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FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Sociology and Social Policy

Methodological Challenges of Researching the Social Worlds of Children on the Autism Spectrum

by

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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<u>Doctor of Philosophy</u>

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF RESEARCHING THE SOCIAL WORLDS OF CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

by Jaimie Sarah Ellis

Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, increased emphasis has been placed on the involvement of children in matters concerning them. In social research this has been reflected in increased participation of children in research. Children's increased participation, particularly disabled children's participation, has in part been encouraged by innovations, adoptions and applications in research methods. This has led to a growing number of new, 'non-traditional' research methods being added to the social researcher's methodological repertoire. However, the appropriateness of different research methods remains unknown and this research aims to fill this void. By using autistic children as a case in example, the primary aim of this research is to explain why some methods are more appropriate than others to be used when researching the social worlds of autistic children. The secondary aim is to explore the experiences of autistic children. This research therefore has a dual focus in that it is concerned with research methodology and the experiences of autistic children.

   The research aims were explored through an ethnographic approach to research, where six methods were used to explore the experiences of eleven autistic children aged between eleven and fifteen years. The two 'traditional' methods used were 1) observations of children in their school environment and 2) interviews with their parents and teachers. The four 'non-traditional' methods that required participation from the children required them to 1) write an essay about their imagined futures 2) take photographs of people, places and objects considered significant to them 3) reflect themselves through art and 4) to produce a documentary about their lives. The research found a number of factors to affect the appropriateness of methods. It was also found that while some methods were more appropriate than others, an understanding of the children's experiences was best achieved through a mixed-method, multi-dimensional approach.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Jaimie Sarah Ellis declare that the thesis entitled Methodological Challenges of Researching the Social Worlds of Children on the Autism Spectrum and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission,

Signed: ………………………………………………………..

Date: ………………………………………………………

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Abbreviations

ASC- Autism Spectrum Condition

EP- Extra Provision

ESRC- Economic and Social Research Council

LSA- Learning Support Assistant

MLD- Moderate Learning Difficulties

PECS- Picture Exchange Communication System

pt.- Point

pts.- Points

SEN – Special Educational Needs

UNCRC- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UPIAS- Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis has a dual focus in that it is concerned with research methodology and with the social worlds of autistic children. This dual focus has arisen from a number of identified 'gaps' in existing literature. Most notably, the literature concerned with children's participation in research, specifically the issue of whether *all* children have been provided with the opportunity to participate in research.

In the period since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (The UN General Assembly, 1989) increased emphasis has been placed on the involvement of children in matters concerning them. In social research the emphasis on children's involvement has encouraged researchers to shift from perceiving children as research objects and thus conducting research '*on*' or '*for*' children, towards perceiving children as capable social actors and thus conducting research '*with*' and '*by*' children. The rise in children's participation in research has generally been considered to be a positive progression, positive for both research and children themselves. However, notwithstanding this, the participation of disabled children, specifically autistic children, in research lags behind that of their non-disabled/ non-autistic peers. Social research has perceived disabled children and other groups whose participation in research is considered challenging in a number of ways. It is the preference here to perceive these groups as 'muted groups' (Ardener, 1975) who have become 'hard to hear' because it places responsibility on the researcher to remove the barriers preventing the involvement of these groups. With Governmental initiatives introduced to encourage the involvement of *all* children in matters concerning them (UNCRC, Article 23 (1989), Disability Equality Duty 2006 (UNISON, 2006), the Autism Act 2009 (HMGovernment, 2009) and Adult Autism Strategy (Department of Health, 2010)), researchers have been required to engage in a process of methodological innovation, adaptation or application (Wiles et al., 2011) in order to promote the involvement of muted groups in research. Such advances in methodology have led to increased involvement of muted groups, including

disabled and autistic people, in research through providing methods which enable the individuals to engage meaningfully in the research process. However, despite Governmental policies and increasing advances in methodologies, there is a limited range of literature to evidence specifically how social researchers might encourage the involvement of autistic children in research (Preece, 2002; Preece and Jordan, 2010; Beresford et al., 2004). With limited literature to offer such guidance, autistic children's participation in research continues to lag behind that of their non-autistic peers. This difference has in part also contributed towards, and is reflected in, the narrow and partial sociological understanding of the experiences and social worlds of autistic children. Therefore, the primary focus of this research has emerged from the lack of literature which documents how to encourage autistic children's participation in research. The secondary focus has emerged from the narrow sociological account of the experiences of autistic children and, as a result, the thesis has a dual focus; methodological and substantive.

The primary focus of this research is to explain why some methods are more appropriate than others to be used when researching the social worlds of autistic children, and to suggest how these methods could and should be used. This focus is explored through the substantive area; the experiences of autistic children. Thus, the research aim is to explore how we can best get at and understand the social worlds and experiences of autistic children. The research objectives are:

1. To explain why some methods are more appropriate than others.
2. To provide suggestions regarding how the chosen methods should / could be used.
3. To explore what the methods enable us to discover about the experiences of autistic children.

In order to compare how different methods are more or less appropriate, and also compare how different methods contribute towards the understanding of

the social worlds of autistic children, a number of research methods were selected. A qualitative, ethnographic approach was taken to data collection which enabled me to employ a range of methods to explore the research problem, which is discussed further in chapter three: methodology. Through taking this approach I spent eight months in a special needs secondary school, assigned the pseudonym Ladybarn, where I employed six different methods to explore the experiences of eleven autistic children aged between eleven and fifteen years. The six methods employed were a mix of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' and the method selection was such that it enabled a comparison between methods which required different levels of child involvement. The methods were:

'Traditional':

1. Participant observation: eight months spent in a school environment
2. Semi-structured interviews / focus groups: Taking place with the children's parents and teachers.

'Non-Traditional':

3. Essay: The children wrote an essay about their imagined futures
4. Photography: The children took photographs of people, places and objects considered significant to them and provided three reasons for why each photograph was taken.
5. Patchwork Quilt: Using art to portray themselves each child created a 'patch', which contributed towards the overall quilt and represented who they were individually and collectively.
6. Documentary Making: The children worked together to write, perform and record a documentary about their lives.

The subsidiary focus of the research was to provide a sociological understanding of the social worlds of autistic children. Through taking an inductive, ethnographic approach to data analysis, the approach of Erving Goffman emerged as a suitable theoretical perspective from which to interpret the data generated from the six methods. An introduction to Goffman and the steps taken to data analysis are discussed in chapter three. Goffman emerged as a suitable theorist because his theoretical position offers an account of social life spanning across both the macro and the micro elements. Goffman primarily focused on the interaction occurring between people and for him the orderliness in interactions reflects and supports all other forms of order. It is for this reason that chapters four, five and six present the research findings, which explore the experiences and social worlds of the children, are structured from macro (Chapter Four: Community), meso (Chapter Five: Intimate Relations) and micro (Chapter Six: Self). Utilising a number of Goffman's key concepts, the findings chapters explore how order is maintained in the community of the school, during interactions and how the children themselves contribute towards or affect the orderliness in interactions and the community. The research aims to contribute to current literature through providing a sociological understanding of the social worlds of autistic children. Furthermore, the research aims to contribute to existing literature by offering a further perspective on existing debates; for example, what is understood by the concept 'normal' and are the stereotypes associated with autism useful? The contributions made to these debates were significant issues that the six research methods 'got at' and they are discussed further in chapter seven.

The research focus is a combination of methodology and experiences of autistic children which are woven together throughout the thesis. However, in the discussion chapter I discuss the findings in relation to methodology and substantive elements separately, as well as present the conclusions specifically related to methodological appropriateness and the social worlds of autistic children. Furthermore, in this chapter I discuss the limitations of the research and offer recommendations for practice and future research.

In chapter two the thesis continues with a literature review of issues concerning children's participation in research, how methodological developments have led to greater participation and explores the benefits and challenges of including children in research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This thesis has a dual focus in that it is concerned with research methodology and the experiences and social worlds of autistic children. This dual focus led me to consult literature around three specific points: 1) research methodology, 2) issues around childhood and 3) disability literature. I felt it necessary to draw upon a variety of literature, not only because of the range of themes emerging with my interest, but also because I find it difficult to align myself wholeheartedly and exclusively with a movement, a single set of literature. My interest is greater than a single movement; it spans a variety of movements and it aligns itself with the philosophy of equality. I advocate an equality of opportunity for *all* children be they disabled, ethnically diverse, troublesome, or 'typical' children. It is from this standpoint, and with a sense that every child should be given the opportunity to participate in society and social research, that I embarked upon the research.

In order to ground the research, the key terms used throughout this thesis are first defined. Understanding the social worlds of autistic children is part of the research aim and therefore 'childhood' needs to be defined. In legal terms children are defined as those individuals under the age of 18 (Department of Health, 1969). However, sociological literature refers to those aged between 15 and 24 years as young people (Heath, 2009). In considering these definitions I conceptualise children to be of compulsory school age, those under the age of 16 years.

Children have been conceptualised in social research in a variety of ways. They have been conceived as 'hard to reach', 'hard to hear' and as a 'muted' group and a group in need of 'giving voice' to. The different conceptions assume different theoretical and methodological perspectives, and infer where the responsibility lies for encouraging children's participation in research. Before I

offer my preference regarding how to conceptualise children, I discuss the aforementioned conceptions and explain their inferences in relation to research.

The perspective of children as a 'hard to reach' group places responsibility on the researcher to locate and gain access to this group and infers children are inaccessible but able. It assumes that, once located, children will be able to participate meaningfully in research. Conceiving children to be 'hard to hear' implies that the researcher is responsible for finding ways of listening to children. This perspective is similar to the conception of children as a 'muted group', suggesting that 'society' has silenced children and it is the researcher's responsibility to provide a platform for children to be listened to. The notion of 'giving voice' to children is similar to the conception of children as a muted group. 'Giving voice' places a responsibility on the researcher to uncover voice, provide a platform and to give status to voice. It is similar to the notions of children as 'muted' and as a 'hard to hear' group, and the conception of 'giving voice' also holds the researcher responsible for ensuring children's voices are heard. For the purpose of this discussion I conceptualise children as a 'muted group' who have become 'hard to hear', because it places responsibility on the researcher to remove the barriers preventing the involvement of these groups in research. The literature review summarises the history of children's participation in research, it details the case of autistic children and explores how developments in methodology have facilitated the participation of muted groups in research.

2.1 Children's Involvement in Social Research

This section provides an account of children's involvement in research. The discussion broadly maps the changes in policy, the changes in how childhood is conceived, and explains how this has influenced the involvement of children in research. The term 'children' is taken to refer to *all* children but where

necessary I distinguish between disabled and non-disabled children to explain the different experiences of these groups.

2.1.1. Non-Participation

Conceptions of childhood are intrinsically linked to the level of involvement children have, or have had, in social research. Under the once dominant psychological model of conceptualising childhood, children were viewed as "becomings" rather than "beings". Developmental psychologists such as Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1933/1978) were influential in reinforcing the conception of children as "becomings". The linear models recognised children to gradually acquire the intellectual, social and emotional skills to become competent adults. Conceptualising children to assume competency on entering adulthood positions children in an inferior, incompetent position to adults.

This is further exacerbated for disabled children who, according to developmental theorists, are also considered incompetent compared to their non-disabled peers. The psychological model of conceptualising children encourages viewing children according to the expected achievements by a given age, which encourages viewing children in terms of the typology 'normal' and 'abnormal'. This perspective is reflective of the medical model of disability that conceptualises disabled children as having 'special needs' or being developmentally delayed.

Conceiving children in the above terms positions them as research "objects" (Christensen and Prout, 2002) and reflects a tokenistic (Hart, 1992) involvement of children in research. Drawing upon Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, conceptualising children as research objects is reflective of research which involves 'false' participation from children. Conceptualising children as incompetent actors meant that childhood was studied through experiments and observations where children were objects of study. This sort

of research requires little, if any, meaningful participation from children because the approach recognises the adult to be the superior and knowledgeable individual. Research which positions children as incompetent objects of research has been categorised as research '*on*' children and is characterised by very little involvement of children.

Using Hart's Ladder of Participation as a means of positioning children's involvement in research level three, tokenistic involvement, is a move towards research '*for*' children. A tokenistic involvement in research is categorised as non-participatory because although children appear to be given a voice they have no control over the topic or method of communication (Hart, 1992).

Conceptualising children as becomings positions them as objects of research '*on*' or '*for*' children where they have little involvement. These approaches to research have been criticised for assuming children to be a homogeneous group and failing to recognise the social, political and economic structures which affect childhood (Katz, 2004). Changes in how children are conceived have led to greater levels of children's involvement in research and these approaches recognise the diversity of children.

2.1.2 Participation

Globally, children's rights took centre stage in 1989 with the UNCRC (The UN General Assembly, 1989) when participation was added to the right to protection and to provisions (Alderson, 2001). Ratified by the UK in 1991, conceptions of children were redefined with the principal concern of recognising the right of the child to be involved in decision-making. Of the UNCRC's 54 articles, article 12, which outlined the child's right to express their views, to be informed and to have influence over decisions, was arguably the most influential of the articles for research. The convention was significant for all children, since it recognised the heterogeneous nature of children and that

children can suffer multiple disadvantages by falling into a number of muted groups. Article two states that rights should be promoted without discrimination for all children, and as such the convention also had a profound effect over how disabled children were perceived.

The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) redefined disability in 1976, which, by highlighting how environmental factors contribute towards disability, shifted the focus from the individual to society (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). It was not until thirteen years later that the UNCRC also promoted the rights of disabled children. This resulted in disabled children gradually beginning to acquire rights, both as disabled individuals and as children.

A significant consequence of the UNCRC was that social scientists and social researchers reconceptualised children to be competent social actors (Sinclair, 2004) who were knowledgeable about their social worlds (James et al., 1998). Increasingly children were coming to be recognised as beings in their own right, as experts on childhood, and as such were valuable to research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Conceptualising childhood in such terms positioned children as active participants and constructors in their daily experiences of childhood (James et al., 1998). After the UNCRC, social research began to espouse the principles laid out in the convention by reconceptualising childhood, valuing children's involvement and thus children became subjects of research (Alderson, 2001).

The history of children's involvement in social research is similar to that of other marginalised groups such as women and disabled individuals. Both feminists (Oakley, 1981; Smith, 1988) and disabilities activists (Oliver, 1996; Barnes et al., 1999; Swain et al., 2003) have pushed for increased involvement from the individuals in question. That is, research about gender should have meaningful involvement from women, and similarly research about disability issues should have meaningful involvement from disabled people.

Consequently, participatory research is rooted in feminist and disability research, and reflects the saying '*Nothing About Us With Out Us*' (Carlton, 1998). The change in how childhood is conceived has encouraged greater involvement of children in research and encouraged the use of participatory approaches to research.

The 7th and 8th rungs on Hart's (1992) ladder, "child initiated and directed" and "child initiated, shared decisions with adults" respectively, account for research with meaningful involvement from children. This type of research has been characterised by children collaborating with researchers throughout all stages of the research process (O'Brien and Moules, 2007). Involving children in this manner is categorised as research '*with*' children, and it is the first approach that I believe fully incorporates the principles of the UNCRC treaty. Since the treaty, research '*with*' children, that is participatory research, is readily assumed to be a good thing (section 2.2.3 addresses this issue further). This has been reflected in the changing nature of funding bodies who have established funding criteria for research which encourages meaningful participation from children (Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

With increased funding opportunity, there has been a growing move towards research being carried out '*with*' children. There now exists a wealth of literature evidencing that children can be meaningful participants in research. Examples include Waller and Bitou (2011) who drew upon the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) to research with four year olds. McCarry (2012) included 14 year olds to advise on the design of a questionnaire and Lomax (2012) used a range of methods to include 8-12 year olds in research exploring friendships. Pimlott-Wilson (2012) used creative participatory practices such as Duplo[1] and rainbows and clouds[2] to include children in research. Researching

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[1] A play-based, hands-on method Pimlott-Wilson asked the children to 'build a representation of their home from Duplo and to enact the roles that each person within the home' (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012:137).
[2] A draw and write activity which allows children to express both positive and negative perceptions. The children write positive perceptions on the rainbows and negative perceptions on the clouds.

'*with*' children is an umbrella term covering all participatory research with children.

Whilst participatory approaches to researching '*with*' children have become increasingly favoured among the social research community, disabled children's involvement in research has not reflected that of their non-disabled peers (Mitchell et al., 2009). Despite the shift in paradigm for non-disabled children, as outlined above, concerns over protection is one reason that is often cited for their lesser involvement in research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). However, Mitchell et al (2009) evaluated two projects where disabled children had meaningful participation, The Choice for Change and Deaf Services programme, and they reported that researchers can introduce steps to facilitate the involvement of disabled children. They suggested researchers should offer a range of communication tools, and spend time with children to learn the most appropriate method of communication. This study serves as an illustration that measures can be taken to promote the involvement of disabled children in research. The WeCan2 Projects (Aoslin et al., 2008) included disabled children in research as did Nind and Seale (2009) and Nind et al (2010). Undoubtedly these examples demonstrate a shift toward increased involvement of *all* children in research. However, it has been observed that disabled children's participation continues to play catch-up with their non-disabled peers (Badham, 2004). This is perhaps evident in non-disabled children's move towards further participation in research.

Participatory research is about a commitment to providing a space where children's voices can be both accessed and heard (Mand, 2012). Researching '*with*' children according to participatory activists like Kellett (2009) is not where children's involvement in research should end. Kellett and the Children's Research Centre have in recent years advocated children becoming researchers, which shifts the paradigm to research '*by*' children. Research '*by*' children requires a complete transfer of power from the adult researcher to the 'participant' (child) researcher. This type of research enables children to work free from adult management as children are responsible for the whole research process from planning to dissemination (Kellett, 2005). This approach is

different to research '*with*' children since it is seen as an attempt to democratise the research process (France, 2004). Research '*by*' children is something which has in many instances included 'young people' typically aged between 12-14 years and up (Brownlie et al., 2006). It is a research approach largely populated by middle childhood and non-disabled children as Kellett advises it is an approach for "average ability 13-14 year olds" (Kellett, 2005: 4). The extent to which research '*by*' children has been carried out is reported in Brownlie (2006) but examples include Cox and Robinson-Pant (2008), O'Brien and Moule (2007) and the work of the Children's Research Centre (2012).

The changes in how children and childhood are perceived has been both reflected in and influenced by children's changing involvement in research. The above discussion has drawn attention to the four approaches taken to research ('*on, 'for', 'with'* and *'by'* children) but increased involvement of children in research brings both benefits and challenges. Research should not strive to include children in research because it is deemed the moral thing to do, rather their participation should be appropriate and beneficial to children and research. The following section explores the benefits and challenges associated with participatory research with children.

2.1.3 Benefits and Challenges of Participatory Research with Children

Children's participation in research is often assumed to lead to more authentic research (Lomax, 2012), but critiques recognise this assumption to be problematic (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008; James, 2007). The benefits and challenges associated with children's involvement in research are both ethical and methodological, and this section explores the 'pros' and 'cons' levelled at research involving children.

Involving children in research has benefits both for the individuals themselves, and the creation of knowledge. The observed advantages for children centre on

self-development benefits, including increased sense of self and agency, and social developments associated with working in a research team (Fielding and Bragg, 2003). Furthermore, Fielding and Bragg (2003) observed children's involvement in research to allow them temporarily to assume a new identity. This is especially so for children with disabilities, by participating in research it can provide an opportunity to break away from their everyday 'vulnerable' identity to an identity of a competent participant. Benefits for the children themselves should not be overlooked since these contribute towards the ethical credibility of the research.

Principally, the involvement of children in research is considered an ethically responsible approach to research (Kellett, 2005). Participatory research has been found to allow children choice over what to disclose by allowing them to control pace and depth of questioning, which is considered to be a more ethically sound research practice (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). Furthermore, children's involvement has been recognised to provide a vantage point not achievable from an adult's (outsider) perspective (Heath, 2009). Advocates of increased involvement of children in research argue that children are best placed to comment on issues of childhood as adults cannot regress to view the world through children's eyes (Grave and Walsh, 1998). This becomes more complex when a non-disabled adult researcher attempts to talk of a disabled child's experience. Instead what is achieved is a perspective made from "multiple layers of experience, theirs and ours" (Grave and Walsh, 1998: 93). It is from this perspective that children's involvement in research offers a solution by providing an insider's account and therefore is considered to benefit knowledge.

The involvement of children in research on a theoretical level and practical level has been observed to be mismatched (Uprichard, 2010). That is, theoretically researchers advocate the involvement of children in research, but in practice it has been found that although children are considered competent social actors, they are considered competent only in regard to their own lives and not wider social issues (Uprichard, 2010). This is considered to undermine the position of children, and some suggest that their inclusion in research

based on the belief that there are benefits to knowledge is misguided (Lomax, 2012). Involving children in research to benefit knowledge regarding childhood assumes children to be a "homogeneous and undifferentiated" social group (Lomax, 2012: 107) and that research of this nature should not unproblematically assume an authentic representation of childhood is necessarily achieved (James, 2007).

Where research has involved children in a participatory approach, researchers have reported several ethical, methodological and practical obstacles to overcome. Ethically speaking, parental consent is required for minors' participation in research, however obtaining parental consent for 14-16 year olds participation in research was considered by the young people to undermine their capabilities (McCarry, 2012). Furthermore, the use of pseudonyms has also raised concerns about undermining the children's participation (Gillies and Robinson, 2012). This is because it has been found that children can find the use of pseudonyms confusing as "they wanted [people] to know how they felt" (Gillies and Robinson, 2012: 171) and the use of pseudonyms undermined this. These considerations serve as reminders that a challenge of involving children in participatory research is adapting and modifying ethical and methodological procedures to suit the nature of the research.

The first practical challenge experienced by researchers who want to carry out participatory research is that it is often impractical to involve children at the initial stages. The initial stage of research is applying for funding and involving children before funding has been secured is an observed challenge (McCarry, 2012). Once funding has been secured, a practical challenge relates to a further assumption that children will want to be involved in research. Several researchers striving for children's involvement in research have found acquiring children's interest to be difficult (Gillis and Robinson, 2012). Once interest is established, researchers have found building a positive relationship between themselves and the children is an additional obstacle to overcome (Fielding and Bragg, 2003). Establishing a time and place to meet is a practical obstacle to negotiate when involving children in research who are required to

attend school. In addition, further practicalities may arise when working with disabled children. For example, locating suitable premises with appropriate access and locating additional supportive structures such as visual aids or an interpreter.

Participatory research is an approach with both its advocates and sceptics, and carries both benefits and challenges. The practical limitations mentioned can be overcome, thus enabling children to participate meaningfully in research, but the more philosophical arguments should always be considered. McCarry (2012) advises that children's involvement in research should be relevant and appropriate; that is, children's involvement may not always be appropriate. It is with the belief that children can participate and should participate in research where appropriate that I embarked on the research.

2.2. The Research Case: Children with Autism Spectrum Condition

Children with autism spectrum condition (ASC) are the focus of this research. They act as an example of a muted group whose participation in social research lags behind that of their non-autistic peers. Autism is a complex condition, and in order to contextualise this research this section provides an account of ASC.

2.2.1. What is ASC?

Autism was first recognised by Leo Kanner (1943) and Hans Asperger (1944/1991) who, despite working separately in America and Europe respectively, both observed and diagnosed a condition which has become part of ASC. Lorna Wing and Judith Gold (1979) concluded from their study that autism existed on a continuum and the notion of an autistic continuum became widely accepted by the Medical Research Council (2001). Wing (1981)

used the term Asperger syndrome to refer to a distinct sub-group of individuals who were observed to be different from those with autism but who demonstrated characteristics of ASC. Thus, today autism and Asperger syndrome are acknowledged to be located at different points on the autistic spectrum (Portway and Johnson, 2003).

The prevalence of ACS in the UK today is estimated to be 1 in 100 people (NSA, 2011) and it is estimated that 1 in 166 children under the age of eight years have been diagnosed with ASC (Medical Research Council, 2001; The NHS Information Centre Community and Mental Health Team, 2012). Other estimates suggest that 1% of the whole school age population (children aged between 5 and 16 years) are on the autism spectrum (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009). The importance of including autistic children in research in order to better understand their social worlds and experiences is apparent when it is learnt that autistic children are twenty times more likely to be excluded from school than their non-autistic counterparts (Humphrey, 2008).

ASC is understood to be a lifelong developmental disorder which affects how a person makes senses of the world, processes information and relates to other people (NSA, 2011). Three impairments are associated with ASC, known as the triad of impairments, which cause a difficulty in social communication, interaction and imagination. The triad of impairments although common among people with ASC affect individuals differently (NAS, 2011). It is here where it becomes constructive to separate autism from Asperger syndrome since the two have differing experiences of the triad of impairments. I have found it useful to formulate a table to help conceptualise the differences:

Table 2. 1 Overview of the Triad of Impairments

Impairment	Autism	Common to both	Asperger Syndrome
Social Communication	Difficulties in understanding jokes and sarcasm. Difficulties in understanding common phrases due to their literal understanding of language.	Difficulties in verbal and non-verbal language. Have a literal understanding of language Difficulty in using and understanding facial expressions and tone of voice.	Difficulty in knowing when to start or end a conversation. Difficulty in choosing a topic to talk about. Have a tendency to use complex words without fully understanding their meaning.
Social Interaction	Would rather spend time alone.	Difficulties in understanding unwritten social rules.	Often want to be sociable but have difficulty in forming relationships. Can become withdrawn and appear to be uninterested in others.
Social Imagination	Can find it difficult to cope with new and unfamiliar situations Difficulties in interpreting other people's thoughts and feelings.	Difficulties in predicting what could happen next. Experience difficulties in understanding and interpreting subtle messages conveyed through body language and facial expressions.	Tend to have a restricted range of activities which they often pursue repetitively.

Information from: NAS (2011)

In general, the common characteristics of individuals with ASC include a preference for routines, sensory issues, and the pursuit of a special interest. Furthermore, both individuals with autism and Asperger syndrome often prefer a fixed daily routine because it provides structure and consistency, and helps them to make sense of the world.

The above discussion illustrates that whilst individuals with autism and Asperger's syndrome share common difficulties, they also have quite distinct experiences. The main difference is the onset of learning disabilities, which are most commonly associated with autism rather than Asperger syndrome. Whereas individuals with Asperger syndrome often have average or above average intelligence, individuals with autism usually experience some level of learning disability (NAS, 2011).

2.2.2. Conceptualising ASC

The complexity of autism stems in part from the uncertainty regarding its cause. Physiological understandings of the condition have not been able to identify a genetic cause, and although over 100 genes have been associated with the condition researchers are still uncertain over their importance. Literature has observed that ASC is more common in males than females by a ratio of 4:1, which suggests a biological basis of the condition, but studies on twins highlights environmental factors have a part to play too. Therefore autism has been understood and conceptualised from psychological perspectives.

Psychological Understandings

Broadly speaking, three psychological models have been offered as an attempt to explain autism; theory of mind, weak central coherence theory, and

dysexecutive theory. In this section I offer a brief introduction to each. For a fuller account see Baron-Cohen (2008).

Theory of mind refers to an individual's ability to understand other people's mental states. This understanding is acquired through reading facial expressions and other subtle cues that people leak to the world, revealing their otherwise hidden emotions. Theory of mind is tested through use of the Sally-Ann test (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985) which has found individuals with ASC are unable to engage with meta-representations and therefore are unable to develop a theory of mind. That is, individuals with autism have been observed to be unable to understand another person's mental state, and the theory of mind perspective explains autistic individuals' difficulty in social interaction and communication.

Central coherence helps individuals to draw together a range of information to formulate a higher-level meaning in context (Baron-Cohen et al., 2000). It is this drawing together of information which encourages individuals to see the whole, the gestalt, rather than segments of the picture or context. Central coherence is tested via the Wechsler Scale and the Block Design test where it has been found that people with ASC find it difficult to perceive the gestalt, and therefore are considered to have a weak central coherence (Baron-Cohen et al., 2000). This perspective helps explain autistic individuals' difficulty in social imagination and preference for a fixed routine.

The 'executive' function of behaviour which is associated with planning, cognitive flexibility, inhibition and working memory operates in the frontal lobe of the brain (Pennington, 1997). Individuals with ASC have been found to experience problems with each of aforementioned dimensions and therefore are considered to have damage to the executive function. Although the dysexecutive theory accounts for several difficulties of the associated impairments, none of the psychological accounts of ASC sufficiently explains all of the behaviours and impairments associated with the condition.

Sociological Understandings

Currently no sociological theory has been used to account specifically for the experiences of autistic individuals. This is not to say that sociological understandings of the experiences of autistic individuals cannot be offered, and disability literature more generally can make some contributions. The area of disability studies is vast, and I am unable to address the complexity of the field here; instead offer an introduction to a selection of models in the area.

In viewing disability as a tragedy, the medical model deems an impairment to be a personal tragedy which should be cured. According to the model the individual's 'problem' (their impairment) is the cause of disability. This perspective leads to the typology normal/ abnormal to arise, and in conceptualising disability as 'abnormal' the assumption that an individual should be 'cured' to become 'normal' is made. The focus of the model lies in helping the individual, who is unable to fulfil 'normal' social roles (Priestley, 2003: 12) to overcome the impairment. The model is disempowering and fails to take into account factors external to the individual that contribute towards their disability.

Emerging as a critique of the medical model the social model does recognise external factors as contributing elements to disability. This model conceptualises disability as "wholly and exclusively social" and acknowledges that "disablement has nothing to do with the body" (Oliver, 1996: 41-2). For the first time the social model distinguished between impairment and disability by demonstrating that impairment becomes disabling by factors in society and, as such, the social model attempts to address the "real cause of disability: discrimination and prejudice" (Shakespeare, 1992: 40) by locating the 'problem' "squarely in society" (Oliver, 1996: 32). According to this model the individual should not be subject to attempts to 'normalise' them, but rather the focus should be on changing society to make it more accommodating and enabling. The model draws attention to disability being a result of society failing to remove barriers which prevent people from participating. The social model has been used significantly by the disability movement since it was the first

paradigm shift which broke the relationship between impairment (the body) and the individual's social situation (Shakespeare, 1992). That said, and the achievements of the model acknowledged, several developments in disability studies have arisen from the social model, some in criticism of and others as developments of the model.

The medical and social models have each identified a different 'cause' of disability; biological or social. Born out of criticism of these models, two alternative perspectives have attempted to bring these causes together to offer a more "holistic understanding" (Shakespeare, 2006: 55) of disability.

The interactional approach to disability criticises the social model for failing to recognise the role of impairment (Shakespeare, 2006). The approach challenges the dualistic thinking of the medical and social models by suggesting disability is an "interaction between individual and structural factors" (Shakespeare, 2006: 55). Shakespeare is keen to engage with impairment and, unlike either the medical or social model, he recognises the experiences of disabled people "result from the relationship between factors intrinsic to the individual and extrinsic factors arising from the wider social context" (Shakespeare, 2006: 55). Similarly, the social relational model (Thomas, 2007) also attempts to engage with impairment, and advocates a rational understanding of disability. The social relational model defines disability as "a form of oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional wellbeing" (Thomas, 1999: 60). The significance, and uniqueness, of the social relational model is its recognition of the psycho-emotional effects of disability (Shakespeare, 2006). The social relational model and the interactional approach both argue that disability is complex and is caused by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Although the perspectives both agree on this point, they have key differences. Firstly, they contest the notion of disability as a form of oppression. Secondly, the social interactional model argues that "the social model should continue to occupy a central position in disability studies" (Thomas, 2004: 33), whereas, the interactional approach calls for "abandoning the social model" (Shakespeare,

2006: 54) altogether. While I have not had the scope to adequately cover these perspectives, their importance here is that they both begin to bridge the divide between, and challenge the dualism of, the medical and social models.

The disability literature presented here offers a starting point from which a sociological understanding of the experiences of autistic people can be made. Each of the models draw attention to how conceptions of disability can affect an individual's experience; in this instance, how autism is conceptualised will have an effect upon an autistic child's involvement in research. It is important for me to promote autistic children's, and other muted groups', involvement in research, and therefore I ask how can I best include autistic children in research? Asking this question leads me to recognise the external, environmental factors that might impact upon their involvement, and so the models of disability that recognise the significance of external factors are important here. One 'external' factor relating to the involvement of participants in research is the choice of methodology, as the choice in methodology is significant in helping to encourage meaningful participation from individuals in research.

2.3. Involving Muted Groups in Research: How will this be achieved?

I have preferred to conceptualise autistic children as a muted group who have become hard to hear. I believe that it is the responsibility of the researcher to find ways of communicating with this group, and to provide a methodological approach where the individual's voice is listened to and respected. Pascal and Bertram summarise this perspective when they say

> Our task as researchers is to meet this challenge and open our eyes and ears and minds to these voices; to become expert and active listeners to children and to recognise the many ways in which children skilfully communicate their realities.

> (2009: 253-254)

In relation to methodology the question asked is how can researchers meet these challenges and become expert listeners? Social researchers have developed research methods to help overcome the challenges and encourage active listening. These methodological advancements have encouraged muted groups, such as autistic children, to be able to participate in research. I will first discuss the process of methodological innovation before highlighting how autistic children have been included in research.

2.3.1. Methodological Innovation

In terms of methodological innovation it is important to distinguish between innovation, application and adaptation (Wiles et al., 2011). The definitions provided here are used to contextualise the process of and illustrate the differences in methodological developments.

Innovation is defined as the action or the process of innovating a new method, idea (Dictionary, 2011). In regards to research, innovations involve new methods and approaches of carrying out research and collecting data. Dogan and Pahre (1990) define a methodological innovation in terms of developments in methods which produce significantly different conclusions than previous 'faulty' methods. Taylor and Coffey (2008) define innovation as the "creation of new designs, concepts and ways of doing things" (2008: 8). Taylor and Coffey's definition, unlike Dogan and Pahre's, does not require an innovation to be successful, or for there to be fault stimulating the innovation. In considering the three definitions provided, methodological innovation in this discussion is understood in terms of Taylor and Coffey's, where the key characteristic of innovation is the creation of something new, in this instance a new methodology or method.

Application is taken to mean the use of an existing methodology within a new discipline; whereas adaptation is taken to mean modifying a methodology in

order either to better the knowledge produced or to use it in a different way. The blurring of the terms comes when authors consider adaptations and applications to be innovations. For example, the blurring of terms has been noted when innovations are considered to be anything that makes a substantial contribution (Deutsch et al., 1986). This understanding of innovation may include the contributions made from either adaptations or applications. Other examples include innovations being defined as "research practices [which] …cross disciplinary boundaries and/or extend existing methodologies" (Xenitidou and Gilbert, 2009: 7). These examples suggest that an adaptation or application of a methodology would be categorised as a type of innovation. The definition of innovation employed here encourages the view that innovation, application and adaptation are distinct concepts. An application or adaptation of a methodology is considered to be an expansion of research methodology rather than being considered to be new innovation.

How do innovations in methodology arise? To answer this question, I focus on innovations in more general terms, with specific reference to social research where applicable. It is possible for innovations to arise from a 'eureka' moment or result from a cumulative process (Dogan and Pahre, 1990) but they can arise as a result of influence or pressure. There may be a pressure resulting from a need to resolve a problem and so innovations arise when a problem occurs and a new method for solving it is required. This sort of pressure encourages individuals, institutions or agencies to search for new methods to solve their problem, which relates to Dogan and Pahre's (1990) definition of innovation. This process of developing an innovation is known as a 'bottom-up' method since the innovation arises up from a problem (Cuttance, 2001). The 'problem' or 'fault' that I am addressing in this instance is how, and in what ways, can we encourage meaningful participation of muted groups in research?

Economic and political pressures also drive innovations, and this is noticeable in research. In the area of social research it has become increasingly common for researchers to satisfy the demands placed upon them from research councils and from the need to be seen as a leader of research. Therefore, innovations in social research can arise as a result of the political agenda

driving or enforcing restrictions on the research agenda. I have discussed how political agendas have changed how children have been conceived which has influenced the inclusion of them in research. The chief example of this was the UNCRC which placed demands for children to be consulted and for them to exercise their right to express their opinions in all domains of society (including social research).

In continuing with the above example, methodological innovations arise when researchers are encouraged to find ways and methods of listening to children. The use of innovative methods may encourage children's involvement more so than the exiting methods. However, innovations can also offer an alternative perspective from the one gleaned from established methodologies. Methodological innovations can also arise as a result of subtle political pressures. There is a pressure on institutions to produce quality research and a pressure to be seen as a leader in research which can act as encouragement for researchers to think creatively and produce innovative research papers.

The production of an innovation in itself does not necessarily bring about change since many innovations go unheard. Methodological innovations are said to be either "absorbed rapidly" into a discipline or "rejected quickly" (Dogan and Pahre, 1990: 21). It is important to consider that innovation is not synonymous with progress, and that not all innovations are welcomed by the associated community. Some of the listed barriers to implementation or uptake of an innovation include: bureaucratic, cultural and ideological barriers (Cuttance, 2001). Cultural factors, which include a change relating to an established practice, were reported to be the most influential factor in determining uptake of an innovation (Cuttance, 2001). A question raised from this is what happens to the innovations which do not gain support? Cuttance (2001) describes innovation as a process that includes establishing an innovation, trialling the innovation and uptake or rejection of the innovation. Should an innovation be adopted by the community it still undergoes a transitional process through stages of adaptation and adjustments as it becomes more embedded in practice. One example of a community adopting innovations has been reported by Greig et al (2007) who have claimed that

social sciences are selecting, developing and implementing innovative methods of listening to children.

To locate my position in terms of methodological innovation, I am of the opinion that the development of a new approach to research should be viewed as an additional string to the researcher's bow, rather than as a replacement string. I am in favour of increasing rather than limiting the number of research methods available to researchers. This is especially important if the new, adopted or adapted methods promote the inclusion of muted groups in research.

2.3.2. Methods: The tried and the tested

Much of the literature that exists on autistic children is psychological in its approach, which has often led to the adoption of an experimental design to research. For example, Millward et al (2000), Evers et al (2012), Zingerevich and LaVesser (2009) which report on issues of poor memory recall, an inferior processing of emotions, executive function respectively. The concern of this research is with understanding the experiences of autistic children, rather than understanding the associated 'problems' related to autism (see section 2.2.2.). It is for this reason that the following discussion is concerned only with literature that endeavours to understand autistic children's experiences. I explore the existing literature by discussing some of the ways in which the experiences of autistic children have been researched.

Literature exploring the experiences of autistic children's friendships have utilised questionnaires and 'joint focus' activities to obtain the perspectives of parent, teacher and the children themselves respectively (Rowley et al., 2012). When concluding that a minority of autistic children have friends, the authors took the adults' perspective to be the authoritative perspective on the issues. The child's voice was silenced as their perspective was contrasted against, and

considered secondary to, that of the adults. Similarly, Billington (2006), using an observational method, found that autistic children have "intense feelings" (Billington, 2006: 3) and connect with 'the world' through friends and things. Further, Billington observed that "the problems for an autistic child can be exacerbated by the people and objects within their environment" (Billington, 2006: 10). Environmental factors have also been found by Mezinger and Jackson (2009) to affect the wellbeing of autistic children. Utilising an observational method the authors found autistic children's behaviour in classroom environments was negatively affected by noise. The children were observed to become distressed by unexpected 'bursts' of noise and would often cry out for individuals to 'be quiet'. Other researchers have observed autistic children to become distressed more readily than their non-autistic peers (Myles and Hubbard, 2005). Based on their observations of, and experience working with autistic children, Myles and Hubbard (2005) offer advice regarding how others can implement strategies to reduce distress. Two strategies proposed were implementing a routine and having a 'home-base' (time-out area) for the child to return to.

While each of these papers shed light on some of the aspects of the autistic child's social worlds their chosen research methods lack any meaningful participation from the children. Increasingly, but still very few, authors have started to engage in promoting children's participation by 'adapting' methods most commonly used in educational settings to help capture the child's perspective.

Methods for promoting the involvement of autistic children have emerged from educational settings. For example, the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a system of one-word picture cards to help autistic children to communicate (Frost and Bondy, 2002). Similarly Comic Strip Conversations (Gray, 1994) and Social Stories (Gray, 2007) are two further methods used frequently in educational settings to encourage communication. Each of these tools are visual methods to help autistic children communicate. PECS is most useful for children who are "not yet able to speak or who speak without

spontaneity" (Myles et al., 2007: 254). This is because the system has "virtually no prerequisite skills for use" (Myles et al., 2007: 251) as children are required to use the cards to communicate a request or response. Both of Gray's methods "describe a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social skills" (Gray and White, 2002: 17), which help children learn the appropriate skills required to engage in interaction. The success of these educational tools for providing the skills for children to communicate has led researchers to use them to encourage the involvement of autistic children in research.

Beresford (2013) interviewed autistic young people to explore their future aspirations. During the interviews, the young people talked of their current experiences where they explained the importance of their mothers to their emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, the young people discussed their foreseen adult lives being marked by achievements including, independent living and acquiring a job. In an earlier report Beresford et al (2004) adopted the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) to encourage the involvement of autistic children. Part of the research methods selected included children's drawings and the use of Social Stories (Gray, 1994). The research required direct participation from children to investigate their experiences of support services. However, in a separate report the authors reported their methodological journey (Beresford et al., 2004). They concluded that methods needed remoulding to make them appropriate and encourage children's meaningful involvement. Despite offering this as a recommendation the authors omit to state which methods required remoulding and why this was the case. They concluded "that there [was] a sense that the fieldwork ended before the full potential of the research design and methods had been fully explored" (Beresford et al., 2004: 184).

Preece (2002) investigated autistic children's experiences of short-term residential care. He designed an individualised consultation programme tailored to meet the children's needs. The children's teachers led the consultation so Preece was able to observe the whole process. The research found that the children preferred consistency and concreteness in

environments. In terms of methodological findings the research found several factors enable / disabled children's participation in research. Barriers preventing participation included the child's difficulty in social communication, high levels of anxiety and children's idiosyncratic use of language. The barriers often led to interaction break-down and a difficulty in 'getting at' the children's experiences. The practices that promoted children's participation include; having a familiar adult to the child present, the use of visual images and talking to the child about an event shortly after it has occurred. In a later study Preece and Jordan (2010) used PECS, photo-elicitation and drawing to alleviate children's anxiety and promote their participation. The research found children preferred to be alone, reported problems at school with other children 'name calling' and also became upset by other service-users in residential care who were loud and aggressive. Alongside the children's own reports of their experiences the authors observed children to become anxious when engaged in verbal communication. The methodological related findings of this report echoed those of Preece's 2002 report, as the researchers found anxiety and the children's idiosyncratic use of language prevented communication, and thus their participation in research.

The literature provided has been selected to illustrate the range of ways in which the experiences of autistic children have been researched. Some researchers continue to draw upon 'traditional' methods while others attempt to engage in a process of methodological adaptation, application or innovation (Wiles et al., 2011) in order to promote children's participation. A growing understanding of autistic children's experiences is developing however there continues to be a bias towards favouring adults' perspectives over that of the children themselves. In research there is also a growing sense that the characteristics of ASC should be considered before selecting the appropriate methodology and methods in order to promote children's participation. However, as Beresford, Preece and Jordan have illustrated involving autistic children in research has many challenges. As a consequence our understanding of children's experiences from *their* perspectives is limited, this is in part due to an absence of literature detailing how to 'get at' these perspectives. This is where I pick up, where the research problem arises from.

2.4. The Research Problem

The above discussion has highlighted how political movements, agendas and shifts in thinking have encouraged and facilitated the inclusion of children in research. The transition to more participatory approaches in research has failed to move at an equal pace for all children. Those children with disabilities have been observed to continue to fight for the rights and opportunities their non-disabled peers have and continue to acquire. Autistic children are just one example of a disabled group whose involvement in research has lagged behind that of their non-disabled peers. It is for this reason that this group is the selected case study for this research. Autistic children remain marginalised from research, which is reflected in the limited sociological account of the daily lives of this group. Whilst some authors have started to involve autistic children in research, literature on autism remains largely educational and more psychological. The psychological theories offered have been used to explain the causes of autism, yet they fail to provide an understanding of the experiences of autistic individuals. Therefore, it is from a sociological interpretivist understanding that I investigate how autistic children can be included in social research. The research problem to be answered is how can we best get at and understand the social worlds and experiences of autistic children? I should explicitly acknowledge that I am not the innovator, and that these methods have been created and used by other people, as illustrated above. However, the link with methodological innovation is that in one sense I am undertaking stage two of the innovation process of "trialling the innovation" (Cuttance, 2001: 166) by investigating how useful the methods are, and discovering what they enable us to find out about the experiences of autistic children. Beresford et al (2002) observed some methods were more appropriate than others at encouraging the involvement of autistic children in research, but they omitted to declare why. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explain why some methods are more appropriate than others and to suggest how these methods could and should be used. By appropriate I am referring to the suitability of methods, since methodological innovations may have been taken up by the social science community, but just as a method is selected based on its suitability to answering the research question, a method

should also be selected with consideration of its suitability to the research participants.

The following chapter details the selected methods used to explore this research problem and offers justifications regarding why the chosen methods were selected.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

To explore the research questions six qualitative methods were used. This chapter details the research approach, the design, research site and provides an account of each of the methods utilised. The discussion also addresses the ethical considerations associated with the methods and research sample and concludes with an explanation of how the data were analysed.

3.1. Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore how we can best get at and understand the social worlds and experiences of autistic children.

The research objectives are:

1. To explain why some methods are more appropriate than others.
2. To provide suggestions regarding how the chosen methods should / could be used.
3. To explore what the methods enable us to discover about the experiences of autistic children.

The research aim and objectives encourage an approach to be taken which advocates the use of several different research methods. I turn now to discuss the research approach and the chosen methods.

3.2. The Research Approach

In considering an approach to research that was suitable to answering the research questions two factors had to be considered. Firstly, the approach should enable a range of methods to be used. Secondly, the approach should also reflect the ontological position taken. Ontologically speaking I align myself Mead (1934) who observed society to be the sum product of the social interactions between individuals, and therefore social life is subjective and fluid. It is my belief that the best way to reach an understanding of society; of the subjectivity and fluidity of society, is for one to experience it, witness it in action and to utilise an epistemological approach which adopts '*the native's point of view*' (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, when selecting the research approach it became clear that the approach should be ethnographic.

3.2.1: Ethnography

Ethnography is not a single method of data collection, rather it is understood here to be a "style of research", which is characterised by its approach of "getting close to a setting" in order to understand the meanings and experiences of those in the setting (Brewer, 2000: 11). It was selected because it enabled me to study the students' "behaviour in everyday context" (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998: 110) and employ a range of "methods which capture their social meanings" (Brewer, 2000: 10) . Furthermore, ethnography enables researchers:

> to build, over a period of time, an account of the situation being studied which takes the view of the participants in the situation very seriously
>
> (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992: 99)

The important aspect highlighted here is the recognition that accounts of social life should be built "over a period of time" (Ackroyd and Hughes 1992: 99). This allows the researcher to witness the changing nature of behaviour, personalities and relationships of individuals. A snap-shot picture fails to provide an insight into the changing nature of social life and merely presents a momentary picture. In order 'to build an account of a situation' it is important one "understand[s] the context because situations affect behaviour and perspectives" (Cohen et al., 2007: 167). Thus, to understand the social world of autistic children I needed to understand the context they found themselves in, which in this instance was a special needs secondary school. I therefore needed to spend time in a school in order to experience and understand the social worlds of autistic children. In view of the research's focus carrying out an ethnography was deemed suitable due to its ability to "amplify the voices" of those individuals "on the social margins" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 124). Ethnographic principles advocate the use of a variety of data techniques as long as they 'sit comfortably' with the context (Brewer, 2000), which is a further benefit of the approach.

3.3. The Research Design

In keeping with the ethnographic tradition, this research employed a number of research practices with participant observation being the most enduring method. In this section I discuss the research site and sample before outlining the methods used.

3.3.1. The Research Site

Selection

Autistic children are considered to be a 'hard to reach' group and therefore Ladybarn, the school in question, was purposively selected as it not only fitted the criteria for a potential research site but I already had established contacts. Ladybarn is a special needs secondary school and once a previous place of employment and therefore I was aware of its specialism in autism.

Gaining Access

After identifying Ladybarn as a potential research site I approached the head teacher formally and arranged a meeting with her and the head of the autism unit. In advance of the meeting I sent an agenda, research proposal and the requirements I was seeking from a research site. I felt it was important to keep the meeting formal in order to clearly distinguish my role as a former employee and associate of Ladybarn from my position as a researcher. The meeting concluded and I was granted permission to use Ladybarn as the research site subject to approaching parents/ carers and students for their consent.

Organisation

Ladybarn's organisation in some respects is similar to a typical secondary school but in other respects it is rather unusual. Catering for a little over 100 students aged between 11 and 18 years of age, the students and staff are divided into four units, which are similar to the traditional school house system. However, rather than students being randomly allocated to the unit, as in the

case of school house systems, the students are divided based on the level of care and support needed. The four units are named appropriately: 1. 'Autism Spectrum Condition Unit' for autistic students; 2. 'Extra Provision Unit' for students who have severe learning difficulties; 3. 'Main-school' for students with moderate learning difficulties and/or behavioural problems; and 4. 'Post-16 provision' for students over 16 years of age of all abilities. Each unit's specific organisation varies slightly but I will concentrate only on the ASC unit since this is the specific site where the sample was selected.

The ASC unit is subdivided into three form groups, 1MP, 2VM and 3ED and this is where the distinction from a 'typical' secondary school is most apparent. Whereas a mainstream secondary school organisation would allocate pupils to forms based on year group this is not the case here. Mrs Parker is the tutor of form 1MP and the form comprises the year groups 7 and 8 (aged 11 to 13 years). Miss Morrison (1)[3] is the tutor of form 2VM and the students are a mixture of years 9 and 10 (aged 13-15 years) and Mr Douglas is the tutor of form 3ED and the students are in years 9, 10 and 11 (aged 13-16 years). Whilst this may appear to be a strange organisational structure, this is a subtle form of streaming because the students are divided according to who works best together. This is quite different from a division based on friendships but rather is an effort to separate those individuals who have the potential to aggravate each other. With the exception of English and Maths (where students are streamed according to ability) the students are taught in their tutor groups and as a consequence the timetabling structure is complicated by this. Similar to a mainstream school the students follow a timetable where they move around the school in order to be taught by the subject specific teacher. However, due to the mix of year groups the curriculum operates on a rolling timetable, which offers the ability to maintain the mixed year groups and ensures the students are taught the whole curriculum before they leave. For example, during the year spent at Ladybarn, class 1MP pupils were being taught from the year eight curriculum and in the following year this will change to the year seven curriculum. Whilst this appears a rather unusual arrangement it is a flexible

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[3] There are two teachers named Miss Morrison at Ladybarn and the students nicknamed them Miss Morrison-One and Miss Morrison-Two to distinguish them apart.

structure which the school believes ensures that each pupil is provided with the best possible working environment for their needs.

3.3.2. The Research Sample

The head teacher and the head of the ASC unit were the immediate gatekeepers to the sample. Once access to Ladybarn had been approved and research ethics approval from the School of Social Sciences at the University of Southampton granted, I still had to gain consent from the three groups of participants. The first group of participants, and the focus of this research, were the students of the ASC unit. The second and third groups of participants were the parents/carers and teachers of the participating students. Acting as secondary gatekeepers to the students were the parents / carers and so before the student sample could be approached I had to gain consent from these individuals. After consulting with Ladybarn I was advised to organise a parents' evening where the opportunity would be given to present the research, explain the involvement of their child and for questions or concerns to be raised. In order to be able to gain consent early in the academic year, and to fulfil Ladybarn's requests, the evening was arranged for the second week of the new academic year (14.09.10). In the previous July, 'save the date' letters were sent home to all parents/ carers via the school; 20 invites altogether. A second reminder of the parents evening was sent out the first week of September (2010) in which seven parents replied to inform me that they planned to attend the evening. However, the evening was less successful than the replies had suggested it would be, since only two parents attended. Following the presentation evening, a third round of letters was sent home with an information sheet and consent form attached and from this 14 consent sheets were returned over a period of ten days. In total 20 parents/carers were informed of the research and their consent sought for their child to participate, 14 replies were received, 6 parents/carers made no contact and thus their children did not participate in the research, leaving the total number of students initially participating at 14.

All names used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms and some non-participating students may feature in the field notes or other tasks, but these too are anonymised through use of pseudonyms. In order to clearly distinguish between individuals, I refer to students by their first name only, the parents by their first and surname and teachers are referred to as Mr, Mrs or Miss 'name'. A full list of participants' names and details can be found in appendix one.

Students

With the consent of parents/ carers obtained, I approached the students to gain their consent for (a) the overall study including the observations and (b) for each individual task in which they were due to participate. At the start of the project I sat down individually with four students and sought their consent. After talking through the information sheet and consent form with them it became clear that any consent gained from this process was not *informed* consent, and thus questionable. The decision was made not to pursue gaining written consent for the overall study from the students since it was felt it was meaningless (for further discussion see the ethics section). After consideration I felt that the parents'/ carers' written consent for their child to participate was sufficient for the observations and tasks to continue. With consent obtained from 14 parents/ carers, I started to observe all 14 students. However, after being at Ladybarn for several weeks, I found it difficult to observe three participants as these individuals were often working off site at the local college. I therefore took the decision to omit them from the study and focus on the 11 students I was able to work with regularly. Table 3.1 provides details of the sample. The sample included one set of siblings (Ben and Abby White).

