Volume One

"Square Pegs in Round Holes": A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Educational Professionals' Constructions of School Exclusions and Children at Risk of Exclusion in Primary Education

by

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ABSTRACT

The present research aimed to explore how exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are constructed in the discourses of educational professionals within primary school settings in North-West England. The research topic was influenced by a continued gradual increase in the rate of exclusions and suspensions across the country and different educational settings (Department for Education, 2022a). The specific research aims of the study were developed in light of available literature which demonstrated shifts in discourse of education and exclusion in educational policy, including recent contradicting discourses of inclusion and exclusion within national policy. Academic research exploring exclusionary practice demonstrated variation in practice and perceptions of exclusion by a variety of stakeholders.

Nonetheless, the present research, sought to explore how exclusions and children at risk of exclusion were constructed as objects in discourse, how subjects were positioned and any contradictions between discourses. Based on a social constructionist epistemology and the theories and seminal works of Michel Foucault, the research also explored how such constructions influenced practice in primary education. Five educational professionals, who worked within a primary school setting at the time of their involvement, were interviewed. Each interview was transcribed and analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Pearson, 2016; Willig, 2013).

The interpretation of the data generated in this research highlighted the complexity of discourses around school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion, which are inextricably linked to contradictory constructions of education and schooling. Juxtaposing constructions of exclusions as being punishment and supportive were evident, along with the positioning of school staff and children at risk of exclusion as being 'unable to cope'. The dominance of

individualised discourses, with a discourse of abnormality were also highlighted. Subsequently, implications for the practice of educational psychologists (EPs) were shared, with particular regard to their role in challenging discourses which oppress children within the education system. Finally, recommendations into further research of the constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion within different contexts were made, before reflections on the quality of the research and concluding thoughts were shared.

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Dedication

To Andrew and Cooper, for the sacrifices you have made on this journey with me.

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Conversation Analysis
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDP	Critical Discursive Psychology
DCFS	Department for Children, Families and Schools
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
DP	Discursive Psychology
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
LA	Local Authority
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEN(D)	Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities)
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research forms Vol. 1 of a two-part thesis for the academic and research requirements of the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate at the University of Birmingham. This volume of the thesis details a small-scale research study which explored how school exclusion and children at risk of exclusion in primary education are constructed in the discourses of educational professionals. The research took place during the fulfilment of a professional practice placement within a local authority (LA) as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP). Before introducing the study and the structure of this thesis, the following chapter will outline the background to the research, including the professional influences that informed the research design.

1.2 Professional Influences

Prior to my enrolment as a TEP, I worked within education for five years. For most of this period I was a teacher in a rural, community primary school in North-West England. Whilst the school I taught at was considered to be a low excluding school, I worked within a LA that had exclusion rates consistently above the national average. My awareness of these facts became more prevalent during my role as an assistant educational psychologist of the same authority, whereby discussions regarding exclusions were more frequent. It was during these complex discussions that I began to reflect on discourses of children, exclusions and exclusionary practice; both in terms of my own constructions and in society more generally.

As a TEP, I attended a fair access panel for one LA. In this meeting, a number of children were discussed with regard to their risk of exclusion and the suitability of a managed move to another

school in the authority. I discussed concerns with my placement supervisor that it was 'taken for granted' by professionals that a child was 'at risk of exclusion' without in-depth exploration of the circumstances around the decision by the school. Similarly, though a brief overview of the child's familial and educational background was sometimes shared, the impact that this may have on a child and the support that they may benefit from was not discussed. From this, I wondered how professionals working in schools constructed 'children at risk of exclusion' and differentiated between children who required support and children who required a removal from their current school roll.

As part of the educational and child psychology doctoral training, I was introduced to the concept of discourse and its influence on social practice. This added further food for thought regarding the impact of professionals' constructions of children at risk of exclusion on the school practices and support that is available to young people. It is posed that the consideration and challenge of any dominant discourses that may be oppressive to marginalised groups is an important aspect of our role within educational psychology (Bozic, 1999). Moreover, as a profession, our influence in the construction of children and young people through language and the educational practice that ensues is critical to recognise and address (Sangar, 2018).

1.3 Theoretical Orientation and Methodology

Ontological and epistemological assumptions are key tenets in this research. The theoretical orientation of this study aligns with a social constructionist position, which is based on the premise that meaning is achieved by performative language or *discourse* (Gergen, 2001). Discourse is defined as "a system of statements which constructs an object" (Parker, 1992, p.5). Through language in use or *texts*, meanings of a phenomena or *object* can be conveyed between two people (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Discourses around an object may vary between

cultures, over time or political positioning, denoting that multiple constructions of the same phenomena may exist at any given time (Willig, 2013). Whilst discourses may complement another, contradictory discourses have implications for *social action* and highlight the subjectivity of language and meaning (Burr, 2003). Through the performativity of language, the constructive influence of discourse is recognised in its formation of social structures, institutions and practices (Sangar, 2018). Therefore, the exploration of discourse is fundamental to this research.

1.4 Study Rationale

The aim of this study was to explore discourses of children at risk of exclusion, school exclusion and alternatives to exclusion. Government statistics suggest the prevalence of school exclusions in England, whilst published literature explores the impact of school exclusion on children, their family and society more widely. However, there is limited research on how exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are constructed, particularly within a primary education context. Research typically explores perceptions of school exclusion as objective practices that exist within education, which arguably highlights a *taken for granted* construct (Nash, 2002). Moreover, the construction of *children at risk of exclusion* is often used in discourse with an assumption of a shared understanding of meaning. Within this discourse, children at risk of exclusion are positioned as deviating from a seemingly objective role within a school system. However, it may be contended that this use of shared language is often vague and unchallenged (Douglas, 1967). This research aimed to explore the discourses of school exclusion and children at risk of exclusion by professionals working within primary schools in England.

A flexible research design was adopted during this study. In total, five primary school teaching staff volunteered to participate and their talk was gathered through individual semi-structured

interviews. To research the aims of this study, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) was employed. Whilst several discourses surrounding school exclusion and children at risk of exclusion exist, certain constructions have come to be accepted as truth (Burr, 2015). Through FDA, the role of discourse in shaping the positioning of children and teachers, and the educational practice of exclusion, can be explored. This research has implications for a number of educational professionals, including educational psychologists (EPs), by providing an opportunity for reflection on the prevalence of dominant discourses of children and practices within education.

1.5 Structure of Volume One

This volume of the thesis consists of six chapters. Continuing on from this introductory chapter, Chapter Two comprises of two parts: Part 1 provides a summary of the national context in which this research is situated before Part 2 highlights the dominant discourse of school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion within relevant literature. Chapter Three discusses the methodological considerations of this research, namely the influence of social constructionism and reflexivity of the researcher. Chapter Four shares the methods utilised in this study, including the research design, methods of data collection and unit of data analysis. The ethical considerations are also discussed within this chapter. Chapter Five offers findings from the participant interviews in order to address the research questions. Finally, Chapter Six discloses a summary of the key findings, the implications for EP practice and a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study. Furthermore, possibilities for future research are also provided at the end of this volume.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW PART ONE

2.1 Introduction

The research aims of this study are to explore how school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are constructed by educational professionals. This chapter is presented in two parts: an overview of school exclusions within the national context and dominant discourses of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion. Part one begins by detailing relevant national legislation and policy. Part two then explores key developments and issues within published literature to highlight the current discourses and social practice. It also considers the implications for discourses when considering the support available to children in mainstream primary schools.

Both parts of this literature review consider published and unpublished academic papers, with the aim of creating a more balanced view of current research (Mahmood, Van Eerd, & Irvin, 2013). Whilst published research is often peer-reviewed and easier to systematically search (Boland, Cherry, & Dickson, 2017), the inclusion of grey literature has been suggested to add an important contribution to understanding by providing insights to research that may alternatively be unavailable due to potential publication bias of academic journals (Paez, 2017). In addition, the use of contemporary unpublished doctoral theses (Lee, 2020; Pearson, 2016; Sangar, 2018) within this literature review provides an insight into current research that may typically be withheld from dissemination due to lengthy submission processes (Floyd et al., 2011). Therefore, relevant published and unpublished literature is used within this research to explore the research topic of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion in England.

2.2 A Brief History of Education and School Exclusions in England

In order to better understand the current national context, with regard to education and children's exclusion from it, it may be argued that an overview of historical practice is important. Parson (1999) argues that the purpose of education and a school system are socially constructed and, as a result, will change over time. This is evident when looking at the shift in educational policy and practice in England over centuries.

Records indicate that purposeful education was evident during the Roman occupation of Britain, from AD43 to around AD400 (Gillard, 2018). However for centuries, academic education was reserved for the middle and upper classes, whilst the teaching of the reading of the Bible was introduced to the working class in an act of moral regulation (Gillard, 2011). Academic education at this time was constructed as a privilege, whilst secular education was an attempt to save working class children's souls (Arnold, Yeomans, & Simpson, 2009) and ensure the survival of Christianity in England (Lawson & Silver, 1973). This positioned working class and 'poor' children as being in need of reform and perpetuated fear amongst middle and upper classes (Ashurst & Venn, 2014).

Gillard (2011) suggests that the first instruction to educate all children was evident in the early 1800s whereby employers of factory workers were responsible for the academic teaching of their apprentices in basic reading and writing skills. It is proposed that this political transformation was encouraged to upskill the working class in the wake of the industrial revolution (Gillard, 2011, Industrial Revolution Section). Despite some opposition, education *en masse* was introduced and there followed the conception of state schools, such as monitorial, elementary and church schools, for working class children and preparatory schools, grammar schools and private schools for middle and upper class children (Gillard, 2011). Similarly,

separate provision was introduced for 'the blind', 'the deaf', 'the physically handicapped' and 'the mentally defective' (Gillard, 2018, Chapter 5). Whilst there was apprehension that educating the working classes may create more educated criminals, education was constructed as an opportunity to monitor children from working class backgrounds and provide them with the teaching of "good habits" (Burman, 2016, p. 20). Children who were constructed as troublesome, during this time, were often excluded through government policies of forced emigration (Ashurst & Venn, 2014). It is thought, therefore, that the introduction of compulsory education in the 19th century was also an attempt to alleviate the anxieties of middle and upper class citizens about pauperism and the perceived rise in crime in society (Hendrick, 2003).

This monitoring and regulation of children's behaviour is apparent in the development of disciplinary practices in schools (Foucault, 1977; Harwood & Allan, 2014). At the turn of the twentieth century, children who did not conform to authority in schools were constructed as 'immoral' and 'maladjusted', signifying a shift from children's hereditary traits to a discourse of psychological abnormality and deviance (Pearson, 2016). Children that were constructed like this were often segregated from their peers to be taught in residential provisions (Gillard, 2011). This demonstrated a classical ideological perspective of education (Parsons, 1999), whereby children were controlled in an attempt to regulate social and moral standards. Arguably in a similar vein, school exclusion as a disciplinary practice was introduced into national, educational policy in the late-twentieth century (Sealy, Abrams, & Cockburn, 2021).

2.3 Overview of National Legislation and Policy

Today, disciplinary school exclusions in England are protected as a practice in law. Principal legislation includes the Education Act (2002, 2011), the Education and Inspection Act (2006)

and the School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) Regulations (2012). Within the law, it states that, to:

> "exclude", in relation to the exclusion of a pupil from a school or pupil referral unit, means exclude on disciplinary grounds (and "exclusion" is to be construed accordingly). (Education Act, 2002, 51A (10) Section)

The terms *permanent* and *fixed period* exclusions were introduced and legitimised the removal of a child from an educational setting in the Education Act (1986). Over time, the terminology of fixed period exclusions has changed in policy to a *fixed term exclusion* (Department for Education, 2020b) and most recently a *suspension* (Department for Education, 2022a). The UK government (2022) defines permanent exclusion as a child being expelled from their educational setting. A pupil who has been permanently excluded "will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned)" (Department for Education, 2022a, Permanent Exclusions Section). Whereas a suspension is when a child is temporarily removed from their setting (UK Government, 2022). A child's exclusion from the school premises is conceptualised within the statutory guidance on *Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England* (Department for Education, 2021). Within the guidance it constructs exclusion as a disciplinary decision made by a head teacher based on a "civil standard of proof" (p.9) that an incident requiring disciplinary action has occurred. The document provides a guide to the law for head teachers and governing bodies, in addition to factors for consideration prior to taking the decision to exclude. Factors that may contribute to a child's "serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy" (Department for Education, 2021a, p.10) are highlighted.

Around the turn of the century, there was a change in discourse in education which encouraged inclusion within English government policy. The report of the Warnock Committee, otherwise known as the Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978), for example, is recognised as a highly influential review of educational practice and basis for future legislation in England (Lindsay, Wedell, & Dockrell, 2020). In addition to critiquing terms of reference for children and introducing the term 'Special Educational Needs' (Department for Education and Science, 1978, Chapter 3), the Warnock Report is deemed to be a key text in a political and societal shift towards inclusion (Hornby, 2011). Advocating for the educational rights of all children to be able to access mainstream provision, the Warnock Report argued for scope within the educational system to provide a flexible response to a child's "special-ness" (Wedell, 2019, p. 23). However, critiques of the 1978 committee's work also suggest that the report "provided the catalyst for an enduring framework of individual statutory assessment in England for children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN)" (Lamb, 2019, p. 1). Whilst the hope of the Warnock Report was to protect a defined level of education for children whose right to education had only just been recognised (Warnock & Norwich, 2010), implementation of inclusion in practice resulted in a raise in individual assessments and special school allocations, highlighting the complexity around definitions of inclusive education itself (Lamb, 2019).

Nevertheless, with the swing of a slight paradigm shift came an emphasis on the need for a preventative, multi-agency approach to supporting children and their education, as demonstrated with the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit (1998) in a bid to reduce social exclusion, particularly school exclusion and truancy. However, the movement's failure to create a significant impact on social policy and practice (Geyer, 1999) may be indicative of the underlying dominant constructions of the education system, namely as a quasi-market and an

increasing emphasis on league tables and attainment data (Parsons, 1999). Vulliamy (2001) suggests that, as a result, school exclusions continued to increase due to exclusionary pressures placed on schools and a lack of resources to support other socio-economic factors.

Despite acknowledgement of socio-economic factors on inclusion (Geyer, 1999), further agendas to support individual children, such as 'Every Child Matters' (2003a), the National Strategies Behaviour and Attendance Strand (2003b) and the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (2007), were introduced by the Department for Education and Skills in an attempt to lessen social and school exclusion (Cole, 2015). Arguably, this bid for improved school performance was further evidenced in practice by the introduction of academy schools (Messeter & Soni, 2017). Though these agendas suggested a drive to reduce school exclusion, the move from discourses of individualised problems within children is debated (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022).

Despite the call for a promotion of equality and inclusion for children in statutory guidance such as the *SEND Code of Practice* (DfE/DoH, 2015), other publications by the Department for Education contradict the premise of inclusion. In focusing on changing behaviours through sanctions, educational policy often results in adverse effects for marginalised children (Armstrong, 2018). *Behaviour and Discipline in Schools* (Department for Education, 2020a) and *Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance for England* (Department for Education, 2022b) highlight that:

> The government recognises that school exclusions, managed moves and off-site direction are essential behaviour management tools for headteachers and can be used to establish high standards of behaviour in schools and maintain the safety of school communities. (Department for Education, 2022b, p. 3)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS, 2008) guidance on *Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units* advocates managed moves as an alternative to exclusion, whereby a child is voluntarily transitioned between one educational setting to another. While the practice is not a statutory requirement (Messeter & Soni, 2017), managed moves are considered to be the most popular alternative to school exclusion in England (Craggs, 2018).

2.4 The Current Context

The most recent statistics provided by the Department for Education (2022a) report that 5,057 children were permanently excluded across state-funded schools in England in the academic year 2019/20. Whilst this demonstrates almost 3,000 fewer permanent exclusions than the previous academic year, it is acknowledged that the impact of national lockdowns, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and "school closures have had a substantial effect on the number of permanent exclusions and suspension and therefore caution should be taken when comparing figures across years" (Department for Education, 2022a, Headline Facts and Figures Section). The most recent data provided does, however, directly compare the exclusion data from Autumn term of the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20. Subsequently, it is stated that there was an increase of 5% in permanent exclusions in England during that period (Department for Education, 2022a).

Exclusion rates shared in data are defined as a proportion of the school population, in a given academic year, and are calculated by dividing the number of exclusions or suspensions "by the total number of pupils (x100)" (Department for Education, 2022a, Permanent Exclusions Section). Prior to the pandemic, data shows that 438,265 children received school suspensions in the 2018/19 academic year, demonstrating a rate of exclusion of 5.36 (Department for Education, 2020b). This highlights an increase of 1.86 in the rate of suspensions since 2013/14

(Department for Education, 2015). Whilst the overall number of school suspensions decreased in the 2019/20 academic year, data shows that there was an increase of 14% in the Autumn term when compared directly to the 2018/19 Autumn term, prior to the pandemic (Department for Education, 2022a).

England has the highest exclusion rate within the UK (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022). This is evident when comparing the published data on permanent exclusions. For example, during the 2018/19 academic year, 7,894 children were permanently excluded in England compared to three permanent exclusions in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2020). Of children excluded in the UK during that period, 98% were excluded in England (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022).

2.4.1 Difference Between Types of Educational Setting

The Department for Education (2020b, 2022a) data suggests that there has been an overall increase in school exclusions in England between 2018/19 and 2019/20 Autumn term. When the data is broken down further still, as shown in Table 1, differences in exclusion rates between primary and secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) are highlighted. The data suggest that, whilst the rate of permanent exclusions in special schools has decreased, there has been an increase in the rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools and PRUs over the past six academic years (Department for Education, 2015, 2020b). Meanwhile, the rate of permanent exclusions in primary schools has largely remained at 0.02, which is the equivalent of two in every 10,000 children (Department for Education, 2015, 2020b). However, when comparing the Autumn term of 2018/19 and 2019/20, permanent exclusions within primary settings increased by 20% compared to a 3% rise in secondary settings (Department for Education, 2020b, 2022a). Arguably, if the trajectory of permanent exclusions had maintained over the duration of a full academic year, the rate of exclusion may have increased.

Furthermore, the rate of suspensions in PRUs, primary and secondary settings has continued to rise over a six-year upward trend (Department for Education, 2020b). Though data from the Autumn term of 2019/20 suggests that there was a further increase in suspensions across primary and secondary schools since 2018/19, primary settings saw an increase of 21% compared to 12% in secondary schools over the same period (Department for Education, 2020b, 2022a). Special schools, on the other hand, have seen a decrease in the rate of suspensions since 2016/17 (Department for Education, 2022a).

Table 1

Exclusions Data from Department of Education (2020b)

Data	Setting	Academic Year					
		2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Rate of permanent exclusions	Primary	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02
	Secondary	0.13	0.15	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.20
	Special	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06
	Pupil Referrals	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.22
Rate of suspensions	Primary	1.02	1.10	1.21	1.37	1.40	1.41
	Secondary	6.62	7.51	8.46	9.40	10.13	10.75
	Special	13.86	13.54	12.53	13.03	12.34	11.32
	Pupil Referrals	120.50	142.89	155.84	164.75	158.40	191.09

2.4.2 Characteristics of Excluded Children

Research conducted by the Department for Education (2019b) recognises that official statistics demonstrate a continued disproportionate exclusion of pupils with certain characteristics from English schools. National statistics also highlight discrepancies between the exclusion of children of different ethnicities. The Timpson Review (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019) of exclusion data highlighted that some ethnic groups are less likely to be permanently

excluded, whilst others are considered to be at higher risk of exclusion. The 2018/19 exclusion data shows that children of Gypsy Roma heritage continue to have the highest rate of permanent exclusion at 0.39, followed by Traveller of Irish heritage ethnic groups (0.27) and children of Black Caribbean heritage (0.25) (Department for Education, 2020b). Children of Gypsy Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage also have the highest rate of suspensions with a rate of 21.26 and 14.63 respectively (Department for Education, 2020b).

Other common characteristics of excluded children are demonstrated in official data. Data from the Department of Education (2018c, 2019a, 2020b) suggests that boys continue to be permanently excluded at three times the rate of girls, whilst children who are eligible for free school meals (FSMs), a constructed indicator of low-socio economic status, are reportedly more than four times more likely to be excluded than their peers. In the 2018/19 academic year, children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were suspended at a rate of 16.11, compared to a rate of 3.57 for children without identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (Department for Education, 2020b). Moreover, in the same period, children with reported SEND but without an EHCP were permanently excluded at double the rate of children with EHCPs, who were excluded at double the rate of their peers, with exclusion rates of 0.32, 0.15 and 0.06 respectively. This supports previous findings that children with SEND account for approximately 45% of all permanent exclusions (Department for Education, 2018c, 2019a).

Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift (2017) emphasise that the children who are most commonly excluded from schools are often those who are already most vulnerable in society. This is supported by the Department for Education who acknowledge that there are many layers of potential drivers for exclusion, and that:

Schools do not operate in a vacuum. As microcosms of society, some authors suggested that the current patterns of exclusions were perpetuating society-wide stereotyping and discrimination, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender and disadvantage. (Department for Education, 2019b, p.6)

2.5 Outcomes of School Exclusion

Exclusions are often constructed as having a range of negative outcomes associated with them. Children who have been excluded report short- and long-term difficulties, both in terms of psychological implications and life outcomes (Martin-Denham, 2020b). Research suggests that there can be long term psychological implications for children who have been excluded, as they often experience high levels of psychological distress in comparison to their peers (Ford et al., 2018).

