industry... Knowledge production, not only its
Theories and models but also its methods and techniques has spread from academia into all those institutions that seek social legitimation through recognisable social competence and beyond...knowledge production is increasingly a socially distributed process.’ (Gibbons M. et al. 1994 p.2)

The second is that AI results in a generative metaphor that compels new action. The claim to generating new knowledge (models, theories) is perhaps the most important claim of the theory of AI as a method of inquiry. Egan and Lancaster (2005) focus their critique on traditional action research and problem-solving approaches to planned change primarily by arguing that such inquiry is more likely to foster a (re)creation of the processes that have been investigated rather than a creation of new knowledge. The suggestion is that action research is inherently weakened by the position it takes in relation to the promotion of change by proposing that most action research begins with a pre-determined model of the ideal that it then assesses the participating system against.

The AI position seems to have emerged out of a desire to develop methods of inquiry that have the potential to create new and novel images, models and theories within and of social organisations and therefore such an inquiry will not be tempered or restrained by preconceived ideas of an ideal. If the most powerful force for change within systems and organisations is a new idea, then the creation process of the idea is both crucial and critical. This should not be something that is imposed from the outside but alternatively driven from and constructed by those within the system.
Building on Barrett’s (1998) exploration of improvisational processes in organisations, and theory on self-organizing systems in general (Sherman & Schutz, 1998), some AI theorists advocate a rejection of action plans during the deliver stage of the process. Instead the AI should create a set of images and ideas that are so compelling to those within the system that they voluntarily find ways to transform their social and work processes. By allowing this transformational process to operate from the ground up AI theorists argue that much more change takes place much faster than can occur from any attempt to control and implement something new. (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005)

Gergen et al (2004) suggest that the centrality of discourse and the related concept of generative knowledge offer a clear AI distinctness, however they also suggest that the literature emanating from AI practitioners has a propensity to concentrate on content at the expense of process. It is possible to infer that a deeper understanding of the active processes that enable the development of generative data may be helpful in providing a more robust advocacy for AI as a social research methodology. Gergen et al (2004) suggest three dialogic elements that characterise an AI project; dialogue as a bridge, affirmative act and narrative and temporal integration;

2.6.7 Dialogue as a bridge

AI projects by their nature seek to involve all those from within a system in a non-hierarchical way in order to generate new knowledge. This will therefore bring together participants with varying positions of power and status. This may be problematic; difficulties could emerge when participants do not share similar cultural, discursive traditions, raising the possibility of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Gergen et al (2004) suggest that the ‘dialogue’ that emanates
from an AI project can be seen as ‘discursive co-ordination’ – ‘a form of communication from which something new emerges’ (p.9). They suggest that the positive affective context that an AI inquiry is located within constructs ‘dialogue as a bridge’, that can ameliorate hostility and difference between those engaged in the inquiry.

2.6.8 Affirmative act
For Gergen et al (2004) it is only possible to achieve a sense of meaning as a result of the dynamic process of dialogue. They also suggest that having an affirmative element to this process is crucial within an AI project. Without the shaping effect of affirmation they suggest that the ability to co-construct realities and the potential to change as a result of this co-construction is stymied;

‘An individual’s lone utterances contain no meaning in itself, but only the potential to mean. The potential can only be realised through another’s supplement. The supplement of affirmation may stand as the key building block to creating conjoint realities’ (Gergen et al. 2004 p.12)

2.6.9 Narrative and temporal integration
Gergen et al (2004) suggests that the present is rooted in the past and that the AI approach that encourages participants to locate success in past experiences is again crucial in developing transformation. Gergen et al (2004) defines this process as a ‘solidification’ of accounts that can fortify the present and in lead to the development of preferred futures. The active agent in this process is defined
as the ‘metonymic’ reflection – namely a fragment that can represent a whole to which it is related. Themes, motifs and artefacts that are recognised, repeated and relived are used to develop what Gergen et al. (ibid) define as ‘collaborative coherence’ – a process that facilitates the co-construction of meaning.

2.6.10 Critique of AI as a Social Research Methodology

As a tool for organisational development AI principles have been more readily and uncritically accepted (Reed, 2007). As a methodology to conduct social research however the case presented is characterised more critically. Egan & Lancaster (2005), Fitzgerald et al. (2010), Gergen and Gergen (2003), Golembiewski (2000), Reason (2000), Miller et al. (2005) and Rogers and Fraser (2003) have all constructed robust critiques of AI, interrogating the inherent worth of a research methodology which unashamedly begins from a strengths based position. The suggestion in opposition is that possible creative solutions may reside within an exploration of the ‘problem’ that exists.

Reason (2000) suggests that there is a risk in ignoring the ‘power’ of the problem. He suggests that inquiry into problems can bring around new and different ways of thinking. Such critiques suggest that a more balanced and critical approach is not only helpful in understanding contexts and situations but also illuminating when seeking solutions. Challenge and problem solving it is argued can often bring about creative solutions if the process is structured and managed effectively (Reason, 2000).

Some AI protagonists respond to such critiques by reasserting that AI is less about denying the negative and more about celebrating the positive (Watkins and
Mohr, 2001); the guiding principle seems to be, therefore, that in all human systems there exists success. It is through the process of ‘looking for it’ by creating a narrative around success that it is possible to enact change for the better. For some AI is about reframing an inquiry approach away from a preoccupation with the problematic and towards an emphasis on acknowledging strengths and successes (Elliott 1999).

Watkins and Mohr (2001) stress the importance of choosing ‘the positive as the focus of inquiry’ and that ‘the choice of focus will determine how the whole process will unfold’ (2001: p55); otherwise the participants in the inquiry run the risk of focusing ‘on the obstacles they face, the problems they have, the malfunctions that have caused them to be in their current situation, and so on’.

Developing the concept of AI as a social research tool, Boyd and Bright (2007) characterise AI as an ‘opportunity-centric’ approach to organising social change as oppose to more traditional action research problem-centric approaches. For Boyd and Bright (ibid) the principles of AI do not attempt to deny the problem but by focusing on success there is an opportunity to recalibrate social norms within a system/organisation by shifting the gaze towards the best a system/organisation can be by enabling ‘a consideration of the extraordinary’ (p.1025). They continue to suggest that this approach helps to circumvent resistance to change which is often experienced by participants involved in more traditional change projects, the origins of which are often fear, insecurity and defensiveness;
'The underlying metaphor of these activities (traditional action research) is that a community is sick or in a state of detriment, requiring a need for healing and restoration to be made whole. The consultant facilitator often takes this role, and from the organizational perspective is seen as a physician who can heal the organization’s ills. These underlying assumptions—that “something is wrong around here”—tend to make community members wary of the consultant, especially if they have been burned by past development activities. As a result, data collection can generate scepticism, and feedback to community members may be met with concern, fear, or high anxiety among participants. Motivation through fear is not very sustainable.

(Boyd and Bright, 2007: p.1024)

Other critiques of AI draw attention to the heliotropic principle (Cooperrider, 1990) which suggests a more positive and life-giving organisational form follows inquiry into participants’ best practices and peak experiences. Some have suggested that this is problematic for the following reasons; definitions of what is good and just are not universal (Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004); there is a risk attached to who and how decisions are made about what is the ‘best vision’ of the future and who controls the process of constructing these visions. Researchers have to be sensitive and alert to suggestions that they could be guilty of imposing researcher or leader defined ideas of best practice (Barge & Oliver, 2003; Bushe, 2005).

Bushe (2011) suggests that Cooperrider’s helioptropic theory, as well as being unsubstantiated, was superseded by the anticipatory principle, which locates the
power change dynamic in the attempt to project future images. This anticipatory principle is presented as a Heideggarian perspective (McAdam and Mirza, 2009), contending that it is part of the human condition to project existence into the future; change is therefore harnessed by creating an environment that encourages participants to project the best of what the future could hold. Others however, such as Bright and Cameron (2009) have revisited the heliotropic hypothesis, arguing that research on positive organisational climates, positive energy networks and high quality relationships substantiate the proposition that heliotropism exists in social organisations.

Fitzgerald et al. (2010) suggested that ultimately and somewhat problematically AI has become a victim of being characterised in a multitude of ways; ‘as intervention, as method or technique, as spirit, as philosophy, as worldview’ (p.221). This has led to a de-personalisation of the activities related to such engagement; a disembodying which de-emphasises the importance of the role of the practitioner. Further and perhaps more intriguingly Fitzgerald et al. (ibid) propose that it is the over emphasis of the positive principle at the expense of the others that has led to the ‘unintended consequences of the polarization and bifurcation of human experience and expression in our collective AI conversation’ (p.220). They suggest that AI has mistakenly become synonymous with focusing on the positive by an unnecessary overemphasising or prioritising of the positivist principle over the others previously discussed. Fitzgerald et al. (2010) suggest that further balance could be achieved by recognising and including further additional emergent principles that have been developed subsequently by others. These include; the enactment principle (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, pp. 72-74) which encourages participant to ‘be the change you wish to see’; the awareness principle (Stavros & Torres, 2005, pp. 79-83) that true freedom comes from inner clarity; the narrative principle (Barrett & Fry, 2005) that we are all
inter-connected and part of a bigger whole; the free choice principle (*ibid*, pp. 75-79) that we need to reflect on and be aware of underlying assumptions and the wholeness principle (*ibid*, pp. 69-71) that supposes we create stories about our lives and live into them.

For Fitzgerald et al. (2010) the supremacy of the positivist principle has consequently created a binary which precludes recognising, acknowledging and harnessing knowledge which emanates from ‘shadow’. Fitzgerald defines shadow as a Jungian concept which encompasses ‘...everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself, for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies’ (Jung, 1968, p. 284, in Fitzgerald 2010).

Fitzgerald et al. (2010) contend that shadow can be conceived at an individual, group and systems level and should not merely be characterised in solely negative terms; indeed they present the case that shadow should be considered knowledge that remains outside of the perceived norms;

‘Although the Shadow might be thought of as the “dark side” of people and organizations (i.e., as the polar opposite of “the light”), it actually includes the full spectrum of censored feeling and cognition, ranging from repressed strengths and capacities to fragilities and abhorrent characteristics. (p.221)

Through a detailed exploration of the AI-Shadow relationship, Fitzgerald et al. (2010) define three distinct ways in which it is possible to represent shadow; AI as generating shadow through both its “light” and the censoring effect of polarizing norms; AI as an intervention into the shadow and AI itself as a shadow process.
This representation provides not only a vigorous defence of AI against those that decry the research venture as ‘pollyanna-ish’, but by attempting to re-characterise AI as more than just an exercise that seeks to illuminate positive narratives, the possibilities of re-conceptualisation and re-construction are extended;

‘...the tremendous liberation of collective energy in many AI interventions may have more to do with reclaiming long neglected and/or silenced aspects of individual and organizational life (i.e., Shadow) rather than focusing on the positive per se. This recognition can open new vistas of possibility for our AI conversations, research, and practice.’ (p.226)

This more nuanced understanding of the AI process opens up increasing possibilities therefore enhancing the argument for further adaptations of AI as a social research tool.

2.7 AI Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter has connected AI to the epistemological, ontological and methodological foundations of social constructionism. As a research methodology, AI is located within the broad church of Participatory Action Research (PAR), but with a distinct and definite character. Evolution from an organisational development tool towards a more widely encompassing social research methodology has facilitated the reflexivity required by AI practitioners to prevent it from becoming just another development ‘fad’ and ultimately presented the case for AI as an emancipatory research methodology.
In the next section the role of the EP is explored and connections are drawn between EP practice and AI in application.

2.8 Role of the EP

2.8.1 Introduction

The following section will synthesis the broad overarching meta-theoretical constructions that form the foundations of this project, with literature related to the operational experiences of EP practice. By plotting the impact social constructionist thought has had on the role of the EP, it is possible to draw direct connections to the relevance of research and practice that explicitly engages in emancipatory enterprises and therefore provides a robust case for the appropriateness of AI as a framework to guide EP practice. Additionally this section will attend to current trends and changes within local authorities that will and are having a significant impact on the role of the EP.

2.8.1.1 The Role of the EP

An unceasing conversation of professional self-reflection and role (re)construction has defined much of the literature related to the role of the EP. From Gillham’s seminal text (1978) to more contemporary reflections (Fallon et al., 2010; Gersh, 2009; Mackay, 2002; Moore, 2005; Norwich, 2005), EPs continue to articulate ideas about how the role of the EP should/could develop and evolve in order to sustain relevance and appropriateness in working with children, young people, parents and educationalists alike. These conversations have also been added to by a number of government sponsored enquiries investigating the role of the EP (DES, 1955; 1968; DfEE, 2000; Farrell et al., 2006).
Some view these almost perennial musings as preoccupations that may have deleterious effects; self-directed, existential questions such as ‘who are we?’, ‘what do we do?’, ‘what should we do?’ and ‘how should we do it?’ perhaps signify an internal professional insecurity attributed primarily to the broadness and consequential lack of clarity around the role of the EP (Fallon et al., 2010). Alternatively, such exploits might be indicative of a profession that recognises the importance of self-reflection and reflexivity; such ventures being integral to the role of any educational practitioner (Schon, 1983) and an EP specifically. Whether such on-going reflection leads to positive developments in practice, delivery of services and ultimately improved outcomes for children and young people, or to professional, introverted self-conscious, navel gazing and inertia, rendering the profession superfluous in these austere times, remains to be seen.

Following their meta-analysis of the reviews of EP practice Fallon et al. (2010) defined EPs as,

‘fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners’ (p.4).

Despite the broad and all-encompassing nature of the above definition of the role of the EP, Moore (2005) suggests that educational psychology practice has become too narrow in focus, relinquishing to increasing demands for EPs to be
solely involved in assessment, diagnosis and judging the ‘resource worthiness of children and young people, without critically interrogating the theoretical origins and implications of such practices.

This narrowing of EP practice is reflected most starkly in the current debate surrounding the statutory function of EP practice within local authorities. Fallon et al. (2010) suggest that historical and political developments have both helped and harmed the profession by presenting the Education Acts of 1981 and 1983 as the origins of pairing down the role. It was within these educational statues that the status and current statutory role of providing local authorities with Educational Advice was initially formalised, by prescribing the EP the role of assessing children who may need additional resources via Statements of Special Educational Need (Code of Practice, DfES 2004). For some this defined part of the EP’s role as that of gatekeeper to valuable and scare additional resources, namely in the form of money to fund extra teaching assistant support for children deemed to require it (Fallon et al. 2010; Moore, 2005).

Some of these assessments, that seek to explain a child/young person’s ‘difficulty’ by using psychometric testing, run the risk of locating the ‘problem’ within the individual, rather than challenging the educational context that the child/young person is educated within (as per the social model of disability). In order to counter this over reliance on deficit-orientated practice, some have considered the factors that may protect, preserve, and promote radical and innovative practice. Moore (2005) and Gersh (2009) amongst others have encouraged practitioners to engage explicitly in critically analysing the epistemological foundations of EP practice, and suggested that Positive
Psychology and post modernism respectively, both offer sustaining antidotes to the perceived malady.

Positive psychology, defined as the ‘scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive” (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), according to Gersh (2009) and Toland and Carrigan (2011), provides the profession with the opportunity to refocus efforts away from negative, deficit model practices towards a model that seeks to explore resilience, success and effectiveness. The suggestion appears to be that by re-focusing of attention away from quantifying deficit and towards uncovering and developing strengths and resilience, educational psychology may have a more radical and emancipatory impact.

The impact of epistemological debates encompassed in the challenges laid down by post modernism and social constructionism has led to a consideration of ways in which EPs can practice at an environmental/ecological level rather than an individual deficit model (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Moore, 2005) . The prevailing challenge has prompted and promoted an on-going critique of psychometric testing and individual assessment. EPs are often in the business of defining and clarifying situations that need changing. The positioning of the EP at the centre of this change process shapes how they are seen as professionals by those that they work with, when the ‘problem’ is directed at an individual pupil, the social/environment domain can go unchallenged (Prilleltensky & Nelson 2002).
Preventative, capacity building, systemic approaches to understanding problematic situations by definition look to recalibrate issues away from the individual and towards the context that the individual finds themselves in, the problem is therefore positioned within the system or organisation as opposed to within the individual (Norwich, 2005; Stobie, 2002). Questions and critiques arising from this debate has had somewhat of a polemic effect on much of the discussion; at times proponents of systems work have been portrayed as being diametrically and philosophically opposed to individual work. Norwich (2004) contends that despite the impassioned debate no one model has gained overall supremacy; systemic work co-exists alongside individual casework, with one often leading in to the other and vice versa.

From a pragmatic perspective, this occurring dichotomy has left some suggesting that a total rejection of statutory work/individual assessment casework may leave the profession in an uncomfortable position. By denying or diminishing the one and only statutory role of the profession, EPs may make their position within LAs more vulnerable. This is particularly prescient given the harsh climate of uncompromising cuts in public spending as well as the proposed changes in assessing children’s learning needs detailed in the Children and Families Bill, with the provision of Educational, Health and Care plans due to replace Statements of Special Educational Need (DfE, 2012). Some have also suggested that a reluctance to engage in individual casework or framing it in a way that defines such work by equating it solely with psychometric testing is both disingenuous and damaging to the profession;

‘There is an need for individual casework in the education sphere, whether those within the profession like it or not, and if a
profession that is already uniquely place within the field fails to deliver, then the customer will go to another supplier…if the profession does not change, or changes without the market changing accordingly, the profession of educational psychology may become redundant.

(Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009: p.73).

Norwich (2004) identifies this debate in terms of the relationship between the three levels of practice he defines within the profession, namely the academic, applied, and professional application of psychology. Holding on to this element of applied psychology relates specifically with the question of uniqueness. The ‘psychology profession’ has protected certain practices by developing the idea of ‘closed tests’ – only qualified psychologists can complete some psychometric assessments. By promoting the idea that such practices are outdated and philosophically nefarious may suggest that EPs risk devaluing what others may consider to be not only unique to the role but also inherently useful. However an uncritical promotion and maintenance of such practices and activities (such as IQ testing) in order to protect elements of professional uniqueness could be seen as having very little integrity or moral authority, even though according to (Fallon et al. (2010), such practices have been viewed as being still very much a part of the EP role.

The desire to protect and amplify the ‘application of psychology’ as a central tenet of the role of the EP continues to be key area of discussion (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Kennedy et al. 2009; Gersh, 2009; MacKay, 2002). It appears that there is still some way to go before consensus is achieved about what EPs could, should or may be doing. However in some cases consensus may not only be
illusive but also undesirable; from a social constructivist perspective we are constantly creating ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ at an individual and systemic level. A drive towards developing a uniformity of opinion may stifle discussion and debate and stymie the perpetual and radical nature of evolutionary processes.

2.8.1.2 Consultation

Directly related to the debate between individual referral work and systems/systemic work, is the discussion around service delivery. Without wishing to reduce the debate into simplistic, polemic positions, generally proponents of consultation as a means of service delivery advocate a paradigmatic shift away from a focus on individual difference to one of problem solving and finding alternative solutions to issues (Clarke and Jenner, 2006; Miller & Frederickson, 2006; Wagner 2000).

A significant corpus of descriptive literature is indicative of the pervasiveness of the service delivery model and accounts of the professional practice of consultation (Evans 2005; Hymer et al, 2002; Wagner, 1995 & 2000). Wagner (2000) defines consultation as a “… voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems …” (p.11) with the theoretical origins identified as personal construct theory, symbolic interactionism and systems thinking (Wagner, 1995). Consultation is perceived as a way in which options for change can be explored to bring about difference at the level of the individual child, the group/class or the organisational/whole school level;
‘It involves a process in which concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review’.

(Wagner, 2000: p. 11)

Miller and Frederickson (2006) suggest that despite the existence of diverse theoretical models, there are certain common features that unify the concept of consultation, which include the participation of consultees in problem identification/analysis, working via consultees to bring about change and the belief that consultees acquire effective skills that can subsequently be applied to other clients. This ‘joint problem solving framework’ acknowledges that EPs have specialist knowledge and skills, but that these are brought to bear in a collaborative way (Dennis, 2004).

Broadly speaking traditional forms of consultation appear to adopt a more problem-orientation approach to facilitating change within an educational context. AI as a framework for intervention and consultation offers an opportunity to develop EP service delivery from unique perspective.

Explicit evaluations of consultation have explored outcomes in relation to SEN processes (Dickenson, 2000; Wagner, 2000) however there still exists a paucity of work which engages directly with the client’s experience/perception of consultation as an approach and its value as a method of engagement to support change.
2.9 Summary

This review of literature provides a robust theoretical and philosophical basis for the AI project by locating the epistemological, ontological, and methodological origins with the social constructionist paradigm. From this point, it was possible to make direct and explicit links to theories of disability; links which represent both a personal and professional journey.

The following methodology chapter will explain how AI literature informed the development of the project into the 4D stages distinct to an AI structure (Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver). Each stage comprised various research activities that facilitated the co-construction of the student’s narratives. Details are provided of a pilot study that was undertaken, which was useful not only in refining techniques but also in developing materials that enabled students to better understand the research process. Other issues discussed include; the practical contingencies/considerations required to carry out real world research, and the ethical considerations of working alongside and co-operatively with the students as co-researchers.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This project, exploratory in design and with its philosophical foundations deeply rooted in social constructionism was centrally concerned with the process and the possibility of conducting AI research alongside individual student co-researchers; the aim being to explore how relevant a methodology informed by AI could be to the role of an EP. This chapter will explore and present the manner in which the project evolved; the decisions taken which related directly to the development, structure, and organisation of the research process. This will include detailed discussion on the evolution and adaptation of the AI consultation framework, co-construction techniques, data collection and analysis strategies and the ethical and logistical issues that served to shape and characterise the project.

As stated previously the two broad overarching aims of this thesis have been summarised as follows;

- **Process** - To evaluate Appreciative Inquiry as a methodological framework for promoting the participation and the perspectives of young people.

- **Content** - To evaluate the involvement and participation of the young people in the AI project and the impact this had on the support offered through the LMP.

In order to effectively evaluate these aims and guide the research it was necessary to develop specific research questions, which are revisited in Table 4.
These specific research questions guided my thinking, reading and review of the relevant literature so that I was able to utilise the theoretical and philosophical foundations of AI to support the evolution and development of the AI framework for consultation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process: To evaluate AI as a methodological framework for promoting the participation and the perspectives of young people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRQ1 – Is the AI consultation framework useful in helping students locate successful/positive times in their educational experiences? (PRQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRQ2 - Can the AI consultation support students to construct ideas about the best they can be in school and the best the school can be? (PRQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content: To evaluate the involvement and participation of the young people in the AI project and the impact this had on the support offered through the LMP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRQ – Can the AI consultation framework facilitate students to construct ideas about how the LM can support them to make changes they identified as important?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Revisiting Project Objectives and Research Questions

3.2 Evolution of the AI framework for consultation
As the review of literature detailed in the previous chapter, traditional AI projects follow a 4D cycle (Coughlan et al. 2003), encompassing the stages of Discovery, Dream, Design and Deliver, and it was this structure that provided the basis for developing the AI framework of consultation. It is important to recognise how this project deviates from what might be considered a more standard application of an AI research structure. AI in its original manifestation was deployed as a method for organisational development and therefore in its subsequent incarnations researchers have discussed the philosophical and methodological issues relating to involvement and participation in the process of data collection. As inclusivity is philosophically key to AI (Cooperrider et al. 2003), it is incumbent
on those guiding the research to insure that the project has a clearly demarcated
democratic persuasion, involving as many participants as possible in the process
of eliciting and elucidating the narratives within a system/organisation. This
elucidation of narrative creates a rich picture based of what exists within.