Table 3: 1 Students

Participant	Gender	Year Group
Liam Ball	M	8
Josh Collins	M	7
Lydia (Lyds) Gunn	F	10
Joseph (Joe) Knight	M	10
Jake Knox	M	8
Elliot Mason	M	7
Harry Patterson	M	7
Owen Webster	M	7
Paige West	F	7
Abby White	F	7
Ben White	M	9

Parents / Carers

Four sets of parents/ carers consented to be interviewed. Three of the four interviews were conducted with the primary female parent/carer, whereas the fourth was conducted with both the male and female parent/carer. The table below offers a summary of who was interviewed.

Table 3: 2 Parents / Carers

Name	Parent or Carer	Student
Sally Ball	Parent	Liam Ball
Leo Ball	Parent	
Mia Lawrence	Carer	Owen Webster
Deborah Mason	Parent	Elliot Mason
Alexandra White	Parent	Abby White
		Ben White

Teachers

I prefer to use the term teachers to refer to all members of staff at Ladybarn, including the teaching and learning support assistants (LSAs) because this is in keeping with Ladybarn's terminology. The teachers feature more generally in the field notes but their involvement as research participants came through the focus groups. Eleven teachers participated in the focus groups and these included the teachers of the ASC department and those teachers who delivered the research tasks. The table presents details of these teachers; and it should be noted that Miss Morrison (1) and (2) were sisters who had been assigned the numbers 'one' and 'two' by the students to help distinguish them apart.

Table 3: 3 Teachers

Name	Subject
Mrs Andrews	LSA
Mr Douglas	Art
Mrs Fletcher	LSA
Mrs McIntosh	LSA
Miss Miller	LSA
Miss Morrison (1)	Form tutor of 2VM
Miss Morrison (2)	LSA
Mrs Parker	Head of ASC + form tutor of 1MP
Mr Stevens	English
Miss Young	LSA
Mr Ward	Drama

3.3.3. Research Site and Researcher's Role

Gaining access to research participants is a notorious challenge experienced by many social researchers, especially those working with 'vulnerable' individuals.

However, it was a challenge that proved to be less testing when a (former) place of employment doubled as the research setting.

Having negotiated access at the end of the academic year 2009-2010 it was my intention to join Ladybarn at the start of the following academic year (2010-2011). This was decided because in a school setting it is common practice for individuals to join or leave the school during the transition between terms. It therefore would have been more disruptive to join part way through a term. In addition it was my experience that by joining at the start of a new year I had in effect established myself as part of the class dynamic from the outset. That said, I still needed to work to gain students' trust and to establish my role with the staff. In order to encourage this, for the first four months I spent four days a week at Ladybarn spending two days per week with each class (1MP and 2VM). As I became a more trusted member of the class, and as my understanding of each student grew, I gradually reduced the number of days spent at school. The timetable organisation during the third term (Jan-Feb) meant that the two activities scheduled to take place (photography and patchwork) coincidentally fell on the same day. Thus during this term I spent three days a week at Ladybarn, one day with each class and one day carrying out the activities with both classes. For the fourth and final term (March-April) I began to employ an exit strategy and further reduced the number of days at school. The same level of consideration had to be given to leaving the field as to entering it. After spending eight months working closely with the students, relationships had been established and in order to be sensitive to these relationships, exiting the field had to be carried out delicately. Thus during the fourth term I reduced my time to two days per week so to progressively leave the field, which would provide the students with time to become accustomed to my leaving. The level of attention given to leaving the field may seem somewhat excessive. However, one challenge frequently encountered by autistic individuals is a difficulty in coping with change (Baron-Cohen, 2008). Change has to be introduced gradually as a sudden change in circumstances can cause an autistic individual to become anxious. Therefore, by gradually leaving the field and by leaving at the end of a school term I hoped to prevent any anxiety a change in circumstances may have caused.

As change is difficult for autistic individuals, there is a need for consistency and routine and this became most clear when I received a telling off from one participant. "*Why weren't you here the other Tuesday? You are always here on Tuesdays*" (Joseph). The particular week being referred to, I had purposefully changed my time at school to try and achieve a more holistic view of the students' behaviour. After all, one's behaviour on a Monday morning may be rather different to that of a Friday afternoon. Joseph's remark was symptomatic of the anxiety he had experienced caused by the change of routine and from this point forward, I fully understood how consistency was important to the students. I experienced it to be a juggling act, trying to observe students over a variety of days and yet provide them with consistency and routine. I found achieving this balance difficult and in order not to disrupt their routine I attended Ladybarn on the same days for a complete term.

My time at Ladybarn

Prior to the research I spent an academic year with Ladybarn (2008-2009) where I was employed in the Extra Provision Unit. During my employment I did not have direct contact with students outside of the unit; however I began to know of other students due to time spent on break time duty. During my time I forged relationships with staff from different departments but due to the limited contact with students I would describe my position when re-joining Ladybarn for research purposes as part insider and part outsider.

Experiences of transforming a work place into a research site

My experience of researching in a former work place was a confusing one as my role was a mixture of insider (with staff) and outsider (with students). This position meant that whilst I was able to draw upon the advantages of each position, I was also susceptible to the challenges posed by each. The principal

benefit of assuming an insider position was the prior-knowledge I had of Ladybarn's organisation, administrative matters and its codes of conduct. Having prior-knowledge of the social group has been observed to encourage a greater understanding between the researcher and the researched (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Furthermore, Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) suggest that the established relationship can encourage participants to allow the researcher "back stage" (2002: 9). As an insider in the eyes of the teachers, I felt that they allowed me 'back stage' immediately as I was instantly privy to staff room conversations.

Another advantage of assuming an insider role was having free movement around Ladybarn. As Lofland and Lofland observe:

> [A] known investigator can enjoy the tremendous advantage of being able to move about, observe, or question in a relatively unrestricted way. Only common standards of decorum, tact, courtesy, and circumspection, that is, only the necessity of getting along with the participants need interfere with their "snooping" and "prying", and note taking is generally not problematic.
>
> (Lofland and Lofland, 1995: 72)

Not only was I able to move freely around the school, joining and leaving classes as I wished, but the staff at Ladybarn were also enormously generous with their time. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) further recognise that an insider is likely to experience higher levels of trust and cooperation. I felt that it was on the occasions where scheduling the tasks was a little difficult that my insider status was at its most advantageous.

It was clear that occupying an insider position, or at least being viewed as an insider by the teachers, was advantageous. However, I felt this position was at times misused or misunderstood and an example of this was when I was left to attend to lunchtime playground duty:

I had been talking with two teachers as the students were making their way back from the lunch hall. Some were heading out to the Weston Yard playground whilst some, including Abby, Owen and Harry were out in the Quad (the designated ASC playground). It had been a busy morning with lots of events to remember so I took the opportunity to write notes. The room went quiet and 10 minutes must have passed when the silence was interrupted with Owen and Harry bursting into the room "Miss, come here. Abby needs you". It's not unusual for several women to answer to a cry of 'Miss' and so I stood to go with them. Abby was knelt in the centre of the Quad and had managed to get herself stuck in a large plant pot. It was only after freeing her that I realised that I was in fact the only 'Miss' in the room at the time, the only adult able to attend to the situation. I then spent the remainder of lunchtime on duty and it was not until after lunch that a member of staff returned.

(16.11.10)

It was complimentary to be able to work with the students on a one to one basis, but I felt that being left on duty was a misuse of my role. An insider position may make a researcher susceptible to being seen as an additional pair of hands (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Therefore, on re-joining Ladybarn I worked to distinguish myself from the role of an employee and to establish myself as a researcher, especially with the staff. Measures taken to impose this distance included being open about the research demands and progress, as well as distancing myself from staff duties, such as staff meetings, registering attendance or matters of discipline. I was conscious to spend time with and support students only as part of the research.

On the whole my experience of researching at a former work place was beneficial and challenging, but this I feel is reflective of the research process more than it is reflective of researching at a former work place.

3.4 Methods

In order to address the research question it was necessary to draw upon a variety of research methods. I drew upon more 'traditional' methods alongside the more 'innovative' methods and this section outlines the methods employed.

'Traditional' Methods

The two 'traditional' methods chosen were selected because they offer additional perspectives on the social worlds of children; by additional I mean in addition to the perspective of the child themselves. Categorised as methods typically used in research '*on*' or even '*for*' children the methods were selected to provide a range of methods to explore the research question.

3.4.1 Observations

It is almost a prerequisite for a researcher taking an ethnographic approach to make use of observations. Assuming an ontology which values the interactions of people and recognises social life to be fluid lends itself to an epistemology which reflects this vantage point. Observations are sensitive to the setting and allow for participation and observation, which enables the ethnographer to reach an understanding through direct experience.

Research Design

The observations occurred continuously throughout my time at Ladybarn and they provided the opportunity to witness students' behaviour on a day by day basis at first hand. An advantage of observations becomes clear when it is

acknowledged that people can behave differently compared to their self-reported behaviour. It should also be acknowledged that the presence of an observer "transforms the [setting's] dynamics" (Mason, 2002: 88) and can influence the behaviour of those observed. However, it was hoped that due to the longevity of the observations that any direct and conscious effect it may have on students' behaviour could not be maintained consistently for eight months.

Researcher Role

I have frequently referred to myself as a member of the classes; and to an extent I did regard myself as such, but it was a role which was also imposed upon me. This raises issues associated with insider/ outsider perspectives as well as fears of going native (Williams, 2003). I feel it is possible to feel a sense of belonging with a group without moving into the 'going native' territory. It was the case that I was referred to as a member, I felt a sense of belonging, but like all social groups, each member performs their own distinct roles. Ladybarn, like all communities, consisted of numerous individuals who each fulfilled a unique role and my role was a research student. It was possible to perform this role, applying enough distance to achieve the appropriate level of critical questioning, at the same time as engaging in the setting so to learn about the social world by being in it. In order to maintain the distance needed to observe with a questioning eye, I made sure people were reminded of my temporary membership. The very process of taking field notes and meeting supervisors regularly served as reminders that I had a purpose at Ladybarn. Through maintaining regular contact and writing regular field notes, the thoughts "where are the data" and "are the research objectives being met" were never far from my mind.

From the outset I was introduced to the class by Mrs Parker as "Miss Ellis, who will be joining our class and will be with us until Easter. She is here to help her with her University course and if you need help she can help you". My

introduction propelled me into my desired position where I would engage with the students and they were encouraged to engage with me. When I entered the field I wanted to remain faithful to the key principles of ethnography, therefore, to acquire an understanding of the students' social worlds I had to do more than observe, I had to immerse myself and participate in these. Observations take many forms, from complete observations to complete participation; and Cohen et al (2007) offer a succinct account of this. Starting from the ontological position taken to this research, the observations lend themselves to be that of participant-observations. However, according to Alvesson (2003), the term participant-observer places emphasis on participating before observing. He further argues that the researcher is rarely a pure ethnographer, "in the sense of a professional stranger" (Alvesson, 2003: 174) and so the position is better termed observing-participant. I find this better accounts for my role as I was chiefly observing which was achieved through and alongside participating. However, my role did shift in instances, for example there were times when I was more of a participant than observer (when I was left on duty) and times where I was more an observer than participant (during the delivery of the research tasks).

Upon (re)joining Ladybarn the students appeared not to be phased by my presence, the new intake were familiarizing themselves with all aspects of the school and so I was just another adult whom they had to get to know. The older years (years 9, 10 and 11) had remembered me from my time of employment and were more concerned about where I had been for a year than why I had returned. It was important to me that I was honest with them and so I answered all questions that were asked of me. I felt it was respectful to share myself with the students as I was hoping they would share themselves with me. As I became more familiar and trusted this reciprocity was observed on a daily basis, by working in the classes and by responding to their requests for help I was participating in their social worlds as well as satisfying the research demands.

Observer

When I first joined Ladybarn I had a small level of information of some students, for example their name and year group, and so I was really getting to know them for the first time. I found observing numerous students at once challenging because it felt as though there was too much to be taking note of. It proved useful to consult methodologists such as Cohen et al (2007), Denscombe (2007) and Freebody (2003) although I found Morrison's (1993) guidance most useful. He proposed that observations should be guided by a focus towards the physical environment, human characteristics and the interactional. Whilst I was initially cautious in pigeon-holing my observations, I found this advice helped direct my gaze. I was able to take note of a variety of behaviours whilst being reminded to focus on the wider environment and to use all my senses to achieve this. Observations are more than what is seen; they also include what is heard or sensed (Morrison, 1993). I was reminded therefore to take notes on the physical layout of the environment *and* the atmosphere and what contributed to its creation. When I first began observing, I was taking note of incidents which helped me understand the students; for example, their temperament, behaviour and interests as well as information regarding their academic abilities. Getting to know these aspects helped to build a rapport as well as informing the design of the specific activities. I felt that once a rapport had been established that I could go on to raise questions regarding the students' social worlds and experiences. My observations then progressed onto honing in on specific lines of enquiry as well as continuing to observe more broadly.

Capturing Data

Due to the volume of information I had to record, and because I wanted to capture information on all participants equally, I decided to be explicit with my note taking. It would be naïve to think that my overt note taking did not affect those around me but I felt it vital to accurately document events.

By the end of my time at Ladybarn the notebook became a feature of identity, those around me became more concerned when the book was absent than when it was present, often questioning "*do you not use your diary anymore?*" I was conscious of the effect my note taking was having but it appeared to be the staff, rather than the students, who were concerned. My 'insider' status encouraged an open dialogue where staff felt able to question, albeit with a concerned tone, "what do you take notes of, me?" Given the familiarity I had, I was able to assure them that the notes were of the participating students and on several occasions I volunteered the notebook in order to maintain an open rapport. Only in two instances did the staff accept this offer but all appeared to be reassured, if a little startled, by the proposition of reading it. Towards the end of the first term it was noticeable that the staff became more at ease with the note taking and I was also becoming more savvy in how I would take notes. Most of the students paid little attention to the note taking and it seemed to have little effect on them. I believe this was because they were aware that I was working at Ladybarn 'to help with my university course' and therefore the notebook was considered a diary for my 'teachers'. Furthermore, schools are locations where children are subject to high levels of surveillance (Richards, 2012) and so it is conceivable to suggest that the students were also used to high levels of observations. Therefore, whilst it was the catalyst for uncomfortable staff, it had relatively little effect on the students, and eventually I think the note taking became invisible to the staffs' and students' eyes.

I felt it to be important to capture events as authentically as I could in order to provide an accurate account of the students and setting. Relying on my memory would have led to data being missed or inaccurately recalled. Taking jot notes in the field soon after the events had occurred assisted me when I came to write more comprehensive notes after school. During my time at Ladybarn I also maintained a research journal that was distinct from the field note entries. Field notes were a record of incidents which occurred at school which involved the students, whereas the research journal was a more subjective account of my feelings towards the research process. The two

separate diaries had to be updated after each visit to school and when necessary. It was a time consuming and labour intensive process but a process intrinsic to ethnography. There were times when I had wished for a short cut but in regularly writing both diaries it not only provided a record of events at school but was a useful means of documenting my journey.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviews have many forms from the structured, semi-structured or unstructured verbal interviews, to focus groups. This list here is by no means exhaustive or agreed upon, Cohen et al (2007) categorise interviews into four groups, Mason (2002) talks of the qualitative interview which is used as an umbrella term for three types of interviews, whilst Freebody (2003: 133) discusses interviews in relation to a "three-part taxonomy".

Interviews are a dynamic method which enable the constructed social world to be reconstructed and captured through the interactions between the interviewee(s) and interviewer. The two chosen interview types used here were semi-structured interviews (with parents/ carers) and focus groups (with teachers). The decision for using two different interview techniques was to capture different perspectives. Interviews were carried out with parents as it was my preference to provide the opportunity to speak in depth about one child and it was anticipated to be a means of following up specific lines of enquiry. On the other hand, focus groups were selected for use with teachers as they would provide the opportunity to uncover the agreements or disagreements over the perceived experiences of all the students as well as specific individuals. Focus groups offer the chance for the researcher to observe group interaction, and therefore focus groups help to uncover the reasons behind the opinions that are expressed. It was, therefore, important to explore the agreements or disagreements over the perceived experiences of the students as this provided an opportunity to explore the reasons why the teachers held these views.

The objective of the interviews was to provide the opportunity for the parents/ carers and teachers to discuss their opinion of the experiences and social worlds of the children. They were also an opportunity for interviewees to reflect upon the research process and offer suggestions on the suitability of the methods (see appendix eight for the interview schedules). Therefore, all interviews were scheduled towards the end of my time at Ladybarn in order to allow interviewees to reflect upon the research process. Furthermore, it was felt that these interviews would provide a perspective on the children's experiences and so carrying out the interviews towards the end of the data collection would limit the number of preconceptions I was entering the field with.

To arrange the interviews, invitations to participate were sent to all parents/ carers of the participating students in the first week of February. Invitations were distributed via the students' home/ school communication books which the teachers and parents/ carers use on a daily basis. Although these were thought to be a reliable means of communicating with home, only two (positive) replies were sent back in the first wave of invitations. A second wave was sent in the post at the end of February to eliminate the possibility that the invitations could be removed from the books before they reached home. From this, five replies were returned amounting to a total of seven out of eleven responses.

I offered the parents/ carers the opportunity to suggest their preferred time and location (see appendix three). Of the five participating parents/ carers, two interviews were carried out at the family home and the other three were carried out at Ladybarn. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, one parent cancelled the interview at the last moment. Efforts were made to reschedule but this was unsuccessful. The total number of interviews conducted was four (refer to section 3.2.2 for participant details). The interviews lasted between 60

and 90 minutes and were audio-recorded. Consent was sought at the start of all interviews and the participants were given an information sheet and required to sign a consent form (see appendices).

The focus groups with teachers took place one evening after school in November 2011 and each lasted one hour. One challenge with focus groups is to ensure there is an adequate number of participants and also that the dynamics and power relations are as far as possible evenly balanced. In the interests of this, I organised two focus groups; the first with the teaching staff who carried out the research tasks, consisting of five individuals, and the second with the learning support assistants of forms 1MP and 2VM, consisting of four individuals. Dividing the focus groups in this way encouraged an open dialogue as the power relations were evenly balanced in terms of position in the school. In the interest of balancing the power dynamics, I interviewed Mrs Parker (head of ASC and assistant head of Ladybarn) alone, which also provided the opportunity to discuss matters specific to autism and the department.

'Non-Traditional' Methods

The student-centred tasks were selected because they offered an alternative means of communicating. By this I refer to the different skills the tasks drew upon, for example, written (essay), visual (photography), creative (patchwork) and verbal (the discussion around the activities) and also team work (documentary). Considering the triad of impairments, I recognised the potential challenges associated with some tasks but I viewed it as important to use a variety of research methods. Furthermore, one should not disregard an activity because an impairment which is associated with the condition suggests it might be challenging. It is important to remember the associated impairments affect individuals differently and that autistic children are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, the methods were selected because in order to truly discover which methods are most appropriate a range of methods

which draw on different skills and capabilities of the students should be explored.

Each of the research tasks was delivered by a teacher in a lesson that was most closely related to the tasks; for example, Mrs Parker delivered the essay task in an English lesson. It was a purposeful decision to involve teachers in the delivery of the tasks for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to eliminate the potential of the tasks 'failing' due to my inexperience of leading activities with autistic children. Secondly, it was the process of delivering the tasks which was of interest to me, and therefore, with the teachers delivering the tasks I was free to observe the process of how the activities were structured. The role of the five teachers who delivered the tasks has parallels with a 'co-researcher' position. This is because the teachers and I worked collaboratively, sharing the research responsibilities, during this phase of the research to complete the tasks. I compiled an information sheet, which was structured enough to ensure the research requirements were met, but was flexible enough to allow the teachers to tailor the activity according to the students' needs. While I retained overall control of the research direction, during the delivery of the tasks the teachers were solely responsible for how the tasks were structured. It was both useful and important to collaboratively work with the teachers in this manner as it enabled me to observe, and learn from the teachers how to encourage the participation of autistic children in the tasks.

3.4.3 Essay

The essay (the writing task) was the first of the methods to be completed by the students and it was the most language dependent task. The method was used to explore how the students saw their futures, which is similar to other authors' use of the method (Veness, 1962; Pahl, 1978; Elliott, 2010; McDonald et al., 2011; Lyon and Crow, 2012). Veness (1962) made use of this method with school leavers to investigate how they perceived their futures and she gave the students the following instruction:

> I want you to imagine that you are a great deal older than you
> are now, and that you are towards the end of your life in fact.
> And I want you to look back over your life and say what
> happened to you.

<div align="right">(1962: 205)</div>

The method has been reported to provide great insight in to participants' lives. Pahl (1978) reported to be impressed by the realistic expectations of the essays as many wrote of employment prospects and other difficulties faced in life. The inclusion of family and work in the essays is reported to also "tell us a lot about taken for granted community norms" (Lyon and Crow, 2012: 514). The imaginative essay method was also used to explore notions of gender and a reported advantage is that the method "provides insight into children's understandings of the social world and their place within it" (Elliott, 2010: 1082). Furthermore, Elliot notes that asking an individual to imagine themselves at a given stage means that for the essay to be 'successful' it "has to show some degree of continuity with [their] current circumstances and sense of self" (2010: 1078).

The dependency on language and verbal ability as well as the need to 'imagine' were two factors which I was cautious of when selecting the method. This was because autistic children often experience language delay and therefore it is not unusual for them to undergo speech and language therapy when at school. In this instance many of the students were participating in speech and language therapy and in some cases students were spoken to in simplified, clipped language. The associated impairment in social imagination was another factor which I was cautious of. According to the triad of impairments autistic children are challenged by social imagination and find it difficult to imagine anything other than the immediate. In light of these cautions, questions may be asked regarding the selection of a language based and imaginative method. The rationale is simple; autism is on a spectrum and as such autistic individuals will ultimately experience different types and severity of impairments.

I recognised the potential challenges of the method but the decision to include this task was because of the observed benefits discussed above. The decision to keep the essay title focused on imagining one's future was for the very reason highlighted by Elliot (2010). A writing task about the present day might have been foreseen as an easier task for the students in question. However I was keen to provide them with the opportunity to write about their futures to see if it would yield information about their future trajectories, current circumstances and sense of self.

Research Design

The original research design designated five lessons for completing the task; however, I was advised by Mrs Parker that the task would require fewer lessons than originally planned. I was advised that "*autistic children require a clear beginning, middle and end*" and therefore this structure was best implemented over three lessons. I incorporated the advice from this initial consultation into the information sheet (see appendix nine).

The activity took place with form 2VM led by Miss Morrison (1) over three English lessons in the second week of term two, and Mrs Parker used three lessons to complete the activity with her form in week three. All 11 students participated in the task to some degree, ten essays were completed and one essay (Joseph's) was incomplete because commitments preventing him from attending two lessons.

3.4.4 Photography

The photography method was selected because autistic children are reported to be visual learners who often make use of visual supports and aids (Attwood, 1998). A widely used resource at Ladybarn was PECS (see chapter 2), which

were used to visually display the students' daily, lunchtime and after school routines (see figure 3.1).

Figure 3: 1 After school schedule
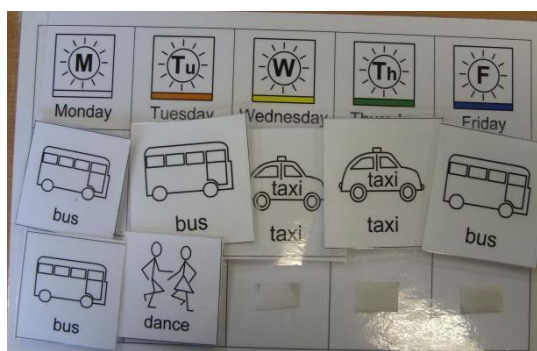
A further example of visual supports which are often used with autistic children is Gray's Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations (2001), which use illustrations to help autistic children to manage social situations and conversations respectively. Therefore, due to the predisposition of many autistic individuals to think visually it seemed appropriate to include a visual method in the research.

The use of visual research methods is not an innovative approach to research since visual methods have previously been used to facilitate the participation of children in research. For example, they have been used to research autistic children's experiences of residential care (Preece, 2002) and their experiences of social care (Preece and Jordan, 2010). Preece (2010) found that children enjoyed talking about their photographs, and it made communication easier. Similarly, Beresford et al (2004) also used photography when investigating strategies of including autistic children in a social care research project. They echoed the findings of Preece but also concluded that the use of photographs reduced the children's anxiety about participating in the project.

Research Design

The photography project took place during term three, it lasted between four and six weeks and was delivered by Mr Stevens in Media lessons. The instructions were for the students to take photographs of people, places or objects which they believe will tell people about their lives (see appendix nine).

A single use disposable camera with flash and 27 exposure was issued to each student along with a leaflet (see appendix six). The leaflet outlined the stages of the activity, discussed appropriate and inappropriate use of the camera as well as serving as a notebook. This information was presented visually and was something concrete the students could refer back to if necessary. The leaflets were only a resource as the actual delivery and organisation of the lessons was left to Mr Stevens.

3.4.5 Patchwork Quilt

This method required students to express themselves through art and to use their creative skills to make a patch which reflected their personality, experience and social worlds. The patchwork quilt was an activity with a dual interest; it provided a personal interest, because each student was required to reflect themselves through their patch, and a group interest, because the pieces would come together as one unit of work to reflect them all.

The primary reason the task was selected was because the activity was a creative one which was less reliant upon the verbal communication skills of the participating students. Gauntlett, an advocate for creative methods, used Lego to explore identity and notes the following about the use of Lego as a research method:

> [It is] a kind of research which enables people to communicate in a meaningful way about their identities and experiences, and their own thoughts...through creatively making things themselves, and reflecting upon what they've made

> (Gauntlett, 2006: 82)

The patchwork quilt activity acts in a similar vein to Gauntlett's use of Lego, it is a research method which provides an alternative means for individuals to communicate through creating something tangible which they are able to reflect upon. Furthermore, patchwork quilts in the traditional sense have been recognised to possess a "layer of narrative" because "the experiences and thoughts you have whilst making a quilt end up stitched into it" (Bunting, 2010: 1). Although Bunting was commenting on the traditional sense of patchwork quilting this, along with Gauntlett's use of creative methods, serves to illustrate how individuals can reflect their thoughts, experiences and identity through creative means.

The second reason the task was selected was because it held the potential to promote communication between myself and the students. Although the activity provided an alternative means of communicating, the patches were complemented by a verbal explanation. In the absence of these explanations, the viewer would have to engage in a process of interpretation, theorising what they thought the creator was trying to convey. As a result there would be a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1975) and the viewer of the quilt would obtain a partial understanding of the creator's intended meaning. It was therefore necessary that the creator interpreted their creation (Guantlett, 2006). In consideration of the associated challenges of social communication for many autistic children, I engaged sensitively with the participants to talk about their creation during the process of creating the patch. Beresford et al (2004) recognised that the use of creative methods gives the researcher and participant a joint focus to start talking from. Quite often having the joint focus and something tangible to talk about has proven successful in reducing social anxiety, promoting communication and thus participation in research

with autistic children (Beresford et al., 2004; Preece and Jordan, 2010; Clark and Moss, 2001; Mitchell et al., 2009). Engaging with participants during the process of creating the quilt encouraged an explanation of the patch and it offered the opportunity to explore avenues which opened up when talking about their creation.

Research Design

The activity ran in conjunction with the photography project during term three and Mr Douglas delivered the activity in his art lessons. The students were asked to design and create a patch which reflected their personality (see appendices for instructions).

To introduce the activity the students were taught the concept of using art as a visual representation of one's personality. Famous artists were used as examples to illustrate how they portrayed themselves through their art work. An example of a patchwork quilt was also provided in order to give the students a visual example to work from. The students were each allocated one white, 40 by 40 centimetre square cotton patch as a base to work on. To create their design the students were offered an assortment of materials to choose from; these ranged from fabric off cuts to coloured lollypop sticks. In order to assemble the patch, transparent fabric glue was provided as it was considered by Mr Douglas to be the most accessible means of creating the patch.

3.4.6 Documentary

The drama production required students to write, perform and record a documentary. A key aspect of the task was to encourage the students to reflect upon the previous tasks to help them with the activity. It was for this reason that the activity was scheduled to be the last activity the students participated in. The documentary was also an opportunity to observe all the students as they worked collaboratively in the group project. It offered an opportunity to observe the dynamics and interactions between individuals who due to the naturally occurring organisation of school were separated into form groups.

The task also offered students a degree of control over the direction of the research. I hesitate to describe it as an emancipatory method since it took place in a context steeped in power relations and hierarchy; but it was the most child-directed task. Other similar tasks have been recognised to engage participants, especially when technology is involved, because young people today are reportedly increasingly confident and able with the use of technology (Weller, 2012).

The history of using cameras in social research has been dominated by still image cameras, although the popularity of using video cameras has substantially increased (Erickson, 2011). The use of video cameras has been shown to be a useful research tool and children are just one group who have successfully used video cameras in research (Gauntlett, 2006; Buckingham and Block, 2005; Holland and Renold, 2008). Providing participants with cameras is also one way to relinquish control and here it was an opportunity for students to work more autonomously. This was a method much more reflective of the principles of researching '*with*' children and was designed to allow students to speak freely on topic(s) of their choosing.

The task was delivered by Mr Ward and took place over the course of one day, made possible due to Ladybarn's ten day rolling timetable. The timetable was designed in such a way that every tenth day, every second Friday, was spent off timetable and the students participated in activities arranged around a particular theme. 'Theme days' provided the opportunity for students to experience activities that might not be easily included in the normal everyday lessons. The overarching theme for the fourth term was 'Children and Young People's Rights' and the activity took place on the theme day titled 'Creative Technologies'.

I consulted Mr Ward who advised me that "*a documentary would be them being them*" and that it would be more suitable than an activity asking students to write, record and produce a film about the lives of autistic people. He advised that the latter activity "*would be them being someone else, and that's too abstract*" and so the activity became a documentary which would personalise the activity as well as make it concrete and thus easier to understand. Therefore, the students were given the broad instructions to write, perform and record a documentary (see appendices for instructions).

Students were provided with an assortment of recording equipment that included one standard hand held camera and several smaller cameras with a 'snap shot' function.

3.5 Ethics

Whether utilising 'traditional' or 'non-traditional' methods, ethical considerations are always rife in social research where minors are concerned. I was required to apply to the University for ethics approval for the research and

approval was granted without any suggested alterations. However, it was my experience that consideration of ethics was not over on receiving this approval.

3.5.1 Ethics: The Application

When writing the application I consulted the ethical considerations outlined by professional associations such as the British Sociological Association and the British Educational Research Association.

In the application I outlined key considerations such as the need to acquire informed consent, which is "the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without duress, prior to the research getting underway" (British Educational Research Association, 2004: 6). It has always been my position that informed consent should be sought from the participating students. However, legal requirements do mean that consent should also be sought from parents/ guardians of the children. Taking this into account I acted according to the position that if the adult consents on behalf of the student yet the student declines it is the student's refusal that is respected (British Medical Association, 2001). Therefore, two separate information sheets and consent forms were drawn up, one for parents/ carers and another for students. Consent sheets were also drawn up for the parents/ carers permission to participate in the interview and for the teacher's consent to be interviewed.

A further consideration regarding issues around informed consent was the topic of power (Greig et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2007). The issue of power posed many questions including, how will the power relations operating within a school setting influence a student's decision to participate? Because a school is riddled with power relations, existing most obviously between teacher and pupil, when a school is also a research site it is important to ensure that the typical power relations do not impede the research process. It was possible

that the students would consent in order to be compliant or in order not to be the 'odd one out'. Therefore, I needed to be vigilant and to distinguish between informed consent and a student being co-operative. However, as discussed below such distinction was at first not easy.

The final consideration taken was how to maintain anonymity. It was stated that measures would be taken to promote anonymity but guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality could not be promised. Whilst both could be encouraged confidentiality especially would be partially agreed in light of the 1989 Children Act (Department of Children Schools and Families, 1989). The Act places a duty of care with adults to protect minors and details that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed to minors or where minors are concerned. Instead confidentiality is provisionally given but always with the acknowledgement that this would be breached if the welfare or safety of minors is believed to be in jeopardy.

The decision was made to promote anonymity through the use of pseudonyms; pseudonyms are prescribed to everyone who features in the reporting of the research including the school's name, Ladybarn. Furthermore, to promote anonymity all visual images used have been anonymised through blurring. How, and if, a researcher should anonymise visual images is a contested issue (Wiles et al.,2008; 2012). However, before consent was gained for the students to participate in the research I informed teachers and parents/ carers that measures would be taken to protect the anonymity of the students. This has been achieved through blurring faces and other aspects of the images which might reveal the students' or school's identity. It was important to me to preserve the authenticity of the images because I consider them a valuable contributor to the understanding of students' social worlds. Therefore, in order to strike a balance between protecting the students' identities and preserving the authenticity of the images I elected to blur only selected parts of the images. The decision to blur the images was reached after I tried the method of blanking out and pixilating which were either a detriment to the authenticity of the image or offered little anonymity respectively. Blurring was considered

to offer a middle approach that both preserved the authenticity of the image and offered protection.

3.5.2 Ethics: More Than an Application

I embarked upon the research with the belief that children are competent social agents and therefore their written consent should be sought. However, my experience was rather different to the consensual process I had anticipated. Obtaining written consent from each student was difficult to achieve. This is not to say that they were unable, but rather it reflects more the means by which consent was sought. Just as the choice of research method needs to be appropriate to the participating group, so too does the means of gaining consent. I initially attempted to gain the written consent of the students, first by talking through the information sheet with three of them and then asking them to sign the consent form. This however proved to be meaningless since I felt that I was able to manipulate the students into signing the consent form. I was not sufficiently convinced that the students were any more informed after reading the information sheet, in fact it became clear that both the information sheet and the consent form were more to satisfy the ethics committee than the students' needs. The students were more interested in why I carried a diary with me, could I help them with their work and they were more than able in asking these questions of me. The supplementary information provided in the documents served only to confuse them as they had no desire to know the information and were baffled as to why I was telling them it. From this point forward I elected not to gain the written consent of the students. Although I was operating without the written consent of the students I was working with parental consent and I was doing so in a school environment where numerous gatekeepers act in safeguarding the students. Furthermore, I was not operating outside of the students' consent as such but rather their consent was being gained regularly with each new encounter and activity. The students were capable of voicing their reservations about participating and gave their consent through their actions, i.e. their willingness to participate or talk to me.

The process of applying to the ethics committee was a useful one, however in reality things do not always go according to plan, unforeseen circumstances arise and participants do not always react the way you had anticipated. It becomes most apparent that ethics is an on-going process rather than just an application when unforeseen events occur.

The lesson started with a discussion each taking it in turns to talk about what they might do as adults. Miss Morrison (1) asked the class where they might be living when they are older. Vishal responded with a definite: "16. House of my own". The same question was asked of Ben: "That is at 16 to 18 Vishal? Where do you think you'll be living Ben?" Ben squealed "20!" Miss Morrison repeated: "So you will be living on your own at 20?" Ben burst into a flood of tears "No, no, I don't want to live on my own. I'm just a teenager". We were all a little surprised by the tears, "Will you leave home when you're older Ben?" Miss Morrison questioned. Ben: "NO, NO I want to stay at school. I'm just a teenager". He threw his head into his hands and flopped down on the table sobbing into his arm.

(09.11.10)

Just because you have failed to foresee an event does not mean that the research is unethical. Rather it is a case of when these events do occur it is how you react and deal with the situation which determines your ethical credibility. Miss Morrison and I took several measures during the activity to reassure Ben that he did not have to leave home and that it was up to him what he did and wrote in his essay. However, the anxiety caused by the activity persisted throughout the remainder of the day. Using Ben's home-school communication book I wrote to his parents to explain what had caused Ben's anxiety and how this was dealt with, in order put them in an informed position to understand his upset when he returned home from school. The following morning Ben's mother informed me that Ben had remained anxious all night but that she was able to reassure him and ease his worries. This example illustrates the importance of sensitively responding to a situation. In this instance leaving Ben without support or not informing his parents would have

been unethical rather than the unethical aspect being not predicting or preventing his upset.

In some other instances behaving ethically requires a move towards abandoning, albeit temporarily, the research or researcher role. The second example refers back to the story in section 3.2.3 where Abby became stuck one break time and I was the only adult able to attend to this incident. This account illustrates the most ethical practice is one which prioritises the participants' safety and in this instance also those non-participating students' safety. Regardless of the research demands, or as in this example where the responsibility fell, the safety and welfare of the participants and others in the field should come first.

Working in such a dynamic environment for eight months I have learnt that it is impossible to predict all eventualities before entering the field. It became clear that ethics is much more than an application you submit to a committee for review, it is a way of being, it manifests in all that you do and the way you behave. That is not to say the process of submitting an application is a futile one but rather it is the start of a continuing process; ethics must be a consideration and negotiated continually throughout all aspects of the research.

3.6 Analysis

The use of traditional and less traditional methods encouraged a wealth of data of different formats to be collected. Upon completion of the data collection phase the data needed to be analysed and interpreted in order to answer the research problem.

The following discussion is split into two sections the approach to data analysis and the rationale behind it is addressed in the first section, details of the analysis is provided in the second section.

3.6.1. Data Analysis Technique

The analysis of ethnographic data is inductive in nature; the theoretical and abstract findings emerge from the data (Murchison, 2010). This is similar to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) Grounded Theory method to data analysis. However, I was more concerned with generating explanations and descriptions about the students' experiences rather than being wholly concerned with developing theory. The steps to analysis were taken from Brewer (2000) and the approach was adopted because the third of the three steps of the 'method of discovery'. This step encourages an interpretation of the data which requires a familiarity with the data in order to be able to understand the individuals' social worlds (Spradley, 1979). The steps in ethnographic data analysis are (a) a description of the group (b) analysis of themes and (c) interpretation (Brewer, 2000: 110).

Table 3.4 illustrates that the range of research methods used generated a diverse data set, from written field notes to pictures and video clips. The three steps of the 'method of discovery' enable the analysis of a variety of data and because of this the method of analysis was considered appropriate. The steps in ethnographic data analysis employed a similar technique to a thematic analysis. Step (b), the analysis of themes, lends itself to the use of the thematic analysis technique. The thematic analysis technique was favoured over other techniques such as content analysis because it offered interpretation and explanation rather than only serving to quantify events.

Table 3: 4 Methods and Data Type

Method	Data	Data Format
Observations	Field notes	Written
Essay	Essay	Written
	Observations	Written
Photography	Photographs	Visual
	Descriptions of photos	Written
	Interviews	Written
	Observations	Written
Patchwork	Patchwork	Visual
	Interviews	Written
	Observations	Written
Documentary	Play transcript	Written
	Play	Visual/ Audio
	Observations	Written
Interviews	Transcript	Written

3.6.2. The Process of Analysis

Before the process of analysis could begin the data needed to be organised and the computer software Nvivo 8 was used to handle the data. The first phase of the data analysis is to organise the data and this can be according to themes, questions or moments. I chose to organise the data via method. It was a consideration to analyse the data via case (student) but it was felt that looking at the data on a method by method basis would encourage a more general overview of the methods' appropriateness to materialize. It was through the data analysis process, progressing back and forth through the three stages of analysis, that encouraged a story of the students' social worlds to emerge. This is a fundamental aspect of ethnography and the ethnographic method of data analysis, it is also important to remember when analysing, that the story told should be rich and authentic. I felt that organising the data according to method would enable an analysis of the suitability of the method but also provide the opportunity to build an understanding of students' experiences.

Employing the ethnographic method to data analysis via a thematic analysis technique requires a move towards approaching the data in a more systematic way. Once the data had been organised according to categories I progressed back and forth through the data coding. Once the data was coded the process of moving from the specific towards the general took place. This inductive process of coding allows for unexpected things to arise from the data and encourages the reporting to be written from the data rather than alongside the data (Murchison, 2010).

The process of coding was an iterative process where considerable time was spent reading, coding, reading and further coding. To begin the process I started with a general read through of all data sources to re-familiarise myself with the data and to being to think about the emerging themes. A second read through took place where I loosely coded the data prescribing descriptive codes and upon completion of this phase I had in excess of 200 codes (in Nvivo terms: free nodes). For a complete list of all the codes made during this process, consult the appendices. Many of the codes in the initial phase had low counts and were replicates of other codes and in moving from the descriptive to the analytical these codes were condensed into similar themes. Upon completion of this phase 18 codes (in Nvivo terms: tree nodes) were identified for example; self-concept, help and support, family and stereotypes of autism proved and disproved. It was from these 18 codes that I was able to begin to identify the 'story' and it was from here that the decision to explore the macro to the micro-level of social life emerged. These 18 codes were further condensed into five codes from which the titles of the findings chapters (community, intimate relations, self) and the analytical themes (Goffman, models of disability) emerged. In order to further analyse the data 'queries' were ran in Nvivo to produce data matrices. Data matrices allow for a combination of codes (nodes) to be cross-checked with one another in order to find and highlight patterns among codes. In this instance the 'queries' allowed me to check where data was coded at more than one node. Specifically queries were run to highlight the instances where data was coded at a 'chapter' and a 'theme' node. Through completing this stage of analysis a pattern of events was able to be identified to help create a story, an understanding, of students' social worlds.

The work of Erving Goffman emerged to be an appropriate theoretical perspective from which to interpret and understand the data. Chiefly a micro-social theorist whose concern lies with the interactions between individuals, Goffman's account of social life also has macro elements to it, for example how order is sustained in society. It is for this reason that a Goffmanian approach was taken to interpreting the data since his focus aligns with the macro-micro structure of the research findings. The following section introduces Goffman and defines his key concepts.

3.7. The Interpretation

Interpretation of the data was the third step in the ethnographic approach to data analysis. In order to better understand how the data was interpreted and how the findings are presented, the following section introduces Goffman's key concepts and outlines the nature of social life from a Goffmanian perspective.

3.7.1. Introducing Erving Goffman

Goffman's work primarily focuses upon the individual, the interactions which occur between individuals and the aspects of these interactions. Goffman's account of social life resides in understanding the encounters between people and his work has also been observed to link encounters on an individual level to wider society.

> The orderliness which prevails in face-to-face interaction reflects and supports all other kinds of social order. Social order is central to the fundamental question of how it is that society is possible

Goffman observed each individual to be a knowledgeable actor, equipped with a catalogue of tools to help navigate their way around the rules that govern interaction. Interaction, especially face to face interaction, is constituted by a distinctive order which sets the parameters for the encounter and it is the rules that make the order which Goffman was concerned with identifying. The discussion first explains how order is maintained in interaction before discussing the consequences which arise when the rules are broken.

3.7.2. Order!

In *The Interaction Ritual* (1967), Goffman wrote specifically of the interactions between people when engaged in face-to-face talk. Goffman observed that rules which govern and regulate all situations (known as situational proprieties) contribute towards order in interactions. The rules he talked of are pivotal to the maintenance of interaction but Goffman placed particular value upon the more general rule; "the rule obliging participants to 'fit in'" (Goffman, 1967: 11). The rule obliging interactants, the term Goffman uses for individuals engaged in interaction, to fit in requires the interactant to navigate the rules and work within the system of etiquette which upholds all action (known as the ceremonial order). Interaction is governed by a complex and fragile web of rules of which interactants are required to be knowledgeable in order to be able to fit it, because failure to do so leads to interaction break-down.

The rules of interaction begin before a word is uttered for there are norms dictating if, when and how verbal interaction should arise. Strangers interact when they gaze at one another as they pass in the street to simultaneously acknowledge each another but to also demonstrate they pose no threat. Goffman termed this interaction civil inattention and classified it as the "slightest of interpersonal rituals" (Goffman, 1967: 84). Strangers, Goffman

observed, need a reason to enter into an encounter with one another, whereas acquainted individuals need a reason not to enter the encounter. When an encounter does begin, each interactant commits to maintaining the interaction by adhering to the rules which preside over the encounter. Furthermore, upon committing to the interaction, each individual proceeds to 'give' or 'give off' expressions. For Goffman expressions are the key way in which information about the individual is conveyed. Those expressions 'given' are intentional ones and are most commonly 'given' through dialogue. Conversely, those expressions 'given off' are unintentional and are 'given off' through the tone of voice or body language for example. The impressions 'given off' relate to what Goffman termed body idioms, which he saw as continually operating during interaction and is the term prescribed to the shared understandings of the meanings attributed to the expressions 'given off'. This monitoring of expressions and body idioms is part of the process called impression management where each individual judges the other and also monitors their own expressions and body idioms. Therefore interaction requires the individual to be skilled and knowledgeable in not only their own actions but also in the actions of the other person. It is precisely this joint effort and commitment to an interaction that ensures it continues.

Another sort of joint effort Goffman observed was something he termed 'face-work'. Goffman explained that an interactant, whilst operating where others (an audience) can see (known as the front region), puts on a performance and engages in face-work. Face, then, is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself... [it] is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (Goffman, 1967: 5). Furthermore, it is important to note that face is "on loan from society" (Goffman, 1967: 10) because if an individual does not conduct themselves appropriately if they prove they are not 'worthy' "it [face] will be withdrawn" (Goffman, 1967: 10). Face therefore is an interactional construct just as self is, and each individual has a face they wish to sustain which they achieve by conducting themselves appropriately. Face-work is the behaviour of an individual and it is the effort an individual makes to "make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (1967: 5). What Goffman means by this is that face-work is the behaviour and action an individual

performs in order to maintain a consistent face (appearance). One essential method of face-work an individual employs is that of poise and it is through poise that Goffman said embarrassment is contained. The commitment individuals make to the interaction means that they have a responsibility to maintain face, both their own and the other's, as face is a prerequisite of interaction and loss of face results in embarrassment.

> The combined effect of the rule of self-respect and the rule of considerateness is that the person tends to conduct himself during an encounter so as to maintain both his own face and the face of other participants. This means that the line taken by each participant is usually allowed to prevail, and each participant is allowed to carry off the role he appears to have chosen for himself. This kind of mutual acceptance seems to be a basic structural feature of interaction

> (Goffman, 1967: 11)

The mutual acceptance Goffman talks of encourages each interactant to deploy a number of face-saving practices, which are unique to each subculture/ subgroup. Generally speaking however each face-saving practice will fall under either the defensive or protective category. Defensive practices are face-saving methods which protect one's own face, for example avoidance rituals whereas protective practices protect the face of the other. Goffman saw presentation rituals as being one protective face-saving method which include paying compliments and other pleasantries to the individual you are interacting with. Employing face-saving practices is not as simple as staying off topic (avoidance rituals) or paying your listener a compliment (presentation ritual), because face-saving practices require a high level of perceptiveness. Maintaining both your own and the other's face requires the individual to read body idioms and those expressions 'given' and 'given off' in order to monitor the interaction and to be able to draw upon the necessary face-saving practices to ensure the encounter continues.

3.7.3. Disorder

Each interactant once engaged in an encounter has a responsibility to maintain the interaction by preserving face. A question arising from this is what happens when face is lost? Face is lost when the expectations of an interaction are not met and when this situation arises embarrassment is felt (Goffman, 1967). Avoiding embarrassment was what Goffman believed encouraged individuals to abide by the rules and order of interaction. For Goffman embarrassment is not something that only one party feels but rather embarrassment is felt by all members of the interaction because "the discreditor is just as guilty as the person he discredits...in destroying another's image he destroys his own" (Goffman, 1967: 117). The threatened self and loss of face are just one reason why interaction can break down and when this occurs embarrassment is felt. I will briefly go on to outline how and when interaction might also break down before turning my attention to explaining how Goffman saw interaction being rescued.

As well as engaging in face-saving exercises to prevent interaction from breaking down it can also be halted if one individual breaks the rules and thus alienates themselves. Goffman (1967) observed four ways in which an individual can alienate themselves from interaction and cause the encounter to break down. I will list and define them only briefly here. The first Goffman called "external preoccupation" (1967: 117) where an interactant focuses too much attention upon something external to the interaction. The second is "self-consciousness" (1967: 118) where the individual becomes overly aware of themselves during the interaction. The third and fourth are "interaction consciousness" (1967: 119) and "other consciousness" (1967: 120) which account for the times where attention is unduly focused upon either the interaction or another individual external to the encounter respectively.

What the above serves to illustrate is just how fragile social interaction is. The complex nature means that in order to participate in an encounter one needs

to carefully tread their way through a maze of rules. Furthermore, one is also required to know how and when to employ a certain face-saving practice or where to focus their attention, as too much or too little of one leads to interaction breakdown.

3.7.4. Restoring Order

When interaction breaks down it is important for all involved to make sure interaction is restored as quickly as possible. Goffman noted that "individuals are taught to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self expressed through face" (1967: 5); this he termed ritual. It is the perceptiveness and feelings that encourage individuals to prevent the loss of face and thus interaction break down. However, should interaction break down it will require restoring. Restoring the encounter is achieved through a series of 'remedial interchanges' which are the repair work performed when there has been an interactional offence (Goffman, 1971). Goffman (1971) noted three types of remedial work, a) accounts, b) apologies and c) requests and the function of remedial work is to change the meaning of the offence to something more socially acceptable. For example, in the instance of embarrassment, individuals may offer an account for why embarrassment occurred in an attempt to defuse the offence and promote restoration of the encounter. Furthermore, when interaction breaks down due to embarrassment it is the perceptive, empathetic individual Goffman talked of in ritual who allows for the embarrassed to "regain composure" (Goffman, 1967: 103) and thus restore the encounter.

Ritual is another important aspect for interaction as it is through ritual that an individual learns the behaviours "which must be built into the person if practical use is to be made of him as an interactant" (Goffman, 1967: 44). If an individual fails to learn ritual and acquire the key features and understandings of behaviour then Goffman deemed them as not being properly socialized. Through learning ritual people become socialized and learn to fulfil roles that

ensures the "tasks in society are allocated" (Goffman, 1969: 41). It is through fulfilling roles, performing how one is expected to, that ensures the ritual order is sustained. This is important because a failure to perform roles and adhere to the rules of the interaction order leads to a loss of face, the occurrence of embarrassment and the breakdown of social interaction. Thus, each individual must learn to perform with poise, engage in a process of face-work and employ face-saving practices or remedial interchanges where necessary to save or restore the face of themselves or others. Individuals acting outside of the rules can cause a loss of face to either themselves or another. Goffman identified children as an invisible social group, as 'non-persons' and as a social group who are able to behave outside of the social rules which maintain order. This is in part due to the parent-child relationship where parents take responsibility for social rules and norms on behalf of the child but also in part because children are recognised to be in a process of learning ritual. I take issue with Goffman because little attention is given to children and childhood, a phase of time where he recognised ritual is taught. My concern lies with the lack of attention given to how ritual is learnt, Goffman points out that it is a taught requirement and ordered interaction is not possible without it, but there is a distinct absence in his account of how, when and through what methods ritual is taught.

For Goffman interaction requires a joint effort from all parties involved as individuals are required to abide by the rules, deploy perceptive and empathetic practices to preserve, maintain or restore interaction. His account explains how society and the individual members typically function and helps to establish the 'norm'. In paying attention to the ordinary Goffman noted that this was how we can understand difference; "it is not to the different that one should look for understanding of our differentness, but to the ordinary" (Goffman, 1963: 152).

Goffman's account of social life establishes the expectations held of interaction, it sets up 'typical' and 'normal' behaviour which provides everyone with a sense of predictability. Those individuals who are considered 'normal' are those individuals who "do not depart negatively from particular

expectations" (Goffman, 1963: 15). From this understanding of normal we can assume that individuals who are considered 'abnormal' are those people who deviate from society's expectations. In *Stigma* (1963) Goffman notes deviance occurs for many reasons. Goffman observed a collection of individuals who make up a group of "core social deviants" (1963: 170) and observed these to be "the folk who are considered to be engaged in some kind of collective denial of the social order" (1963: 171). Goffman also identified what he termed "normal deviants" because he observed stigma management to be "a general feature of society, a process occurring wherever there are identity norms" (1963: 155). That is, Goffman observed stigmas to occur in some form in everyone. Therefore, it is not a matter of "whether a person has experience with a stigma" because an individual always has a stigma of sorts but it is a matter of "how many variations" the individual "has experienced" (Goffman, 1963: 154). By paying attention to the ordinary, Goffman was able also observe the deviant, the extraordinary, and at the heart of these observations is a set of social norms, a social order that people adhere to, which helps establish what is to be defined as ordinary or extraordinary.

The discussion has outlined a number of Goffman's key concepts and provided an introduction to his account of social life. Goffman's account of social life has both macro and micro elements to it, which align with the research findings, and it is for this reason that I drew upon this understanding of social life to interpret my data.

3.8. Closing Remarks

The discussion has outlined the approach taken to data analysis and the interpretation of the data. The three findings chapters; community, intimate relations and self, are presented next. The Goffmanian perspective taken to interpreting the data has resulted in a key theme explored throughout the findings chapters focuses on how order is sustained. In chapter 4: community, the discussion focuses on how order is maintained in the community. Through

discussing structure, support and surveillance in the community, the chapter highlights how a shared moral code contributes towards order. Chapter 5: Intimate Relations explores how another individual can help the students to behave with demeanor, which contributes towards ordered interactions. Finally, in chapter 6: Self, the discussion uses Goffman's understanding of self to explore what feelings the students have attached to self and how these feelings are expressed. This chapter draws upon the concept of demeanor to explore how the students restrain their emotional involvement in interactions and how this helps to sustain order.

Chapter 4: Community

Introduction

Community is understood in this discussion to be the ties an individual has because of an association to a common attachment, they are more than the "interpersonal institutions of wider society" but they are not family or close friends (Crow and Allan, 1994: 1). In this instance community relates to Ladybarn; an institution where relationships are formed because of the association with the school.