One psychological implication of school exclusion is a child's perceived sense of belonging (Martin-Denham, 2020b). School belongingness, specifically, refers to a child's perceived sense of value, acceptance, integration within the community and positive relations with peers and teachers (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). One's experience of security and maintenance of good mental health is suggested to be dependent on a fundamental sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Where children have a limited sense of belonging and have repeated experiences of rejection through school exclusion, they can be subject to social exclusion within the school community (Gill et al., 2017) and may disengage with education (Raufelder & Kulakow, 2022). Munn and Lloyd (2005) report that children can also have difficulties maintaining relationships in the wider community following a school exclusion, due to experiences of stigmatisation. This supports suggestions that school exclusions is also a pathway towards social exclusion within the greater community (Paget & Emond, 2016).

Prolonged exposure to social rejection, or ostracism, can have long-lasting negative effects such as experiences of depression and helplessness (Williams, 2007). Ren, Wesselmann and Williams (2018) explore the psychological impact of social exclusion and propose a temporal need-threat framework for understanding responses to ostracism. In turn, individuals are said to experience reflexive, reflective and resignation stages of emotional response to ostracism. Firstly, individuals may experience feelings of pain, sadness and anger upon detecting cues of social exclusion. Then, they may attempt to make sense of the exclusion and recover from the social damage, by adopting either anti- or pro-social behaviours, or withdrawing from social interactions entirely. In the final phase, individuals may enter a stage of resignation, whereby they experience feelings of worthlessness and helplessness are experienced. Arguably, the three defensive coping strategies suggested in the temporal need-threat model of ostracism (Ren et al., 2016; 2018) support research which explores the children's psychological responses to school exclusion. Following school exclusion, children are reported to often experience feelings of anger (Quin & Hemphill, 2014) and injustice (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Their subsequent behaviours are also thought to be adopted in an attempt to confirm their negative self-image, thus perpetuating the labelling of their behaviour as difficult (Krohn, Lopes, & Ward, 2014).

Moreover, children are also reported to experience long-term negative effects of school exclusion (Vincent, Harris, Thomson, & Toalster, 2007). This includes poor mental and physical health and prolonged unemployment (Pirrie, MacLeod, Cullen, & McCluskey, 2011). In addition to experiencing a state of resignation about their educational outcomes, as suggested in the need-threat model above (Ren et al., 2018), the need to identify and belong within a social group in order to experience positive interactions, whether the group be socially constructed as good or bad, has been found to be essential for children (Lee & Breen, 2007). Thus, excluded children are found to be more susceptible to social influence and more likely to be involved in

criminal activity (Williams, Papadopoulou, & Booth, 2012). As a result of such negative life outcomes, exclusions also have long-term costs to society (Cole, 2015), namely the education system (Snell et al., 2013) and agencies such as the police (Parsons & Castle, 1998).

Whilst there is a considerable amount of literature exploring the negative consequences of school exclusion as well as the trajectories of children who have been excluded from schools, positive outcomes and constructions of exclusions are less frequently explored (Parker & Ford, 2013). Nevertheless, some research does offer alternative constructions of exclusions and highlights some positive outcomes for children. Parker, Paget, Ford and Gwernan-Jones (2016) report that exclusion is sometimes constructed as an effective route to gaining external professional support for a child, by providing *evidence* to the LA that a school cannot meet their needs. Moreover, Flitcroft and Kelly (2016) suggest that managed moves, as an alternative to exclusion, can provide children at risk of exclusion with a chance to build new, positive relationships in an unfamiliar setting. By enrolling at a new school, a child may avoid the potential future invoking of a formal exclusion at their current educational setting (Cole, McCluskey, Daniels, Thompson, & Tawell, 2019). These constructions will be explored further throughout the rest of this chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW PART TWO

2.6 Introduction

Part two of this chapter explores key developments and issues within published literature to highlight the current discourses of school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion. It starts with a brief overview of inclusion, as a contrasting ideology of exclusion, before exploring dominant constructions of exclusion more closely. The implications of these discourses on social practice are considered, particularly regarding the support available to children in mainstream primary schools.

2.6.1 Search Strategy

To obtain information on how school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are constructed, the Boolean search terms "(school exclusion) AND (primary school or elementary school or primary education or elementary education) AND (views or opinions or thoughts or experiences or attitudes or perceptions or beliefs) AND (England)" were entered into the EBSCO Education Databases. Research referenced in the literature identified by the search terms was also explored via the University of Birmingham search platform FindIt.

2.7 Inclusion as a Construct

Inclusion as a concept has been discussed over the decades as an alternative to exclusionary practice (Martin-Denham, 2021a). Whilst there are varied definitions of inclusive pedagogy, inclusive practice and inclusive education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), inclusion generally aligns with the view that:

children and young people are included both socially and educationally in an environment where they feel welcomed and where they can thrive and progress. (Lauchlan & Grieg, 2015, p. 70)

Florian and Beaton (2018) define inclusive pedagogy as a philosophy of education. They state that it is "a response to individual differences between pupils that avoids the marginalisation that can occur with differentiation strategies that are designed only with individual needs in mind" (Florian & Beaton, 2018, p. 870). Thus, emphasising the rights of all children to an equal opportunity for mainstream education as embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989).

The acknowledgement of inclusionary practice is also evident in educational policy. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015) refers to 'Equality and Inclusion' within the statutory guidance. Though there is no definition of inclusion given in the guidance, it states that schools:

require thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage. Schools also have wider duties to prevent discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. (DfE/DoH, 2015, p. 93)

However, it is argued that the lack of definition for inclusion in statutory guidance is problematic (Martin-Denham, 2021a). Without specific guidance, some school practices adopted in the aim of inclusion can often be exclusionary (Tillson & Oxley, 2020). For example, in the hopes of improving behaviour whilst avoiding a recorded exclusion, thus maintaining a child's inclusion within an educational setting, both primary and secondary schools throughout England adopt the practice of *isolation* (Children's Commissioner, 2013). The practice involves an internal exclusion, whereby children are removed from the classroom but remain on site

(Martin-Denham, 2021a). This common practice highlights a contradiction between the construction of inclusion and school practice, whereby children are held in the care of the school in a 'limbo' between inclusion and exclusion (Abawi, Bauman-Buffone, Pineda-Báez, & Carter, 2018). Barker, Alldred, Watts, and Dodman (2010) suggest that the school-based exclusion is a response to political pressure to reduce exclusions, rather than an ideological change or move towards inclusion.

2.8 Exclusion as a Construct

School exclusion within common discourse typically refers to permanent exclusions and suspensions (Rose, Stanforth, Gilmore, & Bevan-Brown, 2021). Though, academic discourse also refers to hidden exclusions and alternatives to exclusion (Messeter & Soni, 2017). Nevertheless, whilst school exclusion is often constructed as a discrete outcome, it may be argued that different types of exclusion are facilitated at different points within a process (Gazeley, Marrable, Brown, & Boddy, 2013). English policy recognises a number of exclusionary practices, including: permanent exclusions (Department for Education, 2021), suspensions (Department for Education, 2022a) and managed moves (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008). Whilst the use of permanent exclusion is emphasised as a last resort, exclusionary practice varies between LAs and schools (Hatton, 2013).

Gazeley et al.'s (2013) qualitative study gathered views of school exclusion from a range of stakeholders, including practitioners from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers, LA professionals, school staff and children from secondary settings. The research, which was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, explored disciplinary exclusion as a practice in an attempt to identify examples of well-developed practice in addressing inequalities in school exclusions. Figure 1 represents exclusion within a continuum of provision

within six schools, across four LAs, as constructed by educational professionals (Gazeley et al., 2013). Though the figure presents exclusions as part of a clear, linear process, Gazeley et al. (2013) identifies that this is not always the case, as the options available to a child at risk of exclusion are limited to the resources available at the time.

Nevertheless, the continuum of provision highlights a distinction between ideology at different levels of practice. Within the research, Gazeley et al. (2013) note that all participatory schools referred to a problem-solving approach to provision, which may indirectly reduce exclusion. In line with this problem-solving approach, it was stated that there was a resourcefulness and willingness to try new things to support children at risk of exclusion. However, it may be argued that this approach only goes so far in supporting children before exclusion is used. Though research suggests that school staff can find it difficult to include all children in education (Rose et al., 2021), it is not clear at which point educational professionals differentiate between inclusion and exclusionary practice in discourse or practice.

Figure 1

Exclusion and Alternatives to Exclusion: A Continuum of Provision
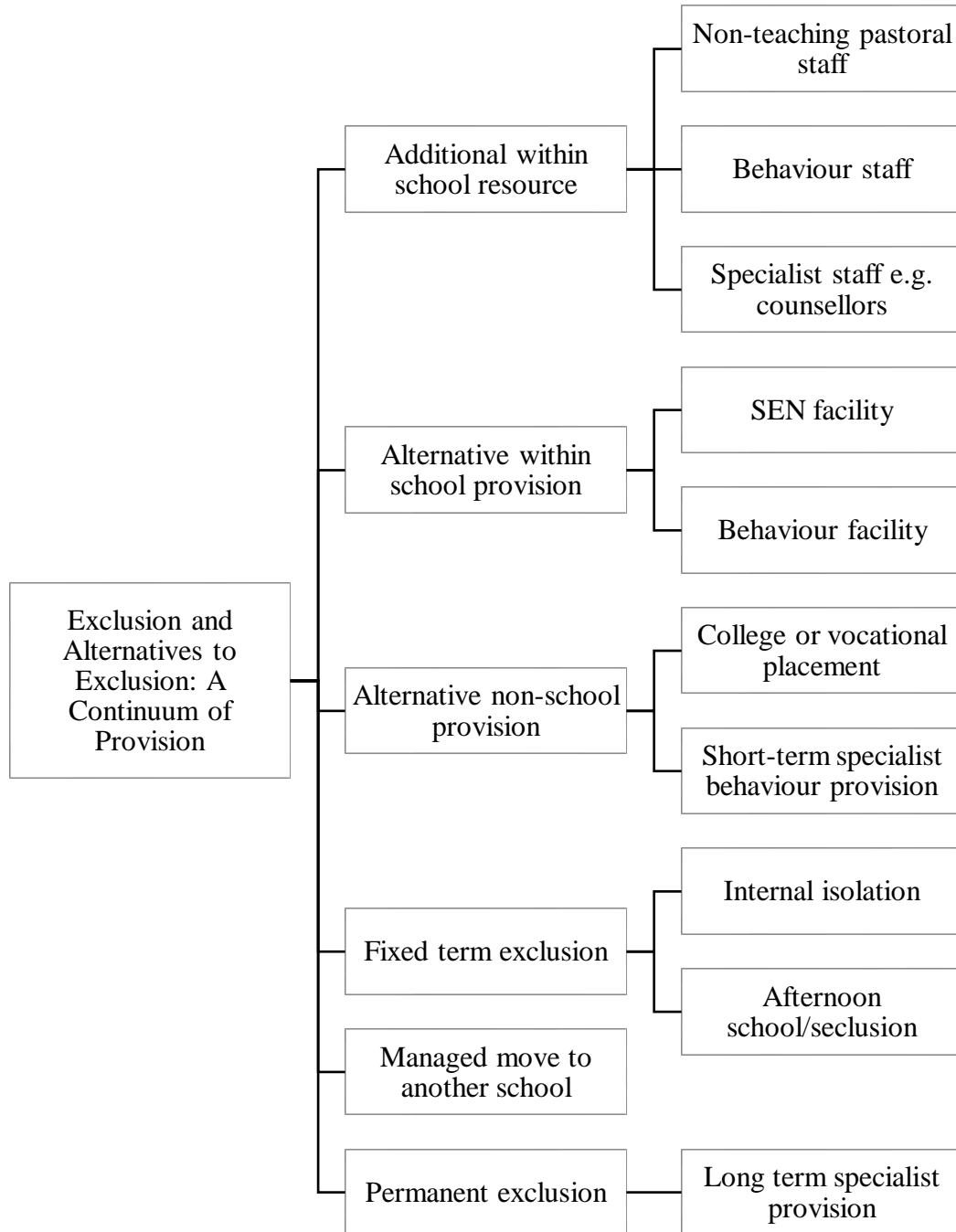
Note. Adapted from *Reducing inequalities in school exclusion: Learning From Good Practice* (p.25) by L. Gazeley, T. Marrable, C. Brown and J. Boddy, 2013, Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth.

2.8.1 Constructions of Permanent Exclusions

The construction of a permanent exclusion "refers to a pupil who is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned)" (Department for Education, 2022a, Permanent Exclusions Section). Upon a permanent exclusion, the child is removed from their current school roll and either enrols at another mainstream school or is transferred to an alternative provision, such as a PRU. Statutory guidance for head teachers states that a child can only be excluded from a school on disciplinary grounds, by the head teacher, as defined in the Education Act (1996). It also notes that the decision to exclude must be "lawful… rational; reasonable; fair; and proportionate" (Department for Education, 2021a, p.8). However, statistics demonstrate that the rate of exclusion for children with an EHCP or receiving SEND support are at least double that of their peers (Department for Education, 2020b). Children from a Gypsy Roma heritage also have a permanent exclusion rate of 0.39 compared to 0.10 for White British children. Whilst these exclusions may be considered lawful, the fairness of decisions may be questioned.

2.8.1.1 Permanent Exclusion as a Deterrent

Nevertheless, one construction of permanent exclusion is that it is an objective punishment or sanction for unacceptable behaviour (Department for Education, 2021). In line with this, dominant discourse constructs permanent exclusion as a last resort in the struggle to manage children's challenging behaviour. This is reflected in the reasons cited to exclude, as provided by the Department for Education (2022a), which state that persistent disruptive behaviour accounts for 34% of permanent exclusions and suspensions. In positioning teachers as having to 'tackle' undesirable behaviour, the dominant discourse positions children as defiant and unwilling to comply with school expectations (Stanforth & Rose, 2020). This construction

supports the view that schools in England often adopt a discipline and manage approach to teaching (Armstrong, 2018), aligning with ideas of the exercise of control as proposed in Foucault's (1977) Discipline and Punish. Whilst there is no explicit definition of this approach, Armstrong (2018) suggests that it is a descriptor of overlapping, reinforced assumptions within education. Often, schools are constructed as enforcers of social and moral regulation (Ball, 2013a). In turn, sanctions are seen to function as prevention, retribution, rehabilitation or deterrence from undesirable behaviours (Parsons, 2005). This is reflected in educational policy which constructs "good discipline in schools" as "essential" in order to ensure that "all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education" (Department for Education, 2021a, p.6). Where a child's behaviour is deemed challenging or disruptive, exclusions are constructed as a necessary step to safeguard the learning of other pupils in the school community (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019).

2.8.1.2 Permanent Exclusion as Support

However, this is not consistent across all educational settings in England. Arnold et al. (2009) highlight that individual school environments and cultures play a large part in determining whether a child will face exclusion or not. Whilst some schools use permanent exclusions as a sanction, others avoid it wherever possible (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019). However, when the decision to exclude is made, an alternative construction of exclusion is as a way of supporting children rather than punishment. Parker and Ford (2013) report that some schools justify using permanent exclusion as a means to evidence a child's needs in order to gain support from professional services. Within their phenomenological exploration of school exclusion, Arnold, Yeomans and Simpson (2009) found that school staff often cite a lack of resources as a factor outside of their control, which impacts the support available for children

within school settings. This path for support is acknowledged in government guidance which advises against:

> a 'no exclusion' policy as an end in itself. This can lead to perverse incentives to schools not to exclude even when exclusion is the only real way to make sure an excluded pupil can get the support they need, while remaining engaged in education. (Department for education, 2022b, p.3)

2.8.1.3 Permanent Exclusion as a Political Move

A further construction of permanent exclusion is that it enables schools to support political agendas. In England, schools face "huge financial, social and performative pressures" (Thompson, 2020, p.118). West and Pennell (2002) propose that schools in England exist within a system that promotes competition for students. Through the implementation of parental choice for school selection, school admissions and publication of league tables based on attainment, the school system is argued to be based on a quasi-market (West & Pennell, 2002). With a drive on attainment in high stakes testing, Thompson (2020) suggests that this has led to a narrowing of the school curriculum which may itself contribute to the rise in school exclusions. As schools are monitored on their attainment outcomes, some children who cannot achieve expectations are constructed as undesirable (Messeter & Soni, 2017). Furthermore, many schools are thought to respond to the pressure by creating low tolerance behaviour policies at the expense of personal and social development (Thompson, Tawell, & Daniels, 2021). Children are required to change their behaviour in order to comply with the policies, whilst often navigating systemic labelling of having difficulties that are irreconcilable with the school's expectations, or face exclusion (Bagley & Hallam, 2015).

2.8.2 Constructions of Suspensions

A suspension, previously referred to as a *fixed period exclusion* (Education Act, 1986) or *fixed term exclusion* (Department for Education, 2020b), is defined as being when a pupil "is excluded from a school for a set period of time" (Department for Education, 2022a, Suspensions Section). This time-bound exclusion can involve a part of the school day or a continuous period of exclusions, up to a maximum of 45 days in a single academic year.

2.8.2.1 Suspensions as Respite

One common construction of suspensions is that it is an opportunity to provide a period of respite for children and staff. In removing a child from the setting temporarily, suspensions are constructed as an opportunity to let incidents settle down for all involved (Martin-Denham, 2021b). At times when the school environment can be the cause of emotional distress for a child, they may find time at home a welcome relief (Parker et al., 2016). It can also serve as a time for reflection (Martin-Denham, 2021b). However, some parents argue that a suspension can be counter-productive to the intended disciplinary purpose, as some children prefer to be at home where their distress in the school environment is alleviated (Parker et al., 2016).

In addition to supporting children, suspensions are sometimes constructed as providing respite for teachers (Pavey & Visser, 2003). The wellbeing of teachers is an increasingly important topic within education (Brady & Wilson, 2021). Research suggests that 32.6% of teachers who qualified in 2014 were recorded as working outside of the teaching profession in 2019, which is the highest rate of teachers leaving the profession since the recording of the current series (UK Parliament., Long, & Danechi, 2021). Exploration into teachers' reasons for leaving the profession show that workload, stress and leadership support are three of the most cited factors (Department for Education, 2018a). Time spent managing pupil behaviour is cited as a

contributing factor towards perceptions of high workloads (Department for Education, 2018a). Martin-Denham (2021b) explored Head Teachers' views of exclusion and found that suspensions were often constructed as a safety measure to protect the wellbeing of teachers and other pupils.

2.8.2.2 Suspensions as a Message to Stakeholders

Suspensions are also constructed as a political strategy to send a message to stakeholders. Pavey and Visser (2003) report that suspensions are sometimes used as a deterrent to send a warning to pupils and parents that undesirable behaviour will not be tolerated by the school. In sending out a clear warning to pupils, parents and staff alike, change can be brought about by senior management in settings with a history of poor behaviour management and discipline (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019).

Moreover, similarly to permanent exclusions, suspensions are sometimes constructed as a necessary step within a political process to gain support for a child. At times where it is thought that a child needs specialist intervention, a suspension is construed as evidence that a child requires attention from the LA (Pavey & Visser, 2003). Without intervention, there is a risk that a child will be permanently excluded.

2.8.2.3 Suspensions as a Process to Exclude

Whilst the Department for Education (2021a) guidance on exclusion specifies that the "law does not allow for extending a fixed-period exclusion or 'converting' a fixed-period exclusion into a permanent exclusion" (p. 8), some parents construct suspensions as an opportunity for school staff to gather administrative evidence in preparation for the justification of a permanent exclusion (Parker et al., 2016). The statutory guidance for exclusions arguably supports this

construction by stating that another suspension period or permanent exclusion can begin immediately after the first period ends, when "further evidence has come to light" (Department for Education, 2021a, p. 8). Thus, facilitating a further suspension or permanent exclusion following an arguably minor incident (Parker et al., 2016).

In a similar vein, suspensions are sometimes constructed as an opportunity to evidence that a school is following legal processes. Respondents that contributed towards the Timpson Review (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019), suggested that a rise in suspensions at one school or academy trust may be an indicator of a management team addressing previous malpractice, rather than a rise in children being asked to leave the school. In this light, suspensions are still constructed as a pathway to exclusion, however schools are positioned as following procedure, rather than gathering evidence.

2.8.3 Constructions of Alternatives to Exclusion

Caution in interpreting official exclusion data as accurate has been shared (Hatton, 2013). Power and Taylor (2020) propose broadening the definition of exclusion to incorporate other constructions of the practice, including unofficial, informal and hidden exclusions. Unofficial exclusions have been highlighted as an illegal exclusionary practice within English schools. Such practices include the reducing of children's timetables, sending children home during the school day, coercing children to enrol at another school and 'off-rolling' (Children's Commissioner, 2013). These exclusions are not recorded within school exclusion data (Pavey & Visser, 2003). As a result, there is a concern that exclusionary practice cannot be monitored and that the needs of many children are unrecognised (Children's Commissioner, 2013). However, some parents state that the withholding of formal exclusions from school records can be beneficial for the child (Parker et al., 2016). In their research, whereby 35 parents of children

who had been excluded during primary school were interviewed, Parker et al., (2016) reported that some parents felt the recording of formal exclusions can lead to negative implications on theirs and their child's identities. Moreover, where parents felt that a school were "*building up a case* against the child" (Parker et al., 2016, p. 138), the lack of recorded exclusions would not justify or support a permanent exclusion.