The structure of this thesis however represented a departure from a standard Al
process in terms of levels of participation. It was never an intention of this project
to directly involve any participants other than the individual students at the
school. Rather Al provided the epistemological, philosophical and methodological
foundations whereby a framework for individual consultations with students
could be explored and developed. To this end each traditional 4D stage, guided
and provided structure and focus for each individual student consultation.

As this project represented an innovative and experimental Al design, the
rationale behind limiting the process of data collection (construction and co-
construction) to the students directly involved in the project was a way of
mitigating a number of threats to the research process while at the same time
retaining key characteristics of Al. It may have been beyond the scope of this
project both in terms of time and resources (financial, professional and personal)
to include members of staff in the data collection at each stage of the project.
Being a single researcher carrying out a project as part of a professional role and
within a pre-determined time allocation system⁵, I did not have the afforded
luxury of an extended or extensive period of data collection.

______________

⁵ Time allocation is a system where by each school has an allotted amount of EPS time delivered
by an individual EP
The context itself also provided a number of key challenges; the school is deemed to be in special measures by OFSTED following a recent inspection for a second consecutive time signalling an unprecedented level of involvement by the LA and central government in the form of representatives from the DfE. The future of the school remains deeply uncertain, with a falling student role and an uncompromising staffing review leading to redundancies continuing to sap staff morale. As suggested by Bushe (2012) in a context that is pitted with such challenges it can be inappropriate to carry out a full scale AI project; those involved may not be able to engage fully and without cynicism with a process that depends so explicitly on mining the successes and good practice within an organisation. This was therefore further grist to the mill in determining the rationale for electing to draw the parameters of this study in such a way.

Despite this somewhat gloomy picture, there were however, a number of reasons to justify conducting the project in this context. My previous experiences of working collaboratively with the LM were very positive; this pre-existing positive relationship (from an AI perspective) gave me hope that it would be possible to create almost an ‘oasis within’ with which the research could be located. Furthermore, I had confidence that my connections within the system would allow me to navigate my way through the practical contingencies of carrying out real world research e.g. planning and booking appropriate rooms for the consultations to be conducted in, confidence in the organisational abilities of the LM to ensure regular and agreed access to the students as planned etc. The opportunity of working in this optimistic way alongside a substantive member of staff employed by the school had its own merits and power. Identifying areas of successful practice within a challenging context is commensurate with an AI
philosophy therefore adding internal coherence and consistency to the methodology.

Working with the students exclusively enabled a prioritising of their constructions, their realities; accounts that are not normally prioritised above those of paid professionals that work in educational settings. This strategy avoided possible conflict and contradiction which may have arisen if the research process sought to build composite views from both the teachers and the students, this added to the emancipatory character of the project.

3.3 Pilot Study

The project itself was piloted in the previous academic year, where a consultation structure based on AI principles was employed as a method of providing a ‘student voice’ element to a LA project which attempted to promote effective multi-agency working with young people who were deemed to be at risk of social and educational exclusion.

A working party of the LA’s Children and Families Services developed a project based in the same school throughout the academic year of 2010-2011. This involved the promotion of a multi-professional/agency approach, which brought together key staff from school and the LA on a regular basis, and sought to put in place appropriate support plans and interventions for vulnerable children and young people and their families identified by the school from Years 7, 8 and 9. The intervention timescale for each individual young person was between 3-6months dependent on the level of need. Each term young people were selected to be referred to the project. The AI pilot attempted to work within a PAR paradigm (Heron and Reason 1997), involving each of the participants in an
appreciative inquiry research cycle through-out the course of the project. Each student referred to the project was invited to take part in the AI pilot.

There were 12 participants identified to be involved in the project however only 10 students were eventually referred (two families did not giving consent for the students to participate). Four students participated during the autumn term, three during the spring term and three during the final summer term. The structure of the pilot is represented in the Figure 3. below.
3.3.1. Methodological Issues Identified during the Pilot Project

3.3.1.1 Student information about the project

During the initial consultations with the students, it became clear that there was a great deal of information to communicate and discuss with them relating to the intentions, objectives and the structure of the project. While reflecting on the first round of consultations I felt that it was necessary to develop a set of graphic information sheets to support our discussions about the project. Ethically and in accord with the principles outlined in by the BPS (2009) it was important to ensure that the students were furnished with all the appropriate information necessary to make an informed choice about their involvement in the project. When providing these information sheets it was also important to be aware of
possible literacy difficulties the students might experience and therefore limit the amount of text used. These graphic information sheets can be found in appendix 5 and were used throughout the main research project.

3.3.1.2. Development of the use of ICT as a tool for data collection, student motivation/ownership

The initial plans for the pilot were for all of the consultations to be audio recorded with the use of a small Dictaphone. The students were all made aware of the audio recording and I was able to explain my reasons for recording our consultations by stating that it was important that did not misunderstand or forget what the students had said to me. The students all agreed to have the consultations recorded.

Alongside the recordings I also made contemporaneous notes, which I shared with the students, however on reflection of this process, I felt my note taking gave me an unbalanced amount of control of the recording process. I was in control of what information I wrote down and therefore may have prioritised information that I felt was important but the students may have not. Conversely, I might have missed or overlooked information which the students may have felt were crucial or important to them. Despite my intentions to minimise uneven power relations within the adult-child relationship, particularly in the context of an educational setting, I felt that it was unlikely that the students would have told me to write down information they felt I had missed. I needed a strategy to enable the students to have more control over the data collection and co-construction process. For these reasons, I decided to trial the use of a laptop and the Power Point function to encourage the students to record their own information, with my support if required. To facilitate this I outlined the
objectives and activities of each of the AI consultations on a series of Power Point slides that formed the basis of a presentation that the students produced as a result of completing the round of observations. In effect, the Power Point presentations represented a physical and visual artefact of the co-constructing and data collection that took place in the consultations.

Using the laptop with the students also appeared to be a way of maintaining their concentration and motivation throughout the consultations. Previous research conducted by Valentine et al. (2005) has suggested that ICT used by children at their homes is ubiquitous, with 89% of children involved in the study across key stages 1-4 having access to computers within their family home. ICT was regularly being used to support learning (completing home etc.) as well as for leisure use. Anecdotally, when I conducted consultations without the use of a laptop it seemed more difficult to sustain the student’s attention, however using the laptop appeared to motivate them to complete the activities. Student familiarity with using ICT to communicate, from smart phones to instant messaging and gaming on computers (desk tops and lap tops) seemed to tap in to a method of communication that the students felt at ease with.

3.4 Structure and Organisation of the AI project

An overview of the development and related timeline of the project can be found in Table 4. Initially it was necessary to hold planning meetings with the LM at the end of the academic year (2010/11) in order to detail and discuss the overall aims of the project and in particular, to establish how the 4D structure would best serve to support the LM project. To fit best with the ebb and flow of the
In an attempt to ensure a sense of flow and continuity to the consultations, they took place weekly, at the same time each week, but the order with which the students were seen was varied, so that they did not miss the same lesson on a regular basis. All the consultations were completed within a term. After each round of consultations, it was agreed that the students’ presentations would be emailed to the LM so that he would have an opportunity to discuss, review and refine them with the students. This gave the LM an opportunity to action strategies or suggestions that were discussed in the consultations. I also had an opportunity to meet with the LM at the end of each week to discuss how the project was progressing, discuss content and issues that arose in the consultations and check to see if there were any procedural issues that needed attending to such as room bookings, timings etc. Figure 4 represents the structure and design of the AI project.
Figure 4. The Structure of the AI project
Table 5. Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AI METHODOLOGY 4 D CYCLE</th>
<th>DATA GENERATION AND COLLECTION METHODS</th>
<th>PARALLEL ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>(PRQ1) Appreciative Inquiry based consultation (AIC) with YP to determine what is already positive, effective and beneficial in their lives</td>
<td>Continue with literature review Obtain consent from YP; Send out project information to CYP and parents Present consultation questions to PEP in role as critical friend Arrange dates for initial AIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>(PRQ1,2) AIC to facilitate the construction of a preferred future for the YP through use of PCP techniques e.g. Ideal self</td>
<td>Initial data analysis Interim LM feedback/update meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>(PRQ2, CRQ) Conduct on-going dialogue on the perceived success of the interventions from the perspective of the YP</td>
<td>Data analysis Final LM feedback/update meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver</td>
<td>(PRQ2, CRQ) Final AIC with YP to construct ideas about what could happen now as a result of the programme</td>
<td>Data analysis Interim LM feedback/update meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write up</td>
<td></td>
<td>YP presentations to the LM Final data analysis and write up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Overview of the AI consultations

The following section details the activities that were presented to each of the students during the consultations. Questions were posed and prompts developed to reflect the generative ethos of an AI methodology, to create and construct data through the process. There was also a determined intention behind the development of the questions to foster a transformative element to the process;
by focusing on experienced success, the questions were positioned to challenge students to perhaps re-construct their own perceptions of their educational experiences. As these students were all identified as being at risk of fixed term exclusions it is reasonable to assume that they would be only to aware of examples where they have experienced difficulties, challenges and/or negativity. The use of AI informed questions presented an inquiry into their perspectives of school in perhaps a new and unexpected way.

I was also mindful to ensure a degree of flexibility within the structure of each of the consultations. To be consistent with AI principles, it was incumbent that the data generation strategy was responsive and flexible to the participant/context (Reed, 2007). The structure of each of the consultations and the activities specified in the Boxes below were helpful in guiding and shaping the conversations in a way that was not too prescriptive, rigid or exclusive of information that may occur as part of the dynamic process that is integral to the consultation process.
3.5.1 Appreciative Inquiry Consultation (AIC) Activities

Box 1.

The following questions were presented to the students on a pre-prepared PowerPoint presentation;

- Can you tell me about a really happy time at school?
  - What school was it?
  - What year?
  - ???

- Can you tell me about a time you felt successful at school?
  - What were you doing?
  - Who was with you?

- Describe a teacher you get on with
  - What are they like?
  - What are their lessons like?
  - What do they do to help you learn?

- Is there anything else that is going well at school?

Box 1. AIC 1 Discover Activities

Box 2.

Ideal Self\(^6\) – describe/draw the student I would NOT like to be…

Ideal Self – describe/draw the student I want to be…

- His uniform would look like…
- His school bag would have in it…
- His friends would be…
- In lessons he would do…
- The teachers would describe him as…
- Any other characteristics?

Box 2. AIC2 Dream Activities

\(^6\) Developed from Moran’s Ideal Self Activity (Moran, 2001), which is based on Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). The activity is primarily a self-characterisation activity to uncover how a person may construe themselves.
Box 3.

**Imagining the future...**

Think of a date in the 2-3 years in the future. You will be either in year 10 or 11.

Now imagine that you have travelled in time – you are now in the future and it is the date you have chosen. Things are going well for you and you want to tell someone at school about it.

You are going to write a letter to someone of your choice. You are going to let them know how things are going at school. You can choose to tell them about anything. To help you think you might want to tell them about;

- What subject you are studying
- What is going on with friends
- What hobbies/activities you do outside school
- How things are with your family

**Box 3. AIC 3 Design Activities**

Box 4.

**Presenting the changes...**

What has been going well since the start of the project? Complete your presentation with the final slide.

Evaluation

**Box 4. AIC 4 Deliver Activities**

**3.6 Student Workshop**

Workshops and summits are commonplace within an AI research process, particularly with regard to large scale organisational change (Ludema et al., 2003; Whitney and Cooperrider, 2000), they are ordinarily organised as a means of
including a large number of participants within the data collection/co-construction strategy. The initial research proposal did not include a specific plan to incorporate such a structure within the project. However midway through carrying out the consultations with the students, one of them raised the possibility of meeting up with the other students involved, to discuss the project. Following a discussion with the LM, to see if there was scope to organise this event, I was able to get agreement to go ahead with the workshop by organising and additional date where the students could meet up as a group.

I asked the LM to use some of the time he would have with the students to discuss the structure of the workshop. Through these conversations it was decided that rather than concentrate exclusively on sharing and discussing individual data, the students themselves wanted to use the time to think systematically about the school; to consider what they felt was going well generally and how the school could be the ‘best it could be’. To this end as the following statements were presented to the students to help shape the discussion;

- We think things are good in school when...
- Actions we would like to take are...
- Our Propositions are...

Even though this data collection event was unexpected and data relating to the school as a system was unanticipated, inclusion within the findings of this project is entirely justified. AI as a methodology is flexible and responsive in design; inclusive and non-hierarchical epistemologically speaking, therefore it would be counter to those principles to exclude data driven by the student co-researchers and therefore deemed by them to be important. In order to ensure that the data
from this event was given due consideration, an additional phrase was added to the second Process Research Question (PRQ2) to include ideas about the best the school could be.

The data from this workshop was recorded contemporaneously on to a laptop by a student while the LM took notes on a flip chart in an attempt to capture as much information as possible. This data set was included with the transcription data from the consultations and analysed following the same systematic approach. A copy of the presentation can be found in appendix 10.

3.7 The position of the researcher
As noted previously within the literature section, the position of the researcher is a particularly important methodological issue generally in qualitative research and specifically when conducting an AI informed project. In contrast to positivist methodologies where researchers make attempts to limit their impact and effect on the research process, researchers engaging in participatory methodologies acknowledge that their position as either ‘insider-researcher’ or ‘outsider-observer’ with indelibly mark the product of the research. The position of the researcher will always bring with it a unique set of questions, contingencies, issues and compromises that require explicit engagement with. As Altheide and Johnson suggest (1998);

‘As we try to make ourselves, our activities and our claims more accountable, a critical step is to acknowledge our awareness of a process that may actually impede and prevent our adequate understanding of all relevant dimensions of an activity’ (p. 303)
Within AI methodologies, the positioning of the researcher is characterised as fluid and dynamic. The researcher’s position embodies membership, alliances, interests and role; all of which can be changed, altered and adapted by the life cycle of the project (Reed, 2007). Furthermore the co-construction element which was central to the AI consultations held with the students in this research makes the position of the researcher even more important to consider. Narrative is derived as a result of the consultations (conversations) and then developed into a personal theory making the process susceptible to personal biases. In effect, the AI paradigm promotes transformation, generation and emancipation making it imperative for me to consider my role as researcher in the process.

My role as EP/researcher encompasses a number of ambiguities and opacities; I am known within the school by the SMT and the LM (having worked in the school or its previous incarnations for seven years). I am also the EP for a number of the school’s feeder primary schools, so students that may have seen me in my role as EP in their primary schools may well recognise me. Indeed, there were two students referred to the project that I had already worked with at primary school. I therefore felt that my position as EP/researcher straddled the insider/outsider dyad.

The students may also have a prior understanding of my professional role in the school (particularly those that have already met with me at primary school), so I was aware that I may need to re-position myself as with them as co-researcher rather than EP. This re-positioning was crucial to creating an alternative dynamic relating to the co-construction of their narratives; I wanted to avoid pathologising the students’ behaviour, however I cannot be sure that this re-positioning of my position altered the students’ perception of my role as researcher.
Bobasi, Jackson and Wilkes (2005) in Reed (2007) allude to this construction of the research relationship by suggesting that ‘Interviewing or observing another is not a neutral act. Together the interviewer/observer and interviewee/observed create the reality of a situation’ (p.497). It was my intention to create a less ‘interrogative’ relationship, where I (researcher) excavates the participant’s (student’s) experiences, in order to construct theories about them, in favour of a research relationship based more reciprocity, where ideas are shared and theories are constructed as a result.

3.8 Power and control
Issues relating to power and control have particular resonance when operating from an AI position. Being explicit about the emancipatory and participatory objectives of this project, demands a full and transparent examination of power relationships that exists within the consultation dynamic between professionals and students. As a professional with previous experience and a role in the school I had advantages relating to accessing the students, which an outsider would have found more complex. Practical contingencies such as getting clearance to work in a school (Criminal Records Bureau check) were already set up. I also have 8 years professional experience of carrying out consultations with students in an educational setting to which has enabled me to develop my skills in this area.

3.8.1 Power
Working as a paid professional psychologist within an educational context brings with it a certain set of issues relating to power and the research process. Choices relating to involvement, participation, chronology and dissemination had to be balanced by the competing demands of my personal/professional philosophical position, my professional role in the school and in the LA, the needs of the
students/co-researchers and the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

In terms selecting the participants, this decision rested entirely with staff from the school via internal processes and procedures designed to support students. Although I have provided details relating to obtaining active and informed consent from both parents and teachers, I acknowledge that as these students were referred by staff from the school to the LM project. I concede therefore, that it may have been difficult for both parents and students not to give their consent to be involved in the AI project. The project was presented as a way of accessing additional support for the students, who were, by the nature of the referrals, characterised as experiencing difficulties in school.

In structuring the consultations, I was aware for the need to facilitate the participation of the students, and in order to do this I recognised the importance of developing a positive rapport with the students. This had to be achieved over a relatively short period and was aided by meeting the students and their parents before the study began, as well as using video clips and icebreakers at the beginning of the first two consultations to encourage discussion and interaction.

The consultations took place on a weekly basis to ensure a sense of flow and continuity. The students were informed that this would be the case, and were also made aware that the times they were scheduled to meet with me would change, so that they would not miss the same lesson every week. Discussions with the students took place on how they would like to disseminate their data and who they wanted to share their presentations with.
I was also aware of my professional and personal competency to carry out this type of research. As detailed in previous sections I have been aware and interested in emancipatory research methodologies for around 15 years. As an EP I have accessed training on approaches such as Solution Focused techniques (de Shazer, 1985) Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955) and consultation, I have not however received any direct, specific training on how to conduct an AI research project. Use of a research journal and contemporaneous memo writing assisted in developing a strong reflexive element to the project.

3.9 Data analysis strategy – An overview of the approach to analysis

A thorough, systematic and robust thematic analysis of data from the research was conducted (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This approach acknowledges and celebrates the flexibility characterised within a thematic analysis strategy while at the same time providing a thorough and trustworthy staged approach to interpretations. Braun and Clarke (2006) recognise that the processes of codification, interpretation, and presentation of themes can either be data driven (inductive) or theory driven (theoretical). The positioning of the researcher and the nature of the research determines where along the inductive – theoretical continuum the strategy falls. The more inductive the interpretation the closer it becomes to a more grounded theory approach. Influenced by the grounded theory approaches of Strauss & Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006), the analysis strategy adopted in this project takes account of some of the procedural elements deemed necessary for grounded theory: concurrent data collection and analysis (Ezzy, 2002) enabling constant comparison of data for checking theory development throughout the course of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Ezzy, 2002), memo writing and member verification of theorising (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All of these processes served to develop safe and secure codes from which the themes were developed.
Theoretically, I felt that the above processes would be congruent with the AI notion of noticing themes, stories and patterns by paying attention to the metaphors, images and words young people use to construct their own realities (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, the strategy was far from a ‘pure’ grounded theory approach. Analysis of the data also combined an inductive approach with a theoretical approach by using ‘a priori’ codes that emanated from the AI literature namely that AI data should have generative and transformative qualities. The five principles of AI data (positive, anticipatory, simultaneous, constructionist and poetic) were also used as ‘a priori’ codes.

3.9.1 Two Staged Data Analysis Approach

The strategy as well as encompassing both an inductive as well as a theoretical stance, also viewed the analysis on two distinct levels. The first stage represented data analysis that took place during the consultations alongside and with the students; the second stage represented data analysis that I undertook after the data collection process was complete with the sole purpose of writing the thesis.

3.9.1.1 Contemporaneous co-construction with students as co-researchers

During the consultations, the conversations that took place represented a co-construction/data analysis strategy; the data was represented in the narratives that were produced through the consultations; therefore, data analysis seemed synonymous and indistinguishable from co-construction; a dynamic activity that was contemporaneously analysed by myself and the students involved. Through discussion, exchanging understanding of constructs and ideas, perceptions and beliefs were refined, re-constructed and re-framed. Recognition of this as an integral part of data analysis is fundamental to AI principles of participation,
inclusivity and, power/control over the process of knowledge production (Reed, 2007).

AI questions/activities were presented to the students to guide and shape our conversations; the key points/themes that came as a result of the consultations were contemporaneously recorded directly on to a Power Point presentation by each student. Each consultation built upon the previous version of the Power Point presentation which, following the completion of the cycle of consultations, formed an artefact of the four consultations. The students decided that they then wanted to present their own presentations back to their parents and senior staff at the school. Given this structure, the students therefore retained control over what was written and recorded. A degree of data coding and paraphrasing obviously had to take place so that the most salient points were recorded on to the Power Point presentations.

3.9.1.2 Individual Data Analysis for Doctoral Qualification

The second stage of data analysis was completed following the completion of the project and was an individual venture that I completed without the further support of the students. This data analysis focused both on the content of the students’ presentations as well as on broader overarching methodological research questions. All the audio recordings of the consultations (24) were transcribed verbatim. This emersion in the data represented the first stage of the data analysis (Bird, 2005). The students were aware that I would be undertaking this process of transcription, which took place in my private study. No other person had access to the transcriptions. The students had access to their own audio recordings via a CD that was given to them to ensure that they were happy with the on-going process of data collection and co-construction. There were no occasions where the students wanted to clarify or modify their ideas after
listening to the audio recordings. At no time did they voice concerns over using the transcriptions for the purposes that I had explained to them at the beginning of the project.

With reference to Winter and McClelland (1978) cited in Boyatzis (1998), I developed a series of codes from which I could generate themes from the data. As mentioned earlier some of these codes were a priori, the others were derived directly from the data set.

I used the qualitative data analysis computer package Atlas.Ti to manage and systematically code the data. Atlas.Ti enables researchers to locate codes and develop themes directly from large qualitative data sets. Other functions that proved helpful included attaching memos directly to data throughout the process of analysis, as well as devising network maps which graphically represent relationships between codes (nodes) and themes. Examples of network maps are reproduced in chapter 4.

An initial set of codes were developed following an open coding process, where the entire data set was coded. Codes were derived from key words used by the students or phrases that summarised a segment of transcription. These initial codes were then modified through a process of comparing, contrasting and refining the initial codes (Straus and Corbin 1998). This process assisted in establishing the stability of the codes from which the themes were developed. Some of the codes were subsumed by others, some were considered duplicates and some were considered redundant (Winter and McClelland, 1978). The authenticity and trustworthiness of the codes is established by maintaining the
link directly to the raw data (transcriptions), (Yin, 2003). Examples of the transcriptions and a list of the refined codes can be found in appendix 8.

Atlas.ti.’s functionality allows for systematic constant comparison of codes via the code manager system; in order to compare the codes, I was able to locate and directly compare each section of data within the codes and themes to ensure stability and consistency. At the same time, the programme also records the prevalence of the codes within the data set, again providing further checks with regarding to rigour, verification and trustworthiness.

Being a sole researcher working within this paradigm, the iterative nature of the data collection process insured a level of verification directly with the students as their narratives developed (Morse et al., 2002). The second stage of data analysis did not however include further member checking of the codes or themes.

3.9.2 Summary of Data Analysis

Overall, the flexibility and theoretical congruence of a systemic thematic analysis approach enabled where possible, all participants to be engaged at some level in the contemporaneous coding and constructing of themes. Analysis was discussed with the students and presented as a shared responsibility but I also made it explicit that I had a discrete and different purpose for engaging in the research, in order to fulfil the criteria for the professional doctorate in educational psychology. This purpose represented the need for me to conduct analysis that was separate and distinct from the project that engaged the students. However, the joint responsibility for co-construction of the individual student narratives
shaped the processes and procedures related to the subsequent analysis for the thesis.