The importance of understanding the community of which the students are members derives from the understanding that an individual's relationships and sense of self are shaped by the social context in which they are formed. It is also important to understand autistic people as members of a community because literature on autism has neglected to pay attention to the communities of which autistic individuals are part. I align myself with Ochs et al. (2004) who argued that it is important to view autistic people as "participating members of a community and not [just] as individuals in relation to other individuals" (2004: 147). Autistic individuals are rarely considered as part of a community and their relationships are generally considered on an individual level rather than in the context of a wider community. Although literature suggests autistic individuals may find social interaction challenging they are members of society and deserve to be seen in this manner. I feel that failure to acknowledge their membership in communities can isolate autistic people and can lead to, or at least contribute towards, their exclusion.

In this discussion I first explain the key features of the environment before addressing how the environmental factors affect students' experiences. Goffman chiefly focused on the encounters between individuals, and so it might appear contradictory to take the macro-level of social life first. From a Goffmanian approach it can be assumed that the macro-level of social life (the

community's organisation) is reflective of the micro-level of social life (face-to-face interactions). Therefore addressing students' experiences in this way will help contextualise their experiences of school, their relationships and sense of self. Furthermore, in order effectively to locate students as participating members of the community, one needs to understand the structure of that community, which is a further reason why this issue is taken first. Following the discussion of the community environment, my focus moves to discussing the students' relationships with their teachers and with me. I have classified these relationships as 'community relationships' because they are relationships that exist primarily because of the setting.

4.1. Community Environment

By the term community environment, I refer chiefly to that of Ladybarn but where possible I also address family networks, which will be referred to as the students' 'home' community. The discussion will be weighted this way primarily because the research took an ethnographic approach and so the findings reflect this by focusing upon the 'host' site. This discussion provides an account of Ladybarn's organisation, practices and culture and through this discussion the effects a community may have on its members' experiences will be explored.

4.1.1. Structure

The focus of this section is upon the structure and organisation of Ladybarn. The triad of impairments suggest that structure and routine are important factors for autistic individuals because it minimises the possibility of unforeseen circumstances arising which can cause feelings of anxiety (Baron-Cohen, 2008). Through this discussion I address this stereotype, I outline how Ladybarn organises itself to achieve structure as well as discuss the significance of this for students' wellbeing and experiences.

Upon entering Ladybarn I noticed the architectural design was just like any other school, the neutral paint on the walls, the hard wearing nylon carpet lining the floors and each door numbered or named indicating its occupier(s) (field notes, 28.09.10). Although the physical organisation mimicked that of most schools, it quickly became apparent that Ladybarn was not 'most' schools. With an intake of approximately 100 students, Ladybarn was divided into four departments (see section 3.2.1) and each department specialised in teaching students with similar needs. The ASC department consisted of only students who are on the autism spectrum and it was this organisation which enabled each unit to be structured so specialist support could be provided.

The ASC department was further subdivided into three forms and the five year groups were split across them, typically students were divided based on who worked best together, as explained in section 3.2.1. Although the tutor groups were usually established at the start of the academic year, the need to separate those who 'set each other off' occasionally meant that students might swap form groups throughout the year.

It was the second week back after Christmas and Lydia had been nothing but disruptive for two weeks. Today she had joined form 1MP and at the start of the lesson Mrs Parker announced that from this point forward Lydia would be a member of form 1MP. Elliot took immediate concern with this and protested "but she swears". Mrs Parker assured him that "no-one will be swearing in this class including me. Lydia knows that she won't have a desk space. She and Liam are good friends (they look at each other and smile) but Liam can become silly (Liam nods in agreement) and things can change back if this happens. Do you understand?" She asked as they both nodded. The class were sold her membership by being told that it would be valuable to have a year 10 in the class, it was however an attempt to put an end to her disruptive behaviour in form 2VM.

(13.01.11)

Ladybarn imposed structure from top down, from the organisation of departments to the careful allocation of pupils into forms and further still by the classroom arrangements.

Figure 4: 1 ASC Classroom (Form 1MP)

Each of the ASC classrooms were designed in such a way that provided structure, routine and consistency. The classrooms had specific 'teaching tables' (as indicated) which was where students sat at the start of lessons to receive instructions. In addition to this the students had their own 'area' that included a desk and two bookcases, which doubled as barriers. Imposing this sort of physical structure was important to the running of the class since it provided consistency as each student knew where they were expected to sit and where they should leave, and expect to find, their belongings. Having one's space and not intruding on another's is part of the classroom etiquette and the physical barriers of the bookcases helped uphold this etiquette. As such the classroom design can be seen as one example of upholding order, which students adhere to, and in doing so demonstrates how imposing

structure can help sustain order. The importance of imposing structure from top down resides not only in the need to support students but also the need to maintain order. These identified 'needs' go hand in hand as the organisational structure was a purposeful attempt to promote routine and cohesion in order to prevent students from feeling anxious, and in preventing anxiety, order was maintained. Therefore, the importance of physical structure and space should not be underestimated since having consistent surroundings contributes towards a structured and organised environment. The significance of preventing anxiety is explored further in this chapter but it was on these foundations, with this macro organisation, that other methods to help impose structure were built.

The most prominent method which helped impose structure was the use of schedules and students regularly used a daily schedule, an after school schedule (figure 3.1.) and a lunch time schedule. Lunch time schedules were imposed for the same reason that the tutor groups were organised as they were, to separate those individuals who could 'set each other off'.

After months of Josh and Liam battling for the position of top dog they had set their differences aside and decided they could both rule the roost. As the class sat in silence during morning registration Josh and Liam took it as an opportunity to declare their new friendship. "Mrs Parker can me and Liam play football together at lunch?" Josh questioned. Both boys were reminded why their lunch time schedules had been put in place. "You all fall out every five minutes" Mrs Parker reminded them. "Yeh but we get on now" Liam protested. It was agreed that they would see out the remainder of the schedule this week and next week they could come off the schedule.

(20.01.11)

Adults in schools regulate students' time through establishing fixed regimes and routines that students are required to follow (Mayall, 1997). In the instance of Ladybarn, adults regulated the students' time by implementing schedules,

and the use of schedules was a method of maintaining order (as in the example of Josh and Liam) *and* a method of promoting participation (as in the example of daily schedules).

Figure 4: 2 Daily Schedules
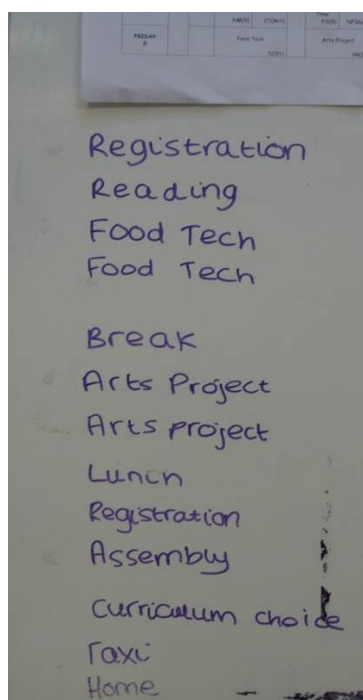
White Board	**Students Desk**
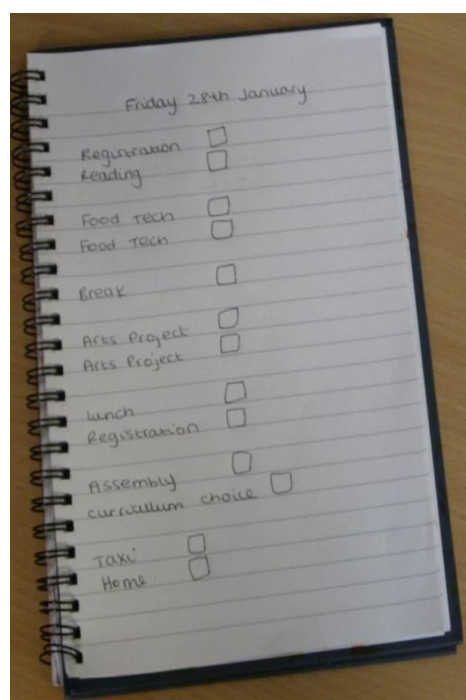
Each morning a daily schedule was written on the whiteboard and in some cases students would also have a copy on their desks. Although many students relied heavily on the use of a daily schedule (Abby for example would return to her desk to tick off the lessons as they passed) other students were less dependent on a personal schedule. A schedule provided structure and offered students predictability and comfort as well as helping to reduce the feeling of anxiety arising because of the unknown. For some students this practice provided regular structure which they required in order to minimise feelings of anxiety, promote order and stability and thus enable them to participate in the

community. For other students this was a practice that they self-imposed during periods of high anxiety as a means of support.

Josh had been having a particularly difficult week. I was aware that he had fallen out with his best friend Paige because she had a new friendship with Kyle (who had recently joined the class) and believed this had something to do with his continued upset. Josh never usually needed a schedule to get himself through the day, he could remember where he was supposed to be and when. "Morning Josh, you OK, did you have a nice evening?" Mrs Parker asked Josh as she took her seat next to his to take morning registration. "Yeh, OK" Josh sheepishly mumbled back. "Oh, are you writing yourself a schedule, do you need one today?" she probed as Josh nodded. "Ok. Good. If you want to talk, you can talk to me OK".

(17.03.11)

In the example of Josh, he demonstrates that through implementing a schedule he was able to control his anxiety and in doing so it enabled him to participate in the community. This reflexive awareness from a Goffmanian perspective can be viewed as an example of Josh acting with poise (Goffman, 1967) and self-control to manage his emotions. In acting with poise Josh demonstrates a profound level of self-awareness, but also highlights the importance of structure to his emotional wellbeing. It has also been observed that student agency, that is, students feeling able to contribute towards and control activities in the environment, is important to their wellbeing (Mayall, 1996).

It is clear from my observations of Ladybarn that a structured environment created conditions for cohesive, positive interactions to arise. Furthermore, it was through structure that order was maintained, as practices to impose structure helped curtail feelings of anxiety and thus sustained order. These factors are not unique to Ladybarn but might be deemed to be prerequisites for students' wellbeing, and for all environments autistic students are part of, if they are to be able to engage positively in interaction. Mayall (2006)

observed that children regard their lives as largely controlled by adults, and as Alexandra White explained, adult management of children's time through schedules was also a feature of both Abby's and Ben's home environment.

> I think one of the worst ones we've ever had is when we were flying on holiday. We were flying from Coventry airport and we arrived there, we checked our luggage in and we were sat waiting for a 2 o'clock flight and they announced over the Tannoy that the plane was broken. So Ben could see the plane on the runway and they asked us to come and collect our luggage again and they were bussing us to East Midlands Airport and we would get a flight at 10 o'clock that night. And my heart just kind of went [action of sinking] you have no idea what it's like for two autistic children, and we sat in the thing and I just got my piece of paper out and said [laugh] "now, there's going to be a slight change". We wrote it out and they were OK once we got on the coach because they knew we were going onto a new airport but we couldn't, well they had to wait for hours and it was really hard, it was the kind of anxiety involved in… But they did cope, kind of, having it written out and knowing. You just kind of put a new structure in place. "This is what's going to happen". I use that a lot.
>
> (Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.11)

In unpredictable environments there was a chance that Ben or Abby could experience feelings of anxiety and as a result would become distressed and unable to cope in the environment. This example highlights the importance of structure and how implementing structure via schedules is fundamental to the students' emotional wellbeing and participation.

The final identified method of implementing structure was the practice of reward and reprimand schemes. Such schemes are a common feature of school

life and school disciplinary measures (Osler, 2000). The schemes were in place to establish a set of rules of expected behaviour for which, if abided by, students would be rewarded. The most frequent method employed at Ladybarn was a reward point system, which was a whole school scheme that provided each student with the opportunity to gain five points every lesson. Points were awarded for attendance (1 point (pt), correct uniform (1pt), achieving the personal target (1pt) and behaviour (2pts)); similarly points could be lost on these criteria too. In addition to the five 'standard' points, students could earn 'merits' for exceptional work or behaviour which held a value of ten points. The points were totalled weekly and the students were provided with the chance to spend their points as credit in Ladybarn's reward shop. Unspent points were carried forward and points would accumulate as more points earned 'better' prizes. It was a scheme that worked on the premise of encouraging students to behave appropriately (according to situational proprieties) through positive reinforcement rather than punishment and thus order was maintained.

As the bell rang for lesson four Miss Jackson and Miss Morrison (1) were stood in the door way discussing the previous lesson. The students returned to the room to drop their PE kit off. Miss Jackson explained how Joe had been sworn at and he had become upset and wanted to hit the perpetrator. She suggested that Joe could remain in the form room for a while to enable him to calm down. Sipping from his water bottle Joe looked worried as he loitered in the doorway listening to the conversation. Miss Morrison commented "he [Joe] can't stay as he [nods in the direction of Andrew] won't go". Joe picked up on this and protested "no, no, I'll go to drama I don't want to get zero points. Come on Super Jones let's go".

(08.12.10)

The students responded positively towards the reward points system as each of them strove to achieve five points every lesson. Furthermore, home-school collaboration meant that particular methods of encouraging appropriate behaviour were able to bridge the home-school divide by being used in both

communities. For example, Jake responded well to earning Eastenders viewing time which was implemented at Ladybarn with his mother's recommendation and in conjunction to the reward points system. If Jake was successful in achieving five points in a lesson he also earned five minutes Eastenders viewing time, depicted by him earning one piece of the Eastenders jigsaw puzzle. Ladybarn had six lessons a day so Jake had six opportunities to earn five points and five minutes of Eastenders, if he was successful in all six lessons Jake could watch a complete 30 minute Eastenders episode at home that evening.

Figure 4: 3 Jake Knox's Area and Eastenders Puzzle

Eastenders
Puzzle

The reward point system was a means of encouragement but also a means of providing structure for students because it established boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Furthermore, through this scheme students were in a process of learning how to behave appropriately, and therefore it also acted as a preventative tool discouraging the sort of disruptive behaviour from students which might 'set each other off'. Although the reward point system did usually encourage successful encounters and thus sustain order, there were times

when behaviour led to disorder and at these times the students were reprimanded.

The quad was busier than usual for a break time but Abby and Jake were sat indoors eagerly anticipating their timers going off. Both of them had accrued seven minutes detention during the first two lessons because they had been disruptive. They were only two minutes into their detention when Ben came running in. "Come on Abby, come on" he instructed grabbing at her arm. "No Ben. Leave Abby alone. She will be out when the timer goes off" Mrs Andrews informed him. "But, she's a good girl" Ben protested. "No Ben. Abby's been naughty, now you go outside and she'll be there in four minutes" Mrs Andrews responded. Ben reluctantly left Abby to sit through her detention.

(28.01.11)

Detaining students, taking away their free time, for behaving 'badly' has been found to be a regular practice of schools (Christensen and James, 2001) and it was a practice Ladybarn engaged in. Both reward points and reprimand methods served to establish expectations of behaviour. In doing so the students were engaged in a process of learning what counts as acceptable behaviour which relates to Goffman's learning of the ritual order (Goffman, 1967). Furthermore, these systems acted to prevent disruption and anxiety because they were a consistent set of rules which provided boundaries and thus predictability. Both the reward point system and the issuing of detentions acted to encourage behaviour that would promote order.

In learning that community environments are typically structured environments which contribute towards students' wellbeing, promote interaction and maintain order it is clear that structure is one way of supporting the students. My attention now turns to questioning how else the community environment supports the students.

4.1.2. Support

In this section I discuss two additional ways in which Ladybarn supports students and I continue to explore the link between the identified supportive measures and the need to prevent feelings of anxiety.

A primary way the community offered students support was by being flexible. I might appear to contradict myself by proposing that flexibility and structure were significant but I observed that it was imperative that flexibility operated within a structured environment if order was to be maintained and students able to participate. By flexibility I am referring to the individualised support by allowing the environment to adapt, change or for the proceedings to stop if a student required it and an example of this was Ladybarn's timetable structure. The timetable structure was tailored to students' needs, for example Lydia did not participate in Media but instead had 1:1 time with Mrs Parker, and although the students followed the same timetable each week, during periods of upset they could quite often be removed from or swap lessons.

Flexibility within a structured environment was important because it ended or prevented anxiety and upset. Quite frequently the students would find it difficult to cope with the situation and/ or the interaction and so they would become anxious. The complexities posed by autism meant that students were challenged by a vast array of things from the school transport turning up late (Elliot) to the presence of tissues (Jake). One trigger could be the catalyst for a stream of emotions which could prevent students' participation in the community and during these episodes students could be removed from or swap lessons.

Lydia had come into school in a temperamental mood, she had already flung her bag into the coat rack and slumped herself in the chair, it was a clear indication of her state of mind. I was surprised to see that she had joined us in

Art where she sat in silence, alone, working on her painting. "Right that's it folks, the bell's gone. Leave everything where it is, I am using it next. Where are you going now? Joe, what lesson do you have next?" Mr Douglas asked. "Learning for Life" Joe replied. In the mist of the end of the lesson chaos Lydia had remained still almost as though she hadn't heard the bell. "Miss" Mr Douglas directed towards me "Tell Mrs Parker that I have Lydia, I'll keep her here, she's doing alright and we don't want …" he said as he flicked his head back as though to suggest that we didn't want another episode of her running around the corridors as we witnessed yesterday.

(25.11.10)

In this example Mr Douglas was attempting to restore, and go on to maintain, order because forcing Lydia to adhere to her timetable held the potential for further disruption and disorder to occur. Therefore, the flexibility of being able to swap students' lessons was a means of supporting them and restoring/ maintaining order.

From a researcher's perspective the flexibility was at times rather challenging as the students were able to effectively swap lessons if it was felt that by doing so it would prevent or end a period of anxiety. On a number of occasions I had planned to be with a particular student and at a moment's notice they could be absent from a timetabled class because they had swapped lessons or required a period of 'time out'. I hasten to add that without Ladybarn's flexibility the research would have taken quite a different shape and the flexibility was more beneficial than it was challenging. Once more, what one learns here is that as a researcher one needs to adapt to the environment and it is only by being part of it that one comes to learn of and experience the community's practices, however challenging one may experience them to be. Furthermore, what is of most concern is why this practice was a regular feature and it was only by being a part of the community that I was able to comprehend the reasons for this. In addition to the observations the interviews were also beneficial because I was able to follow up on points which I had observed to glean further understanding and insight.

I'll show you what I've been doing with them today because it's like this movable map. It's looking at things which are stopping them learning at the moment because every day there's another issue and their behaviour's a little erratic because now there aren't any road works in Middleton, so now we've had to completely stop doing English at the moment because they're having to re-learn the fact that now there aren't any road works, so they're not going to be late for school, and now they're back in school at ten past eight instead of twenty to nine and they've got to fill that time, even though this is what's happened to them for the last three years I am having to re-teach them, and ones like Lydia who appear quite able. So it's constantly dealing with things as they happen.

(Interview, Mrs Parker, 22.11.11)

This excerpt highlights how the flexibility of being able to stop, swap or change lessons was a key supportive method. This is because it provided the opportunity to address issues causing upsets and anxiety, which was often achieved by implementing a new routine so to avoid or cope with the anxiety provoking situation. As in this specific example Mrs Parker implemented a new routine for students so they could occupy the time before school. Through implementing a routine Mrs Parker was establishing the necessary structure for the students to be able to control their feelings of anxiety and participate in the community.

The second identified supportive method which occurred both at Ladybarn and the students' home community was the practice of timeout. Timeout was where a student would temporarily withdraw their participation from the lesson to spend time away from the event in order to regain composure.

Form 1MP were sat around the teaching tables waiting for Mrs Parker so that their Social Skills lesson could begin when she walked in, "sorry, I just had to deal with something" she said hurrying to her desk. "Oh, where's my pound gone? Have any of you seen my pound?" She asked but the question was ignored by all. "Oh never mind. I might have to check your pockets" she said with a big dose of humour. "Nooooooooo" Elliot screamed as he stood up and rushed to his area. Students and staff looked around at each other in surprise. A couple of moments later, as the class ignored Elliot who was sat under his desk, a note was carefully slipped out and across the floor. It read "I need quiet and time out". The cause of Elliot's upset remains unknown but he stayed under his desk for the whole of social skills after which he re-joined the class for music.

(16.03.11)

As a practice timeout helped maintain order by permitting the upset individual to leave the encounter allowing them to gain control over their emotions, often anxiety, and re-enter the interaction when able to. Many of the timeouts were self-imposed which illustrates the students' self-awareness.

The class were excited by their photos and were eagerly showing each other their pictures as they worked to compile their photograph albums. However, Liam had sat himself away from the others awkwardly perched on a chair working from the windowsill. 20 minutes or so passed and Liam was engaged in a cycle of getting up and walking out, returning to his work, getting up and walking out and returning to his work. Mr Stevens whispered to me "he is finding this hard, he doesn't like talking about his family. He keeps leaving to see Mrs Parker for some timeout".

(28.01.11)

In the above excerpts Elliot and Liam are examples of individuals who use the same method of enabling themselves to participate in the community but in a

slightly different way. Whereas Elliot used time-out to regain control over his feelings of anxiety once he became overwhelmed by them, Liam demonstrated his self-control by using time-out as a means of enabling himself to manage his emotions in order to save face, and thus Liam demonstrates he is able to act with poise and demeanor (Goffman, 1967). The method of supporting students by allowing timeout was not a practice unique to Ladybarn but was also a feature of some students' homes.

Figure 4: 4 Harry Patterson, Photography
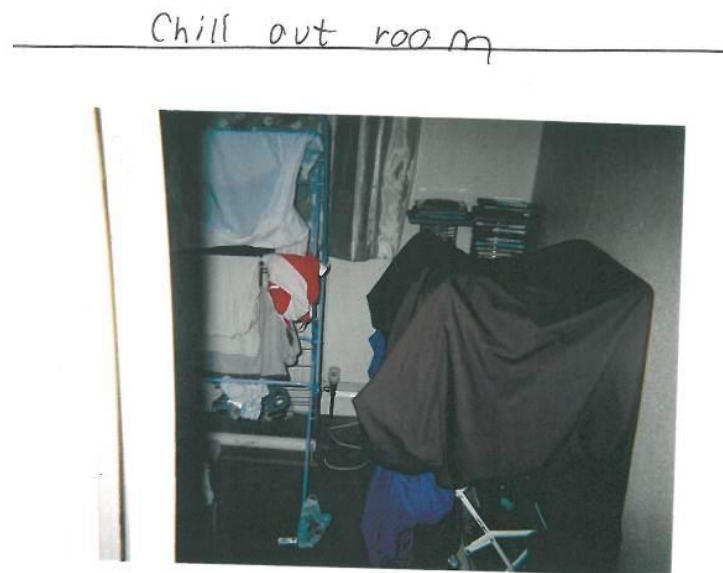
Chill out room

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I go in to PE if I'm angry

2. I like the look of PE.

3. I sit down in PE.

The provision of a 'chill out room' or a desk area was important to the students because it acted as a physical area which provided space for them to

regain composure. That is, the 'chill out' space enabled students to regain control over their emotions during periods of high anxiety so that they were able to participate in the community. Therefore, in allowing flexibility for timetable changes and/or timeout to be taken, Ladybarn as a community was supporting students by preventing, minimising or ending periods of upset and anxiety. In supporting students in this manner, the community acted to look after the welfare of students as well as to maintain order.

The support provided by Ladybarn frequently required the community to be understanding of each student's individual needs. It therefore proved paramount that if order was to be sustained it needed to be possible for the environment to adapt its structure and practices to best support the students. As was evidenced here, adapting practices primarily required methods to prevent and control feelings of anxiety; as it was the feeling of anxiety which often left the students requiring support. Ladybarn as a community demonstrated the various ways in which it adapted its organisation and practices to support the students, and in doing so illustrated the principles of the social model of disability in action. A question posed from this discussion is how do the members of Ladybarn's community know when the students require support? This discussion suggests that the students make known their need for support through self-issuing timeout but I ask if this is always the case.

4.1.3. Surveillance

Surveillance "involves both perception and management of information" (Hope, 2007: 360) and is recognised to be a "feature of everyday life" (Lyon, 2003: 13). Surveillance has been identified to be a feature of 'everyday life' of Ladybarn. This discussion outlines how, where and why the students were subjected to surveillance.

High levels of surveillance were an observed feature shaping students' experiences at Ladybarn and although it was, on many occasions, a feature purposively implemented, it also arose from the organisational structure. Each tutor group had two learning support assistants (LSAs) who went with the students to each lesson to support them. The significance of this was that the LSAs also followed the students during the transition between lessons which meant there were very few occasions where students were away from the gaze of an adult.

The bell rang to signal the end of registration and Jake jumped up, grabbing his pencil case and headed to the door. "Ergh, where are you going?" Miss Morrison (2) asked him. "To my lesson drrrrh" Jake joked in reply. Jake was in a particularly happy mood because his Mum had reported in his home-school book that he had been well behaved all weekend. "Wait for me and we'll walk together" Miss Morrison followed up.

(29.10.10).

The corridor and playground have both been said to be extensions of the classroom (Richards, 2012) because children continue to be regulated in these areas. This was found to occur at Ladybarn; students were monitored during the transition between lessons and during break times. The 'quad' was the ASC department's designated playground where students from the other departments were not permitted to go. It was a courtyard area situated in the centre of the school, accessed through form 1MP's classroom and observable from several other rooms.

Figure 4: 5 The Quad

The quad's windows faced into two corridors and three classrooms, which meant that the students were observable from many perspectives. The design of the quad has resonance with Foucault's discussion of the panopticon (Foucault, 1979). It is an example of reverse panopticon in that students were observable from a range of points but they were probably not aware whether or not they were being observed at a specific point.

We were all sat around the bench and students were planning their woodwork. "Oh dear, looks like someone's upset" Miss Morrison (2) said. I turned behind me to look out of the window and I could see Andrew (Super Jones) walking around in the quad pulling what looked to be angry wrestling moves. "I wonder what's upset him" Mrs Andrews inquired as Andrew stood in the middle of the quad with a fierce look on his face.

(02.11.10)

The chief purpose of the quad was to provide a quieter playground for students but it was also used as a space for timeout as illustrated above. The quad offered students a 'safe retreat' during periods of time out as well as it being the recreational area for the ASC students to use if they felt unable to cope with the 'main' playground.

At lunch time many of the students elected to play football in the gym or preferred use the Western Yard and so the quad is often quieter than it is at morning break. With the usual suspects in the quad Miss Morrison (2) and I sat chatting and watching the select few out of the window. All of a sudden Josh and Liam came bursting into the room. "What's the matter boys?" Miss Morrison asked. "You know Matthew yeh, from year 9, he is annoying us, so we want to go in the quad" Josh exclaimed. "For timeout? [they nodded] Ok, you can go out" Miss Morrison replied.

(29.11.10)

The quad is an example of Ladybarn supporting students by having provisions for them to avoid anxiety-provoking situations (break times in the main playground) and provisions to reduce anxiety (a space for time out). However, what is of particular interest is where this space was situated, and this was in the direct gaze of adults and other students. It has been reported that architects when designing schools "recognised the need for ceaseless monitoring" (Markus, 1993: 66) and thus the architectural design of schools can facilitate the surveillance of students; the quad could be suggested to be an example of this. The discussion thus far has illustrated that students were observed by adults in almost every situation when at school, including the classroom, corridor and playground. In addition to the physical and organisational structure of Ladybarn that encouraged the surveillance of students, several practices also contributed towards the observation of students.

One particular practice of Ladybarn which lent itself to the observation of students was the use of a two-way radio system (walkie-talkies) which was used to keep all staff in communication with one another. Each classroom and office was equipped with a walkie-talkie which meant that everyone from the head-teacher, the receptionist, to the school nurse and teachers were in immediate communication with one-another. Similarly, this also meant that as exchanges were made over the walkie-talkies the whole school were able to hear, and so everyone was party to all knowledge transferred using the device. The radio system's primary usage was for taxi-time where members of staff stood guard at the school gates and called for students as their taxis or parents/ carers arrived to collect them from school.

The students from form 1MP were slowly being called to make their way to their taxis. Liam was sat on his desk leaning over his board which divided his desk from the rest of the classroom. Jake was sat with his coat zipped up and backpack on eagerly waiting to run the moment his taxi number was called. "Lydia Gunn holding up taxis, Lydia Gunn holding up taxis" the front gate bellowed down the walkie-talkie. "On my way to find her" Mrs James responded as she was the person designated to chase up students from the school and send them on their way. Moments passed and the call was repeated "Lydia Gunn. Lydia holding up taxis. Where is she?" those at the front gate were becoming more agitated. "At last. Taxi 43 please" an exasperated voice said, Lydia had been found and the taxi sent on its way.

(15.10.10)

The use of the walkie-talkies during taxi-time helped to impose structure and routine and while the practice could be said to be born out of concern for children's safety it is also an "obstruction to [the students'] mobility" (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2011: 8). A secondary use of the system occurred more frequently throughout the day to call for assistance if a student(s) needed removing from class because they were causing disruption. The 'on call' member of staff, the individual who was timetabled to respond to calls, would

go to assist the teacher, retrieve a student who had left class or remove a student from the lesson.

As the class sat around the rectangular table in the middle of the room listening to Mr Kirkwood who was teaching them about the different flags of countries, a call over the walkie-talkies came through, "Liam Ball and Lydia Gunn on call please" a voice said. "Ha ha Liam's on the Western Yard" Josh laughed as he pointed out the window. The class turned to see and were temporarily distracted with Liam and Lydia running around the exterior of the school. "Miss, would you mind closing the blinds please?" Mr Kirkwood asked Mrs Andrews. "Right class, let's ignore them, they are misbehaving. This is the flag of Kenya" he prompted.

(17.03.11)

This system connecting the whole school together meant that students' behaviour was highly monitored and subject to everyone's knowledge. This practice meant that the students were observed continually whilst at school and they had little space free from the gaze of adults. The above two examples also illustrate that students were not always "passive subject[s] of surveillance" but they could also be "actively engaged in resistance" (Hope, 2007: 372)

A second practice employed at Ladybarn to monitor the students' behaviour was the use of a home-school communication book. The book served to bridge the students' two communities and acted as a means of sharing information regarding students' achievements, behaviour and moods.

Figure 4: 6 Abby White's Home-School Communication Book

A reason for the book was to inform the people in the other environment of matters which might require additional support, and I found it particularly useful when Ben became upset by the essay task (see 3.5.2). It does however mean that students are subject to surveillance and are "object[s] of information" (Foucault, 1977: 200) in both environments . The information passed from adult to adult regarding the students is done so freely without their consent being sought; this further demonstrates that the students were subject to adult surveillance and had little private space.

The discussion so far has illustrated how the structures and practices mean that the students were rarely free from adults' gaze. What I consider next is the consequences of this surveillance on the students' behaviour.

From spending time with the students it was clear that the high level surveillance could have an effect upon their experiences. The most profound example of this came from the patchwork activity.

Figure 4: 7 Lydia Gunn, Patchwork

Lydia was one student who could be aware of being observed as she explained her patch was a collection of eyes because *"everybody watches me all the time" (field notes, 17.02.11)*. Self-policing arises when one is aware of surveillance (Hope, 2007), and in coupling Lydia's patch with my own observations, it was clear that at times she was aware of the surveillance and this awareness could lead Lydia to self-police her behaviour.

It was taxi time and I was stood at Matt's desk so that I was able to see the room and the corridor, the radio sat on his bookshelf so the students were able to hear the taxi numbers being called. Lydia and Matt were in a hyper mood, they stood next to me first quizzing me and then poking me when the quiz became boring. Lydia took the radio from Matt's bookshelf and began to use

the aerial to poke my side to try and elicit my attention as I talked with Joseph. In ignoring her and continuing my conversation with Joe this only acted to encourage her to make further attempts for my attention. "I feel like shouting is my taxi here you fucking dicks" Lydia said, pretending to talk into the radio. Joe's eyes widen with shock and I was reluctant to flinch. Matt laughed and Lydia repeated, "I said, I feel like shouting is my taxi here you fucking dicks". I ignored her once more since both Lydia and I were aware that had she bellowed her question down the radio that this would have been heard by all and would have resulted in several members of staff descending on the classroom to reprimand her immediately. This was clearly not the kind of attention that she was after as she tossed the radio onto Matt's desk and jumped to sit on the side.

(25.11.10)

In this instance Lydia's knowledge of the walkie-talkie system acted as a deterrent and thus shaped her behaviour. The home-school communication book was a second method which held the potential to deter bad behaviour, because the students rarely wanted their 'bad day' at school reporting home to their parents.

During taxi time as the students gathered their bags the teachers were busy trying to write in the home-school communication books. "What's in here?" Jake asked as he grabbed his book from Miss Morrison (2). "I have told mummy that you were naughty today and that you do not have Eastenders tonight" Miss Morrison told him. "No I wasn't. I'll be good tomorrow. Change it" Jake ordered. "No Jake, you know I have tell mummy when you've had a bad day" Jake huffed and stomped back to his area.

(20.01.11)

Although the communication book could act as a deterrent Jake illustrates, as Foucault (1982) observed, that there is the constant possibility of disobedience;

in this instance Jake had a 'bad day' despite reportedly knowing, by Miss Morrison, that his mother would be informed.

The examples provided illustrate that the identified practices, the physical and organisational structure of Ladybarn led to high levels of surveillance. While methods of surveillance helped to impose structure and routine into the social worlds of students, it did not necessarily lead the students to consider 'what will others think of me'; and thus the self-policing of behaviour. This differs to Goffman's observations that actors consider the situational proprieties and take into consideration what others will think of their behaviour before they act.

This discussion has illustrated that being under constant surveillance, where information regarding your conduct is freely exchanged, influenced the students' behaviour. In some instances this encouraged more 'appropriate' behaviour which contributed towards order, and in other instances students' resistance of surveillance contributed towards disorder in the environment.

4.1.4. Community Environment Closing Remarks

The discussion regarding the environment of the students' community has found there to be three prominent characteristics; structure, support and surveillance. Each of these were not discrete characteristics operating alone but rather they worked together to create an environment which was ordered. These factors will be considered further after I have addressed the issue of methodological appropriateness.

The understanding of the community environment was chiefly achieved by spending time in the community. It was an experienced benefit that immersing myself in the community enabled me to learn of Ladybarn's practices. The approach allowed me to experience and comprehend the significance of the organisational structure and practices for Ladybarn's members. By becoming

an observer-participant I was able to build a first-hand account of the daily and perhaps more mundane practices of Ladybarn and my understanding was enhanced through my involvement in the community. It was my experience that this approach enabled me to understand the community environment and it is for these reasons that there is great value to be gained by utilising an observational method.

Understanding the community environment through the work of Goffman leads me to consider how orderliness is maintained. The basis of the orderliness in Ladybarn was a moral order of shared norms. That is, the community encouraged individuals to abide by the shared code of conduct, and therefore sustain the orderliness in the environment. This chapter has identified order to be achieved through the identified features; structure, support and surveillance. For example, students were encouraged through the reward points system, to behave according to situational proprieties and thus act with demeanor (Goffman, 1967). Similarly behaviour that would be considered as inappropriate received 'punishments'. Students were also encouraged to uphold the moral order through the identified surveillance methods. The method of surveillance relate to Foucault's concept of panopticon, because order was maintained by the adults in the community exercising their power over the students and positioning them as subjects of surveillance. Although this was one means by which order was maintained my concern is not with the issue of power or the bureaucratic forms of surveillance, that Foucault (1979) is concerned with, but rather the effects of surveillance on the students' behaviour and experiences. The effect the community practices had on the students' behaviour was observed to hold the potential to promote cohesion and participation. This is because the practices established the expectations regarding behaviour which encouraged a share moral order in the community. Similarly, in the instances where cohesion did not occur, disorder arose as students were seen to 'resist' the moral order.

Order was also achieved in the environment through its organisational structure. The identified organisation of Ladybarn can be considered from a Goffmanian standpoint to be a means of maintaining order through its

organisational 'framing' (Goffman, 1974). The organisational framing of Ladybarn, for example having a set classroom layout, is key in helping create consistent surroundings which provide routine and thus a sense that 'everything is as it should be'. Having structure and routine is also fundamental to the students' ability to participate in the community. It has been demonstrated that the students can suffer from anxiety, which can be overwhelming, and so the creation of consistent surroundings is even more important to the students' ability to participate. The students needed structure, stability and predictability in the environment so that only "peripheral attention" (Goffman, 1971: 283) is required to be given to the environment enabling students to participate in the community. From the Goffmanian perspective, these attempts to control the environment can be deemed to be efforts to establish practices which maintain a consistent social order so that the students are able to learn what is expected from them. That is, the students learn right from wrong, situational proprieties from situational improprieties, and thus establish appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for the community.

The structure, support and surveillance in the community fundamentally contributed towards the orderliness in the environment. More than this however, they also contributed towards students' emotional and social wellbeing. Ladybarn has demonstrated itself to be a community that the students are secure in. Security is achieved through being supportive and by imposing the organisational structure necessary to enable students to participate. In combining a Goffmanian perspective with the disability literature, adapting an organisation's structures and practices to students' needs can be considered to be beneficial to the students because it controls for the factors which cause students' anxiety.

A community environment is not an entity independent of its members and so with this understanding of the environment I turn to address the relationships that form within the community. I examine the nature of the relationships in the community and the effect of them upon the students' ability to engage in interaction and participation in the community.

4.2. Community Relationships

A community is a network of social ties and relationships and so it seems important to understand the types, functions and experiences of the relationships if we are really to understand the community as a whole. The community relationships addressed in this section are those which exist primarily because of the context. It is for this reason that the discussion first addresses the relationships between the students and the teachers before moving to discuss my own relationship with them.

4.2.1. Teachers

The term teachers in this discussion refers to the form tutors, subject specific teachers and the LSAs. The following discussion will focus on the meanings and functions of students' relationships with their teachers as well as address how the relationships shape the student experience.

The photography task was an appropriate method for revealing the significance of the students' relationships. In particular its appropriateness resided in its ability to tease out the meaning, functions and aspects of the relationships.

Figure 4: 8 Ben White, Photography

Mrs McIntosh is happy

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She helps me with maths.
2. She helps me with english.
3. and very helpful.

Ben highlights the supportive feature of the student-teacher relationships when he writes "*she helps me with maths" and* recognises Mrs McIntosh to be "*very helpful".* The function of the teachers as a source of support was also recognised by other students.

Figure 4: 9 Jake Knox, Photography

Mrs Andrews

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She's lovely

2. She is my beatest helper

3. I can see Harry

Both Jake and Ben draw attention to the fact that the teachers' role is to offer the students support. The photograph activity was useful at highlighting that the students were aware that the teachers were there to offer them support. What was of particular interest however was not that the students understood the contextual nature of their relationships but that those teachers identified as being supportive were members of the students' tutor group. As part of a structured and supportive environment, each ASC tutor group had two teachers who attended every lesson to support the students throughout the day. The teachers, Miss Morrison (2) and Mrs Andrews of form 1MP and Mrs McIntosh and Mrs Fletcher of form 2VM, were the individuals with whom the students had the most contact. The practice of having assigned teachers to a

tutor group meant that consistency, routine and familiarity were established. These features gave rise to trust which was a key contributing feature towards a positive student-teacher relationship.

Figure 4: 10 Liam Ball, Photography

Mrs Parker_____

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She is sunny and makes me laugh
2. She is always there for me
3. I like having her around
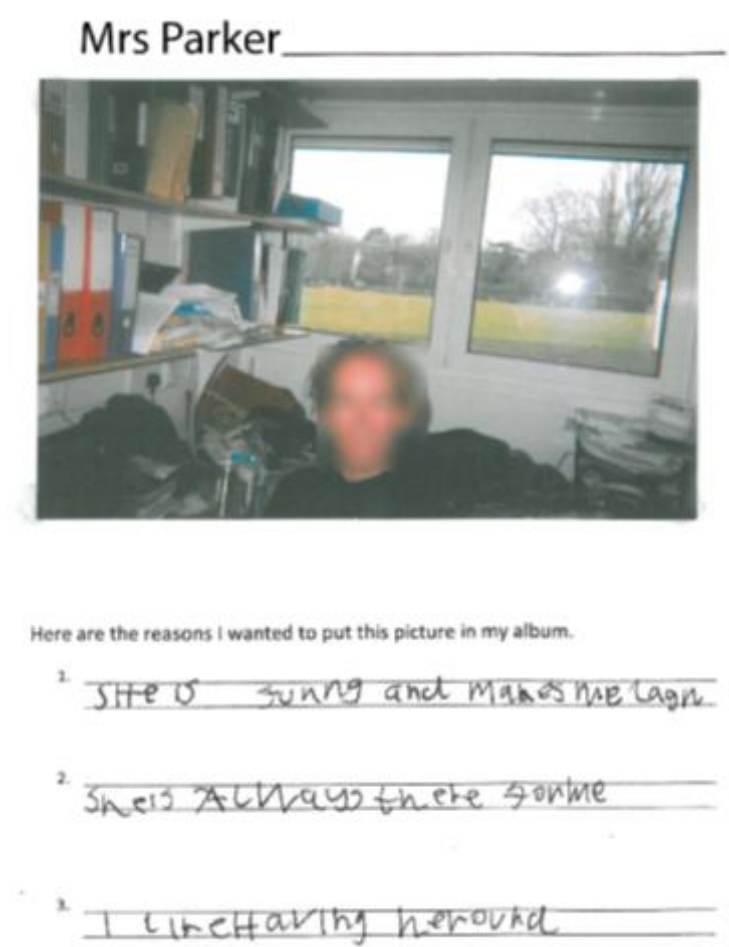
In this instance, Liam identified that Mrs Parker was "*always there*" for him, which illustrates trust was an important aspect of the relationship and it was something the teachers worked to preserve.

I was aware that Mrs Parker had left for the school exchange visit to India and I was intrigued to see how the students were dealing with her absence. The morning lessons appeared to go by without any trouble and I took the opportunity at break time when there were no students present to ask about this. "Everything seems OK, what were they told about Mrs Parker?" I asked the room as everyone sat drinking their cups of tea. "Ms Hamilton (the Head teacher) came in on Monday and told them that she sent Mrs Parker to India, didn't she? She told them that she was going to go but then couldn't and she made Mrs Parker go. Bless them, they didn't like it but they believed it didn't they? She told them that Mrs Parker was upset and didn't want to leave them" Miss Morrison (2) told me.

(24.11.10)

This incident depicts the fragility and centrality of the student-teacher relationship and illustrates the effort made by teachers to ensure trust was maintained. Although the trip was pre-planned, Mrs Parker believed that informing students of her absence in advance would have caused anxiety and communication breakdown for the time leading up to her departure. It was the students' preference for routine and their difficulty in coping with change that the teachers were managing when Ms Hamilton attributed the responsibility for Mrs Parker's absence to herself. I was informed by Mrs Parker that the rationale behind dealing with the situation this way was to preserve trust between her and the students, so as to prevent the relationship from breaking down. It was however, also an attempt to maintain the routine for the longest period of time so to sustain order in the environment. If the student-teacher relationship was to continue, trust had to be preserved and this was achieved through consistency, familiarity and routine. Mrs Parker and Ms Hamilton acted in the interest of the students and the school by preserving the routine for the longest period of time to ensure the students felt able to participate in the community and to maintain order.

An experienced benefit of the mixed methodology, and in particular the interview method, became evident when I was able to follow up on points of

interest with teachers. It was through the interviews that I was able to learn more about the students keeping their social worlds small and limiting their relationships to only the teachers in close proximity. When I returned to interview the teachers, it was the following academic year and the classes had moved up a year group; what I knew to be form 1MP had become form 2VM and form 2VM had become form 3ED, the students had moved forms but the teachers had not. This provided an interesting perspective because Mrs Fletcher explained that since Ben had moved class he had not spoken to her and instead would seek out his 'new' teachers.

> *Mrs McIntosh: they won't come to you the next year, the next September because they're moving on.*
>
> *Miss Morrison (2): Like 2VM they won't come to me anymore they'll go straight to you [nods to Miss Miller]*
>
> *Mrs Fletcher: Because you're not in their immediate... It's also about being consistent with them, the consistency of having the same LSA, but obviously when they've done year 7 they have to do year 8 and move into a different class with a new teacher and a new LSA. So, it's like starting from scratch again.*
>
> *(Focus Group, LSAs, 23.11.11)*

This illustrates that the relationships between students and teachers were not only supportive and meaningful but they were also temporal, context-specific and situational. By situational I mean more than being specific to Ladybarn; the relationships were dependent upon the form group and immediate proximity.

At the end of the PE lesson I was stood in the gym waiting for the students to come back after getting changed when Miss Young came in, "did you know Lydia has gone back to the classroom? I was walking past and she tore at the display, I asked what was the matter was but she said she didn't want to speak

to me, she wanted Miss Morrison and slammed the door and burst out crying
saying something about PE."

(08.12.10)

Students seeking help from only those teachers who were assigned to their
tutor groups highlights the significance of consistency and routine in a
relationship. This also makes further sense of the pattern identified in the
photography task. From this it can be deduced that the student-teacher
relationship was not only dependent on membership to the school, but upon
membership to the tutor group. The relationships were therefore supportive,
tied to time and space, as well as being influenced by teachers understanding
students' needs.

I was sat with Miss Morrison (2) at the side of the gym and by the goal Jake
was goalkeeper in. He started off being quite interested in the lesson trying
albeit unsuccessfully to defend his goal. The hockey puck was whizzing around
the hall and the students were like magnets to it. Jake was told several times to
stay in goal and as such he was barely able to get involved in the game. "I
don't want to play" he confessed to Miss Morrison. After several attempts at
verbal encouragement Jake dumped his stick in the goal and made his way to
us. "No Jake, go and get your stick and play" Miss Morrison encouraged. "No, I
don't want to" he protested. "I tell you what, you do 10 more minutes, here look
I'll put it on your timer and when this goes off we'll go and get changed" Miss
Morrison offered. Jake accepted this and returned to goal to stand out his 10
minutes. When the timer went off he dropped his stick, grabbed the timer and
skipped back over to us. "Where's he going?" Miss Cox the PE teacher who was
the other side of the gym shouted. "We're going to get changed" Miss Morrison
replied. "No, he's got another 5minutes left, you can't go now" Miss Cox replied
rather unhappily. "I told Jake when the timer went off we will go and get
changed" Miss Morrison replied, "I don't care, he's got another 5 minutes left"
Miss Cox insisted. During this discussion Jake was stood at the door, ready to
leave and get changed and as he left he muttered to Miss Morrison "I don't like
Miss Cox, PE's rubbish".

At the heart of the exchange in this example was a misunderstanding of Jake's need for structure. Miss Morrison's actions show her understanding and willingness to accommodate Jake's needs, since it was she who implemented the necessary structure required for Jake to participate in the encounter. Furthermore, Miss Morrison acted to sustain order by imposing a routine because this established expectations of behaviour for Jake; that is he was required to participate in the lesson until his alarm sounded. This incident also exemplifies how understanding students' needs and behaving sensitively towards them was key to the establishment of a positive relationship. This was something I was able to follow up on during the interviews with teachers and learnt that teachers' understanding of autism was different across Ladybarn.

Mr Stevens: I think that autism is one of those things where some people, I've heard it so many times where people go "he's not autistic he's just naughty". And you hear it here in school and because they can't, I mean it's their lack of empathy. I mean, you talk about autistic kids can't empathise; people who don't get autism can't empathise.

Miss Morrison (1): It's a lack of understanding

Mr Stevens: They just completely don't get it. They can't, because we've done so much training and people are explicit in going "if this happens it's because of this" but there are people just go "it's not real, they're just naughty, I know he's autistic but he's also really naughty" and that really frustrates me.

Miss Morrison: If you see this training thing that Mrs Parker did it really does make you think "oh yeh, they do that because…"

(Focus Group, Teachers, 23.11.11)

Understanding autism and the behaviour of autistic children to be naughty helps explain why students formed close relationships with select teachers. A lack of or a misunderstanding of students' behaviour and needs, whether judging them to be naughty or misunderstanding their need for structure led to an absence of a positive relationship between students and some teachers.

Where a positive relationship between student and teacher had been built, supportive and playful interchanges were observed.

Mr Marshall (Ladybarn's deputy-head) and I were stood by reception talking about how the research was going when Lydia appeared at the other end of the corridor. It was lesson time so she should have been in class. "Hey Lydia come 'ere" Mr Marshall shouted down in a playful manner. "Oi, Marshall you come 'ere" Lydia replied. "No, the last time I did that you punched me" Lydia laughed at his reply "and it really hurt, I'm not doing that again" he continued. "Ha Ha did it really hurt?" Lydia questioned as she bounced her way down the corridor towards us. "Yeh, look, it left a mark here. Just here" Mr Marshall continued the story. As she passed us she jumped up "let me do it again" she asked. "Noooo" he said as he cowered away.

(30.09.10)

The teasing and joking that occurred between Lydia and Mr Marshall was a common exchange between the students and teachers when a relationship had been established.

"Ow Miss Mills don't you look lovely today" Jake bellowed as Miss Mills entered the classroom. "You creep, what do you want, you usually call me a scarecrow" Miss Mills replied inquisitively as Jake burst into fits of laughter.

(17.03.11)

Being able to joke and engage in fun and friendly encounters reflected the established, and meaningful, relationships students had with some teachers. In the absence of a positive relationship, interactions between students and teachers were observed to be difficult and fragile encounters:

As Mr Stevens was giving the class their instructions Josh spontaneously shouted out something he had spotted on Mr Steven's desk. "Are you going to do this all lesson?" Mr Stevens asked. "What it's a troll" Josh proclaimed. "Yes, but I was talking. Will you carry on shouting things out all lesson?" Mr Stevens asked again. "What?" Josh replied becoming agitated. The exchange became increasingly heated as Mr Stevens and Josh were in a battle; eventually Mr Stevens ignored Josh's attempt to get the last word. When the class started to work individually to compile their photograph album Josh divided up his photos so that he had his top 10 he wanted to preserve and take home. The poor quality photos, some had fingers over the lens and others had no flash, were the ones he wanted to use in his album, thus preserving his favourites. After a struggle to get him to do the work as planned, Mr Stevens made one final attempt to get Josh to do the planned activity "I'll make you put all your photos into the album" he said which caused Josh to storm out the classroom. Mr Stevens turned to Miss Morrison (2) and Mrs Andrews "he hates me, I don't know why but he hates me and every week it's a real battle with him" he acknowledged.

(27.01.11)

The encounter in this instance was less successful, which ultimately led to Josh's withdrawal and interaction breakdown. Josh's withdrawal from the encounter might be reflective of his dislike of Mr Stevens. Josh's withdrawal can also be regarded as him being unable to restrain his emotional involvement and behave with demeanor. Being unable to behave with demeanour leads to the breakdown of interaction and disorder arising.

Disordered encounters were observed to arise in the absence of positive relationships between students and teachers.

It has been demonstrated that positive cohesive relationships were established between the students and teachers. The discussion has identified that understanding was paramount to a relationship and this required the teachers to demonstrate they understood the students' needs. The issue of proximity and regular contact also proved to be important to the formation of a positive relationship. In the presence of these features the student-teacher relationship was a supportive one but one that was also playful and fun. If we begin to accept that the illustrated features are prerequisites for positive relationships with the students, I question whether this extends to all adults in their community and turn to address my own relationship with the students.

4.2.2. Me

The key principle of ethnography advocates being part of the social world if one is to understand it. In choosing this approach I allowed myself to be positioned where I would form relationships with the students but also where I was actively seeking to build relationships. This discussion focuses upon the relationship I had with the students and addresses the aspects and functions of my relationship from the perspective of the student.

I was introduced to the students as someone who would be working in the class and was an individual who could help them. However, it was my experience that the students did not perceive me in this light until I had been at Ladybarn for some time. It was not until I became a familiar feature of the department that students would seek me out for support.

"Oi Miss" I heard from across the table "Miss, can you help us please?" Joe repeated as I realised he was talking to me. "Yeh, course, what are you stuck on?" I asked as I moved from across the table to join Joe and Andrew on the other side. I worked with them for the whole lesson as we tried to work out if particular jobs should be classified as primary, secondary and tertiary sector jobs.

(12.01.11)

Providing academic support to the students was something I strove for since it enabled me to work with and get to know them and it was something the students actively sought from me as time passed.

I wandered around the classroom, looking over students' shoulders, helping Ben, Josh and Paige; just generally looking around. Eventually Lydia asked me for a pen. Then she asked me for help "Miss can you come and help me, sit here" indicating the seat to her right. I got a pen and joined her. She stopped colouring and decided to work. We progressed through the work sheet which she did with relative ease so I joked "oh, you don't need me here" as if to say she was capable and had demonstrated this with her first attempt at the sums. I sensed the panic in her tone when she responded "no, don't leave".

(18.01.11)

In these incidents Joe and Lydia sought my help with their academic work and in addition to this type of support some students turned to me for social-emotional support.

A drama production about the use of drugs was put on for years 9 and 10 and so Joe, Ben and Lydia went to the hall to watch. The hall was arranged in a way so that the chairs were in a horse shoe shape around a temporary stage. The lights were all out, the curtains closed and the play started with a big loud

bang as the actors, dressed in black crawled their way onto the stage. Ben put his hands over his ears and Joe turned to me in horror "it's ok. Let's stay and watch, but if it gets too much then just nudge me and we'll leave" I said to reassure him. "What's a nudge?" Joe replied. I nudged him and he laughed. Some 20 minutes into the play it was becoming darker and more sinister when Joe nudged me. I stood, without saying a word, and he took my hand and led me out of the hall. On the way down to the classroom he explained to me why he found it upsetting.