2.8.3.1 Internal Exclusions

It is argued that the national practice of recording exclusions does not encompass the prevalent constructions of exclusions (Caslin, 2021). Some suspensions also take place internally within the school setting (Tillson & Oxley, 2020). A case study provided by the Department for Education (2014) as a *Whole School Approach to Managing Poor Behaviour* highlights discourse which encourages the use of an "inclusion unit" that is "supervised by senior staff" for children who "behave inappropriately". Caslin (2021) reports that this practice is increasing across schools in England.

The practice is stated to be an "effective deterrent against poor behaviour", in part, because children's ability to socialise with their peers is withdrawn for "the entire day" (Department for Education, 2014). However, it is also reported that hidden or grey exclusions perpetuate similar negative outcomes to permanent exclusions (Craig, 2015). Jull (2008) states that hidden exclusions often:

> exacerbate negative socio-behavioural developmental patterns, compound(ing) identified risk factors and associated deleterious social emotional and cognitive/learning outcomes. (Jull, 2008, p13)

2.8.3.2 Managed Moves

Managed moves, as previously shared, are constructed as the practice of facilitating a child's transition from one educational setting to another (DCSF, 2008). They are commonly constructed as an opportunity for a fresh start for the child (Bagley & Hallam, 2016). The *Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units* guidance states that a managed move should only take place with "the consent of all parties involved" (DCSF, 2008, p.8), including parents, governors and the LA. It is also stipulated that parents "should never be pressured into removing their child from the school under threat of a permanent exclusion" (DCFS, 2008, p.10). However, the Children's Commissioner (2019) reports that this is not always the case, with some parents feeling pressured into consenting to a managed move to avoid a permanent exclusion on their child's record. Moreover, to avoid a permanent exclusion on the school's statistics (Demie, 2021).

To date, there has been limited research on managed moves despite their frequency in English schools in the past decade (Messeter & Soni, 2017). Where research on managed moves has been conducted, it has largely focused on stakeholder perceptions of the process, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and then thematically analysed (H. Lee, 2020). Perceptions of the managed move process have been collected, using participants including young people (Hoyle, 2016), parents (Bagley & Hallam, 2016) and school staff (Bagley & Hallam, 2015). Participant's views have been collected both retrospectively (Craggs, 2018) and prior to the managed move process (H. Lee, 2020). Stakeholder perceptions of managed moves will be explored more below.

2.8.3.2.1 Constructions of Successful Managed Moves

A successful managed move is constructed in contrasting ways. One discourse focuses on the enrolment of a child within education, following their compliance with expectations. Some construct a productive managed move as the reintegration of a child in their original educational setting (Martin-Denham & Donaghue, 2020), whereas other constructions regard a successful managed move as a child's integration to a new educational setting (Chadwick, 2013). Alternatively, others may construct success as a positive change in the child's view of themselves. Bagley and Hallam (2016)'s exploration of parent and child views of managed moves shared that their construction of an effective managed move was a child's improved self-perception and confidence as a learner. Though this research only included one primary-aged child who had experienced a managed move, it supports findings from earlier research of that demographic.

Whilst the construction of successful managed moves may differ, research into the contributing factors of positive managed moves are consistent. One key factor, highlighted in Messeter and Soni (2017)'s systematic literature review of the managed move process, is relationships. Across nine studies, relationships were highlighted as a positive factor in each one. However, only two pieces of research within the literature review were focussing on managed moves within primary school provision (Bagley & Hallam, 2016; Craig, 2015). Other protective factors include the careful planning of a tailored curriculum (Vincent et al., 2007), a flexible approach to intervention (Chadwick, 2013) and good communication between schools, parents and children (Bagley & Hallam, 2016). Successful managed moves rely on an authentic opportunity for children to "reinvent themselves" (Bagley & Hallam, 2015, p.442), in an environment that can positively influence the child's own behaviour, learning and motivation

to attend school (Turner, 2020). However, it may be argued that this measurement of the success of managed moves perpetuates the discourse that children are to blame for the breakdown of staff-pupil relationships in their original school (Gazeley, 2010).

2.8.3.2.2 Constructions of Unsuccessful Managed Moves

At times where managed moves are reported to have failed, children are often constructed as displaying undesirable behaviours in their new setting. Martin-Denham (2020a) highlights how children's attempts at creating relationships can be construed by a focus on observed negative behaviours. For example, whilst a child may be attempting to be accepted as part of an established social group, they may be reprimanded for smoking with their new peers (Craig, 2015). Parents and children alike have indicated that school staff's constructions of children at risk of exclusion can negatively impact their relations and ability to respond to a child's needs during a managed move (Bagley & Hallam, 2016).

However, there are no current universal standards for best practice, meaning that protocols and expectations across provisions may vary (Messeter & Soni, 2017). In addition to administrative difficulties that this may present, conflicting constructions of a managed move can be unhelpful for all stakeholders involved. Dual registration at two educational settings, for example, often requires a child to adhere to two sets of expectations and policies. It is suggested that this "may confuse a pupil further and set them up for failure" (Chadwick, 2013, p. 72). Furthermore, Chadwick (2013)'s exploration of three LA managed move protocols identified that they were not easily accessible or understood by school staff, parents or secondary age pupils. Subsequently, primary-age children are even less likely to understand the process. This opposes the call for transparency within the process (Children's Commissioner, 2013).

2.8.3.3 Off-rolling

Off-rolling is defined as an exclusionary practice in schools in England, whereby a child is illegally removed from the school roll (Done & Knowler, 2021). The practice is constructed as an attempt to mask systemic failure and avoid the recording of exclusion (Power & Taylor, 2020). Whilst the aim of the practice may arguably be construed in the same vein as a managed move, off-rolling is constructed as an informal exclusion for the strategic manipulation of academic data (Machin & Sandi, 2020). Though off-rolling is thought to happen in England, Done and Knowler (2021) suggest that the fabrication of off-rolling as a manipulation of academic data for schools has led to a dominant discourse based on moral objections in society.

2.9 Dominant Discourses of Children at Risk of Exclusion

When discussing school exclusions, terminology explicitly or subtly positions children differently within discourse. Parsons (2005) highlights this by questioning:

> is the young person associated with the adjective or adjectival phrase of 'at risk', 'disaffected' or 'socially excluded', or is it another agent that has placed them 'at risk', caused their disaffection or excluded them? Are they troubled or troublesome, disruptive or experiencing disrupted pathways, intolerable or just not tolerated? (Parsons, 2005, p. 187)

In both literature and practice, *child(ren) at risk of exclusion* is a common phrase that is used within discourse. Cole et al. (2019) state that the term encompasses children who have not yet been excluded but demonstrate behaviours in school that typically lead to their removal from an educational setting. It can, however, be argued that there is a high degree of ambiguity in the assumed meaning of this phenomena. Douglas (1967) proposes that social phenomena are

typically described without clear definitions and in "abstract, common-sense theoretical terms" (p. 248). With no definition provided in statutory guidance (DfE, 2021a), the term 'child at risk of exclusion' is used with taken for granted assumptions of an objective truth (Nash, 2002). Whilst Popkewitz (2013) argues that the manufacturing of determinant categories of people is through a process of fabrication in order to embody cultural views of life, it may be argued that the construction of children at risk of exclusion in discourse creates exclusion itself.

2.9.1 Construction of Special Educational Needs

Traditionally, psychology as a discipline originated from the exploration of phenomena from a positivist epistemology (Sangar, 2018). Derived from early understandings of child development (Erica Burman, 2016), discourses of children have often been concerned with the perception 'normalcy' (Leiter, 2007). In focusing on individual ability, perceived difficulties are often assumed to be a within-person deficit (Rees, 2017). This leads to the pathologizing of children based on a medical model of disability (O'Reilly, Muskett, Karim, & Lester, 2020). The biological discourse of difference attempts to make sense of uncertainty through diagnostic labels and follows the premise that a cure can be found (Swain, French, & Cameron, 2003).

A construction of children at risk of exclusion is that they often have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); a term that was coined in the Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978). Parker et al. (2016) report that children at risk of exclusion often have pronounced needs, such as Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). However, Craig (2015) notes that the formally considered SEND 'Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties' (SEBD) is the only need to be regularly addressed with exclusion. Though children with diagnosed needs have a legal right to attend a mainstream education setting (Equality Act, 2010), common discourse constructs mainstream

school staff as being unable to meet the needs of some groups of children (Cole, 2015). The biological discourse constructs difficulties as a biological condition within the child that cannot be supported without expert intervention, such as medication or ongoing professional support. As a result, children are asked to move schools due to associated behaviours of a special educational need (Craig, 2015). This is also reflected in exclusion data which suggests that children with identified SEND are excluded at more than twice the rate of their peers (Department for Education, 2020b, 2022a).

In line with this, mainstream teachers are positioned as being unable to support all children in their learning due to insufficient specialist skills (Kokkinos, 2007). Opportunities to facilitate adequate support and positive change for children with differing needs, through environmental and pedagogical changes, are, therefore, closed. Thus, children with needs considered to be outside the norm are constructed as being vulnerable to exclusion from mainstream education (Parker & Ford, 2013). Arguably this reaffirms the view that medical discourses can be influential in social oppression (Shakespeare, 2013).

2.9.2 Construction of Mental Illness

In conjunction with the previous discourse of biology, the medicalisation of mental distress is another common discourse in education. In classifying behaviour in such a way, people are often given a diagnostic label when they do not meet the constructions of social norms (Pearson, 2016). Thus, it inherently links mental distress with discourses of abnormality, which attempt to categorise human behaviours into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' (Foucault, 1977). This is observed in government guidance, such as *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (DfE, 2018), which refers to mental health 'issues' and 'problems' throughout. Whilst the impact of school culture on the mental wellbeing of pupils and staff is noted, individuals are often

positioned as being responsible for challenges in practice due to a psychological deficit. This is evident with common phrases such as, "when schools suspect a pupil has a mental health problem" (DfE, 2018, p.5) and the suggestion of seeking clinical support for the child.

Through such language, a discourse of abnormality is perpetuated and the categorisation of emotional responses to environmental stimuli is endorsed. Though the terminology has changed, Cole (2015) highlights that this performative use of language to label children's mental wellbeing is not new. Within education through the years, children have been constructed as being 'maladjusted' (Ministry of Education, 1955) or having 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' or 'BESD' (Department for Education, 2011). In recent guidance, though the definitions significantly overlap with previous terminology, it is argued that there has been a move to a more inter-disciplinary understanding of children's behaviour (Cole, 2015). Nevertheless, whilst the prevalent discourse encourages the term 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health' or 'SEMH' needs (DfE/DoH, 2015), it may be argued that the changes do not go far enough to safeguard children from the discourse of abnormality. Radez et al. (2021) highlight children's perceptions of stigma associated with mental health problems and the impact that this has on their seeking of professional help. The term 'Emotional Health and Well-being' is offered as an alternative phrase to shift the discourse of a deficit model to a more holistic approach (Cole, 2015). However, the current prevalent discourse of mental health is evident by the recent research into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental health and their "probable mental health conditions" (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021, p. 356).

Children at risk of exclusion are often constructed as having underlying mental health difficulties, both by their parents (Parker et al, 2016) and educational professionals (Caslin,

2021; Cole et al., 2019). Whilst it is not possible to accurately portray the number of children who are excluded with perceived mental health difficulties, due to varying constructions of the phenomena and limited reported data (Cole, 2015), Ford et al. (2018) suggest that school exclusion is more common for children constructed to have mental health difficulties than their peers. Children with mental health difficulties, as well as children at risk of exclusion, are often constructed as being unable to regulate their emotions (Caslin, 2021), and presenting behaviours that may be challenging for adults to manage as a result of having an unmet need (Cole et al., 2019). In the same discourse, teachers are often positioned as being unable to support their needs due to their lack of adequate training and skills with regard to mental health difficulties (Kokkinos, 2007). In addition to contributing to the construction of abnormality, this discourse facilitates the construction of different types of provision and legitimises the authority of experts (Nettleton, 2021). At times when such services are not available to support children independently, there is more perceived pressure on teaching staff to support complex needs. The prevailing discourse constructs mainstream schools as being unable to achieve this (Martin-Denham, 2021a).

2.9.3 Construction of Challenging Behaviour

Rose et al. (2021) highlights a growing concern over recent years regarding the standard of behaviour within English classrooms, namely behaviour which interrupts the teaching and learning of other children (Jull, 2009). Statistics show that 'persistent disruptive behaviour' continues to be the commonly cited reason for school exclusion in England (Department for Education, 2019a, 2020b, 2022a) . However, interpretation of the statistics should be done with caution (Hatton, 2013). Arguably, the interpretation of 'persistence' and 'disruptive behaviour' is a construction by educational professionals itself. This is evident in the contradictory discourses within education (Pearson, 2016), and is demonstrated in government publications,

such as the *SEND Code of Practice* (DfE/DoH, 2015) and *Behaviour and Discipline in Schools* (DfE, 2020) guidance. Whilst terminology has sought to remove the label of behaviour as a special educational need, Caslin (2019) argues that it is still very much the focus within education.

Children at risk of exclusion are often constructed within a discourse of challenging behaviour (Cole et al., 2019). Though this is reported within official data as an objective truth, labels of behaviour are defined by individual teachers and their expectations of behaviour in school (Holt, 2016). McCluskey et al. (2016) suggests that there is an inequality in the way that individual school systems operate and respond to behaviour that staff find challenging. Tolerance of behaviour varies within and between parents, school staff and policy writers (Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013). Which in turn impacts the approach taken to supporting children at risk of exclusion.

One construction highlights behaviour, or the ability to regulate behaviour, as a special education need or as the result of a SEND need itself (Martin-Denham, 2021a). Armstrong (2018) reports that teachers often attribute poor behaviour in the classroom with deficits within the child. However, through this discourse, behaviour that deviates from the norm requires further exploration and understanding (Cole et al., 2019). Where there are concerns regarding a child's behaviour, DfE/DoH (2015) guidance states that "there should be an assessment to determine whether there are any causal factors such as undiagnosed learning difficulties, difficulties with communication or mental health issues" (p. 96). Therefore, behaviour is seen as communication. This takes into account the impact of ecosystemic and environmental factors that may influence a child's behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and promotes the early intervention of a multi-agency team in order to support the child. Behaviour can develop

through the building of relationships, restorative practice and changes in the environment, including teaching approaches (Cole et al., 2019).

However, a contradicting discourse is also evident within government policy and school practice. As well as espousing to encourage teaching staff to explore unmet needs of children demonstrating behaviour that is challenging, current guidance empowers school staff to "crack down on bad behaviour" (Department for Education & Morgan, 2015, Tackling Low Level Disruption Section). Statutory guidance on *Behaviour and Discipline in Schools* discusses "teacher's powers" in addition to "punishing poor behaviour" (DfE, 2020, p. 2). Within this discourse, behaviour is often constructed as a choice. The child is often positioned as a 'culprit' and is at greater risk of exclusion (Parsons & Howlett, 1996). In contrast to the approaches to support systemic change, behaviour is constructed as being managed through behaviourist approaches, such as a "strong behaviour policy" with "rewards and sanctions" (DfE, 2020, p. 3), or "punishments" (UK Government, 2022). By positioning teachers as enforcers of universal standards of behaviour, the focus is on the child to change rather than educational professional practice (Caslin, 2019; Martin-Denham, 2021a).

The distinctions between SEND needs and behaviour is evident in practice. Often, a SEND Co-ordinator (SENDCo) and Behaviour Lead are different, uncoordinated roles of responsibility within a school setting (Cole et al., 2019). This highlights an ongoing conflict between the two discourses in balancing discipline and care within education (Loxely & Thomas, 2001). Nevertheless, children with perceived behaviour difficulties are often at greater risk of exclusion (Holt, 2016). In addition to the long-lasting stigma attached to inherent difficulties (Caslin, 2019, 2021), research suggests that there is less tolerance for behaviours that are constructed within a medicalised model of disability within mainstream schools (McCluskey et al., 2019).

2.9.4 Positioning of Children at Risk of Exclusion

In line with the constructions of SEND, mental illness and behavioural difficulties, children at risk of exclusion are often constructed as being *unable to cope* in the current educational system (Martin-Denham, 2021a). Arguably, this phrase positions the child as being inflexible and incapable of adhering to the norm; the current construction of school. It also positions teachers as being helpless in facilitating changes that will result in positive outcomes for such children. On the other hand, children at risk of exclusion are often positioned as active agents in the discourse of exclusion. At times, there is an implication that children are understanding of the criteria for exclusion, the changes that are desired of them and are active in attempting to be excluded. However, given the lack of a clear, shared meaning of what it is to be a child at risk of exclusion, it may be suggested that a child will be unable to control their involvement in the phenomena. Douglas (1967) emphasises that "if one cannot determine the meaning of something, then he does not feel that he can control it" (p. 250).

Lunt (2007) argues that the approach of identifying needs and delegating funding for individual children supports the construction of children as problem-holders and in need of change. This facilitates a discourse of expertise (Cole, 2015) and a reluctance to evaluate and plan for change of systemic practice within schools (Skidmore, 2004). Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) propose the adoption of a systemic model which recognises that undesirable behaviour is a social construct in context. The relationship between the interaction of the school and the individual is therefore the focus (Rose et al., 2021). In line with a discourse of inclusion, there is a greater likelihood of systemic change (Skidmore, 2004).

2.10 Summary

Literature documents various negative outcomes that are associated with children who have been excluded from school; from poor mental and physical health (Pirrie et al., 2011) to a greater likelihood of involvement in criminal activity (Williams, Papadopoulou, & Booth, 2012). Despite this, recent data suggests that the rate of exclusions in England is increasing (Department for Education, 2022a). However, the specific extent to which exclusionary practice is increasing is not known (Department for Education & Timpson, 2019), as constructions of exclusion itself are varied (Hatton, 2013). Taken together, the existing literature demonstrates a range of constructions within practice, including permanent exclusion, suspensions, internal, hidden and illegal exclusion. Though not all are incorporated in the recording and tracking of exclusions under the current definition (Power & Taylor, 2020).

In light of the current context in which the rate of disciplinary exclusions continues to increase in schools in England, but where dominant discourses juxtapose constructions of exclusions as a punishment for behaviour and a process to gain support, it is an important opportunity to consider how exclusions are constructed by professionals within school settings. Where researchers have explored pupil, parent and school staff accounts of exclusions and alternatives to exclusion, the available research mostly concerns itself with the 'views' and 'perceptions' of stakeholders within a secondary school context, rather than the constructed nature of knowledge itself. In viewing discourse as performative in creating social action, it is assumed that "the more the shared linguistic terminology for dealing with some social actions, the more the shared meanings of such phenomena" (Douglas, 1967, p. 247). Therefore, a greater understanding of the construction of school exclusion itself, by practitioners who are influential in the support offered to children, is important in order to challenge oppressive practice (Foucault, 1977).

Moreover, the positioning of children in relation to school exclusions, and the frequent use of the term "child at risk of exclusion" in literature and policy, poses its own difficulties due to the ambiguous meaning of the term. Within common discourse, the term is used as though describing an objective category of child, often based on a discourse of abnormality and difference (Foucault, 1977). However, there is a taken for granted assumption that different groups in society construct a child at risk of exclusion in the same way. Arguably, school staff, parents and children may have several meanings of the terminology and the social action that follows. Whilst this may appear unimportant, literature details how discourse shapes social action. If a commonly used term is difficult to define by social actors, it will be difficult to manage and support (Douglas, 1967). Thus, teachers of children at risk of exclusion, in addition to children themselves, will be unaware of the definition of this term and therefore how to support them to remain and thrive in mainstream schools. Furthermore, a lack of clarity also impedes society's ability to effectively monitor social practice. Within the EP profession specifically, the awareness of the impact of dominant discourses on educational practice and the ability to challenge constructions of children are pertinent to the role (Bozic, 1999). Whilst literature indicates that the construction of children and their access to education has evolved over time (Gillard, 2011), government statistics suggest that children with particular characteristics are more often excluded than their peers. Data suggests that children from a Gypsy Roma heritage have the highest rate of exclusion across ethnicities, boys are more likely to be excluded than girls, whilst children from low-socio economic backgrounds are reportedly more than four times more likely to be excluded than their peers (Department for Education, 2020b). Children who are said to have SEND are also excluded at five times the rate of their peers. Whilst this information may be indicative of current trends of exclusion, it raises questions of how children are constructed as being at risk of exclusion and how these

constructions may influence children's access to education. Burman (2016) argues that children and the concept of childhood is socially constructed to serve a bureaucratic function, whilst T. Billington and Pomerantz (2016) suggest that the characteristics of children that we invest in as a society have themselves arisen from the needs of contemporary government.