Joint data analysis strategies and co-construction was built in to each of the consultations; data and themes that emerged within the consultations were checked at the start of each new consultation by going over with the students, the activities and information that had been recorded on the Power Point presentations the previous week. The students were also emailed accounts of their presentations to the LM after each round of consultations had been completed. This was to ensure that the students had the opportunity to check what had been discussed and recorded; they were able to make changes and adjustments during their weekly meetings with the LM.

3.10 Ethical considerations
It was necessary to consider the ethical considerations related to carrying out research alongside students within the real world context of working within a school. Before any research activities were undertaken, the project proposal was approved by the University Thesis Panel and then ethical approval was sought via the University Ethics Committee. The following issues were considered to have an ethical impact on the research process; providing information to the student co-researchers, parents and professionals that working within the school, gaining informed and active consent to carry out the project and implications of holding the dual role of researcher and professional.

3.10.1 Information about the project
In terms of guidance around ethical issues the British Psychological Society has provided information set out in a ‘Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and
Guidelines’ (BPS, 2009), which places the responsibility on the researcher to be professional in their conduct and the need for them to be honest and explicit about their research in order to safeguard the psychological well-being, health, values and dignity of participants. The research involved students in Key Stage 3 (Year 8), it was necessary to provide them with appropriate information about the structure, content and objectives of the project. This was organised in the form of an information sheet. As some of the students had previously identified literacy/reading difficulties, it was decided that the LM would meet with each student individually to read through the sheet and discuss any questions the students may have about the project even before the issues of parental consent and student assent was broached. This was to insure that both parents and students were able to make informed decisions about their involvement in the project before I had the opportunity to meet with them. An information sheet was also written for the parents of the students and this was posted to them at the beginning of the school term.

To ensure that staff who may have been indirectly affected by the project were also included a further staff information sheet was emailed via the school intranet. Specific members of staff such as the Head of Year 8 and the non-teaching member of staff with the designated pastoral responsibility for Year 8 were given individual staff information sheets. Both these members of staff were also invited to one interim review meeting that took place midway through the project – although they did not attend. This was scheduled to give staff the opportunity to engage with the project by providing feedback information pertinent to the individual progress of each student and the development of the project in general. The aforementioned staff were also furnished with my LA email address (which is operated through a secure and encrypted account) to
ensure that they had an appropriate and accessible way of contacting me throughout the course of the project.

3.10.2 Informed and Active Consent

As the students were all in Year 8 it was essential to obtain informed parent consent as well as assent from the students themselves. Guidance from the BPS (2009) stipulates (section 1.3) that psychologists should ensure that children in particular understand the nature and purpose of research before participation and informed consent/assent is given.

Following the distribution of the parental research project information sheet, individual parental consultations were arranged for each of the parents to meet with me and discuss the project. At the end of this consultation, written parental consent was sought and given by each of the parents. They were made aware that they could withdraw their child at any time during the project. A parent for each of the students involved attended an individual meeting.

Once parental consent had been agreed for each of the students it was possible to seek assent from the individual students. Following their initial individual meeting with the school’s LM, a further individual consultation was arranged for each student to have the opportunity to meet with me and discuss the project I asked them to give their written and active assent. During this meeting, the students were made aware that they could choose to withdraw from the project at any time during the life of the project. This would have no bearing on their engagement with the LM in the school.
At the introductory meeting with the students I made each of them aware that this project was part of some studying I was doing at a University; I explained that because of this I would need to write about the work that we had done together and that I might use the records of our discussions to explain some of my ideas. To do this effectively I told them that at times I might use direct quotes or selections of text from their Power Point presentations. I explained that I would not use their real names in the project or the name of the school, so that they would not be able to be identified. They all gave their permission for their data to be used in this way.

3.10.3 Professional/Researcher Role

Having the dual role of substantive EP as well as student researcher within the school brought with it a particular and unique set of circumstances. It was therefore important to be aware of possible situations that may have compromised either role. This issue was identified as part of the thesis proposal presentation process. Through discussion with the panel, it was proposed that it would be important to identify specific strategies to ensure a level of reflexivity which would mitigate at some level against unconscious pressure on either role. For this reason, I kept a research journal, which allowed me to log and reflect on any situations that may have impinged on either role. As it transpired there were no specific issues that arose as a result of my dual role in the school. However further individual assessment work with one of the students was identified as being necessary as the project came to an end. The rapport that I had already engendered with this student expedited the assessment process to a degree as I was well aware of the situations he was facing in school from his perspective.
My professional training and subsequent experience as an EP provided a useful grounding in developing appreciate questions and conducting appreciative consultations with the students. Using active listening and consultation skills such as reflecting, recapping, and reframing all proved useful in engaging in the consultations with the students. Reed (2007) recommends that novice AI researchers reflect on pre-existing skills that are commensurate with those required to conduct AI informed research before the data collection activities begin.

**Summary 3.11**

The information presented in this chapter has detailed the processes and procedures that were undertaken to set up the project, including how the student co-researchers were identified, the context in which the research was set, carrying out research in a safe and ethical manner, and more prosaic issues that relate to booking rooms and agreeing times with the school.

The following chapter will present the data that answers the research questions that shaped data collection process.
4. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY CONSULTATIONS (AIC): A PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF CO-CONSTRUCTED DATA

4.1 Overview

The following section will present the data that relates to the research questions repeated below in Table 5. that guided and shaped this project;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Research Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>PRQ1 – Is the AI consultation framework useful in helping students locate successful/positive times in their educational experiences? (PRQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRQ2 - Can the AI consultation support students to construct ideas about the best they can be in school and the best the school can be? (PRQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRQ – Can the AI consultation framework facilitate students to construct ideas about how the LM can support them to make changes they identified as important?</td>
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The six individual narratives of each of the students involved in the project are presented initially, with reference to the above research questions. Presentation of the narratives in this way intends to be both descriptive and analytical. The descriptive element is important in giving the reader a sense of the students’ stories – commensurate with the principles and theoretical foundations of AI research that were presented earlier in the literature chapter; namely that AI research should be constructionist, simultaneous, poetic, anticipatory and positive. The imperative implied in emphasising the students’ narratives from their perspectives resonates with the emancipatory drive of an AI methodology which is also reflected in current educational policy e.g. the Children and Families
Bill (DfE, 2012), which prescribes that LAs have an obligation to involve children, young people as well as parents in reviewing and developing provision for those with special educational needs.

The students’ narratives are retold through direct quotes taken from the transcriptions and are associated with the specific research questions they address. In order to elaborate and contextualise the quotes often the dyadic and dialogic nature of the consultation is represented. This gives a sense of the dynamic character of the consultations and demonstrates how such topics arose. Reproduction of the dialogue in this way supports transparency and reflexivity by enabling the external reader to gain an insight into and semblance of issues important to the research process such as power, control and co-construction. Yin (2003) refers to this as maintaining a ‘chain of evidence’ – a principle that provides the external reader with an opportunity to appreciate ‘the derivation of any evidence, ranging from the initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions’ (p. 105) in an attempt to (re)present the trustworthiness of the research process.

Following the presentation of each individual student’s narrative, a section is devoted to analysis of the data across the six data sets, under the themes that arose again with regard to the research questions. A further section will explore that data emanating from the student workshop.

Throughout the consultations students worked on developing a Power Point presentation, which encapsulated their key constructs, ideas and elements of each of their stories. Their presentations were sent to the LM after each session,
so that he could review and refine them with the students. This cycle of recapping, reviewing and refining further facilitated the involvement of the LM and ensured that the students had sufficient opportunities to feedback their information back to a substantive member of staff. This enabled the LM to use the data from the students to shape some of the provocative propositions and guide the support they accessed in the school on a daily basis.

The students decided that they would show their presentations to members of their families and key members of staff once they had completed them. I asked (and was given) permission from each of the students to reproduce copies of their presentations, but five students asked for their letters from their future selves to be removed. Two sample copies of the presentations can be found in appendix 9. They are unadulterated apart from omitting the letters and full name of schools the students attended. When staff were named by the students I have used the initial of their surname to protect their anonymity. I have used the students’ initials to retell their stories and throughout the transcriptions, the LM is referred to as M.

4.1.1 Background information on the students from staff
As part of the internal systems within the school any Year 8 student deemed to require support from the LM is referred to the school’s Inclusion Meeting via a ‘Behaviour for Learning’ referral form. The Inclusion Meeting takes place each term and is attended by the SMT and the LM. The form is completed by either a form teacher or Head of Year 8. At the meeting, six students are selected and then referred to the LM, for a 6 week intervention period.
Data from the referral form has been included in the main body of the thesis as it represents a narrative about the student from the perspective of teaching staff within the school. It is therefore a characterisation of the student and the behaviour they are engaging in, which is considered either problematic and/or concerning for the staff. It is an outsider perspective, in terms of the project, representing the ‘authority’ view of the student’s behaviour. The qualitative data from the referral form is used in its entirety and is also unedited. Other quantitative data is included on the referral form represented academic achievements, namely National Curriculum levels that had been achieved at the end of Year 7. This information has not been included in the report but was useful in determining how much support and differentiation a student could need in engaging in some of the activities that were dependent on using their literacy skills.

By presenting the data from the referral form it is possible identify any contrasts or contradictions from the student narrative that emanated from the consultations. Contrasting narratives can represent both generative and transformative data, key characteristics of an AI research project. Such data also has the potential to demonstrate constructionist, simultaneous, anticipatory, poetic, and positive principles and these occasions are highlighted in the presentation of findings.

4.2 Case 1

4.2.1 JB’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff

The information provided to the LM regarding JB included the following;
‘JB’s behaviour is having a real impact on his attitude and involvement in school life. JB refuses to follow instructions, does not respect or appreciate the importance of rules and boundaries (he struggles to wear full school uniform). In class and around the school JB makes inappropriate noises, remarks and or comments to disturb the learning within the classroom. His behaviour and language can be childlike and immature. He is somewhat on the periphery and does not appear to have solid lasting friendships’

This information describes JB’s problematic behaviour, without an attempt to analyse or explain the reasons for it. He is characterised as a student who is choosing to engage in low level behaviour that challenges the ‘in house’ rules set by the school. His behaviour is seen as wholly undesirable and negative. His social engagement is also characterised as ‘inappropriate’ and disruptive not only for JB but also for the other students in his class.

By engaging in the AI process, it was possible to explore JB’s perception of his experiences within the school; through the process of exploration it became evident that an alternative, generative, micro narrative could provide an explanation for his behaviour. This contradiction is explored below.

4.2.2 Locating Success – (PRQ1)

4.2.2.1 Resistance to positive questioning

Although JB was able to identify both academic and social successes during the consultations, initially he found this difficult and was unable to locate success or a positive experience emanating from his educational experiences during the first
(discover) consultation. Despite attempts to draw on positive experiences through appreciative questioning, JB persisted with a negative narrative of his educational career to date, resisting attempts to conceive some of his experiences as positive or successful;

**AIC 1 Discovery Consultation**

**KH** So I have some questions that are going to help us think about those positive times...the first question is can you tell me about a time you felt happy at school?

**JB** No.

**KH** How about a time when you were at school and you felt things were going well?

**JB** I feel the same most of the time, no better, no different.

**4.2.2.2 Locating Positive Social and Academic Experiences**

However by using questions that explored the possible differences and/or contrasts in his experiences across two different primary schools, JB was able to identify an element of social success, something that was indeed important to him. As his narrative developed through the series of consultations, the importance of social success began to be revealed, provided an alternative analysis of explanation of his previously constructed problematic behaviour;

**AIC1 Discover consultation**

**KH** Ok. Let’s think about the different schools you have been to. Was there any difference between going to the D primary and going to B primary?

**JB** No there were both the same...but B was smaller.
KH  So B was a smaller primary. How did that feel?

JB  A little better...yeah. It only had one class in each year and the D primary have two classes. You get to know people better at B...you don’t forget the names of people when you are having a conversation with them.

KH  Is it important to you to be familiar with people and get to know them?

JB  Yeah it’s helped to make friends.

KH  Did you make friends when you moved to B?

JB  Yeah. They come to this school but I don’t hang around much with them now.

KH  So have you made new friends coming to this school?

JB  Yeah...I just met other people from my classes.

KH  So do you think meeting new people has been a good thing? To make more friends at school...so in Year 7 that has been a positive thing?

JB  Yeah.

JB continued to describe the lessons and learning activities he did not enjoy; reading, writing and drawing he stated were ‘boring’, however, through the consultation it was possible to unpick his story in a more forensic manner and by being sensitive to a positive opportunity, through the use of contrasting and comparing JBs descriptions of his lessons, it became possible to spot an opportunity for a positive construction of his experience;
AIC1 Discover Consultation

KH  So although you said that you don’t like to do anything in your lessons we have discovered that actually you do enjoy some things...

JB  Yeah suppose...not boring things.

KH  You like to do things that are more active?

JB  Yeah I like to do fun things...

KH  And fun things for you means to do things that are more active?

JB  Yeah.

KH  Ok great...what about in music?

JB  I enjoy playing keyboards.

KH  So I’m getting the feeling that you like to be more active...not passive? Do you know what passive means?

JB  No.

KH  It means that you like to be actually doing stuff rather than listening while the teacher is doing stuff like talking. When you are active and doing things does it affect your behaviour at all?

JB  Sometimes...I’m good when I’m doing things but when I’m not I can mess around...I used to be like that in year 7.

KH  So things have changed this year?

JB  I like more of the practical lessons this year I suppose...we get to do different stuff.

The above data samples represent tentative examples of JB reconstructing his experiences in school both from a social and academic perspective. As his narrative developed, the importance of being socially successful represented a recurring theme. Recapping and revisiting the data at the beginning of the second (dream) consultation, JB identified something he considered to be a successful academic experience;
AIC2 Dream Consultation

KH  Ok, we then went on to talk about a time when you felt successful... you couldn’t think of anything in particular last week... is there anything you can add this week?

JB  When I got a good score in my SATs.

KH  Ok that’s great, you have thought of something quite specific... wonderful. Can you tell me some more about that?

JB  Well I thought I weren’t gonna do good cos erm our teacher kept saying it was gonna be dead hard and that. Then we started do them and they weren’t hard at all.

KH  That’s really interesting... can you tell me some more about how that made you feel?

JB  Just got good marks and I felt really happy and that...

The cycle and structure of the consultations therefore required a degree of flexibility; the focus of the consultations with JB oscillated throughout the cycle, often returning to discover and dream type data throughout the research process. This methodological issue is explored in more detail when considering the broader overarching findings of this project.

4.2.3 JB’s constructions about the best he can be in school (PRQ2)

4.2.3.1 Generative data – Non Conforming

The importance of social success was again a thread that was evident in JB’s thoughts when he was considering the best he could be at school through using the Ideal Self technique (Moran, 2001). JB was able to describe the student he would most like to be in the future by creating a ‘future self’. JB’s depiction echoed the description that staff had given on the initial referral form – a student
that engage in low level rule breaking behaviour e.g. wearing a modified version of the uniform (which broke the rules) and not engaging positively in learning, which he described as ‘sitting off’. By engaging in an appreciative dialogue, which focused on the benefits of such behaviours it transpired that JB was participating in these behaviours to facilitate ‘aspirational’ friendships with a certain group of students. He described students that worked in all their lessons as ‘nerdy’ and those who wanted to ‘sit off’ as ‘normal’. He characterised himself as being ‘normal’ and therefore maintenance of these behaviours was important for him to fit in with the group to which he aspired. He also challenged the inherent value of some of the rules the students were expected to follow in the school, suggesting that following them without questioning would challenge part of his identity and personal integrity;

**AIC2 Dream Consultation**

KH I think it’s interesting that you think that…following the rules means what to you?

JB That you are a nerd.

KH And not following them makes you?

JB Cool.

KH Ok…so you want to break some rules?

JB Yeah, not all of them. I don’t want to get kicked out…I want to stay with friends.

**AIC3 Design consultation**

KH Ok, great. What about the next thing we spoke about...keeping to the school rules and breaking some of the rules....where would you put yourself on this line?

JB Again in the middle.

KH Ok…can you tell me a bit more about that?
JB  Cos I don’t like following rules if I think they are stupid...like tucking your shirt in.

KH  Ok, do you have any ideas about why the rule is in place at all?

JB  So you look presentable.

KH  Ok.

JB  And it’s just stupid.

KH  Ok, so this is a rule that you think it’s ok to break?

JB  Yeah cos it’s not that serious...like chewing gum...it’s just chewy, it’s not like it’s gonna kill anyone?

KH  What do you reckon the reason behind the rule for no chewing gum in school?

JB  Cos the teachers can’t afford it?

KH  Mmm....not sure about that...think there might be another reason. What do people do when they have finished with their gum?

JB  Throw it in the bin?

KH  Yeah sometimes...sometimes they might do something else with it?

JB  Throw it on the floor.

KH  Yeah and I think that’s when it becomes a bit of a problem. But what you have said is that you choose not to follow some of the less serious rules because keeping all of the rules would put you closer to the student you would not like to be...is that right?

JB  Yeah...I don’t want to be someone that follows rules they think are stupid that would make me look stupid.
4.2.4 JB’s ideas about how the LM can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ).

4.2.4.1 Resistance to positive questioning

During parts of the dream/design consultations JB appeared to have some personal reticence and reservations about engaging in thinking about the future. He suggested that this way of thinking was not only novel to him but did not fit with his individual perspective, nor did he think of it as something that would be important to him. Through the process of consultation (revisiting, recapping and reframing earlier discussed topics) it was possible to engage with this resistance, rather than impose an agenda that did not resonate with the student.
AIC3 Design Consultation

KH Is there anything else you can think of that’s important to do with future goals you may have?

JB I don’t like to think about the future that much. I prefer to think about what’s happening now.

KH Ok...is there anything that’s important that might be happening now?

JB Well nothing important at the minute. I don’t need to think about anything.

KH Ok...that’s interesting. We have spent a lot of time discussing your ideas about school and how you are in school, so I feel you must spend some time thinking about things that are important to you.

JB Suppose...

KH You were quiet clear about things like the importance of friends at school.

JB Yeah.

KH And making more friends this year than last year...yeah?

JB Yeah, I suppose I just don’t spend that much time actually thinking about things like that.

KH Ok so it’s been a bit of a new way of thinking?

JB Yeah, haven’t done things like this before.

KH What do you think of this whole process?

JB It’s been alright like, suppose, having different things to do in school. Getting out of some boring lessons.
4.2.4.2 Transformative Data - Future Social Developments

Continuing the strong social theme throughout his narrative the consultations facilitated discussion on JB accessing extra-curricular activities which he found particularly interesting. This focused on the film club that was run in the school but JB had not attended to date. Below is the section of the consultation that located ideas around attending film club;

**AIC3 Design Consultation**

**JB**  Well I have mates but not loads of mates.

**KH**  Ok...are you happy with where you are on this scale or would you like to change.

**JB**  I’m happy.

**KH**  Ok good...you feel like you have good friends in school?

**JB**  Yeah s’pose. They are alright like. Some are still a bit nerdy.

**KH**  What is it that you like about your friends?

**JB**  Just having a laugh...and doing stuff.

**KH**  What stuff do you do when you’re not in lessons?

**JB**  Just hang about, mess around.

**KH**  What about doing anything else...do you do any other things run in school?

**JB**  No not really. Don’t really do anything.

**KH**  Do you know what there is?

**JB**  Well there's some clubs and stuff, cooking, badminton.

**KH**  Do you do those?
JB  No...boring.

KH  There are others, film club, table tennis. Do you know about them?

JB  Not really. I like movies though.

KH  Ok...great. So that's something you may be interested in?

JB  Yeah. Movies.

KH  Ok. I'm not sure about what goes on in film club or when it happens but I'm sure M will know, so we can make a note to ask him, ok?

JB  Yeah sound.

Attending the film club represented a novel experience for JB. Through the consultation, we had located an opportunity that not only resonated with his personal interests, drawing him in to something that was already in existence but not known to him, but accessing this extra-curricular activity connected a potentially ‘present’ experiences within the school to a future ambition;

**AIC4 Deliver Consultation**

JB  I said that it would be good to go to the film club. I want to be a movie producer. To be a movie producer I would need to learn different things as well. About special effects and stuff.

KH  Yes, I'm sure there are lots of thing you would need to learn about to become a movie producer. Did M tell you about what happens in film club?

JB  People bring in different films to watch with your mates and stuff.

KH  Do you have a favourite film?
JB  I like the lord of the rings. I liked two the best, I like the action in it best. I like Peter Jackson.

KH  What about learning about films and how they are made. Do you do that in film club.

JB  Not sure, M didn't say.

KH  Ok, I'm sure there are lots of steps to be a movie producer. Maybe that's something you could suggest as an activity?

JB  Yeah. To be a producer I'll need loads of money to get all the equipment and pay actors and stuff. But I would have to start off with a mini movie so I could do my own stuff.

JB was also able to discuss some intentions he had when leaving school, these focused on attending college with the intention of being able to get paid employment so that he would eventually be able to live independently as an adult;

AIC3 Deliver consultation

KH  Ok let's think about your other target, college. Yeah that’s right you said that you wanted to go to college.

JB  Yeah I want a job, I don’t want to be living at home when I’m in me 20’s like. Not like my uncle who still lives with me nan.

KH  Why is that important to you?

JB  Cos it’s like being an adult...it makes you feel like you can do things on your own, be independent like.

KH  OK so that is important to you, to feel that you can support yourself.

JB  Yeah, don’t want to have to rely on others, I would want to be seen as an adult when I’m that age.
4.2.5 JB’s Provocative Propositions

JB’s provocative propositions can be found in the box below. They reflect and came as a result of the series of consultations that were completed. The LM made plans to engage JB in the film club, but the consultations did not span a sufficient period of time to ascertain the level of his engagement with it.

Box 5. JB’s Provocative Propositions – the best I can be...

I go to the film club in school. (Extra-Curricular)

I am really interested in making films. (Extra-curricular)

I have made more friends that like the same things as me (Social)

I am going to college to do media studies. (Academic)

Box 5. JB's Provocative Propositions

4.2.6 Summary of JB’s Narrative

The construction of JB’s narrative from a positive AI perspective was initially challenging due to his overarching ‘meta’ perspective of school. He appeared to construct school as a context in which he was obliged to engage in learning activities that he did not find stimulating as well as an environment in which he was required to follow a number of rules that from his perspective did not have any inherent benefit. However by using positive questioning, being sensitive to differences and contrasts and revisiting, reframing and exploring it was possible to co-construct an alternative narrative that was both generative and transformative, to describe elements of JB’s educational experiences.
4.3 Case 2

4.3.1 JC’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff

The following information from JC’s head of year was included in the referral to the LM;

‘JC’s behaviour in the last half term has become increasingly poor and disruptive. He has recently become involved in a new circle of friends who are having a negative impact on his behaviour and attitude towards school life. JC behaviour is low level but Key Stage 3 Team are concerned that it is getting more frequent and more serious. JC has lost focus and direction in his school life and his time is spent fooling around and making the wrong decisions.’

JC’s social engagement is characterised as being problematic and associated with having a detrimental impact on his academic engagement and progress. There is also a sense that this situation is escalating which is having a deleterious impact on JC’s ability to engage positive in learning experiences within the school.

4.3.2 Locating Success (PRQ1)

4.3.2.1 Locating Positive Social and Extra-Curricular Experiences

JC was able to immediately respond to and locate successful and positive experiences from his educational career to date, both at primary school and in his first year (Year 7) in secondary school. All the examples he identified related broadly to his social development including success in extra-curricular activities ranging from representing the school by being selected to play in the football team to attending a year 6 adventure activities residential, to making new friends in Year 7;
AIC 1 Discover Consultation

JC  I liked starting a new big school. It was really good meeting more people and making friends. It was exciting.