(25.11.10)

In this example Joe turned to me for support as he felt himself becoming anxious and increasingly unable to cope with the situation.

It is my belief that as I was becoming familiar to the students they felt increasingly able to approach me. In addition to approaching me for support the students also perceived me as someone who was able to solve issues of conflict.

I walk into the RMT room where Josh and Jake were midway through an argument, Jake was upset by something "stop it Josh. Get off". Josh had decided to sit on the 'teacher's chair'. Pushing Josh Jake cried again "Stop it Josh, get off, that is for Miss Morrison." Jake turned to see me "Miss, tell him to get off. That's for Miss Morrison" he ordered of me.

(02.11.10)

Although personally I was keen not to involve myself in these issues, the very fact that I was an adult in a school positioned me in a place of authority and as a result students perceived me as someone who had the power to referee disputes and sanction discipline. This illustrates that the relationship between the students and me was one that was contextual and as such the students

perceived me as someone whose purpose and powers mirrored those of a teacher. As a consequence the relationship between the students and me shared characteristics of their relationship with teachers. For example, the relationships required me to be understanding of their needs, to provide support and be close in proximity.

It was the end of the school day and the last of the students had just left in their taxis. I was sat with Miss Young, Miss Morrison (2) and Mrs Andrews in the room of form 1MP talking when Mrs Parker walked in. "It's funny because when I was with the EP classes Lydia wouldn't talk to me and now she's really opening up" I confessed. Mrs Parker replied, "that's because you have a purpose now. Now that you are in the unit you have a purpose".

(03.11.10)

Mrs Parker's comment reflected the situational and contextual elements identified to be part of the relationship between the students and teachers. It is interesting to observe that I came to have purpose when I became part of the ASC department which demonstrates the relationship was dependent upon proximity, consistency and therefore it was situational.

> *Their understanding of what they were doing probably wouldn't have, not that it wouldn't have benefited them but once it was over it's gone. And it was that sort of thing, which isn't a personal thing against you, but they won't remember why you were here or what you were doing.*

(Interview, Mrs Parker, 22.11.11)

Just as I had purpose, once I joined the ASC department I believe the relationship between the students and me mirrored that of students and teachers and as such was also temporal. By temporal I mean the relationship

would continue to develop and last for as long as I was working in the ASC department.

As has been explored the students' relationship with me mirrored the features and characteristics of the students' relationships with teachers. Just like the student-teacher relationship our increasingly 'friendly' relationships were reflected in our encounters.

At the end of the lesson Miss Morrison (1) asked Lydia to take the tray to science (the lab around the other side of the school) and she said "No, get miss to do it". I replied "Oh really Lyds, Miss what? You tell me my name and I'll take it" I gave her a wink. She laughed and accepted the challenge. "Ow noooo, Miss, Miss.... Ermmmmm GIVE ME A CLUE?" she shouted and begged. "No, Lyds come on, take a guess" I said to wind her up. "That's not fair, Miss give me a clue" She turned to Miss Morrison who was smiling. "Ellll" Miss Morrison started "Like Ellie but..." she continued "ELLIS! Miss Ellis" Lydia shouted with relief.

(29.09.10)

Being able to joke with the students in this way is an example of our positive relationship and as I became a familiar feature of the class, more students felt comfortable in engaging with me on a personal level.

As the students waited to be called to record their section of the documentary they all resided in form 1MP. There was lots of hustle and bustle as the students occupied themselves; some were taking turns to put their favourite music on and project the video onto the big screen. I sat on Elliot's table towards the rear of the room watching when Abby came over to sit next to me. She rested her head on my shoulder and hugged me, we sat there for a couple of moments watching the film until she jumped down and went to take her turn on the computer.

The examples of Lydia and Abby illustrate the different encounters between the students and me, which reflected our positive relationships. However, in some instances a positive relationship was difficult to achieve and engaging with the students was challenging:

I was helping Liam and Kami cut their wood as Josh and Paige worked independently across the bench from us. Josh was racing along, frantically sawing in an attempt to finish and he was becoming more agitated as those around him were completing their maze. Kami and I had cut some wood for one of the inner walls for his maze and lined it up on his design. We turned to cut another piece and turned back to glue them both on but the piece Kami had left on his work was gone. Josh was holding a similar piece. I asked "where's that piece gone? Josh where did you get that bit from?" Josh insisted that he cut it "I cut it", "can I see?" I ask as Josh handed me the wood "where does this fit on your maze, please can you show me on your design" I followed up. "I'm not working from my design, I've rubbed some bits out and doing it differently" Josh offered as an explanation as to why the piece didn't fit his design. "You are meant to be working from your design. Here Kami here's your wood. Josh here's some more for you to use and cut the walls from your design" I offered as a resolution but this upset Josh who became angry "you've just stole my wall you bitch".

(09.11.10)

This example illustrates how the interactions between the students and me could be challenging but it is also reflective of the relationships between Josh and me. Josh never initiated contact with me throughout my time at Ladybarn and the excerpt is an example of how interactions were at time fragile and could end in a communication breakdown. These interactions could also occur at times with those students with whom I considered I had a positive relationship.

The last bell of the day rang and I took my position at the door to watch taxi time unfold. As the taxis started to be called I exchanged a few words with students walking by often wishing them a good evening. Jake came and stood next to me. "Hello Jake, did you have a nice day?" I asked. His reply was "No. I hate you miss". "Ow, that's not very nice I was just seeing if you were OK". "I hate you. Don't talk to me" Jake replied again.

(10.03.11)

The less successful encounters as illustrated in the examples of Jake and Josh demonstrate the fragile nature of the relationship between the students and me. Just like the relationships between students and teachers, the relationships between the students and me could also be subject to interaction breakdown.

4.2.3. Concluding Remarks

The above discussion highlights that there are similar features in the relationship between the students and the adults in the community (Ladybarn). That is, the relationships between students and those perceived as teachers are supportive, situational and temporal and they are also heavily dependent upon understanding students' needs.

The value of a mixed methodology, particularly one which gathers a number of perspectives, is illustrated in this discussion. Through combining the perspectives of the students (gleaned from the photography), the perspectives of the teachers (obtained through interviews) and with my own perspective (acquired through observations) an understanding of the students' community relationships has been formed. What is particularly significant here is how the different perspectives acted as different pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The photography activity was useful at getting at the meanings and functions of

students' relationships, whilst the interviews were helpful in elaborating on specific issues, such as the issue of proximity and continual contact. Furthermore, it was through direct observation and participation in the community that an understanding of how the relationships were performed and their effect on the students' experience was built.

Understanding students' relationships with adults in their community from a Goffmanian perspective leads to questions being raised regarding how order is maintained in interactions. The above discussion highlights that adults are often responsible for maintaining the relationship and interaction. Goffman observed adults to sustain interaction through asserting their position of authority. He observed children to be invisible social actors, who are permitted to behave outside of social conventions but they are positioned as subordinates to adults. As a result they are often subject to control and regulation from adults. It is this regulation of children's behaviour by adults which largely ensures order in interactions is sustained and relationships are positive. The discussion identified that the chief way in which adults could help manage the encounters and promote a positive relationships with students rests on the adult's understanding of students' needs. For a relationship to exist and become meaningful to the autistic student, it is imperative that the other individual understands their needs and accommodates them in interactions. These practices include being a consistent and regular feature of their social world. Consistency requires the non-autistic other to behave consistently to a set of established rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important because it serves to prevent feelings of anxiety arising and thus promotes order and positive interactions as well as acting as an example of the expectations that exist regarding behaviour. Although the above features have been demonstrated as necessary to sustain order, there were times when disorder arose and when the adult was not able to manage the interaction on behalf of the student and themselves. I propose that it might have been due to the absence of one of these aforementioned features but it also raises questions regarding order. That is, are students' relationships wholly dependent on the other person to sustain order or is it also in part dependent on the agency of the students?

4.3. Concluding Remarks

Through this discussion I have addressed the issue of the community at large, identifying the characteristics needed for the students to participate and encompassed within this. I also examined the relationships which occur within the wider community.

One factor to arise from this discussion was the suitability and value of spending time within the students' social world. Assuming the position of observer-participant enabled me to become a part of the community and in doing so helped build an understanding through direct experience and observation. Furthermore, mixing methods helped create a multidimensional perspective account of the community by drawing on the voices of the different members of the community. Finally, what has emerged from the examination of community in regard to research method appropriateness is the value of observations. Observations have proven their strength by providing the opportunity for the researcher to be positioned at the heart of the community. Just as Goffman found observations useful in his enquiry, the method has been demonstrated to be a significant contributor towards understanding the community.

Taking a Goffmanian approach to the understanding of community structure, practices and relationships, I ask what are the contributing factors which maintain order? The community environment and relationships have been found to be largely concerned with minimising the causes of anxiety. The community environment is structured in such a way that imposes routine and consistency which helps prevent students from feeling anxious. Similarly, the 'success' of the community relationships depends on the non-autistic others' ability to minimise anxiety-provoking factors. Anxiety is occasionally avoided in relationships by the non-autistic individual (teachers or myself) allowing the ceremonial order (the situational proprieties) which govern interaction to be relaxed rather than strictly imposed. It is only by relaxing the ceremonial order

that Goffman saw as fundamental to order that anxiety is prevented and order is maintained. From a Goffmanian perspective, this behaviour could be classified as 'abnormal' because it deviates negatively from society's expectations; but it has been shown here to promote interaction between individuals and, in doing so, help question what is 'normal'. Furthermore, it also raises questions regarding how order is sustained in communities that do not adhere to the ritual order that Goffman observed.

My final point develops on from the point above regarding how preventing anxiety is important if order is to be sustained. Goffman identified that environmental factors make it easy or difficult for an individual to play the ritual game, which refers to the individual's ability to behave with deference and demeanor (Goffman, 1967). Here the community's practices, community organisation and the practices of the adults in the community control for anxiety provoking situations by implementing routine, which is intended to enable students to participate in the community. This relates to Goffman's observations that where community practices are institutionalised, it makes it easier for individuals to act as a 'socialized self', acting with deference and demeanor and according to situational proprieties. Therefore, I am led to ask if these identified institutionalised practices are also required during students' interactions with their intimate relations and if it enables students to act as "well demeaned individuals" (Goffman, 1967: 77) during the encounters? To explore this question and the importance of anxiety further, I address students' intimate relations and ask if the factors contributing to order in the community environment and relationships are just as important in the students' intimate relations.

Chapter 5: Intimate Relations

Introduction

Intimacy refers to 'the quality of a close connection between people' (Jamieson, 2011:1). Intimate relations are personal and private relationships which form between select individuals and 'may also be socially recognised as close' (Jamieson, 2011:1). An individual may have many acquaintances, they may know of many people but they are likely to have fewer intimate relations, relationships that are deeply close and personal (Morgan, 2009). Morgan (2009) distinguishes between strangers, acquaintances and intimates and for the purpose of this discussion I uphold this distinction. This chapter explores the students' relationships with intimates. These relationships are those with whom the students have a "close connection" (Jamieson, 2011), and are characterised by a greater level of intimacy than the relationships with strangers or acquaintances. For the purpose of this discussion I prefer to use the term intimate relations and address only those relationships between students and their family and friends. Relationships of any sort require individuals to interact with one another. Intimate relations are therefore inherently social which raises the question: how do individuals who have social impairments form and maintain personal relationships?

This chapter explores the intimate relations of the students. It is important to explore this, since literature on autism assumes that because of a difficulty in social communication and interaction autistic individuals prefer to be alone (Baron-Cohen, 2008). Literature has found autistic children to engage only rarely in social exchange, but also that autistic children desire friendships (Rowley et al., 2012). This chapter asks if autistic children form intimate relations and what form and function these relationships may take.

Goffman observed that an individual is tied to society through their social relations and he distinguished between anchored relations and acquaintances

(Goffman, 1971). The intimate relations addressed here relate to those relationships Goffman termed as anchored relations. The importance of discussing the students' relations from a Goffmanian perspective resides in acknowledging that relations tie an individual to society and help shape self. It is precisely because Goffman's account of social life resides in understanding the encounters between people that this perspective can help explore if and how the students form intimate relationships, and I build on this in the following chapter to discuss the effects of the relationships on the students' conceptions of self.

For the purpose of this discussion I have found it useful to distinguish between family and friends in order to account for the different types of relationships which can form.

5.1. Family

Throughout this discussion I have used the term family to include the students' 'immediate family' which is taken to mean the residents of the students' household. Parents/ carers and siblings will include both biological and non-biological relations (i.e. step / foster mother, father, brother or sister).

Relationships with family members are the first intimate relationships an individual is likely to form. Parents / carers are considered to be the primary "source of intimacy and support" in the early stages of life (Erwin, 1998: 3) and siblings are considered to be the longest-standing ties an individual has (Edwards et al., 2006). The following discussion focuses first on the students' relationships with their parent/ carers before moving to address their relationships with siblings.

5.1.1. Parents / Carers

Nine of the eleven students who participated in the research live with both biological parents; one student, Owen, lives with a legal guardian whom I refer to as a 'carer' and one student, Paige, lives with her mother and step-father. From this point forward, I will use the term carer in the instance named and use the term parent to include both biological and non-biological parents. Through this discussion I explore the meanings and functions of the students' relationships with their parents and question what impact they have on the students' experience.

It was my experience that the photography task was an appropriate method to capture the significance of the students' relationships. The method provided an account of the relationships with their parents and I propose that this was because the camera was physically able to cross the home-school border. I suggest this because, on numerous occasions, both parents/carers and teachers have commented that it is characteristic of autistic children to be of the 'here and now'. By this I believe they are referring to the students' difficulty in imagining the future and their impaired episodic memory (Lind and Bowler, 2010) which causes problems in remembering past experiences (Eysenck and Keane, 2005). The use of a camera enabled the students to capture the moment which included capturing the 'here and now' both at school and at home. The photography task therefore has proven to be useful at providing insights into the relationships forming in both contexts.

Eight of the eleven participating students included their parents in their photograph album and interestingly the task highlighted a divide in the roles performed by mothers and fathers. Mothers were most widely reported in terms of support and care which positioned them as the primary caregiver.

Figure 5: 1 Ben White, Photography
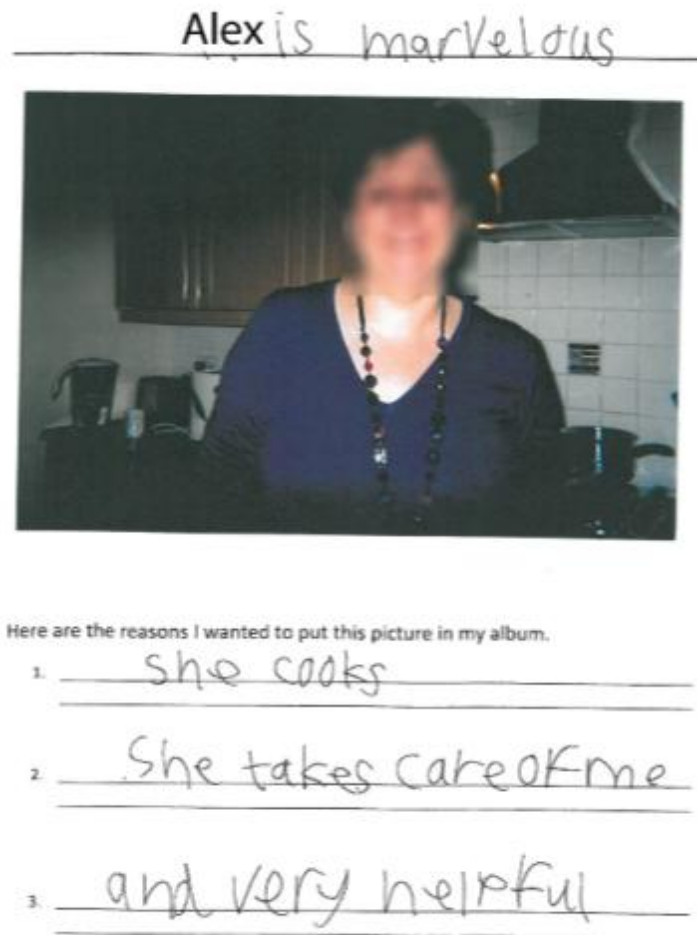
Ben recognises that his mother, who he called by her name, took care of him and fulfilled domestic roles such as cooking. Jake used his photograph album to explain that his mother was "*the best*" and that she cooked him macaroni and cheese, which I discovered while talking to him was his favourite meal.

Figure 5: 2 Jake Knox, Photography

My Mum

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I love mammy she's the best

2. mummy cook's me macaroi cheese

3. mummy looks funny in this picture

Hochschild (2003), among others, has observed that women split their time three ways between employment, childcare and housework and that they fulfilled 'maintenance' roles of childcare duties (feeding and bathing). The findings from the photography method reinforce the observations of Hochschild and position mothers as the primary caregivers. Alongside recognising their mothers to be the primary caregiver, the relationships also provided them with social and emotional support.

> *If we've had a problem and he's upset and I know it's some*
> *sort of communication issue, like he's misunderstood what's*

> *expected of him or he's frustrated about something, then I will*
> *get him to write it down. Because he doesn't cope with the*
> *emotional, it takes out the person and so he sends me letters*
> *underneath the door explaining. Some of them are fantastic*
> *and so spot on, but he has to be on his own and he has to not*
> *discuss them afterwards. I write him a letter back explaining*
> *what has happened, why something's happened, what I am*
> *going to do about it, how I feel about it, that sort of thing.*
>
> *(Interview, Deborah Mason, 17.03.11)*
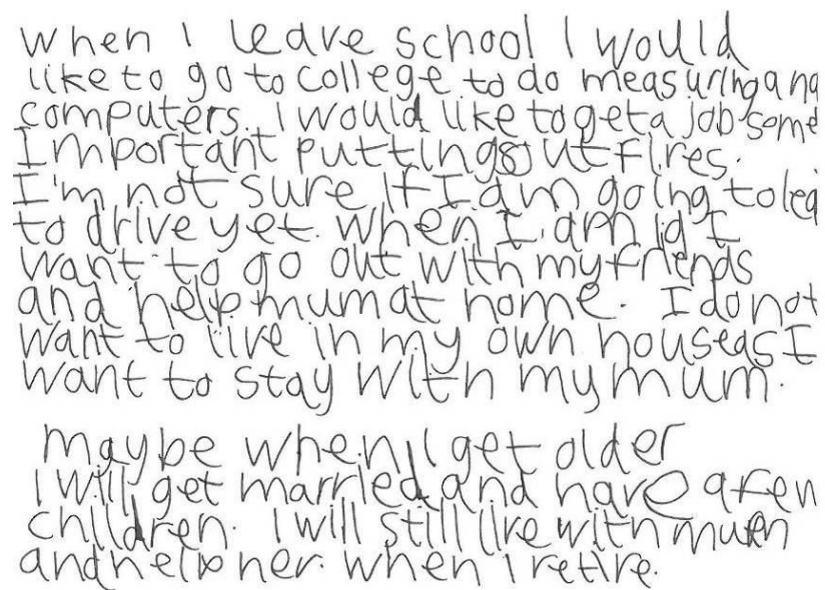
In the example provided here, Deborah Mason explains how she uses letter writing as a means of supporting Elliot when he has become upset. The process of "*explaining what has happened"* and unpicking the situation to calm Elliot has similarities with Goffman's notion of learning ritual. Elliot's mother explains to him the expectations of the situation, the situational proprieties and improprieties, which establish how others in the situation feel and how Elliot is expected to behave 'appropriately'. It is an example of Elliot learning how he 'ought' to behave.

Support was more than emotional support as illustrated in the above example, but it was also concerned with enabling the students to participate in the environment. In remembering back to the example in the previous chapter where Ben and Abby experienced a delay at the airport, their mother explained how she used structure to support and enable them to cope with the situation. She further explained that Abby and Ben's participation in daily activities is encouraged when "*you basically run an auty household...and you cater for autism in all of your plans*" (Alexandra White, 10.03.11). The practice of providing a breakout space (as in the example of Elliot) and imposing structure (as in the example of Abby and Ben) can be considered to be practices which 'cater for autism'. Furthermore, this relates back to chapter 4, and mirrors the institutionalised practices of Ladybarn which enable students to participate in the community and act with demeanor by controlling for anxiety provoking situations.

The students' relationships with their mothers were reported to be supportive, loving and caring and this reflected the bond the students had with their mothers. Authors writing on the relationship between parent and child recognise the dependency of children on their parents (Erwin, 1998). This dependency is observed to change over the life course; however, some students reported that they wanted their relationship with their mother to remain unchanged.

Figure 5: 3 Ben White, Essay

> When I leave school I would like to go to college to do measuring and computers. I would like to get a job some Important putting out Fires. I'm not sure if I am going to lea to drive yet. When I am old I want to go out with my friends and help mum at home. I do not want to live in my own house as I want to stay with my mum.
>
> maybe when I get older I will get married and have a few children. I will still like with mum and help her when I retire.

Ben was not alone in hoping his mum would continue as the primary supportive figure into adulthood, as Lydia explains:

Figure 5: 4 Lydia Gunn, Essay

> Our Life
>
> When I leave school I want to stay at home with my mum.
> When i leave school, want to stay at home with my mum.
> I want to go out with my friends and party. My mum will give me my money and buy. Me a house next door when I'm 30 years old.
>
> I don't want to get married or have children ever when I am old I just want to live my life next to my mum and I am going to knock the walls through.
> I would like to go round the world looking at different countries.
>
> When I am older I'm not going to look old or have wrinkles. I am still going to live next door to my mum and i will live with my 8 dog's. I will drive a Ferrari that is red. I will go on lots of holidays with my mum and buy a house to rent out.
>
> When I get bored of being at home I might get a job as a Vet or a footballer.

Goffman observed that relationships, which he termed anchored relationships, have a "natural history" and pass through different stages (Goffman, 1971: 230). The essay method was advantageous because through encouraging the students to think about their future it revealed the students' thoughts regarding how their relationships were likely to remain unchanged. In addition, the essays, through focussing on the future, were able to provide insight on their current circumstances as also found by Elliot (2010). What the above examples illustrate is students' relationships with their mothers at the time of writing the essays were significant and meaningful.

Some parents also reported that their relationship between themselves and the students were unlikely to change when they enter adulthood.

I don't think he will move out. I think he just couldn't. I don't think, even in sheltered accommodation, I don't think Liam could cope... we're going to have to find things that he can do, what we can do with him because we're going to have to entertain him.

(Interview, Sally Ball, 24.03.11)

In this excerpt Sally Ball explained how she saw her role as primary caregiver for Liam continuing when Liam enters adulthood. Deborah Mason also explained her own idea of the future would see her continuing as Elliot's primary source of support.

I, in my mind, in an ideal world, I would have a nice big house, massive garden, we would build a two bedroom house in the massive garden right at the end and Matthew and Elliot would live in there together. And they would still have independence and we would be there on hand for safety and to keep a close eye on them.

(Interview, Deborah Mason, 17.03.11)

The students' relationship with their mothers was foreseen by them and their mothers to remain constant throughout their lives. It has been observed that parents act as a secure base for their children, someone whom they can return to for support and feel at ease with. This is thought to change over the life course (Erwin, 1998) but in the examples given both students and mothers expect this function of their relationship to endure.

The discussion has so far illustrated the deeply close, personal and supportive nature of the students' relationships with their mothers and my attention now turns to the relationship with their fathers.

Fathers were often reported to be a significant person to the students because they engaged in fun activities such as playing football.

Figure 5: 5 Harry Patterson, Photography
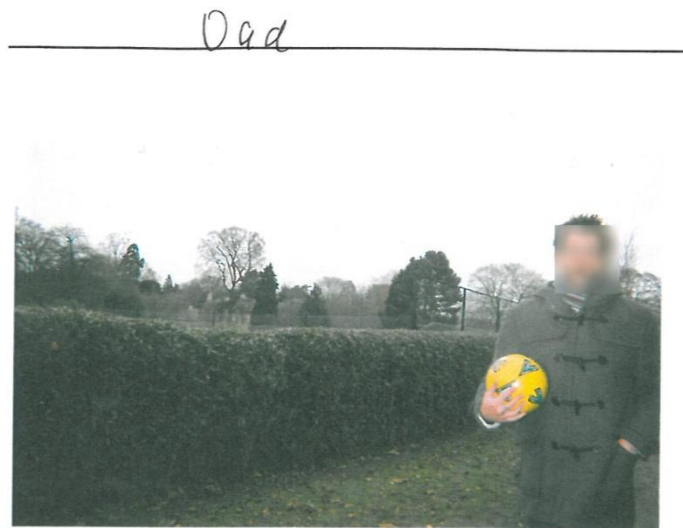
Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I like him because he plays with me

2. I like him because he plays football

3. I like him because he's nice

Harry cites that his father plays with him as a reason why he is considered to be significant. Fathers were also reported to be fun.

Figure 5: 6 Abby White, Photography
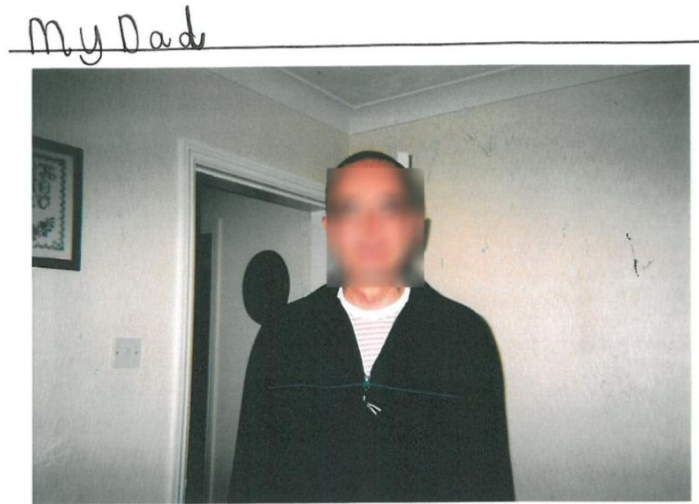
My Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. he's happy.

2. I love my Dad.

3. he is fun.

In Hochschild's (2003) observations of mothers and fathers she observed fathers to fulfil 'fun roles' such as days out and trips to the park. She further observed fathers to split their time between two demands; employment and childcare and this pattern was also observed in this research.

Figure 5: 7 Ben White, Photography

Paul _is good_

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. _he is good at modules_
2. _he goes to work_
3. _and helps a lot_

The above examples illustrates that fathers fulfilled the 'fun roles'. Students reported their fathers in a matter of fact way when describing the functions of their relationships, whereas mothers were reported in fond and loving terms for example "*Alex is Marvellous*" (figure 5:1) and "*Mummy is the best*" (figure 5:2). I suggest that this is reflective of the students' relationships and that they might feel emotionally closer to their mothers than fathers, as also observed by Jamieson (1998). An example of this, and an illustration of the value of a mixed methodology, came when I learnt of the circumstances surrounding Elliot's photograph of his father.

Figure 5: 8 Elliot Mason, Photography

my Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He's MY Dad

2. he is Sometimes s BOSY
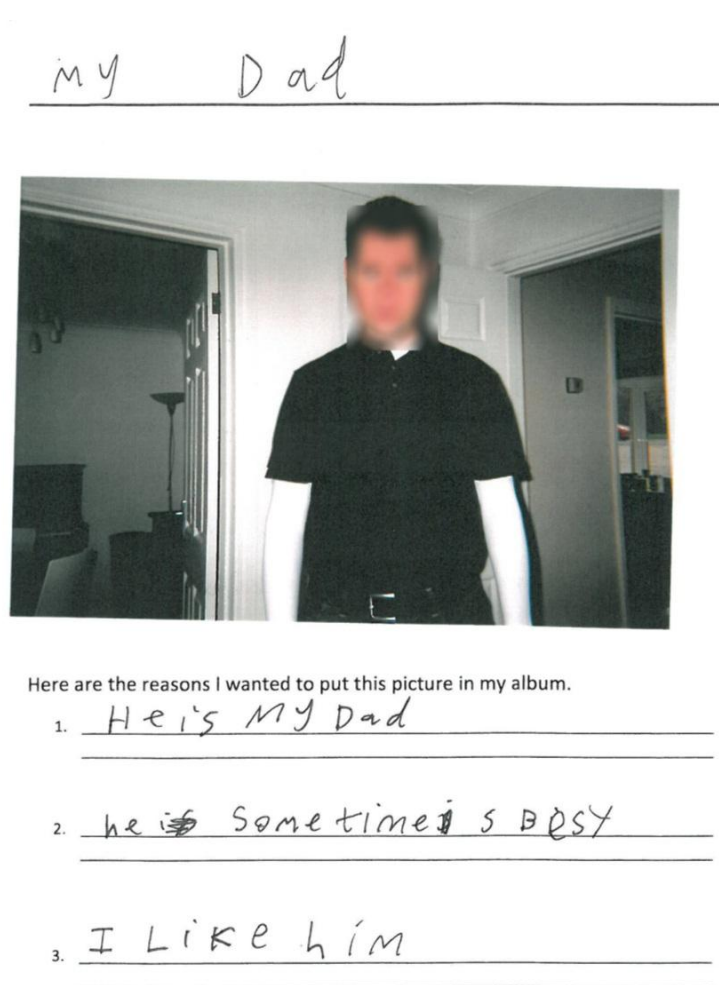
3. I Like him

In this example Elliot writes about his father in a matter of fact way saying "*he is my dad, I like him*" and also acknowledging that "*he sometimes is [busy]*". The value of a mixed methods approach, and in particular an illustration of the disadvantage of the researcher not being present throughout all stages of the data production, was highlighted in a comment made by Elliot's mother during the interview.

> *He had to kind of be talked into taking a photo of his dad. He said "on my list I have a picture of mummy, a picture of Emily his sister and a picture of Matthew his brother" but I said "you*

know what I think would be a good idea, is a picture of daddy
as well."

This example illustrates that when research participants complete the research task away from the researcher's gaze, factors contributing towards the data collection go unrecorded. Learning the circumstances around Elliot's photograph of his father encourages a different analysis of it. It appears that Elliot was not as close to his father as his mother, who he referred to as "*being lovable"* (Elliot). The fact that he needed prompting to take a photograph of his father sheds light on the meaning and significance of the relationship.

He's not coped with his dad at all, despite the fact, I mean, his
dad still lives with us, we've not separated, but no, it's
consistent, it's always been like that, it's considerably harder
for Craig. Elliot sees no problem at all. He doesn't normally
cope with Craig sitting next to him if they were watching a film,
certainly not with any sort of touching, like holding hands, it's
absolutely a no-no. If he's poorly it'll go to absolute extremes,
so he will scream and cry if Craig is in the same room, just
really goes extreme...I mean it's got to be hard for Craig, but
he will go and just force himself upon him, just like give him a
cuddle, because he knows damn well that if he asks there's not
a hope in hell that Elliot's going to want him near him.

This excerpt suggest that Elliot felt little emotional attachment towards his father and that his father would "*force himself upon*" Elliot to cuddle him. The encounters described to occur between Elliot and his father indicate little understandings of each others' feelings and different understandings of interpersonal rituals. The interpersonal rituals which Elliot's father tried to

engage in with Elliot were not reciprocated and this might be because they lie outside of Elliot's boundaries of comfortable behaviour. For example, a cuddle could be seen by one individual as a tie sign (Craig Mason) (Goffman, 1971: 226) but be seen by another individual as an anxiety trigger (Elliot) and the different understanding of the behaviour causes the interaction to break down and the relationship to be a strained one. This specific example highlights the importance of understanding the students' needs and operating within boundaries of comfortable behaviour as well as illustrating the value of a mixed methodology.

What has been demonstrated is that the students' relationships with their parents differ and there is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a distinction between the roles mothers and fathers fulfil. The discussion also illustrates the students' relationships with their mothers have similarities with their relationships with their teachers, that is, the fact that they are dependent upon the adult and support is an intrinsic factor of the relationship. The support provided in the mother-child relationship acts to encourage interaction, as guidance and a secure base to return to. The relationships discussed thus far have been found to have a strong supportive aspect, I now explore if this is a feature of all students' relationships.

5.1.2. Siblings

The term siblings although recognised to be more complex to define than simply by biology or law alone (Edwards et al., 2006) will be understood here as those individuals biologically related through either one or both parents. This is because ten of the eleven students were known to have (biological) siblings and one, Owen, had a foster brother whom he referred to as his friend. Therefore, in honouring the students' perspective, the term siblings will apply to individuals who are biologically related.

Mrs Fletcher: But we were just saying about Harry and Savannah about how different they are.

Miss Morrison (2): Yeh, she never wants to go out

Mrs Fletcher: And he's so lively. They look alike but they are so different-

Miss Morrison: She is so anxious and scared, she's so timid and quiet, whereas Harry is the complete opposite.

Mrs Fletcher: But you do have that with brothers and sisters anyway don't you. But then you've got Abby and Ben who are so the same, it really is quite bizarre.

(Focus Group, LSAs, 23.11.11)

The conversation between Mrs Fletcher and Miss Morrison reminds us that although siblings share family ties, they are individuals and the relationship between siblings varies. As noted, the photography task was good at revealing the meanings and functions of the students' relationships. Through this method it was learnt that the students' relationships with their siblings were meaningful.

Figure 5: 9 Abby White, Photography

_My_ Ben

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. he's MY Brother.

2. SuN togther.

3. he is Speciat to me.
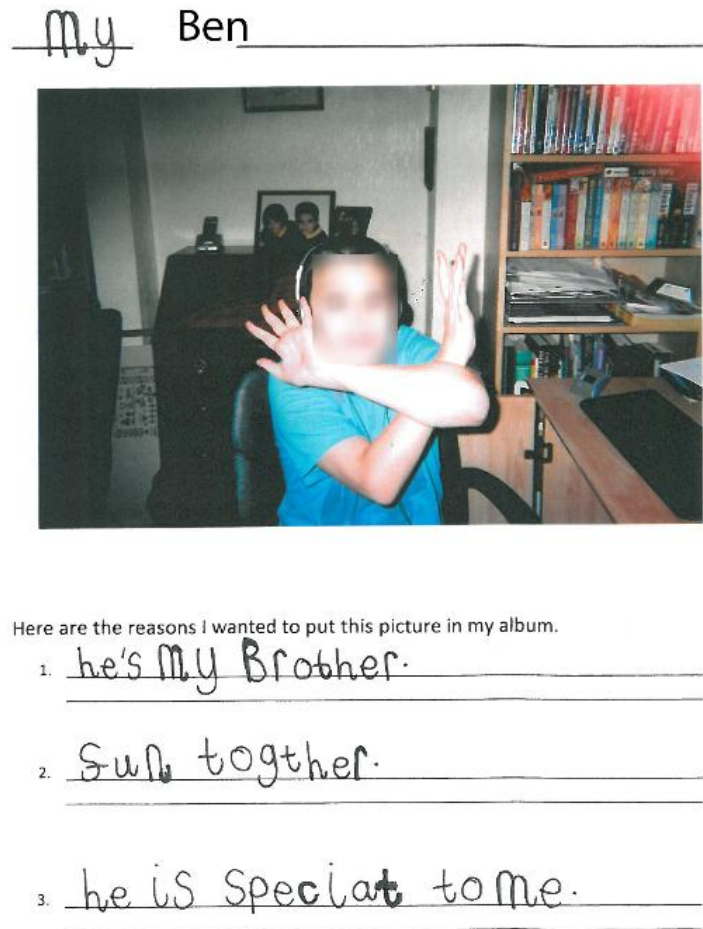
Abby writes that Ben is special to her, which illustrates the significance of this relationship to Abby and also that it is a relationship which is close and personal. Other students, such as Liam, demonstrated how significant their sibling was to them by acknowledging they "*looked up to*" them.

Figure 5: 10 Liam Ball, Photography

Luke

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. becose my brushir tach lock up to him

2. _____

3. _____

The relationships between siblings were loving and fun because the students' found their siblings amusing and people whom they could spend recreational time with.

Figure 5: 11 Ben White, Photography

Abby _is my sister_

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. _She is sometimes funny_

2. _She is small_

3. _and very hepful_

Citing siblings' sense of humour, or behaviour which is deemed as 'funny', was a common theme throughout the photography task as Joe acknowledged his "*two sisters are funny*" and Josh also made similar references in his photograph album.

Figure 5: 12 Josh Collins, Photography

My family

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.
1. becours scum tims. thay are my cher and ejoy.
2. best frendc
3. and s-uny

This example highlights the blurring of the relationships between family and friends as Josh refers to his family, which include his two brothers, as his "*best friends*". Siblings can be considered to be friends and to fulfil similar functions as friends, as was observed between Abby and Ben who elected to play together at break times.

Ben bounced into the classroom where Abby was putting on her coat and the two of them skipped out together into the quad. I went to stand in the fresh air and I could hear Ben and Abby talking to each other. They were stood looking into their reflections on the food technology room window, as they did most break times, and as they talked they each would alternate between looking at

each other and looking in the reflections on the glass. Periodically Ben would raise his hands and Abby would follow and even mid-conversation Ben would dash off to the corner of the quad and return to Abby who continued talking.

(18.01.11)

Through the mixing of methods, I was able to observe directly the relationship between Ben and Abby and the photography task complemented this by highlighting the meaning of their relationship for each of them. Furthermore, through including parent interviews alongside the other methods, a multi-perspective understanding was achieved as their mother explained that "*they have a connection there…it's because he understands what she is talking about*" (Alexandra White, 10.03.11). I also observed a 'connection' and an understanding between Abby and Ben; as in the above example. The interaction between them has factors which, according to Goffman, should ordinarily lead to interaction breakdown. These factors were external preoccupation (increased attention on something outside of the interaction) when Ben 'dashed off' and consciousness of others (attention unduly focused on an individual external to the interaction) when Abby was focused on her reflection in the window (Goffman, 1967). This raises questions regarding how it is that the interaction sustains, despite the presence of situational improprieties that are recognised to lead to interaction breakdown.

The relationship between Ben and Abby was observed to be both deeply close and personal; two characteristics that satisfies Morgan's criteria of intimates. The bond and relationship observed between Abby and Ben was observed in other students' relationships with their siblings.

> *Matthew started the school which Elliot was at. So, they were together and immediately they were both going on transport. So right from that young age it's "me and my brother go to school together. We go to exactly the same school, we're in the same unit, and we're in the classroom next to each other."*

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Matthew has always insisted that Elliot played with him because [he is] frightened of other kids and Elliot was the only one he trusts. I mean they were always together, an awful lot of the time it was just Matthew and Elliot.

(Interview, Deborah Mason, 17.03.11)

Both sets of siblings were observed to spend a considerable amount of time together. In observing the relationships the elements of a 'connection' were observed (Abby and Ben) as well as the element of support (Elliot supporting Matthew). The element of support was a feature of students' relationships that was not only observed by those outside of the relationship (parents/ me) but it was also a feature that was recognised by the students themselves.

Figure 5: 13 Jake Knox, Photography

my sister Lucy

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. We some times fight

2. Lucy plays with me

3. Lucy looks after me

Relationships between siblings are a valuable source of emotional and social support (Vandall, 2000). Siblings are observed to provide a sense of emotional security because they are considered to be the longest standing relationships one is likely to form (Edwards et al., 2006). The above discussion has illustrated that the students' relationships with their siblings are meaningful, loving and playful ones but they are also supportive and therefore can also be considered to provide the students with emotional security.

Students' relationships with their siblings were largely reported to be loving and meaningful; however, some students experienced challenges and difficulties in their relationships with siblings. Referring back to figure 5:13, Jake acknowledged that he and his sister "*sometimes fight*", but conflict between siblings is well documented (Edwards et al., 2006) and can be considered a typical feature in a sibling relationship.

As in the example of Jake, the conflict between him and his sister occurred "*sometimes*" and the changing dynamics of the students' relationships from cohesion to conflict was observed in other relationships. In one example Mrs Parker removed Paige, Josh, Liam and Lydia one afternoon from class to discuss their relationships with their siblings. The discussion was one I felt I could not enter but talking with Mrs Parker after I learnt that the session was prompted because each of their parents had recently reported the relationships with their siblings were becoming fraught. This reflects the usefulness of the chosen methods and I suggest observing the home environment would have been a different means of understanding the relationships between the students and their siblings. In particular, observations would be more likely to highlight the conflict which can arise in sibling relationships; more so than the photography task which was focused on significant people and therefore, the structure of the method discouraged accounts of conflict from arising. It was the experience here that an understanding of conflict between siblings was in this instance better gleaned through interviewing parents.

> *Sometimes we meet up for lunch and on the last holiday we met up for lunch and Liam was with me, and he said to me "who's paid for his dinner?" And I said "I have" and he said "why?" I said "because he's my son and like you're my son Luke's my son" and he said "why are you paying for his bloody dinner? He can pay for his own, he doesn't live with us, he's nothing to us". And I said to him "that is your brother" and you know "and I can pay for his dinner because I'm his mum" but because he doesn't live in our house he kind of then becomes of no consequence.*

In this example Sally Ball talks of Liam's relationship with his elder brother and how Liam does not perceive Luke to be a family member because he does not live in the family home. This was also found in Edwards et al's (2006) study where some children had to be reminded of siblings who lived independently. This example also raises questions about the importance of proximity to the formation of a relationship; this was also discussed in the previous chapter regarding the students' relationships with their teachers.

The discussion has found sibling relationships to vary and some students were emotionally closer to siblings than others. Where a close relationship existed it was considered meaningful, playful and supportive. However, some students' relationships with their siblings were more fraught and tense. The value of interviews with parents arises here since parents were able to offer information that had not been gleaned through the other methods, in particular issues around conflict. The important point to note is that the student-sibling relationship mirrored many aspects of sibling relationships which have been reported in the literature.

5.1.3. Family Closing Remarks

The above discussion has illustrated the students' family ties are deeply close and meaningful and it has also highlighted the value of children's participation in research.

Through providing ways for the children to participate the research has found their relationships are considered significant to them. The photography task was particularly useful at enabling the students to convey the meanings, functions and emotions attached to their relationships with family members.

The discussion here has illustrated the students' ability to participate meaningfully in research has provided an understanding of their family relationships.

Understanding the discussion through a Goffmanian approach, the family relationships discussed relate to the socialization process observed by Goffman. The relationships have emerged to be important in the 'here and now' but the importance of proximity to a cohesive relationship reflects the fact students are in a process of learning (and being taught) that social relationships can span time and space. Students are being taught by their parents and others to learn that relationships "do not die" but change (Goffman, 1971: 231). The support needed by and provided to students from parents and siblings enables their participation in the relationships through accounting for factors which cause anxiety and students' inability to control their emotions. This relates to Goffman's concept of demeanor as parents accommodate students' needs (by implementing routine) so the students can act with demeanor (they can control their emotions). Furthermore, the discussion has outlined the input from (non-autistic) adults is sometimes needed to help students manage their relationships. These examples further highlight students to be in a process of learning ritual. Goffman (1963) observed children to be social actors who are permitted to operate outside of social conventions but, as a result, their lives are subject to control by parents and other adults. This discussion has found the students' relationships with parents to reflect this observation made by Goffman and has illustrated that the exercise of power by the adult contributes towards a cohesive relationship. It has, however, also illustrated the 'successful' and meaningful relationships between two children, between siblings. I question how it is that two individuals who are permitted to operate outside of social conventions, form and sustain meaningful relationships. It is for this reason that my attention now turns to the students' relationships with friends, where I consider who friends are and what factors contribute towards the formation of friendship.

5.2. Friends

Friendships are thought to be "spontaneous and voluntary" (Jamieson et al., 2006: 14) and are established out of individuals' mutual regard for one another (Rebughini, 2011). Pockney (2006) offers a succinct account of what constitutes friendship by proposing that it is a relationship of four elements; autonomy, equality, reciprocity and intimacy. In brief, these elements are defined as the freedom to select one's friends (autonomy), the existence of a balance of power (equality), the exchange of information, support and sociability (reciprocity) and the existence of disclosure, communication and trust (intimacy). Although these elements provide a useful platform to develop this discussion, it must be acknowledged that commentators on friendship observe that there is "little common agreement on what counts as being a true friend" (Pahl, 2000: 14). Working from this definition, friends can be any number of things which might satisfy this criterion and so, with this in mind, I divide the discussion into two categories, 'peers' and 'other friends', and explore if these can be considered friendships and what form these relationships may take.

5.2.1. Peers

Defining the term 'friendship' can assist in understanding what is meant by peer. Friendship, whilst acknowledged to be a complex concept to define, will be understood in terms of its characteristics as defined by Pockney (2006). Similar to the term friendship, 'peer' is a term that refers to a relationship between two individuals of an equal status and who have a joint membership to a group. The term peer in this discussion is restricted to the membership of a group; a peer is an individual of a similar age who also attends Ladybarn. In this discussion I address the blurring of the terms friend and peer, and ask if all peers are considered to be friends and explore the meaning of the relationships to the students.

There were quite different perspectives on the subject of friendship and whether the students' peers could be considered friends. "*I didn't know if she knew what a friend was*" (Alexandra White), "*he makes friends easily but doesn't keep them*" (Mia Johnson) and "*he can't cope with relationships*" (Sally Ball) were just a selection of comments the parents and carers made. Through spending time at Ladybarn, the perspectives of the teachers were obtained which suggest the students did form friendships with their peers; "*this is the most sociable bunch we've had*" (Mrs Fletcher) and "*Mrs Parker said to me that autistic kids don't make friends unless they are in form 3ED*" (Mr Douglas). I was puzzled by the different perspectives on friendships and questioned the assumptions around what constitutes friendships. These differing perspectives serve as a reminder that individuals have different perspectives on a topic and that different methods access these perspectives. It was apparent that observing the students led to different understandings regarding their friendships. It was of little surprise then that the student-centred methods, which accessed the students' perspectives, were found to be most appropriate.

Directly consulting students about their friendships provided them with the opportunity to explain the meanings, functions and types of relationships they formed with their peers.

> *Mrs Fletcher: it [photography task] was certainly the best for thinking about 'who is my friend?'*
>
> *Mrs McIntosh: Yeh, the good thing with that, doing the photos, was that it was something to do outside of school so you got an insight into what they liked doing outside of school as well as in school.*
>
> *(Focus Group, LSAs, 23.11.11)*

While I share these views, the documentary task was also useful at uncovering who the students considered to be friends. Combining the findings from the

documentary task and the photography task, an understanding of why certain peers were considered as friends was obtained.

> *Josh: I like Liam, Lydia, Paige, Elliot, Tristan, Harry, Owen, Archie, practically everybody in my class and a couple of people around the school.*
>
> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

The documentary task was an opportunity for students to state who they considered to be a friend and many students demonstrated their friendship by declaring they 'liked' someone.

> Elliot: I like Kyle, Josh, Paige
>
> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

The notion of 'liking' someone equated to the individual being recognised as a friend, since there was no peer-friend distinction made by the students themselves. Psychologists and other observers of childhood relationships comment that children form in-groups and out-groups and that some individuals are rejected by the peer group and remain excluded (Tajfel, 1974). Similarly Goffman (1971) distinguished between acquaintances and anchored relations, and although the students did not distinguish between individuals in these terms, they were engaged in a form of categorisation; labelling individuals whom they 'liked'.

Through combining methods an understanding of the aspects and functions of friendships was gleaned. For students being a member of the same form, having classes together or sharing transport home often meant that the individuals were likely to be considered friends.

AW: I think Paige seems to be her friend. Yeh, they seem to be. I haven't met her yet. She's bowling at the weekend. So that will be interesting. I think one of the difficulties is you know you come to plan a birthday party and she could only come up with two names for people...Because that's a typical one is you say "oh what are the names of the people in your class?" Now he [Ben] could tell me now. Abby came up with Paige and Jake for the party.

JE: They sit next to her.

AW: There you go, that's her immediate [neighbours].

(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.11)

What Alexandra White was referring to by the phrase "*that's her immediate*" is the proximity of Paige and Jake to Abby. Paige and Jake sat either side of Abby in their form room and because of this close proximity Alexandra suggested that this contributed towards Abby considering these individuals to be her friends.

The photography task was used by Joseph to take photographs of two of his friends, both of whom were in his form group.

Figure 5: 14 Joseph Knight, Photography

Super Jones

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He is good at football

2. He likes wrestling

3. He is cool
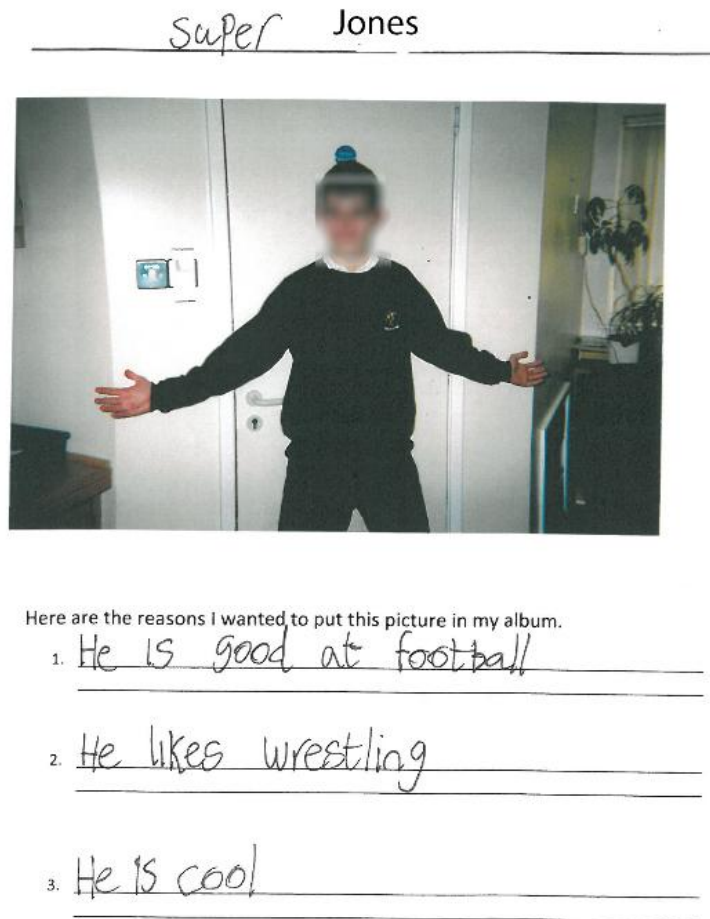
Proximity is emerging to be a key factor in the formation of friendships, but the notion of 'being liked' highlights how friendships are also autonomous in nature. Friendships require more than simply two individuals being of a similar age or being in close proximity. As the example of Joseph and Andrew highlights a shared interest might also be a factor of friendships. Joseph shares with his friend, affectionately titled in his photography album "*Super Jones*", a common interest in football and wrestling. Two reasons provided by Joseph as to why "*Super Jones*" was his friend: "*he is good at football*" and "*he likes wrestling*". By combining the observations and photography I was able to learn these were mutual interests of the boys.

The class were given free choice (time to spend as they wished) because they had completed the work before the lesson ended. Andrew Jones (Super Jones) and Joe were stood at the white board frantically scribbling away, creating a score table of some sort. "Yeh, and who will Barca play in the semi's?" Andrew enthusiastically bellowed at Joe. "Laaaaaaaadddybarn!" Andrew screamed answering his own question. "Yeh, and we will win eight nil" Joe added as the boys high fived. They spent the whole of free time organising a fantasy football world cup and each game's predictions and scores. When the world cup ended, it goes without saying that Ladybarn won the cup, they moved onto organising a wrestling competition which they took great delight in acting out.

(09.03.11)

In this example, Joseph and Andrew's interaction is an imaginative one and it is ordered which relates to the concept of supportive interchange (Goffman, 1971). The example also raises questions regarding just how challenging Joseph and Andrew find being socially imaginative and this is something which is explored further in the final chapter. Joe and Andrew's relationship was grounded in their mutual interest in football and wrestling, and having a shared interest was a feature of other students' relationships. Ben included his friend Timothy in his photograph album and through observing their relationship I learnt that they both enjoy watching Disney films.

Figure 5: 15 Ben White, Photography

tough Timothy Hinde

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. he is good at talking

2. We talk about IS hey films.

3. and helpful.
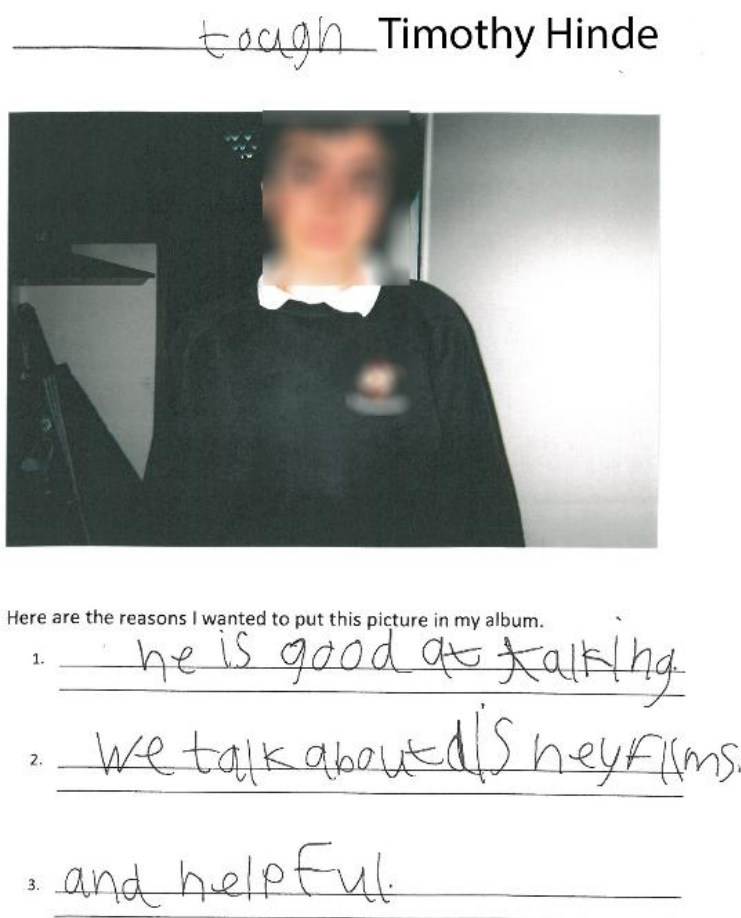
In the photography task the students fondly described their relationships with their peers and often used nicknames to refer to them. Considering this alongside my observations of the students, their friendships with peers suggest that the 'sociable' dimension of friendship (Pockney, 2006) is satisfied.