The complex constructions of school exclusions and children that are at risk of exclusion formed the basis for the development of this research. In order to add to the limited literature available, the present research aspired to explore the discursive constructions of educational professionals. It also aimed to add to the limited understanding of exclusionary practice within a primary school context. The research questions, methodology and methods are discussed below in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research explored primary school teaching staff discourses around children at risk of exclusion. A qualitative design was employed and included semi-structured interviews with a range of a teaching staff. The transcribed data was analysed using a six-stage, adapted version of Willig's (2008, 2013) Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) (Pearson, 2016). The research questions that were explored in this study were:

1) How do educational professionals construct children at risk of exclusion within discourse?
2) How do educational professionals construct exclusion within discourse?
3) How are subjects (teachers and pupils) positioned within these discourses?
4) How do these constructions open up/close down opportunities for support for children at risk of exclusion?

This chapter starts with an exploration of the philosophical positioning of this research. It provides an overview of approaches to analysing discourse before discussing pertinent aspects of Foucault's seminal work and their relevance to this study. The chapter concludes with acknowledgement of the criticisms of a Foucauldian approach.

3.2 Research Orientation

Research is the engagement in systematic inquiry about phenomena of interest and requires the careful consideration of the philosophical positioning of the researcher, the construction of the research questions and the subsequent research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ontological orientation of research is influenced by the way in which the world is viewed and beliefs about the nature of the existence of the world. Whilst the epistemological position of

research is concerned with the way in which knowledge of the world comes to be known by the researcher. These philosophical assumptions, as seen in Table 2, subsequently influence the questions that a researcher chooses to study, as well as the design of the study itself (Thomas, 2017).

Traditionally, positivism and empiricist science has been seen as the dominant research paradigm in social sciences (Willig, 2013). This historical view contends that knowledge can be gained through systematic collection of data and is objective; thus, knowledge is "uncontaminated by culture, history and ideology" (Gergen, 2001, p. 7). Moreover, in seeking transcendent truths, findings can be neutrally observed and unaffected by another researcher (Porta & Keating, 2008). In ascribing to this approach of knowledge, it is believed that there is a straightforward relationship between phenomena, their representation and our perception and understanding of it (Willig, 2013).

Contrastingly, social constructionism posits that all traces of 'reality' are attributed to the processes of relationships between history, culture and language. This philosophical position rejects the claims of transcendent truths; instead viewing knowledge as a specific reading or interpretation of conditions (Willig, 2013). It argues that positivist claims of universal truth can be problematic, specifically in affecting the distribution of power and creating the oppression of marginalised people within society (Gergen, 2001). However, the increase in interpretivist research and the opposition of the dominant view of social science has led to the development of alternative versions of knowledge (Gergen, 2015).

Table 2

Research Orientations and Their Philosophical Positions

	Positivism	Social Constructionism
Ontology	A single, discoverable reality exists (realist)	Several versions of reality exist and their meaning is constructed through interaction (relativist)
Epistemology	Findings are viewed as 'truths' or 'universal laws' based on empiricism (objective)	Knowledge is constructed by the researcher who aims to understand varying interpretations of the world (subjective)
Logic of Inquiry	A researcher begins with a theory and aims to confirm/reject their hypothesis through testing (deductive reasoning)	A researcher begins with observations of phenomena and develops theory based on the exploration of patterns (inductive reasoning)
Methodology	Knowledge of the world can be obtained objectively through experimental investigation and measurable observations.	Knowledge of the world can be interpreted through exploratory methods, namely interviews and focus groups.

Note. Based on *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* by P. Schwartz-Shea and D. Yanow, 2012, Routledge. Copyright 2012 by Taylor and Francis.

The philosophical position adopted in this research is social constructionism. The study aims to explore how primary school teaching staff construct the socio-cultural concepts: school 'exclusions', alternatives to exclusion and 'children at risk of exclusion'. The research also aims to understand how these constructions implicate social practice within primary education.

3.2.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is argued to have been born of opposition to positivist assumptions of universal truth and objectivism (Burr, 2015). Whilst there is no singular definition of social constructionism, the theoretical orientation originates from developments within science and the sociology of knowledge (Wang, 2016). Influenced by multiple disciplines, including philosophy, psychology and linguistics, social constructionism takes a critical view of "taken-for-granted or essentialized reality" (Gergen, 2001, p. 101). Gergen (2001) argues that:

> This is not to propose that 'nothing exists' or that 'we can never know reality'… but rather that when we attempt to articulate what exists, to place it into language, we enter the world of socially generated meanings. (p.100)

In contrast to the epistemological position of mainstream psychology and the positivist claim of transcendent or universal truth, social constructionism challenges that knowledge is constructed through social relationships (Burr, 2003). It is suggested that "*nothing* is real unless people agree that it is" (Gergen, 2015, p. 5). From this critique of the assumptions of empiricism, social constructionism has been positioned as a threat to traditional psychology and dominant views of knowledge (Burr, 2003). One societal view that has faced recent challenge is the pathologizing of individuals based on the assumptions of a 'definable' nature, including the phenomena of mental health, disability and gender (Oakley, 2016; Thomas & Loxley, 2022; Williams, Billington, Goodley & Corcoran, 2017).

Research aligning with a social constructionist approach views language as a tool in which the construction of phenomena in society is developed. It is argued to be a behaviour in itself and a form of crucial social action (Rosa, 2019). Therefore, research is often concerned with the performative function of language as "indicators of an alternative way of constructing the world

as opposed to the necessary or superior way" (Gergen, 2001, p. 100). Discourse analysis is one way in which constructions of meaning can be explored, understood and reconstructed (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2003).

3.2.1.1 Discourse

There are several definitions and understandings of *discourse*. One definition of discourse is that they are "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements… that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 2003, p. 64). Another definition defines the phenomena as "sets of statements that construct objects and an array of subject positions" (Parker, 1994, p. 245). Whilst definitions may vary, discourse is largely viewed as a way of interpreting the world; providing meaning to behaviour and experiences by deconstructing the social practices that facilitate them (Burr, 2003; 2015).

3.3 Approaches to Analysing Discourse

Discourse analysis "seeks to understand the role of discourse in the construction of our social world" (Wiggins, 2017, p. 32). Whilst differing approaches to discourse analysis may all be based upon the assumption that language is constructive, the key principles and process of analysis between each approach varies. It is stated that there is no hierarchical positioning between discourse analysis approaches (Wiggins, 2017). Instead, an approach is chosen based on its key principles and relevance to the research questions a study wants to address.

Table 3 summarises five key approaches to discourse analysis and their distinct analytical focus. Some approaches focus their analysis on the organisational structure of language within interactions, which Burr (2003) coins as micro-social constructionism. Examples of this can be seen in Conversation Analysis (CA) and Discursive Psychology (DP), whereby talk is analysed

to understand how meaning of reality is constructed through interaction (Wiggins, 2017). Other approaches explore discourse as a social structure within a historical context, known as macro-social constructionism (Burr, 2003). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) are examples of approaches that explore discourse with regards to wider ideologies and power relations (Wetherell et al., 2003).

Table 3

Approaches to Discourse Analysis

Form of Discourse Analysis and Key Principles	Critique	Type of Social Constructionism
1. Conversation Analysis (CA) To explore the organisational structure of talk that underpins social action. It emphasises the performance role of speakers through their interactions. CA often explores naturalistic or synchronous online interactions. The analysis focuses on the nuances of spoken language, e.g. turn-taking organisation, disclaimers and footing shifts.	CA primarily focuses on the social organisation of talk and how people make sense of each other in interaction, not allowing the interpretation of power relations that may be implicated in interactions.	Micro-social constructionism

2. Discursive Psychology (DP) To examine how psychological concepts, such as subject identity, is used and managed in discourse. DP often explores naturalistic and synchronous online interactions, as well as interviews and focus groups. The analysis focuses on participant's constructions of themselves and their presentation of their actions as factual during interactions.	DP focuses on the microprocesses of interactions between individuals, and not making links to wider ideological and power relations.	Micro-social constructionism
3. Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP) To identify the culturally available repertoires that shape our understanding of a particular topic. It explores how the repertoires define the subject positions available within the topic. CDP often explores interactions within interviews, focus groups and news media text.	CDP is primarily focused on the language used to construct understanding and subject positions, whilst not making links to wider ideological and social relations.	Micro-social constructionism
4. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) To reveal hidden ideologies that oppress individuals or groups within society. CDA focuses on the relationship between language and power and undermining these ideologies.	CDA focuses on discourses in public settings or institutions and treats language as a matter of choice by an individual: that people deliberately make language choices that communicate an argument. Thus, focusing on	Macro-social constructionism

	cognitive processes of word selection.	
5. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) To explore how the construction of discourses make 'truths' available about the world. FDA focuses on how such discourses influence people's subjectivities and social practice. The analysis often looks at interaction through interviews or speeches, written texts and visual images.	FDA subscribes to a subjective and interpretive analysis process which can be difficult to implement in practice.	Macro-social constructionism

Note. Adapted from *Discursive Psychology: Theory, Method and Applications* (p. 33) by S. Wiggins, 2017, SAGE Publications, Ltd. Copyright 2017 by Sally Wiggins.

In accordance with the research questions of this study, FDA has been determined as the most suitable tool for analysing discourses of school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion. The approach allows for the exploration of power relations and social action, in addition to the construction of reality through discourse (Wiggins, 2017). Hall (2003) emphasises the approach's assumption that knowledge, power and the body are inextricably linked, stating that:

> Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true'. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices. (Hall, 2003, p. 76)

This research is interested in the macro-social exploration of discourses of school 'exclusions' and its implications on subject positions of 'children at risk of exclusion'. Therefore, FDA is suitable as it also allows the further exploration of how discourses influence social action and the practices within education. FDA has previously been used in analysing discourses around concepts of health, gender and race (Burr, 2015), including children and constructions of mental health (Pearson, 2016) and shame (Sangar, 2018).

3.4 Taking a Foucauldian Approach

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) provides opportunity for reflection and elaboration of dominant discourses that shape society (Parker, 2013). Though Foucault's position often changed during his career, he proposed that discourses are "practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 2002a, p.54). He also widened his definition of discourse to include what is "never-said" and "not-said" (Foucault, 1972, p. 43). Willig (2013) postulates that FDA, therefore, takes language beyond its immediate context; instead asking questions about the relationships between discourse, how people feel, social practice and the material conditions that support experiences to take place.

As previously highlighted, it is concerned with power and knowledge, and their role in shaping our understanding of the world through language (Sam, 2019). Whilst FDA pays attention to the language in practice, the approach is more concerned with the constitution of social and psychological life (Willig, 2013, p. 130). It therefore takes a "top-down" perspective of discourse analysis, concentrating on the broader ideological issues and their relation to power through discourse. Thus, being a suitable approach for the exploration of discourses that create inequities and oppression (Burr, 2015; Foucault, 1972).

It is not the aim of FDA to describe which discourses are true or accurate reflections of 'reality', but to analyse the mechanisms through which subjects and objects are produced through discourse (Sangar, 2018). Foucauldian views of discourse posit that language does not just describe the world but is productive and achieves social action (Hall, 2003). At times, this can present oppressive versions of the world (Parker, 2005). This research is concerned with children at risk of exclusion as an object, and how school exclusion and the distinction between children is constructed through language. The discourses of 'exclusion' and 'children at risk of exclusion' are capable of creating social structures (Smith, 2008). Because of this, it is argued that discourses are powerful in their influence of the creation of social practices (Sangar, 2018).

This section shall expand upon these pertinent points, taking into consideration the ideas of Foucault, which have been briefly touched upon in earlier chapters of this research.

3.4.1 Objects

Discourse is described as the tool that brings phenomena, or *objects*, into social reality (Gergen, 2001). Whilst a physical material or event may exist, there may be several discourses surrounding it, each providing different, contradictory constructions of it (Burr, 2003). Therefore, it is argued that, without discourse some phenomena do not exist (Parker, 1992) as objects have no meaning outside of discourse (Foucault, 1972).

3.4.2 Subjects

Discourses are also viewed as being able to construct individuals, or *subjects*, and their beliefs, based on the available discourses that are prevailing at the time (Gergen, 2001). It is suggested that these figures are not innately created, but are subject to specific discursive regimes at the time and historically (Hall, 2003). Therefore, at any one time, there are limited elements of

identity on offer to accept. As some discourses are so entrenched within society and are perceived as common sense, subject identities are often difficult to see and challenge. Nevertheless, Foucault proposes that dominant discourses can be resisted and renegotiated, thus different identities can be constructed (Foucault, 1978). However, this facilitation of change can foster conflict from social institutions, due to a threat of the status quo (Burr, 2015; Sangar, 2018).

In addition to the construction of individuals, it is argued that a variation of subject positions, which people can accept or resist, are also created (Sangar, 2018). The consideration of positioning is an important aspect of analysis from a Foucauldian approach, as "the social meaning of what has been said will be shown to depend upon the positioning of interlocutors which is itself a product of the social force a conversation action is taken 'to have'" (Davies & Harre, 2003, p. 262). It is through these constructions of identity that discourses are viewed as being able to facilitate and limit what is said, and by whom, as they bring about implications for the kind of responses that are brought into being (Burr, 2015). The Foucauldian perspective argues that it is through this power that knowledge "once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and disciplining practices" (Hall, 2003, p. 76).

3.4.3 Power

Discourses make available "ways-of-seeing and ways-of-being" (Willig, 2013, p. 130). From a Foucauldian perspective, this production of knowledge is extrinsically linked with *power*. Foucault (1972) argued that the effectiveness of creating agreed knowledge is more important than the question of the 'truth' of the knowledge itself. Hall (2003) highlights that knowledge is power, stating that, "All knowledge, once applied in the real world has real effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true'" (p. 76). Therefore, a *regime of truth* has consequences for

social policy and practice adopted within that cultural context (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1978) postulates that subjects are created and guided by dominant discourses of identity, available within the cultural context to maintain social standards.

A further consideration of power from a Foucauldian perspective, is the direction for which it radiates. Traditionally, power has been viewed as a single transaction between two beings, such as an individual, an organisation or a group of people. It has also been viewed as a deployment of ruling ideas by the ruling class in a linear direction (Hall, 2003). However, Foucault (1980) proposes that power circulates through all levels of society, producing discourse and knowledge through mechanisms. It is through these *power relations* (Foucault, 1980) that differing discursive formations "divide, classify and inscribe" objects in their respective regimes of truth, often legitimising existing social structures through dominant discourse. In this sense, the relationship between knowledge and power is fluid and complex (Guion Akdag & Swanson, 2018).

3.5 Challenges of Taking on a Foucauldian Approach

Whilst Foucault is thought of by many as a revolutionary thinker (Mills, 2003), it is acknowledged that his writings were sometimes contradictory and changed over time (Guion Akdag & Swanson, 2018). As a result, his work can be difficult to read and his theories can be misinterpreted by researchers (Ball, 2013a). However, Ball (2013b) posits that Foucault attributed value to the development of one's self through the production of writing freely. In taking such an approach to personal development, it encourages researchers to be "extremely critical of one's own position and not assume that one has ever reached a position where one has discovered the final 'truth' about a subject" (Mills, 2003, p.3).

Foucault's work is also often criticised for its failure to provide a rigorous method of analysis for researchers. Whilst he suggests a connection between discourse, power and knowledge, he has been criticised for failing to articulate a specific method for the analysis of discourse (Burr, 2015). Consequently, researchers are required to draw upon his theories and apply them within a tailored schema (McLaren, 2009). Instead of following a set framework, however, Carabine (2001) proposes that Foucault's ideas should be adopted as a methodological lens in order to be critical of discourse, power and knowledge. As a result, the lack of prescription is sometimes positioned as a strength for researchers, who can adopt key principles of Foucault's writing flexibly (Guion Akdag & Swanson, 2018).

Despite these known challenges, it was deemed that Foucault's theories of discourse, power and knowledge would add value to this research. By raising one's own consciousness of discourses of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion, and being critical of its influence in educational practice, it is hoped that challenging of the status quo and alternatives can be achieved. Therefore, the aim of this type of approach to analysis is to free ourselves from our current understanding and taken for granted knowledge.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

4.1 Introduction

This exploratory research explored the discourses of school 'exclusion' and 'children at risk of exclusion' by educational staff from primary school settings in North-West England. A flexible qualitative design was adopted, and data was collated through semi-structured interviews with five primary school, teaching staff members. The data was then analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) as described by Willig (2013) and adapted by Pearson (2016). This chapter outlines the research design adopted and ethical considerations that were addressed.

4.2 Research Design

Consistent with the research orientation, the research design of this study was flexible and evolved through an iterative process. Adaptations were made in account of pragmatic considerations during the study, which is deemed appropriate for exploratory research (Robson, 2011). Due to the view that the researcher is integral to design, interviewing style and the co-construction of data based on their own personal history, qualitative approaches acknowledge that research is never objective (Robson, 2011). For this reason, this research aims to explore multiple realities constructed through discourse, and therefore does not aim to provide generalisable findings. In contrast, it acknowledges my subjectivity as a researcher and the influence of my personal interests in the topic, social practice and power on the construction of knowledge within this study (Burr, 2015). Moreover, the philosophical assumptions of this research design complements subjective epistemology and interpretivist presuppositions, suggesting that the intersubjective realities of participants and my interpretation of that reality are of equal weight (Schwartz-Shea, 2012).

4.3 Research Methods

Qualitative methods are regarded as suitable for exploratory research as they explore a variety of participant interpretations, "in order to understand wherein the differences of experience and interpretation lie" (Schwartz-Shea, 2012, p. 41). As FDA can be used to understand the mechanisms behind social policy and practice (Sam, 2019), several methods of data generation were considered for this research. Whilst the gathering of naturalistic interactions within naturally occurring contexts has its advantages (Nikander, 2008), it was considered impractical for this research due to time constraints. Focus groups were also deemed inappropriate due to the nature of the topics to be explored. It is argued that there may be a difference between private, public and collectives discourses and that these can be affected by inherent power imbalances between participants (Rutledge, Gilliam, & Closson-Pitts, 2021).

As a result of these reflections, semi-structured interviews with individual participants were considered to be the most appropriate method for this research. Semi-structured interviews ensure the research questions can be explored in a safe, confidential environment, at the same time as allowing for flexibility in design to accommodate for the needs of individual participants. When exploring discourse, the method also allows the facilitation of informal talk and sharing of experience, whilst using prompts to focus on the research aims (Willig, 2008). In contrast to the ontological position of positivist research, where interviews may be used to locate and collect objective data with the aim of confirming or falsifying a hypothesis, an interpretivist view of using interviews is as method to meaning-make between the interviewer and interviewee (Schwartz-Shea, 2012). Therefore, data is not considered to be collected, but to be co-generated and interpreted in this research.

The schedules for the semi-structured interviews were designed to prompt discussion around school 'exclusions' and 'children at risk of exclusion' (Appendix 1). In addition, the interview schedule included the option to integrate an activity based on an adaptation of Moran's (2001) Ideal Self, as a stimuli to aid discussion if needed (Appendix 2). The activity, based on principles of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP), provides children with a template to explore their constructions of self in order to evaluate their self-esteem and aspirations for the future (Moran, 2006). Whilst the technique typically explores "the extremes" (Moran, 2001, p. 601) of a singular construct of self, the resource was used in this study as a facilitative tool to explore a multiplicity of discourses around children at risk of exclusion. Pragmatic adaptations were made to the template in line with the research aims and methodology, such as: the title of the resource; the wording of statements; and the removal of a rating scale between pole constructs. Where participants appeared to find it difficult to elaborate during the interview, the adapted resource was available as a structure to guide conversation and elicit constructions of children at risk of exclusion.

The questions planned within the interview schedule arose from the research questions following my professional experience in education as well as my engagement with current literature. Whilst the schedules were planned as a guide to ensure that discussions were concerned with the research aims, new questions and prompts were added flexibly as the interaction progressed.

4.4 Identifying the Participants

The participants were identified using a purposive sampling strategy, which enabled them to be identified based upon the specific needs of the study (Robson, 2011). Information about the research was disseminated to approximately one hundred primary schools within one LA. The

LA in which the research took place covers a large geographical area and has more than 600 schools. Recent statistics provided by the authority suggest that, whilst KS2 the number of children reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is slightly below the national average, the average 'Attainment 8' score at the end of KS4 was slightly higher than the average in England. Whilst, on average, there were less children in the authority receiving SEND support than across the country, the percentage of children with EHCPs was slightly higher than the national average. With regard to exclusions, the statistics prior to the COVID-19 pandemic showed that children were permanently excluded at a greater rate than the national average.

Within the named authority, an email was sent (Appendix 3) with an invitation to participate (Appendix 4) to the named Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO), for further dissemination to all teaching staff in the school. Information regarding eligibility to participate was shared within a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5). The inclusion criteria are described in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Currently working within a primary school setting in the named Local Authority.	Exploration of whether there are similar/ contrasting dominant discourses within one geographical location.
Currently working within a child-focused role, including: a Teaching Assistant, Class	Their role in school will have a direct impact on the implementation of policies/practice.

Teacher, Middle Leader (i.e., SENDCo) or Senior Leader (i.e., Deputy/Head Teacher).	