KH  Ok...that’s interesting. Sometimes starting a new school can be a bit scary?

JC  I don’t mind meeting new people and making new friends. I met up with some old friends that I used to know in my other school as well.

JC appeared open to exploring previously encountered successes and identified experiences that may have caused some students anxiety (starting a new school) as a positive opportunity to expand his social network. For JC his friendships also play an important role in his educational experiences – from his perspective his friendships are characterised as unproblematic, exciting and fun. This initially represents a tension and contradiction with how his friendships are perceived by staff from the school. Further and deeper exploration through the use of the ‘ideal self’ activity during the dream consultation however provided supplementary analysis of the situation as described in the next section.

4.3.3 JC’s constructions about the best he can be in the school (PRQ2)

4.3.3.1 Future Academic developments

JC had very clear ideas about how he wanted to improve his school experiences and these related to his academic development; these were articulated initially during the first discover AIC, representing a further example of oscillation between different stages of the AI cycle. JC constructed his behaviour as being acceptable in the lessons he felt he was appropriately placed in, he felt adequately challenged which kept him engaged and on task.
However he identified that his behaviour deteriorated in his English lessons and he wanted to move sets, feeling that the poor behaviour in his current class was a barrier and threat to him improving his literacy skills. Further data reinforcing and consolidating this picture emerged from the dream consultation.

He believed that if he could improve and move classes this would have both an academic and behavioural benefit for him. He also suggested that perhaps he had not been placed in the correct class, feeling that the work was not challenging for him. His perspective on the situation provides an explanation of some of the difficulties detailed in the initial referral form to the LM;

**AIC 1 Discover Phase**

**JC** Some of the lessons are ok like. My maths and PE are fine I’m in the right lessons with me mates. They are the proper sets, so I don’t mess around like. I’m in set three for Maths and two for PE. I don’t have a problem in those lessons.

**KH** Ok.

**JC** It’s English that’s the worst. I’m in set five at the moment...it’s all over the place, the class. I want to get into set two or three.

**KH** What’s the work like? How do you find it?

**JC** It’s a bit easy like.

**AIC2 Dream Phase**

**JC** I really want to move up a set or two in English because I can’t work with all the naughty people. In the higher set the kids concentrate and get their work done more, so I will work more.
The above data sample also represents an example of AI data that does not necessarily examine the positive; for JC his experiences in his English lessons are characterised in negative terms. This can be understood with reference to examining ‘the shadow’, an element of JC’s educational experience that may not necessarily have been uncovered. This examination of ‘shadow’ leads to JC exploring the change he would like to see in school, namely improving his English so that he can move to a different class. By ‘moving up’ to a class which is considered higher ability, JC believes the behaviour in the class will be better which will in turn have a positive impact on his behaviour. He clearly values English as a subject and want to be more successful in it.

**4.3.3.2 Specific Strategy identified for LM**

JC’s keenness to move sets was discussed with the LM during the feedback meeting and it was agreed that he would speak to the Head of English to see if any movement was possible. Following this meeting it transpired that the English teacher felt that JC was appropriately placed in terms of his ability as well as his behaviour. She suggested that she could give the LM extra literacy work for JC to practice with him during their weekly meetings and agreed that if he made good progress she would re-consider his class placement. This did not solve the immediate problem identified by JC but he began his additional literacy work with the LM the same week.

**4.3.3.3 Locating Positive Academic and Social Experiences:**

*Simultaneity and Anticipatory principles*

JC was also keen to update me with examples of current positive experiences during the cycle of consultation. This type of data illustrates several AI principles – including those of simultaneity (engaging in inquiry precipitates change),
anticipatory (constructing positive images of the future guides present behaviour) as well as more prosaically the positive principle.

The LM had requested that JC use a positive report card throughout the week. The positive card requests that staff provide feedback for JC on a key positive target (decided by JC through consulting the LM) and therefore differs from a behavioural card which is used as a sanction. JC felt that this was having a positive impact on his behaviour and learning.

**AIC4 Design Consultation**

*KH*  So how has the week been?

*JC*  Good, I’ve got really good marks on my report card…the positive one.

*KH*  Ok let’s have a look at today’s

*JC*  I got a 5 today in Maths.

*KH*  Let’s read the comment – ’excellent contribution during the review activity. He has helped with a number of jobs and completed some lovely work. Well done’. M says that you have had a really good week, what do you think?

*JC*  It’s been good like.

*KH*  M said that you didn’t want to go on the card initially, what do you think now?

*JC*  It’s good like, when I’m doing well and get good marks...makes me feel proud of myself.

*KH*  Proud...that’s an interesting word can you tell me a bit more about that?

*JC*  Well me mum has been happy about school and she is proud of me as well.
Continued positive reports from staff also enabled JC to attend a reward residential, which further reinforced the improvements he was making at school;

**AIC 4 Deliver consultation**

*KH*  
*So you have been on a residential trip?*

*JC*  
*Yeah I was chosen to go because of my behaviour in school.*

*KH*  
*Ok, so is that because of the improvements you have made?*

*JC*  
*Yeah, as well as my attendance in school, its 100%*

*KH*  
*Ok that sounds pretty good. So what kind of residential was it?*

*JC*  
*An activity holiday with Years 7,8 and 9s. We did loads of things. Fencing, archery and on the rip wires. We went for 3 days. It was great.*

**4.3.3.4 JC’s Provocative Propositions**

The following Provocative Propositions were identified by JC through the completion of the ideal self activity. By using the constructs he had identified as desirable and those that he wanted to improve upon during the activity JC’s propositions were as follows;

**Box 6. JC’s Provocative Propositions – the best I can be...**

- I am prepared and have pencils/pens/rubber and ruler. I will keep them in my pocket and my locker. My key is in LM’s Office (Academic)
- I have improved my English work and I am in set 3. (Academic)
- Teachers think that I care about my work. (Social/Academic)
4.3.3.5 Transformative data – Being prepared

JC had identified that being prepared for his lessons would be something he wanted to change for the future. He was able to identify a strategy/solution that would enable him to enact this change while reflecting on change that had already started to take place;

AIC 4 Deliver consultation

*KH*  Ok now we are going to look at your plan for making changes in the future. The main target you set yourself was to be prepared for lessons. And you decided that your strategy was to bring pens and pencils in to school and keep some in your pocket and in your locker. Can you remember why you wanted to be prepared?

*JC*  So that I am ready for lessons, I don’t get any detentions – I still haven’t got one yet.

*KH*  Is that all year?

*JC*  Yeah.

*KH*  Did you get any last year?

*JC*  Yeah (laughs)

*KH*  A lot?

*JC*  Yeah

*KH*  So this is a real improvement from last year then?

*JC*  Yeah.

The development of JC’s provocative propositions were easily translated into ‘targets’. Target driven language was used with the students as it is commonplace in the environment, understood by both the student on an individual level as well as by members of the broader system (namely teachers that are not directly
involved in the project), making the data easier to communicate across the system.

4.3.4 JC’s ideas about how the LM can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ).

4.3.4.1 Future Academic development and Specific LM strategy identified

JC had identified a personal academic target – to improve his Literacy skills with the intention of being able to move sets. From his perspective, moving sets would move him away from students that engaged in ‘naughty’ behaviour. Following the uncovering of this ambition via the dream consultation, further literacy support was arranged by the LM in collaboration with the Head of English. The structure of the project facilitated sharing JC’s target and enabled the LM enabled to individually tailor the support he could offer.

4.3.5 Summary of JC’s Narrative

JC’s engagement in the process began from a positive starting point. He was readily able to identify and construct ideas about his successes at school and his determination to change specific aspects of his educational experience – his literacy setting. He was able to engage positively in the extra reading that was organised as part of the learning mentor support. His narrative also emanated generative and transformative data regarding how he wanted to be perceived by others. As well as being determined to improve a specific academic skill, JC alluded to a desire to challenge or change possible teacher perspectives (macro narratives – because they are more readily available discussed by and with teachers, given more credibility, given more weight). He identified that he
wanted to be seen as ‘prepared’, as a student that ‘cared’ about and therefore valued education and as a result valued the role of teachers within the school.

The processes and procedures of the school appeared less responsive to his objectives and ambitions. From the information available from the staff (on the Behaviour for Learning form and the response of the Head of English), the ‘macro’ narrative of JC’s behaviour seemed to be resistant to positive characterisation. During the lifetime of the project JC remained in his original literacy class, however he did maintain his additional reading support with the learning mentor.

4.4 Case 3

4.4.1 JM’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff

The following information was presented to the LM to support JM’s referral for additional support;

‘JM had a difficult time in Year7. His behaviour can be disruptive and inappropriate at times, disturbing his learning and the learning of others. He can be challenging to staff and finds it difficult to accept responsibility when he has made the wrong choices. His behaviour seemed to deteriorate towards the end of the year and the usual sanctions were not having any impact on his behaviour. His family are supportive of the school and are keen to get JM support.’
4.4.2 Locating Success (PRQ1)

4.4.2.1 Locating Behavioural and Academic success - Simultaneity and Anticipatory principles
JM was able to locate successful experiences relating to improvements in his behaviour and his academic development at the school.

AIC1 Discover Consultation
JM    This year, Year 8. Cos I’m hardly messing g this year and I’m trying to get my head down and get on with me work.
KH    Ok that’s interesting. Why is that a good thing for you?
JM    Yeah, it’s good because my mum is happy. So that means that she doesn’t go off her head at me all the time.
KH    So you think that the improvements you have already made at school are having an effect at home?
JM    Erm..yeah, we don’t fight as much at home, so that’s a good thing.
KH    Ok, that’s interesting. How about other benefits, say in school...have you noticed any benefits in school?
JM    So that I can get a good job when I leave school.
KH    OK...that sounds like you have given it some thought...leaving school is quite a long way off. Does working hard and keeping out of trouble...does it have any benefits for you right now?
JM    Dunno...(pauses) erm it’s good cos I’m not getting in trouble...it means that I’m getting on with my work and not getting into fights with teachers.
KH  I see...so if you're not getting in trouble...is there something else that’s happening?

JM  Getting praise...

KH  Right...praise...I see...what’s that feel like?

JM  It’s good. Getting shouted at lot last year meant getting into more trouble...detentions like.

KH  So can you think of anything in particular that helped you make that change from getting in to trouble to working hard.

JM  Well I want to stay in this school and I know others have been kicked out like...had to go to ‘naughty’ school. I wanna stay with my friends...don’t want to go to another school in another place. KH  Ok so am I right that being with your friends and going to school in the area you live is important to you.

JM  Yeah don’t wanna have to go to a school in K where I wouldn’t know anyone...wouldn’t have any friends.

AIC 1 Discover Consultation

KH  Can you think of any other time when you have been really successful?

JM  In maths – I was in set three in year 7 and then I was moved up to set one. Because I kept finishing my work dead quick and Mrs M kept having to set me more work, so they moved me up. I’m still in set one now and its better, I working with people who don’t moan and know how to do the work and they work at the same speed as me. I sit by people that are the same or even better than me, so that helps. We can sometimes help each other.
4.4.2.2 Locating Social Success

He also identified the social aspect of being in the school as positive for him;

AIC 1 Discover Consultation

KH  Ok so let’s look at the first question. Can you tell me about a really happy time at school?

JM  Break time...(laughs).

KH  (Laughs) so that’s a very particular time. What is it about break that you enjoy?

JM  Just hanging about with your mates

KH  Ok and that is important to you?

JM  Yeah you can have a laugh, talk about stuff.

JM’s ability to give a well-rounded appreciation of successful/positive experiences in school indicated that he had already begun to contemplate the impact and possible consequences of the difficult times he had experienced in Year 7, which demonstrates examples of both the anticipatory and simultaneous nature of an AI data. Despite staff concerns that regular in house sanctions were not having an impact on changing his behaviour, he readily demonstrates that he understands further deterioration of his behaviour in school would lead to more serious and unwanted consequences, namely the possibility of his place at school being threatened. Knowing that other students have been moved to alternative provision has had an impact on how JM perceives his agency in maintaining his place, by making changes he will be able to remain at this local school with his peers and friends, a powerful motivator for JM. Using AI based questions has uncovered JM’s perspective of a challenging situation, without needing to apportion blame or present his failures as a starting point to the consultation.
4.4.3 JM’s constructions about the best he can be in the school (PRQ2)

4.4.3.1 Simultaneity and Anticipatory Data – Being Prepared

JM’s constructions describing the best student he could be focused on developing his personal organisational skills. His intentions were to be more prepared for his lessons and remember to complete his homework, by doing this he understood that this would prevent confrontational situations with teachers as well as reduce the likelihood of sanctions being applied (a usual sanction for the non-completion of homework). As JM articulates in the dialogue below, engaging in a change orientated inquiry has precipitated movement in the direction defined by the participant, underscoring the simultaneous and anticipatory principles in an AI project;

AIC 3 – Design Consultation

KH Let’s have a look at some of the things you identified as possible changes.

JM Being prepared, I’ve been remembering to bring in my PE kit.

KH Ok so that relates directly to the target – to bring in equipment. How have you remembered?

JM I’ve been getting it ready the night before. I also got myself a new timetable so that I know where I am and what lessons I’ve got.

KH So you are obviously making changes already.

4.4.4 JM’s Provocative Propositions

The following provocative propositions were identified by JM as key to making the changes he felt were important to him;
Box 7. JM’s Provocative Propositions – the best I can be...

- I carry my timetable so I know what I am doing in the day. (Personal Organisational)
- I remember my homework mainly Science and Art (Academic)
- I get my PE kit ready the night before (Personal Organisational)
- I have a journal which helps me stay organised (Personal Organisational)

Box 7. JM’s Provocative Propositions

4.4.5 JM’s ideas about how the school can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ)

When reflecting on his provocative propositions, JM recognised that without a journal he would find it hard to develop his personal organisational skills. Getting a new one from the LM was one strategy he identified as being helpful to him. JM did not discuss any further specific strategies that he thought may be of use. He did however comment on the importance of receiving feedback and appraisal from teachers, something that used to happen last year, a practice that seemed to have receded in teachers’ practice at the beginning of the year. JM had also noticed that some staff who were outside specialist teachers brought in to offer additional literacy support for identified students, did not have access to the system either. The section of dialogue below led us to consider ways in which such practices may be resumed;

**AIC 3 Design Consultation**

*JM* We use to get these things called bromcom points. Some of the teachers give them, they used to give them out last year but they don’t do it so much anymore. You could collect them up and save them for a prize like.

*KH* So that was a good thing that was happening last year?
JM  Well they were giving them out last year but I didn’t get many cos I messed around quite a lot. It would be good if they would give them out this year.

KH  Well that sound like a really interesting idea and perhaps something we should feedback to M and some other teachers in the school. Because you seem to be saying that it would be a good reward to get Bromcom points if you are doing well?

JM  Yeah it would be good like…I can’t remember getting any like…they’ve been giving minus points out, don’t think anyone has got any plus ones.

KH  So you get minus points as well?

JM  Yeah if you are naughty or something. Miss K can’t give them because she doesn’t have a proper register so she can’t get on the system to give us Bromcom points, cos she doesn’t work in the school all the time, she works in different schools.

KH  Would it be an idea to find a way for her to give Bromcom points?

JM  Well we would probably have to speak to Mr C (Assistant Head) cos he would be in charge of them.

KH  Ok so we need to make a note of that so we can remember as it seems very important to have a system of rewards that works well.

4.4.6 Summary of JM’s narrative

JM’s narrative was characterised by willingness and an inclination to engage in positive change. His was able to identify current positive and successful experiences both academically and in a social context. JM’s narrative demonstrated his motivation to remain at the school, which acted as a strong lever for change. His engagement in the process was also characterised by an acknowledgement that he has agency over the changes he wishes to make.
Locating personal agency and willingness to change was also supplemented by JM’s ability to observe the wider system (the school) analytically. His observations about the rewards systems within school were insightful and he was eager to discuss his perspective with members of staff from SMT. His engagement and motivation to invoke personal and systemic change belies the construction created about him by teaching staff on the ‘Behaviour for Learning’ referral form and is therefore a further example of both generative and transformative data.

4.5 Case 4

4.5.1 LR’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff

The following information was passed on to the LM regarding LR from his Head of Year;

‘LR’s behaviour can be very disruptive and can have a negative impact on other students learning. He can be rude and provocative to staff and peers. He finds it difficult to forgive and constantly brings up past happenings as excuses for his behaviour. LR struggles to accept the consequences of his behaviour and at times does not. LR at times struggles to engage in his lessons and as a result displays unacceptable behaviour and the disruption of others. LR can tell lies and extend the truth to make himself look better in situations. From my experience LR struggles to communicate effectively with adults. He struggles to communicate when he is struggling in school life and only explains (sic) in a rage when a situation explodes. Mum has mentioned in the past that although LR has many male role models in his life (especially Granddad) she is concerned that the absence of his father from
when he was young is impacting on his behaviour. He now has contact with his dad but this is sporadic’

4.5.2 Locating Success (PRQ1)

4.5.2.1 Resistance – dealing with the negative

For LR locating success in the first instance proved problematic as our first meeting coincided with current challenging situation that was at the forefront of his mind. He immediately wanted to re-tell an incident relating to an issue with two of his peers. From his perspective the adults who were involved in resolving the issue were incorrect in their understanding and analysis of the situation;

AIC1 Discover consultation

LR   Well I’ve got some bad news cos I’ve went on it (report card) just this week. Cos they reckon I’m targeting people when I’m not and me mum is trying to find out about this. When you can ask the both of them that I’m not...Jack and Nick, and she reckons that it’s that we are always arguing?

KH   Who is this?

LR   Miss M.

KH   Ok.

LR   Cos she caught me and she didn’t hear them.

KH   Caught you doing what?

LR   Just messing about. Having a laugh in the home base, we were just skitting. Not in a bad way like. Just messing. We always do it.

KH   So what does your mum think?

LR   She thinks that I’m not doing any wrong cos I’m not like that...I’m not a bully I just mess around?
KH  So do you think there is any issue between you and the other two students?

LR  No they are me mates but we wind each other up...we call each other names but we are just messing. Nick calls me one eyebrow and I call him gogglebox.

KH  So has the teacher taken it the wrong way?

LR  Yeah she has taken it dead serious and we are only messing about? That's just it.

4.5.2.2 Dialogue as Bridge

The above selection of data can be seen as a representation of difficulties that emerge when those within a system do not share similar cultural, discursive traditions, raising the possibility of miscommunication and misunderstanding. LR does not perceive any malice in his exchanges with his peers. Later in the consultation, LR chooses to identify one of the students identified in the incident in the following way;

AIC 1 Discover Consultation

KH  How about your friends do you have a best friend at school?

LR  Yeah Nick the guy I called gogglebox

KH  Ok. Can you tell me a bit about why you are friends?

LR  Well Nick is dead funny. He is from Cyprus, so he didn't know many people when he started here. I made friends with him when he started.

KH  Ok...why was that.

LR  He needed to get to know someone, he didn't have any mates. No-one to hang about with. So I thought I would be
a mate. We like the same things as well. He does the drums and likes footy and the Xbox.

KH So you seemed to be saying that you understand that making friends when you are new is important?

LR Yeah, well...erm...I was new when I started at the D primary in year 4, so I know how it feels to make new friends. We have a laugh together. Mucking about.

Through exploring further possible successful elements of LR’s experiences at school, his narrative provides an alternative explanation of the situation with a peer that was characterised by a member of staff as being problematic. LR’s perspective of this particular relationship is undeniably positive. It demonstrates that the relationship was initially based on a level of empathy (knowing what it is like to start a new school and have to make new peer relationships) but has developed into a more stable friendship based on shared interests.

4.5.2.3 Locating Positive Change – Simultaneity Principle
As the narrative unfolded, LR explained that the report card he initially portrayed as representing a negative experience has actually had a positive impact on his behaviour and engagement;

AIC1 Discover Consultation
KH What impact has the report card had...has it made a difference?

LR It has helped a bit...It has made me a bit better.

KH Well you have made the change but it has helped because?...

LR Because I can get excellent on my card when I do well.
KH  Does the feedback from the teachers when things are going well help you? Can you think of a reason why?

LR  It feels like you know when you are doing better and the teachers know and tell you as well so you want to do it to get an excellent.

KH  So it motivates you to improve and continue to improve?

LR  Yeah

KH  Ok I can see why that would help, why it would be important.

LR identified that it has helped to have an opportunity to access direct feedback from the staff, which he sees at this point motivating. He goes on to discuss his progress on report card in the third consultation. He explains that continued improvements in his behaviour has resulted in him moving from a sanction issues card to the LM’s positive report card. However it is here that he constructs being on the card as more negative, seeing it as an unnecessary level of surveillance. LR’s concerns about being on a report card system seem to be reinforced by his mother’s concerns that information relating to LR’s difficulties may be permanently recorded on his records and limit his future educational opportunities;

**AIC3 Design Consultation**

LR  I’ve been took off the report card and put on a positive report card, so if I carry on I will be off that one as well.

KH  That sounds like good news...and you’re smiling so I guess you are happy with that?

LR  It’s good...I don’t want to be monitored anymore about my behaviour, I want people to just find out normally what my behaviour is like, rather than be monitored all the time. It’s
better to find about just by the teachers rather than be on a card.

**KH**  So how were you able to get off the report card...what did you do differently in the last week?

**LR**  Behaving in lessons, not shouting out and getting all 5’s which means excellent in lessons. I’ve not got in to trouble. I’ve been getting me head down and doing me work...not messing about.

**KH**  So has anyone else commented on this change that has happened?

**LR**  Me mum is dead proud of me...she’s happy because she doesn’t want me one report card...she wants me to have a better life in school...she thinks that it might go through to what you want to be like when you are older...to like university...like people will know that you were naughty cos it’s on your school file at school and for the rest of your life people might think that I’m naughty.

4.5.3 LR’s constructions about the best he can be in the school (PRQ2)

LR’s provocative propositions incorporated social, behavioural, extra-curricular and academic elements. The behavioural and extra-curricular propositions represent changes that LR has already started to achieve and therefore his propositions represent his determination to sustain these changes and build upon them, in particular the reference to being a prefect in Year 11. LR stated that he wanted to help students and prevent them from getting in to trouble. He cast himself as a ‘peace-maker’ during the final consultation, when writing the letter from his future self;

**AIC4 Deliver Consultation**

**LR**  I am now a prefect. I look after people in the school and try to help out. I might help other people out with work and stopping people from fighting each other.
The proposition represents a target identified by LR to support his academic development and relates to career aspirations identified through the consultations. LR reported that he wanted to gain employment, working in the same car plant as his father in the first discover consultation;

AIC 1 Discover Consultation
LR A bit but the work as well – I want to try and do the best in Maths and English cos it’s important when you leave school to get a good job.

KH So have you thought about that?
LR Yeah something like my dad does...works for Jaguar.

KH Ok so you would like to do something similar to your dad when you leave school?
LR Yeah

KH Why is that important to you?
LR I want to get a job and have something to do. I like cars as well. I want to have a car when I’m older and I need to have a job for that.