In the above examples, Joseph and Ben assign their friends nicknames, Super Jones and Tough Timothy respectively, and from a Goffmanian standpoint this can be considered to be a tie sign between anchored relations (Goffman, 1971). The use of nicknames was widespread at Ladybarn; for example, Josh referred to 'MJ' (his friend who is a Michael Jackson fan) and all of the students fondly

named two teachers who were siblings Miss Morrison One and Miss Morrison Two. Goffman recognised personal identity to "establish through distinguishing marks" (1971: 227) and so the use of nicknames are an example of a close friendship but also illustrate how relationships are tied to one's identity. Whilst nicknames have the potential to be derisory, in these examples they are a sign of meaningful relationships. It can be suggested that nicknames emerge out of the intimate knowledge individuals share as nicknames are usually ascribed based on personal knowledge of the individual in question. I am of the belief that these examples and the use of nicknames are a reflection of close and personal friendships between students and their peers.

The above discussion has demonstrated that the students form friendships with peers and it has also illustrated the significance of the relationships to the students but my attention now turns to discussing the role and functions of the relationships.

Figure 5: 16 Elliot Mason, Photography

Kyle

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. Because he was the First Friend in Ladybarn

2. He is kind and some times Helpful

3. He trusts Me

Elliot draws attention to support and trust as being important factors of friendships. In Elliot's photography project he recognised his relationship with Kyle (who shares transport to and from school with Elliot) to significant because Kyle is '*helpful'* and Kyle '*trusts'* Elliot. The value of obtaining multiple-perspectives arises here, as Elliot's mother has a differing account of Elliot's relationships.

> *He calls his friends whoever is on his bus or whoever's in his school. Other than that, he doesn't have what you and I would term as friends at all…on the bus when he goes to school, he's*

the youngest as all of them are around 15, 16. So for an awful
long time, apparently all the other kids were sitting near the
back of the bus and they all brought in cakes, and sweets, and
doughnuts, and chocolates and all of them were eating them
except Elliot and Elliot was told "you have to watch the escort
and the driver, you're not allowed anything because you're the
look out" and because of his theory of mind he didn't think to
tell me because I already knew, so it was purely by accident
that I asked him something that it came out and I was like
"what makes you think that that's something that a friend
would do?" but you can't get through to him.

(Interview, Deborah Mason, 17.03.11)

Deborah Mason explains that in her perspective Elliot might misunderstand the encounter between himself and his bus 'friends'. Whilst Elliot was satisfied with his role in the interaction ritual, the role of look out, his mother believes that this is an unfair role to assume in the ritual and that Elliot had been 'fooled' into such position because 'true' friends do not treat each other in such ways; that is, by forcing each other into unfair roles as Kyle did to Elliot. Deborah Mason can be considered to be attempting to teach Elliot the difference between friends (anchored relations) and acquaintances. The example also illustrates the value of acquiring different perspectives.

Elliot was not the only student to recognise friends to provide support, as other students also reported this.

Figure 5: 17 Joseph Knight, Photography

Good Dom

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He Helps People
2. He is good at football
3. He is amazing

Joe reported Dominic (Dom) as someone who "*helps people*" and I also observed Dominic to be helpful, as he acted to prevent Joe from becoming anxious.

The students were keen to crack on with their game of touch rugby but before they could they had to complete a skills drill. They were split into pairs and lined up at one end of the gym and the pairs took it in turns running and practice throwing the ball backwards to their partner. After several attempts at this they came together to watch another demonstration, Miss Cox then started to pair the students up with different partners. Joe began to look slightly nervous by this. "And Dominic you go over there with …" Miss Cox

began to order "But, I was working with Joe and he likes things to be the same"
Dominic protested. "Joe, do you want to continue to work with Dominic?" Miss
Cox asked, to have Joe agree and the boys carried on with the second drill.

(25.11.10)

This is an example of a friend understanding another friend's need for routine
and in understanding Joe's need for routine Dominic acted to prevent Joe from
feeling anxious. From a Goffmanian perspective Dominic could be considered
to show Joe accommodation by upholding the routine which alleviated Joe's
feelings of anxiety and allowed him to act with demeanor.

Both Elliot and Joe reported their friends Kyle and Dominic respectively to be
helpful and I too observed this to be a feature of students' relationships.

It was another Maths lesson where the students were a mix of form 1MP, 2VM
and students from the MLD unit. Everyone was quiet and hard at work, Ben
was sat by himself on the desk in front of the teacher, Lydia who was colouring
in a sheet of paper occupied a six seater desk by herself, Josh and Paige were
sat together helping each other complete the sums.

(18.01.11)

Paige and Josh frequently helped each other with their work and this is an
example of a more reciprocal relationship. Their relationship was also
observed to be intimate and personal, they frequently elected to spend free
time together (illustrating autonomy), their friendship was built on trust and
the sharing of personal matters as I observed (demonstrating reciprocity and
intimacy):

Lydia announced to the class that she was taking time out and left the room leaving Josh and Paige sat alone. With Josh and Paige to my left and the remainder of the class on a large table to my right I position myself on a table between the two. As the students began to work, Josh and Paige started talking. Josh: "I have my mum's Aspergers. Dad is what I say as normal, you know, without a disability. Ben has Autism." Paige: "What have you got?" Josh: "Aspergers. Mum is Aspergers, Ben has autism and I have Aspergers. My brother Tom might be coming to this school. Your brother looks Aspergers." The conversation paused after discussing their diagnosis they went on to talk about friendships. Josh: "Were you popular at Oaklands?" (Paige's Primary school). Paige: "I started off with no friends." Josh: "Same here." Paige: "But then I met Liam, Emily and Freya." Josh: "Same here. [pause] It was like when I came to Ladybarn, I didn't know anyone, but now we're friends."

(13.01.11)

In this example Paige and Josh demonstrate more than a friendship built on trust but they also demonstrate that as individuals they are aware that they have been diagnosed with ASC, which I address further in the following chapter. What is also of interest here is Josh's use of the term 'normal' and it leads me to question what is understood by the term 'normal', which is discussed in the final chapter. Furthermore, in observing this interaction Josh and Paige show little difficulty in social communication and interaction. This observation raises questions around the triad of impairments associated with ASC and this issue is also discussed in chapter seven.

Through mixing methods, and especially through spending time with Paige, I am confused by my observations of her. She was observed to present herself as an articulate individual when talking with her friends. However when engaged with adults, Paige appeared to struggle or refused to interact and the encounter often broke down. I was uncertain if this was because of anxiety, trust or active resistance on Paige's behalf. While I was unable to figure this out it was my experience that Paige was happy and enthusiastic to engage in tasks that did not require verbal communication. It was for this reason that the

photography task was experienced to be an appropriate way of engaging Paige, and others who struggled with social interaction, in the research.

Figure 5: 18 Paige West, Photography
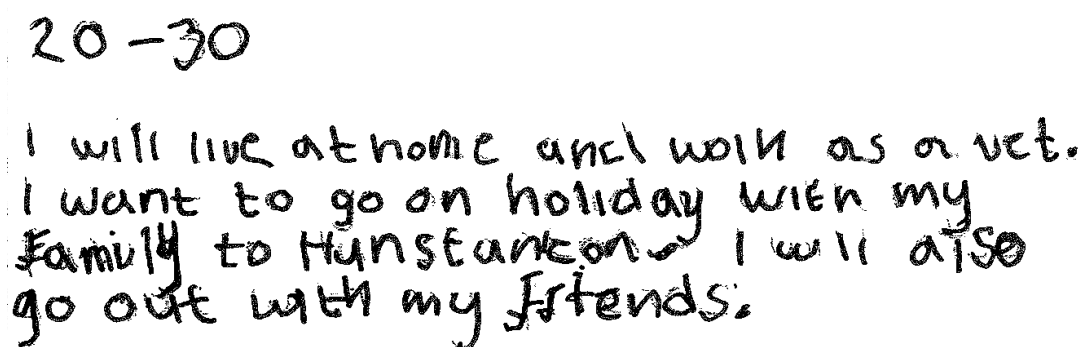
The benefit of the photography method is supportive evidence for the argument that disabled people can, and should, themselves assume a meaningful role in research. This is because the photography method illustrates that when participants' needs are considered, research can be more inclusive and the individuals in question can meaningfully participate.

Finally, students' friendships with peers were meaningful and supportive in the here and now but the essay task also highlighted that friendships were foreseen as an enduring aspect of students' lives. Referring back to figures 5:3 and 5:4, Ben and Lydia respectively both write that they would like to "*go out with friends*" when they are older. What is interesting here is the acknowledgement that friends will continue to be a feature of one's life but with no specific acknowledgement of who these friends are likely to be.

Figure 5: 19 Jake Knox, Essay

20 -30

I will live at home and work as a vet.
I want to go on holiday with my family to Hunstanton. I will also go out with my friends.

I conclude with a reflection on the essay method's suitability before I comment on students' friendships with their peers. Although the essay method highlighted students' foreseen friendships continuing into adulthood, there was no specific mention of whether the friendships of today would endure into adulthood. I propose that this was a reflection of the method's appropriateness and relates to students 'challenge' in social imagination. A distinction between the essays produced by the two classes was observed, as each class had a different teacher delivering the task. In both instances students were reliant upon the structure provided by the teacher, the age ranges and the proposed achievements occurring within those ranges. It was perhaps due to the teachers generally mentioning friends which led to the omission of specific friends in students' essays. I observed students to find the essay task challenging. This serves as an illustration that data are a co-product of participant, researcher and context. With all essays produced by students

following the same structure as the one provided as an example by the teacher, this demonstrates how data are created and influenced by factors around the participant rather than being something to extract from them. I however, am of the view that every child should be given the opportunity to participate in research; and I stand by this in light of the insightful essays produced and the comments made by parents regarding their child's participation in the research.

In a way it was good, because it [the essay] made him talk about things in perhaps a way he wouldn't have done because it wouldn't have been triggered off.

(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.11)

From the above discussion it has been illustrated that crucial to the formation of students' relationships with their peers was the issue of proximity and a shared mutual interest. In the presence of these factors students' friendships were reported to be meaningful, their encounters observed to be ordered and thus the relationships satisfy the elements of friendships as identified by Pockney (2006). A significant factor running through all the relationships explored so far is the issue of proximity. I take this issue further in the following section when I explore if all 'things' in close proximity to the students are considered friends.

5.2.2. 'Other' Friends

I use the term 'other' friends to refer to the relationships the students have with objects and animals. I am keen to classify these relationships as friendships, not least because that is how the students consider them but also I am of the view that in some students' social worlds objects and animals provide real friendships.

Before I move on to discuss the students' relationships with objects and animals, I want to note the advantage of having participants meaningfully participating in the research. Through the students' participation in the research, they were able to direct the course of the research by introducing topics which were significant to them but were not considered by me, the researcher. This also serves to highlight the difference between an adult and child perspective and supports the argument that it is the child who is best placed to comment on issues concerning their lives (Kellett, 2005). This difference in perspective becomes greater when other factors are considered, for example the difference between a non-autistic adult's perspective and an autistic child's perspective, and so it further supports the need for participants to be included in research. I had not considered animals or objects to be friends until the students made known the significance of them to me, and so I reiterate that many benefits come from meaningfully engaging participants in the research process.

Objects

In this discussion I distinguish between the students, for there was a significant difference in how objects were presented. It was a familiar feature for all the students to have items of value and for objects to be used or discussed during free time. For example, Lydia's iPod, Josh's Nintendo DS or Elliot's Harry Potter wand. However, within the participating group there was a noticeable difference between students who treated the objects as valuable and those who treated the objects as something that fulfils the role of a friend. I first provide an account of how objects are perceived as friends before explaining the observed differences between the students.

The most striking examples were in the cases of Abby and Owen. The methods used were consistent in drawing out their attachment to objects, specifically toys, and through mixing-methods the significance and meanings of these can be understood.

In the case of Abby, Babs the (toy) hamster featured in all the methods, for example in the documentary Abby expressed how she "*liked*" Babs. The repeated occurrence of Babs demonstrated how Babs was a real and prominent part of Abby's life. Babs lived with Abby and Abby cared for Babs, as she explained in her essay, "*I feed my hamster Babs*". The relationship between Abby and Babs might not be any more than imaginative child's play, as children are recognised to progress through stages of playing with toys and having attachments towards objects. However, I would be reluctant to dismiss Abby's relationship with Babs as only imaginative child's play. For Abby, her relationship with Babs was real and meaningful; according to Abby, Babs was her friend.

Figure 5: 20 Abby White, Photography

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.
1. babs is on the table.
2. I Love babs.
3. Shes my friend.
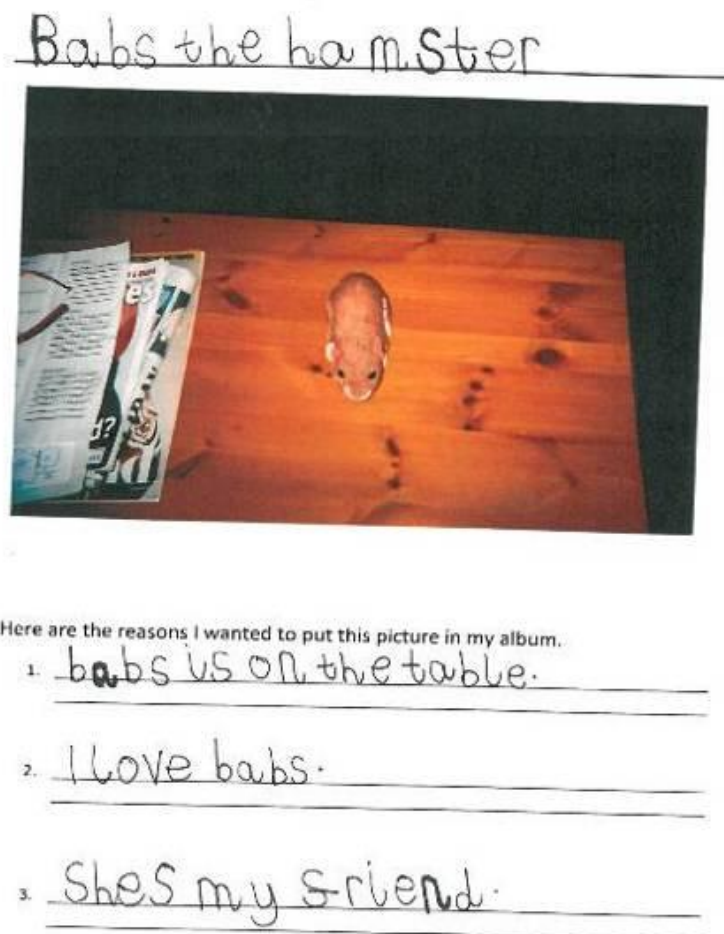
Abby considered Babs to be her friend and Abby's mother suggested why Babs might be perceived by Abby as a friend.

> *[opens photograph album to the photo of Babs] She's my friend.*
> *I thought that was very interesting. So she perceives it as, well I*
> *didn't know if she knew what a friend was. But, someone who*
> *is with her constantly, it's non-demanding, she can make it*
> *what she wants.*

> *(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.12)*

The recurrence of Babs in the activities signifies Babs' importance to Abby and yet why Babs was important never emerged through the methods. I could speculate that with time and different methods Abby would be able to explain why Babs was important. I could offer a further suggestion from the theoretical perspective taken by proposing that the interactions between Abby and Babs do not adhere to the strict social rules observed by Goffman. In not adhering to these rules, which Abby as an autistic child is expected to struggle with, no anxiety is caused because the interactions are "*what she wants*" them to be. It is this control over the interaction which I propose offers Abby and others comfort in their relationships with the named objects. However, by combining the methods and specifically drawing upon the parent interviews, it was suggested by her mother that Abby might be attached to Babs because it reminded her of a significant period in her life.

> *Their dad was taken ill quite seriously last year he had a*
> *massive brain haemorrhage and they didn't see him for three*
> *weeks because he was in intensive care and then the next kind*
> *of unit and it wasn't a place where I could have taken them*
> *into... Oh interestingly she had that [Babs] for her last birthday.*
> *This time last year. And I think that's all associated with,*

because it was the day that Paul came out of hospital and I
think that's all triggered in. We bought that at the hospital
shop for her birthday.

(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.11)

This demonstrates the strength of gathering a variety of views and utilising a number of methods because doing so can help to highlight the existence of different perspectives (child: adult).

Owen is a second example of someone who had a friendship with an object and this case is also a further illustration of the value of mixing methods. When combining the findings from the methods three fictional cartoon characters (Petey the Piranha, Sponge Bob Square Pants and Pingu) repeatedly emerged from Owen's work.

Figure 5: 21 Owen Webster, Patchwork

Petey the Piranha

Pingu

Sponge Bob

Square Pants

Figure 5: 22 Owen Webster, Photography

Petey the Piranha

Pingu

Sponge Bob Square Pants
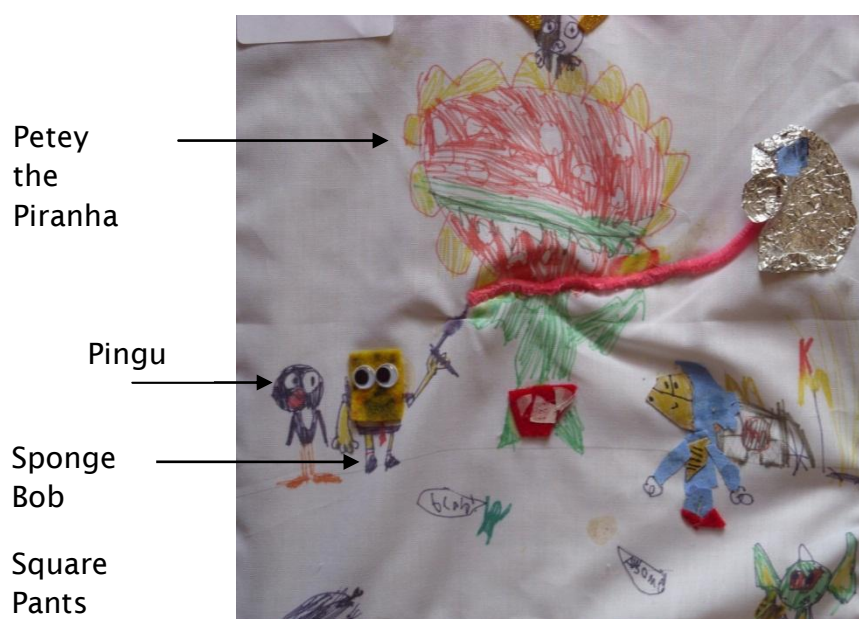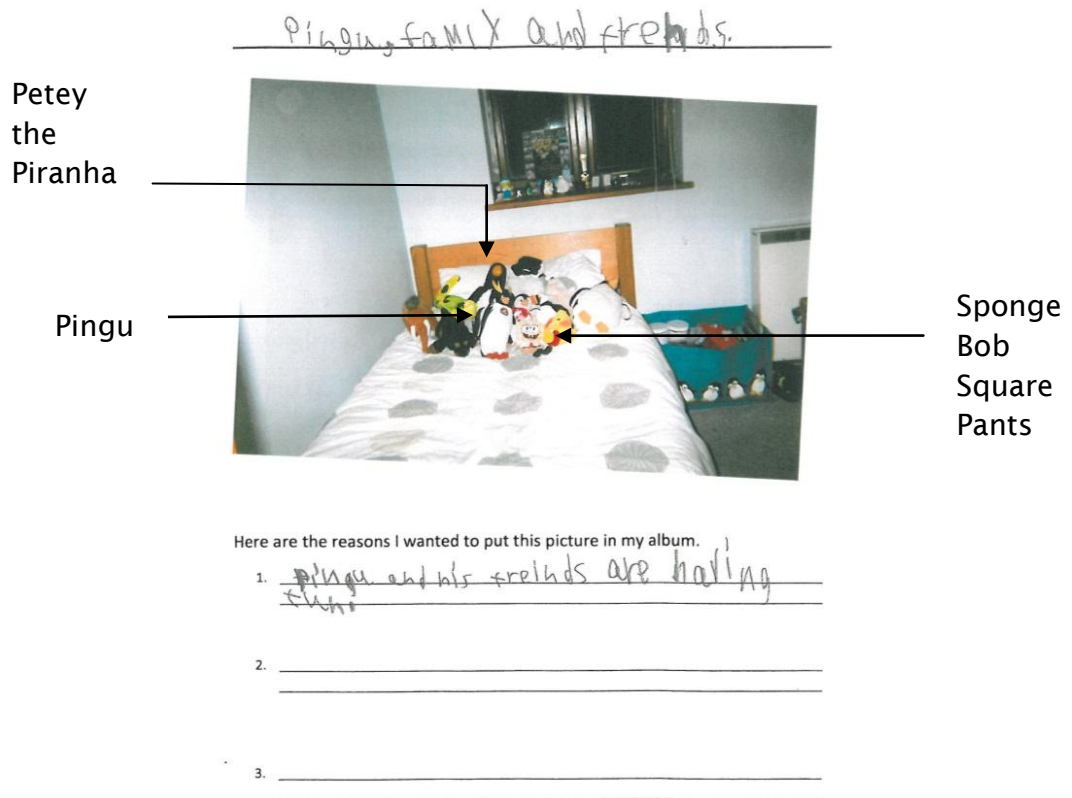
Similar to Abby, the repetition of these characters demonstrates their significance to Owen. The patchwork and photography were both useful in highlighting these characters were significant to Owen, and the documentary was useful at revealing that Owen considered these his friends.

> Owen: Owen Webster and this is my friend Petey the Piranha.

> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

Petey's participation in the film provoked some uncertainty regarding whether Petey was included because of his significance or if he was included out of

circumstance. As explained in the methodology chapter, the documentary task took place on a charity mufti-day when the school rules were relaxed and so students were permitted to bring toys into school, something that is usually prohibited. This chance occurrence meant that Owen was able to bring Petey into school and include him in the documentary. Therefore, I questioned if the inclusion of Petey was because he was Owen's friend or if it was influenced by the circumstances of the day. Mixing methods was use because I was able to pursue this uncertainty with Owen's carer who explained that she considered Owen to perceive these characters his friends.

> *He's made this fantasy world. It always has been. Sponge Bob*
> *has been around since the day he can remember... Owen*
> *doesn't seem to need people as long as he knows who is*
> *responsible for him, and who will help him, in any situation,*
> *whether it be school, or on a trip, or at home, or you know, or*
> *on holiday, as long as he knows who is responsible for him*
> *then he is happy and he will make his own world.*
>
> *(Interview, Mia Phillips, 29.03.11)*

Referring to Owen in such terms positions him as different and I am interested in what was meant by the term fantasy world? I wish to offer my own perspective coming from a Goffmanian standpoint. I believe the interactions Owen had with the named characters are real and meaningful to him. However, I suggest that the interactions could also offer Owen secure and comfortable interactions as they pose no threat of anxiety. I propose these relationships maybe secure and comfortable, because if Owen does struggle with the social rules observed by Goffman, as might be expected, then he might be able to interact with the characters free from these rules which could cause him anxiety.

Whilst not all the students considered objects to be their friends, all of the students did have items of value and meaning to them. The difference lies in

Lydia using her iPod recreationally and Abby or Owen turning to Babs or Petey respectively for friendship. Thus, I return to my remark that for *some* students, friendships extend to inanimate objects. However, while there was a clear division between the students in regards to their attachment and perception of objects, there was a much more widespread collective understanding regarding animals.

Animals

Can animals, pets in particular, be regarded as friends? Charles and Davies (2008) in their article *My Family and Other Animals* conclude by classifying family pets as kin. Therefore for the purpose of this discussion animals will specifically refer to family pets, those animals with whom regular contact is maintained. All five of the students who were known to have pets included them in at least one task. In fact, Josh, Paige and Jake included their pets in the essay, patch and photography. Lydia also discussed her dogs in the essay and photography, while Elliot referred to his dogs twice in the photography task. The inclusion of pets, just like the inclusion of pets in Charles and Davies' re-study, was spontaneous and without any prompt or suggestion. I agree with the authors when they suggest that the spontaneous inclusion of pets means the data are "robust, certainly in the sense of not being affected by preconceptions" (Charles and Davies, 2008: 7). Therefore, once again, I am of the belief that these methods have demonstrated their ability to tease out things students consider to be significant.

The students' relationships with pets were meaningful, emotional and personal ones. I recall many conversations with Lydia sharing puppy stories, the number of household items chewed and the experience of training them. The conversations were always cheerful and it was clear that she was attached to her dogs. By sharing my experiences with Lydia, and the other participants, I was able to engage in conversation that drew out the emotional attachment they felt towards their pets. Loving and feeling affectionate towards your pets

was a common feeling among students. An example of this comes from Paige who surrounded a photograph of her cat with hearts and explained some of the reasons why she loved her cat(s).

Figure 5: 23 Paige West, Photography

Romany

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. My cat
2. I like stroking her.
3. Shes Soft
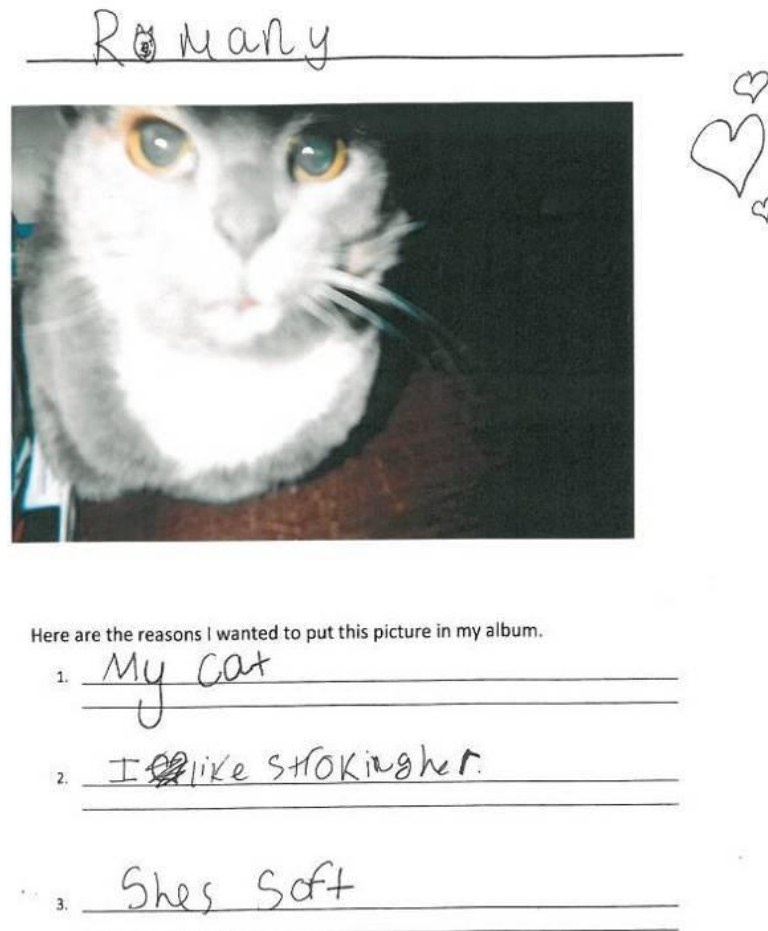
The "*love hearts*" indicate an emotional attachment between Paige and her cat Romany. She explains that she likes "*stroking her*" which could be considered to be an act of affection (physical intimacy) (Morgan, 2009) in a relationship. All five students who had pets demonstrated their affection towards them as one would be affectionate towards a friend, which reflects autonomy and intimacy (Pockney 2006) in the relationships, and so there is a justification for classifying pets as friends.
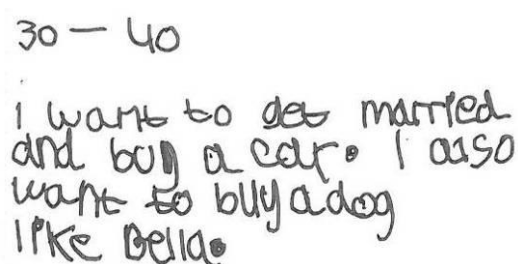
Pets were important to the students and they were considered to be friends and a significant part of students' social worlds. Jake's dog Bella was important to him and featured in his photography, patch and essay. Jake also surrounded his desk with photographs of Bella which further illustrates Bella's significance.

Figure 5: 24 Jake Knox, Desk

Photograph of Bella
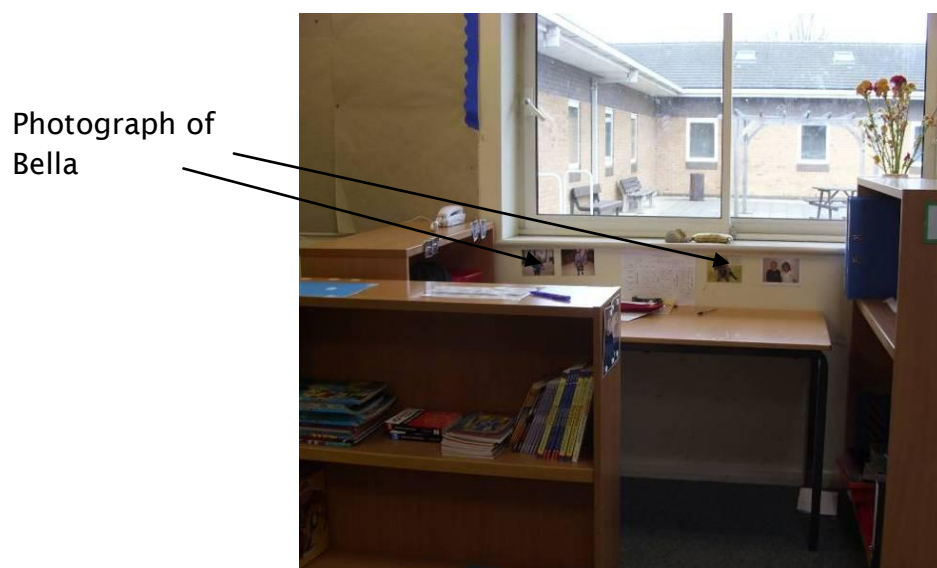
Pets were a prominent and significant part of the immediate social worlds of the students. The relationships with pets were also seen by some students as an enduring relationship and one that would continue into adulthood.

Figure 5: 25 Jake Knox, Essay

Josh, Paige and Lydia echoed Jake's account of buying a pet similar to the ones currently owned, which reflects the meaningful relationships the students experienced with their pets.

Those students who had pets were keen to talk about the significance of them. This mirrors Tipper's (2011) findings who reported that children "include pet animals in their definition of their family" (Tipper, 2011: 150). Pet animals to the students were important, but the reasons why the realtionships were significant were never drawn out. It has been suggested that pets are included as kin by "virtue of cohabitation" (Tipper, 2011: 150) but it has also been suggested that children place particular value on relationships where interactions are informal and enjoyable (Mason and Tipper, 2008). I suggest that for children who have been observed to struggle with social interaction it may be that maintaining friendships with objects and animals, things that do not insist on the adherence to unwritten social norms, may be an easier relationship to maintain. From a Goffmanian perspective the relationships with objects and animals can be considered 'safe' because they do not adhere to the unwritten social rules that can cause students to become anxious and unable to "restrain their emotional involvement" (Goffman, 1967: 37). I suggest that because the interactions are not dependent upon the rules oberved by Goffman they may be 'safer'; because the students are in control of the encounters. I suggest this because it has also been found that the introduction of objects and/or animals into a social situation helps reduce anxieties experienced by

autistic individuals (Solomon, 2010). The relationships with objects and animals have not only been demonstrated to be friendships but also as affectionate, meaningful and enduring intimate relations. It is in light of this discussion that the working definitions of intimate relations and friends should include relationships with objects (toys) and animals (pets).

5.2.3. Friends: Closing Remarks

The observed incidents coupled with the fond manner in which the students referred to their peers, specifically in the photography task, highlights the significance of these relationships to students. The relationships students form with peers, objects and animals satisfy Pockney's (2006) criteria and for this reason are considered to be friendships. The methods reveal students' friendships are close, affectionate and represent an attachment to the other. In addressing the question what does friendship consists of? Friendship is a meaningful relationship, which consists of a close, personal and affectionate attachment to the significant other. With this understanding of friendship the students' relationships with their peers, objects and animals are considered to be friendships.

The above discussion has illustrated the benefit obtained from a multi-perspective approach to research and an important contributing perspective is that of the students' themselves. In particular the documentary method was useful at getting at who was a friend; whilst the photography method was useful at revealing the meanings and functions of the identified friendships. This serves as a further example of how a participatory approach to research can lead to greater level of understanding and insight in to disabled people's social worlds.

The friendships discussed were all meaningful and ordered encounters. From a Goffmanian standpoint, and with consideration of the triad of impairments, the

friendships of autistic children might have been expected to be characterised by disorder. However, the friendships described were characterised by order, which raises questions regarding how order was maintained in relationships between individuals who are permitted to operate outside of social conventions. Two ways in which order was sustained were observed.

Firstly, and specifically in relation to friendships with peers, order was maintained because the peers managed the encounter between themselves. This was achieved by the peer accommodating the student's needs during interaction. The accommodation of student's needs enabled them to control their anxiety, and to act with poise and demeanor. This supportive characteristic of friendship gave rise to supportive interchanges and ordered encounters. It was this characteristic of friendship that often meant students would describe their peers as 'helpful' and thus their friendship as supportive.

Secondly, and more generally across friendships, order was also maintained because interactions were informal. What I mean by this is that, order was generally sustained because the rules of interaction that Goffman observed were not strictly enforced. By relaxing the rules around interaction and allowing the interactions to be more informal students were able to manage and participate in encounters. However, this explanation of how order was sustained in the friendships has implications for the use of Goffman. It raises questions regarding how it is that order can exist in friendships without either party adhering to the rules of interaction that Goffman observed. The very fact students' relationships with peers, animals and objects have been demonstrated to give rise to ordered encounters raises additional questions regarding the term 'normal' and what is considered as 'normal'.

The two identified ways in which order was maintained in friendships have two common features. Firstly, the identified ways that order was maintained in friendships is an illustration that when the students were able to participate in

interactions this gave rise to order. That is, when rules or behaviours act to exclude students from encounters the likelihood of disorder arising is greater. This has resonance with the models of disability, and the issue regarding if the individual should adapt to society or should society adapt to the individual is raised; this is explored further in chapter seven. Secondly, the described friendships were characterised by order which is an illustration that children are active agents in the creation of their social worlds. The findings suggest the relationships have little consideration for the rules observed by Goffman which poses the question, how suitable is a Goffmanian approach for understanding the social worlds of children; an issue also explored in chapter 7.

5:3 Concluding Remarks

The above discussion highlights that every student in the research had several individuals whom they considered significant. Relations with these individuals could be labelled as intimate. In doing so students' sociability is demonstrated.

An important factor to arise from the discussion is that there are many benefits to having students meaningfully participating in research. This approach to research moves away from the method Goffman often utilised (observations) and moves towards empowering the individual. It was only through the students' active participation that an understanding of their intimate relations was acquired. In this instance observing students and consulting others on their relationships did not prove as beneficial as consulting students directly. It is with this that I advocate the participatory approach to research which would encourage the meaningful involvement of autistic children in research.

The discussion has demonstrated that students have many intimate relations and that the interaction with those considered an intimate relation is often ordered. The literature on autism suggests that students would struggle with

social interaction and communication which is likely to impede on their ability and desire to establish relationships. The triad of impairments is a diagnosis label given to autistic children and often employed from a medical model of disability approach. In consideration of the above discussion I question in chapter seven these stereotypes and ask how far it is appropriate to employ them.

Students' intimate relations relate to what Goffman termed 'anchored relations' (1971).He identified anchored relations to have three properties. The first property is 'name' which refers to who the relation is formed with and in this instance intimate relations were formed with parents, siblings, peers and animals. The relations have also demonstrated to be on meaningful and supportive 'terms', which is the second property Goffman identified. The third property is 'natural history' where intimate relations are observed to pass through stages. Taking a Goffmanian approach to the discussion, I question if students were aware of the natural history of their relationships? Goffman recognised anchored relations "are not born and do not die" (1971: 231) but students' relationships appeared more cut and dried than Goffman recognised. That is, individuals were either 'liked' and therefore were considered a friend, or were 'disliked' and therefore were considered to be of little consequence. The students' had little regard for the distinction between anchored relations and acquaintances. My final thought regarding the anchored relations and acquaintance distinction relates to how it is that order is maintained if there is little regard for performing small acts of interpersonal rituals towards acquaintances. Distinguishing between anchored relations and acquaintances requires the individual to understand the need to acknowledge acquaintances through acts of civil attention and/or interpersonal rituals regardless of how one feels towards them. These acts are important because acts of civil attention prevent disorder from arising. A question to arise here is how is it that order is maintained if the students ignore those who they 'dislike' (acquaintances) and do not perform acts of civil inattention which Goffman saw as important to the maintenance of order?

With the above discussion in mind I close with two final points. The first is that Goffman saw the orderliness which occurs in interaction to support all other forms of social order. From a Goffmanian perspective it could be suggested that the order in the interactions between intimate relations is linked to the order in the community at large. It is becoming clear that the orderliness of interaction does in this instance reflect the orderliness in the community of Ladybarn. By this I mean if the students are to participate successfully in individual encounters, the other individual needs to employ the institutionalised practices of Ladybarn in order to be supportive and accommodating of students' needs. Individuals can accommodate the students' needs in two ways. The first requires the 'friend' to manage the encounter by compensating for the students' behaviour which does not abide by the rules that Goffman observed (as demonstrated in the relationships between students and parents). The second requires the individual to pay little consideration for the rules of social order observed by Goffman (as demonstrated in the relationships between the students and pets/ animals). Failure to adapt to the students' needs in either of these ways means students can find social interaction and communication challenging and it becomes difficult for individuals to form a relationship with the students. Secondly, I refer back to Goffman's total institutions where he observed an absence of high morale among inmates and he attributed this to the institution being successful at redefining the inmate's self. The discussion here illustrates a high morale and a sense of happiness among the students in their intimate relations which leads me to explore the topic in the following chapter, that is, how being a part of a community and having many intimate relations can contribute towards a sense of self.

Chapter 6: Self

Introduction

Self is a multifaceted and complex term to define, and one that is deeply rooted in the social world. In this chapter I address the students' selves; the micro level of social life. The chief question asked is, who are these students and what are they like as individuals? The purpose of the discussion is to provide an understanding of who these students are as individuals and within this the students' conceptions and understandings of self are also discussed. It is important to address the issue of self from a sociological perspective, in this instance a Goffmanian perspective, and to ask the above questions because current literature on self and autism is heavily psychological. Autistic individuals' conceptions of self have often been talked of in terms of having a diminished sense of self-awareness (Lind, 2010; Lind and Bowler, 2010; Frith, 2003) caused by an impairment of episodic memory (Powell and Jordan, 1993). This psychological approach to self adopts a cause and effect relationship at the expense of addressing the experiences of self. The starting point for this literature is that self is an entity to be acquired and is something to be measured by use of a mirror recognition test (Lind, 2010). However, starting from a Goffmanian approach this discussion recognises self to be fluid and interactional.

For Goffman self is the object of ritual care and during the process of socialization individuals are taught to have "feelings attached to self and self expressed through face" (1967: 44). "Self expressed through face" means that self arises through interaction and for this reason is fluid and ever changing. I am concerned with Goffman's reference to feelings as he also writes "as human beings we are presumably creatures of variable impulses with moods and energies, which change from one moment to the next" (1969: 56). By understanding self from a Goffmanian perspective, the emotional side of humans is recognised but the perspective also stresses that individuals must "restrain their emotional involvement" (Goffman, 1967: 37) in interactions if

they are to be considered a "properly demeaned individual" (Goffman, 1967: 77). Feelings are considered to be a signal of the inner self (Hochschild, 1983) and are important in helping an individual to understand another's standpoint but also their own standpoint (Hochschild, 1983). This chapter addresses the emotional side of the students and asks what feelings the students have attached to self and, if and how they are 'restrained' in interactions. By looking at the feelings students have attached to self and how they express or restrain emotions during interactions, an understanding of their selves and of who they are as individuals is provided. Before I can do this I first need to explain how emotions are understood.

Emotions are complex phenomena to understand. They have been recognised to have a physiological, psychological and social basis (Hochschild, 1983) and a relational basis (Burkitt, 2002), they can be rational or irrational (Collins, 1990) and conscious or unconscious (Barbalet, 2002; Theodosius, 2006). These different dimensions and perceptions of emotions make researching and understanding emotions difficult. Some authors use the terms feeling(s) and emotion(s) interchangeably without defining the terms (Turner and Stets, 2005), while others recognise feelings and emotions to "not always be identical" but to be "intimately connected" and therefore are distinct terms accounting for different phenomena (Barbalet, 2002: 151-154). For Barbalet feelings are "part of the practical consciousness" (Barbalet, 2002: 154), that is, the physiological state of arousal, while emotions are part of the "discursive consciousness", that is, the articulation of feelings. This understanding of feelings and emotions draws attention to the intricate relationship between the two as well as recognising the biological and social basis of emotions. Feelings become known as emotions when articulated and labelled, while emotions must have a "feeling element behind the words and thoughts" (Barbalet, 2002: 156). Understanding feelings and emotions in these terms helps us to account for some of the difficultly experienced when researching emotions. Some feelings, whether conscious or unconscious, are difficult to express in words, and while the individual might be aware they are feeling something they might be unable to state what emotion they are feeling (Barbalet, 2002).

It is not possible within the scope of this research to systematically address all of the nuances involved in emotions. Therefore, this discussion is limited to only those feelings that are conscious and have been articulated and labelled as emotions, that is, labelled either by the students themselves or an observer (myself, parents or teachers). To structure the discussion, and to cover the range of emotions, I have broadly categorised the emotions into 'positive' and 'negative'. This is similar to Collins' (1990) observation that emotions fall along a continuum of high, positive feelings and low negative feelings, and I explain this further in the respective sections.

6.1. Positive Emotions

The term 'positive emotions' is used as an umbrella term in much the same way as Collins' uses the term. It refers to those feelings that led to order and cohesion in the environment. During the discussion I specifically focus upon the feelings that I have termed 'happiness' and 'excitement'. Although many feelings fall under this broad category I address only those conscious feeling that were articulated or displayed by the students. In this section I discuss the cause of 'positive emotions', how they are expressed and what this means for students' understandings and conceptions of self.

6.1.1. Happiness

This discussion focuses upon the emotion of happiness and is not to be confused with excitement or any other heightened emotion as this is discussed in the subsequent section. Happiness is understood to be a state of contentment, and the focus here is on the students' 'everyday' state of happiness. This understanding of happiness is in keeping with Turner and Stets (2005) who observed happiness was a primary emotion and was concerned with satisfaction. Furthermore, the students themselves often referred to states absent of negative feelings (anxiety and annoyance) as being 'happy'. Therefore, the understanding of happiness is also in keeping with the

students' own use of the term. Before I address happiness further I take a moment to discuss the patchwork quilt as a suitable method for inquiring into the students' selves.

Figure 6: 1 Patchwork Quilt

The rationale for the inclusion of the patchwork quilt was because of its creative element, which produces rich accounts as it encourages the creator to think carefully about their responses (Gauntlett, 2007). However, the experienced advantage of the method resided in its non-dependency on verbal communication. Referring to the triad of impairments, and also back to the preceding chapters, we have learnt that in some instances students can

experience difficulty in communicating with others. This method enabled each of the students to express themselves creatively and to do so in isolation, free from anxiety caused by verbal interaction, and as a result they were able to produce a patch which reflected who they were. The benefit of the method is typified in the example of Paige who, upon joining Ladybarn, refused to talk to adults but preferred to communicate through her peers. Paige used the patchwork as a means of expressing who she was without having to talk to adults which she felt uncomfortable with.

Figure 6: 2 Paige West, Patchwork

Pet cat

Smiley face

Mum's flower shop

Paige is also an example of the need for researchers to be flexible when in the field, because, although the method was suitable for the reason that it was not dependent upon verbal communication, an element of communication was desirable. It was important to seek students' explanations of their patchwork so that their creation depicting their selves were correctly understood; however in the instance of Paige this was difficult to achieve. It was important therefore to be flexible to Paige's, and all participants', needs if they were to be included in research and for their understandings of selves to be accurately understood. By changing my behaviour slightly to accommodate the demands of the field and students' needs I was able to glean an explanation of each student's patch.

It was by adapting to Paige's needs that I learnt she had drawn a smiley face to illustrate that she considered herself to be happy and this was achieved by listening to her explain her patch to her friend Josh. Similarly Abby, Josh and Harry also drew a picture of themselves on their patchwork to portray themselves as happy individuals.

Figure 6: 3 Abby White, Patchwork
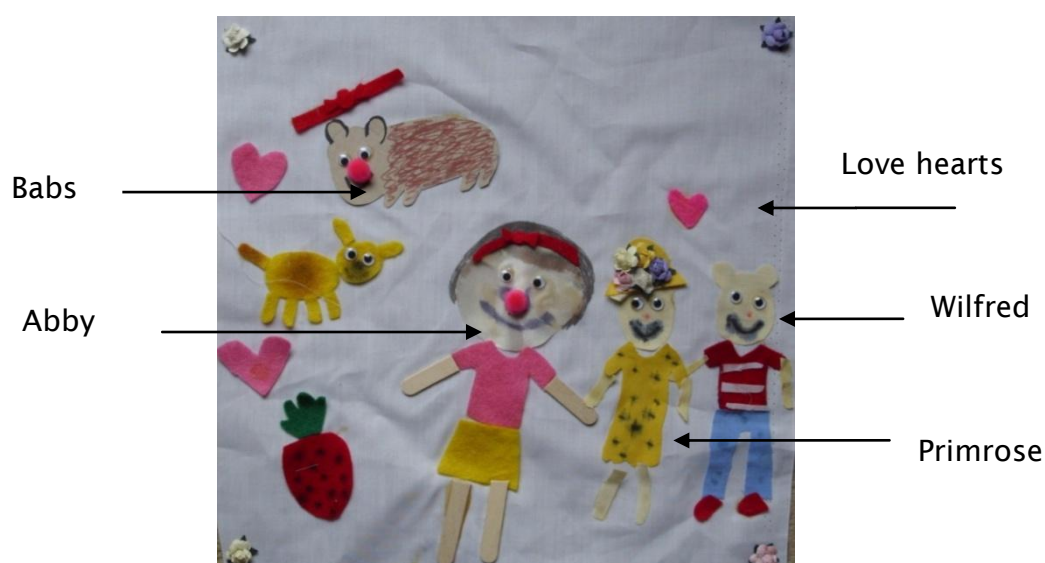
Abby drew herself smiling because she was "*happy*" but she also included "*love hearts*" on her patch because she considered herself to be a loving person who *"likes cuddles"* (Abby). The strength of the patchwork is clear because some individuals found it a useful means of conveying who they considered themselves to be, that is happy individuals.

Through mixing methods and more specifically through spending time with students I was able to learn that they were frequently taught how to identify feelings, how to express themselves effectively and how to do this through facial expressions.

In the Social Skills lesson the group took it in turns to identify how a person was feeling based on their facial expression. "Jake, can you tell me how this person is feeling?" Mrs Parker asked pointing to a cardboard cut-out of a smiling face. "Happy" Jake replied. "Yes, now come and put it in the box and tell me why he might be happy" Mrs Parker continued. After going around the table and each student identifying how a cardboard cut-out face was feeling they were then asked to pull faces that were happy, sad and angry.

(23.09.10)

From the Goffmanian perspective taken this can be considered an example of Ladybarn teaching students skills to engage in a process of impression management. The students were not only taught how to recognise the facial expressions of others but also shown how to express their own emotions through facial expressions, which are skills Goffman saw as fundamental to sustaining the interaction order. Learning how to recognise facial expressions is typically acquired by a child from as early as six months of age (Berk, 2013). By secondary school children are expected to be competent in this domain, however, the observation illustrates students were in a process of emotional socialisation. With this example in mind, it was of little surprise that the students used smiley faces to illustrate that they considered themselves to be happy.

I observed the students to be individuals who were happy in their own company.

It was another wet break time and students were forced to play indoors. Many of them gathered around the computer in the corner and others around Liam's desk, but Owen sat at his desk alone playing with Lego. He appeared to be assembling the pieces to make monsters as he later used the figurines to recreate a battle. "Bang, boom. No, get off me. Arrrr" Owen muttered under his

breath as the battle played out. When the bell rang to signify the end of break and start of period three Owen was so engrossed in playing with the Lego that he had forgotten to eat his snack which he ate quickly on the way to his next lesson.

(07.12.10)

Owen could happily play with Lego in solitude for hours and when the class were given free time, Owen would frequently elect to play alone. Similarly Elliot could also sit for lengthy periods of time alone reading Horrible History books or drawing Dr. Who characters.

Because the class had been given free time Elliot went to sit at his desk to read a book. It wasn't unusual to see Elliot sat at his desk alone and today he sat quietly reading his book as the other students ran around him.

(10.02.11)

The above examples illustrate that students were content individuals when alone. In observing the students, their happiness was also evident in their participation of the everyday activities of Ladybarn.

All the students were shuffling their way through the crowded corridors on their way to lessons. Joe shouted "hey high five" as he passed the music room and was 'high fived' by Elliot who was stood waiting for the door to be unlocked. This encouraged Joe to 'high five' everyone who he passed.

(09.03.11)

Through observing the everyday encounters, I was able to see that on the whole students were happy individuals, as it was evident from their friendly exchanges that they felt happy at Ladybarn.

As the students sat in silence around the teaching area of the classroom Paige lent forward over the desk towards Josh and tapped him gently on the shoulder with her pen. In reply Josh lent forward so that their faces were only an inch apart and tapped her back. They both giggled and returned back to writing their story but the playful exchange and support continued as Paige silently and periodically lent over Josh's work to correct his spelling.

(22.09.10)

In this example Josh and Paige's friendship shone through and although they were happy completing their worksheet it was clear that for some students, there was a relational dimension of emotions as friendship appeared to be one cause of happiness.

The noise level in the class started to gradually creep up as it was coming to the end of registration and reading time. Joe lent over his book case, "pist Andrew, you've got to be..." he initiated and Andrew turned around to finish Joe's sentence. They both sang and pretended to dance to an old football song and had no concern for the others around them as they lost themselves in singing.

(30.09.10)

Whether the students were interacting with one another or were settled working alone, the observations were a useful method in revealing their happy state. By spending time with them, it was clear that, on the whole, the students were happy and content when at Ladybarn. An advantage of interviewing

parents was that it provided an account of the students' emotional states when at home.

> *I think generally as long as everything stays the same and consistent they [Abby and Ben] are actually very happy children.*
>
> *(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.11)*

Alexandra White explained that she believed that consistency was a factor which needed to be in place for Ben and Abby to be happy, and I suggest that this transferred to all environments including Ladybarn. I propose that it might have been the predictability of Ladybarn's daily routine that contributed towards their happiness when at school. Referring back to Abby's patch, she identified herself as a happy person and this was evident to see at home, to her mum, and at school, to me.

During break time all of class 1MP opted to play in the quad. Paige and Abby played together just beside the bench. The activity stopped being running the length of the quad when Abby put her hands around Paige's face and brought her head towards Paige's so that their foreheads were touching. They moved around in circles for a while until Harry went over to see them. Abby released her grip on Paige and extended her arm so to include Harry and the three of them stood hugging and moving in circles.

(30.09.10)

Referring to the observations, happiness appeared to be related to contentment and it was observed that feeling happy enabled interactions to take place, for example those between Abby, Paige and Harry. Furthermore, when considering Alexandra White's comment alongside the observations, happiness and contentment appeared to be a consequence of security and

familiarity which relates back to the discussion in chapter four. Consistency in the environment led to stability which encouraged students to feel content and thus able to participate in activities and encounters. The documentary and the patchwork were useful methods in providing an opportunity for students to make known the things which made them happy and brought them enjoyment. Through mixing methods the recurrence of familiar items and activities which made students feel happy suggests consistency and familiarity of surroundings is important to them. For example, referring back to figure 6.3 for Abby's patchwork the items drawn on the patch recurred during the documentary and the photography tasks.

Ben: Abby, what, what do you like?

Abby: Strawberries

Ben: Any other things

Abby: Brambly Hedge

Ben: Yes

Abby: And Babs.

(Documentary, 18.03.11)

In all three of the tasks Abby cited Babs (toy hamster), Wilfred and Primrose (characters from Brambly Hedge) and strawberries as things she enjoyed playing with or eating. Furthermore, Abby demonstrated not only her happy nature but also her loving side when she explained the significance of the named items in the photograph album.