Eleven individuals expressed an interest to take part in the study. Two individuals did not meet the inclusion criteria and were not selected to participate in the study. Following further correspondence one individual was unable to participate and three individuals did not respond. As a result, five individuals provided written consent (Appendix 6) and took part in this research. Demographics of the participants, which were collated prior to their involvement (Appendix 7), are presented below:

Table 5

Demographic Information (as Described by Each Participant)

Participant	Ethnicity	Title of Current Role	Duration of time in Current Role	Total Experience Working Within Primary Education
1	White British	Teaching Assistant	2 years	14 years
2	White British	Head Teacher	12 years	40 years
3	White British	SENDCO / KS2 Teacher	2 years	13 years
4	White British	SENDCO / Early Years Teacher	9 years	21 years
5	White British	Teaching Assistant	18 years	19 years

4.5 Interviews

Overall, five members of primary school teaching staff within a LA volunteered to participate in this research. The first participant took part in a pilot interview, from which some adaptations were made to the interview schedule and resources (see section 4.5.3 for more information). A further four participants took part in individual interviews. Arrangements for the interviews were made directly with the participant. The participants chose between a virtual and in-person interview, taking place at a time that was most suitable for them. All five participants chose in-person interviews, which took place at their respective schools in a quiet, confidential room.

The purpose of the research, what participation would involve, and participation rights were shared in writing and verbally with the participants prior to the interview (Appendix 1, 4 and 5). An opportunity to withdraw and ask any questions was also given prior to the commencement of the recording of the interview. Interviews were recorded on an audio-recording device, in view of the participant at all times. Each interview lasted between 50 and 120 minutes.

4.5.1 The Design of the Interview

The interview schedule (Appendix 1) was designed in keeping with the research orientation and my engagement with literature using a FDA approach. Interview questions were planned based on the philosophical assumption that knowledge is co-generated and constructed through the interaction of the interview process (Schwartz-Shea, 2012). Whilst my own prior knowledge and assumptions are acknowledged as planning and designing the research questions (Willig, 2013), the method of interviewing was designed to make sense of constructions in collaboration with the participant.

Prior to the recording of the interview, participants were informed that it would be in a conversational style. Though the interview schedule was followed to ensure that the research topic was explored, flexibility was used to allow participants freedom to express themselves. Taking into account the interview schedules of previous research (Pearson, 2016; Sangar, 2018), the design of the schedule begins with introductory questions before moving on to more specific questions to elicit richer discussion.

4.5.2 Ethical Considerations

As seen in Table 6, several considerations were made to ensure that the research was conducted in line with the ethical standards of: The University of Birmingham *Code of Practice for Research and Ethical Guidelines*; The British Educational Research Association *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2018); The British Psychological Society (BPS) *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (BPS, 2021) and the *Code of Human Research Ethics* (BPS, 2021). The steps taken to safeguard participants during this research are below:

Table 6

Steps Taken to Safeguard Participants from Ethical Risk

Ethical Consideration	Action Taken to Address Risk
Ethical Review	Appropriate levels of ethical review were sought, and granted, prior to the commencement of this research.
Informed Consent	Prospective participants were provided with an Invitation to Participate (Appendix 4) and Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5). Both documents detailed the outlines of the research and their rights as prospective participants. Emphasis that participation was voluntary, as well as a participant's right to withdraw, was made. Prospective participants were also informed of how data would be stored to ensure

	confidentiality. They were also provided with contact details of my research supervisor. Upon reading the information, respondents registered their interest to volunteer by returning a signed consent form (Appendix 6) directly to me via encrypted email.
Right to Withdraw	Within the Invitation to Participate (Appendix 4) and Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5) details of participants' rights to withdraw were shared. Participants were able to withdraw from the research before, during and up to two weeks after the interview.
Confidentiality	Arrangements for interviews were made directly with the respondent. The participants selected a convenient location and time for the interview and placed notices on the doors to indicate that a private meeting was taking place. All names (of the participant, children, the school and local authority) were removed from transcripts and codes were assigned. Participants were also informed that I would be the only person who would listen to the recordings and information was provided regarding how and with whom the findings would be shared (Appendix 5).
Anonymity	As there was only one male participant, references to participants' gender were removed from data sets and gender-neutral terms were used.

4.5.3 Piloting the Interview

The first interview was undertaken as a pilot. The participant was asked to provide verbal feedback on the questions presented to them and the use of the resource to facilitate discussion. Following their feedback, amendments were made including: the ordering of questions, the wording of questions and the availability of a scripted definition of managed moves.

Following the pilot interview, the decision was made to use the adapted version of Moran's (2001) resource, flexibly, rather than as a fixed structure within the interview schedule. This

was to allow for a more conversational style of interview as well as allowing the participants to share their own experiences more freely. However, the resource (Appendix 2) was still available as a tool to facilitate discussion for participants who required more structure within the interview.

Whilst the interviews were conducted with the focus of co-generating meaning of discourses around school exclusion, children at risk of exclusion and alternatives to exclusion, a scripted definition of 'managed moves' was available for participants with limited experience of the process (Appendix 8). The definition was provided by the LA of which the participants worked in. This was to reduce the influence of my own previously acquired knowledge and opinions of the process on the construction of the definition, when providing it to participants with little knowledge.

4.6 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis within this research reflects Pearson's (2016) framework for Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, which was based on Willig's (2013) six stage framework. The six stages proposed by Willig (2013) are as follows: Stage 1 Discursive Constructions (the ways in which objects are constructed); Stage 2 Discourses (the location of discursive constructions within wider discourses); Stage 3 Action Orientation (the function of discourses in context); Stage 4 Positioning (the location of person within a structure of rights); Stage 5 Practice (the relationship between discourse and practice), and; Stage 6 Subjectivity (the consequences of subject positioning for individuals). The original structure of analysis is suggested to support the researcher in mapping the discursive resources identified in a text and their implications for social practice, though does not claim to be reflective of a full FDA (Willig, 2013). In this study, though Willig's framework has been used as a guide, an epistemological tension regarding the

final stage of analysis has been addressed through an adaptation of the framework. Concerning itself with the interpretation of "what can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions" (Willig, 2013, p. 133), the latter stage of the original framework can be described as speculative (Pearson, 2016).

In line with a social constructionist view that subject positions do not originate within the private space of an individual (Burman & Parker, 1993) but are limited to discourses of identity on offer at a time (Hall, 2003), participants' interpretations of their thoughts and feelings, as well as a researcher's interpretations of these, would also be limited to the ideas generated within a particular culture (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). As a result, it was determined that the research assumptions and research questions of this study better align with an adapted version of the FDA framework, as seen in Pearson's (2016) doctoral research. Therefore, the original sixth stage of Willig's framework was removed and replaced with an exploration of contradictions within discourses (see Table 7), acknowledging the significance of this stage within FDA (Wetherell et al., 2003). Parker (1992) suggests that the analysis of contradicting discourses is an important stage in exploring the construction of different objects in text. In analysing multiple discourses, interrelating discursive constructions and the constitutions of the same object in different ways can also be explored (Parker, 1992). Through the inclusion of contradictions, rather than subjectivity, it is espoused that the focus of analysis can remain on the construction of reality through language, without the need to interpret the private space of the individual (Lyons & Coyle, 2007).

The analytic stages that were taken during this research are outlined in Table 7. School 'exclusions', 'children at risk of exclusion' and alternatives to school exclusion were the discursive objects explored through discourse. The orientation and positioning of subjects,

such as teachers, parents and children, were considered in relation to practice within primary education.

Table 7

Stages of Data Analysis

Stage	Stage Description	Key Questions	Process in Practice
1	Discursive constructions	How is the discursive object constructed in the text? What type of object is being constructed?	The text was searched for implicit and explicit reference to the discursive objects. All references were highlighted. Initial notes were made on highlighted sections of the text to outline the discourses identified.
2	Discourses	What discourses are drawn upon? What is their relationship to one another?	Initial notes were reviewed and differences between discourses were noted. The various constructions were located within wider discourses.
3	Action orientation	What do the constructions achieve? What are their functions?	Discourses were reviewed and potential functions of the discourses for the speaker were noted.

4	Positioning	What subject positions are made available by these constructions?	Discourses were reviewed and subject positions were noted.
5	Practice	What possibilities for action are mapped out by these constructions and subject positions?	Discursive constructions and subject positions were reviewed and implications for practice were noted.
6	Contradictions	What contradictions are evident within the discourse?	Contradictions within discursive constructions and subject positions were noted.

Note. Adapted from *Boys' Behavioural and Mental Health Difficulties: an Exploration of Pupil and Teacher Discourses* (pp.57-58) by R. Pearson, 2016, University of Birmingham. Copyright 2016 Rebecca Pearson.

Each of the five interviews were transcribed fully, using a less detailed style of transcription. Where some forms of discourse analysis focus on the micro-textual details, such as changes in pitch and volume levels, FDA is more concerned with the content within texts than the structure of talk itself. Because of this, an adaptation of a tidy transcription style, which focuses on the language used rather than the micro-textual details, was adopted in this study (Henderson, 2018). Whilst Henderson's (2018) definition of a tidy transcription demarcates the recording of whole-words only and the omission of fillers and repair, transcription within this research included self-repair and short or long pauses within the text, as interpreted from the audio recording of each interview (Appendix 9).

Audio recordings of each interview were listened to several times during transcription and proof reading. During the data analysis phase, paper-based copies of transcripts were used (Appendix 10). Annotations, highlighting of text and developing interpretations were marked on each transcript. Appendix 10 provides an image which demonstrates the initial stages of the data analysis process.

4.7 Reflexivity

Aligned with a relativist ontology, it is suggested that the positioning of a researcher, their assumptions and values unavoidably influences the production of knowledge within research (Burr, 2015). As a result, the separation of the researcher and the research is considered to be impossible (Taylor, 2003). Whilst Willig (2013) posits that qualitative research acknowledges the influence that the researcher has on research, it is important for the researcher to understand and reflect upon their own assumptions and their influence throughout the research process. The "active consideration of and engagement with the ways in which his own sense-making and the particular circumstances that might affect it" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 100) is known as *reflexivity*.

The identity of the researcher is posited to be an important consideration at different stages of research (Taylor, 2003). It is acknowledged that my interest in exclusions as a practice in England initially sparked the concept of this research and was developed through further reading around the topic. It is also recognised that my personal demographic information, such as my gender, age and profession will have influenced the data generation process (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Whilst, arguably, my age and gender may have been protective factors for participants to openly explore their views on exclusion and children at risk of exclusion, an attempt to further reduce the working power relations (Foucault, 1972) my positionality was

shared with prospective participants prior to their involvement (Appendix 4 and 5). During the interviews, participants were also encouraged to consider me as a curious researcher (Sangar, 2018), interested in understanding the constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion.

In addition to personal reflexivity, a qualitative researcher brings about epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2013). In line with a social constructionist orientation to research, the constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are co-constructed between the researcher and the participant during the interview (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). A critical lens was exercised throughout data generation, where my use of language was adjusted during interviews, and the subsequent analysis through the adopted stages of FDA. Whilst some researchers suggest involving participants in the co-production of analysis, Coyle (2007) suggests that this is not appropriate in discourse analysis due to the analysis of how language may unintentionally open up or close down opportunities for action. For this reason, participants were not involved in the data analysis of this study. However, peer and academic supervision was used as a mechanism for the verification of research process, discursive constructions and subject positionings in this research.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of transcripts from the semi-structured interviews conducted with teaching staff in primary school settings. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis was adopted in order to answer the following research questions:

1) How do educational professionals construct children at risk of exclusion within discourse?

2) How do educational professionals construct school exclusions within discourse?

3) How are subjects (teachers, parents and pupils) positioned within these discourses?

4) How do these constructions open up/close down opportunities for support for children at risk of exclusion?

In turn, the six stages of analysis as seen in Table 7, are presented within this section. The discursive constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion are shared (Stage 1) and considered in relation to wider discourses (Stage 2). The achievements of these constructions (Stage 3) and the subject positionings (Stage 4) which they create within the texts are then explored. The opening and closing of social actions (Stage 5) are proposed. Contradictions within discourses (Stage 6) are discussed throughout the chapter.

5.2 How do Educational Professionals Construct Children at Risk of Exclusion?

A number of discursive constructions of children at risk of exclusions were analysed within the interview transcripts. Below, each construction shall be presented with illustrative quotations and located within wider discourses. Key constructions are illustrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2

Key Constructions of Children at Risk of Exclusion
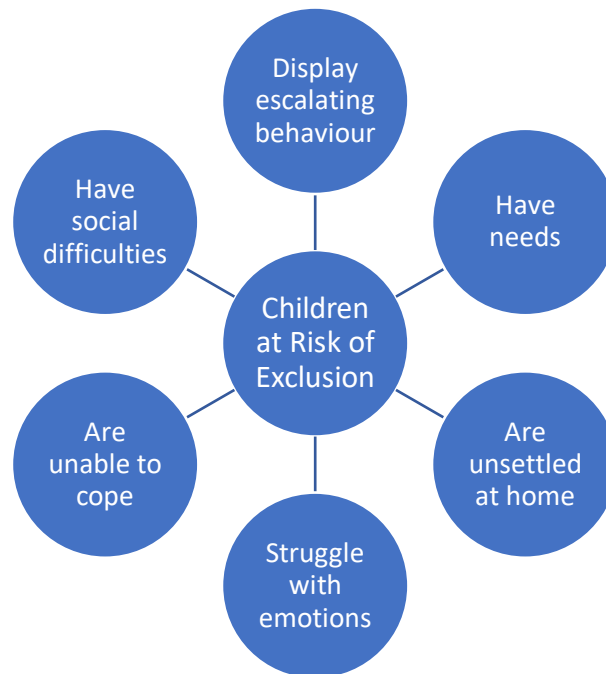
5.2.1 Children at Risk of Exclusion as Displaying Escalating Behaviour

The dominant discourse analysed within this research was the construction of children at risk of exclusion as being physical in the classroom. At times, children at risk of exclusion were constructed as 'wild' and 'crazy', displaying undesirable behaviour:

> Cause I – in the home corner we used to have pans and things and they used to run around with pans and like be whacking everybody with the pans. (Participant 1, line 76)

This construction positions the child as 'aggressive' and intimidating towards their peers and aligns with the government's threshold for disciplinary exclusion as a result of a "serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy" (Department for Education, 2021a, p.10). Furthermore, it reflects a wider discourse of behaviour as deviant and positions children

as inherently 'bad' (Macleod, 2006). Children were also constructed as making conscious choices and being responsible for their behaviour:

> And doesn't mean to say that he didn't batter her and you know, once -it it takes a lot to make this person cry but when she was shaken because he'd he'd grabbed her ponytail he had had her head was down and he was pulling I mean really going for it and he'd kicked her and scratched her, and she was she she couldn't work him again for the rest of the day, so he had to go. Had to go home. He got an exclusion for that a fixed term exclusion. But so when when he when he goes to be physically aggressive towards her, he really goes for it. You know he means to hurt you. (Participant 4, line 106)

In this construction, school staff are positioned as needing to tackle 'unacceptable' behaviour at an individual level (Stanforth & Rose, 2020). Despite acknowledging a range of environmental factors that may contribute to the presentation of challenging behaviours, participant's accounts often highlighted an individualised discourse whereby children's behaviours are accounted for by deficits within the child:

> but as soon as something becomes difficult for them or challenge or they need some resilience, that's when they'll start to display the negative behaviours that escalate and lead to fixed term exclusions. Erm a lot of the time it's been all *serious* issues in the playground that have then escalated and come back into class. And then there's been a massive explosion of emotion really and tables and chairs going over and things like that… And hurting -physically hurting other people. (Participant 3, line 139)

However, an alternative discursive construction of children at risk of exclusion suggested that children's behaviour requires interpretation by school staff, placing the onus for responsibility on adults rather than the child:

> They can't see what's *underlying* that child's behaviour. They can't see that a child's behaviour is communication. And they can't see that they're trying to tell us something.

they just see it as well, he's bad -badly behaved, and he should be behaving like this and they should be behaving in this way *instead*. (Participant 5, line 58)

5.2.2 Children at Risk of Exclusion as Having 'Needs'

A second construction of children at risk of exclusion was within a discourse of difference. A variety of discursive constructions of children at risk of exclusion having 'needs' were highlighted including behavioural, emotional, psychological and learning needs. Differing from the previous construction of behaviour, whereby children were positioned as being in control of their actions, the discourse of difference aligns with the medical model of disability and suggests that within-child factors are objectively biological in nature (O'Reilly et al., 2020). As such, undesirable behaviours are attributed to medical disorders:

So he was classic PDA even though it couldn't be diagnosed 'cause we don't diagnose it in this area. Very classic. *Massive avoidance*. And err had this -he had to control *everything*. (Participant 5, line 84)

The construction of children at risk of exclusion as having innate, biological needs appear to position the child as a passive bystander who lacks understanding of their needs, whilst distancing the responsibility for positive change away from educational professionals. Within this medical discourse, difficulties are constructed as fixed and without a possibility of change from environmental factors:

For us what we'd wanted, the outcomes were for him to to to sort of. It's like a last. Ditch no you know effort to sort of see if we could get him -tame him a little bit or change. Change him which is -that's probably barking up the -that's probably not going to happen. (Participant 4, line 126)

In order to see positive change for those at risk of exclusion, children are positioned as needing a therapeutic intervention (Macleod, 2006). This supports literature which suggests that

dominant discourses position mainstream school staff as being unable to support some groups of children without professional support (Cole, 2015). In turn, teaching staff are positioned as being unable to facilitate meaningful change and the suitability of a mainstream education is questioned:

> They could go to a school that could suit their needs whether that be a special school or a behaviour school something that they -that suits them and their needs because some schools just can't deal with anything other than the normal [laughs] and a normally behaved child. (Participant 1, line 410)

However, though a similar discursive construction of 'needs' was apparent for children at risk of exclusion, they were also distanced from children with 'special educational needs':

> it's impacted by lots of things I don't know where it stems from I haven't worked out - yeah. It's probably probably the way he's wired exacerbated by ACE yeah. (Participant 2, line 34)

This alludes to some socio-economic factors that may influence child development and behaviour. Whilst this discursive construction remains within an individualised discourse, it combines both medical and social discourses. Nevertheless, the problems identified within the school environment are still due to a deficit within the child themselves.

5.2.3 Children at Risk of Exclusion as 'Unsettled' at Home

Throughout participant responses, children at risk of exclusion were constructed as being from 'unsettled' backgrounds relating to a discourse of traditional familial discourses. Though the structure of families was not directly referenced, "friction between parents" (Participant 4, line 56) in co-parenting families was construed as a factor which impacts relationships between school staff and parents of children at risk of exclusion. This discursive construction supports

the construction of school staff as enforcers of moral regulation within the school community (Ball, 2013a). It also positions a child at risk of exclusion within a discourse of vulnerability. When talking about the behaviour of children at risk of exclusion, one participant shared that:

> Err they might, it might be something else that's gone on in their lives where they might have had trauma. Err that has impacted them, you know into thinking well I can't do it. I can't do that. I'm panicking about this. It might be that you know they have illness it might be that, erm, they've got missed out on some development. You know even the even though they've got both parents still at home. Or whatever. It might just be that you know both parents are so busy with work that they've missed out on the nurturing side of development. (Participant 5, line 66)

Moreover, within this discourse, parents are often positioned as "not meeting" the child's "needs". Three constructions of parents' influence on children at risk of exclusion were made by participants in this study. The first portrayed parents as lacking understanding of their child's needs, as constructed by school staff. The second described parents as lacking skills in routine and discipline. Finally, parents were positioned as failing to provide support and aspiration:

> Typical child at risk of exclusion I'd say it's a rocky home life, not really routined and probably some ACEs in there as well. Erm parents aren't really that engaged with school or them doing well or encouraging them. (Participant 3, line 106)

These discursive constructions often overlapped reflected a discourse of disadvantage, including low socio-economic status. In addition to positioning parents as 'at fault' for their child's risk of exclusion, school staff are positioned as helpless in facilitating change due to deficits within the home environment of which they have no influence.

5.2.4 Children at Risk of Exclusion as Struggling with Emotions

Another construction of children at risk of exclusion as having 'poor mental health' or regulation of emotions:

> Just some of them just *really* lack of self esteem, self confidence erm. Just really poor mental health and in fact we've had a number of children recently over the last few years just say they wanna die and I don't want to be here anymore and they are the children that struggle with their emotions and will display those kinds of behaviours that we're talking about. Erm. So yeah just really poor mental health, particularly the ones who've experienced trauma. So children who've experienced -well we've got children whose parents have committed suicide in front of them and things like that, and they have had really significant traumatic experiences and it's just a massive impact on them. (Participant 3, line 232)

Whilst potentially triggered by a significant life event, mental health difficulties for children at risk of exclusion were construed as an internal psychological state. This positioned children as inwardly experiencing distress and being unable to regulate themselves, which then leads to behaviours that others deem undesirable. Thus, children at risk of exclusion were often constructed as vulnerable to distress:

> erm it's like a snow globe but instead of snowflakes, it's *emotions*… and, he's, you don't have to shake it much to get that that blizzard of emotions that he that runs through because they're already sort of swirling around in his head… Erm it's sort of he's not a child that has got that sort of doesn't -he doesn't experience *calmness* very much and any any sort of inner peace or, he's just at the mercy of his own emotions and, the chemicals running through his brain probably. (Participant 4, line 38)

In addition, children at risk of exclusion were often constructed as being unaware of their impact on other children's wellbeing. However, there was tension between participant's positioning of children within this discourse. One discursive construction of children at risk of exclusion

positioned as "struggling" (Participant 3, line 151) to understand others' emotions. Alternatively, a discursive construction of a disregard of others' emotions was also constructed, positioning the child as selfish:

> Yeah it might just be that they don't give a toss about other people's feelings, that their needs are paramount and yeah -so I think that is the factor that could lead to the permanent exclusion because that would be the barrier I think to creating an environment where everyone can be safe which would be -which would be the reason why you might permanently exclude. (Participant 2, line 44)

Nevertheless, both discursive constructions support the pathologizing of mental health difficulties (O'Reilly et al., 2020). In doing so, the perpetuation of individualised discourses supports literature on the discourses of abnormality, as responses to the environment are categorised into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviours (Foucault, 1977). Again, this positions school staff as unable to support change due to deficits within the child's biological and cognitive structure.