This articulated desire to emulate his father may also resonate at a deeper level for LR. The information recorded on the referral form alluded to some possible difficulties/challenges relating to the relationship he had in the past with his father and possibly some opportunities to consolidate and develop a future relationship with him.
4.5.4 LR’s Provocative Propositions

LR was able to identify the following provocative propositions, they related to a broad range of issues including academic, social, extra-curricular and behavioural foci;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 8. LR’s Provocative Propositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I’ve made improvements in my English work by finishing my work. (Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am polite in school; I have good friends and get on with teachers. (Social)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am a member of the football team. (Extra-curricular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am off report card. (Behavioural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am a prefect. (Behavioural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.5 LR’s ideas about how the school can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ)

LR commented that he found his sessions with the LM helpful in finding solutions to any difficult situations that arise in school during the course of the week. He was unsure of the regularity of these sessions and was not sure if they would continue. Through the consultation it was suggested that knowing when sessions were going to be held could help, but also LR suggested that if things were going well, he could just check in with the LM. This could have possible tensions especially if LR’s perception of his progress was at odds with that of staff in the school. Given the information presented to the LM when LR was referred, it was suggested in the feedback meeting with the LM that future work on perspectives and taking responsibility would be helpful to support LR’s development and progress.
4.5.6 Summary of LR’s narrative
LR’s narrative throughout the consultations demonstrated how within an AI framework it is possible to construct positive outcomes from an initially negative starting point. His perception of his relationships with specific students deviated significantly from the perception he reported from the member of staff that was involved with resolving the incident. This situation provided an example of the potential AI may have in ‘bridging’ cultural spaces between staff and students; however the potential to facilitate this resolution was impeded by the structure of the project as it remained student facing and did not have built in opportunities to communicate directly with specific members of staff. The limitations of the structure and design of the project will be discussed in more detail in the final section of the thesis.

4.6 Case 5
4.6.1 MC’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff
The following information was provided to the LM about MC’s presenting difficulties by his Head of Year;

‘MC displays erratic and unusual behaviours around school and in class. MC can find it difficult to engage in lessons and can be disruptive, his concentration is short and gets in to arguments with others in class. The disruptions in class lead to teachers trying to implement constraints, MC seems to find it difficult to understand and accept responsibilities for his behaviour. MC’s behaviour is at times immature and this effects his friendships. MC can erupt into an argument with staff if a simple instruction is given which he feels is unnecessary and unfair’.
4.6.2 Locating Success (PRQ1)

4.6.2.1 Locating Social Success – Affiliation and Belonging
MC was able to locate social success relating to his relationships in the school however he identifies three members of staff as ‘mates’ rather than his peers;

AIC 1 Discover consultation
MC  My friends are really important...me mates are all good and they help me out. Like M and K and Ms B they’re good people, I want to say sound but sorry (points to the Dictaphone when apologising.)

KH  Sound is fine...tell me how they are sound.

MC  They always let on to me and just always let me...M always come to get me to see how things are going and its good, that’s it.

He did not name any particular peers that he identified he has positive relationships with and the possible confusion and conflation of the role of adults in the school may explain some of the difficulties detailed in the referral information to the LM. He returned to this topic again in the following dream consultation. The following section of dialogue followed MC recalling a positive relationship he had with the deputy head at his previous primary school;

AIC2 Dream Consultation
KH  Do you feel like you have anyone like that here?

MC  Yeah M – he’s dead sound like? He makes time for me and takes me out and plays chess with me. There’s K as well. She always lets on to me when I’m walking passed.

KH  OK, can you tell me why that is important?

MC  It makes me feel happy, like people want me to be here.
KH  I see, so having a good relationship with others makes you feel like people want you to be at school, they want you to belong?

MC  Yeah it’s sound when people talk to you and know you like.

KH  Is there anyone else like that in school? In your classes?

MC  Erm dunno really, can’t remember. Can’t remember the names.

Here MC revisited the positive relationships he has with two members of staff (the LM and another key member of non-teaching staff with pastoral responsibilities for his year group). MC communicated a need to feel part of the school community. ‘Letting on’ i.e. saying hello represents to MC the staff acknowledging his affiliation and belonging. MC also explained that he is the youngest member of a big family; eight brothers and two sisters, belonging and feeling valued appear to be important feelings for MC. However building appropriate social relationships with his peers seemed to remain problematic for MC, highlighted by the fact that he was unable to name peers from his classes that he got on well with. Additionally, perceiving staff as ‘friends’ may have other problematic consequences; MC named staff that have key pastoral responsibilities so an over familiar social interaction style with them may be considered acceptable, however with academic staff MC’s style of interaction may be considered inappropriate and lacking a certain level of respect.

4.6.3 MC’s constructions about the best he can be in the school (PRQ2)

4.6.3.1 Provocative Proposition (Academic)
MC identified academic related provocative propositions to guide changes and improvements he felt were important to him. These were connected to
successful experiences he identified in his primary Year 6 class, which was taught by a teacher MC felt had control over the class. He contrasted this with his perspective of the classes in the school in which he described the students’ behaviour in negative terms;

**AIC3 Design Consultation**

**MC** Well no one messed around in his lessons

**KH** Is that different to school here?

**MC** Well these don’t care in here.

**KH** What do you mean?

**MC** Well like they don’t do the work, no one gets the work done cos people don’t care.

**KH** So what’s that like for you?

**MC** Well people mess around all the time in the lessons. So no one gets stuff done.

**KH** How does that make you feel?

**MC** Well it’s just boring and everyone messes around and everyone gets in to trouble. If people did work, we wouldn’t get in to trouble a lot like.

**KH** Ok, is it hard to stay out of trouble?

**MC** Yeah and it’s hard to do your work – I can’t get my work done because I can’t work when it’s noisy.

**KH** So having a quiet place to work is important to you?

**MC** Yeah, it’s better when I get help in a quiet place outside the classroom. Like in B when Mrs L got me a quiet place to do...those things you do at the end of year 6...me SATs. She helped me do my English and Maths. She was a good teacher, she always gave me hugs. I want to do my work in a quiet place, where I can work better. I want to work better in class.
The final statement from MC in the above data sample not only represents one of MC’s provocative propositions; it is also a further example of the students’ ability to move readily between more than one stage of the AI process. In the above example MC begins by stating that it is better for him to work in a quiet place outside the classroom (discovering successful experiences). This successful experience is taking place in the present. He is then able to connect that with successful experiences rooted in his past experience, in his primary school. He then finally moves to anticipating something he wants to achieve in the future (dreaming about future change).

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**Box 9. MC’s Provocative Propositions – the best I can be…**

- I have improved my reading (Academic)
- I work in small groups (Academic)
- I practice my reading work at home (Academic)

**What helps…**

- Work in a quiet place
- No-one is around to disturb me
- I work better in small groups or on my own

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4.6.4 **MC’s ideas about how the LM can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ)**

4.6.4.1 **Transformative – Specific Learning Strategy**

MC did not identify any particular strategy that he felt the LM could implement to support him in school. However he did provide an alternative explanation to his perceived intentionally disruptive behaviour in class. MC explained that his disruptive behaviour served a very specific purpose, namely so that he would get sent out and would then be in a quieter place to do his work;
AIC3 Deliver Consultation

MC All I want to do is to be left alone outside on a table on my own to do my work, not with the naughty kids.

KH Ok, when do you get a chance to work outside?

MC Only when I get sent out, with Mr B for science. I get sent out and then I do my work quietly.

KH So you have to get sent out first?

MC Yeah

KH So how many times do you think you get sent out?

This information was presented back to the LM and discussed in terms of possible future strategies to support him. Through consultations with the LM, who was able to liaise with other members of staff it transpired that MC was struggling significantly with the academic demands of the curriculum. In particular his literacy levels were presenting substantial barriers to him accessing the curriculum. These teacher concerns were considered so significant that MC was referred to the SENCO and it was agreed that an individual referral would be made to the EPS, for an up to date learning assessment of MC’s needs. This subsequently resulted in MC having a full Statutory Assessment. MC is now in receipt of a Statement of SEN and receives 25 hours of teaching assistant support. This support sometimes takes place outside the main classroom so that MC is able to fully concentrate on the learning tasks.

4.6.5 Summary of MC’s narrative

The development of MC’s narrative demonstrated a number of issues that were key to organising support in a way that was meaningful and appropriate. By
exploring issues that MC felt were important it was possible to co-construct alternative explanations for his behaviour in school which led to an appreciation that MC’s needs both social and learning had not previously been fully appreciated. MC’s negative behaviour in class, was evidently solving a problem for him – by getting sent out of classrooms he was able to work in a quieter environment with the possibility of more adult support and attention. By sharing his narrative, again it was possible to present an alternative theory and explanation for MC’s behaviour.

4.7 Case 6

4.7.1 PG’s Background from the Perspective of School Staff

The following information was included on PG’s referral form to the LM project. It details some difficulties that PG was experiencing in his social relationships throughout Year 7;

‘PG’s behaviour can have an impact on his learning and affected his progress last year. He is getting involved in altercations with other students both during lessons and in unstructured times of the day. His behaviour in class can be challenging and had a number of internals\(^7\) last year. He can be defiant and have confrontations with staff. He is a capable student but his behaviour is hindering his progress’.

\(^7\) Internals are internal exclusions, where students are isolated from their peers for a specific period of time (normally between 1-2 days) as a sanction for poor behaviour. This represents the less serious sanction before a fixed term exclusion.
4.7.2 Locating Success (PRQ1)

PG was able to identify both academic and social success during the discover consultation. The social success related to the beginning of Year 8 – representing very current experiences.

4.7.2.1 Locating Social Success – Affiliation and Belonging

The data sample below, as well as providing an example of PG identifying positive experiences, also sheds more light and a layer of analysis on the difficulties he was experiencing in the previous academic year. As a student of a non-feeder primary school, it appears that PG was experiencing difficulties establishing himself socially within the cohort. However he now feels that he has been able to establish a successful and supportive social group that can offer guidance and protection from any future challenging situations. In this way PG has identified strength and resilience in his new found social group.

AIC1 Discover Consultation

KH So can you think about times that you have felt positive in school?

PG Well this year has started better. When I came here in Year7 it was difficult. I didn’t know anyone really, cos I went to another school, BP primary. All my mates from BP went to a different school. I came here cos my brother did. So I didn’t have any good mates. It was hard.

KH And is there a positive difference now?

PG Yeah, cos now I have got to know people. I know who I get on with. It’s going ok like, I had a bit of a fight last week but it wasn’t anything really serious. I was getting wound up by this lad but cos he was skitting me and we ended up having a bit of a play fight, it wasn’t really serious and the teachers didn’t see so I didn’t get in to trouble.

KH Was that different to what might have happened last year?
Well it would have probably got more serious last year, but I’m growing up now, I’m a teenager (smiles).

So growing up means that?...

Well I’ve got mates that I can talk to if I have a really bad problem.

4.7.2.2 Locating academic success

PG was able to locate a very specific example of academic success that was closely related to his overall progress in his literacy development. The data sample demonstrates his ability to identify learning that he associates directly with his academic progression, which he appears to be very informed about, recalling how many levels he has improved since starting at the beginning of Year 7;

AIC 1 Discover Consultation

I learnt about PEE last year

Oh PEE, what’s that about?

PEE are Point Evidence Explain charts. It’s something we use in English to help our writing. It’s about when you have to explain something, so you make the point and then you have to find evidence for it and then explain it.

Ok, I see, well I have learnt something there. I didn’t know about PEE charts before.

It was something new and it helped. I have been kept in set 1 English this year and I have improved 2 sub levels since Year 7.
4.7.3 PG’s constructions about the best he can be in the school (PRQ2)

Through PG’s dream consultation he was able to construct a full picture of his ideal self as a student. He included being prepared, being polite and being calmer in class.
4.7.4 PG’s ideas about how the school can support him in the future to make changes he identified as important (CRQ)

4.7.4.1 Specific Support Strategies
PG was clear about support strategies that he had found helpful in the past. These related to having direct involvement and engagement with the LM. Ring fenced time to reflect on his progress in school appeared to be important to PG;

**AIC3 Design Consultation**

PGG  Well going out on an intervention helps as well.

KH  Ok, what is an intervention?

PGG  Well I have only had one this term, but it is when M comes to lesson to get you for a session with him and you get to talk about what’s going on and play games with him. We talk about how I’m doing in lessons and stuff like that.
Ok so time to talk about how things are going...getting some feedback can be helpful?

Yeah, my positive report card is going really really good (show card) I haven’t had any bad comments and I’m getting good marks and stuff so that helps too.

Why is that helping do you think?

Well teachers tell you how you are doing so you can be proud when you do well in the class.

PG also had further ideas that related to keeping him calm in class. He suggested that he may benefit from using a timeout card, specifically if he was finding himself in situations where he was antagonised by other students. He characterised himself as someone who can lose their temper easily and who has in the past lost control in the classroom. He was able to recognise that this behaviour has at times affected his relationships with teachers;

AIC 3 Design Consultation

I want to move on being polite because sometimes I can be polite but sometimes I can be cheeky.

OK tell me why and what changes you would like to make.

Well I could be kind to the teachers cos there are times that I get a cob on in the classroom.

So there are times when you are not kind to teachers?

Yeah there are.

You are always very polite and thoughtful in these sessions, what happens sometimes in the classroom to change your behaviour?

I get annoyed by other people in the classroom, I know it’s wrong but then I get a cob on with the teacher and storm out of the classroom and get in to trouble. I’ve got a quick temper.
OK, do you have any ideas about a solution?

I think that maybe a time out card might help. So that I can get some time out to calm down and try and not lose my temper.

4.7.5 Summary of PG’s Narrative

PG was able to engage with locating previous success and identifying future success and change without any difficulties. He was able to reflect analytically on his behaviour that had previously caused him difficulties in school, recognising that at times he needed to assert more control over the way he reacts towards other students in his lessons. PG was able to explore possible strategies that would help him avoid further confrontation (time out card) and these were discussed with the LM.

For PG it was important to receive feedback from staff regarding improvements he had identified were important. Reward and recognition were both positively reinforcing a change in his behaviour as well as reaffirming a sense of pride in the changes he was making.

PG also specifically identified time with the LM as an important vehicle of support, which is available to resolve issues and reflect on his progress in school.

4.8 Summary of Individual Narratives - Key overarching themes

The following section summaries and synthesises the findings presented through the individual student narratives in to overarching themes across the data sets. Key themes for each of the research questions are represented by the associated
Thematically maps developed from the ATLAS.ti computer package for analysing qualitative data.

### 4.8.1. Locating Positive Academic, Social, Behavioural and Extra-curricular Experiences (PRQ1)

Through the consultation process all the students were able to locate examples of successful/positive experiences at school, situated both in the past (in their primary schools) as well as the present. These examples encapsulated themes that could be conceptualised from both a process perspective as well as an overarching methodological perspective. By giving the students opportunities to reflect upon times at school that they felt happy or positive, it was possible to construct ideas about issues they feel are important to their overall educational experience.

These examples also underscored and exemplified the principles of AI research. The responses of two of the students indicated that at some point within the AI cycle they found locating positive/successful experiences more challenging; however resistance to positively orientated questions was not insurmountable; implementing strategies and techniques commonly related to psychological theories including Personal Construct Psychology and Solution Focused such as re-framing, noticing and contrasting it was possible to facilitate the process for students to locate examples of success from which they could construct AI narratives to provide the platform for change. This connection with skills and techniques that are already routinely part of an EP’s repertoire provides further evidence to support the position that AI can offer a useful and appropriate structure for holding consultations with students. The thematic network map
associated with identifying examples of positive or successful experiences at school (PRQ1) can be found in Figure 5.
Figure 5. Network Map of Key Themes for PRQ1
4.8.2 Students’ Constructions of the Best They Can Be in School; the Development of Provocative Propositions (PRQ2)

4.8.2.1 Conforming and Non-conforming constructions

All the students were able to identify areas in which they wished to make changes for the future. For some students this ability to connect these ideas to constructions and form provocative propositions to shape their future selves were situated earlier in the AI cycle of consultations. JC was ready to explore changes he wanted to make immediately, during the discover consultation. His key area of change related directly to his academic progress as well as his behaviour in a certain lesson. JC’s construction of the best he could be in school would therefore be considered appropriate and desirable by the adults that work within the system.

JB however identified constructions relating to the best he could be in school that would be considered non-conformist and therefore less desirable. For him low level rule breaking behaviour served an important social purpose but this would continue to put him at odds with the ‘authority’ view within the school. This posed a degree of tension between what the school would consider appropriate and positive and what the student sees as important to his experiences in school.
Figure 6. Network Map of Key Themes for PRQ2
The feedback sessions planned with the LM provided an opportunity to discuss my interpretation and analysis of this situation. From this discussion we were able to identify strategies to promote JB’s social integration and development. This analysis and reconstruction of JB’s behaviour was received favourably by the LM, but I did not have the opportunity to meet with teachers that feel JB’s behaviour has a detrimental effect on him individually as well as on his classes in a more generalised way.

Without this direct access to the teaching staff, the potential to explain, explore and open a dialogue across the larger system is stymied, limiting the poetic potential of the project. By restricting the process to the students and the learning mentor the research project may not be considered as inclusive as AI projects claim to be. The reasons for this have been discussed earlier in this thesis, namely that given its experimental nature and scale I felt it would be advantageous to limit the access. This represents a methodological weakness of the design which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Suffice it to say that it is imperative to consider the implications this may have on the appropriateness of this methodology to provide a sound, effective and effectual basis for EP practice in the future. For an overview of the key themes for PRQ2 see Figure 6.

4.8.3 Provocative Propositions and the Delivery Stage – Learning Mentor Strategies (CRQ)

Through the use of the activity based on the Ideal Self (Moran, 2001) the students demonstrated their ability to identify and anticipate positive change in line with AI principles. As mentioned previously five of the six students constructed images of themselves congruent with the ethos and prevailing
culture of the school. Changes identified by this group related to being prepared in lessons, improving learning behaviour and behaviour in general. Only one student (JB) constructed an ideal self that could be considered challenging with regards to the rules and routines of the school.

The nature and magnitude of these changes and the methodological implications derived from them is interrogated from a meta-theoretical perspective in the following discussion chapter. The propositions were identified by the students across the dream/design phases of the project and specific strategies were considered across the design/deliver phases. In the final delivery consultations, the students were able to reflect on what would need to happen for them to realise the objectives described by the provocative propositions.

The strategies, commitments and interventions associated with the propositions all involved to varying degrees the support of the LM. This support ranged from facilitating JB accessing the film club to support his social development, to exploring the possibility to LR undertaking specific work with the LM to develop his ability to stay calm in school.

Figure 7. is derived directly from the data and demonstrates the instances where direct support of the learning mentor was discussed with the students through the consultations. Figure 7. also demonstrates a commitment to the transparency with regards to the data analysis process, detailing the link between the pure data and providing answers to the research questions.
Figure 7. Network Map of Key Themes for CRQ
4.9 Student Workshop Data – the best the school can be (PRQ2)

The following data relates to the student workshop that took place in the middle of the individual consultation cycle at the request of the students themselves. They had expressed to me and the LM that they wanted an opportunity to meet up with the other students who were engaged in the project to share their information and also consider improvements that could be made in the school in general.

The students had already considered some of these questions in their individual consultations but they were asked to consider them again as part of the workshops;

- Describe a teacher that you get on with.
- Describe things in school that you think are positive.
- Describe things that happen in school that you think are important.

The students were split into two groups of three to discuss and share their ideas of each of the questions (the group discussions were facilitated by myself and the LM) and then using a process based on the Nominal Group Technique (Chapple and Murphy, 1996) each group shared their ideas and the following themes emerged. These were recorded by the LM directly on to a Power Point presentation. As the group was small it was possible for me to record notes and key illustrative quotes from the students directly on to flip chart paper during the discussion. Table 5. details the themes arising from the discussions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with staff</td>
<td>All the students commented on the importance of developing positive relationships with staff. From the students’ perspective, using humour was an instrumental way of cultivating such relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection/Resolution</td>
<td>Students discussed the importance of having support from key members of staff to resolve issues that arise with teachers or between students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Having access to the facilities within the school was also identified as possibly something that could be developed further. Students spoke positively about accessing the clubs that were available but qualified their comments by reporting that at times they are not permitted to use some of the facilities such as the library and the gym.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward/Recognition</td>
<td>All of the students commented on the how the reward system in the school was important in terms of giving them feedback on their behaviour and progress. This was also qualified by the students who felt that since the beginning of the year, the internal reward system did not seem to be fully operational.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the development of these themes the following provocative propositions were devised;

- At school all teachers do something fun with students that is different to lessons.
- Teachers give choices to students in the class.
- Students behave in lessons so everyone can work.
- All students have good work and good behaviour rewarded each week.
- All students can have time with a LM to make sure things are going well in school. Checking that work is ok and things with friends.
- The library is open before school, at break and after school so students can use the computers.
- The gym is open to keep fit and exercise.

From the above provocative propositions the group decided on what needed to happen next in terms of an action plan which included the following;

- M to arrange meeting with Mr C and Mrs B to present our individual and group presentations;
- M to meet with HoY to discuss timetabling individual sessions with students;
- M to develop a reward competition for Yr8 boys based on a league table (football).

As the same questions were asked in the individual consultations and in the workshop, data associated with the themes detailed in Table 5 is presented below, from both the individual consultations and the workshop;
4.9.1 Relationships with Teachers

Data collected during the individual consultations regarding successful or positive relationships with teachers was further triangulated by the data gathered during the workshop. All the students reinforced how humour was an integral ingredient for good and positive relationships between staff and students as this section of dialogue from JC’s discover consultation illustrates;

**AIC1 Discovery**

KH  Can you now think about one of your favourite teachers, someone you feel you get on well with, either in this school or from your primary school?

JC  Mr S.

KH  Ok so he’s your PE teacher isn’t he?

JC  Yeah, my cousins had him and they told me he was a good teacher and I get on with him well like.

KH  I’ve never met him so can you tell me what he is like?

JC  He’s dead funny like. He makes jokes all the time like. He set up a derby game between all the lads in our PE class cos the derby game is next week. And he said whoever wins he will put a bet on. And the Liverpool side won so even though he supports Everton he’s got to bet on Liverpool winning the derby.

This section of data represents an example of the teacher using community cultural events to encourage, motivate and connect with the students he is teaching. Other students also commented on the personal disposition of the teachers, whether they were relaxed or strict as something that can determine
positive teacher/student relationships as illustrated by JB’s and MC’s comments on teachers they feel they have positive relationships with;

**JB AIC 2**

*JB* Mr H is my French and PE...He’s alright. He can be funny and have a laugh with you.

*KH* Ok...That’s interesting. Can you tell me a bit more about him?

*JB* He’s more chilled out if everyone is good in the lesson.

**MC AIC 2**

*MC* Mr S is funny, he’s out teacher. He shows off his muscles and it’s funny.

*KH* What kind of teacher is he?

*MC* He can be funny and strict sometimes, you’re not allowed to swear on the footy pitch, you get taken off and benched if you swear.

Interestingly five out of the six students identified the PE teacher as someone that they felt they had a good relationship with. PE is a subject by its very nature that is likely to be more practical, not dependent on academic prowess, fits with the culture of the area (very football orientated) and possibly conducted in a more relaxed manner that more classroom based subjects, which may give teachers of the subject some advantage in developing good and positive relationships with the students.

During the workshop the students discussed how they would value the opportunity to engage in activities with teachers that were not always related to the curriculum. They identified attending clubs as one way of getting to know the
teachers better but commented that only a small number of teachers and other pastoral staff run after school or lunchtime clubs. Having the opportunity to engage with teachers in this way formed one of the students’ provocative propositions;

- At school all teachers do something fun with students that is different to lessons.

4.9.2 Reflection/Resolution

The students discussed the value of having time with a key member of staff throughout the week that they could spend time with. MC reported that he enjoyed going to see the LM because it gave him some time away from the academic side of school commenting that some of the time was spent playing chess. Other students identified the LM’s role as a mediator, someone that could help them to resolve problematic situations or reflect on things that had happened at school;

AIC 1 Discover

KH – Who would you go and talk to now if you needed to discuss something?

JM – M (LM) or K (Pastoral Officer KS3)

KH – Do you know them both well or are you just getting to know them?