Figure 6: 4 Abby White, Photography
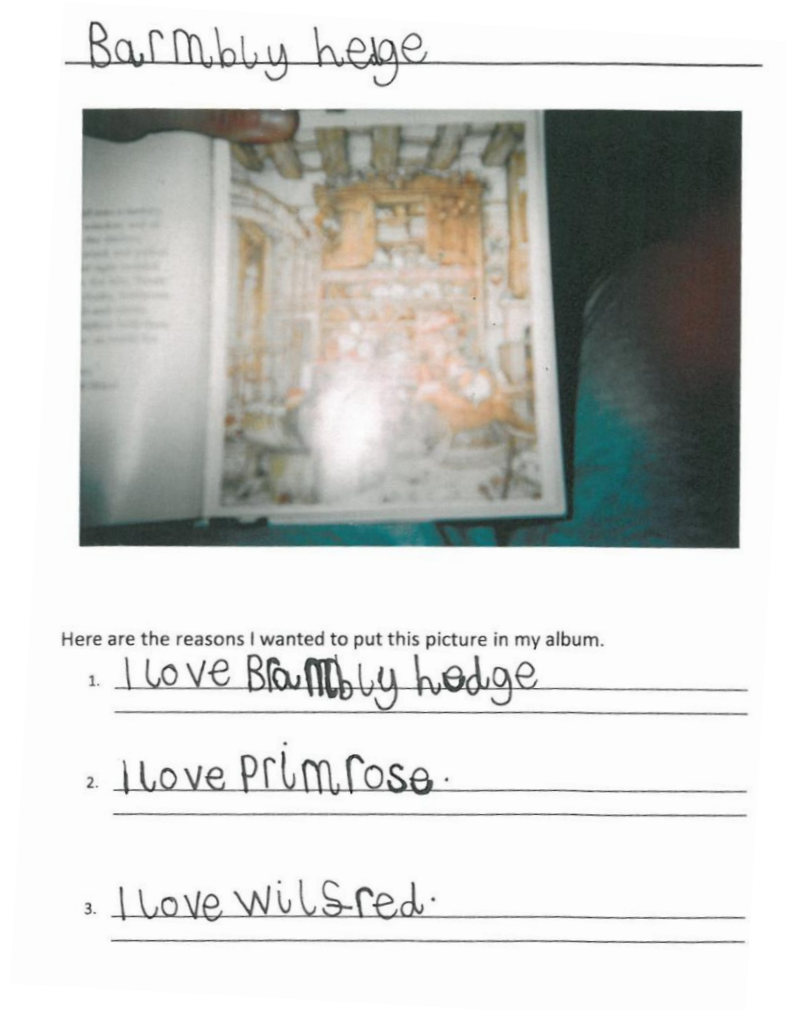
The recurrence of 'things' in the methods suggest that those items named several times were frequent causes of happiness for the students. Although Abby cited her 'intimate relations' (Babs, Wilfred and Primrose) as things which brought her happiness and enjoyment, Harry, another student who consistently named the same items across methods, named the food technology room as a place he enjoyed spending time.

Figure 6: 5 Harry Patterson, Patchwork

Food Technology Room

Harry smiling
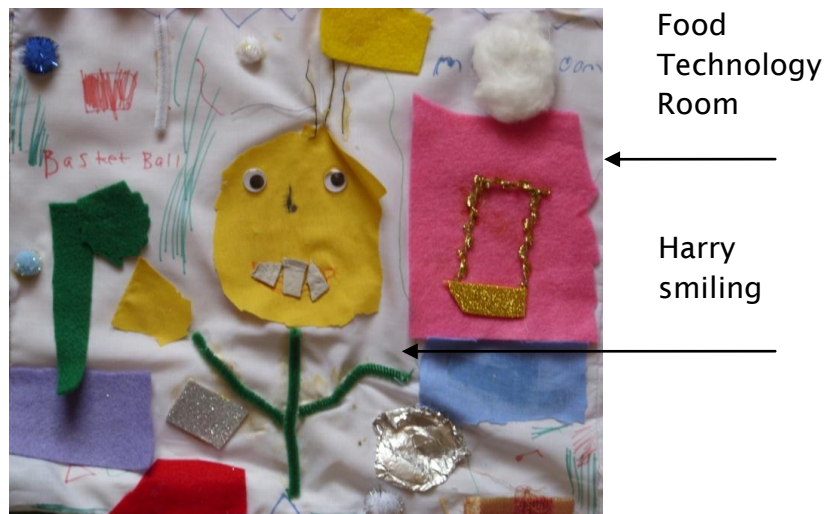
The photography task was advantageous because it provided students with a definitive opportunity to explain why something was significant to them and this provided key contextual information.

Figure 6: 6 Harry Patterson, Photography

food Tech room

Here are the reasons i wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I have food Tech in it

2. I do Cooking

3. and I poe Mrs Vaughan
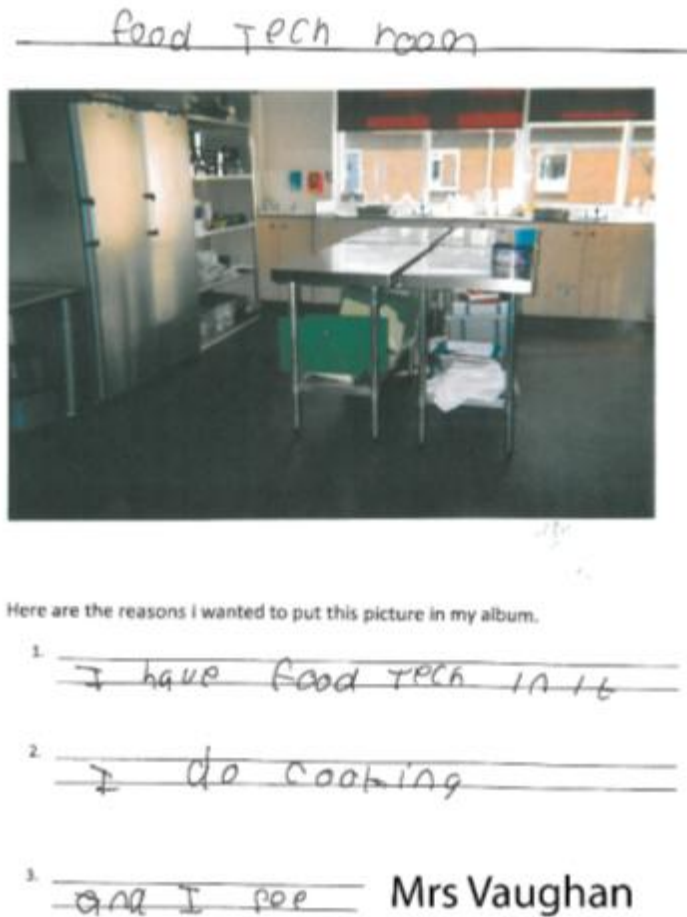
Harry highlights that being in a preferred and familiar environment was a major contributing factor in causing students to feel happy in the social setting. The recurrence of the food technology room in Harry's activities illustrates the importance of this room to him, further I propose that the familiarity it offered contributed towards his feelings of happiness when in the space. The value of talking with parents is again highlighted when Liam's mother explained that she believed Liam was most happy and at ease when at home in his familiar and stable environment.

His ideal world would be no school and up home with us 24 -7
and that's what he wants to do... he feels safe at home but he
doesn't feel safe when we take him out.

(Interview, Sally Ball, 24.03.11)

The specific causes of happiness varied from individual to individual, but there were similarities; for example, each of the items named in the methods were regular features in the students' lives. It is emerging that consistency and familiarity were important contributing factors to the students' state of happiness. Furthermore, Ladybarn provided these factors through the school's structure and through the supportive relationships established within the community. The students' general state of happiness meant that they were able to participate in the encounters and activities taking place. Feeling happy led to participation and inclusion, furthermore and in following on from the previous chapters, this was a result of the structure of the community environment and intimate relations. This relates to Giddens who observed that structure and routine of day-to-day events contribute towards ontological security which promotes happiness by "keeping anxiety at bay" (Giddens, 1991: 37). If, according to Giddens, everyone, not just autistic children, requires routine to feel happy, this raises further questions regarding 'what is normal?'

The students' general state of happiness is highly dependent upon external events, for example the people around them and the environment. This relates to the models of disability and suggests that those environments which accommodate students' needs by being stable (those environments addressing the 'extrinsic' causes of disability) help reduce feelings of anxiety and thus contribute significantly towards students' happiness. By contrast, those environments which are less accommodating are likely to cause students' feelings of anxiety; anxiety is explored in section 6.2.1. In consideration of the Goffmanian perspective taken, intimate relations are also important contributing factors. Not only do they tie an individual to society, but the interactions between people have enabled an understanding of the feelings attached to self to be observed and understood. It is emerging therefore that

the students can identify feeling of happiness and can effectively express these feelings in interaction, but what about the more heightened emotions such as excitement?

6.1.2. Excitement

This section addresses the second most frequent 'positive emotion', that of excitement, which is taken to refer to enjoyment or an aroused emotion. The discussion includes the more excitable and animated emotions students expressed.

Only one student, Josh, referred to himself as being someone who experienced heightened states of enjoyment when he referred to himself as being "*crazy*" (17.02.11).

Figure 6: 7 Josh Collins, Patchwork

Josh used his patch to convey his 'crazy' side which he represented through

use of sparkling, fluffy balls. Josh demonstrated his ability to be reflexive as well as being able to identify his feelings and express them through this creative form of interaction. When I question what was meant by the term crazy through observing Josh, I speculate that he was referring to his excitable and enthusiastic character. The ambiguity of the term does create some uncertainty, just as the phrase "*he is lively*" (Mrs Fletcher 23.11.11) used to describe Harry does. In taking into consideration the contextual information around how these phrases were used, it is my sense that both referred to the excitable states Josh and Harry could display.

On a day to day basis any one of the students could display an excitable state and it could be caused by the slightest stimulus, for example hearing a favourite song.

The students who were waiting to film their sections of the documentary were confined to the form room of tutor group 1MP. Miss Morrison (2) was at the computer overseeing students who were taking it in turns to select a song that they would like to hear and it was the turn of Jake. Jake chose 'Hey Baby' and as the music came on he jumped around, fists punching the air. Facing the class he jumped up and down singing "heeeeeey, hey baby, oh, ah" at the top of his voice. The class cheered him on and he appeared delighted as he sang and danced away.

(18.03.11)

Jake's display of enjoyment by performing to the class could be considered as an act of an individual who has little regard for feelings of embarrassment or the thoughts of others. This example relates to Goffman's concept of self-work and raises questions regarding how it is that order is maintained if individuals do not always consider what others will make of them. In fact, in this instance, Jake's behaviour went unnoticed by some and was cheered on by others and so his display of excitement did not cause disruption to the interaction order. This might have been because such displays were a regular occurrence at Ladybarn.

I arrived at Ladybarn at 8.30 am and headed as usual to room nine to put my bag away when I was greeted by Miss Morrison (2) who already had several students. Abby was leant over Miss Morrison; the two were engaged in small struggle to take charge of the computer mouse. Finally Abby jumped off and started singing "The sky is perfectly blue-The clouds are perfect too" Abby ran to the smart board to watch as Winnie the Pooh sang the song "Everything is right" and she began to skip on the spot. Abby copied the video marching on the spot until the chorus came and she belted out "nothing can go wrong, If everything is right, AND EVERYTHING IS RIGHT SOME-HOWWWWW" as she marched, arms swinging and feet stomping, around the centre tables.

(03.11.10)

Both Jake's and Abby's performances were spontaneous and with little regard for the situational circumstances and also with little consideration of what other people will think of them. This relates to Goffman's concepts of face-work and embarrassment avoidance and leads to questions such as do the students feel embarrassment and are they concerned with avoiding feeling such an emotion? While it has been found that by the age of 11 years children are expected to feel self-conscious and take the likelihood of feeling embarrassed into consideration before behaving (Berk, 2013), others have found children's extroversion to predict their levels of happiness (Holder and Klassen, 2010). The above excerpts can be considered examples of extroverted and outgoing performances; however many of the students experienced excitement and how this was expressed was quite personal.

The students frantically opened their photos to see what they had taken and how they had turned out. Owen was sat near Elliot and was hugely excited by his photos. "Look its Pingu, my DVDs" he squealed with excitement. He flicked through his photos and as he did so he started to flap his hands until eventually he sprung out of his seat, rapidly flapped his hands which were all

tense as he bobbed up and down. He eventually took his seat to look through
the photos but took to biting his fingers.

(27.01.11)

In this example Owen's hand flapping and finger biting was an expression of his excitement and was an indication that might have become overwhelmed by his feelings. Owen was unable to effectively manage his emotional state which led to him being overwhelmed and enthused that this caused him to bite his hands at the risk of injuring himself. This was not a frequent occurrence among the group, as none of the other students displayed such behaviour, but it was not unusual for students to become excited when alone.

As the drama group waited to be given instructions the students clustered
together by the door but Ben was stood alone at the window. He was
hysterically laughing to himself and holding his ears with his hands. Ben
alternated between looking out of the window and then down at the floor
laughing and when the class were brought together he had to be reminded to
calm down and pay attention to the instructions.

(16.03.11)

In the above examples, the students' excitement was evident through their actions. Ben was overwhelmed by his feelings and could not contain the impulse to express his excitement just as Jake, Abby and Owen were. The impulsivity the students displayed might suggest a biological basis of emotions. The students' impulsive nature raises questions regarding their management of emotions and whether they considered the social setting before acting. I use the term manage(ment) in much the same way as Hochschild (1983) did, which refers to the control over one's feelings. In both Hochschild's concepts of deep and surface acting, the individual is required to identify, control and present a front in much the same way as Goffman talks of self, face-work and poise. It is the ability to restrain one's emotional

involvement and carefully present one's feelings, which relates to the social basis of emotions but is also what I refer to when I say manage(ment). The students' impulsive behaviour could at times cause a chain reaction and by this I mean one student's excitement could at times encourage others to behave in the same way causing a wave of excitement through a peer group.

Jake held up his picture of Christian (a character from Eastenders) and announced to a quiet class "look, I'm kissing Christian". "Ergh, we do not kiss in school, I've told you" Miss Morrison (2) reminded him but Jake started giggling. Jake's giggling and second kiss of the photograph caused Harry to laugh and the boys laughed and shouted 'kissy, kissy, kissy'.

(20.01.11)

This example is a combination of Jake spontaneously displaying his affection towards the character Christian. It is a demonstration of the social dimension of emotions as Jake failed to consider the 'appropriateness' of his expressions and it is also in part an example of Jake's mischievous nature. The excerpt is also an illustration of the students' sense of humour and fun nature which often meant that at times they could become excited.

The students had been given free time whilst they waited to be called to do their section in the school's performance of Jack and the Beans Talk - a take on Jack and the Beanstalk. Owen was sat in his area, as were Jake, Elliot and Abby but Josh found a shoe underneath a table and threw it to Liam. The boys threw the shoe to each other and before it was halted by Mrs Andrews, Lydia and Harry were involved and the game became piggy in the middle.

(07.12.10)

A small act escalating into a hub of excitement whereby the students were 'carried away' by their feelings was a familiar feature of everyday life.

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It was a cold winter's day and Abby and Ben were wearing their hats, scarves and gloves whilst playing in the quad. Huddled in the corner of the quad they jumped up and down, ran to and from the food technology room's window and skipped along the side of the quad. Ben took off his hat and began to wave it around. Abby copied this and then they threw their hats up in the air until Ben appeared to purposively throw his on the school's roof.

(20.01.11)

Being carried away in the moment due to excitement often meant that the students did not consider the consequences of their actions. For example, Josh and Liam did not consider the disruption caused by their shoe throwing just as Ben did not consider the consequences of throwing his hat on the roof. It is emerging that the students' behaviour might have been more impulsive than Goffman recognised and this leads to questions regarding the effects of this spontaneous behaviour on the interaction order. On all of the occasions mentioned, the excitement led to a withdrawal from the encounter and a breakdown of order. Excitement was, for all of the students in the examples given, overwhelming and all-consuming, which caused them to be 'swept along' with their emotions.

Referring back to Josh who described himself as "*crazy*", to Mrs Fletcher who described Harry as "*lively*" and in consideration of the examples given, I question what is meant by the terms 'crazy', 'lively' and 'excitable'. I propose that these terms carry a sense that the emotions are uncontrolled or unmanaged. These are feelings that are not in keeping with the social situation and are feelings which Hochschild (1983) observed should be 'blocked out' in order to be situationally sensitive. However, although the terms crazy and lively carry the undertones of excitement being an uncontrollable emotion, Ladybarn (as a community) did not suppress these emotions but rather there was an element of teaching the students the more 'appropriate' ways of behaving.

"Paige, it's so lovely to see you" Harry said as he jumped onto Paige's lap and flung his arms around her. "Harry what did we learn about in Social Skills yesterday?" Silence fell as the others stopped to watch Harry ponder Mrs Parker's question. "About personal space. That is not appropriate. You need to give Paige her personal space. [pause] Right, I'll tell you what, everyone around the table". Mrs Parker rehearsed the previous day's social skills lesson where the students were taught about the importance of personal space. "And remember, arm's length, look" Mrs Parker grabbed Josh to demonstrate "you need to be this far away. It's ok to be closer, like this, you see elbow length apart if you know that person well, like your mum, dad, brother or sister. But you can't be this close" she stepped forward squashing any space that was once between her and Josh which raised a laugh from the class "this is inappropriate".

(20.01.11)

Although this excerpt is an illustration of a more formal means of teaching the students how to behave, learning did also occur informally among peers. The excerpts above and below relate to Goffman by being examples of students learning ritual, understanding situational priorities and also understanding what it means to act with demeanour.

During taxi time I was stood at the door watching the corridor as the students filed past. Harry started to jump on people's backs as they went by but before anyone could say anything Jake, who was stood beside me balancing an empty butter container on his head, warned Harry of his behaviour, "Stop it Harry. That's inappropriate". As Harry jumped up again Jake reminded him "Stop it. You will hurt somebody".

(04.10.10)

Interestingly Jake, who was in his second year of Ladybarn compared to Harry who was in his first term, used the term 'inappropriate' which was the term widely used by the staff at Ladybarn. The students were taught to distinguish appropriate behaviour from inappropriate behaviour and so it was interesting that Jake categorised Harry's behaviour using this language. From a Goffmanian perspective, Jake's regulation of Harry's actions and use of Ladybarn's key term goes some way to suggest that Jake was learning ritual and retaining what he had been taught.

Excitement was an overwhelming emotion frequently experienced and felt by the students. Furthermore, just as happiness had numerous causes and could be felt when alone or in the company of others, so too was excitement. The examples provided illustrate the complexity of emotions and that there is likely to be a biological, social and relational basis of emotions. The impulsivity of expressions suggests a biological basis whereas being influenced by others also suggests a relational and social basis of emotions. The students readily displayed their feelings of excitement but the impulsive, spontaneous nature in which these feelings were displayed raises questions regarding the students' management of their emotions. Their spontaneous nature could reflect their lack of regard for acting, performing or pretending (depending on your terminological preference) in order to sustain the ritual order. Hochschild observed that pretending "creates barriers to reflection and spontaneous feeling" (1983: 45) and so the students' spontaneous manner could be considered to reflect their inability, or unwillingness, to pretend. However, their impulsive behaviours, although disruptive at times, were signals of their unguarded inner perspective (Hochschild, 1983) and as such illustrated their happy and excitable nature. From a Goffmanian perspective, the students' spontaneous manner also prompts the question; how far do they act with demeanour?

6.1.3. Positive Emotions Closing Remarks

The discussion has illustrated the students' fun, kind and happy nature and it has also illustrated the suitability of the patchwork quilt as a method of inquiring into the students' selves.

To address the suitability of the patchwork first, the method's creative and visual nature in which participation did not primarily rely upon verbal communicative ability was an advantage for many of the students. By accommodating the students' needs, in this instance by not demanding the students engaged in verbal communication, those individuals who found it challenging to interact with others and in particular with adults, were able to participate. Furthermore, the success of the method in helping build an understanding of the students' selves serves as an example that, given the opportunity and with appropriate support, students can meaningfully participate in research. Therefore, as a method the patchwork quilt is reflective of the social model's approach to research, because by being sensitive of students' needs it has enabled students to participate meaningfully in research as well as exercise some control over the research direction.

In terms of understanding the students and their conceptions and understandings of self mixing methods proved most useful. By looking at self through a Goffmanian approach, we can understand self through face, which is an expression of self and those feelings attached to self, and it is clear that the students were happy, fun and loving individuals who could also become highly excited. Students were shown to be happy when alone but more often than not they were most happy when in the company of others. One contributing factor towards students' positive emotions was other people, their intimate relations, as their general state of happiness was partly dependent on those around them and excitement was also caused and shared with friends. From a Goffmanian perspective, this has significant implications for the students' selves.

Firstly, Goffman observed that individuals are tied to society through their social relations but in addition to this, the students illustrated that relations also contribute towards the feelings attached to self, as well as influence how feelings are managed and presented in interaction. This relates to the second point which is that the students were observed to be in a process of learning ritual and learning the importance of impression management. A significant contributor to their learning of these skills was their intimate relations and so the students' relations do more than tie them to society but they also help students learn ritual. Thirdly, students' positive emotions were affected by those around them which demonstrate that they had a relational aspect to self and had a reference group with whom to share and express emotions with.

My attention now turns to addressing the negative emotions felt and expressed by students.

6.2. Negative Emotions

The term negative emotions can to a degree be considered to be the inverse of positive emotions and it is also an umbrella term which includes a number of feelings. Negative emotions are those feelings that can lead to disorder and a break down in cohesion (Collins, 1990). Although many feelings may cause disorder the discussion explores only the emotional states of anxiety and annoyance, as these emerged as frequent negative feelings displayed by the students.

6.2.1. Anxiety

Anxiety is a generalised state of nervousness and worry, and it should be distinguished from fear which "is a specific response to a threat" (Giddens, 1991: 43). It is an emotion which I have referred to on several occasions in the

previous chapters, particularly in reference to how the organisation of an environment can cause or elevate anxiety. Anxiety in this instance will be understood to occur when an individual is "unable to carry out a behaviour" (Giddens, 1991: 44). With this understanding, anxiety was an emotion which was the most frequently observed (negative) emotion among the students particularly because all of them at some stage displayed signs of anxiety.

In the hustle and bustle of taxi time students listened out for their taxi number to be called over the radio before they were allowed to make their way to the front gate to go home. The classroom was busy and the noise of the corridor was adding to the chaos as many students dashed around the school trying to either catch their taxi or make it to the right room for their after school activity. "Lyds you've been called" Miss Morrison (1) informed Lydia. "No I haven't. I haven't heard my taxi" Lydia replied. "I did, you can go" Miss Morrison prompted. "I ain't bloody going. Call them and ask if my taxi is here" Lydia demanded. Unfortunately the transmission on the radio kept failing and the corridor was becoming ever busier with people shouting "ask Mrs James if taxi 49 is here" or "has 52 been called" and so it seemed many radios were suffering problems too. Lydia became more anxious and refused to leave the room until she heard her taxi call "Lydia I promise you that I have heard it. Look do you want me to go with you?" Miss Morrison asked. "No, bloody call again. I ain't bloody going anywhere" Lydia defiantly protested. Finally with some coaxing from Mrs Burton who had to 'swear on her life' that Lydia's taxi was waiting for her, Lydia left to go to the gate.

(14.10.10)

Lydia's uncertainty regarding her taxi led to her feeling uneasy and as a result of her uneasiness and anxiety Lydia was unable, and unwilling, to continue in the routine of taxi time until the uncertainty had been resolved. It was through the mixing of methods and especially through observing students that it was learnt that uncertainty and change were common causes of anxiety for many of the students.

It was the second PE lesson of the week and the students were playing indoor hockey. The yellow sticks were shooting away from the gym entrance and the red sticks were shooting towards the gym door. The game had started but Ben was stood in the middle of the gym half-heartedly getting involved. "Come on Ben, hit the puck" Miss Cox shouted periodically but the instruction did not prompt any further participation. Eventually after a further ten minutes or so Mrs Andrews went to see Ben "what's the matter Ben? You have to play otherwise you'll lose points". "No, no, I don't want to lose points" Ben replied "it's not my fault, no, I don't want to lose points". This moment of panic further confused Ben and he stood still in the middle of the room barely holding the hockey stick. "Argh, wait" Miss Jamieson started "Emily come here please. Can you swap sticks with Ben and you now play with the yellow sticks?" Miss Jamieson asked. She then swapped Ben's yellow stick for Emily's red stick and the game continued with Ben's full participation. "You see, he was red sticks on Monday" Miss Jamieson explained.

(30.09.11)

In this example, change caused Ben to feel anxious but it was not change per se but rather unexpected change and in this regard the causes of Ben's and Lydia's anxiety were similar. Unlike Lydia, Ben was unable to identify or verbalise the cause of his anxiety. Unexpected change was observed to be a cause of anxiety and upset.

As the class came back from PE and were heading off to break, Owen walked into the classroom and flung his bag into the corner of the room where the coat hooks were. He then made a beeline towards his desk, grabbed his snack and stormed off out the door. "Ow, what's the matter with him?'" Miss Stevens inquired. "He thought we were breaking up for half-term this Friday but I had to tell him it's next week and he wasn't happy" Mrs Andrews replied.

(14.10.10)

In the three examples given, Lydia's, Ben's and Owen's reactions to a stimulus were immediate, and understanding this behaviour from a Goffmanian perspective would suggest that their behaviour and reactions were more impulsive than Goffman recognised behaviour from individuals to be. Anxiety was caused by unexpected change and the uncertainty change brought. Furthermore, the students' reactions were not reflective of "well demeaned individual[s]" (Goffman, 1967: 77) as they were unable to effectively manage their emotions by acting with poise and thus became overwhelmed with anxiety. In Giddens' writing on ontological security, he observed that everyone seeks security in routines because routines help individuals to manage anxiety by forming a framework which helps block the threat of anxiety (Giddens, 1991). Thus, the breaking of routine for Lydia, Ben and Owen and the uncertainty it brought caused anxiety by disrupting the students' "sense of being-in-the-world" (Giddens, 1991: 37). Furthermore, although the reactions and expressions of anxiety were different for Lydia, Ben and Owen, key similarities existed in that the fact the anxiety felt led to a withdrawal from the encounter. From a Goffmanian perspective, these examples can be understood to be examples of individuals who were unable to manage their emotions by acting with poise; which ultimately led to disorder and a breakdown of interaction. In order to prevent anxiety, and other emotions which caused interaction breakdown, a degree of management over feelings needs to be in place which is dependent upon individuals identifying stimuli.

Each student was asked to name something which made them angry and when it was the turn of Jake he just stared at Mrs Parker. "Come here Jake, are you OK?" she asked as he made his way to her with arms open wide. Jake welled up, went all red faced and flung his arms around Mrs Parker "I'm just having a bad day" he cried.

(04.10.10)

Although Jake identified that he was feeling upset, he was unable to identify the cause of these emotions. Rather Jake's upset had built up over the course of the day until it became so overwhelming that he was unable to cope or participate in the encounter. Feelings of anxiety could often lead to outbursts, whether outburst of tears, upset or fierier outbursts, and this arose because the students were unable to manage their emotions.

He was horrendous when he came home Monday night wasn't he? He came and he wasn't happy because she weren't here [Mrs Parker was in India], he went off upstairs and you went up to see what he was doing and he kicked off and he was actually fighting you wasn't he? The eldest son had to go up and get Liam off of Leo. He just got such a stress, like when he comes at me he pushes me over and he just started in the last month to try and fight you hasn't he?

(Interview, Sally Ball with Leo Ball present, 24.03.10)

Liam's reasons for 'kicking off' centred around Mrs Parker's unexpected absence from school which relates to the importance of trust and routine that Giddens (1991) saw as key to ontological security. The loss of trust between Mrs Parker and Liam, that is that she will always be at school, could have caused Liam's anxiety by threatening his sense of stability. Furthermore, Liam's aggressive outburst that his mother explained occurred in the family home was also observed to occur at Ladybarn. A number of students when they became anxious and were unable to manage their emotions, or unable to identify the cause and thus stop the anxiety, responded by losing their temper.

"Everything's crap" Josh shouted. "Josh you need to calm down. Sit down and take some time out" Miss Morrison (2) advised but this advice was not taken. Josh kicked his chair over and then grabbed another one to throw at the door. The students in the area continued with what they were doing. As Josh became angrier and started to throw things across the room Miss Morrison and Mrs

Parker had almost to wrestle him out of the door and into the quad "Josh you have to calm down. Take time out" Mrs Parker said as she let go of Josh and shut the door. Later that day I was told that his mum had contacted school to explain that he was being badly behaved at home and that the loft conversion was causing him stress. The outburst was attributed to the disruption at home although Josh never explained why he became aggressive but instead he spent the rest of the afternoon at his desk drawing.

(01.02.11)

Similarities between Liam and Josh can be observed and it is more than their aggressive response to anxiety and upset but it is that neither of them managed their emotions by identifying the cause and thus being able to control their anxiety. Being unable to identify the cause of feelings has been observed to be a problem for individuals (Collins, 1990). While many of the students struggled with this, it is important to note that each of their reactions were different. Whereas Liam and Josh became aggressive, Jake became tearful and Ben quite often withdrew into himself.

When I made it to the hall for Drama I could see Ben who was again stood at the window intently looking at the car park. I asked Ben what he was looking at and he replied "the cars". Finally Mr Ward arrived and greeted the class by joking "Mr Ward isn't here today"- there was a stunned and confused silence as the students tried to work this out and Ben was the only one to reply "you're teasing us". Still stood by the window Ben was asked to join the class standing in a circle and he replied "but but Mrs Fletcher isn't here". Mrs Fletcher's absence concerned him, he continued to look out of the window and not participate. Once Mrs Fletcher's car pulled up Ben's attention shifted from the window to the lesson.

(16.03.11)

In the examples given, the occurrence of unexpected change and the uncertainty this brought, caused the students anxiety. The examples illustrate the major cause of anxiety for the students and in each incident there was no coping with change, but rather unexpected change and uncertainty predominantly led to feelings of anxiety. This demonstrates a social dimension to emotions as the environment affected how the students were feeling. Furthermore, approaching the examples from a Goffmanian perspective, there appeared to be little consideration for the thoughts of others in the encounter. In all of the examples given, the students did not engage in face-work, which would require control over their emotions, but rather they were impulsive in their expressions of their anxiety. In addition, the impulsive reaction to a stimulus in most of the cases observed resulted in a complete or partial breakdown of interaction and withdrawal from the encounter.

I return to the issue of managing one's emotions and how in order to achieve effective management one needs to be able to identify the cause of emotions and understand how a stimulus makes one feel. In the above examples Jake, Liam and Josh were unable to identify or verbalise the cause of their upset and anxiety whereas in fact Ben was. In Ben's case he made the step to identify the cause but he was unable to manage his emotions which led him to withdraw from the encounter. Thus, the first step for many of the students towards managing their anxiety was to learn to identify the causes and this was something some students were able to do.

> *Harry: I don't like change. I don't like quiche. I don't like people showing their food with their mouth open.*
>
> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

Harry identified that change was something which he did not like and it was also one factor common to all the students. The students' communities, both school and home, actively engaged in a process of helping the students identify causes of anxiety and also taught the students mechanisms for dealing with

them. For example, Alexandra White discussed ways in which she attempted to help Ben cope with change.

> *I did start to [purposively implement change] when I took them to town and things like that. Because I found once that we would write out a schedule for where we were going to go, and we were going to the bank first and there was a big queue in the bank I said to Ben "I think it would be a really good idea if we did the next thing on the list and we come back to the bank because there's a queue" and when I found he coped with it I thought "yeh actually this is a really good way of learning" so sometimes I do try things but not very often because it's hard work. It is, because you have to plan ahead for it.*
>
> *(Interview, Alexandra White, 10.03.10)*

Purposively implementing change was not a practice Ladybarn engaged in but change did naturally arise, for example timetabling changes due to teacher absences, and the use of a schedule that Alexandra White talked of was key for helping students deal with change. The use of a schedule was also one way that Ladybarn taught students to manage their feelings of anxiety and an example of this was Josh who self-implemented the use of schedules when he was feeling anxious. As was discussed in chapter four, the students' communities had a strict structure to help prevent feelings of anxiety arising. Hochschild (1983) observed that institutions such as schools manage individuals' feelings by prearranging the environment, and in this example Ladybarn could be considered to be an institution managing students' feelings. This external organisation and control of the environment which imposed structure was one way that students' feelings, particularly the feelings of anxiety, were managed. Ladybarn as an environment was sensitive towards students' needs, which went some way in managing the anxiety they felt, but Ladybarn was also keen to promote students' agency by encouraging students to learn their own techniques of coping which they could self-impose during periods of anxiety.

Before school Joe was playing football in the Weston Yard and accidently kicked the ball over the fence into the allotments outside Ladybarn's boundary. A teacher was unable to reach it and so the ball was left there until someone had time to go around the school perimeter to retrieve it. Joe had kept away from the form room during registration but he was marked in since he had been seen that morning although he was not in sight at the time. No-one attempted to locate him, staff absences which hit the ASC department hardest were being dealt with. Some students were going swimming and this needed to be staffed, students requiring 1:1 were also in need of cover, whilst Mrs Parker was away for her usual Tuesday outreach at a local mainstream school. It would be fair to say that the ASC classrooms were chaotic and the chaos was being dealt with. When the bell rang to signal first period Joe turned up, loitering in the door way where the following conversation ensued. Miss Morrison (2) "there you are, where have you been?" Joe: "In the library." Miss Morrison: "Why have you been there?" Joe: "I gave myself timeout. Because I had an accident. It was an accident." Miss Morrison: "when you kicked the ball over the wall?" Joe: "Yeh" he said slouching with the disappointment.

(18.01.11)

In this example Joe had become anxious at the thought of doing wrong and he managed his emotions by issuing himself timeout. I have provided many examples of occasions where students have issued themselves with time out and this appeared to be the most frequent and effective way they could control, or regain control over, their emotions. An additional way in which Ladybarn encouraged students to manage their emotions was through the school's personal target scheme, which was where each student had a specific target for a term which they worked to achieve. For example, Joe's target for the third term was "*to say when something is worrying him*". This target was to encourage Joe to identify the causes of his worry and to exercise control over his feelings so that he did not become overwhelmed by them. I propose that it was becoming overwhelmed with feelings which caused the interaction to breakdown and the students to struggle to participate in the encounter, rather than the feeling of anxiety per se. Thus the schemes Ladybarn employed which

taught students how to identify and control their feelings can be considered from a Goffmanian perspective to be Ladybarn teaching students how to act with poise. The strategies both Ladybarn and the students themselves employed helped the students manage their feelings, act according to situational proprieties and act with demeanor in anxiety-provoking situations. Furthermore, the strategies also helped students regain composure and control of their emotions. This observation could suggest both a biological and social basis of emotions. That is, the students must learn to control their biological feelings, so not to be overwhelmed, and in order to present these feelings in a socially acceptable manner. In some cases students were able to identify and employ strategies to control their emotions but it was clear that some students were more able at this than others.

At the end of the day we were packing up the classroom and I took the opportunity to ask how Lydia was after she had been in timeout all day. Miss Morrison (1) explained that today's issues stemmed from yesterday's mood. During lesson five Miss Morrison found the opportunity to talk to Lydia. Lydia explained that she was worried that her grandparents would die. More than this though she was scared that her family were withholding information and would also die soon (Miss Morrison informed me that her family were well). During the discussion about her behaviour Lydia explained how she found it hard to control herself but she was scared that she would get kicked out of school and she was worried about what she would do when she finished at Ladybarn.

(03.11.10)

Lydia is an example of a student who was highly anxious, but she is also an example of a highly articulate student. Lydia demonstrated that she had acquired the skills taught by Ladybarn to help the students control their feelings and emotions. Furthermore, Lydia's anxieties were so multifaceted that they were all-consuming of her thoughts. Anxiety has been found to increase the number of worrying thoughts in school aged children (Wright et al., 2010) and in this example Lydia exemplifies the all-consuming nature of anxiety

which many of the students felt. It was for the very reason that the students could become consumed with anxiety that their communities (home and Ladybarn) implemented strategies to prevent and/or control anxiety as well as teaching the students how to (re)gain control of their feelings.

Anxiety was a frequent and complex emotion the students regularly experienced. It was an emotion which could be triggered off by any number of things but a frequent cause was unexpected change. Just as Giddens observed, a break in routine, trust and thus ontological security caused the students to feel overwhelmed by anxiety. Furthermore, the response to anxiety differed according to the individual but, in each case, anxiety almost always led to interaction breakdown and a withdrawal from the encounter. The previous chapters outlined the varied and vast number of ways anxiety was controlled for in both the community and interactions between intimate relations. The students' developing ability to control their feelings by acting with poise meant that it was necessary for those around them to help manage their emotions. Anxiety might have been the most frequent negative emotion felt by students but it was an emotion which led to, and was caused by, other emotions, such as annoyances.

6.2.2. Annoyance

This final section discusses the experiences and triggers of annoyances, irritations and frustrations which resulted in feelings of disappointment, dissatisfaction and upset. In much the same way that students frequently had periods of anxiety, it was also common for them to feel annoyed by an event. It is for this reason that the particular focus of this discussion will be upon identifying the specific causes of annoyances as well as addressing how students responded to those causes.

The documentary task was again useful in helping to bring to light factors which caused the students annoyance. Many of the participating students used the task as an opportunity to identify the causes of their feelings as they discussed their 'likes' and 'dislikes'.

> *Josh: I don't like it when people swear or bully me and my friends.*

> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

Josh identified bullying and swearing as two factors which he disliked and in doing this Josh demonstrated two things. The first was that he had a sense of right and wrong and it was the 'wrong doings' which he disliked. Second, Josh's inclusion of his friends illustrates the importance of these individuals to him but also that emotions can be relational (Burkitt, 2002), in that, others' emotions affected his feelings too. This demonstrates both his empathetic nature and his ability to identify 'triggers'. Similarly Elliot, when talking to Jake, also identified swearing as something which he disliked.

> *Elliot: I don't like swearing, it's horrible.*

> *Jake: I don't like dying, it's horrible.*

> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

In mixing methods, different perspectives and further insights were gleaned; for example, in considering Elliot's participation in the documentary alongside the observation of him protesting at Lydia joining form 1MP (chapter 4), it is learnt that Elliot became annoyed and anxious at swearing. Although the observations were useful at providing supplementary information, the documentary task was an opportunity for students to steer the direction of the research. The students elected to talk about likes and dislikes, but beyond this

there were striking similarities in the things listed as a 'dislike'. Interestingly, however, some students could identify that they felt annoyed and that this was a state which they disliked, but they found it challenging to identify the specific cause of their annoyance.

> *Ben: I don't like being annoyed, being bullied, being hurt or being shouted at.*
>
> *(Documentary, 18.03.11)*

Although Ben was unable to explain the specific causes of his annoyance, he demonstrated that he had a developing awareness of his emotions as he cited the causes of upset as "*being bullied*" or "*being shouted at*". The excerpts from the documentary highlight that students' emotions are affected by others. They also demonstrate that students can identify factors which cause them upset or annoyance. Furthermore, and in developing on from this, these examples show orderliness to the students' social worlds as they expressed their sense of right and wrong. They clearly defined swearing, bullying and shouting as being 'wrong' and as causes of upset, and in doing so, boundaries of satisfactory behaviour begin to be defined. It is in this sense that the students demonstrated that they had social norms dictating their behaviour and judgement of others' behaviour, which relates to Goffman's concepts of demeanour, because the students revealed their understandings of what constituted socially desirable behaviour.

The documentary was useful in providing the opportunity for students to make known their dislikes. It was, however, less useful in probing deeper and obtaining explanations regarding the effects of these 'dislikes', for example specifically how the students felt or reacted to any one of these named 'dislikes'. This experience therefore acts as a tale of caution since relinquishing control of the research direction to the participants limited the input of the researcher. I am not suggesting that this is a reason for participants not to be more involved in the whole research process as many

positives arise as a result. I am merely highlighting that with reduced control over the direction of the research, I was unable to learn more regarding the students' feelings via this method. However, this is where the value of mixing methods is once again evident and in particular observations and immersing yourself in the community. It was only through spending time with students that I was able to observe and identify the causes of annoyances as well as capture their reactions to these and thus build an understanding of their feelings. For example, and most notably, the students' sense of right and wrong was captured through observing their interactions with one another, which shed light on both the causes of annoyances and the reactions to these stimuli.

As the students worked at their desks, Jake was stood out of his seat, lying over Miss Morrison (2) and they were engaged in a small struggle as Miss Morrison tried to get Jake off. "Off Jake. Come on. Off. Sit down and do your work" she instructed. Liam was also stood in his desk area and was leaning on the division moaning about Jake. "What's up Liam?" Miss Morrison (1) asked. "Him. He's annoying me" Liam replied with a fierce point towards Jake and almost in unison Miss Morrison (1) and Miss Morrison (2) replied "well, sit down and do your work and you won't see him".

(04.10.10)

Jake's wrongdoing caused Liam to become annoyed and his reactions to this were immediate and with little consideration of the added disruption that his behaviour might bring.

Ben and Abby came in from the quad after Ben had thrown his hat on the school's roof. Abby was most concerned with how it was going to get down "noooo the hat" she cried as she tried to make her way back out to retrieve it. "No Abby" Ben ordered as he turned and punched her in her stomach. "Ben!" Mrs Andrews bellowed "you do not hit Abby" she continued. "But she was annoying me. I wanted her to shut up" Ben replied in an attempt to explain his

actions.

Both Ben's and Liam's responses to being annoyed by another's wrongdoings are examples of impulsive acts. Their reactions were immediate and they exercised little restraint over their behaviour as they both immediately reacted without consideration of their own actions. From a Goffmanian perspective, Ben and Liam could be considered to be examples of individuals who did not consider the thoughts of others or of sustaining a viable image of self (self-work). Their impulsive behaviour led to further disruption in the environment but interestingly, their actions were responses to other people's perceived wrongdoings. What this demonstrates is not only the students' sense of right and wrong, but also that while they are able to judge, reflect and monitor other's actions they are challenged with reflexively judging and monitoring their own. Thus as a consequence, there was an odd contradictory relationship between how order was maintained and how disorder arose. For example, both Jake's and Abby's wrongdoings created disorder. However, Liam's and Ben's reactions to all intents and purposes were intended to restore order but, because their reactions were impulsive, they caused further disorder.

The students had a profound sense of right and wrong and all too frequently wrongdoings would be contributing factors behind moments of annoyance. However, some students showed evidence that they were better able to deal with wrongdoings with more sensitivity to the setting than others.

Paige and Josh were in a hyper mood as they snatched each other's fluffy toys back from one another. Elliot was sat next to them quietly colouring until Josh snatched his Dr Who pen from beside his pencil case. "Hey, can I have that back?" Elliot asked but Josh laughed "Paige, quick" he said as he threw the pen to Paige. "Please can I have it back, it was expensive?" Elliot asked for a second time but Paige and Josh ignored him and carried on throwing the pen to one another. "Miss please can you ask Josh and Paige to give back my pen?" Elliot

asked turning to Mrs Andrews.

This is an example of Elliot controlling his emotions, considering the context and also it is an illustration of Elliot's sense of right and wrong. What is emerging thus far is that the students became annoyed at other people's wrongdoings and at behaviour which was 'unacceptable'. Therefore, this establishes the boundaries for acceptable behaviour and anything lying outside of the boundary causes students to become annoyed and, in general, to immediately react. The students' feelings and emotions (and thus self) have a relational basis as they are affected by other people, and there is also limited tolerance for wrong behaviour. The students' reactions to wrongdoings can be considered to be more impulsive than Goffman recognised behaviour to be, which could suggest that the students were not acting with demeanour or considering the thoughts of others. However some of the students did also demonstrate moments of awareness which may suggest that they were in a process of learning socially acceptable ways of behaving.

> *Josh: I sometimes get annoyed at myself when I swear and I don't feel that there should be swear words going around because it's not a nice way to say anything to anyone.*

This excerpt illustrates Josh's reflexivity, that he is aware of his own emotions and that he identified that he could cause himself upset. However, it is also an example of a student, although aware of his feelings, being unable to control his actions; for example not swearing and thus not causing himself to become annoyed. It was only through observing Josh, and coupling the observations with the documentary task, that an understanding of Josh's reflexivity but impulsive nature could be further appreciated.

The class were given an impromptu spelling test and they all sat quietly around the teaching tables of the classroom attempting to spell the words Mrs Parker read out to them. It was reiterated on several occasions that it didn't matter if they got a few answers wrong, they just had to try their best and Josh gave the test his all. He was huffing and puffing and becoming more agitated as the words got a little longer and I assume became harder. He started to frantically scribble out some answers and rushed in a second and sometimes third attempt. Eventually Josh screwed up his test sheet and threw it into the recycling bin behind him. "What do you think you are doing?" Mrs Parker snapped. "The test was rubbish. It's annoying" Josh replied.

(27.09.10)

This example can be understood in several ways. It could be understood as Josh putting an end to something that was causing him anxiety (the test). Through spending time with Josh, and getting to know his competitive nature, I suggest it could also be understood to be Josh becoming annoyed at his own abilities / struggles. In the example Josh's response ultimately led to his withdrawal from the activity and encounter. This relates to Goffman's concept of self-work; that is, Josh did not employ self-work in order to sustain an image of someone with self-control. Furthermore, this examples highlights why it is important that individuals learn how to sustain a viable image of themselves by acting with demeanour, because it is fundamental to the maintenance of the ritual order.

There had been a change of Maths teacher but the students had been aware of this since morning registration and so they took their seats without any disruption. Mr Reid didn't normally teach the ASC students unless cover was needed and so the lesson was a little disjointed. The class were tasked with drawing the statistics in a table into a bar graph. They were shown once how to do it "and red has 8 counts so you draw a bar next to the green one up to number 8" Mr Reid instructed. Elliot was getting on with his graph as Mr Reid

made his way around the class sat at the teaching tables. "Why have you drawn them next to each other?" Mr Reid asked Elliot. Elliot looked up in a stunned silence. "Look at the example I have given you. Here look, there is a space between the bars" Mr Reid continued as he pointed at the example on a hand-out. Elliot, still looking shocked, sat in silence, a gloomy look fell over his face as his head slumped down and stared at the chart he had been producing. Elliot shuffled together his paper and pens and made his way to his desk to work in isolation.

(10.03.10)

Elliot became upset because, according to Mr Reid, he had incorrectly completed his work and this example illustrates two important things. The first is that Elliot is an individual who became upset at his assumed 'wrongdoings' and the second is that Elliot was able to a degree to manage his emotions by returning to his desk to be alone. Although Elliot's reactions did not cause further disorder, as has been illustrated in the above examples, Elliot's annoyances did cause his withdrawal from the encounter.

In questioning why the students were so readily annoyed and overwhelmed with emotion that it ultimately led to interaction breakdown, I am reminded that encompassed within annoyance, and feeling annoyed, is irritability and impatience. The students could become annoyed at many things, behaviours and actions deemed 'wrong' and I question if this was a consequence of their management of their emotions or their impulsive attitude.

> *Me: Can you tell me about your photo album Owen?*
>
> *Owen: Owen Webster's cool pictures of the book. Let the photos start. Pingu "Hello, my name is Pingu and this is my best friend Sponge Bob". Sponge Bob says "Hi". Pingu says "today we are looking at pictures so enjoy!"*

[Owen turns over page, I turn it back]

Me: Wait, can you tell me a little about Pingu?

Owen: Yeh

Me: And why did you take a picture of Pingu? [Owen turned the page over] Can I see them?

Owen. Oh never mind [Owen held onto the page]

(Photography Transcript, 11.02.11)

The conversation that developed between Owen and me about his photographs was one where Owen had very little patience for my questioning. The irritation I caused by encouraging him to tell me more, something he did not want to do, was expressed by his snappy responses. Impatience was something which contributed towards students' feelings of annoyance and related to this is how they managed, or did not manage, their emotions. Impatience could be sad to carry the assumption that an individual is unable to manage their emotions as they become easily irritable, but it could also be seen to be tied to an individual's impulsive nature.

Mr Douglas came in with a football "I will put it here and you can have it when I come out to the playground" he said as he put the ball on the side. When Mr Douglas just got out of sight Lydia grabbed the football and ran out of the classroom. Shortly after Mr Douglas, Mrs Parker and Lydia returned with the ball in Mrs Parker's hand. "The ball will stay in the store room until the end of the day" Mrs Parker informed Lydia but Lydia stormed across the room and fought to keep the ball. A scuffle occurred and Mrs Parker shoved the ball into Mr Douglas' hands "put this in the cupboard" she demanded. This angered Lydia who, with all her force, pushed the desk divider down so it fell in the direction of Mrs Parker. Mrs Parker just managed to leap out of the way and so Lydia grabbed a handful of pens and launched them at her before she ran out the door.

In this example Lydia's impatience at not being able to wait for Mr Douglas can be considered to illustrate her impulsive 'here and now' nature but can also be considered to illustrate how impatience led to annoyance which was expressed through an aggressive outburst. This act of aggression could, from a Goffmanian perspective, be considered to be an example of an individual who did not act with self-control or poise and thus would not be considered to be the actions of a "well demeaned individual" (Goffman, 1967: 37). In order to learn self-control, and thus act with demeanour, I propose that an individual is required to be patient and less impulsive.

At the end of lesson six the students were given free time and four of them had decided that they would like a turn on the only computer in the classroom. In the interest of keeping the peace a list was drawn up to ensure they all had a go and were given equal time. The list was written on the whiteboard but Ben's name was last and so the timer was set for ten minutes and the boys had to swap when it went off. In the interim Ben sat patiently playing mouse trap and watching the timer until it was his turn.

(21.10.10)

The use of a timer was something which helped Ben and others to learn to be patient and prevent them from becoming both anxious and agitated. Showing the value of mixing methods, and in particular visiting the students' homes to interview parents, I learnt that this was a technique which was utilised at Abby's (and thus Ben's) home.

Figure 6: 8 Abby White, Photography

the computer.

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I love going on youtube.

2. I love that timer.

3. I love that mouse.

Abby's photograph album illustrates that the timer was one strategy implemented to help her and Ben learn to take turns and to be patient. Other strategies which Ladybarn used to help students control their emotions and to be patient was to use verbal cues such as 'now and then'. This was something which worked well with Owen who was quite often told "*now is work*" and "*then is Lego*" to help him focus on the current task and to be patient. However, strategies for encouraging patience, and learning how to identify and manage annoyances, varied.

> *[Mrs Parker shows me Josh's work] This is meant to be a five point scale, number one is really, really happy, two happy, three OK, four unhappy, five you're really mad...And this is*

Josh's and so you know animals he really, really loves so that's
at one and his brother at the time I did it was at number five
and today when he came in and I went and checked it he had
put him into number three because they had got on alright last
night, only because his brother was out and he didn't see him.
So that's it. You can move things around … So it's giving them
the tools and making everything as concrete as possible and so
they can then just use what they've got to move things around,
some of these might disappear and they might add more and
so it's making everything concrete.

(Interview, Mrs Parker, 22.11.11)

What Mrs Parker described was a method of teaching the students how to identify emotions and how to identify the causes of irritations which could help the students to control how they were feeling. This relates to Goffman's observations regarding the management of self as it demonstrates how the students learn to behave according to the ritual order and thus become 'socialized' individuals.

This discussion demonstrated the students' sense of right and wrong and also illustrated how wrongdoings often caused the students to feel annoyed. Furthermore, their impatience and irritability regarding wrongdoings might be, to all intents and purposes, to maintain order but their impulsive responses often led to further disorder. Thus, the students' immediate reactions to a stimulus, from a Goffmanian perspective, could be considered to be behaviour ignorant of the importance of preserving order. The students' actions may not be considered to reflect those of an individual concerned with face-saving, self-work or demeanour and as such their behaviour was unmanaged as their need for justice overrode the need to sustain order.

6.2.3. Negative Emotions Closing Remarks

Although termed negative emotions, the discussion has illustrated the students' sensitive and somewhat fragile states of mind. The term 'negative' was used primarily because the feelings discussed often led to undesirable outcomes such as aggressive outbursts and disorder. In terms of methodological appropriateness, it was the observations which proved the most suitable method for inquiring into the identified emotions.

For Goffman observation, participant-observation specifically, was a method which enabled the researcher to physically and ecologically penetrate the social worlds of groups (Goffman, 1989). This penetration of a social group ultimately led the researcher to be positioned where one could see how individuals behave in, and respond to, events which was an experienced benefit to the observational method in this instance. The method enabled me to get close to the students and as a result I was able to observe the causes of anxiety and annoyance as well as witness their immediate and impulsive responses to stimuli.

It was through observing the students and their environment that an understanding of how negative feelings were managed and controlled for could be revealed. Both the students' feelings of anxiety and annoyance were affected by individuals around them, as others could help cause or alleviate these feelings. This demonstrates the students' relational aspect of self and in doing so the importance of a supportive and accommodating environment is understood. In an environment where the students' needs were considered and accommodated for the identified negative emotions were better managed. By management I refer to the external management of the students' emotions by those around them by either preventing the occurrence of these feelings or by allowing the students to self-manage by self-issuing timeout. This type of management has parallels with Hochschild's (1983) institutional management of feelings and Giddens' (1991) ontological security. Furthermore, a failure to

help manage the students' emotions and accommodate their needs would have led to more overwhelming states of anxiety and annoyance.