5.2.5 Children at Risk of Exclusion as Being Unable to Cope

Following on from the dominant discourse of individualisation and difference, children at risk of exclusion have been constructed as being unable to 'cope' in mainstream educational settings. Within this discourse, three constructions have been shared within this research. Firstly, that children at risk of exclusion cannot cope with the academic pressures of mainstream education:

> So even though [child name] is very bright boy and he's got the potential to do well academically, his social emotional mental health and he's very suddenly -his behaviours they're they're just a massive barriers to learning and he is he is just not achieving anywhere near what he *could be* achieving, so I think being in the right environment is is central to him actually doing well academically. (Participant 4, line 134)

This construction reflects an educational discourse which promotes academic progress above personal and social development. The positioning of school staff suggests that, again, they are unable to support all children's academic progress when there are potential barriers to learning. However, another construction of the child at risk of exclusion differs slightly from the previous discursive constructions. Whilst the responsibility for change still lies within the child, there is a noticeable change in the construction of children as able to make progress in the 'right' context. This positions children as requiring support, but able to be active in their development.

Secondly, children at risk of exclusion are constructed as being unable to cope with changing demands within a mainstream primary school. This is constructed as being more prominent as the child ages and academic, social and emotional expectations change with each chronological year group:

> P: that's probably why as they go through school [laugh] they might get excluded more because you notice it more I suppose
>
> R: Because they're not like adhering to the structure?
>
> P: Yeah
>
> R: Okay
>
> P: Yeah, I – that's what I'd assume because like if they want more structure isn't it as you go higher through school and they can't cope with that that – well the structure of it and the rules like being told that they have to sit for 45 minutes and do maths, you know. Like, they can't deal with that. (Participant 1, line 234)

This construction highlights a discourse based on traditional developmental research, whereby children are constructed as being able to meet academic, social and emotional milestones in line with their chronological age (Erica Burman, 2016). Failure to do so aligns with the discourse of abnormality and positions the child as underachieving.

It also intertwines with the third construction; that children at risk of exclusion are not suited for the current model of education:

> cause I think a lot of a lot of children are square pegs in round holes in primary school and secondary school. (Participant 4, line 168)

Participants spoke of the influence of teacher views of inclusion and behaviour, as well as the influence of OFSTED inspections and tracking data, on the support offered to children at risk of exclusion. Children at risk of exclusion were constructed as being unable to cope due to the cultural focus on academic progress, positioning them as vulnerable within the educational system. This aligns with research which suggests that a school system based on a quasi-market and high stakes testing categorises some children as undesirable (Messeter & Soni, 2017; Thompson, 2020). The taken-for-granted assumption that the education system will always create children at risk of exclusion was evident through the omission of statements constructing alternative pedagogical practices.

5.2.6 Children at Risk of Exclusion have Social Difficulties

Children at risk of exclusion were also constructed within a relational discourse within this research. Participants constructed three discursive constructions within this discourse. Firstly, that children at risk of exclusion lack the social skills to form long-lasting, meaningful relationships with their peers:

> Erm and there are other children who were just scared of him and don't don't want to be friends *don't* want to be near him but this the the child is at risk of exclusion 'cause he he's stru -he *wants* to be with them. He wants to have friends but he hasn't got the skills. The social skills 'cause his play quickly becomes over boisterous. It's quickly it's eas -he sort of suffocates he he *dominates*. (Participant 4, line 46)

This positions children at risk of exclusion with the discourse of abnormality and suggests that they are pathologically unable to create friendships in a "normal sort of way" (Participant 1, line 162). The construction of normalcy supports literature which suggests that children's attempts at socialising can often be construed by school staff with a focus on negative behaviours (Martin-Denham, 2020a). At times, children at risk of exclusion were constructed as being "like a pack of velociraptors" (Participant 4, line 70) when drawn to socialising with particular peers. However, it does construct children at risk of exclusion as seeking relationships with their peers.

Contrastingly, a second discursive construction positions children at risk of exclusion as being unable to create friendships, due to their peers' perceptions of their previous behaviour:

> See I think that in my experience I think its they find it hard to have friends -especially as they get older I think that they're scared of them. The other children are scared of them. (Participant 1, line 160)

This was a common point throughout the texts. Within this construction, children at risk of exclusion are positioned as vulnerable to social isolation. This is further exacerbated through the breakdown of relationships following suspensions and exclusions.

Similarly, the breakdown of children at risk of exclusion's relationships is also constructed within the context of their relationships with school staff. Whilst participants often positioned teaching staff as finding it 'hard' to support children at risk of exclusion, one participant stated:

> P: I - well I found I – I know that I was only very early on in my teaching career but I found it really – you take it really personally I think that

> R: Uh huh

P: And like get frustrated – not frustrated with them but like it stops you building up the same sort of relationships I think

R: Hmm

P: As like a normal [laughs] as a normal teacher child relationship I think because it makes it hard because like they are causing you as a teacher a lot of like disturbance and upset

R: Hmm

P: And you can't get on with your normal job – that's what you're there to do

R: Yeah

P: And you can't get on with it. I feel sometimes like there's a bit – not resentment but do you know like

R: Yeah

P: I find it hard to build the same sort of relationship with them, so yeah. (Participant 1, line 172)

This discursive construction of the interactions of children at risk of exclusion and their teachers positions children as removing the established power from the relationship, within a construction of defiance. This creates a tension within traditional constructions of power between the pupil-teacher relationship as well as the acceptance or rejection of positioning on behalf of the teacher.

5.3 How do Educational Professionals Construct School Exclusions Within Discourse?

A number of discursive constructions of exclusions were interpreted in this research. Namely, construction of three exclusionary practices: internal, fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Though participants commonly used talked of 'fixed-term' and 'fixed-period' exclusions, the

term suspensions will be used outside of direct quotations. Whilst internal exclusions were constructed within discussions around support for children at risk of exclusion, clear distinctions between suspensions and permanent exclusions were made:

> Okay so you've got your fixed term exclusions and I would say you know a permanent exclusion is an absolute last resort and a fixed period exclusion is a strategy along the way. (Participant 2, line 134)

Below, each construction shall be presented with illustrative quotations and located within wider discourses. Key constructions that were made are illustrated in Figure 3:

Figure 3

Key Constructions of Exclusions
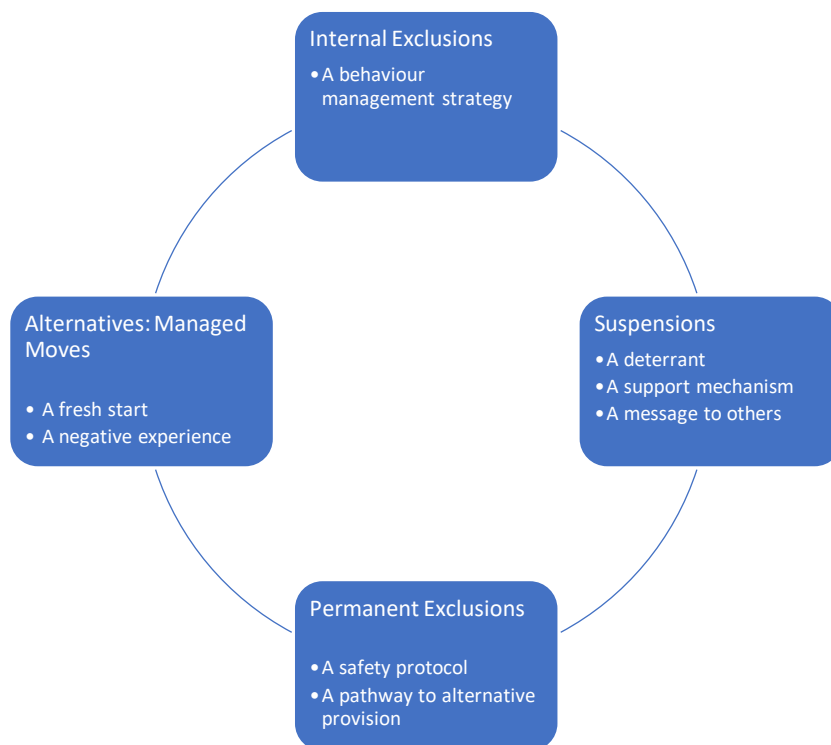
5.3.1 Internal Exclusions as a Behaviour Management Strategy

As previously stated, internal exclusions were constructed within participant's responses during the interviews, however they were not explicitly constructed as an exclusionary practice. Instead, internal exclusions were constructed as a supportive step for children at risk of exclusion prior to an official exclusion:

> we'd always do sort of internal internal exclusion first and isolation erm. And then we start with. They still got a break and a lunchtime with the peers and then if it carries on then they get another one and then separate everything, erm before it would be fixed term at home. (Participant 3, line 165)

Despite often being called 'isolation', internal exclusions are positioned within a discourse of rehabilitation (Parsons, 2005). This positions school staff as offering an alternative route for children at risk of exclusion, who have a choice to change their behaviour prior to an exclusion. The individualised discourse is prominent in the following quote, which discusses internal exclusion as a consequence of negatively constructed behaviour:

> Erm though we -and we wanted them to be educated and we didn't want to get into a cycle of not being in school again erm and the child to be educated err but *really* needed to impress upon the child that that was a step too far. (Participant 2, line 156)

Therefore, internal exclusions are constructed as a behaviour management strategy, aligning with the stages of Gazeley et al. (2013)'s continuum of exclusion. School staff are positioned as having no choice but to use internal, exclusionary practice in order to de-escalate behaviours. Thus, positioning internal exclusions as necessary:

> So erm you had to give him that time to calm down, because obviously all the adrenaline going through his body, erm he *had to have* a safe space, erm where he had to be helped

to the safe space and he he he couldn't be let out of the safe space because something *bad* would have happened. (Participant 5, line 82)

5.3.2 Suspensions as a Deterrent

Suspensions are sometimes constructed as a deterrent for undesirable behaviour, which may lead to a permanent exclusion if it is not changed. Within this discourse, suspensions are constructed as part of an official behaviour management process, whereby children at risk of exclusion are positioned as being wilfully defiant of school rules:

> Erm something that has been where the child has *clearly* known that it's inappropriate and they've made a clear decision and that it had impact on others that was not easily erm repaired and needed time to heal. And I would say three days would be the longest fixed period exclusion I'd be giving and I wouldn't be giving them regularly. (Participant 2, line 144)

As a result, children at risk of exclusion are expected to change their behaviours in order to attend school and participate in their usual activities. Within this discourse, access to education is constructed as a privilege that is dependent on behaviour:

> P: Erm some of our older children have been quite aggressive and violent as well so they're the children that then go to those fixed term exclusions
>
> R: How do you think it does impact them?
>
> P: I think some of them enjoy it and they like being at home and they don't have to come to school and some of -in the past some of them have not been bothered at all but the majority of them they don't like they've been excluded from their friends and they know that their friends are still coming in because they talk to them on social media or see them at the park or whatever erm and they know that they're missing out on school and I think a lot of our children feel safe here, they like being here and when we're saying no you can't come in they sort of realise then like I've pushed it too far. (Participant 3, line 18)

This, in turn, justifies suspensions as a practice. Arguably, it also supports a view within literature which suggests that highly punitive sanctions violates children's rights to education, as supported by the UNCRC (Barker et al., 2010).

5.3.3 Suspensions as a Support Mechanism

A second construction of suspensions was to provide support. Within the texts, three discursive constructions of support were analysed. Firstly, the support for children at risk of exclusion at times where they appear distressed and are 'unable to cope' in the school environment:

> Yeah it was a fixed term exclusion, so it would start small. Started small like a day and that was *really* just to get him to err to calm to calm down because he -we're not talking like five or ten minutes of crisis time we're talking like hours. So it was you know there was just no way that he was going to cope with say the afternoon. (Participant 5, line 88)

Another discursive construction focuses on the use of suspensions as support for the peer group of children at risk of exclusion:

> it would be to ease the pressure in school really and to keep your children safe and her safe because of the behaviour she's displaying. (Participant 3, line 84)

Finally, suspensions are constructed as a temporary relief for school staff who are positioned as often 'struggling' to manage children at risk of exclusion:

> And sometimes it has been to relieve the pressure on the teacher or *teachers* -teacher, teaching assistants and children or both. (Participant 2, line 136)

5.3.4 Suspensions as a Message to Others

A further construction of suspensions is that they are a message to stakeholders that behaviours will not be tolerated. Within this discourse of discipline, school staff are positioned as

authoritarians who safeguard moral and social regulation (Ball, 2013a). One discursive construction within this discourse is to a child at risk of exclusion, who is positioned as defiant and uncompliant:

> to be part of this community you got to fall -follow certain rules and if you don't follow those rules then I'm sorry but you can't be part of this community for a period of time to reflect on the the unwritten agreement that you have of being a -well predominantly to keep everybody safe. (Participant 2, line 204)

Another discursive construction of suspensions as a message to others, is its reassurance to school staff, parents and children within the school community. Positioned as a supportive act, suspensions are sometimes constructed as a way to demonstrate the school staff's approach to 'tackling' undesirable behaviour as encouraged by government guidance (Department for Education, 2021). However, the most dominant discourse which constructed this practice spoke of the message sent to parents of children at risk of exclusion. In addition to stating that certain behaviours are not tolerated by their child, suspensions are also constructed as an opportunity to discuss alternative placements prior to a permanent exclusion:

> He did have a couple of fixed term exclusions. But all the time. We were we. Were sort of. We were kind of. Working towards. Really were doing our best to try and. Get parents, get parents -*mum* 'cause you wouldn't see much of dad. To get mum to come and say, look. He's not, you know he needs. We know what sort of works, but it's difficult to provide it. And mum said well when can he go back into the main class so we can he go back so she wouldn't realise that like if we put him into reception class he's going to be excluded that he'd probably be permanently excluded. (Participant 4, line 122)

This construction supports literature which suggests that parents sometimes feel that suspensions are a process to build evidence for a permanent exclusion, rather than a rehabilitative or supportive practice (Parker et al., 2016).

5.3.5 Permanent Exclusions as Safety Protocol

Participants were reluctant to use the word 'punishment' within their talk about permanent exclusions, instead constructing it as a last resort for breach of a serious school rule or persistent disruptive behaviour:

> Erm and yeah the theme is yeah definitely a refusal to do work that then becomes erm, challenging behaviour then it's like a knock on then you can, you can see it sort of you know unravelling and especially when you've had experience with some children that have been like that, you might come across a child that you think *oh actually* I've seen this before. (Participant 5, line 72)

This discourse of discipline positions school staff as authoritarians and echoes the sentiment that they are responsible for the regulation of social and moral regulation (Ball, 2013a). In light of this positioning, school staff are construed as governing the conduct of children. This echoes Foucault's (1972) ideas of disciplinary power as being productive.

Nevertheless, the construction of permanent exclusions as essential for primary schools commonly focused within a construction of protection; for the child at risk of exclusion, their peers and school staff:

> P: Safety, but even when we're talking with a child whose coming from a PRU at the moment most of the things is *ooh* you know we're not swearing because that doesn't make people feel safe. Everybody has a right to feel safe
>
> R: Uh huh
>
> P: Yeah that's -it all goes back down to safety that's the first priority of the school safety but there's emotional safety as well yeah. (Participant 2, line 210)

Moving away slightly from the positioning of school staff within the discourse of discipline, this discursive construction signifies a discourse of protection. Within this discourse, school

staff are positioned as protectors, of children and staff. Whereas children at risk of exclusion are positioned as aggressors who require supervision. This then constructs permanent exclusions as necessary as a moral duty of care to learners based on a taken-for-granted construction of safety. However, this construction often omits the emotional safety of children at risk of exclusion:

> That's quite an interesting question. What's their greatest fear [laughs]. I think it *would* be that, that people don't want to be involved with them anymore their peers or the staff that they've known because they've been here for a long time when they grow up with us at primary school and being excluded from it all. Which is what you end up doing isn't it when you *exclude*. (Participant 3, line 175)

Exclusions are constructed within discourse as necessary in order to protect the education of other children. This is based on a taken-for-granted assumption of the importance of education and a dominant discourse which espouses the safeguarding of the education of others (Department for Education, 2021):

> And the other children's education then no because it's not fair on 29 other children in the class if that one child is disturbing everything. So, I don't know what the other option would be other than one-to-one's which there is not always the funding for. (Participant 1, line 236)

The previous quote also demonstrates a common discursive construction within this research. Throughout the interviews, participants each spoke of a lack of funding available to adequately support children at risk of exclusion. In turn, permanent exclusion is construed as necessary in order to protect the wellbeing of school staff who are described as "struggling" and "drained". This highlights a discourse of educational reform, whereby a change to the educational system at a national level is needed in order to change processes and practice within individual settings.

Within this discourse, school staff are positioned as unable to create systemic change and thus, exclusions are perpetuated:

> We we'd we'd never *give up*, but it's that balancing act isn't it so what what if you're a head teacher, what would you do when you've got members of staff who are stressed and they are being *injured by a child* and you have parents complaining that their their their child is *scared* of coming into class and when you know when you can see the effects on at least two of the children. Of the -because of their on you know [coughs] needs. *But* we just feel like it's *deaf ears* all around in this case, from the SEND team, from parents. And from anybody else we we we are stuck. (Participant 4, line 160)

5.3.6 Permanent Exclusions as a Pathway to Alternative Provision

One dominant construction of permanent exclusions was centred around children's suitability for mainstream provision. Throughout the interviews, mainstream schools were constructed as "not the right environment" for children at risk of exclusion, based on a number of factors such as children's ability to "cope" in the setting, their behaviour and resources available to mainstream teaching staff. Where the LA or parents do not agree with the views of the school, permanent exclusion is constructed as an essential pathway to accessing specialist provision for the sake of the child. In this construction, parents are constructed as being in denial about their child's needs and, contrastingly, school staff are more knowledgeable:

> So it's like the Head and myself we've got to have that balancing act, or like what's better for the child -now we firmly believe this child should be in a specialist setting he should be, parents are totally against it. So we've had children like this one in the past. The difference has been. Erm parents have seen it and worked with us and we've been on the same page. Erm and they've actually moved into [special school] and and it's been the right move for them. (Participant 4, line 46)

In a similar vein to the discursive construction of suspensions, permanent exclusions are sometimes constructed as an opportunity to send a message to the LA about the 'severity' of a

child's needs. Encompassed in a discourse of abnormality, this construction positions the LA as gate keepers to effective education for children who are constructed to be unable to access mainstream education:

> You know they were in a high level of stress you know and had taken their clothes off or peeing somewhere or doing things that you just feel you can't move on from that *but* I can't just say this child needs to be at home and I won't teach them without formalising -part of it was the structure to say this is a child with real needs and high need, help. To to get child err to get, I need err logging it as a permanent exclusion does two things yeah it makes sure that I'm within the legal boundaries but also makes clear that the child is in need. (Participant 2, line 146)

Meanwhile, school staff are positioned as advocates for the rights of the child at risk of exclusion who are constructed as vulnerable within this discourse. As previously discussed, such discourses support the positioning of mainstream teachers as unable to facilitate positive change, due to the child's 'need' for expert support, and mainstream schools as untenable for some groups of children:

> I think it probably was for him because I think – looking back now knowing that he got excluded and sent to that special school after it was probably the right thing for him because I don't think that environment was right for him. (Participant 1, line 104)

5.3.7 Managed Moves as an Alternative to Exclusion

Some participants referred to managed moves within their constructions of exclusions and support for children at risk of exclusion, whilst others were asked to construct them explicitly. One participant was not aware of managed moves as a practice. Overall, managed moves were mostly constructed by the participants in this research as an alternative to permanent exclusion.

However, the construction of the purpose of a managed move differed. One construction emphasised a desire to impress the seriousness of exclusion on parents and stakeholders, by transferring a child at risk of exclusion to another setting:

> Sometimes the threat of a permanent exclusion can be the erm route to a successful managed move if that -I hope that's not counter-intuitive I don't think it is I think if the parent knows that if they don't accept the managed move that things are going fail and it's better to try something to see if it works that might be one thing. But I think even the threat of a permanent exclusion can lead to a paradigm shift on the parent's side to listen that it's serious rather than pers -personality driven. (Participant 2, line 96)

This discursive construction positions school staff as authoritarians, whist placing parents as subjects who require guiding. In this construction, an imbalance of power is evident. Parents are construed as helpless, in that they are pressured into accepting one exclusionary practice over another. This echoes literature which suggests that the managed move process is not always voluntary or without threat of permanent exclusion (Children's Commissioner, 2019).