JM – Know them well from last year.

KH – How did you find talking to them last year.

JM – They can help you when you have a problem with a teacher or another kid.
Again the positive experiences identified by the students in relation to the role of the LM formed another provocative proposition;

- All students can have time with a LM to make sure things are going well in school. Checking that work is ok and things with friends.

4.9.3 Access
The students spoke positively during the discover consultations about the facilities they could access during after school or lunchtime clubs. These activities included Badminton, using the library to access the computers, cookery club and film club. They did however articulate some frustration about the limited access to the gym and the library before school and during the morning break. Students felt that having more access on a rotational basis across the school would be beneficial. They also felt that the school might be able to offer support for them to access leisure facilities in the local area such as the local swimming pool;

\[PG\text{ “May be the school could use the mini bus after school to take some kids to the H leisure centre to go swimming”}\]

(Student workshop)

4.9.4 Reward/Recognition

During the individual consultations access to the in house reward scheme was identified as being important. From the perspectives of the students, the system that had operated successfully last academic year seemed to be less successful. The students felt that teachers were not using the system consistently;

\[AIC1\text{ Discover}\]

\[JM\text{ We use to get these things called bromcom points. Some of the teachers give them, they used to give them out last}\]
year but they don’t do it so much anymore. You could collect them up and save them for a prize like.

KH So that was a good thing that was happening last year?

JM Well they were giving them out last year but I didn’t get many cos I messed around quite a lot. It would be good if they would give them out this year.

KH Well that sound like a really interesting idea and perhaps something we should feedback to M and some other teachers in the school. Because you seem to be saying that it would be a good reward to get bromcom points if you are doing well?

JM Yeah it would be good like…I can’t remember getting any like…they’ve been giving minus points out, don’t think anyone has got any plus ones.

During the workshop the students also identified some novel ways of rewarding students for good behaviour and these included accessing a longer break time on a Friday and organising a football tournament at the end of the week or term. These ideas were discussed with the LM and SMT at the final meeting where the students showed staff and family members their Power Point presentations.

4.10 Summary of the Interpretations of the Findings

This section has demonstrated that the data gleaned from the individual consultations and the student workshop has been useful in addressing the research questions that guided and shaped this project. All students were at some point in the AI cycle, able to identify positive or successful experiences at school which guided and shaped ideas they had about changes that they wanted to make in school.
Using techniques such based on the Ideal Self (Moran, 2001) and writing letters to their future self, the students were able to develop ideas that formed provocative propositions, statements that described a new state of their educational realities as if they had been successful in accomplishing the changes they had identified.

The workshop activity, although not planned at the beginning of the project came about as a result of a student idea. The data from this activity supported much of the ideas discussed during the individual consultations and also moved ideas on to imagining the school as the best it could be.

In the next chapter I will elaborate on issues relating specifically to the research questions as well as provide reflections on the following overarching methodological issues, therefore considering both the process and content outcomes of the project;

**Process outcomes**

- The fluid nature of the iterative process – rather than unidirectional, the process was multi-directional, the flow of the consultations moved frequently between the AI stages

- Transformative /Generative data provided alternative analysis on situations but the power of this data was perhaps limited as research activities were concentrated on the students and was not designed to include teachers in a co-construction process that could have been ‘revolutionary’
• AI framework is congruent and commensurate with a social model epistemological basis for EP practice and can provide the structure for engagement, however considerations on the context of the project need to ensure the appropriateness of using an AI structure.
Content Outcomes

- The fact that the research process was restricted to working with the students ultimately limited the ‘challenge’ to the system (social model of disability) – in this regard it was more incumbent on the students to reflect and make changes, rather than the system to do the same. The Delivery phase did include targets for the students which could be conceived as action plans, and suggestions were made to the LM regarding the type of support the students thought would be helpful to them.

- The absence of a longitudinal element to the study meant that it was not possible to comment on the sustainability of the changes made by the students. Anecdotal evidence regarding no further involvement from the EPS for five out of the six students indicates that the school do not have on-going concerns regarding the risk of fixed term or permanent exclusions.
5. DISCUSSION

This chapter will attend to further analysis of the data presented and discussed in chapter 4. The discussion will be structured in the first instance around the research questions and then more broadly to overarching methodological issues.

5.1 Is the Al consultation framework useful in helping students locate successful/positive times in their educational experiences? (PRQ1)

The broad structure of the consultations and the activities that encompassed each phase enabled the students to locate successful experiences in school across a range of contexts; social, behavioural, extra-curricular and academic. The students were all responding to a structured but flexible set of questions to facilitate their reflections on what they may have considered or identified as positive. I endeavoured to receive and respond to their narratives in a positive and appreciative way, even when they may have challenged the prevailing cultural norms of the school, for example when JB stated that he enjoyed lessons when he felt it was easier to ‘sit off’.

By appreciating the positive in JB’s response it became possible to develop an alternative hypothesis about his engagement in learning within the school. Displaying low level rule breaking behaviour became a way in which JB could socially identify and connect with his preferred social group (according to the LM, a group that he was not yet fully accepted by). Interestingly when discussing this with the LM it became apparent that there were some members of staff in school that were concerned about JB’s social development, with some questioning where or not he may have social communication difficulties. It transpired that JB had already been previously assessed for Autistic Spectrum Conditions and
although the assessments indicated he had some characteristics, it was felt by the professionals involved that he did not meet the full diagnostic criteria.

For the other students whose responses were much more congruent with the school culture, developing the consultative discussion about the importance of making friends, being part of a school football team and developing their academic skills was unproblematic. Holding conversations about commonly acceptable and appropriate activities in school with children and young people forms a daily staple for EPs engaging in individual consultations. The qualitative differences associated by conducting these consultations along AI principles were located initially at the starting point of the consultations. At no point did I confront the students with their ‘failures’ as perceived by others. Nor did I present any of the information the teachers had included in the referral forms to the LM.

5.1.1 AI as Shadow Process
As the consultations developed and moved across the AI phases, I consciously endeavoured to remain within the positive through my questions and responses. This did not mean that when the students presented with challenges, difficulties or problems these were ignored, skipped over or minimised. My approach was to be fully inclusive of the issues the students brought to the consultations and then see if it was possible to work through any negatives to seek more positive outcomes, as the following passage of dialogue demonstrates;

KH    OK, I see. And you also said that you are not on report card because things in school have started to improve this year?

LR    Well I’ve got some bad news cos I’ve went on it just this week. Cos they reckon I’m targeting people when I’m not
and me mum is trying to find out about this. When you can ask the both of them that I’m not...Jack and Nick and she reckons that it’s that we are always arguing?

KH        So is there anything you can do to improve the situation?

LR        Not mess in class around I suppose. Sometimes I’m better if I sit on my own in class, it helps me to concentrate more and stops me messing around.

KH        Is this in Maths?

LR        Yeah.

KH        And have you had a maths lesson since you have been sitting on your own?

LR        Yeah

KH        How was it?

LR        A bit better, cos I wasn’t talking so much.

KH        Ok so there has been a change since last week in that you have gone on report card but there have also been positives from it. You have recognised that it helps you to sit on your own in some lessons. What impact has the report card had...has it made a difference?

LR        It has helped a bit...It has made me a bit better.

KH        Well you have made the change but it has helped because?

LR        Because I can get excellent on my card when I do well.

KH        Does the feedback from the teachers when things are going well help you? Can you think of a reason why?

LR        It feels like you know when you are doing better and the teachers know and tell you as well so you want to do it to get an excellent.

KH        So are you saying it motivates you to improve and you continue to improve?

LR        Yeah
Working through the presentation of challenges, issues or problematic situations brought by the students, draws on the concept of AI and the shadow process (Fitzgerald et al., 2010). The ‘shadow’ is understood as ‘censored feeling and cognition, where the term censored refers to any conscious or unconscious regulation of cognition and/or emotion by self and/or others where their experience and/or expression is judged to not fit with “accepted” cultural or group norms (Fitzgerald and Oliver, 2006).

Some critiques of an AI approach have suggested that an unswerving commitment to the positive can lessen the power of engaging in research by ‘missing out’ on the creative power of exploring a problem. My experience of carrying out this type of research however has led me to believe that AI does not preclude an engagement with challenges, difficulties or problems; but in the same way as solution focused approaches guide an exploration of the strengths that already exist within a given situation, an AI perspective also creates space for alternatives, better ways and more hopeful outcomes.

In the passage above LR’s concern and problem was not dismissed, belittled or ignored but an attempt was made to engage with it directly in a way that communicated he had agency to change the situation. The solution of a report card was something the school resorts to as part of the in house behaviour policy and there was an expectation from the staff at school for LR to work with this intervention. Structuring the conversation to see if he felt there were any benefits to being on the card opened an opportunity for him to reflect on his own behaviour in response to it. This was done not from an imposed position of
talking about the problems he is having but rather allowing him the space to construct his own narrative about his experiences.

An AI approach can therefore include and fully appreciate data that relates to ‘shadow’, by embracing not only the positive principle at the exclusion of the others. Fitzgerald et al. (2010) present ‘authentic appreciation’ as one that recognises and includes ‘shadow’, by acknowledging that not doing so would condone censorship and editing of peoples’ narratives, making them more partial than they need to be.

To fully appreciate both the light and dark in a situation from an AI perspective requires trust in the process and continuous reflection and reflexivity. Fitzgerald et al. (2010) suggest that as AI continues to develop, it is incumbent on AI trainers and consultants to acknowledge shadow as part of the process;

‘Educators who offer AI courses and training for students and organizational leaders and members can similarly design a healthy balance into their curricula, not only by incorporating and balancing inherent polarities, but also by offering guidance and training in reflexive awareness as integral to AI design and facilitation. Invite trainees to befriend and become acquainted with their own personal Shadows so as to support them in being better able to create a safe space for the constructive emergence of individual and collective Shadows through their AI work. Foster reflexive awareness of the behavioural mechanisms that promote inclusion versus censoring. Explore innovative approaches to process design that transcend the now ubiquitous 4-D model, and explore the constraining as well as the enabling capacities of that model. Inquire
into the richness and complexities of interrelationships among all of the AI principles’.

(Fitzgerald et al. 2010 p230)

5.1.2 Donation, Researcher Agenda and the Leading Question
Seeking to maintain a positive stance throughout the consultations is clearly prescribed by the philosophy and theory of AI as a methodology, however this position brings into focus a number of interesting ethical concerns that require addressing;

5.1.1.2 Donation
During the consultations, in my immediate reflections straight after them and through the process of data analysis I was acutely aware of the underlying power differential in the researcher/ student co-researcher relationship. As discussed earlier I attempted in my actions, words and deeds to be non-hierarchical, inclusive and non-judgemental, however the inescapable fact was that I was the adult in this research relationship and within a school context the adult’s perspective tends to be privileged. Despite retraining my (adult) attention (Christensen 2004), expecting the unexpected and being alive to the unanticipated, I could not disentangle myself from my own self-interested agenda, irrespective of its benevolent objectives. I therefore had to consider if, how and when (if at all) I had drawn upon my privileged position to assert my agenda and consider how that may have affect the trustworthiness of the data.

Using my research journal was invaluable throughout the collection of the data. I spent some time after each round of consultations writing initial reflections on
how each of the consultations had developed. My contemporaneous notes indicated that I was concerned about ‘managing’ JB’s resistance or difficulty in locating positive experiences throughout the consultations. I felt some discomfort in attempting to pursue an unrelenting positive agenda (the risks and possible implications of which are discussed more fully in the following section). I felt that his narrative may not turn out to be commensurate with an AI research project and I wondered if his consultations may suggest weaknesses inherent in the approach. However once I had fully transcribed the consultations and immersed myself in the data through the analysis process, it was the data from his consultations that I found the most intriguing. Returning to the literature on AI and shadow also served to alleviate some of my concerns.

The juxtaposition of what he viewed as positive and what the school viewed as positive provided new space from which to explore alternative stories and lead to the reconstruction of JB’s behaviour especially from the LM’s perspective. This reconstruction and positive stance also led to the development of positive provocative propositions, which may not have been reached through using more general consultation methods.

This however still begs the question of donation; were there times when I had donated suggestions of the positive?

KH  I know that it might be a hard question...can you remember any time that you enjoyed being at school?

JB  Not really, wouldn’t come if I didn’t have to...it’s boring.
KH  Ok. Let’s think about the different schools you have been to. Was there any difference between going to D and going to B?

JB  No there were both the same...but B was smaller

KH  Ok, let’s think about going to B...so it was a smaller primary. Did you prefer going to a smaller school?

JB  A little bit...yeah. It only had one class in each year and D have two classes.

KH  So would that have been better?

JB  Well you get to know people better...you don’t forget the names of people when you are having a conversation with them

KH  Is it important to you to be familiar with people and get to know them?

JB  Yeah its helped to make friends.

KH  Did you make friends when you moved to B?

JB  Yeah. They come to this school but I don’t hang around much with them now.

KH  So have you made new friends coming to this school?

JB  Yeah...I just met other people from my classes

KH  So do you think meeting new people has been a good thing? To make more friends at school...so in Year 7 that has been a positive thing?

JB  Yeah.

The above passage demonstrates my researcher agenda to pursue the positive, despite being faced with somewhat negative responses. I acknowledged that JB may find it hard to locate positive experiences at the beginning of this data sample and then decided to examine the differences between the two primary
schools he had attended. My local knowledge of the two schools was helpful here, as I am the EP for both, so I was fully aware of the differences in size etc. Once the differences had been explored, my presentation back to him may be considered a leading suggestion;

‘So do you think meeting new people has been a good thing? To make more friends at school...so in Year 7 that has been a positive thing?’

This could have been phrased in a more neutral manner. If it had been, I may well have invited a further negative response but on reflection, although unconsciously at the time, I felt that we had together reached a less negative position and therefore I structured my question to accentuate the positive.

Now having even greater distance to reflect on this position, I feel that my anxiety to glean positive data may have also driven my leading question. A more experienced AI researcher may have posed a more neutral question, feeling better equipped to handle the resulting response. A researcher working from a non AI paradigm would almost definitely have posed the question in a more neutral fashion. Freeman (2006) encountered similar ethical dilemmas in her account of conducting emancipatory research with pre-service teachers in the USA. She reflects at one point ‘My emancipatory stance was getting the better of me: I was trying to tell the participants how to feel and what to think’ (p. 91). She continues to address issues relating to times when she felt she was ‘asserting her researcher power’, she concludes by acknowledging the importance of maintaining ‘a state of reflexivity throughout any teaching or research process’ (p.98).
The notion of maintaining a strong sense of reflexivity throughout the research process was certainly helpful however it does not fully address the trustworthiness issue. From the development of JB’s consultations, it did become more evident that his concern at the time focused on his social development. Leading the dialogue relating to making friends and knowing people in a positive fashion may well have had more than a touch of serendipity, but as the narrative built it served to triangulate the positive characterisation. This also serves to support the social constructivist position of knowledge and truth being eternally temporal, contextual and almost ephemeral. At this specific point in time, during this researcher/co-researcher dialogue we were able to construct a social phenomenon in a particular manner. Without a further longitudinal element to the study it impossible to say whether or not this construction is ephemeral and fleeting or more profound and deep rooted.

5.1.2 Researcher Agenda - Risks in Pursuing the Positive

Resistance to searching for positive or successful experiences required a careful and sensitive approach, I was aware that it was possible that by attempting to pursue the positive I could have imposed my own agenda on the process and unwittingly compounded an overwhelming sense of negativity felt by a student at school. The students that took part in this project were able to locate positive situations however, professional experience has alerted me to situations whereby relationships between school, the student and possibly the family have become so fraught, etched with negatively and mistrust that pursuing the positive may be understood as at best insensitive and at worst disrespectful. Bushe (2005) alludes to situations when it may not be appropriate to conduct an AI venture;
‘Some people seem to believe that use of appreciative inquiry is more an ideological than practical question, and that its use will always have a positive effect. I strongly question that. From a purely practical standpoint I think researchers and consultants will find that systems full of deeply held and unexpressed resentments will not tolerate an appreciative inquiry until there has been some expression and forgiving of those resentments’.

(Bushe, 2005 p.2)

As researchers and practitioners it is imperative to maintain a ‘meta’ perspective, a holistic view of the complex interrelated relationships and contextual information available that form both the foreground and hinterland of the positioning of a change relationship. In this respect recourse to sociocultural theory and activity theory can be useful in providing a theoretical basis to understand individual action(s) within wider systems of activity making it highly relevant to the practice of educational psychology (Leadbetter, 2005). My experiences of using an AI informed methodology supports Bushe’s position that before embarking on an AI consultation cycle, it would be imperative to conduct an initial analysis that considers how the school context might support or resist an AI methodology. I do not believe that AI is a panacea or should always inform the structure of consultations with children and young people. Carrying out a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) would allow an EP to consider how such an intervention may be viewed.

Information regarding how children and young people’s difficulties in school are perceived would also be helpful, especially with regard to the SMD. If difficulties viewed from a ‘within child’ paradigm, without a consideration of how the system can change, the impact and magnitude of the change identified may be limited. If
the school fully embraces notions of adapting and modifying the educational environment to support children and young people, change may be more deeply rooted and profound. The nature and magnitude of change further elaborated upon later in this chapter.

I have discussed earlier how I felt that the context in which this project was conducted was challenging. The school serves an area of high levels of socio economic deprivation; the school has been deemed to be in special measures by OFSTED and due to a falling school role, its future remains deeply uncertain, which has had a deleterious effect on staff morale. However, the LM is fully committed to working in a supportive and emancipatory way with the students. Congruence with my professional philosophy of working alongside children and young people and my effective working relationship with him and with other members of the SMT gave me confidence that an experimental AI project would be possible in this context.

5.1.3 Heliotropic Principle

During the consultations the students were also able to reflect on positive changes that were current throughout the project. This relates to and provides some tentative support for the heliotropic principle (Cooperrider, 1990) which states that social systems evolve towards the most positive images and narratives that are constructed about them therefore creating the climate for positive affirmation is a key element in facilitating positive change. Three students (JM, LR and PG) reported that they had received no detentions during the life of the project, JB identified one occasion he had been placed on detention, the reason for this detention was a transgression of the uniform rules, something that he
had identified in his ideal self that he was choosing not to conform with so that he could identify more easily with a particular social group in school.

LR achieved selection for the football team and JC was rewarded by being selected to attend a reward residential for student who demonstrated 100% attendance and improved behaviour – all indications that the students were making changes towards the positive images they had projected throughout the consultations. The structure of the project did not include a longitudinal element and therefore it has not been possible to collect data to comment on the sustainability of the changes the students made however, incidental and anecdotal information suggests that they have avoided any significant deterioration at school as only one of the students has been referred for further EP support and this was due to concerns regarding MC’s academic progress.

5.2 Can the AI consultation framework support students to construct ideas about the best they can be in school and the best the school can be? (PRQ2)

5.2.1 The Nature and Magnitude of Change
During the dream consultations the students were asked to engage in an activity where they created an ideal image of themselves at school. Through analysis of the constructions that embodied their ideal persona, the students were asked to comment on how much like their ideal self they already were and what changes they would like to make that would help them realise this ideal image. It was from these conversations that each student’s provocative propositions where developed.
When analysing the changes that the provocative propositions sought to instigate, a clear contrast became apparent; from five of the students the provocative propositions could be construed as being congruent with the prevailing school system. They concentrated on improving academic skills and social behaviour. From one perspective they can be considered less radical and challenging to the school (or wider system). According to Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2003) provocative propositions are considered to be;

‘a statement which bridges the best of “what is” and “what might be”. It is provocative to the extent that it stretches the realm of the status quo, challenges common assumptions and routines, and helps suggest desired possibilities for the organization and its people. At the same time, it is grounded in what has worked in the past’ (p. 148)

From this position the propositions that detailed improvements in academic and social behaviour cannot be considered challenging to the processes and procedures dictated by the adults in the school. They may therefore be considered to represent first order change, which is defined by Water, Marzano and McNulty (2003) as change that fits within pre-existing codes, practices;

‘The implications of the change for individuals, organizations, and institutions determines the magnitude or order of change. On both individual and collective levels, changes that are consistent with existing values and norms, create advantages for individuals or stakeholder groups with similar interests, can be implemented with existing knowledge and resources, and where agreement exists on what changes are needed and on how the changes should be implemented can be considered first order. (p.8)
By comparison second order change is determined as change that has a more profound effect on the system and in terms of changes in educational contexts, according to Fouts (2003), second order change can be stubbornly elusive;

‘There is evidence that one of the reasons schools remain unchanged is that the reforms or changes have been superficial in nature and/or arbitrary in their adoption. Teachers and schools often went through the motions of adopting the new practices, but the changes were neither deep nor long-lasting. In other words, the outward manifestations of the changes were present, but the ideas or philosophy behind the changes were either not understood, misunderstood, or rejected. Consequently, any substantive change in the classroom experience or school culture failed to take root. The illusion of change is created through a variety of activities, but the qualitative experience for students in the classroom remains unchanged when the ideas driving daily practice remain unchanged’.(p.12)

However if these propositions are compared and contrasted with the information provided by the teaching staff on the LM referral forms, the data can be considered to be both individually transformative and generative. For example in JC’s Power Point presentation he stated that being prepared was important to him and this related to changing the perception teachers may have about him (see Box 11).

Box 11. JC’s Provocative Propositions
This exemplifies both transformational and generative data; JC sees himself differently, as a student that is prepared for work in class (transformational) and this alters the way his teachers perceive him, as someone that cares about his education (generative). From this position the change embodied in this seemingly prosaic statement becomes instantly more powerful.

Despite the generative and transformational quality that can be attached to the student’s propositions, it would be untenable to suggest they represent second order change. The structure and duration of the project also did not seek to evaluate the longevity of the changes. Further work on using AI as a framework for consultation may seek to consider both the magnitude and nature of the changes the individuals seek to realise. Future work in this direction would also have to consider the ‘buy in’ from the school as a system.

Working in an ‘oasis of appreciation’, whereby the wider system continues without knowledge or understanding of the AI process will continue to stymie
any hope of making more profound second order changes. It is also unlikely that AI consultation projects that do not attempt to engage the system more broadly by including teachers and SMT in the process, will have the power to alter, modify or instigate systemic improvements. From a SMD perspective, power relations within the system or organisation remains unchallenged, and therefore the onus of change remains within the individual. This can give the impression that it is only the individual that requires ‘fixing’, limiting the possibilities for wider and more profound changes throughout the system. This discussion point and limitation of the study is elaborated upon further in this section when considered overarching methodological issues.

5.2.2 Identifying Positive Change and the Change Cycle

Ability to anticipate positive change came at different points in the AI cycle for the students. In some cases (for JC and LR) the desire to change certain elements of their educational experiences came within the first (discover) consultation, for others such as JB possible changes were identified across the third and fourth (design and deliver) phases. Willingness for an individual to engage with change can be understood by using the Transtheoretical Model of Change (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998) which constructs change as a process and not a single event and describes five stages of the change cycle; Pre-contemplation (not acknowledging there is a problem that requires change), Contemplation (acknowledging a problem but not how to action change), Preparation (getting ready to make a change), Action (making the change) and Maintenance (maintaining the changed behaviour). This framework for change provides an explanation as to why some of the students were more disposed and ready to engage in identifying positive change for their educational futures in school.
As all the students involved in this project were able to identify changes for the future, the issue of how to work with students who may be stuck in a pre-contemplative stage did not arise, but approaches such as Motivational Interviewing (McNamara, 1998) have been used to support children and young people to make changes. Such approaches could be seen a complementary and supportive of AI informed consultative work with children and young people.