Finally, from a Goffmanian standpoint, the importance of a supportive environment is reiterated especially in light of observing the impulsive nature of the students. According to Goffman the principal consideration behind individuals' actions is the consideration of what will others think of me and therefore individuals act with demeanor to maintain face. However, the students demonstrated that the principal concern for them was justice (to right a wrong) not face which led to immediate, impulsive responses and ultimately disorder. The students demonstrated little consideration for the ritual order and for preserving their own or others' face and as such their negative emotions could be considered to be ineffectively managed.

6.3. Concluding Remarks

From the discussion provided it is clear that all of the participating students were emotional individuals. They demonstrated themselves to be ecstatically happy, fun and excitable individuals who could also experience periods of high anxiety, upset and annoyance. They were individuals who on a daily basis could experience any one of the mentioned emotions but they were also individuals who would quite often experience a number of emotions in any one day. Their sensitive, fragile and emotional selves quite often meant that they were prone to experiencing any of the emotions discussed in quite quick succession. It was through spending time with the students that such an appreciation for the intensity, but also sometimes fleetingness, of emotions could be appreciated.

The documentary was a method which enabled students to have meaningful participation in the research process and in doing so provided them with the opportunity to direct the course of the research. This approach to inquiry

reflects a participatory approach to research because students held the power to direct research and this was certainly of value to understanding the students' selves. The information gleaned from this method was supplemented and strengthened with the use of observations. The contextual information provided as a result of observing and spending time with the students was invaluable. It is therefore supportive evidence towards the advocacy of a mixed methodology, but a methodology which is inclusive and encourages meaningful participation.

Taking a Goffmanian approach to the discussion, I asked what feelings did the students have attached to self and how were these expressed? The students demonstrated they had many feelings attached to self but the approach taken also led me to question if the students acted with demeanour. Goffman observed that there was a distinction between 'human-selves' and 'social selves' and it was the social self who put on a performance to hide their emotional 'ups and downs' (Goffman, 1969). With this I question if the students had acquired a 'social self' or if they were acting from the 'human-self' since there was little hiding of emotions. The impulsive nature of the students' actions suggest that they exercised limited control or management over their emotions. It was for this reason that the onset of excitement, anxiety and annoyance quite often led to disorder and interaction breakdown and this serves as an illustration of why it is important for an individual to behave, in Goffman's terms, as a 'social self'. The overwhelming nature of the students' emotions and their limited ability to manage effectively their feelings symbolised that they were unable to engage in the necessary self-work or impression management to sustain order. The importance of this process was being taught to students in their community by their teachers and intimate relations, which served to illustrate that the students were in a process of learning the ritual order.

To that end, I conclude with several final thoughts and considerations, the first following from the above point. The students were in a 'trial and error' process of learning ritual, and were shown 'appropriate' ways of expressing themselves and self-management once they had behaved 'inappropriately'. This leads me

to question whether ritual is ever completely learnt by an individual, or if it remains a continual learning process for all? Secondly, I question how far the students are expected to understand ritual and the need to manage their emotions 'appropriately'? External factors, such as the organisation of the environment and the role of intimate relations, were significant factors affecting the students' ability to manage their emotions. That is, it is because the organisation provides structure and routine that the students were able to demonstrate agency and their ability to manage their emotions, as illustrated by self-issuing time-out. For this reason I suggest these identified external factors play an important role in managing students' emotions, possibly more so than the agency of students themselves. These factors directly influence students' ability to act with demeanor. This has resonance with current debates regarding models of disability, in particular the question of whether research should address intrinsic (individual) factors only, extrinsic (environmental) factors only, or both simultaneously. If environmental factors have a more significant influence on sustaining order than individual factors, this may question how necessary is it for students to understand and learn the ritual order.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The focus of this research has been both methodological and substantive and this chapter brings together these themes through discussing the contributions of the research. In keeping with the primary focus I first address the appropriateness of each of the methods, including my recommendations for research practice, before I address the substantive findings focused upon the social worlds of autistic children. Empirical evidence from the research will be used to contribute towards broader debates regarding methodological appropriateness, autism and social theory (where a number is provided in brackets this refers to the chapter section where the empirical evidence is drawn).

7.1. Researching Autism: Methods

In this section I address how far the research has enabled me to achieve the research aim; to explore how we can best get at and understand the social worlds and experiences of autistic children. During the discussion I explain how the research contributes to wider debates concerning researching childhood, methodology and methodological appropriateness. To ensure these issues are addressed, and to make clear the advice for others who wish to carry out research with autistic children, I approach this discussion systematically. I discuss each method in turn, as I did in chapter three, by taking the 'traditional' methods before the 'non-traditional' methods.

7.1.1. Evaluating Methodological Appropriateness

The focus has been to explore why some methods are more appropriate than others when exploring the social worlds of autistic children, and to suggest how these methods could be used. I explored this focus through a substantive area, the experiences of autistic children, which provided a means of evaluating the methods' usefulness. That is, an evaluation of the methods' suitability was made through assessing what knowledge they generated about the children's social worlds. However, the research demonstrated that the methods' appropriateness was determined by much more than what knowledge was produced, as the methods' appropriateness was affected by many contributing factors. I have found it useful to illustrate those identified factors which contribute towards the evaluation of the methods' appropriateness in table 7: 1.

Table 7: 1 Method Evaluation

		Observations	Interviews	Essay	Photography	Patchwork	Documentary
Practical Skills (of participants)	Writing			X	X		X
	Talking		X		X	X	X
	Creative Imagination			X	X	X	X
	Technical				X		X
Participatory Potential	High						X
	Medium			X	X	X	X
	Low	X	X				
Method Deployment	Researcher	X	X				X
	Teacher			X	X	X	X
Ethical Issues (to arise)	Pushiness			X	X	X	
	Suppressed Voice	X	X	X	X		
Sequence of Method	Any Time	X		X	X	X	X
	Beginning	X					
	End		X				
Method Structure	Unstructured	X					X
	Semi-structure		X	X		X	
	Highly Structured				X		

The table is a visual illustration of the framework of evaluating a method's appropriateness, which emerged as a result of this research. Before I address the appropriateness of each method I discuss the identified factors which contribute towards the evaluation.

Practical Skills- The student centred tasks were selected because they each drew upon a different skill of the student; as explained in chapter 3. However, it was found that the students' abilities influenced how engaged they were with the method and this in turn affected the method's 'usefulness'. I offer here a select number of practical skills that I found to influence the 'success' of the methods used in this research: writing; talking; creative imagination; and, technical. This selection is by no means exhaustive, as other research methods are likely to have different skills associated with them, but a key point to take forward is that a method's appropriateness is in part determined by whether or not the research participants have the necessary practical skills required to take part.

Participatory Potential refers specifically to the involvement of children in research. I classify the 'participatory potential' into three categories, 'high', 'medium' and 'low'. That is, methods with high participatory potential are characterised by meaningful participation of children and methods with low participatory potential are characterised by minimal/ no participation from children. The debate around the benefits and pitfalls of children's involvement in research is also introduced in chapter 2. For the purpose of this discussion participatory potential assumes that having children involved in the creation of knowledge regarding their social worlds and experiences is beneficial. The term 'potential' is used because although a method might promote children's participation in research, children's participation will be affected by other factors; for example, practical skills.

Method Deployment refers to who is evaluated to be better placed to implement the method, that is, who has the necessary skills (and/or experience) to deliver the student-centred methods. In this research the

student-centred tasks were implemented by the teachers, as I, as the researcher, wanted to observe how the tasks were delivered. The role of the teachers was discussed in chapter 3, and the decision for such a role is also justified. Although this research offers recommendations to researchers regarding how to use the student-centred methods, there are many factors which help determine if a teacher or a researcher is better placed to deliver the student-centred tasks. In this instance, the teachers delivered the tasks, for the reason provided but also because I felt that having teachers deliver the tasks would minimise the disruption to the children's social worlds. That is, it was an attempt to keep the students' daily routines the same because, as the research found, a change in routine can cause autistic children anxiety. However, in terms of the practical skills required to deliver the tasks, it is my belief that researchers with experience of working with children would be able to follow the guidance and recommendations made here and deliver the tasks. That said, there are additional factors which can influence how easily a researcher can deploy these methods, one being where the research is being carried out. In particular, using these methods in a school, in a similar manner to this research, may mean that it is the teacher, rather than the researcher, who is better placed to deliver the student-centred tasks. External factors can place barriers to researchers delivering methods in school environments, particularly when this occurs during time-tabled lessons. For example, securing access to schools and children has been noted to be difficult when researchers require students to take part in research tasks during lesson time (Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been observed that gatekeepers, who control access to schools, may grant access conditionally; a condition being that a 'trusted' and 'experienced' member of staff should oversee the delivery of methods(Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, given some of the potential challenges of a researcher using timetabled lessons as a space to deliver the research tasks, some benefits can be had if the teachers deliver them. It was also my experience that there are additional benefits from research tasks being delivered by teachers. For example, it enables the researcher to observe the 'success' of the methods, and the researcher is also free to work closely with individual students without the responsibility of overseeing the whole group. I concluded that although a researcher might retain the practical skills and experience to deliver the research tasks, other factors mean that when using the methods in a school setting teachers could be better placed to deliver the research task. However,

this conclusion is not without its own concerns and I offer my recommendations for how to research in schools, and what a researcher needs to do if a teacher is to deliver the research tasks in section 7.1.9.

Ethical Issues are always present in research and especially so in research which seeks the participation of children. Measures were taken to promote the ethical credibility of this research; however, as discussed in section 3.5, ethics is an on-going process in research. Although unforeseen ethical issues can arise with any method and group of participants, this category refers to those unforeseen ethical issues that arose when these methods were employed in this research. One identified factor is the issue of being 'pushy'; that is, challenging participants and encouraging them to work outside of their comfort zone. The second factor, 'suppressed voice', relates to instances where the adult voice could dominate the research task and lead to children's input being reduced.

Method Sequence relates to the order in which the method should be implemented and if the method could be used at any stage of the research, or if its appropriateness is increased by being at a particular point in the research process.

Method Structure accounts for whether the method design was unstructured, semi-structured or highly structured. In the instances of the student-centred methods it was found that the more highly structured a task was the more the students found they were able to participate. Therefore, the structure of the method in part contributed towards how 'appropriate' a method was in relation to its use with autistic children.

This framework has emerged from the findings of this research and has been employed to evaluate the appropriateness of the research methods used. The discussion into each of the methods draws on some examples of these factors and illustrates how they affect the 'appropriateness' of the method.

7.1.2. Observations

Through observing the students I was able to witness how their everyday lives were performed and how they interacted with one another. Furthermore, through adopting an observer-participant role, I was able to engage with students and build an understanding of their social world by being part of it. Goffman's methodological position advocated the use of observations as he argued that the core of observations was to penetrate the social group by "subjecting yourself to their life circumstances" (Goffman, 1989: 125).

The research findings highlight the contextual nature of observations, that is, subjecting yourself to participants' life circumstances, as I did, creates an understanding of their social worlds *in the context which is observed*. For example, the bulk of the research findings relate to the experiences occurring at Ladybarn. The behaviour of individuals varies according to social contexts and so the method's appropriateness extends only to the context in which the observations are made. Notwithstanding this the research found observations to be a valuable contributor to the understanding of the students' social worlds.

The research also found that observations can be used to provide an additional perspective on topics which emerge through another method. For example, Ben identified that he felt annoyed in the documentary and I was able to observe his behaviour to see the possible causes of his annoyance. A second benefit of observations was that they helped compensate for the autistic children's difficulty with autobiographical episodic memory (Lind, 2010). It was my experience that when asked about events, which I had observed, many students were unable to remember the episodes. Therefore had I not observed the events, and if it was left to memory recall, this information may have gone unrecorded. An additional benefit was that observations were employed over a long period. I observed students for several months and because of this I was able to observe a vast array of behaviours and experiences, which contributed towards the understanding of students' social worlds.

In addition to helping to understand the students' social worlds, observations were also useful for the research process overall. Through observing students I was able to learn of their capabilities and areas of need, which I used to inform the design of the methods that required direct student participation. Tinson (2009) observed that researchers often seek gatekeepers for advice on structuring tasks so that they suit the children's capabilities. However, through spending time with the students before any task was implemented, I was able to acquire my own understanding of their capabilities. Although I handed over the delivery of the task to the teachers, it was my experience that getting to know students first, helped me to retain control and input over the research tasks.

A potential disadvantage to observations is the lack of participatory potential. I have categorised this method to have low participatory potential as it requires no meaningful participation of the children, that is, the children have little or control over the research process. Although the method has many advantages it is restricted in the participation of children and, therefore, the children's voice and contribution towards the knowledge created about their social worlds holds the potential to be silenced. The method does allow for the researcher's perspective to emerge, although it is not the most appropriate method for getting at the child's perspective.

7.1.3. Interviews

Interviews, the second method with a low participatory potential, were carried out with parents and teachers of the students and as such several different benefits were experienced. An advantage of interviewing teachers was that they were able to report on the group as a whole, on specific individuals and they were able to offer accounts of events which occurred before the observations started. The accounts provided information on how the teachers perceived the students worked together, the commonalities among the

individuals as well as the uniqueness of the students. A benefit of interviewing parents was that they were able to report on matters occurring outside of my gaze, in the family home. A further advantage was experienced when interviews were carried out in the family home, because this provided an opportunity to observe the setting in which many of the instances being recalled occurred, which helped contextualise the information being shared.

The research found interviews to be an appropriate method to explore the social worlds of autistic children because both parents and teachers were found to be key members of the social worlds in question. They were found to be a significant feature of the community, the other half of the intimate relations and as a result also contributed towards the students' sense of self. It was, therefore, both necessary and appropriate to seek the views of these individuals. Finally the appropriateness of the method was in part determined by when the interviews were scheduled. In this instance they occurred after the completion of the other methods and thus I was able to follow up on points of interest. However, I offer a point of caution regarding interviewing parents and teachers. This is because although they were valuable contributors to knowledge they can become less appropriate if conducted at the wrong stage of the research process; this relates to the factor 'method sequence'. If the interviews are used in conjunction with other methods then I caution against conducting the interviews first. I raise this as a concern because it can become all too easy to value the perspective of the adult over the child's and I feel it is important to see the adult perspective as another viewpoint rather than the 'truth'. Corbett warns that children "are not always listened to with respect or trust and their stories frequently rejected as lies, confusion or fantasy" (1998: 59). I am of the view, as I have declared from the outset, that children should be listened to and their views respected. Therefore, it is important that the adults' perspective is not given undue weight and I feel that carrying out the interviews first might shape how one observes or listens to the children, as there becomes a danger of seeing and hearing them through their parent's / teacher's perspective.

The findings from this research illustrate the value to be had from interviewing parents, carers and teachers. They are an appropriate and useful method for the reasons stated so long as they are considered to be an alternative perspective and not 'the' perspective. This caution also applied to observations, it is important for researchers to "treat the obvious [dominant] voices with the same level of mistrust" (Mazzei, 2009: 53) as those voices which are harder to hear. I prefer to term this caution more positively in terms of treating the excluded voices with the same level of trust as the dominant voices.

7.1.4. Essay

This method was selected because it was a writing task, it encouraged students to talk about their futures and to think beyond their immediate circumstances. Interestingly the method revealed how students felt about their relationships and provided insight into their current experiences.

The essay was the only method not to be drawn upon in a findings chapter (chapter six: Self). This is reflective of the method's appropriateness as it highlights that some students were challenged by the practical skills required to engage with the task. In the research those students who had poorer literacy skills found the task challenging and therefore were reliant upon adult support. The method's appropriateness is also affected by the ethical issue; 'suppressed voice'. This is because in those instances where children did not have the necessary practical skills to participate, I am concerned with whose voice was coming through the essays, was it the student's or the 'supportive' adult who helped craft the sentences? I believe that this is a reflection of the essay being less appropriate for some students. It also serves to remind researchers that they are responsible for structuring the tasks appropriately. I acknowledge that in this instance it was my responsibility to structure the task; however also in this instance the focus of this research was to learn how to best achieve this. I therefore propose that the method would be more appropriate if the supportive adults acted only as a source of handwriting or as a 'spell checker'.

Supporting the students in this manner would ensure the students' work was not edited by an adult and thus would encourage their account to emerge.

I have frequently talked of exploring which methods are appropriate to be used with autistic children; however, in finding the essay was difficult for some students, it is a reminder that autistic children are not a homogeneous group. This illustrates that methods are likely to be more or less appropriate on an individual basis and I address the implications of this in the conclusions. While in this research the essay task was less appropriate for those students whose literacy skills were lower, it was more appropriate for others, since it reduced the social anxiety around talking. I found that the non-verbal aspect of the task suited many students, especially those who became anxious when engaged in talk. In light of this, questions may be asked regarding how appropriate it is to set a writing task for individuals who find writing challenging, or how appropriate it is to set an imaginative task for individuals who have been diagnosed with a difficulty in social imagination.

Although the task had unforeseen ethical issues (3.4) each student was able to produce an account of their imagined futures. Challenging the students in this way, being 'pushy', brought benefits to the research and it brought benefits to the students themselves. The appropriateness of 'pushing' participants is in part related to how they are conceived by others and by social researchers. This relates to the discussion in section 7.2 regarding the triad of impairments and models of disability. When conceiving students in terms of the triad of impairments, coupled with a medical model perspective, setting a challenging task would be deemed inappropriate, because children are positioned as vulnerable and in need of protection. However, from a social model perspective, a social researcher would focus on promoting participation by asking 'how can the task be structured so that it is less disabling?' In this research I found that the essay task can be less challenging by structuring the task according to ages. For example, framing the method so that the students write about what they will be doing at set points in their lives, for example at 15, 20, 25 years of age (3.3.3). Furthermore, other ways participation can be encouraged includes using a word processor to help students who struggle with handwriting. This

research is evidence that being 'pushy' should be seen more as 'being encouraging'. Providing opportunities to participants and encouraging their participation is important, but encouragement should also be coupled with the necessary support. I hasten to add that whilst researchers should operate from the social model standpoint and ask how the challenges of the method can be minimised, the wellbeing of participants should be paramount to any research and researchers should be vigilant and know when not to 'push'.

7.1.5. Photography

This was primarily a visual method but one which also relied upon the students' written justifications to help interpret the photographs, thus, it required all of the practical skills identified (writing, talking, creative imagination and technical). In contrast to the essay, this method was useful at getting at the 'here and now' and had the more specific ability to tease out the significance of the students' relationships. It was my experience that this method was useful for exploring the significance of students' relationships because it provided a clear, definitive opportunity for them to explain the meaning of their relationships. The findings indicate that the visual and non-verbal aspect helped reduce feelings of anxiety and thus the method 'got at' the experiences of those who were deemed 'hard to reach'. For example, Paige used the method to convey the significance of her family and pets and she was an individual who only communicated verbally to her peers. Preece (2002) advocated using photographs as prompts for autistic children to talk around because the visual cue and joint focus acts to reduce anxiety. It was my experience that by providing clear instructions about what the students had to write about that I received more information compared to when I attempted to talk to students. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that in this instance the method's appropriateness was increased by reducing anxiety through making sure the task was highly structured, and relied more heavily upon the practical skill of writing rather than talking.

The method's appropriateness resides in its ability to capture the immediate circumstances and as a result it can help compensate for several challenges experienced. Most notably, the students had problems in recalling information about past events because of their poor autobiographical memory. The photography method helped overcome these problems by allowing students to visually capture events as they happened; for example, Liam took photographs of his evening with his brother, which was an event he did not recall when he returned to school (5.1.2). Secondly, Beresford et al (2007) reported that autistic children found talking about home matters at school difficult and to a degree this was also my experience. However, part of the photography's appropriateness resides in its ability to cross contexts and bridge the home-school divide. It was primarily through this method that relationships and experiences which occurred away from Ladybarn were able to be discussed in school. Furthermore, because of the clear structure and the minimal writing which was asked of the students, they required less support and had more independence than was achieved in the essay task. In some respects taking the methods as they stand, without altering them in accordance to what has been learnt, I conclude the photography task is more appropriate than the essay.

Finally, the ethical issue of being 'pushy' arose in this task too as Liam experienced difficulties when participating. Liam felt anxious and struggled to talk about issues of home when at school, and although Liam took many photographs of home he appeared to never feel wholly comfortable in talking about them in school (4.1.2). I reiterate my point from above, the lesson learnt here is that it is about providing opportunities to the participants and it is also about being supportive which encourages an inclusive approach to research.

7.1.6. Patchwork

This was the most abstract and creative method used in the research and it became a useful means of expressing what factors caused feelings of happiness. However, the method was less useful in aiding understanding of the

significance of the items portrayed on the patch. Although the patch portrayed the items which made students happy, further justification as to why the items caused such emotion was difficult to elicit. It was my experience that this was primarily because the method relied upon verbal interpretation of the patch which caused students to feel anxious. Although in some cases the joint focus did decrease anxiety (as also found by Beresford et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2009) many of the answers were short replies which offered no additional information. From the lessons learnt regarding this method I would suggest asking for a written description would promote the method's appropriateness. Furthermore, the method could be made more suitable by changing the structure of the task so that it mirrored that of the photography task. Other means of making the method more suitable would be to ask students to talk to each other about their patch. As the example of Paige (6.1.1) illustrates this can help reduce feelings of anxiety, and thus promote children's participation.

The research also found the patchwork to be useful at revealing matters to do with self and emotions. I suggest that with slight modifications, the appropriateness of the patchwork can be improved because it was a method which many of the students engaged with. The research found the 'hands-on' nature of the task encouraged students to engage with it and to find ways to represent themselves through art. Self is an abstract concept and representing this through an abstract means such as art could be considered challenging. However, the findings illustrate that each student who was given the opportunity to create a patch produced something (figure 6.1), which I feel is justification for encouraging participants to engage with 'non-traditional' methods.

7.1.7 Documentary

This method was the most independent research task and the one which held the highest participatory potential. It was however a method that overall featured less in the writing up of this research. This is not a reflection of the

method's appropriateness for getting at the social worlds of autistic children, but rather, it is a reflection of the difficulties of using video data in the dissemination of research findings. I first address the method's appropriateness before explaining the challenges of using video data and how this might affect the decision to use this method.

The appropriateness of the documentary as a method is encouraged by the participatory potential it has. I have classified it as a research method with medium to high participatory potential, because the method encouraged independent work from the children but some instructions were given to the students; the task should be a documentary conveying their experiences. I propose that the participatory potential of the method could be increased by allowing the children increased control over the research, for example, allowing children to decide the research topic.

The unstructured nature of the task enabled students to control the direction of the method. This allowed the students to use the method to convey issues that were most significant to them. Therefore, the method was found to be useful at revealing the students' 'likes' and 'dislikes' which contributed towards the understanding of the students' emotional 'triggers'. The method was found to be useful in this respect only because the students *chose* to reveal this information. The strength of the method resides in the participatory potential and the control it allowed participants, but this was also to the detriment of the research at times. This is because the documentary was a space which students could elect to talk about issues of their choosing but it was also a space where I was unable to interrupt to ask further questions. I was therefore unable to probe deeper into the explanations regarding why they liked or disliked certain behaviours or people. On the flip side, the control the documentary gave participants could also be said to increase its appropriateness because this led to issues concerning practical skills and ethical issues, which affect the appropriateness of a method, to be reduced. The students engaged with this method as they were able to draw upon the practical skills they possessed and avoid areas which they experienced to be

challenging. The participatory potential of the documentary therefore brought additional benefits which promoted students' engagement with the task and thus increased the method's appropriateness.

That said, although it was an appropriate method to use to explore the experiences of autistic children, the decision to use the method may be affected by the challenges of using video data in disseminating research findings. The data generated from this method was not used as frequently as the data generated by the other student-centred tasks in the reporting of the research findings because of the ethical implications of using video data of children. For reasons of protecting the anonymity of the students I elected not to use the data in its video format. Instead the video was transcribed and the audio transcript used in the reporting of the research findings. The textual format of the data coupled with the method mirroring the data generated by other methods, particularly the patchwork quilt and photography, led me to draw less upon the data from the documentary to illustrate the research findings. The intention here was to create a balance of visual image and text in the reporting of the findings but led to an underrepresentation of the documentary task. This in part was accidental but it is also in part reflective of the difficulty of using video data of children in the dissemination of research findings. The issue of how to use video data in research dissemination and how to protect the anonymity of participants might be a factor which contributes towards whether a method is used in research. It was my experience that these difficulties could be overcome, and should be, as the method was appropriate for 'getting at' the experiences of autistic children.

7.1.8. Method Appropriateness: Conclusions

The research has found that each method was appropriate for different reasons. Most interestingly all six methods were used to explore the same topic, the students' experiences, but each revealed something different. Therefore, it is a matter of each of the methods revealing different aspects of

the students' social world rather than them being right or wrong. Each method contributed towards the understanding of students' experiences which means that when it comes to selecting the most appropriate method I advocate a mixed methods approach to research. Within Bergman's *Advances in Mixed Methods* (2008), the collection of authors each use the terms triangulation and mixed methods with different meanings, and what is meant by these terms can vary considerably. Based on this research, the sort of mixed methods approach that I advocate when researching the social worlds of autistic children, is an approach which uses a variety of methods to offer a multidimensional perspective. As has been demonstrated a mixed methods approach is not required to cross the qualitative-quantitative divide because a mixed methods design can lie within one tradition. What is important for me, and what this research has shown, is different methods bring to the fore different perspectives, they shed light on different issues and therefore each method contributes something different to the research. I conclude that when selecting methods for a mixed methods approach one should try where possible to select methods which capture different perspectives.

Although, I believe that a mixed methods design is beneficial to help understand the social worlds of autistic children, I add several clauses. The first is that the design must include methods which require participation which is meaningful from children themselves in order to capture their perspective. As has been evidenced in this research, autistic children are capable of sharing their experiences and therefore should be given the opportunity to do so. Secondly, where an adult perspective is included as part of the design (and I suggest it is, as this is also valuable), their participation must not carry any more influence than the child's. This is especially so if the participation of children in research is to be meaningful and if they are to be respected as credible informants of issues of childhood (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). I am of the view that the role of the researcher is to bring together the different perspectives on an issue, to find ways that this can be achieved in order to offer a multidimensional perspective on the research topic. Therefore researchers are also charged with the responsibility to be imaginative (Corbett, 1998) and recognise the different ways children can communicate (Pascal and

Bertram, 2009) if they are to promote participation of different informants in research.

In order to achieve the above this might require the researcher to be encouraging ('pushy') and provide opportunities for children to participate. This issue of being 'pushy' arose in some capacity in each of the methods which required participation from the students and this serves to highlight the students' individuality. When I reflect upon the research findings, it is important to remember that while structure and minimising anxiety were common factors across all the methods requiring participation from the students, some methods were more appropriate than others when considered on an individual level. When learning from the lessons of this research, in regard to how to use the methods, it is important to remember that this acts as guidance and not strict rules because an individual's needs should always be considered. I believe it is essential that social research acts according to the social model's principles. Acting according to the social model principles requires research to accommodate the participants' needs in the design of methods in order to ensure people have the opportunities to be included in the research process. This is achieved through innovations, applications or adaptations (Wiles et al., 2011) in methods in order to find more suitable and appropriate ways of accommodating the needs of those deemed 'hard to reach' and who experience exclusion from research.

At the start of this research, I outlined that I was in a sense 'trialling' the methods, but the research has found all the methods' appropriateness was affected by several factors (table 7.1). In terms of methodological developments, research into issues of childhood has in recent times moved from research '*on*' or '*for*' children towards research '*with*' and '*by*' children. Where I position myself here, in light of the research findings, is research '*with*' children. What has been demonstrated through this research is that autistic children are able participants and their contribution to research is invaluable. However, this should not mean that their parents, teachers or significant adults' participation in research should be disregarded, because this was also a valuable contributor to the research findings. Therefore, I would not want to

reject adults' participation by advocating only research '*by*' children as this would mean the loss of other perspectives, including my own. However, and equally, the adults' perspective must be seen as one perspective, a perspective which is no more powerful than the child's and so neither do I advocate research which is solely '*on*' children. What I feel is necessary when the research question seeks to understand children's social worlds or experiences, is a combination of a '*for*' and '*with*' mixed methods approach where several perspectives contribute towards the understanding of an issue. Finally, in order for there to be an effective '*with*' research approach researchers need to build their methodological repertoire, always consider the research sample before selecting methods and ask the question, what can we innovate or how can we adapt or apply a method to capture these different perspectives?

7.1.9. Methodological Recommendations

The problem this research set out to explore was how can we best get at and understand the social worlds and experiences of autistic children? The research has found that, through taking a mixed methods approach, social researchers can 'get at' autistic children's experiences. That is, the research has found that the social worlds of autistic children are best understood through using a multi-perspective approach. I conclude that the complexity of social life, coupled with the complexity of autism, requires a multi-method and multi-perspective approach to research if the social worlds of autistic people are to be understood. Emerging from the lessons learnt as a result of this research, recommendations can be made to offer guidance regarding how to involve autistic children in research. The findings can also act as guidance for how to involve children more generally in research. Therefore, the recommendations made here offer guidance for others who want to work with children in general as well as specifically autistic children. The recommendations for practice are intended for social researchers but they may also be of use to practitioners. Where necessary I distinguish between advice regarding working with children generally and with autistic children specifically. Detailed accounts of the research process have been offered throughout the reporting of this research therefore in the interest of simplicity the recommendations are presented as bullet points.

1. *Trust and honesty:* Trust is paramount to the formation of successful research relationships. It is important that trust is established over time and therefore I suggest researchers remain vigilant to ensure they do not impose themselves or be over zealous when trying to form relationships. Trust is acquired through honesty, both honesty in actions and expectations. It is therefore important that as a researcher you are prepared to answer questions asked of you. Specifically, when working with autistic children it was my experience that when answering questions asked, that you should be clear, concise and direct in your answering. By answering in this way you will help the autistic child to understand the relevant and important points. You should also introduce yourself by clearly explaining who you are and what your expectations are.

2. *Anxiety*: Anxiety will pose the biggest barrier and challenge for researchers to overcome, especially when working with autistic children. Several means of reducing this have been discussed but I propose the chief method of reducing anxiety is through building a trusted rapport with participants. The second method is to adapt your behaviour and the chosen methods to meet individuals' specific needs. It was my experience that asking autistic children to write things down, rather than talk about them, was one method to help reduce anxiety. This method may also be useful when working with children who also suffer anxiety or confidence issues around talking. The principal lesson learnt is to tailor support to the individual's needs if anxiety, or emotions affecting the child's participation, is to be effectively minimised.

3. *Structure:* This is paramount to any research method which will require the child's active participation. Each method selected should be structured so that there is a clear beginning which includes clearly defined task objectives, a clear middle and end. Furthermore, it is important to make known what is expected from the participants before

the method begins. Specifically in relation to working with autistic children it is important to make no additional alterations to these expectations once the method has started, this is because this is likely to cause children anxiety.

Researching at Schools

1. *Gatekeepers:* These are one of the first and most important relationships a researcher needs to build if research with children is to be successful. I recommend establishing good working relationships with gatekeepers but importantly, once access has been gained, I advocate researchers to build relations with other staff in the research site. This is to ensure that you are not solely reliant upon one person to ensure the research demands are met. Through establishing positive relationships bridges can be built and it was my experiences that gatekeepers then become more willing to accommodate research needs.

2. *Pushiness:* School environments can be highly demanding and chaotic environments to research in. The everyday demands can accidentally push aside the demands of the research. It is therefore important that once relationships are built with gatekeepers that a researcher pushes to ensure the research demands are met. I stress however, that it is also important to strike a balance. By this I mean it important that the researcher is also flexible regarding the school's needs alongside ensuring the research needs are met. In my experience this was achieved by being pushy and reminding the gatekeepers of the research to ensure the demands are fulfilled within the agreed time frame.

3. *Extra-time:* Research invariably has a time frame but when working within a school environment it is sensible to factor in extra-time for plans to overrun. It was my experience that due to participants or teachers falling ill some research demands occasionally ran over the allotted time frame. When planning the research process all the factors which impede upon the data collection phase cannot be foreseen, such

as illness, and so it is wise to allow some breathing space for tasks to overrun.

4. *Organised:* By the term organised I refer specifically to the organisational skills required to work with teachers who may deliver the research tasks. It is important to prepare the tasks well in advance so that teachers are clear of the research demands and these can be written into the specific lesson plans. Balancing the needs of the research with the needs of the school curriculum is challenging. Therefore, to ensure 'successful' delivery of the research tasks it is important to review the lesson plans in advance so that alternations can be made if necessary.

7.2. Understanding Autism: Conceptualising Experiences

As discussed in section 7.1 each of the six research methods used revealed something different about the social worlds of the students. The methods highlight both the complexity of social life and the difficulty of researching individuals' experiences. Although no research method can capture every nuance of social life, the methods have been able to engage with aspects of the students' social worlds. The following section draws upon Goffman and the models of disability to provide a discussion into the understandings of the social worlds of autistic children. The discussion considers how useful the approaches are for conceptualising the children's experiences, as well as discusses the contributions this research has made towards theory and the understandings of autism.

7.2.1 Understanding the Social Worlds of Autistic Children

This research set out to explore the social worlds and experiences of autistic children, and this section draws together the research findings. The research

found that their social worlds and experiences had three main characteristics, to be discussed.

Ritualised or Routinised Social World?

Ritual is the conceptual term that refers to the acts 'through which an individual portrays their respect and regard for [another]" (Goffman, 1971: 62). Respect and regard are shown through individuals acting with deference and demeanor. That is, individuals restrain their emotional involvement so to behave according to situational proprieties (demeanor) and take into consideration the thoughts of others so to protect another's image (deference). Acting in this manner demonstrates a commitment to the ritual order. Goffman observed individuals to behave according to ritual, and ritual was observed to be of influence in the students' social worlds.

Understanding ritual in conjunction with the medical model, some aspects of students' behaviours can be considered situational improprieties, and thus labelled as impairments. Both Liam's upset at Mrs Parker's absence (6.2.1) and Ben's upset during the essay task (3.4) are, from the medical model perspective, reflective of impairments in social imagination. They are also examples of individuals unable to control their emotional involvement in order to act with demeanor. Jake's display of affection towards a fictional character (6.1.2) was also an example of inappropriate investment of emotion. That is, Jake's behaviour was a situational impropriety and reflective of an impairment in social interaction. Bringing together the concept of ritual, the triad of impairments and the medical model highlighted that the children had not yet learnt to adhere to, or understand the importance of adhering to, the ritual order and as a consequence their behaviour could be considered socially impaired.

The medical model stance would advocate addressing individual (intrinsic) factors of disability by teaching students ritual in order to 'cure' their impairments. From a social relational model stance however, addressing the environmental (extrinsic) factors alongside the individual (intrinsic) factors would be advocated. This was seen in the instance of Ladybarn, which through its organisation and practices facilitated this. The research found that Ladybarn's practices, many of which were also employed at home, led to a highly structured and routinised environment. Operating according to routines, both school and individual routines, was the primary way of accommodating the students' needs. The highly structured environments the students were in meant that their social worlds were largely controlled by adults, which limited the scope for children's agency. Adult control is a feature of most children's social worlds (Mayall, 2008), but this research found that the practices, which led to adult control, were acts that accommodated students' needs.

The accommodation of students' needs was important to the maintenance of order, and can be viewed as relating to Goffman's concept of deference. Through treating students deferentially (accommodating students' needs), particularly by implementing routine in the environment, students' anxiety was controlled. This in turn enabled students to demonstrate they could act with demeanor.

Treating students deferentially was a matter of addressing extrinsic factors causing disability. On a macro level, this included classroom organisation (4.1.1), the use of schedules (4.1.1) and establishing events as routines such as taxi-time (4.1.3 and 6.2.1). Just as Hochschild (1983) found, these institutionalised practices helped control students' emotions, specifically anxiety, and enabled them to participate in the encounters. On a micro level, the research found people also accorded students deference during interaction through similar means, which also encourages student participation. These practices included; allowing non-verbal means of communication (Paige 6.1.1 and Elliot 5.1.1); allowing students to go for time-out (Liam 4.1.2) and waiting for students to initiate interaction (Lydia 6.2.1). These practices enabled

students to demonstrate they could "treat self with ritual care" (Goffman, 1967: 91); that is, restrain their emotional involvement and act with demeanor during interaction. The evidence of this is when students were considered a "*sociable bunch*" (4.2.1) who were observed to interact with others for support (4.2.1), for play (5.2.1) and to share intimate knowledge (5.2.1). The research found the accommodation of students' needs helped to address, and overcome, the extrinsic causes of disability. The research also found that through treating students deferentially this also helped address intrinsic factors. That is, the research found that in highly structured and routinised environments the students could demonstrate agency and their ability to act as "well demeaned individuals" (Goffman, 1967: 37). Elliot who self-imposed timeout (4.1.2) and Josh who self-imposed the use of a schedule (4.1.1) are examples of this. Just as Giddens (1991) observed structure was important for all individuals' sense of security, this research found that within the security of the structured environment the students were able to self-impose practices to "sustain a viable image of self" (Goffman, 1967: 97).

The research found that whilst the students' social worlds at Ladybarn were highly routinised, there was a moral code of shared norms that underpinned the orderliness in the community (4.1.4). Ladybarn was committed to teaching students how to behave according to ritual, in order to prepare them for life outside of Ladybarn, in environments that might not be so willing to accommodate students' needs. Therefore, students were required to learn how to distinguish 'appropriate' behaviour from 'inappropriate' behaviour and to adhere to shared norms. Students were taught to observe rituals by being encouraged or discouraged to behave according to situational proprieties or improprieties respectively through the reward and reprimand scheme (4.1.1). These schemes have been found to be common ways to implicitly encourage 'appropriate behaviour' (Osler, 2000). This research has found that learning to observe rituals was also an explicit process which occurred formally in the lessons Learning for Life (4.1.1) and Social Skills (4.1.2). The findings indicate that learning ritual was a process which was on going. Rituals, in particular understanding the ritual order, posed students considerable challenges, since they were unable to manage their emotions without external support; such

support includes the practices discussed above. Furthermore, the students' sense of right and wrong led them to find understanding the importance of observing rituals difficult. This was especially so in regard to understanding why it was important to observe rituals over ensuring justice was served. The research found students preferred to ensure breaches of social conduct were punished, rather than overlook them in favour of preserving the ritual order (6.2.2). In preferring to serve justice, rather than preserve the ritual order, students' behaviour was more impulsive than Goffman recognised of "well demeaned individuals" (Goffman, 1967: 37). The research found that there was a mixed commitment to the ritual order and a variance of degrees in understanding the underlining rationale for observing rituals. Rituals are concerned with sustaining order and particularly a commitment to sustaining order on a macro level. This is what most of the students struggled to understand; they struggled to understand the need to behave for a 'greater good'. Therefore, while on occasion students demonstrated they could abide by the ritual order, the underlying rationale was not necessarily understood. Whereas rituals caused students confusion, the research found routines not only enabled participation but also that routine and ritual operated in a close relationship.

Learning ritual requires an individual to understand why they should behave in a certain way, and learn the meanings behind behaviour. The rules of ritual are ambiguous as they are dependent upon situational proprieties (Goffman, 1967), and act only as guidelines for behaviour. Learning ritual was a challenging process for the students as they found dealing with abstract concepts difficult (3.3.6). In order for autistic people to learn ritual, the ambiguity needs to be alleviated by making ritual an explicit process. By this I mean the unwritten social rules need to become written rules and the situational proprieties made obvious. When the ambiguity is removed ritual order becomes easier to understand and the children demonstrate some understanding of how to behave (Harry 6.1.2). The research found students' learning was more successful if it was concrete and grounded (6.2.2). I propose, therefore, that learning to follow a routine has to come before the learning of ritual. This is because routines have clearly defined steps which outline how one should

behave and when. The concrete nature of routines means that the ambiguity that learning ritual brings is removed. Furthermore, ritual requires knowing that another holds expectations regarding your behaviour, whereas routine is chiefly concerned with the individual in question; the individual performing the routine. I conclude that routine is solely concerned with the rule of self-management (what Goffman terms self-respect, maintaining own image) whereas ritual is concerned with the rule of self-management *and* with the rule of considerateness (maintaining another's image). The findings demonstrate that learning to observe rituals is a process and I suggest it requires learning the rule of self-management (routine) before progressing to learn the rule of considerateness (ritual); and thus committing oneself to the 'wider' good. I conclude that students were in an on-going process of learning to observe and understand rituals, and this was best achieved in a routinised environment. This raises questions regarding how this affected order in the environment.

Ordered or Disordered Social World?

Order, according to Goffman, is maintained through adherence to the ritual order. The research found students to be in an on-going process of learning how to behave according to ritual. Considering this alongside understanding autism in terms of the triad of impairments one might expect high levels of disorder in the students' social worlds. The research found, however, the students' social worlds to be orderly. Order was observed to occur in those environments which accommodate students' needs; those environments which address the extrinsic causes of disability. Three ways of maintaining order were found.

Order was primarily achieved when environments were created that accommodated students' needs and were structured according to the social relational model's principles. The research found that according students deference enabled their participation. Methods of according deference (accommodating students' needs) helped to minimise students' anxieties and

thus also encouraged them to be able to control their emotional involvement in interactions. Such methods included the use of schedules (4.1.1), time-out spaces (4.1.2) and permitting alternative means of communication (6.1.1). These methods also meant that a highly routinised and ordered environment was created, which might be assumed to limit students' agency. However, within such an environment students had some room to demonstrate their agency and ability to contribute towards order.

Order was also in part achieved due to the agency of the students. Firstly, students were found to have a strong sense of right and wrong, and a strong commitment to serving justice in instances of social misconduct (Jake, 6.2.2). Hope (2007) observed children could self-police their behaviour and this research also found that, in structured environments, students were able to self-police their behaviour through self-issuing timeout (4.1.2) and self-imposing schedules (4.1.1). It was also found that once situational proprieties were distinguished from situational improprieties, students demonstrated they were aware of the expectations regarding behaviour, and they could enforce these rules/ expectations (Liam, 6.2.2). The agency of the students therefore, in part, contributed towards the maintenance of order in the environment. However, although there was scope for students agency this was limited and dependent upon environmental factors as outlined above.

The final observed factor contributing towards order was the presence of a consensus. Order was found to arise in instances where a consensus existed; two examples of this were observed. Firstly, students operated according to routines which although concerned with the rule of self-management, rather than the rule of considerateness, order prevailed as a consensus existed. That is, because all students were operating in the same manner in the main order was achieved because each individual acted to manage their own image and anxiety, which if left unmanaged risked creating disorder. The second relates to Goffman's observations that face should be put before justice if order is to be sustained (known as pragmatic morality). The question arises that if justice is put before face, if a principle-based morality is put before pragmatic

morality, how was it that order was maintained (6.2.3)? Order was achieved because students subscribed to a principle-based morality, and thus the consensus regarding behaviour ensured order was maintained. The research found that disorder arises in the absence of a consensus and when there is a deviation from what is considered to be 'acceptable', 'normal' behaviour. But what is 'normal'?

'Normal' or 'Abnormal' Social World?

Goffman defines 'normal' to be those individuals who "do not depart negatively from particular expectations" (Goffman, 1963: 5). Therefore the terms normal and abnormal arise in the presence of shared norms and expectations regarding behaviour. This understanding relates to the medical model of disability since the perspective argues that an individual's impairment causes their disablement and requires treatment. Typically treatment refers to medical intervention but autism is a social condition and, with no known cause, is primarily treated through social interventions. That is, the individuals learn how to behave in socially desirable ways (according to Goffman's observed rules). This research indicates that this model and typology impacts upon the experiences of autistic children and this is seen first and foremost in their diagnosis of autism. The diagnosis is made against the shared norms and expectations and therefore the diagnosis highlights the children's deviation from the norm. From a medical model standpoint, the children's behaviours fail to align with social norms and therefore they are considered 'abnormal' and 'impaired'. Such undesirable behaviours include, kissing a fictional character (Jake, 6.1.2), not talking directly to adults (Paige, 6.1.1) and a fixation with cartoons (Owen, 5.2.2). In framing the undesirable behaviours according to the triad of impairments, these behaviours are understood as difficulties in social interaction (Jake), social communication (Paige) and social imagination (Owen). The research found these behaviours were being 'normalised' (in that students were being taught ritual) through the school curriculum (4.1.1 and 4.1.2).

The research also found that the students' community install practices which served to encourage student participation. This was not achieved through 'curing' students, but was achieved through according students deference and accommodating their needs. According students deference has resonance with the social relational model since the practices of according deference account for students' needs and thus enables their participation in the community. The observations of the students' community are different to Goffman's observations reported in *Asylums* (1961). Goffman observed staff to reinforce difference and inmates to achieve self in the 'cracks' of the total institution. This research found the communities' practices (chapter 4) serve as positive encouragement for students to develop a sense of (socialized) self (chapter 6). The research therefore indicates that operating according to the social relational model's principles supports students' personal development. Ladybarn's inclusive nature enables students to actively participate in the community and helps sustain order, albeit a different type of order to that observed by Goffman. Therefore, I question what is normal?

The term normal is socially constructed, and relies upon the collective willingness of individuals to follow the rules that define 'normal' behaviour (Goffman, 1967). The students' social worlds are ordered because people have a shared moral code (4.1.4), which defines normality. According to Goffman the importance of operating 'normally' (behaving according to situational proprieties) is because it creates predictability which gives rise to ontological security (Giddens, 1991). Routines were found to be important in providing students with ontological security. Security was achieved through adhering to routines and this could be seen when routine was broken. When behaviour operated outside of the boundaries of 'typical' behaviour normality was disrupted and security was lost (Mr Ward, 5.2.1.). For the students, security was closely related to their sense of normality and wellbeing, which was why the adults in the community worked to maintain both (Mrs Parker's absence, 4.2.1.). Routines were found to be key contributors to the students' wellbeing. That is, routines promoted ontological security, and the sense of 'everything is as it should be', which produced normal appearances.

I conclude that whilst the children were found to behave differently to Goffman's observations of adults, we are reminded that normal is a relative term. The research found that the creation of normal appearances is dependent upon how disability is framed. From the research I suggest 'normal appearances' are created in communities which operate according to the principles of the social relational model.

Understanding the Social Worlds of Autistic Children: Closing Remarks

Through drawing upon Goffman's ritual metaphor, and considering this alongside the disability literature, the research has found the students' social worlds to be routinised, ordered and 'normal'. The research set out to explore the social worlds of autistic children. However, many of the observed features of the students' social worlds have been reported by others to be also features of (non-autistic) children's social worlds. For example, children are regulated by adults (Mayall, 2006) though surveillance (Richards, 2012) and disciplinary measure (Osler, 2000). Furthermore, many of the behaviours and experiences of the children in question have parallels with non-autistic children's behaviours and experiences. For example, the children's relationships with siblings (Edwards et al., 2006) and pets (Tipper, 2011), and the difficulty children had in identifying feelings (Collins, 1990). Although some of the features of the children's' social worlds do have parallels with those of non-autistic children, this research has first and foremost contributed to the understanding of the social worlds of autistic children. The understanding here highlights the importance of appreciating the influence of other's conceptions and behaviours on autistic children's experiences. In particular, understanding the enabling or disabling effects the environment can have and specifically the importance of a structured environment on the social and emotional welfare of autistic children.

What I offer now is my conclusions specifically regarding autism and the theoretical approach taken.

7.2.2 Understanding Autism: Conclusion and Contributions

The above discussion has brought together the theoretical perspectives drawn upon throughout this research to provide an understanding of the children's social worlds. The following section outlines the conclusions and contributions of this research. Several questions and issues have arisen which are used to structure the discussion.

The Socialization Process

In finding that students were in an on-going process of learning the ritual order, this has resonance with the process of socialization. Ladybarn was found to be teaching students to distinguish 'appropriate' from 'inappropriate' behaviour. As a socialization agent, schools have been typically observed to socialize students subtly through what has been termed the hidden curriculum (Handel, 2006). That is, schools socialize students into normative patterns of behaviour (Parsons, 1964) through establishing "boundaries of acceptable behaviour embedded in the fabric of school routines" (Handel, 2006: 160). School routines, rules and practices encourage students to behave 'appropriately' and thus are preparing students for life 'in the real world'. Preparing students includes teaching them to observe rituals and adhere to the ritual order. The research found learning to understand and behave according to the ritual order posed these students challenges. The process of socialization (learning ritual) is in part to promote order, structure and 'normal appearances'. I am led to suggest that because order in students' social worlds was achieved through adherence to routines, socializing autistic children into ritual may be difficult to achieve.

This encourages me to question how far it is appropriate for students to learn the ritual order if their communities operate according to routines? The research illustrated that following routines were the foundations of order, structure and normality in the community. Therefore, I suggest that it might be unnecessary for the students to be socialized into the ritual order, particularly when their communities do not enforce adherence to such order. Finally, in these instances some might argue that the students are being socialized into a protective environment that does not reflect the 'real world'. For Ladybarn, socializing the students was a matter of explicitly teaching 'appropriate' from 'inappropriate' behaviours with less focus and concern on understanding the underlying rationale for behaving in such ways, that is, understanding why one should observe rituals. From this research I propose that socialization at Ladybarn may be a more explicit process than the 'hidden curriculum', and that students were being socialized to develop a positive sense of (socialized) self in environments which are supportive (that operate according to social relational model's principles).

Stereotypes of Autism

In this section I consider how far the stereotypes, that is, understanding autism in terms of the triad of impairments, are useful for framing autism.

The findings of this research suggest that conceiving autism in terms of the triad of impairments can have benefits to autistic children, if considered from the social relational model of disability perspective. The triad of impairments offer a framework for supporting autistic people's needs. For example by understanding that a difficulty in social imagination encourages the individual to prefer to operate according to a routine one can ensure this is implemented. Thus framing autism in these terms provides knowledge regarding how to accommodate autistic people's needs and thus encourage their participation. Therefore, I suggest that framing autism in these terms holds the potential to

influence positively the experiences of autistic children. The harm of such a framework may come when employed from a medical model perspective.

Employing the triad of impairments from a medical model can position autistic children as vulnerable. The medical model perceives individuals with impairments as being in need, which can lead to increased control and regulation. In the context of Ladybarn, the research found the children were subject to high levels of surveillance. In addition, conceptualising autism in these terms can also lead to a reduction in opportunities. That is, others make a judgement on the autistic child's ability based on the triad of impairments, which can lead to an assumption that they are unable to fulfil roles or tasks. The framework, from a medical model perspective, also places responsibility on the individual to 'normalise' their impairment. Therefore, conceiving autism in terms of the triad of impairments can hold the potential to impact negatively on individuals' experiences.

I recognise that stereotypes of autism can hold potential to be of benefit and of detriment for autistic people, and that this is largely dependent upon how the stereotypes are employed. This research illustrates how operating according to the principles of the social relational model can encourage the participation of autistic people. The usefulness of drawing upon disability theory to understand autism emerges through the above discussion, but principally the work of Goffman was used throughout the research. I now explore the usefulness of Goffman for understanding autistic children's social worlds.

Goffman's Legacy

In this section I address the usefulness of Goffman's concepts for this research, I explain how the theory fed into the research and in turn how the research feeds back into theory. It is important to note that it was never a matter of

Goffman's perspective being right or wrong, but it was, as it was for the methods, about appropriateness. My concern was how more or less useful Goffman's concepts were in helping to explain the children's experiences. The above discussion has demonstrated how Goffman's ritual metaphor was useful and did provide a means to understand the data but some of his concepts had to be re-worked. This was a matter of making Goffman's concepts more useful. What I believe this demonstrates is the legacy of Goffman's theory as well as providing an illustration of the process of theory development.

Just as advancements in methodology have been distinguished to be innovation, adaptation or applications (Wiles et al., 2011), it is possible that advancements in theory might occur in the same manner. Oakley observed that "knowledge is pushed forward a little at a time- inch by inch, not (usually) by quantum leaps" (1993: 305). Goffman did not write in a theoretical vacuum, he drew influence from theoretical perspectives established before his time. The technique of creating and positioning one's argument in relation to another has been observed to be a common way of developing one's own perspective (Crow, 2005). Goffman drew, built and took influence from others and his work is considered to be "sympathetic" of Blumer (Smith, 2006: 31) and Durkheim's work was recognised to be a "major and lasting influence" (Smith, 2006: 15) on Goffman. I do not dispute the uniqueness of Goffman's work, rather I am establishing that social theory, perspectives and concepts emerge with influence and as developments on earlier work.

Goffman built his argument on what had come before him, and what he left was his own legacy for others to build their argument from his (Trevino, 2003). Goffman's concepts have influenced many, and as such his concepts and metaphors have been developed beyond his original writings. To provide just two illustrations, I take examples of individuals whose work I drew upon in the research. Firstly, Hochschild was influenced by Goffman in her work. In *The Managed Heart* (1983) Hochschild developed arguments around the emotional side of humans, which was something Goffman developed only as far as embarrassment (Scheff, 2003). Hochschild made known her influences when she acknowledged that her work led her to "the work of Erving Goffman, to

whom [she is] indebted" (1983: ix). Secondly, Giddens claims Goffman "should be ranked as a major social theorist" (Giddens, 1987: 109) because "Goffman so brilliantly analysed" social life (Giddens, 1991: 46). Commentators on Goffman also hypothesise that "had he lived Goffman would have aligned himself with…Anthony Giddens" (Lemert, 2003: xvii).