Alternatively, managed moves were sometimes constructed as an opportunity for a fresh start for the child at risk of exclusion:

> I think it can be good for something cause it is that fresh start and everything is brand new and they've got to -they're not stuck in their ways if that makes sense, if they've got into particular habits in one school. (Participant 3, line 230)

This positions the child within a discourse of hope, whereby it is anticipated that a change of environment and approach will benefit them. In this construction, school staff in the original setting are construed as exhausting all their efforts in supporting the child to make progress and having not been successful in facilitating positive change. Nevertheless, the onus for change is

still placed on the child who is constructed as requiring to change to either reintegrate into the original setting or integrate into a new environment.

5.3.8 Managed Moves as a Negative Experience

In keeping with the previous construction of children at risk of exclusion being required to integrate into a new environment, managed moves were also constructed as a negative experience for children at risk of exclusion:

> We have had over -in my time in this school we've had one child come here from another school. He came for a week with his TA, he was in his own school uniform, he was working on his own. Erm we felt, it it looked like more of a punishment than anything else and the children who are probably most likely to be excluded or that that their or what they need is not punishment they need nurture support. (Participant 4, line 169)

A discourse of inclusion is prominent in this construction, whereby children at risk of exclusion are positioned as vulnerable and in 'need' of protection and support. At times, managed moves were constructed as potentially exacerbating difficulties that children at risk of exclusion are identified as already demonstrating, such as social skills difficulties (Participant 1) and their sense of belonging (Participant 5), echoing suggestions of social exclusion and ostracism (Ren et al., 2018):

> But then sometimes thinking it's really harsh cause you're meeting them away from everything they know, especially at primary when they've been here since they were probably three four, some of ours start at two so it is a massive change and if they're struggling with mental health issues or you know the social emotional side of things that could just trigger it even more couldn't it. (Participant 3, line 230)

Whilst this discourse perpetuates the construction of individualised difficulties, it does draw attention to environment factors that may influence a child's wellbeing and behaviour. In this

light, children at risk of exclusion are positioned as passive agents in their development, whilst school staff are influential in change through decision making. Arguably, this implies that tensions between personal and professional values are present when making decisions to facilitate a managed move, highlighting a discourse of morality.

Another discursive construction which constructed managed moves as a negative experience, was the associated impact on a child's transition to another school based on the existing labelling of undesirable behaviour. When asked how they would respond to a child joining their class on a managed move, one participant stated:

> I'd panic [laughs] I think it'd be thinking *oh my god* but again that's just like a built up thing isn't it like if you hear and you think oh god they're coming from that school and they've been excluded *ahh* you'd automatically have a negative impression of them wouldn't you. (Participant 1, line 396)

This supports findings in literature whereby children at risk of exclusion are said to experience difficulties in maintaining relationships due to stigmatisation within the community (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). This discourse aligns with research exploring the psychological impact of exclusion (Ren et al., 2018), highlighting potential ostracism and social exclusion within the school community. Therefore, managed moves are constructed as unhelpful within this discourse and a risk of perpetuating and worsening difficulties experienced by children at risk of exclusion.

5.4 How Do These Constructions Open Up/Close Down Opportunities for Support for Children at Risk of Exclusion?

The constructions of children at risk of exclusion as innately different from their peers, and therefore often unable to change, signifies a medical discourse that places the 'problem' within

the child. This discourse, along with traditional familial discourses and hierarchical power within teacher-pupil relationships, highlights the dominance of a realist ontology within education whereby there is an essentialist view of normal and abnormal development. Aligning with research which suggests that children are commodities within a quasi-market (West & Pennell, 2002), participants within this research spoke of children at risk of exclusions' 'ability' to meet academic expectations. Knowledge of whether or not children meet the expected standard is often measured through assessments, such as standardised testing and success criterion.

By pathologizing the needs of children, opportunities to support the child are closed down by placing the onus for change on the child and limiting the responsibility for change in the educational environment. As such, teachers are positioned as being mostly unable to facilitate change and requiring external help from professional agencies (Nettleton, 2021). This supports an expert model and has potential to reduce the self-efficacy of teachers in mainstream settings as practitioners who can create effective change for children, thus constructing children at risk of exclusion as being unsuitable for mainstream schooling.

Furthermore, the constructions of abnormality, challenging behaviour and emotional dysregulation result in a legacy of negative labelling attached to the child. By pathologizing individuals within an individualised discourse, children at risk of exclusion are perceived as being unable to change. This can impair the efforts of school staff who may construct their involvement as ineffective and may then further perpetuate this construction. In turn, participants expressed concern that children at risk of exclusion may begin to exhibit behaviours 'expected' of them, due to a limited sense of 'worth'. Whilst children's attempts to facilitate

change, with their peers for example, may be construed as negative behaviour by school staff (Martin-Denham, 2020a). This highlights the potential cyclical nature of exclusion.

In focusing on the appropriateness of mainstream education, the discourse of abnormality is based on the essentialist assumption that the current education system is fixed and unchanging. Commonly, participants spoke of children at risk of exclusion's inability to "cope" with the current mainstream educational system and the pressures of inspection measures on the culture within primary schools. In an attempt to protect children at risk of exclusion from distress, as well as protect the learning of other pupils, alternative provision is constructed as an appropriate environment for children who experience exclusions. It places the onus for change on the environment, whilst constructing mainstream education as being unable to provide it. This potentially shuts down attempts for support of children within mainstream settings as exclusions are positioned as a gateway to services which mainstream teaching staff are rendered unable to provide.

Opportunities for working relationships between children constructed as at risk of exclusion, their parents and school staff are often influenced by the construction of children's needs and the positioning of the school staff. Wherein parents are positioned as contributing to difficulties exhibited by their child or are in disagreement with the construction of their child's perceived needs, the dynamics of power between decision makers is significant. It appears that, where parents are in agreement with school staff about their child specialist support may be sought in line with the individualised discourse. However, where this is not the case, exclusions are constructed as an opportunity to provide evidence to parents of a children's 'inability' to 'cope' within the setting. This can ultimately hamper relationships and a collaborative approach towards supporting children.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the research, the key discourses interpreted during analysis and implications for EP practice. Suggestions for further research are offered before a reflection of the strengths and limitations of this research. Finally, reflections of the role of the researcher are shared along with personal reflections of the impact of this research.

6.2 Overview of Research and Key Findings

The present study aimed to explore constructions of school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion as objects within discourse. To do this, FDA was used to interpret interviews conducted with educational professionals. In chapter two, literature was reviewed and gave insight into the dominant discourses which currently construct the two objects, predominantly based within a secondary school context. The complexity of the competing discourses that construct school exclusions as practices within the English education system were highlighted, along with juxtaposed discourses that construct children at risk of exclusion. This research aimed to focus on the ways in which educational professionals constructed school exclusions and children at risk of exclusion, and how these discourses influence opportunities for support of children within primary educational settings.

When discussing exclusionary practice, all of the participants differentiated between constructions of permanent exclusions and suspensions. While permanent exclusions were constructed as a last resort, suspensions were conceptualised as a temporary strategy within a larger continuum of support. Some constructions of other exclusionary practice, such as the use of internal exclusion, were also made. However, the constructions of the purpose of exclusions varied. One construction was the use of exclusion as a deterrent or punishment for behaviour

that was constructed as 'unacceptable', echoing Foucault's seminal work (Foucault, 1977). Another construction of exclusion was as a resource to support the child, which mirrors traditional, individualised discourses based on a medical model of disability. A third construction of exclusions was based on the constructed system for which external support is made available for children. In this construction, participants drew upon discourses of professional experts in stating that mainstream teachers were not equipped to teach *all* children and required external support which was not always available to them.

Though these common discourses were evident in this research, participants also spoke of the negative connotations of exclusions and their desire to not exclude children. However, in all instances, participants spoke of the necessity for exclusion within mainstream education in its current capacity. School staff were positioned as being helpless in supporting individual children due to limited resources, both in funding and staffing, and the academic pressures of mainstream schooling, on both the children and school staff. Therefore, this research indicates that constructions of school exclusion are inextricably tied up with wider constructions of education and mainstream schooling. Whilst there may, arguably, be a drive for inclusive education, dominant discourses currently position school staff as unable to provide this due to limited support at an exosystemic level.

In positioning mainstream school staff as being unable to support a child, exclusions are constructed as an opportunity to indicate the severity of the situation to others, including parents and the LA, in the hopes of providing 'the right' environment for the child. This reflects discourses of difference which were evident in the early construction of education in 19th century England (Gillard, 2011). Nevertheless, where it was suggested that a child may benefit from a move to another mainstream school, managed moves were constructed as an alternative

to permanent exclusion. One construction of this practice depicted a positive process whereby children have the opportunity to 'start a fresh', aligning with previous research (Bagley & Hallam, 2015, 2016). Alternatively, another construction drew on discourses of belonging to construct the move as potentially negative for the child.

All in all, constructions of exclusions within this research focused on the aim of regulating children so that they could access the education system, whether through a change in their environment which may lead to change in them, or a change in themselves through intervention. This was demonstrated through the constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion. Commonly in discussion, children were constructed as 'at risk' of exclusion within a discourse of difference and abnormality (Foucault, 1977). The discursive constructions of difference varied between behavioural 'needs', mental health 'needs', social communication 'needs' and environmental 'needs'. However, despite a positioning of children as being 'unable to cope' with mainstream schooling because of their 'needs', clear differentiations were made from children with SEND, whereby behaviours were associated with innate, diagnosable conditions. Though children at risk of exclusion were sometimes constructed as being vulnerable because of their needs, they were also contrastingly positioned as being in control of their behaviour and able to change.

In this research, both constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion supported discourses of difference. In doing so, teachers were positioned as unable to support children, and the learning environment of a mainstream primary school was constructed as an inappropriate setting for some children. Whilst the labelling of children's 'needs' may be intended to indicate the support needed to help a child's development, this research proposes that the categorisation of children based on their ability to access the education system as it is

constructed today, supports the exclusion and segregation of children from mainstream settings. Though it may not matter if humans are categorised, the value that is placed on those categories through discourse affects social practice (Taylor, 2003). Therefore, opportunities to support children in their educational setting are often closed down.

By closing down support for children who are demonstrating behavioural responses that cause concern for adults around them, they are currently managed through a process that has been suggested to exacerbate psychological distress (Martin-Denham, 2020b). Though educational professionals who participated in this study and published research acknowledge the negative life outcomes associated with school exclusion, the construction of exclusion as 'essential' or 'necessary' demonstrates an educational discourse that promotes academic achievement over personal, social and emotional development. In doing so, participants suggested that children can feel isolated and rejected and often demonstrating escalating negative behaviours, echoing previously published literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Martin-Denham, 2020b; Ren et al., 2018).

6.3 Implications for Educational Psychology (EP) Practice

This research is hoped to be significant to EPs, as being consciously aware of the impact of dominant discourses on educational practice and helping create, use and manipulate constructions of children are important to the role (Bozic, 1999). Constructions of abnormality are perpetuated through the categorisation of children in discourse (Burr, 2015). Arguably, in supporting such discursive repertoires by the complicit use of shared linguistic terminology, EP practice is active in the construction of children who are deemed acceptable to remove from education through a shared meaning of the phenomena of exclusion (Douglas, 1967). Though it is suggested that EPs cannot evade a discourse of abnormality within their role (Pearson,

2016), in raising awareness of dominant discourses that influence psychological and educational practice, opportunities for reflection of professional practice as social action is provided. In turn, discourses can be challenged and reconstructed by EPs, who are well placed to have impact at different systems levels within education.

6.3.1 Empower School Staff to Resist Oppressive Discourses

In addition to challenging the construction of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion, EPs can work with school staff in an attempt to help them resist their current positioning within discourse as being unable to support children. As this research demonstrates that some mainstream school staff feel ill-equipped and ill-trained with regard to supporting behaviours that they find challenging, EPs may be positioned to help co-construct an alternative positioning of teachers through work at both an organisational and individual level. In identifying dominant discursive constructions in talk and challenging school staff to reflect upon their skillset, their experience and knowledge, it is hoped that opportunities to support children within the setting will be opened up further.

6.3.2 Facilitate Children's Constructions of Self

EPs are also well placed to advocate for the voice of children who are deemed at risk of exclusion. Often, the intervention of an expert is sought to support the changing of children in order for them to 'cope' in educational settings. In addition to facilitating individualised discourses of behaviour and supporting a medical model of disability which pathologizes children, expert voices are often held with high regard. As such, others' voices, including those of children, may have less power (Pearson, 2016). EPs, therefore, have opportunity to reflect on their role in advocating and facilitating children's voice in the educational setting, in support

of eliciting and championing children's constructions of themselves (Billington, 2013). In turn, imbalances of power within the construction of exclusion can be somewhat addressed.

6.3.3 Conduct and Publish Research

This research also suggests that EPs are well positioned to make positive change at a macro-systemic level. As skilled academics, EPs are well equipped with knowledge and the ability to plan and carry out important research. By publishing such work and using technology to make it available and accessible to a wider audience, raising the consciousness of dominant discourses and facilitating discussion around alternative discourses can take place. Though there are often barriers to publications, such as publication bias (Paez, 2017) and timeliness (Floyd et al., 2011), it may be argued that research that challenges taken-for-granted constructs are important for the development and growth of society as a whole. Whilst alternative discourses may be met with some initial resistance, is important in order to challenge oppressive practice (Foucault, 1977) and support greater outcomes for children.

6.3.4 Challenge Discourse at a Macro-Systemic Level

Using the available research on the constructions of exclusion, outcomes of exclusion and alternatives to exclusion, it may be argued that EPs have the social capital within society to publicly challenge the over-arching systems that oppress children within education. However, this research would also suggest that it would be difficult for a small number of EPs to generate enough movement in England to resist and reconstruct such unconscious discourses as exclusion. It would therefore benefit from the support of the majority of EPs to consciously and ardently resist oppressive discourses at a national level, either as an individual within a collective or through a representative body, such as the Association of Educational Psychologists or the British Psychological Society. Through public challenging and resistance,

discussions of alternative discourses may infiltrate through various groups in society and raise the consciousness of exclusion as a construct that can be changed. With growing support for an alternative approach, EPs would be able to assist with the writing of educational policy and the systemic changes required at a national, local authority and organisational level to support school staff in being able to resist oppressive discourses educational practices.

6.4 Future Research

Firstly, this research could be extended to explore the discursive constructions employed by other subjects constructed within this study, namely children and parents. Similarly, representatives of the LA who write policies on exclusion processes may be useful to participate, in order to broaden the understanding of constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion across different contexts. This may enable a more detailed analysis of subjects and their acceptance or rejection of their positioning in the discourses evident in this research.

Furthermore, exploration of the research questions within a different context may be beneficial for the wider understanding of exclusions in England. Facilitation of the research in secondary education would help create a broader picture of exclusion throughout compulsory education. Similarly, exploration of the research questions within primary educational settings in a different region within England may highlight similar or alternative dominant discourses. For example, exploring constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion within a low-excluding authority may be useful for further reflection on the impact of discourse on the closing and opening up of opportunities to support children.

Finally, opportunity for research may be to explore the research questions within a naturalistic setting, whereby discourse is analysed within an ethnographic approach. Whilst this may be

difficult to conduct, due to ethical considerations regarding sensitivities of the topic and consent from a large group of participants, it would be useful to further understand public discourses of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion. By exploring discourse within a meeting of a Fair Access Panel, for example, the impact of discourse on the opening up or closing down of opportunities for support could be explored in more detail.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations

Typically, criteria of objectivity, reliability and validity are used as a framework to explore the strengths and limitations of research. These concepts are suggested to be essential to positivist research design, due to their focus on operationalised variables within a study (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). However, such considerations are questioned within a social constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2015) and are considered unsuitable for research that is qualitative in nature (Thomas, 2017). As a Foucauldian approach to analysis is based on the assumption that the meaning-making of discourse is co-constructed between the researcher and the text or participant (Burr, 2015), data in this research is suggested to be generated rather than discovered (Howe, 2009). Subjective discourses are explored in their multiplicity, based on a relativist ontology (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Therefore, interpretations of discourses are not evaluated against traditional criterion typically found within scientific research.

Moreover, generalisability is another important factor of positivist research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Generalisability is the replication of research results across different contexts (Makel, Meyer, Simonsen, Roberts, & Plucker, 2022). In the present research it could be argued that the small number of participants, who all operate in a similar context, affects the generalisability of the findings. However, as discursive constructions are created by the interaction of a person and a text, research results in discourse analysis are specific to a context

(Burr, 2015). Instead, Makel et al. (2022) propose that the providing of adequate contextual and methodological information within qualitative research allows others to explore whether discourses may be evident across contexts through transferability, though this opposing term is debated (Maxwell, 2021). As a result, this research does not aim to make claims of generalisability in differing contexts. Instead, the generated data is hoped to provide insight into the constructions of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion within a particular context. In addition, the research process has helped develop my awareness of dominant discourses within primary settings as a practitioner (Ball, 2013b).

Nevertheless, there are two clear limitations of this study. Firstly, not all participants had prior experience of managed moves. Though managed moves as an alternative to exclusion was highlighted as an area of interest for this research in the participant information documents (Appendix 4), prior personal experience of the process was not included within the inclusion criteria for participation. In turn, this meant that some discursive constructions shared by participants were based on the definition provided, which may have limited their understanding and ability to reflect on the process as an alternative. However, as definitions of discourse include interpretation and relationships with written text (Burr, 2015), the use of a local authority definition of managed moves to explain the espoused process can arguably still elicit valuable discursive constructions without prior experience. Though their elicitations may not be based on personal experience, it was possible to generate constructions of the object, drawing upon wider discourses, such as 'power' and 'hope'.

Secondly, though the ethnicity of participants was not a factor in their inclusion or exclusion within this research, the participants that took part in this study via a purposive sampling method, all identified themselves as 'White British'. Whilst this research does not attempt to

generate constructions that are generalisable, it aims to provide insight into a given context; namely primary school settings within a north-west region of England. It may be argued, therefore, that the research does not explore potentially differing discourses of people from a range of ethnicities. Whilst 90% of the population within the region are considered to be 'White British', it may be argued that the sample of this study does not represent the demographic of the region that the research took place.

Moreover, ethnicity was not discussed by any of the participants. Given exclusion data which suggests that children with certain characteristics, such as particular ethnic groups, have a significantly higher rate of school exclusion (Department for Education, 2020b, 2022a), it may be suggested that the omission to discuss such a factor may be due to the limited variation of ethnicities within the sample. However, in line with a Foucauldian perspective, an omission may also be a significant construct of discourse itself (Foucault, 1972). Whilst it may have been useful to explicitly ask about ethnicity within the interviews, where participants have not elicited constructs of ethnicity in their talk, may demonstrate the invisibility of race inequalities with regard to education and school exclusion within wider discourses in society (Parsons, 2008).

6.5.1 Assessing Quality in Qualitative Research

Nevertheless, the concept of validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are drawn in a study (Maxwell, 2021). It is considered to be an integral part of qualitative research (Sangar, 2018). Whilst the assessment of validity from a positivist position may be concerned with the accuracy of knowledge presented, as uncovered by the researcher from analysing existing 'truths', research aligned with a social constructionist epistemology assumes that

knowledge is constructed through the process of research itself (Howe, 2009). Therefore, the quality of the research is evaluated with regard to the research process adopted.