5.3 Can the AI consultation framework facilitate students to construct ideas about how the LM can support them to make changes they identified as important? (CRQ)

The four of the six students were able to identify areas in which the LM could offer specific support related to the changes they had identified. Table 6. below sets out the type of support agreed;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocative Propositions</th>
<th>LM support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JB: To attend film club</td>
<td>Provide JB with information where and when film club is on and explore the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possibility of organising a small film project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC: Being prepared for work</td>
<td>Keeping JC’s locker key in LM office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JM: Being prepared, completing</td>
<td>LM to provide homework journal and support to remember when homework in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homework</td>
<td>due to be handed in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG: Listening is Science</td>
<td>To organise specific positive report card and Bromcom target with teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Learning Mentor Strategies that Supported Provocative Propositions

Apart from the specific strategies related directly to the students’ provocative propositions, there were a number of other ways the students felt that support from the LM was helpful to them. MC identified that having LM sessions generally helped him cope better with the demands of the school day. He enjoyed the time out of the classroom, maintaining that it helped him relax and manage his stress levels better.

The LM was also a key link to the teaching staff and when JC had identified that he wanted to move sets in English, it was the LM that was able to discuss this with the head of English. This resulted in JC being given extra literacy work to help improve his skills which the LM took responsibility for delivering.

It is not possible to ascertain whether or not this strategies would have been qualitatively different if they had not come as a result of a series of AI consultations but the importance again lies in the fact that they were determined by and for the student’s themselves, rather than being imposed upon them by someone else.
5.4 Overarching Methodological Issues – Evaluating the Process

5.4.1 Fluidity and flexibility of the Research Process

AI literature presents the 4D cycle as both iterative and flexible (Reed, 2007), however it is usually represented as being unidirectional. Analysis of the data gathered from the consultations supports the notion that the students moved across phases in a multi-directional fashion. This ability to move between drawing on past successful experiences and dreaming /anticipating future successes and changes has led me to reconceptualise the AI cycle with regards to individual consultations, to incorporate this multi directional process (see Figure 8.) and represents my unique contribution to knowledge by building on previous AI concepts of the process.

![Figure 8. The AI Multi-Directional Cycle](image-url)
The fluidity and non-prescriptive nature of AI as a methodology can be viewed as a strength that enabled the students to visit and revisit the stages as their narratives developed, creating a sense of virtuous concentricity, with the affirmative subject of self-improvement at school providing the fulcrum from which the process was instigated.

The co-construction element of the project required that each subsequent consultation began with recapping and checking which fostered the fluidity and flexibility within the process. Each new consultation began with questions related to topics discussed in previous consultations, inviting the students to reflect on the issues they had discussed to see if they were still relevant, important or if they required refining, altering or abandoning. This approach recognises the temporal and fluid nature of sense making and therefore is congruent with the social constructionist paradigm, further strengthening the internal validity and coherence of the project.

This intentional rechecking and reframing also recognises the importance of the ‘here and now’ especially when conducting research as intervention, in AI terms the principle of simultaneity. As Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) suggest ‘Inquiry and change are not separate moments. Inquiry is intervention’ (p.50). By consistently checking that issues that were discussed the previous week remain relevant, it was possible to demonstrate that intervention changes situations throughout the entire process.

Having the opportunity to build these co-constructed research relationships and conversations over time directly with the students resonates directly with ideas
explored throughout the literature review. It brings to mind the inverted pyramid that was used to structure the literature review process in chapter two, reproduced and revised in Figure 9. In the literature review chapter, at the tip of the pyramid I explored the role of the EP and how AI may fit with the practical and professional contingencies of the role. Through using AI and by creating this opportunity to work over a number of weeks with the students, as an EP I was able to ensure a plan-do-review-improve cycle to my practice. By doing this I can demonstrate the utility that AI informed consultations can offer EPs in their practice.

AI informed consultations connect explicitly to experiential theories of learning (Kolb, 1984). At an individual level, the consultations were structured in such a way as to communicate to the students that they have both agency and power to make positive changes at school that they feel will be beneficial to them. By creating a climate whereby their opinions, views and ‘knowledge’ about their own experiences were privileged within the consultations, the students were encouraged to draw on their reflections as levers for change. This connects at both a methodological and epistemological level with the literature.

Where the weaknesses lie with regards to how this project reconnects with the literature are to be found in relation to the challenge this project presented to the larger system – the school. SMD theories presented in the literature review, challenged researchers, theorists and practitioners to work in ways that can enable groups of people that may be subordinate to challenge systems that oppress or disempower. This small and exploratory project was not fully able to challenge the broader system in a direct manner (details of which have been previously discussed and are also discussed further in this chapter).
5.4.2 Exclusion of Teaching Staff from the Research Process

The issue of change alluded to earlier in this chapter suggested that the data from the provocative propositions were more likely to support the status quo within the school. It is also possible to concede that the structure of the project mitigated against challenging any of the school processes in a more profound manner, again limiting the emancipatory potential of the project. By not including any of the teaching staff directly in the data collection phases, it was not possible to harvest a diverse collection of narratives. By only collecting the stories from the students, their transformative and generative qualities remained contained within the research relationship. Only on one occasion during the dissemination process when the Assistant Head teacher and the Head of Year attended the students’ feedback presentations to their families, did teaching staff have the opportunity to listen directly to the students’ narratives. As a result of this meeting however, the Assistant Head teacher did request a further meeting with the students to discuss their ideas about invigorating the school reward system. The Assistant Head acknowledged that these students were unlikely to engage or
have their voices heard from the usual vehicles that facilitate student participation such as the student council, but he was keen to get them involved and included. The meeting was subsequently convened and a useful and positive set of suggestions were put forward. Anecdotally, the school has designed a new house system to reward attendance, achievement and behaviour based on some of the successful athletes that were in the Paralympic games. There is no direct evidence to suggest this came about as a result of the AI project, but it did enable students to voice their perspective on how the previous subsystem had become inconsistently used.

In defence of the project as it was experimental in design and a novel way of implementing AI to include more participants may have posed a too greater risk. Learning through doing and building experience of implementing such AI in this way, I would now feel more confident to propose the implementation of the framework in a more inclusive and far reaching manner, attempting to include more participants from within a school.

5.5 Summary of Discussion
This section has examined in detail the data relating to the specific research questions employed to guide and structure this research. The discussion of the student narratives demonstrated examples of how an AI framework for consultation enabled the students to locate positive and successful experiences at school, create alternative narratives that embodied transformative and generative qualities and led students to construct ideas about how they perceived themselves as the ‘best they could be’ at school.
By employing the methodology in this experimental and exploratory way issues relating to inclusivity, reflexivity, power and control of the process, were explored and examined. In the final chapter I will consider the limitations of the project, implications this project may have on future practice both from a personal perspective and how it may be communicated to inform others in the profession more broadly.
6. SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis represents a challenge to assess the possibilities an AI informed methodology affords EPs in their consultation work with young people in schools. From the outset a clear and explicit connection has been drawn between the philosophical and theoretical origins of this endeavour (from the social model of disability and social constructionism) and the professional realities of the role of the EP. This final chapter will discuss and summarise the research findings and by doing this address the limitations of the project and consider future implications both from a personal and professional perspective.

6.1 Project Summary

The project sought to establish whether AI, a methodology formally synonymous with organisational development, could be used in a unique manner to facilitate EP consultation work with young people in school. Invariably when children and young people are referred to EPs they are generally perceived by others (usually teachers) to be experiencing some challenges or difficulties engaging positively in the learning opportunities available to them at school. The overarching objective was to examine how an AI methodology could be used to engage young people and support them in identifying and making changes in school. This process was instigated by examining past and present successes in order build a narrative from which the process of change could be developed, so in AI terms the students could ‘be the best they could be’ in school. This adaptation and application of an AIC framework represented a unique participatory research contribution.
From the literature search that was conducted to inform this project I was not able to locate any examples of AI being used in this specific manner. The emancipatory objective of this project was also explicit from the start; by using AI principles and theoretical drivers to inform, shape and guide consultations, generative and transformational data uncovered, and privileged previously unheard or subordinate narratives.

My interpretations of the data suggest that AI can be a useful framework from which to operate. By fostering and engendering ideas that underpin knowledge creation from a social constructionist perspective it was possible to develop alternative student narratives that challenged authority perspectives about the students’ behaviour. This was helpful in providing the LM with alternative explanations for why students’ might be engaging in particular behaviours. By working with the LM in this way, he was in turn able to work with the students from a better informed position, which positively impacted the type of support he was able to provide for them.

6.2 Process Outcomes

6.2.1 AI multi directional cycle

From the process outcomes of the study, the AI structure was shown to be a useful framework from which it was possible to guide and co-construct an alternative narrative working from a strength based and emancipatory starting position. Examining this process, the AI cycle was shown to be multi-directional and flexible, with students’ narratives moving freely between the 4D stages of AI (Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver). This flexibility and fluidity represents a generative conclusion of the thesis and a unique contribution to AI development;
building on the theory of AI discussed previously in the literature review, which represented the process as iterative but uni-directional.

6.2.2 AI utility and the role of the EP

The principles of co-construction and the related techniques employed to achieve this (recapping, re-checking, re-framing and re-phrasing), facilitated this fluidity, enabling and encouraging the students to return and build upon issues and constructs discussed in previous consultations. These consultation skills are central to the role of the EP and therefore it is possible to see theoretical and practical congruence, consistency, and utility between AI theory, AIC practice and the role of the EP. Creating opportunities for EPs and students to work together in an appreciative manner by reflecting on what is working and identifying what changes the students would like to make to improve their own educational experience, fits with ideas about how central experience is to learning. The process itself becomes instructional by showing at first-hand how experiences are fundamental to developing not only academic skills, but also social, behavioural and personal skills, there is an inherent potential to foster a more holistic approach to students’ experiences of school.

6.3 Content Outcomes

6.3.1 Student Engagement

The project was structured in such a way as to encourage and harness the participation of the students in voicing what type of support they would find helpful from the LM, so that they were able to achieve positive changes at school. This process involved making clear that the starting point of the joint investigation between myself and the student was to explore times that they felt
they had already been successful, happy and affirmed at points in their educational career to date. The explicit anticipation that at some stage each of the students involved would be able to identify such times represents a fundamental element of the methodology, a cornerstone of AI exploration. There were occasions where this felt a risky strategy; at times and for some of the students this was more difficult. In the development of themes emanating from the data these occurrences were described as resistance. During these periods of resistance I was aware of my own anxiety. I felt anxious about placing them in a conversational situation which could have caused them discomfort or worse compounded some of their negative feelings towards school, as they struggled to provide examples of the situations I was trying to uncover.

However by reflecting on my research experiences and having the opportunity to re-engage with the body of AI literature reviewed at the beginning of this project, I have developed my view that AI is less about concentrating on the ‘positive’ at the exclusion of other valid strands to an individual’s narrative, and more about creating shared opportunities to explore and construct narrative from the student’s perspective. Through the process of co-constructing the students’ narratives it became possible to build a foundation from which the students anticipated different and more positive futures for themselves in school and beyond. Reflections on the process therefore highlighted to me the importance of the other AI principles (Constructionist, Simultaneous, Anticipatory and Poetic), which perhaps have lived too long in the shadow of the positive. The project data supports the notion that AI can embrace, harness and utilise shadow.
AI exponents should not view ‘shadow’ as counter to the process, but an integral element that allows participants freedom of expression without censor or censure. With this explicitly inclusive approach, the AI process (including shadow) mitigates against criticisms that it is a ‘pollyanna’ approach and therefore weak and unable to grasp and grapple with serious deficiencies in a system or organisation.

When working with individuals, the AI structure proved to be inclusive of each of the students’ views and perspectives, even if they were counter to that of the prevailing system. My initial concerns and anxieties about uncovering what I initially perceived to be ‘negative’ narrative, that may fall outside of the AI paradigm, was replaced by this new understanding that such information was vital and valuable to including and privileging the student narrative, further supporting the literature on AI as a shadow process (Fitzgerald et al. 2010).

Despite the perceived risk involved in structuring the AI consultations in the way described, and some of the initial resistance encountered to the questions, each of the students were able to engage fully in the process. Their engagement can be evaluated at some level by their willingness to attend the sessions and complete the process. They were made aware that their involvement was voluntary and they could have withdrawn from the process at any time. However with regard to how student and adult relationships in schools are constructed, it may have been unlikely (but not unheard of) for students to decline to be involved.
The student’s ability to actively participate in all of the research activities further supports the notion that this AIC structure engendered a level of inclusivity which attempted to privilege their accounts and their perspectives in order to elucidate their narratives and generate possible alternative accounts of their experiences at school. When analysed, these differing perspectives encompassed examples of both generative and transformative data.

6.3.2 Flexibility
The stages of the project were carefully designed and structured around the most commonly recognised 4D cycle; each phase had a particular focus and set of related activities. This level of prescription however, did not limit opportunities to be flexible. Students as they embarked on the process were quite obviously at different stages of contemplating change; some had already considered the changes they wanted to make, others were clearly pre-contemplative, not considering that changes were required at all. As discussed previously, the process was sufficiently flexible to create the space for the students to oscillate between the stages. Having the relative luxury of being able to conduct the consultations over a period of 5 weeks (including the student workshop), gave the process time and a certain level of freedom to develop. The opportunity to carry out this type of work over time may not generally be afforded EPs in their day to day practice as time allocated to schools is becoming an extremely limited resource due to significant cuts in public spending. This issue is examined in the section related to limitations.

6.3.3 Applicability
Notwithstanding the advantages an AI approach may offer, there are definite times where it may not either be possible or desirable to implement such an
intervention. For this reason I am not advocating AI as the ‘go to’ approach whenever EPs consult with young people, irrespective of the wider context. As in all situations EPs find themselves in when they are seeking solutions, careful consideration is required to evaluate whether AI would be a helpful framework for engagement. In particular, attention should be given to the structures, systems and procedures that already exist within the school or context that would be supportive of the epistemological and philosophical basis of AI. The following sections will explore the limitations of this project and consider further implications for the future.

The requirements of a particular intervention and how AI may be understood by the client or those commissioning the work will also have a significant impact on future practice. This issue relates to discussions EPs may have implicitly or explicitly about the work that they do and the epistemological paradigm from which they develop their practice. EPSs increasingly find themselves in situations where their work is being commissioned directly by schools. Conversations between an individual EP and the school that is commissioning their work will become increasingly important and interesting. Schools that commission greater levels of EP time may seek to utilise it to support and engage in innovative, systemic work which may open up possibilities to engage in ground breaking participatory action research based work. Other school may prefer to rely on the individual assessment model of EP practice, which may limit opportunities to engage in AI work.

New and innovative work does bring with it inherent risks and schools that feel under pressure to improve standards may feel unable to engage in working along the road less travelled. This situation may restrict practice and engagement to
activities considered more traditional and safe such as psychometric cognitive learning assessments that may or may not lead to a full statutory assessment of an individual’s needs. The challenge to develop opportunities for systemic work remains.

6.2 Limitations

6.2.1 Individual work

This project was both experimental and exploratory in design and implementation. By using AI to structure individual consultations with young people the intention was to evaluate the methodology from an epistemological and emancipatory perspective as well as considering the utility such an approach would have for EP practice.

The data and interpretations indicate that the methodology did enable the development of the students’, often providing alternative explanations and analysis of situations and issues from the students’ perspectives. This attempt to ‘lift’ their accounts and see them as reasonable ‘sense making’ narratives, demonstrated the emancipatory value of the venture. Presenting an alternative narrative however does not necessarily precipitate any deeper changes to the system or organisation and this is where the limitations of this application reside.

The students’ all at times demonstrated a willingness and openness to consider personal change, recognising positively that they had individual agency and abilities to make changes. This challenge however, did not extend to the staff who work in the school, although many issues were brought up regarding processes and procedures as well as class teacher qualities and classroom craft.
The power of this project or indeed future ventures may rest with the ability of those involved to engage more expansively within a school. In this way it may become incumbent upon the EP to develop such AI opportunities with a school that is open to examining its practice. Future applications of AICs may then be able to engender deeper and more profound changes whilst at the same time insuring quality participation of children and young people.

6.2.2 Data Analysis

The thematic data analysis and interpretation of the students’ transcriptions is not presented as definitive accounts of the students’ experiences and their perspective. This project has been explicitly rooted within the social constructionist paradigm and therefore it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the interpretation process. As detailed in previous sections I have explained that the initial data analysis and co-construction processes were built in contemporaneously during the consultations. However, due to the constraints of the research, namely working as a single researcher within a specific predetermined university timeline, I was not able to build in a second layer of member checking directly with the students regarding the interpretations I made of their full transcriptions. This I recognise limits the interpretations to my understanding of the students’ words and what they mean.

I have my own personal biases, expectations and ‘knowledges’ about what it may mean to go to the school where the project was based. I recognise that my understandings are always going to be partial and incomplete. Secondary analysis and further member checking would have been an interesting development to the data analysis process and in future AI ventures of this kind may consider how
such a process may be undertaken to enhance and strengthen the robustness and rigor of sense making.

6.2.3 Evaluating the impact of change

It fell outside of the specified remit of this project to fully evaluate the nature of the changes identified by the students. Given the time that was available to complete the data collection stage, as well as constraints placed upon me with regards to how much of the school’s allocated EP time could be directed to implement the project it was not possible to include a longitudinal element to the design. Having an agreed evaluation following the completion of the project would have been interesting and intriguing. Evaluation data may also have supported the ideas of building upon the work that was been completed and keeping the conversation going with SMT as to ways in which such a methodology could be employed to support other changes within the school.

I was able to acquire anecdotal information regarding the progress of the students throughout the year; only one of the students has been referred to the EPS for a further individual assessment, which indicates that the students are making sufficient progress and are now not at risk of further exclusions. Students who are considered to be at risk of permanent exclusions are required by the LA to have a Pastoral Support Plan, which is supported by the involvement of the school’s EP. The student who was referred is now being considered for an alternative curriculum due to his level of learning needs.

Other additional anecdotal evidence of changes at school have included the launch at the beginning of the academic year 2012-13 of a revised reward
scheme, which includes a new house system. Points are rewarded for attendance, good behaviour and progress in learning. I am not suggesting that there is a direct causal link with the project and the new system, but conversations with members of the SMT were held with the students following the project, whereby their views and ideas were listened to and acknowledged.

6.2.4 Resource Implications

Conducting this project as part of my Doctoral studies afforded me an increased amount of time to carry out the work. Some of the time directed to complete this intervention did not come out of the school’s allocated EP time and therefore could have been seen as a ‘bonus’ by the school. It is not possible to ascertain where or not they would have agreed to the project if all the time used was from the school allocation.

In the current climate of scarce public resources and significant cuts to public services, directing a prolonged amount of time for such an intervention may be considered by some to be a luxury that cannot be justified. Issues related to how resources are best deployed can be tricky and are often intractable. Tough decisions have to be made and priorities agreed through consensus between professionals. EPs are ideally positioned to guide and advise schools on how best to tackle the issues that they face and it is through these ongoing conversations that solutions are arrived upon. In a situation where a school only has access to 12 hours of LA\(^8\) EP time a term (something that now standard practice in the LA

\[\text{__________________________}\]

\(^8\) This is the current standard LA allocation. Schools have the opportunity to purchase additional time from the Traded EP offer.
that I work for) it seems unlikely that it would be spent on AICs. This therefore represents a further limitation of the project.

6.3. Future Possibilities

6.3.1 Development of consultation framework: Individual and Systemic approaches

The previous sections in this chapter I have alluded to how future projects that use AI as a methodology may be used in the future. To summarise, AI informed consultations are new and innovative both in approach and implementation. Following this initial study it would be helpful and useful to replicate other cycles of consultation with students, to gather more data on how the methodology can be used to support the work of EPs in schools. Extending work with students across the age ranges in secondary would be interesting as well as considering how such an approach could be used to con-construct narratives with younger primary aged pupils.

It is arguable that this thesis has presented AICs initially as an individual micro intervention, which attempted to impact the broader system through the work with the LM. The limitations of this approach have been discussed previously. Future applications may be required to explore what the ideal conditions may be to carry out AICs in this way, in order to maximise the impact of the intervention. When considering the appropriateness of AICs in a school it may be helpful to consider the following;

- How does the school as an organisation view individual differences and difficulties?
Does the school ethos have a ‘within child’ approach to differences in learning and behaviour?

Are there any pre-existing school processes or procedures that fit philosophically with an AI approach?

Are there any key staff that would support an AI approach?

Would there be the possibility of providing some training to staff on how AI may be used to support effective practice in the school?

Apart from considering how AICs may be applied in the future within schools, AI as a methodology, is developing a significant body work with groups and organisations as a research methodology to develop and improve practice. Further possibilities may lie in how it can be employed within schools not just at an individual level but also more broadly across the system either at a group (class) level, whole school level or LA service level. Recent examples of EPs using AI to develop EPS practice have included two Doctoral studies; Oakes (2010) explored EP practice in the early years and Sullivan (2011) used AI to evaluate locality working, indicating that EPs are beginning to consider how AI may support service development ventures.

6.4 Conclusions

The conclusions it is possible to draw from this thesis are found in returning to the key research objectives and related questions. The purpose of this section is to condense and represent these findings. The overall process objective was to evaluate AI as a methodological framework for promoting the participation and the perspectives of young people. Underpinning this objective were the two process research questions;
Is the AI consultation framework useful in helping students locate successful/positive times in their educational experiences?

Can the AI consultation support students to construct ideas about the best they can be in school and the best the school can be?

The narratives were developed via a series of consultations based on the 4 stages of an AI study (Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver); by uncovering previously successful experiences at school the students were able to consider changes they wanted to make in school. The AIC cycle demonstrated that it is both a flexible and fluid approach to engaging in consultation work with students in school.

Students were able to locate positive and successful times in their educational experiences. These experiences were diverse including academic, social, extra-curricular and behavioural. They were able to discuss times when they had felt successful and positive at school (both in the past and present) and by constructing these narratives they were able to consider changes they wanted to make to improve their experiences at school.

The data derived from the AIC cycle indicated that students’ narratives moved between the stages of the cycle, indicating that rather than being a unidirectional process, AICs were likely to encourage a multi-directional engagement with the process. When and how the students’ identified and recognised the changes they wanted to make also seemed related to the stages that each of the individuals were in terms of understand and appreciating the benefits of change, relating the process to other change theories (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998). Some of the student’s started the process with some clearly formed ideas about the changes they wanted to make, whereas others took more time to arrive at a place where
positive change was considered beneficial. All of them were able to develop provocative propositions that encapsulated the changes they had identified.

The overall content objective was to evaluate the involvement and participation of the young people in the AI project and the impact this had on the support offered through the LMP. The research question that underpinned this objective was as follows;

- Can the AI consultation framework facilitate students to construct ideas about how the LM can support them to make changes they identified as important?

The information constructed throughout these consultations was shared with the school LM on a weekly basis. Key strategies and targets were developed by the students and supported through the engagement of the LM. Other development issues were raised during the student workshop, where the students considered changes that the school could make to improve and support them in ways in which they identified as being helpful.

AI is developing as a research methodology, practitioners from across the social sciences and within other health related professions continue to consider how it may support research that is derived from a social constructionist paradigm. As I have acknowledged previously, AI is not a ‘go to’ approach, irrespective of context. It requires careful consideration as to when and where it may be appropriate to employ. With its challenging epistemological basis and emancipatory drive, AI as a methodology is also sufficiently flexible and adaptable to support the varied and diverse work of EPs. By using AI to structure consultations EPs can be positively engaged in a process that encourages the
students to participate, reflect and understand how their past successes can be drawn upon in order to anticipate future change and progress. At a systemic organisational level AI may offer future possibilities to professionals engaged in supporting schools and larger organisations to develop and improve educational practice.