Why am I providing a historical account of Goffman and his work? It is to demonstrate that social theory develops through a process of building upon what has gone before, either in support or in criticism. I have been influenced by Goffman and have used his concepts to help understand the social worlds of autistic children. I conclude that although Goffman's concepts needed revising in places, so that they fit more appropriately to the lives of autistic children, his concepts were useful. The concepts helped me develop my knowledge, understanding and argument, and they acted as a theoretical toolbox from which I was able to borrow. I, however, did not merely borrow and return, to carry on the metaphor, but adapted these tools. I used his concepts and applied and adapted the conceptual tools to be used with a new group of individuals, autistic children. Goffman observed everyday lives of non-autistic adults and because of this there is a gap in his work as a whole social group, that of children are rarely spoken of. What this research has achieved is to take some of Goffman's concepts and demonstrate how they can be applied to autistic children. By this I suggest the research has added to Goffman's conceptual toolbox, and demonstrated how developments in social theory are more likely to be a process of adaptation and application. I end by referring back to Goffman and defending my claim that this research took a Goffmanian approach. I conclude this in the knowledge that in Goffman's view "social traditions were there to be creatively developed, applied and modified, not slavishly followed" (Smith, 2006: 32) which is what this research has achieved.

A theory to suit all

This research has found that understanding autism is best achieved through a combination of a Goffmanian approach and the social relational model of disability. It is by bringing these perspectives together to understand a social phenomenon that I see the relationship between theory and research residing. By 'filling' this gap the research is able to feed back into theory by demonstrating how many of Goffman's observations are different, rather than non-existent, in the experiences of autistic children.

A Goffmanian perspective was able to explain how society 'typically' functions through explaining how society is structured and order is maintained. Goffman's work was used to 'set the scene' and therefore was useful in helping to define one half of the typology normal / abnormal. The approach helped offer an explanation as to why it is that individuals with a social condition like autism come to be labelled impaired and experience exclusion and disability. Goffman's work was less useful in explaining the students' experiences occurring at school, and thus the social relational model helped fill this gap. The social relational model was used as a perspective from which to employ the work of Goffman and this model has been useful in accounting for autistic children's experiences occurring at school. I propose that through bringing together Goffman and the models of disability, the students' experience in different environments might be better explained. This may include environments which do not accommodate the students' needs (environments operating according to Goffman's observations), for example wider society, and those environments which do adapt, for example Ladybarn. In highlighting the distinction between environments which adapt and those which do not, based on this research, I argue that the medical model is likely to continue to operate in society, in other words, that for the most part wider society will not accommodate the needs of autistic people. I suggest, also, that autistic children may feel pressurised to learn ritual, that is, to adapt to 'society's'

ways. While Goffman pays little attention to discussing how individuals become socialized, it is through combining Goffman and the models of disability that I have been able to explore the processes of socialization. Furthermore, through combining Goffman and the models of disability, it may be possible to explain why it is that the students might be required to learn these skills as well as question if students *should* learn these skills.

The implication these findings have for social research is that they demonstrate that multiple perspectives might be needed to explain social life. Social theory offers conceptual tools to explain social life, and I propose that the complexity of social life might not be adequately explained by one theoretical perspective. Furthermore, the added complexity of a condition like ASC might further complicate social life and add additional dimensions for social theory to explain. This research has found that in order to understand autism, theoretical perspectives should be taken as complementary not contradictory standpoints. I therefore recommend that if researchers are to make adequate use of theory to help them explain social life, then this is likely to be achieved through employing multiple theoretical concepts and devices. This is more than a 'pick and mix' approach, it is a matter of identifying how theoretical positions can be more or less appropriate and finding complementary positions to fill the void.

7.3. Future Research

The research has contributed towards knowledge concerning how to include autistic children in social research by offering suggestions regarding how this is best achieved. The research has also demonstrated the importance of recognising the individual nature of autistic children and all research participants. If social research is to include autistic children, then it is important research accommodates an individual's needs, this can be achieved through being flexible. This research has contributed towards the wider issue and debate regarding research '*on*', '*for*', '*with*' and '*by*' children by illustrating

the feasibility of including autistic children in research. The research has made contributions by offering guidance for others who wish to research in a similar field and/or with autistic children. I hope also that the research acts as encouragement for others by illustrating that sensitive research can be carried out successfully. The ethics associated with such research could dissuade researchers from carrying out sensitive research with 'difficult' groups but this research is evidence that ethics can be negotiated successfully during the research process.

In terms of the implications for future research I propose two areas of investigation. The first is born out of a commitment to building social researchers' methodological repertoire and promoting the participation of 'difficult' groups. In order to fully explore how far the recommendations of this research extend to other autistic children, research that utilises the same set of methods, particularly with younger autistic children, is needed. I also propose exploring the appropriateness of other methods in order to continue to build researchers' methodological repertoire. The second is born out of a commitment to further understanding the experiences of autistic children. In following on from the above discussion I recognised that research should focus on understanding students' experiences occurring outside of a school context. I proposed that the medical model continues to operate in society which is likely to contribute towards students' exclusion and disability. Future research should be committed to understanding students' experiences outside of school and in different contexts. This is in order to understand how the ways that children are perceived affects their experiences and wellbeing. The two principles for future research should be to develop the research methods toolbox so that autistic children and other 'difficult' groups can be included in social research. Future research should also be committed to investigating and understanding the experiences of autistic children in other contexts, in order that policy and practice recommendations can be made appropriate and context specific.

Appendix 1: Pen Portraits

Students

Form	Parent	Name	Gender	Age	Year	Siblings	Memorable moment
1MP	Alexandra White	Abby White	F	12	7	Ben White	Special attachment to Babs the (toy) hamster.
		Paige West	F	12	7	yes	Does not to talk to adults.
	Mia Phillips	Owen Webster	M	12	7	yes	Special attachment to Petey the Piranha.
	Deborah Mason	Elliot Mason	M	12	7	yes	'Lookout' on the school bus.
		Joshua (Josh) Collins	M	12	7	yes	Friends with Paige and became upset by their fallout.
		Harry Patterson	M	12	7	yes	Has a 'chill out' room at home.
	Sally and Leo Ball	Liam Ball	M	13	8	yes	Especially reliant upon Mrs Parker
		Jake Knox	M	13	8	yes	Fan of the TV programme Eastenders.
		Lydia Gunn	F	14	9	yes	Changed forms from 2VM to 1MP part way through the year.
2MP	Alexandra White	Ben White	M	14	9	Abby White	Became upset during the essay task.
		Joseph (Joe) Knight	M	15	10	yes	Friends with Super Jones and likes wrestling.

Teachers

Name	Title	Subject	Task
Ms Hamilton	Head Teacher		
Mr Marshall	Deputy Head	Maths	
Mrs Parker	Assistant Head	Head of ASC + form tutor of form 1MP	Essay
Mrs Burton	Senior Leadership Team	Science	
Mr Stevens	Senior Leadership Team	English + Media	Photography
Miss Morrison (1)	UQ[4] Teacher	Form tutor of form 2VM	Essay
Mr Douglas	Teacher	Art and form tutor of form 3ED	Patchwork
Mr Ward	UQ Teacher	Drama	Documentary
Miss Young	HLTA[5]	Form 1MP	
Miss Morrison (2)	LSA[6]	Form 1MP	
Mrs Andrews	LSA	Form 1MP	
Mrs McIntosh	LSA	Form 2VM	
Mrs Fletcher	LSA	Form 2VM	
Miss Miller	LSA	Form 2VM	
Mrs James	Medical Officer		
Mrs Jackson	Cover Supervisor		Patchwork

[4] Unqualified Teacher
[5] Higher Level Teaching Assistant
[6] Learning Support Assistant

Chapter 4: Community

Figure 4:1 ASC Classroom (Form 1MP)

This is the typical organisation for classrooms in the ASC unit. In the foreground of the picture the tables arranged in a u-shape are known as the 'teaching tables', which is where the students sit at the beginning of the lessons. In the background of the picture the individual desks, surrounded by book shelves, are the students' individual desk areas.

Figure 4:2 Daily Schedules
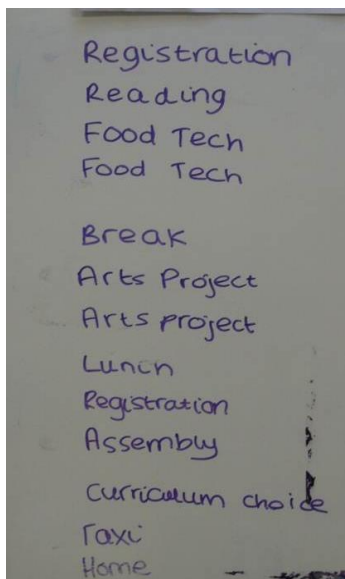
White Board   **Students Desk**
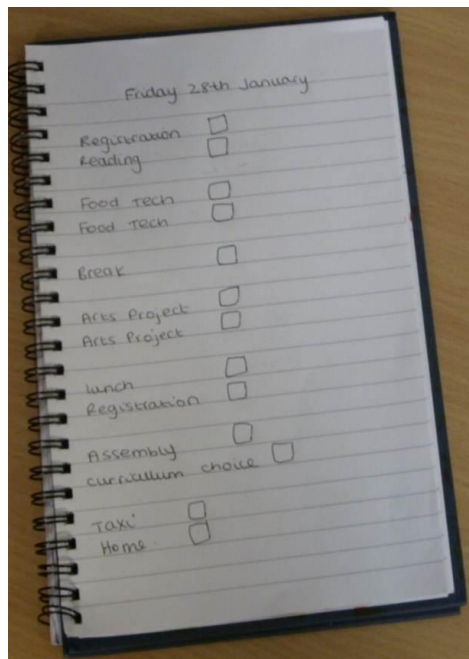
Registration
Reading
Food Tech
Food Tech

Break
Arts Project
Arts Project

Lunch
Registration
Assembly
Curriculum
Choice

Taxi
Home

Figure 4:3 Jake's Area and Eastenders Puzzle

Jake's desk area is sectioned off using 3 book shelves. On the side of his 'back' bookshelf is an Eastenders poster which has been made into a six pieces jigsaw puzzle.

Figure 4:4 Harry Patterson, Photography

Chill out room

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album
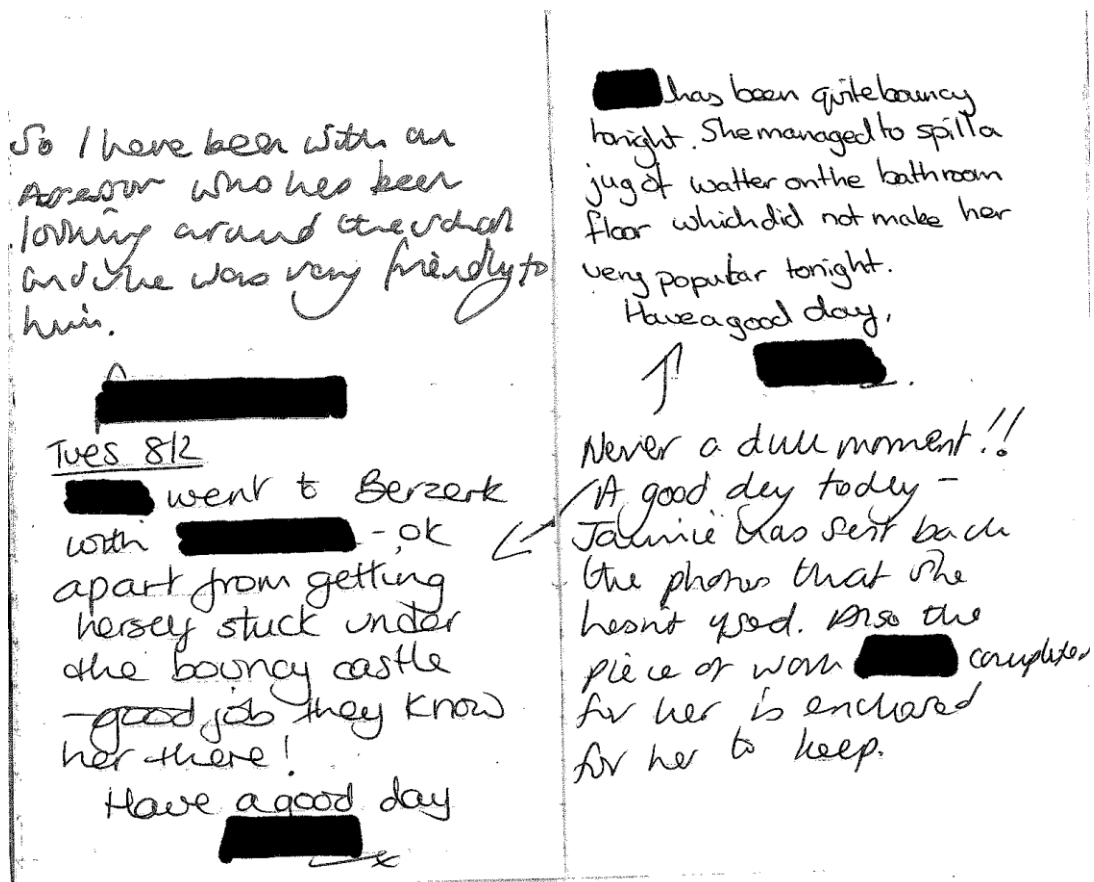
1. I go into it if I'm angry
2. I like the look of it
3. I sit down in it

Figure 4:5 The Quad

This is the enclosed playground which is only to be use by the students of the ASC unit.

Figure 4:6 Abby White's Home-School Communication Book

So I have been with an assessor who had been looking around the school and she was very friendly to him.

[Mrs Parker].

Tues 8/2

[Abby] went to Berzerk with [name] – OK apart from getting herself stuck under the bouncy castle- good job they know her there!

Have a good day

[Alexandra] x

[Abby] has been quite bouncy tonight. She managed to spill a jug of water on the bathroom floor which did not make her very popular tonight.

Have a good day

[Paul]

Never a dull moment!! A good day today- Jaimie has sent back the photos that she hasn't used. Also the piece of work [Abby] completed for her is enclosed for her to keep.

Figure 4:7 Lydia Gunn, Patchwork

Lydia's patch has an eye drawn in the centre of the patch with a collection of eyes around it. She explained this was because '*people watch me all of the time*'.

Figure 4:8 Ben White, Photography

Mrs McIntosh is happy

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She helps me with maths
2. She helps me with english
3. And very helpful

Figure 4:9 Jake Knox, Photography

Mrs Andrews_____

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She's lovely
2. She is my best helper
3. I can see Harry

Mrs Andrews

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture n my album

1. She's lovely
2. She is my best helper
3. I can see Harry

Figure 4:10 Liam Ball, Photography

Mrs Parker_____

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. She is sunng and makes me lagn
2. She is Always there sonme
3. I like Having her ovnd

Mrs Parker

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this in my album.

1. She is funny and makes me laugh
2. She is always there for me
3. I like having her around

Figure 5:1 Ben White, Photography

Alex is marvelous

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

- She cooks
- She takes care of me
- And very helpful

Figure 5:2 Jake Knox, Photography

My Mum

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I love mummy she is the best
2. Mummy cooks me macaroni cheese
3. Mummy looks funny in this picture

Figure 5:3 Ben White, Essay

When I leave school I would like to go to college to do measuring and computers. I would like to get a job some important putting out fires. I'm not sure if I am going to learn to drive yet. When I am 19 I want to go out with my friends and help mum at home. I do not want to live in my own house I want to say with my mum.

Maybe when I get older will get married and have a few children. I will still live with mum and hep her. When I retire.

Figure 5:4 Lydia Gunn, Essay

Our life

When I leave school I want to stay at home with my mum.

When I leave school I want to stay at home with my mum. I want to go out with my friends and party. My mum will give me money and buy me a house next door when I'm 20 years old.

I don't want to get married or have children ever when I am old I just want to live my life next to my mum and I'm going to knock the walls through. I would like to go round the world looking at different countries.

When I am older I'm not going to look old or have wrinkles. I am still going to live next door to my mum and I will live with my 8 dogs. I will drive a Ferrari that is red. I will go on lots of holidays with my mum and buy a house to rent out.

When I get bored of being at home I might get a job as a vet or footballer.

Figure 5:5 Harry Patterson, Photography
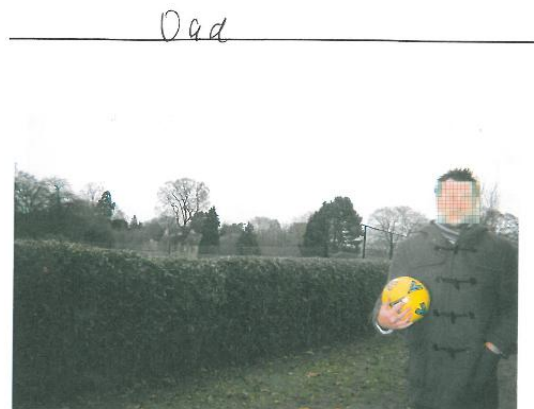
Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. I like him because he plays with me
2. I like him because he plays football
3. I like him because he is nice

Figure 5:6 Abby White, Photography

My Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He's happy.
2. I love my Dad
3. His is fun

Figure 5:7 Ben White, Photography

Paul ___ is good

Paul is good

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He is good at modules [models]
2. He goes to work
3. And helps a lot

Figure 5:8 Elliot Mason, Photography

my Dad

Dad

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

- He is my Dad
- He sometimes is besy [busy]
- I like him

Figure 5:9 Abby White, Photography

My Ben

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. he's MY Brother.
2. Sun togther.
3. he is Speciat to me.

My Ben

Here are the reasons I
wanted to put this picture in
my album

1. He's my brother
2. Fun together.
3. He is speciat [special]
   to me

Figure 5:10 Liam Ball, Photography

Luke

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. my brushur becose look up to him
2.
3.

Luke

Here are the reasons I
wanted to put this picture in
my album

1. My bruthur becoses
   [brother because]
   look up to him

292

Figure 5:11 Ben White, Photography

Abby is my sister

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. She is sometimes funny
2. She is small
3. And very helpful

Figure 5:12 Josh Collins, Photography

My Family

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. Becours fum tims thay are my cher and joy [Because fun times they are my cheer and joy]
2. Best frends [friends]
3. And funy [funny]

Figure 5:13 Jake Knox, Photography

My Sister Lucy

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. We sometimes fight
2. Lucy plays with me
3. Lucy looks after me

Figure 5:14 Joseph Knight, Photography

Super Jones

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. He is good a football
2. He likes wrestling
3. He is cool

Figure 5:15 Ben White, Photography

tough Timothy Hinde

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. he is good at talking
2. We talk about Disney films.
3. and helpful.

Tough Timothy Hinde

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture into my album

1. He is good at talking
2. We talk about Disney films
3. And helpful

Figure 5:16 Elliot Mason, Photography

Kyle

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. Because he was the First Friend in Ladybarn
2. He is kind and some times Helpful
3. He trusts Me

Kyle

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. Because he was the first friend in Ladybarn
2. He is kind and sometimes helpful
3. He trusts me

Figure 5:17 Joe Knight, Photography

Good Dom

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. He helps people
2. He is good at football
3. He is amazing

Figure 5:18 Paige West, Photography

Josh

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. Hes my friend
2. Its a funny picture.

Figure 5:19 Jake Knox, Essay

20 -30

I will live at home and work as a vet.
I want to go on holiday with my
family to Hunstanton. I will also
go out with my friends.

20-30

I will live at home and work as a vet.

I want to go on holiday with my family to Hunstanton. I will
also go out with my friends

Figure 5:20 Abby White, Photography

Babs the hamster

Babs the hamster

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. babs is on the table.

2. I love babs.

3. Shes my sriend.

Here are the reasons I
wanted to put this picture
in my album:

- Babs is on the
  table
- I love babs
- Shes my friend

Figure 5:21 Owen Webster, Patchwork

From left to right:

Pingu, Sponge Bob Square Pants, Petey the Piranha, Gizmo (on Petey's head) and Sonic the Hedge Hog.

Figure 5:22 Owen Webster, Photography
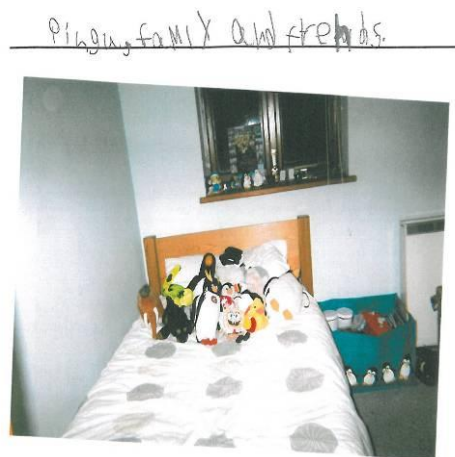
Pingu Family and Friends

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. Pingu and his friends are having fun
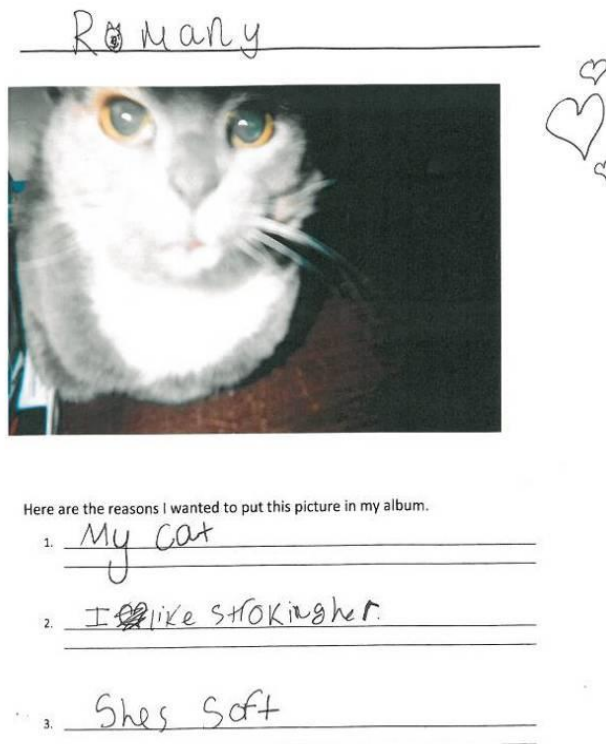
Figure 5:23 Paige West, Photography

Romany

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. My cat
2. I like stroking her
3. Shes soft

Figure 5:24 Jake Knox, Desk

Jake's desk area is sectioned off using 3 book shelves. This is a typical desk arrangement for all the students in the ASC department. Four photographs are pinned to the wall, from left to right: Jake holding an owl, Jake and his dog Bella and Jake and his friend from 2VM. Books and Jake's favourite toys occupy his bookshelves. The papers stuck to the top of the nearest bookshelf is a personalised schedule for Jake's transport home after school and a lunch time personalised scheduled. Jake's desk area faces out onto the 'quad'; the ASC department's playground.

Figure 5:25, Jake Knox, Essay

30-40

I want to get married and buy a car. I also want to buy a dog like Bella.

Chapter 6: Self

Figure 6:1 Patchwork Quilt

Patch's in order of rows:

Row 1: Harry, Jake, Abby

Row 2: Ahmed, Lydia, Elliot

Row 3: Owen, Josh, Liam

Row 4: Tristan, Paige, Dilesh

Figure 6:2 Paige West, Patchwork

Working left to right:

Tree, Paige's cat, Paige smiling, her mum's florist.

Figure 6:3 Abby White, Patchwork

Working left to right:

'Love' hearts, strawberry, dog, Abby's red hair band, Bab's the hamster, Abby smiling, Primrose and Wilfred.

Figure 6:4 Abby White, Photography
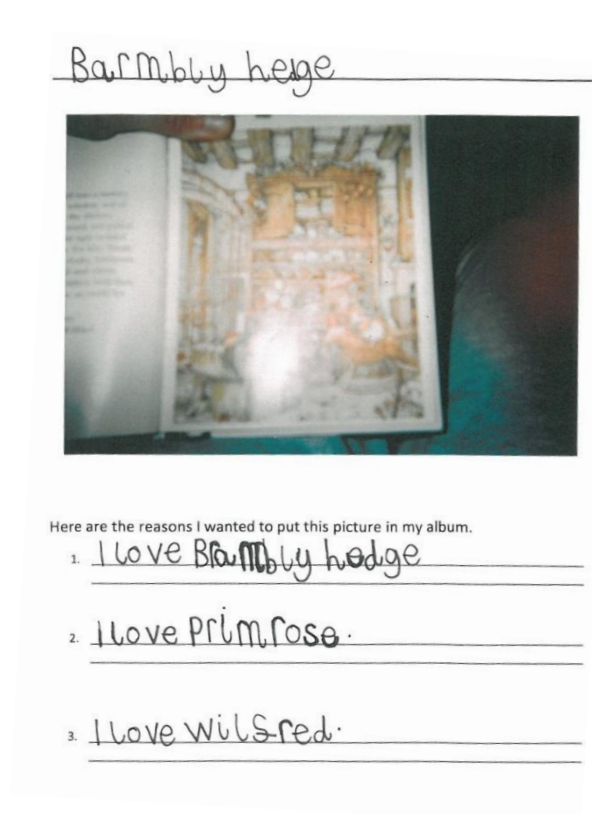
Brambly hedge

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. I love Brambly hedge
2. I love Primrose
3. I love Wilfred

Figure 6:5 Harry Patterson, Patchwork

Working left to right:

Basketball net, Harry smiling, food technology room and 'squiggly' lines because Harry 'likes them'.

Figure 6:6 Harry Patterson, Photography

Food Tech Room

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album

1. I have food tech in it
2. I do cooking
3. And I see Mrs Vaughan

Figure 6:7 Josh Collins, Patchwork

Working left to right:

Bush, Jake with a feathered hat on, a bird table and sparkling balls around because Jake is 'crazy'.

Figure 6:8 Abby White, Photography

the computer.

Here are the reasons I wanted to put this picture in my album.

1. I love going on youtube.
2. I love that timer.
3. I love that mouse.

The computer

Here are the reasons I wanted put this picture in my album

1. I love going on youtube.
2. I love that timer.
3. I love that mouse.

Invitation to presentation evening

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Building 58
Room 2025/10
PGR Student, School of Social Sciences
University Road, Southampton, SO17 1BJ
email: J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk

September 2010

Dear Parents/ Carers

My name is Jaimie Ellis and I am undertaking a research project as part of the fulfilment of a doctorate which is based with the University of Southampton.

The research project's focus is to discover the day-to-day lives and experiences of young people living with Autism Spectrum Condition. It is for this reason that Ms Hamilton and Mrs Parker have agreed for Ladybarn to act as the case under study and have granted me permission to contact you.

I would like to work with your son/daughter to help me understand the day-to-day experiences of young people with ASC. As of now I will be working at Ladybarn and during my time here I will be setting up several opportunities for the students to communicate their experiences. This will be achieved by designing different tasks for the students to carry out as part of their everyday lessons.

I am writing to invite you to a presentation evening where I would like to deliver a short presentation of my research and to outline how your son/daughter can participate in the project. The details are as follows:

> **Event:** Presentation Evening
> **Date:** Tuesday 14th September 2010
> **Time:** 6.30pm
> **Location:** Ladybarn School Hall

I do appreciate that starting a new school is a stressful and anxious time for both parent and student and I certainly do not wish to add to this stress. I do however, very much hope that you will be able to attend the presentation evening. The event will last no longer than 45minutes and it will be a chance for us to meet, for you to learn about the project and for you to raise any

questions or concerns you may have regarding the study. Furthermore, it will be an opportunity to meet the parents/ carers of other students.

Please can you return the reply slip to Mrs Parker indicating your intention asap. I hope that you will be able to attend the evening and look forward to meeting you on the 14th September.

Yours Sincerely

Ms J Ellis

Reply Slip for Presentation evening to be held 14th September 2010

Parent/ Carer of: _____

Student's Class: _____

☐ I will be able to attend the presentation evening

Number of attendees _____

☐ I will not be able to attend the presentation evening but please could you send me more information about the project.

Invitation for Interview

Building 58
Room 2025/10
PhD Student, School of Social Sciences
University Road, Southampton, SO17 1BJ
email: J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk

February 2011

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you are aware I am currently part way through researching day-to-day lives and experiences of young people living with Autism Spectrum Condition as part of fulfilment of a doctorate with the University of Southampton. Over the last 5 months I have worked closely with the students of classes 1MP and 2VM: observing the students, helping them and talking with them so to build a relationship with them and an understanding of their daily experiences. As part of the research classes 1MP and 2VM participated in three different activities. The activities were designed to be an opportunity for the students to express themselves in a variety of ways. A fourth activity is planned for next term but alongside this I would like to seek your views and opinions, both regarding your son's/ daughter's experiences and the research which they have taken part. Therefore, I would like to ask if you would be willing to participate in an informal interview. The interview can take place on a day, time and location suitable to you; this can be either at the school, your home or another venue of your choosing. I would like for the interviews to take place during the month of March (the 4th term of school) and for it to be an opportunity for you to tell me of your experiences and opinions.

If you would like to participate please can you return the form attached, both indicating your preferred time and location.

Many thanks,

Jaimie Ellis (Ms)

----------✂---------------------------------✂-------------------------------------✂-------------

Parent / Carer of: _____

I would <u>not</u> like to participate in an interview ☐

I <u>would</u> like to participate in an interview ☐

Suggested day(s) (in March):

Date	Day

Suggested time:

Morning: [   ]   Afternoon: [   ]   Evening: [   ]

Preferred location:

School: [   ]   Home: [   ]   Other, please specify: _____

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Parent Information Sheet

Title of Study: Young people with autism

Information Sheet: Parents/ Guardians

My name is Jaimie Ellis and I am undertaking this project as part of the fulfilment of a doctorate which is funded and based with the Economic and Social Research Council National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton.

The aim of the project is to discover the best research methods to use with children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) that captures their day-to-day lives and experiences of living with ASC.

The research will take place over the course of 6-8 months commencing September 2010. The first 3-4 months, term one, will be spent working in your son's/daughter's class, building relationships with the class members and establishing myself as a familiar feature of the setting. The second 4 months, will be spent carrying out the following activities.

Activity	Description
Observation	Notes will be taken of the group dynamics within the classroom and used to identify students' academic strengths and weaknesses and to build an understanding of their behaviour, relationships and day-to-day lives.
Written task	Students will be asked to imagine that they are in retirement and to write an account of their lives up to that point.
Visual task	Students will each be given a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of places which are significant to them, this may be in or outside school. They will then compile their photos into an album and asked to add titles and descriptions to each photograph.
Creative task	Students will each be required to design and create a patch for a patchwork quilt which reflects their experiences.
Drama production	Working together the students will write, perform and record a play about what it is like as an autistic teenager.

Your son/ daughter will take part in these activities as part of their normal timetabled lessons. Your consent is needed to audio-record or if preferred for me to take notes of them talking about their work and to use anonymised quotes from the recording/notes in the report of the research. Furthermore, your consent is needed to use examples of your son's/daughter's work in the research report, for example the photographs, excerpts from the essay or still images from the drama production. The information your son/daughter provides will be handled confidentially and every effort will be made to ensure their anonymity.

Your son's/daughter's participation in the study is voluntary and their consent will also be sought. If either of you decline to participate your son/daughter will not take part. You both have the right to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any stage of the process prior to completion of data analysis.

I hope that you will be willing for your son/daughter to participate in the study. Please complete the consent form attached to let me know whether or not you are willing for your son/daughter to participate. You can either complete the form this evening and leave it with me or if you wish to take the form home please send it to school in the envelope provided with your son's/daughter's home-school communication book.

If you would like any further information about the project please contact me, Jaimie Ellis, at the school on [number inserted] or email J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk .

If you have any concerns about the project at any time you can contact my study supervisor at the University of Southampton, Professor Graham Crow on [number inserted] or email G.P.Crow@soton.ac.uk.

Student Information Sheet

This leaflet belongs to

....

Being a teenager – what is it like for you?

Important Information to Remember

- I will ask you to talk about your school work in lessons

- What you tell me will help me write a book

- Examples of your work will be shown in the book

- You will be given a different name in the book

- You can choose to talk to me about your work

- You can choose to be tape recorded

- It is OK to say no

- It is OK to change your mind

- It is OK to stop

- Nothing will happen to you if you say no or stop

The Research

This research will…

Listen to the views of young people about what it is like to be a teenager. I am interested in finding out what you like to do, who your friends are and what you would like to do when you leave school.

I will ask you to …

Talk to me about some of your school work. I would like to tape record us talking or to make some notes so that I can remember the chat afterwards.

I will also like to take photos your work so that I can put it in the book I am writing.

My name is Jaimie Ellis and I work at a the University of Southampton.

I am writing a book about what it is like to be a teenager who has autism and your views will help me write this

Questions you might want to ask me:

What will you do with the tape /notes?

I will keep them very safe and listen to it to help me write a book.

What will you do with my work?

I may put photographs or copies of your work in the book for other people to see.

Will my name be used?

No. I will give you a different name so that I can describe what you think without anyone knowing it's you

Do I have to talk to you about my work?

No. You do not have to talk to me about your work.

What will happen to me if I say no?

Nothing. You will not be in any trouble and nothing will happen to you. It is OK to say no or to change your mind.

Teacher: Overall study

Title of study: Young people with autism

Information Sheet: Teachers

This project is being undertaken as part of the fulfilment of a doctorate and is funded and based with the Economic and Social Research Council National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton.

The aim of the project is to discover what research methods are appropriate to be used in conducting research with children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) that captures their day-to-day lives and experiences of living with ASC.

The research will take place over the course of 6-8 months commencing September 2010. The first 3-4 months, term one, will be spent working in the ASC unit, building relationships with the class members, establishing myself as a familiar feature of the setting and observing student interactions. Observations will be made of the students, their relationships, behaviours and academic strengths and weakness. This is not a study about teachers. Observations will be recorded by way of field notes. Staff members will not directly be observed but may feature in field notes by association to the students. All individuals will be anonymised and the notes may be used in the research report.

The second 4 months will be spent carrying out the four activities with the students:

1. A written task
2. A visual task
3. A creative task
4. A group project

These will take place in specific lessons and I will liaise with individual teachers about this. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time prior to completion of the data analysis.

I hope that you will be willing to participate in the study. I would be grateful if you could complete the consent form attached and hand it back.

If you would like any further information about the project please see me or contact me via email at: J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk .If you have any concerns about this study at any time you can contact my study supervisor at the University of Southampton, Professor Graham Crow on –insert number- or email G.P.Crow@soton.ac.uk.

Parent Information Sheet: Interview

Title of study: Young people with autism

Information Sheet: Parents/ Guardians

This project is being undertaken as part of the fulfilment of a doctorate and is funded and based with the Economic and Social Research Council National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton.

The aim of the project is to discover what are the best research methods to use in conducting research with children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) that captures their day-to-day lives and experiences of living with ASC.

As you will be aware the research has taken place over the course of the last 6-8 months commencing September 2010. During this time your son/daughter has participated in a number of activities, these include a written story, creating a photo album, creating a patchwork quilt and the recent drama production.

You are now invited to participate in an interview which can be arranged for a time convenient for you. I would like to provide you with the opportunity to talk about your son's /daughter's experiences, relationships and aspirations. This will also be an opportunity for you to discuss if you feel they have benefited in any way from participating in the study. This interview can take place at your home or, if you prefer, at the school. It will last about one hour and will be audio-taped.

The information that you give in the interview will be handled confidentially. You will be anonymised and every effort will be made to maintain your anonymity. With your agreement, your anonymised quotes may be used in the report.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time prior to completion of the data analysis.

I hope that you will be willing to participate in the study. I would be grateful if could you complete the consent form attached to let me know whether or not you are willing to take part. Please complete the form by [date to be added nearer the time of distribution] and send it to school in the envelope provided with your son's/daughter's home- school communication book. On receiving the consent form I will contact you to arrange a suitable time for the interview if you are willing to participate.

If you would like any further information about the project please contact me, Jaimie Ellis, at the school on [insert tel.] or email J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this study at any time you can contact my study supervisor at the University of Southampton, Professor Graham Crow on –insert number- or email G.P.Crow@soton.ac.uk.

Teacher Information Sheets: Interview

Title of study: Young people with autism

Information Sheet: Teachers

This project is being undertaken as part of the fulfilment of a doctorate and is funded and based with the Economic and Social Research Council National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton.

The aim of the project is to discover what research methods are appropriate to be used in conducting research with children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) that captures their day-to-day lives and experiences of living with ASC.

As you will be aware the research has taken place over the course of the last 6-8 months commencing September 2010. During this time the students have participated in a number of activities, these include a written story, creating a photo album, creating a patchwork quilt and the recent drama production.

You are now invited to participate in an interview which can be arranged for a time convenient for you. I would like to provide you with the opportunity to discuss your views regarding the experiences, relationships and aspirations of young people with ASC. This will also be an opportunity for you to discuss the research process itself and to offer your opinion on the effects the research process may have had for the students participating in the study. This interview will take place at school. It will last about one hour and will be audio-taped.

The information that you give in the interview will be handled confidentially. You will be anonymised and every effort will be made to maintain your anonymity. With your agreement, your anonymised quotes could be used in the report of the study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time prior to completion of the data analysis.

I hope that you will be willing to participate in the study. I would be grateful if you could complete the consent form attached. On receiving the consent form I will contact you to arrange a suitable time for the interview if you are willing to participate.

If you would like any further information about the project please see me or contact me via email at: J.Ellis@soton.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this study at any time you can contact my study supervisor at the University of Southampton, Professor Graham Crow on –insert number- or email G.P.Crow@soton.ac.uk.

Parent Consent Sheet: Son/Daughter's participation

Consent Form

Title of Study: Young people with autism

Declaration: (please initial one of the boxes in relation to each statement below)

Your son's/ daughter's participation

Your consent is required for your son/daughter to be observed at school.

I consent/ decline for my son/daughter to be observed:

I consent   I decline

☐   ☐

Your consent is required for your son's/daughter's anonymised work to be used in the study.

I consent/ decline the use of:

I consent   I decline

☐   ☐   Essays

☐   ☐   Photograph Album

☐   ☐   Patchwork Quilt

☐   ☐   Filmed play

Your consent is required for your son/daughter to be audio-recorded or for notes to be taken of them talking about their work.

I consent/ decline for my son/daughter to be audio-recorded or for notes to be taken of them discussing their work:

I consent   I decline

☐   ☐   Audio recorded

☐   ☐   Notes taken

Your consent is needed for me to use anonymised quotes of these discussions in the study.

I consent/ decline to the use of the discussion about his/hers… being used in the study:

I consent   I decline

☐   ☐   Photograph Album

☐   ☐   Patchwork Quilt

☐   ☐   Filmed play

☐   I understand that without my son's/ daughter's consent he/she will not participate.

☐   I understand that both my son/daughter and I can withdraw them from the study at any time prior to the analysis of the data.

Name ……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Parent/ Guardian of ……………………………………………………………………..

Date ……………………………………………………………………………………..............

Contact phone number ……………………………………………………………………

Researcher Signature ……………………………………………………………………

Researcher Name ……………………………………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Student Consent Form

Being a teenager- What is it like for you?

If you would like to talk about your school work and for it to be used in the book that Jaimie Ellis is writing will need to

Read the separate leaflet very carefully

Read each statement written below very carefully

Write your initials in each box

Remember- you can ask for help if you do not understand anything, please ask me or a teacher to help you

Would you like to be voice recorded talking about your work or for me to take notes of our conversation?

Yes, voice recorded   Yes, notes taken   No, I do not want to talk

	I know that I can stop talking about my work at anytime and that it is OK to do so

	I agree for what I say about my work to be used in the book

☐ I agree for my work to be used in the book

☐ I understand that I will be given a different name in the book

Name ……………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………..

Class………………………………………………………………………………

Researcher Signature ……………………………………………………….

Researcher Name ………………………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………………………………………….

Teacher Consent form: Overall study

Consent Form

Title of Study: Young people with autism

Declaration: (please initial each box below)

Your participation

☐ I am willing to be involved in this study

☐ I consent for observations of the students to be made in my lessons

☐ I consent for anonymised extracts from the field notes which may contain me to be used in the report of the study.

☐ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the analysis of the data.

Name ....

Date ....

Researcher Signature ....

Researcher Name ....

Date ....

Parent Consent form: Interview

Consent Form

Title of Study: Young people with autism

Declaration: (please initial one of the boxes in relation to each statement below)

Your participation

I consent   I decline

☐   ☐   I consent /decline to participate in an interview for
                                the mentioned study.

☐   ☐   I consent/ decline to anonymised quotes from my
                                interview being used in the report of the study.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the
analysis of the data.

I understand I do not understand

☐   ☐

Name ....

Parent/ Guardian of ....

Date ....

Contact phone number ....

Researcher Signature ....

Researcher Name ....

Date ....

Teacher Consent Form: Interview

Consent Form

Title of Study: Young people with autism

Declaration: (please initial each box below)

Your participation

| | I consent to participate in an interview for the mentioned study. |

| | I consent to anonymised quoted from my interview being used in the report of the study. |

| | I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the analysis of the data. |

Name ....

Date ....

Researcher Signature ....

Researcher Name ....

Date ....

Front and back pages

You must not...

🙁 Lose the camera

🙁 Use the camera in lessons other than Media

🙁 Take photos which-

⚠ are rude (i.e. of body parts)

⚠ hurt anyone else

Question

❓ What will happen if I take a photo which I have been told not to?

The photo will be taken from you. It will not be used in your project. It will be given to Mrs Parker

You can ...

😊 Take the camera home

😊 Use it at break or lunch times

You should...

✔ Keep the camera safe

✔ Ask people first before you take a photo of them

Your photograph project

To be completed in Media lessons

This booklet belongs to

....

Class ....

Media
Day........................
Lesson ....

Middle Pages

To do ...

Think of places which are special to you

Write them down

Think of objects which are special to you

Write them down

Think of people who are special to you

Write them down

Choose which you would like to take a photograph of

-Choose no more than 25
-You can choose all of them

Take photographs of those places, people and objects you have chosen

Print out the photos

Choose which photos you would like to put in the book

Stick photos into the book

Write a title for each photo in the book

Write a description for each photo in the book

Special Places

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Special Objects

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Special People

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Free Nodes

Acdemic interest
Acceptance -signs of being accepted
Adapting to change
Adult Management of behaviour
Adult support
Adult Voice
Affectionate
Agitated
Animals
Anxiety
Appropriateness - learning appropriateness
Asking for help
Aspirations
Attachment to objects or animals
Attention - difficulties with staying focused
Attention Seeking
Attention to detail
Aware of social taboos and norms
Aware(ness)
Being Alone
Being liked
Beliefs
Boisterous
Boundaries - Breaking
Boundaries - Need for
Boundaries - Testing
Breakdown in relationships
Capable - being seen as competent and capable
Caring
Challenging
Change of routine and structure
Clear and direct questions and instructions
Close Proximity
Comparing to Neuro-typical
Competitiveness
Concrete examples
Confidence
Confrontation
Confusion
Consent
Consistency

Control(led)
Coping Strategies
Creative
Defiant
Demanding
Dependency
Descriptive
Detached from Emotions
Developments
Disconnectedness
Dislikes
Distractible
Emotional
Emotional Attachment
Emotionally unaware
Enduring mood
Excitable
Expectations
Expression - difficult to express oneself
Expressive
Factual
Failure to know details about or know the students
Family Support- Relations
Fear
Fixated
Flexibility
Free from adult management
Friendship
Gatekeepers
Gender confusion
Gender divide
Gender Stereotypes
Getting at their voice
Getting away with things
Having its place and purpose
Home school communication
Home- School Distinction
Honest
Honesty
Hyper
I am defined by what I like
Identity creating ones identity
Identity related
Imagination
Imitation
Immediate of here and now

Inappropriate
Independence
Individualised
Individualistic
Influence
Influential
Initiating interaction
Interaction
Issues of trust gaining trust etc.
Joking Around
Justice sense of and importance of
Labelled
Lack of structure
Language- literal use
Language- non-literal use
Language Unusual use of
Leaders and Followers
Learning social norms
Learning to cope
Learnt Behaviour
Learnt emotions
Life getting better
Literal
Literal Understanding
Love
Making sense of things
Making their own decisions
Manipulative
Masculinity silencing femininity
Memory- issues with memory
Mischievous
Moving on
My way or no way
Narrow interest
Need to be right- or behave well
Need to be with someone
Need to know
Nervous
No Surveillance
no surveillance A
'Normal' Good behaviour
not perceptive
Not uncovering child's voice
Not understanding self
Obedience
Observant

Observing the students
Obsessed
Opportunity
Order
Overloading - sensory overload
Parent expectations
Parent Experiences
Peer - acceptance
Peer influence - positive
Peer Influence Negative
Peer management of behaviour
Peer Support
Perceptions of the children
Perceptive
Performance
Persistent
Personal Space Intruding and Requiring
Personalised Learning
Physical contact - interaction
Play
Positive feedback from environment
Possessive
Processing Strategies
Protectiveness
Provocative
Pushing the Boundaries
Reasons for behaviour-attitude etc.
Reassurance
Relating to something
Relational
Relationships
Researcher Role
Restless
Reward for good behaviour and achievements
Rigid
Risk- researcher taking risks
Routine
Rules- black and white
Safe Place
Sameness
School Community
School Demands
Security
Seeking Reassurance
Self-Belief
Self-Conscious

Self-management of behaviour
Sense of Humour
Sense of right and wrong
Sensitive
Sensory related issues
Separation
Sharing yourself with the participants
Showing off
Shy
Sibling Relationships
Silencing students voices
Sociable
Space and Privacy
Special Interest
Special Person - Attachment
Special Places
Starting a fresh
Stilted conversation
Stilted Imagination
Structure
Stubborn
Suppot(ive)
Surveillance
Temper
Theory of Mind- lack of
Time - longevity
Time- concept
Time out
Togetherness
Triggers
Trust - gaining trust
Unable to move on
Unaware of consequences
Unaware of how one is feeling
Unaware of social norms
Understanding - a need for ...from others
Understanding of each other
Understanding Self
Understanding the world
Upset
Violence
Visual support - aids
Vulnerable
Who are they?

Tree Nodes

Chapter 4 Community
Environmental
Family
School Structure

Chapter 5 Intimate Relations
Attachment to objects or animals
Friendships and Relationships
Help and Support

Chapter 6 Self
Emotional States
Behaviour
Excitement
Happiness
Triggers and Causes
Unhappiness
I am defined by what I like
Relational Dimension to Self
Self-concept - understanding
Understanding Other

Goffman
Ceremonial Order
Embarrassment
Learning Ritual
Methods of keeping Order
Normal
Performance
Remedial Interchange
Ritual

Models of Disability
Affirmation Model
Medical Model
Social Model

Parents and Carers

Introduction:

Last an hour

Will be recorded using a digital voice recorder

Reiterate participants right to withdraw, recap the study inc. the activities

Topic 1: Research Methods the Student's Participation:

Explain the research process:

1. Observations: Working closely with forms 1MP and 2VM- acting as sort of an LSA. Being with the students, getting to know them, building trust, observing them in all aspects of school (lessons, break, lunch etc.).
2. Essays: in November 2010- write about their imagined futures. Why? To investigate their thoughts on adulthood- how do they perceive their adult social worlds?
3. Photography: To take photographs of people, places and objects which are special to them, give them a title and 3 reasons why. Why? To investigate their social worlds now- used as an elicitation tool.
4. Patchwork/ Mosaic: Opportunity to express themselves through art.
5. Play: To write, perform and record a play which is about a group of young people with autism. Why? To draw upon their own experiences to write the play- also to see how well the students work as a group.

Questions:

Has your child talked about any of the work?

Have you been involved/ helped with any of the activities?

1. Which ones?
2. How much help?

General difficulties I found

1. Supporting the students with minimal influence over the answers
2. It becoming a list of 'I like'- difficulty in moving away from this

how else might they have been used, which methods might have been better?

Recommendations: What do you think the best way of finding out what life is like for children with ASC?

Link: The objective was to explore the appropriateness and usefulness of different research techniques in enabling us to find out about the experiences and everyday lives of children with ASC- so we were exploring what techniques are a) acceptable to the children and b) provide us with an insight into their lives and experiences.

Lead in / Explanation: I am now interested in getting their perspective on their child, their perspective of their child's lives and experiences to compare with the other data I've collected through the observations and the activities.

Topic 2: Parent's to be ask about their perspective on their child's

Experience of:

1. General day-to-day experience
2. Doing something new can initially be challenging due to the change of routine- do you think it's valuable to introduce new things / experiences to them?
3. If so, how do you go about introducing these new things.
4. If not, why not? – reactions, coping mechanisms etc.

Growing up

1. How do the children gain in confidence as they grow up?
2. How have the impairments, traits associated with autism changed/ manifest themselves as they have got older?

3. Going to school
4. Is it an enjoyable or challenging experience for them?
5. What does school provide for the children?

Relationships with others:

1. Parent's / Carer's
    a. What sort of relationship do you have with them?
2. Siblings
    a. How have these changed as they have got older?
3. Other family members
4. Friends/ school peers
    a. What function do you think school friends/ peers provide for them?

How do they foresee adult life for their child?

In terms of: Will the go/ attend/ have:

1. FE/ Training
2. Employment
3. Living Arrangements
4. Do you think they will live independently? If so, what support networks/ structures need to be in place?
5. Do you think they want independence?
6. Relationships
7. Are there any structures which you think would need to be in place for them to achieve their aspirations? (any on-going support into adulthood)

Close:

Do you think your child(ren) have benefited in any way from participation in the study?

Is there anything else you would like to add to what we've discussed?

Teachers

1. Last between 30-45mins.
2. Will be recorded using a digital voice recorder
3. Reiterate participants right to withdraw, recap the study inc. the activities

Explain the research process: Aim: to find appropriate method to research with children with ASC- and also to find out about their experiences.

1. Observations
2. Essays: write about their imagined futures. Why? To investigate their thoughts on adulthood- how do they perceive their adult social worlds?
3. Photography: To take photographs of people, places and objects which are special to them, give them a title and 3 reasons why. Why? To investigate their social worlds now- used as an elicitation tool.
4. Patchwork/ Mosaic: Opportunity to express themselves through art.
5. Play: To write, perform and record a play which is about a group of young people with autism. Why? To draw upon their own experiences to write the play- also to see how well the students work as a group.
6. Interview parents: Discussed the student's participation in the activities and talked more specifically about their child's experiences. Why? To obtain an alternative perspective.

How suitable do you think the methods were? Suitable as a way of getting at young people's identities? – Evaluation which worked well, which didn't why?

Did the students benefit from taking part?

What do they think are the best ways of finding out about the experiences of young people with ASC?

Link: Talk about [Ben] being upset during the essay task.

Do the students respond well to being pushed/ challenged?

- o If so, how is this approached/ initiated
- o How often do you purposefully do this?
- o If so, what are the benefits /challenges of this?
- o If not, why? What are the consequences of this?

Truth qu. Do you think that it's very easy to put words into their mouths, so that you just get back what you've suggested?

Methods/ Tips for encouraging the students not to imitate or give desirable answers.

General tips for working with children with ASC?

Link: From the tips of working with children with ASC to issues around classification.

Lead in / Explanation: After they've explained tips for working with children with ASC move onto asking if the classification of ASC is helpful.

Topic 2: Autism

Is the classification / diagnosis of ASC useful

For people working with the group?

For the individual themselves

Is there an 'autistic' character?

What might this be?

If yes, can you generalise behaviour/ approaches or is it an individual thing?

If no, then what better way of thinking about things would you say should be used?

Topic 3: Teacher experiences

Experiences of teaching autistic students

Challenges

Positive experiences

Methods of dealing with sensitive issues? (Humour?)

Experiences of having a researcher around?

Pros / cons

Close:

Is there anything else you would like to add to what we've discussed?

Essay

Details: Imagining one's future

Class: 1MP and 2VM

Time: Term 2 (Nov-Dec 2010) - 3 x 45min lessons

Activity aim: by the end of the activity each student will have produced an account of their life from the point of leaving school to retirement.

Broad Instructions:

1. It is the students' imagined future which is important. The stories are to be the students own.
2. This is not a task about what they *want* to be when they are older. It is a task about what they *think* their adult life will be like. Try to discourage a fairy tale style story, encourage a real account of their life as it might be.
3. Spelling and hand writing is not important
4. The story should span their whole life not just the immediate time after leaving school.
5. If hand writing is a barrier the students can use a computer.

Photography

Details: Special People, Place and Spaces

Class: 1MP and 2VM

Time: Term 3 (Jan and Feb 2011)

Activity aim: by the end of the activity each student will have a personal photo album of the photographs they have taken which have also been given a title and description.

Broad Instructions:

Students are to:

1. Take photographs of people, places or objects which they believe will tell people about their lives.
2. Arrange their photographs into an album
3. Give each photograph a title
4. Provide three reasons why they took the photograph (this can be   more descriptive if necessary)

Patchwork Quilt

Details: Patchwork Quilt

Classes: 1MP and 2VM

Time: Term 3 (Jan and Feb 2011)

Activity Aim: By the end of the activity each student will have designed and created a patch which reflects their personality. Each of the patches will then be fixed together to create a quilt.

Broad Instructions:

Students are to:

1. Each design a patch which reflects who they are
2. Make the patch from the design
3. Write or tell me what the patch tells us about them
4. All patches to be put together

Documentary

Details: Documentary
Classes: 1MP and 2VM
Time: Friday 18th March Lessons 1-5

Activity Aim: At the end of the activity the students will have written, performed and recorded a documentary.

Broad Instructions:

Students should:

1. Work together to write, perform and record a documentary.
2. Use the work from the previous activities to reflect upon and aid in the writing of the production.
3. Allocate roles, jobs etc. themselves (students do not have to feature in the documentary if they do not wish).

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