From a personal position, I feel my practice has been enhanced greatly by my experiences in reading about AI and conducting this study. It has enabled me to explore opportunities to engage in praxis-orientated work that seeks to improve the educational experiences of those I work directly with. This grounding will inform my thoughts and ideas about ways in which I may be able to continue to refine and develop AICs in the future.
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APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROJECT

You and your child have consented to participate in the School partnership Programme, as part of the project your child also has the opportunity to be involved in a related project to find ways in which they can become more involved in making decision about what support they would find most helpful. This student project is the final part of my Doctorate Degree in Educational Psychology.

It is called the Appreciative Inquiry Project – this means we will be looking at things that have worked or been positive in the past to help make positive decisions for the future.

**What will it involve?**

It will involve working with myself (the Educational Psychologist for the Centre for Learning). The work will take place at school and will involve me meeting with your child four times throughout the School Partnership Programme, each meeting will last about 45 mins. Each meeting will be audio recorded to check that the information is accurate. Your child will get a copy of the recording so that they can check that the information we discuss is accurate.

**What is the aim?**

The project is designed to explore what your child feels will be positive for them in the future and information created in these meetings will help the other professional involved understand the situation from your child’s perspective.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

A report will be written up and assessed at the University of Manchester, but your child’s name will not be used and all other personal information or direct quotes will be anonymised.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to and your child to decide whether or not you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

**Further Information and Contact Details**

I will be happy to answer any additional questions you may have about this project. You can contact me, Karen Harris by telephone on 443 5771.
APPENDIX 2 Student Information Sheet

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROJECT

Dear Student
You are going to be working on the Learning Mentor Programme, you also have the chance to be involved in another project to find ways to involve you in making decisions about what happens in the future to support you at school. This project is the final part of my Doctorate Degree in Educational Psychology. It is called the Appreciative Inquiry Project – this means we will be looking at things that have worked or been positive in the past to help make decisions for the future.

What will it involve?
It will involve working with myself (the Educational Psychologist for the Centre for Learning). The work will take place at school and will involve meeting you four times throughout the Learning Mentor Programme, each meeting will last about 45 mins. Each meeting will be audio recorded to check that the information is accurate. You will get your own copy of the recording so that you can check that the information we discuss is accurate.

What is the aim?
The project is designed to explore what you feel will be positive for you in the future and information discussed in these meetings will help the other professional involved understand your situation.

How is confidentiality maintained?
A report will be written up and assessed at the University of Manchester, but your name will not be used and all other personal information or direct quotes will be anonymised.
What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you whether or not you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to stop at anytime without giving a reason.

Further Information and Contact Details

I will be happy to answer any additional questions you may have about this project. You can contact me, Karen Harris by telephone on 443 5771.
APPENDIX 3 CONSENT FORM

Appreciative Inquiry project

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio/video-recorded

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other professionals working on the School Partnership Programme

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant ___________________________ Date ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

Name of person taking consent ___________________________ Date ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

Please Initial Box

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APPENDIX 4 Teacher Information Sheet

Dear Colleagues,
My name is Karen Harris and I work as an Educational Psychologist in the Central Area Support Team (CAST). I am currently in my final year of my Doctorate and I have developed a project for my thesis. The project is designed on an Appreciative Inquiry Methodology and seeks to promote the participation of students referred to the LM programme.

The main intervention model that has come to be associated with Appreciative Inquiry is the 4-D cycle of intervention. The cycle begins with discovery, (appreciating what is), moving on to the dream stage (imagining what could be), which is followed by design (determining what should be) and then destiny (creating what will be).

The Appreciative Inquiry Project will seek to adopt the 4D cycle;

**Appreciative Inquiry Consultation 1 (AIC1) - Discovery Phase**
This initial phase will involve consulting with each individual young person in order to discover the best of what has happened in the past, and what is currently working well. Generative questions and a technique base on solution-focused approaches will be used with the children to identify times, places or events when they have felt successful. It is anticipated that the conversations in each of the consultations will generative new constructions or amplify micro narratives that have previously been ignored or subjugated. Central to this project is the view that each of the children/young people represent co-researchers; constructors of their own narratives. My role is also as a co-researcher and facilitator to enable these personal narratives to promote participation of the children/young people throughout the course of the LMP.

**AIC 2 - Dream Phase**
In this phase, further consultations will be held with each of the children/young people to discuss ideas around “what might be”. Using the positives you identified in the Discovery phase, and employing techniques such as the Personal Construct Psychology technique the Idea Self and reinforce them to build real strengths. This information will be feedback to professionals working with each of the students as part of the intervention stage.

**AIC 3 - Design Phase**
Building on the Dream, this phase looks at the practicalities needed to support the vision. The development of ‘provocative statements’ shaped by the previous consultations will be used to continue to inform the LM project. On-going and contemporaneous methods of data collection will be used to ascertain how well the interventions are going from the perspective of the young person, uncover any barriers that may exist or identify what support they feel needs to continue.

**AIC4 – Deliver Phase**
The final AIC will be used to take a step back and look at what is good and is currently working
well. This positive perspective may continue to elicit a whole new set of positive solutions that have not been previously considered. The Deliver phase of the cycle is not so much an end but a place to start to re-evaluate and continue the process. The final consultation will also focus on gaining the perspective of the child/young person about the value of working in an Appreciative Inquiry way.

I am very excited about working in this way with the young people believe that it will provide a useful opportunity to explore ways in which we can increase young people’s participation in decision making in the future.

I would be happy to discuss any questions you may have – you can contact me on *******

Yours sincerely,

Karen Harris
APPENDIX 5 – The 4D cycle: Graphic Information Sheet for Students

1. Discover
2. Dream
3. Design
4. Deliver
APPENDIX 6 - TRANSCRIPTION

JB AIC2

KH So what we are going to do this week is to discover times at school when things have gone really well or that have been really positive and we are going to make a powerpoint presentation about those times. So I have some questions that are going to help us think about those times…the first question is can you tell me about a time you felt happy at school?

JB No

KH I want you to think about time when you were at school and you felt things were going really well

JB I feel the same most of the time, no better, no different.

KH I know that it might be a hard question...can you remember any time that you enjoyed being at school?

JB Not really, wouldn't come if I didn't have to...it's boring.

KH Ok. Lets think about the different schools you have been to. Was there any difference between going to the D and going to B?

JB No there were both the same...but B was smaller

KH Ok, lets think about going to B…so it was a smaller primary. Did you prefer going to a smaller school?

JB A little bit...yeah. It only had one class in each year and D’s have two classes.

KH So would that have been better?

JB Well you get to know people better…you don’t forget the names of people when you are having a conversation with them

KH Is it important to you to be familiar with people and get to know them?

JB Yeah its helped to make friends.

KH Did you make friends when you moved to B?

JB Yeah. They come to this school but I don’t hang around much with them now.

KH So have you made new friends coming to this school?
JB: Yeah...I just met other people from my classes

KH: So do you think meeting new people has been a good thing? To make more friends at school...so in Year 7 that has been a positive thing?

JB: Yeah

KH: If you had to choose one year as your favourite year in school which one would you choose?

JB: Don’t know really...(pause) if I had to choose probably reception

KH: Wow...that’s a long time ago...can you remember that far back?

JB: No, not really but you didn’t have to do much work then, so you didn’t have to remember much

KH: So is it the work that puts you off school?

JB: Yeah

KH: What is it about work that you don’t like very much?

JB: The way you always have to do things instead of ‘sitting off’

KH: Oh...ok so you prefer to sit off

JB: Yeah

KH: Ok...So what benefit to do feel you get sitting off?

JB: Well you don’t have to do anything?

KH: So why would that be a benefit to you?

JB: Well you can have a laugh with your mates, you can have fun instead of doing boring work, you have a laugh with your mates...

KH: So the sitting off is important to you so because its a chance to have a laugh?

JB: Yeah as long as you dont get into loads of stress with the teacher.

KH: Are there other times you have a laugh with your mates?

JB: er...Yeah course, at break and lunch ans stuff but in lessons as well, sometimes cos it's boring unless you can have a laugh in lessons,

KH: So having a laugh in lessons is important to you. Are there any other things that are important in lessons? Activities that you do in any of your lessons that you enjoy?

JB: Yeah practicals in DT but I haven't been doing my homework so I didn’t get to do last weeks...you have to do your homework to do the practicals. I was supposed to finish it off last week...I might finish it off at break

KH: where can you go to do that
JB  Anywhere really
KH  Just find a quiet place?
JB  Yeah
KH  So if you finish it off you will be able to do that practical?
JB  Yeah all I have to do is like sketch something…
KH  Ok so choosing to finish your homework at break would be positive so that you could do the practical activity?
JB  Yeah
KH  So let’s recap…you said that your favourite activities in school would be practical activities like DT?
JB  Yeah
JB  PE and Music is alright and erm...Science
KH  When I think about the lessons you have mentioned I think that they may all have very practical parts of them…yeah? Things you can do? So when you say you don’t like doing anything in your lessons do you mean certain things?
JB  Yeah like reading and writing or drawing
KH  So what about specifically in DT…
JB  We are making boxes
KH  What about in PE?
JB  Footie and table tennis
KH  Do you prefer team sports or playing on your own?
JB  Either really
KH  So although you said that you don’t like to do anything in your lessons we have **discovered** that actually you do enjoy some things…
JB  Yeah suppose…not boring things
KH  You like to do things that are more active
JB  Yeah I like to do fun things…
KH  And fun things for you means to do things that are more active?
JB  Yeah
KH  Ok great…what about in music?
I enjoy playing keyboards

So I’m getting the feeling that you like to be more active…not passive? Do you know what passive means?

No

It means that you like to be actually doing stuff rather than just sitting a listening while the teacher is doing stuff like talking. When you are active and doing things does it affect your behaviour at all?

Sometimes…I’m good when I’m doing things but when I’m not I can mess around…I used to be like that in year 7

So things have changed this year?

I like more of the practical lessons this year I suppose…we get to do different stuff.

OK that’s interesting…so could teachers can help you more in lessons by making them more active for you?

Yeah…it would make lessons not as boring

Ok so how would it help if the lessons were not boring

Well I would want to get on and doing the fun things so like…I wouldn't mess about s'pose

So are you saying that having fun things helps you concentration and your behaviour?

Yeah

Do you have any thoughts about which teachers you feel you get on better with?

Don’t know really…PE teacher is alright I suppose

Are there any others? DT teacher

Don’t like the DT teacher or the music teacher

Mr H is my French and PE…He’s alright. He can be funny and have a laugh with you

Ok…That’s interesting. Can you tell me a bit more about him?

He’s more chilled out if everyone is good in the lesson. He doesn’t make you do everything in the lesson.

Ok how do you know if you’re doing well in his lessons?

He might give bromcom points out sometimes.

OK…bromcom points…tell me what they are.
They are like points you can collect to get rewards

Great…have you had many this year?

Not sure really.

Who collects the points in?

Don’t really know…teachers gave them out more last year than this year.

How about your form teacher…do you have a good relationship with them?

Mr Sterling…he used to be my PE teacher in Yr7…he’s alright like. I don’t really talk to him though. Don’t really talk much to any of the teachers

How about good friends…do you feel you have got good friends to talk to?

I don’t really have a best mate but I hang around with lots of kids.

Ok are there any that you are better friends with

Yeah hang around mostly with JB, DB and AV. I see them in school and outside of school.

Ok can you describe what kind of people they are?

AV is a bit nerdy at times but he is funny as well. He’s a good mate as well, we enjoy watching wrestling together but we like different people.

How about JM? Is he different or similar?

He’s not so nerdy in lessons, he can mess around sometimes.

Ok so if he’s not nerdy…how would you describe him?

More normal.

Right, that’s interesting. So do you see normal as being the other side of nerdy? [draws a line of contrasting poles]

Yeah, JM can be good in some lessons but he also can mess around and have a laugh. Nerdy people just get on with their work all the time.

Ok…I’m interested to know where you feel you would put yourself on the line between being nerdy and normal?

More normal really

You’re normal…ok…can you tell me why you think that

Cos I’m not someone that gets their work done all of the time. I like to chat to my mates and have a laugh sometimes.

OK, So normal for you is someone who doesn’t do their work all the time…have I got that right?
JB Yeah, someone who you can have a laugh with and all that.

KH So are you happy with the group of friends you have?

JB Yeah

KH If you had to score how you feel about your friends out of 10…with 10 being the best what would you give it?

JB ermm I suppose about a seven out of 10

KH Ok…great so that’s quite a positive score?

JB Yeah…I’ve made more friends this year than Yr 7

KH Is there anything else that you like at school that we haven’t talked about?

JB No not really

KH Are there any other teachers you feel help you at school, or any other members of staff?

JB No not really all teachers are the same really…boring

KH Oh…ok, but you said that Mr Healy was different and that he was funny and you got on better with him?

JB Yeah…He’s ok. My teacher in year 5 and 6 was funny…Mr Armstrong…he used to always do funny jokes in the classroom and blame me for things that I didn’t do and that was funny.

KH Ok so you have also had a good relationship with an other teacher in primary school. That’s interesting. It tells me that you prefer to have teachers that can use humour in the classroom.

JB Yeah…it makes you feel better and not like everything is always so serious.

KH That’s really interesting. The last thing I want us to think about I a time when you felt proud or successful at school. It could be in lessons or doing other activities like sports or arts or anything really.

JB Probably in yr 1 when I got stuff right…

KH Can you remember that far back?

JB No not really (laughs)

KH Well let’s try to think of something you can remember because I would like it to be something that you can remember.

JB Can’t really think of anything really…

KH Ok well maybe when we do some more work together we might discover a specific time when you can remember feeling proud.
Before we finish is there anything that you think is important that we haven’t talked about that you feel we need to include?

No I’m sound.

Ok what I would like to do is email this (power point presentation) to Mick so that he can see the important information we have discussed and you can have a look at it with him. Would that be ok with you?

Yeah sound.

And you can add any information that we might have missed. Next week when we meet again we will be talking about the dream phase of the project when we look at what you would like to achieve in the future…is that ok?

Sound

Ok J, thanks for all your thoughts and hard work today. Have a good day and I will see you next week.

Ok see you.
conforming as positive
non conforming as negative construction
non conforming as positive
positive change for the future
success - social
provocative propositions
simultaneity
LM action/solution
from negative to positive
career aspiration
humour in school
success - behaviour
social benefit
generative
success - extra curricular
teacher characteristic
appraisal
teacher relationships
friendship
reistant to positive questions
anticipatory
reward
academic aspiration
uniform
success - academic
social construction of behaviour - generative/transformative
Students' constructions of the best they can be in school
being prepared
locating success
common interests
sitting off
active lessons
personal aspiration
conforming as a negative
conforming - socially detrimental
solution orientated dialogue
barrier to success
familiarity with staff
identify differences across contexts but within phases of education
dialogue as bridge
donated solution
dissemination strategy
unable to locate success
exception finding
personal agency to make changes
recognition
lessons that fit with learning style
transformative
affirmation
conforming as positive <is> Root
  positive change for the future <is cause of> conforming as positive
    academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future
  social benefit <is a result of> conforming as positive
    friendship <is part of> social benefit
  uniform <is associated with> social benefit
  uniform <is part of> conforming as positive

non conforming as negative construction <is> Root

non conforming as positive <is> Root
  conforming as positive <contradicts> non conforming as positive
    positive change for the future <is cause of> conforming as positive
      academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future
    social benefit <is a result of> conforming as positive
      friendship <is part of> social benefit
    uniform <is associated with> social benefit
    uniform <is part of> conforming as positive
    sitting off <is part of> non conforming as positive
    social benefit <is a result of> non conforming as positive
    uniform <is part of> non conforming as positive

positive change for the future <is> Root
  academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future

success - social <is> Root

provocative propositions <is> Root

simultaneity <is> Root
  positive change for the future <is property of> simultaneity
    academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future

LM action/solution <is> Root

from negative to positive <is> Root

career aspiration <is> Root

humour in school <is> Root

success - behaviour <is> Root

social benefit <is> Root
  friendship <is part of> social benefit
  uniform <is associated with> social benefit

generative <is> Root
success - extra curricular <is> Root

teacher characteristic <is> Root

appraisal <is> Root

teacher relationships <is> Root

friendship <is> Root

resistant to positive questions <is> Root
  positive change for the future <contradicts> resistant to positive questions
  academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future

anticipatory <is> Root
  positive change for the future <is property of> anticipatory
  academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future

reward <is> Root

academic aspiration <is> Root

uniform <is> Root

success - academic <is> Root

social construction of behaviour - generative/transformative <is> Root
  conforming as a negative <is property of> social construction of behaviour - generative/transformative
    conforming - socially detrimental <is part of> conforming as a negative
    non-conforming as negative construction <contradicts> conforming as a negative
    non-conforming as negative construction <is property of> social construction of behaviour - generative/transformative

Students' constructions of the best they can be in school <is> Root
  conforming as a negative <is part of> Students' constructions of the best they can be in school
    conforming - socially detrimental <is part of> conforming as a negative
    non-conforming as negative construction <contradicts> conforming as a negative
    conforming as positive <is part of> Students' constructions of the best they can be in school
    positive change for the future <is cause of> conforming as positive
    academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future
    social benefit <is a result of> conforming as positive
    friendship <is part of> social benefit
    uniform <is associated with> social benefit
    uniform <is part of> conforming as positive
  non-conforming as negative construction <is part of> Students' constructions of the best they can be in school
  non-conforming as positive <is part of> Students' constructions of the best they can be in school
    conforming as positive <contradicts> non-conforming as positive
    sitting off <is part of> non-conforming as positive
social benefit <is a result of> non-conforming as positive
uniform <is part of> non-conforming as positive
provocative propositions <is associated with> Students' constructions of the best they can be in school

being prepared <is> Root

locating success <is> Root
positive change for the future <is part of> locating success
academic aspiration <is associated with> positive change for the future
resistant to positive questions <contradicts> locating success
positive change for the future <contradicts> resistant to positive questions
success - academic <is part of> locating success
success - behaviour <is part of> locating success
success - extracurricular <is part of> locating success
success - social <is part of> locating success

common interests <is> Root

sitting off <is> Root

active lessons <is> Root

personal aspiration <is> Root

conforming as a negative <is> Root
conforming - socially detrimental <is part of> conforming as a negative
non-conforming as negative construction <contradicts> conforming as a negative

conforming - socially detrimental <is> Root

solution orientated dialogue <is> Root

barrier to success <is> Root

familiarity with staff <is> Root

identify differences across contexts but within phases of education <is> Root
dialogue as bridge <is> Root
donated solution <is> Root
dissemination strategy <is> Root
unable to locate success <is> Root
exception finding <is> Root
personal agency to make changes <is> Root
recognition <is> Root
lessons that fit with learning style <is> Root

transformative <is> Root

affirmation <is> Root

from problem to positive orientation <is> Root

non-conforming as socially detrimental <is> Root

work - negative theme <is> Root

recapping connects to past successes <is> Root

identify different experiences across contexts primary and secondary <is> Root

identify differences between primary contexts <is> Root

clarification <is> Root
APPENDIX 9 SELECTION OF STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

JB
Learning Mentor Project
My research presentation

I felt happy at school...
I was happy in B Primary. It’s a smaller school so I knew most of the people, so I don’t forget names when I’m speaking to them. In Year 7 I made more friends from the other primary schools

a time when I felt very successful...
Doing my SATs – I thought I wasn’t going to do good, but it wasn’t hard at all. I found it easy, got good marks and that made me feel happy.
He A told me that I got good marks.

A teacher I get on with...
Mr H – he teaches PE and French
He can be funny and sometimes tells jokes if class behaves
He doesn’t expect you to do everything perfect.

The student I want to be like is...
😊
✓ Has lots of mates to have a laugh with.
✓ Isn’t a nerd.
✓ Doesn’t wear a long tie.
✓ Wants to break some of the rules, seems like the cool thing to do.
✓ Wants to stay in school with his mates.

Other positive things about school
Playing on the computers in the library at break and lunch time.
Badminton Club
To help me be the student I want to be...

The target I have set myself is...
To do more activities in school.
I would like there to be a film club because I am really interested in making films.
I will make more friends that like the same things as me.

JC
Learning Mentor Project
My research presentation

I felt happy at school...

CF Year 7

I liked starting a new school, getting to meet new people,
And making new friends

I am confident at making friends

I also got to meet up with old friends that used to go to my first primary school.

a time when I felt very successful...

- Killearn - Year 6 Residential

I was the 1st to go on everything like shooting
I like trying new things.

Your favourite lesson at school

PE

I love all sports and I'm good at them.
I'm in the football team and I play up front.
A teacher I get on with...

Mr S.
- He taught both my courses - they have told me he is a good teacher.
- I get on with him because he is fair and tells jokes.
- He is strict when he has to be, when people are messing about.
- When people are doing good he is more relaxed.

Other positive things about school

All my mates like school and I walk to school with them.

I'm doing extra reading with Mr to improve my English because I want to move up sets. I don't work with the naughty people, it makes me act naughty, in the higher set people who concentrate but still have a laugh.

The student I want to be like is...

😊
- Smart, uniform fits
- Hair cut – nice and smart
- Bag with all his kit and books,
- Does his work
- Respectful and understanding
- Friends are the same as him, has a lot of friends

To help me be the student I want to be...

The target I have set myself is...
To be prepared for work in class.

Propositions – the best I can be...
I am prepared and have pens/pens/rubber and ruler.

I will keep them in my pocket and my locker. My key is in LMS Office.

Teachers think that I care about my work.
I have improved my English work and I am in set 3.
APPENDIX 10 SCHOOL WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

Student Workshop
Imagining the best the school can be...

Oct 2011

What we are going to do today...
We have been meeting to collect data (information) about how you feel about school, and the best you can be at school.

Now we are going to spend some time thinking about the best the CfL can be based on your experiences.

We feel things are good in school when...
Relationships with teachers are good.
✔ We get on with teachers
✔ Teachers have a laugh with us
✔ Teachers let us make choices in the class
✔ Teachers do interesting activities in class that helps us learn better

We feel things are good in school when...
There are good activities to do in school like
✔ Football
✔ Badminton
✔ Film Club
✔ Cookery Club

We feel things are good in school when...
Teachers tell us we are doing well by
✔ Using positive report cards
✔ From Com points
✔ Other rewards

We feel things are good in school when...
There is time to do things with your mates like...
✔ Use the computers in the library at break, lunch and after school
✔ Use the gym
We think things are good in school when...

We are in a class that has good behaviour so we can get on with our work.

We are in the right set so that the work is not hard or easy.

We can try and improve and move sets.

We feel things are good in school when...

There is time to do things with your mates like...

✓ Use the computers in the library at break, lunch and after school
✓ Use the gym

So actions we would like to take are...

✓ We could meet with Mr. C and Mrs. B to tell them our ideas.

✓ We could show them our presentations.

Our Propositions

✓ At GL all teachers do something fun with students that is different to lessons.
✓ Teachers give choices to students in the class.
✓ Students behave in lessons so everyone can work.
✓ All students have good work and good behaviour rewarded each week.

Propositions

✓ All students can have time with a LM to make sure things are going well in school. Checking that work is ok and things with friends.

✓ The library is open before school, at break and after school so students can use the computers.

✓ The gym is open to keep fit and exercise.

Our Action Plan

✓ Arrange meeting with Mr. C and Mrs. B to present our individual and group presentations.
✓ M to meet with HoY to discuss timetabling individual sessions with students
✓ LM to develop a reward competition for Yr8 boys based on a league table (football)