Qualitative researchers are encouraged to evaluate the quality of their research in order to ensure integrity of their work (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Within literature are various frameworks for analysis of the quality of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). However, the use of overly prescriptive criteria is cautioned against as its boundaries may restrict what is intended to be a fluid process of exploration (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). On the other hand, Mills and Birks (2014) suggest that frameworks can be useful in evaluating the quality of research when adopted in line with the methodological positioning of the research. One tool that is commonly used to review qualitative research (Long, French, & Brooks, 2020), and has been used to evaluate the quality of this research, is the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) tool. Table 8 conceptualises the tool and illustrates the evaluation process of the present research:

Table 8

Evaluation of the research using the CASP (2018)

Question	Evaluation (as evidenced in the research)
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes, there were clear research questions (see Chapter 3) that were conceptualised in advance of the research process, which were shared with participants (see Appendix 4 and 5). The aims of the research were conceived as an area of interest and were developed based on areas for further exploration as identified following a review of published literature (Chapter 2).
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	The research sought to analyse the individual discursive constructions of participants, in order to explore discourses of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion. The research aligned with a social constructionist

		epistemology and aimed to explore a multitude of discourses in text. As a result, qualitative methodology was appropriate in order to research the research questions (Chapter 3).
3.	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	A flexible research design was adopted during the study (Chapter 4). In total, five primary school teaching staff volunteered to participate, and their talk was gathered through individual semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule was drafted based on the research questions and was followed (see Appendix 1). A resource was available for use to elicit participant's constructions, as needed (see Appendix 2). As a result, the research design was appropriate in order to explore the research questions.
4.	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	The participants were identified using a purposive sampling strategy (see Section 4.4). Information about the research was disseminated to approximately one hundred primary schools within one local authority, and prospective participants were invited to volunteer to participate in the research. Eleven individuals expressed an interest to take part in the study. Two individuals did not meet the inclusion criteria (see Table 4) and were not selected to participate in the study. Following further correspondence one individual was unable to participate and three individuals did not respond. As a result, five individuals took part in the research. This strategy was appropriate given the context identified in the research title and questions.
5.	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Chapter 4 illustrates the method of data collection in detail. Semi-structured interviews with individual participants were considered to be the most appropriate method for this research. Semi-structured interviews ensure the research questions can be explored in a safe, confidential environment, at the same time as allowing for flexibility in design to accommodate for the needs of individual participants. An interview schedule was used (Appendix 1). Interviews were audio recorded (with participants' consent – see Appendix 6) and then transcribed prior to analysis. As the research aims were to explore constructions of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion within

	discourse, the use of semi-structured interviews was appropriate for this research. However, future research exploring the same research questions may be conducted within an ethnographic approach to explore naturally occurring talk (see Section 6.4).	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	I critically examined my role in the research, adopting a reflexive approach throughout (see Section 4.7). Whilst the initial interest in the research came from a special interest, the research questions were developed following a review of relevant literature (see Chapters 2 and 3). My position within the research was clearly stated to prospective participants in writing (Appendix 4 and 5) and prior to the interview. Participants were given the option of where they would like the interview to take place (Appendix 4 and 5). The use of a written script of 'Managed Moves' was shared with participants who sought a definition, following the piloting of the interview schedule (Appendix 2), in order to limit my influence over the description of the practice prior to discussion. As a result, the relationship between the researcher and participants was considered in this research. However, on reflection, participants may have been wary of my role within the LA that they worked. Though this did not appear to stunt their openness during the interview, it may have been a factor in the limited response to the invitation to participate.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical considerations were taken into account. The research gained approval from the University of Birmingham Ethical Committee prior to commencement. The research was explained to participants prior to the process (Appendix 4 and 5). An overview of ethical considerations and the approaches taken to address them has been evidenced earlier in this research (see Table 6).	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Consideration of other methods of analysis were taken into account (see Table 3) and the use of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis was justified (see Section 3.4). The stages of analysis were shared in this research (see Chapter 3 and Table 7). Examples of stage one of the analysis process has been illustrated (see Appendix 10). Within the	

	Analysis and Discussion chapter (5), stages of the analysis are referenced throughout, including discursive constructions, discourse, positioning of subjects, orientations and contradictions. Direct quotes from interview transcriptions were used to illustrate discourses analysed in text. Discussion of discursive constructions and wider discourses were shared during peer and academic supervision. Therefore, the research analysis was rigorous. However, criticisms of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (see Section 3.5) highlight that there is no universal method for conducting such analysis, and therefore it may be argued that the method of data analysis may be improved.
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	The interpretations of data are made explicit (see Chapter 5). Dominant discourses that were interpreted within the data analysis were discussed, whilst contradicting discursive constructions and discourses were also shared with relation to the research questions. A summary of the discourses prevalent in this research was also shared earlier in this chapter (Chapter 6).
10. How valuable is the research?	This research was developed in light of limited research on exclusions within primary education in England, and even less research on the constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion as objects of reality. Therefore, the present research makes a contribution to knowledge of exclusions, as well as developing the practice of myself as a researcher. Furthermore, Implications of this research on EP practice has been suggested (see Section 6.3) along with recommendations of future research (see Section 6.4).

6.5.2 Role of the Researcher

As previously discussed (see Section 4.7), the positioning of a researcher can significantly impact the research process and the generation of knowledge (Taylor, 2003). The practice of reflexivity, therefore, is important within research in order to promote integrity (Burr, 2015). As the researcher in this study, my professional role, shared interest in the construction of

exclusions and the framing of questions asked will have influenced the responses of participants during individual interviews, due to power relations (Foucault, 1980). Whilst I was mindful of these influences and was careful in trying to provide a safe environment for the participants to be open with me, alternative methods of data collection may have limited this further. However, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for an active approach in the exploration, challenge and clarification of constructions being made. In doing so, sense-making of discursive constructions were largely generated between myself and the individual participants during data collection. Over the course of the interviews, my approach to the co-generation of meaning-making through an adoption of a role as a curious researcher rather than an 'interviewer', supported further elicitation of constructions in talk.

6.6 Personal Reflections and Concluding Thoughts

As a practitioner and as a researcher, this research has enabled me to develop my understanding of social constructionism and the influence of discourse on social action. At the beginning of this process, my desire to study constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion mostly came from personal experience of meetings with professionals, whereby children were positioned as undeserving of mainstream education in a discourse of defiance. The conception of an initial research idea was based on a search for 'truth' of what educational professionals really thought of children and how this impacted children's opportunities in school. However, I have found the exploration of multiple constructions of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion liberating, as it has allowed me to challenge my own construction of educational professionals. In working reflexively, I have identified and resisted my initial urge to create a 'whistle-blowing' document and have instead had opportunity to reflect on the complexity of discourse, their often contradictory constructions and the impact that these have on practice. As a result, I have further distanced myself from my previous 'black and white' thinking and

pursuit of a clear cause and effect. Not only has this research helped develop my understanding of the construction of exclusion and children at risk of exclusion, it has illuminated the prevalent constructions of the schooling system in England within a wider context. This is something I look forward to continuing to explore in the future in order to continue to challenge oppressive practice.

This research, along with available literature, demonstrates the complexity of discourses around the topic and a need for further consideration. Without the challenge of dominant discourses and the collective challenge of taken for granted practices, alternative approaches for training and resourcing of schools will not be forthcoming. And, therefore, the inclusion of all children in schooling is unlikely to be achieved. In conclusion, in order to support school staff who state that they aspire to provide good education for all children within a nurturing, thriving environment, this research advocates for EPs to continue to explore, challenge and reconstruct objects of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion. By working at different ecological systems levels within the EP profession, it is hoped that educational practice will better align with the discourses of inclusion which have begun to challenge the dominant discourse of the past centuries.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Appendix 2: Resource

Appendix 3: Email Script to SENDCOs

Appendix 4: Invitation to Participate

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 6: Consent Form

Appendix 7: Demographic Questionnaire

Appendix 8: Managed Move Script

Appendix 9: Excerpt of Participant Interview

Appendix 10: Example of Data Analysis

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Housekeeping	• Welcome the participant, thank them for agreeing to meet, introduce myself as the researcher.
	• Explain the research aims and the interview process (approximately length of interview).
	• Check understanding of the participant information sheet and provide time for any questions.
	• Review signed consent form, including consent for audio-recording of the interview, and the participant's right to withdraw.
	• Note any safeguarding issues.
Interview commences – turn on audio-recorder	
Introductory Questions	• What is your current role?
	• How long have you worked at your school?
	• How long have you worked in primary education?
Specific and Probing Questions	• Have you ever taught a child that was at risk of exclusion? What support had been given to that child?
	• What is exclusion? What is the purpose of exclusion?
	• What are the alternatives to exclusion? What is a managed move? What is the purpose of a managed move? What are the main reasons for a managed move?
	• Are all children at risk of exclusion suitable for a managed move? When might a managed move not be appropriate?
	• What helps facilitate a managed move? How is a managed move deemed successful?
	• Do you feel that different reasons for exclusion require different approaches for support? Why?
Interview ends – turn off	
Conclusion	• Thank the participant for taking part in the interview.
	• Remind the participant of their right to withdraw (within the next 14 calendar days), and the available contact details in the initial email and participant information sheet.
	• Signpost the participant to the offer of a debrief via telephone once data collection and analysis are complete, should they wish.

Appendix 2: Resource

Child at risk of permanent exclusion	Now we're going to imagine a child at risk of exclusion in a primary school. • Imagine this child in your classroom/school, can you describe them? • What would they be like as a person? • They have a bag with them, what would be in the bag? • How would you imagine this child's friends? • What would their family/environment be like? • Thinking about this child in school, what would they be like? • What would their greatest fear be? • What is this child's history? • What would their future be like?

Appendix 3: Email Script to SENDCos

Dear [SENDCo name],

I hope that this email finds you well. My name is Laura Halton, and I am a Trainee Educational psychologist on placement at (removed for anonymity of Local Authority). I am currently in my third year of doctoral training on the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme at the University of Birmingham, being supervised by Dr James Birchwood.

Over the next 9 months, I will be conducting a research project for my thesis, exploring children at risk of exclusion with primary education. I am interested in how school staff construct children who are at risk of exclusion, and the exclusion process. It is hoped that this research will provide insight into children at risk of exclusion and the support available to them within primary education.

I will be interviewing a range of teaching staff for this project and would appreciate your help in recruiting any teaching assistants, teachers, middle leaders or senior leadership team members from your school who might be interested in participation. They do not have to have had direct involvement with a child at risk of exclusion.

Please could you circulate this email with your school teaching staff. Any teaching staff who are interested in participating in this research are required to read the attached participant information sheet and consent form. If the staff member would then like to participate, a signed consent form and demographic information sheet should be returned directly to me at this address before [date].

I will then be in contact with the participant to arrange a convenient date and time for the interview. If you have any queries, or wish to know more, please contact me or my supervisor using the details below.

Thank you very much for your time and your support.

Laura Halton

Researcher: Laura Halton

Email: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)

Phone: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)

Research Supervisor: Dr James Birchwood

Email: (removed for anonymity)

Phone: (removed for anonymity)

Appendix 4: Invitation to Participate

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Invitation to Participate in Doctoral

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to share my upcoming research and invite you to participate in it.

My name is Laura Halton and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement at (removed for anonymity). I am currently in my third year of doctoral training on the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme at the University of Birmingham, being supervised by Dr James Birchwood. Over the next 9 months, I will be conducting a research project for my thesis exploring children at risk of exclusion within primary education. The aspirations for this research are to provide insight into how children are constructed by educational professionals and the practices available to support them in schools.

Following your consent, participation would involve a single, confidential interview with myself. The interview will either take place face-to-face at your school, or online via Microsoft Teams. The interview itself will take place at a time which suits you best and will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis by myself as the researcher. Strict confidentiality would remain in place throughout, meaning that your name, the school you work in or the Local Authority of which the school is in will not be shared. Any identifying information will be redacted, and a pseudonym will be provided in the transcription and analysis of your data. This includes in any summary report, my doctoral thesis and any future publications in professional journals.

If you do wish to participate in this research, please:

- Read the attached participant information sheet (see attached).
- Complete the consent form and demographic information sheet (see attached).
- Email both the signed consent form and demographic information sheet directly to me at this email address ((removed for anonymity)), before [date]. I will then be in contact to arrange a convenient date and time for the interview.

Thank you very much for your support and taking the time to read this information. If you have any queries, or wish to know more, please contact me or my supervisor using the details below.

Laura Halton

Researcher: Laura Halton
Email: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)
Phone: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)

Research Supervisor: Dr James Birchwood
Email: (removed for anonymity)
Phone: (removed for anonymity)

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Participant Information Sheet

This participant information sheet has been sent to you to so that you can make an informed decision as to whether you would like to take part in my research project. Please read the information so that you understand why the research is being conducted and what the involvement of a participant will entail. If you would like any further information or have any questions about the information below, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information provided at the end of this document.

Background

> My name is Laura Halton and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. Since 2019, I have been registered as a postgraduate research (PGR) student at the University of Birmingham, where I am undertaking a full-time, three-year professional doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. Prior to the course, I was a primary school Teacher (2014-2018) in the North West, before working for the same Local Authority as an Assistant Educational Psychologist (2018-2019).
>
> As part of my doctoral training, I am currently on a supervised practice placement at (removed for anonymity) within the Educational Psychology and Learning Support Service. I am also required to undertake a substantive research study which will form Vol. 1 of my thesis. This project is supervised by Dr James Birchwood, who is available on the contact details below.

Research Aims

> I am interested in how children at risk of exclusion are constructed within primary education. I aim to gather primary school professional's views of how children at risk of exclusion are identified and the support that is available to them, namely managed moves. By gathering views from staff across different primary settings, I aim to explore any similar or contradicting discourses across the Local Authority. The title for this research project is:
>
> A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of educational professionals' constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion within primary schools.

Research Rationale

Government statistics suggest that the rate of permanent exclusion across primary settings in England has remained at 0.02 per cent for the past 10 years, whilst the rate of fixed-period exclusions has risen by 0.44 per cent in the same period. Concerningly, the increase in the rate of fixed-period exclusions highlights a six-year upward trend in primary settings.

Research has well documented the detrimental consequences of pupil exclusions, suggesting that they lead to negative life outcomes, poor mental and physical health and involvement in criminal activity. Nevertheless, the Timpson Review (2019) highlights a range of perceptions amongst educational professionals, parents and children with regard to pupil exclusions. The report also suggests that school practice and exclusion policies vary based on individual school values and behaviour policies. Whilst some schools view exclusion as a necessary practice to manage poor behaviour, other schools seek to set out alternative approaches to fixed-term and permanent exclusion.

One of the alternative approaches is a managed move. Whilst this is recognised within the English education system, there is no statutory guidance, regulation or recording of this process. Concerningly, 44% of 133 Local Authorities in the UK do not have data on children accessing a Managed Move. Whilst some research is beginning to emerge in this area, it is still limited and in need of development.

This research aims to explore the constructions of exclusions, alternatives to exclusionand the children that are at risk of exclusion. In doing so, I anticipate that variation in discourse and practice across schools within the same Local Authority will highlight the need for more discussion about children at risk of exclusion and the support available to them in the current English context.

Your Involvement

Should you wish to participate in this study, the process will involve an in-depth conversation with myself for approximately 90 minutes. The interview will take place either face-to-face at your school or via Microsoft Teams, at a time that is most suitable for you. It will be audio-recorded to ensure that I am able to accurately capture the detail of your account at a later date when analysing all of the interview transcripts.

What will the findings be used for?

- The research findings will be written in Vol. 1 of my doctoral thesis for the University of Birmingham and will be published online in the University e-theses database.
- The research findings will also be communicated in a summary report for the Educational Psychology and Learning Support Service and other stakeholders within the Local Authority.
- The summary report, or, should you prefer, the full report, will be provided to you and other participants.
- Summarising articles of the research may be written for submission to a peer-reviewed journal for publication at a later date.
- Similarly, findings from the study may also be presented at professional conferences.

Please note: Your name, the school and Local Authority in which you work, and any other identifying information will <u>not</u> be included in any of the reports.

What will happen to the data that is collected?

- Immediately after your interview, the audio-recording will be transferred from the devices to a password-protected folder on the University of Birmingham's secure electronic data storage system, BEAR DataShare. The files will then be erased from the recording devices.
- Electronic transcripts and digital notes from your interview will also be held in a password-protected folder on BEAR DataShare.
- Any written notes and forms will be scanned in and also stored on BEAR DataShare in a password protected folder. Original paper notes and forms will then be shredded.
- In accordance with university research policy, the data will be stored on BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10-year expiry date will be set for the electronic data stored on BEAR DataShare.

If I change my mind, can I withdraw from the study?

- You have a right to stop the interview (and the recording) any time. You do not have to give a reason for doing so.

- You also have the right to ask me to redact any part of your interview transcription. You can choose to exclude specific comments from the interview transcript, which will not be analysed. However, it will not be possible to erase excerpts from the audio recording.
- If you choose to withdraw completely from the study during or immediately after the interview, the recording will be deleted from the recording devices immediately.
- Following the interview, you can withdraw your data from the research, for a period of up to fourteen days, by contacting the researcher (see contact details below).

Will my information be kept confidential in the study?

- Yes. Anything that you say will be treated as confidential, which means that it cannot be identified as yours.
- Pseudonyms will be used throughout the transcript and research reports. Family relationships or professional roles may be referred to (e.g. brother, teacher or doctor).
- Every care will be taken to minimise the reporting of specific or unique case details that may reveal your identity.
- Please contact me if there is anything that you would like to be left out.

Please note: If, for any reason, I become seriously concerned about your own or others' safety and/or well-being, I have a responsibility to pass on this information to the university tutor or placement supervisor, in order to decide how to offer support. This would be fully discussed with you first.

Who do I contact if I have a query or concern?

If you have any questions or would like to seek further information, please feel free to contact me using the information below. You will also have opportunity to ask any questions before and after the interview.

Researcher: Laura Halton
Email: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)
Phone: (removed for anonymity of Local Authority)

Research Supervisor: Dr James Birchwood
Email: (removed for anonymity)
Phone: (removed for anonymity)

What do I do now?

If you do wish to participate in this research, please:

- Complete the demographic information sheet and consent form (see attached).
- Email both the signed consent form and demographic information sheet directly to me at this email address (removed for anonymity), before [date]. I will then be in contact to arrange a convenient date and time for the interview.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering your participation in the study.

Laura Halton

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Participant Consent Form

Please complete the following form and return it to (removed for anonymity) by [date].

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.	Y	N
I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.	Y	N
I confirm that I am currently working within a Primary School setting in North-West England.	Y	N
I understand that the interview will last approximately 90 minutes.	Y	N
Right to withdraw: I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point without explanation. I can also ask for my interview information not to be used in the study, up until two weeks after the interview date. If I decide to withdraw from the study, during or after the interview (within the two-week time frame), all interview data will also be destroyed.	Y	N
Confidentiality: I know that neither my name, nor the name of the school or Local Authority of which I work, will be included in these reports. I understand that basic details about me (i.e. Gender, ethnicity, age, years of experience) will be summarised in the methodology section. I give permission for my interview recording to be typed up with a different name and for this to be used in the research. I agree to anonymised quotes being used as part of the study.	Y	N
Safeguarding: My views and identity will be kept confidential unless I say anything that suggests that I or another are at risk from harm. In this case, I understand that Laura would seek guidance from her research supervisor and follow necessary safeguarding procedures.	Y	N
Audio Recording: I understand that my voice will be recorded during the interview and Laura may also make some hand-written notes. I understand that the voice recordings will be transcribed. I agree to being audio recorded and I understand that the recordings will only be heard by Laura and her research supervisors.	Y	N
Data storage: All hand-written notes and audio recordings will be typed-up using pseudonyms. The original recordings and notes will be deleted or destroyed. The notes and recorder will be kept locked in a filing cabinet that only Laura Halton has access to. The anonymised transcripts will only be available to Laura, her University Supervisor and University assessors. In adherence to the Data Protection Act (2018), all electronic versions of anonymous documents will be stored on the University of Birmingham secure network for a period of 10 years, after which point, they will be destroyed.	Y	N
Data usage: I understand that the anonymised results of this study:	Y	N

- Will be used for Vol. 1 of Laura's Doctoral Thesis for the University of Birmingham.
- Will be shared with other participants of the study in a summary report.
- Will be shared with professionals from the participating Educational Psychology Service.
- May be made available to other professionals working in children's services in (removed for anonymity).
- May be written up for professional journals or shared at conferences for people working in/with educational psychology services.

I have read the participant information sheet and <u>would</u> like to take part in the study '*A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of educational professionals' constructions of exclusions and children at risk of exclusion within primary schools*'. This study is being carried out by Laura Halton, Trainee Educational Psychologist, as part of a Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. This research is supervised by Dr James Birchwood.

Please indicate your response to the following statements (either using the <mark>highlight</mark> function or <u>deleting the incorrect response):</u>

Participant Name		Researcher Name	Laura Halton
Participant Signature		Researcher Signature	*L. Halton*
Date		Date	[date]

Appendix 7: Demographic Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Demographic Information Sheet

Please complete the following table and return it to (removed for anonymity) by [date]. Please note that this data will be used for the methodology section of the written thesis document*. Any identifiable information will not be shared.

Your Personal Information	Your response:
Name	
Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity	
Your Career	Your response:
Current role in your school	
Length of time in your current role	
Total length of time working in primary education	
The number of Local Authorities you have worked for (including this LA), whilst working in education	

*These details are collected to illustrate the diversity of the sample and to limit claims about potential relationships between findings/themes and the sample. This is based on the understanding that all knowledge is situated in a given context and all participants experiences are unique to specific cultural spaces. Demographic information collected here is NOT treated as a variable to generalise but to ensure a variety of professional experiences and backgrounds are accounted for within the sample.

Appendix 8: Managed Move Script

Managed Moves

What is it?

DfE guidance recommends a managed move as an alternative to exclusion: 'A number of different alternatives may be available to head teachers in response to a serious breach of behaviour (including a) managed move to another school to enable the pupil to have a fresh start in a new school. Parents should never be pressured into removing their child from the school under threat of permanent exclusion, nor should pupils' names be deleted from the school roll on disciplinary grounds unless the formal permanent exclusion procedures set out in statute and in this guidance.'

Which pupils?

Managed moves should only be considered when it is in the best interests of the pupil concerned:

• Where the young person is facing permanent exclusion for persistently breaking school rules

• Where a pupil has a long history of challenging behaviour and interventions have proved unsuccessful.

• Where the relationship between the pupil and either a particular group of fellow pupils and/or staff has broken down or where there is an expected pattern of behaviour which might be broken by a fresh start in a new setting.

• Where there has been a serious one off incident that might have led to permanent exclusion but is out of character in respect of the young person's history.

It should be noted that schools should not initiate the process when in the head's view the pupil cannot in any circumstances succeed in a new setting.

Appendix 9: Excerpt of Participant Interview

Interview 3

Name	Ppt 3	Current Role	SENDCO / KS2 Teacher
Gender	F	Length of time in role	2 years
Ethnicity	British	Total length of experience in primary education	13 years
Consent	✓	Date of Interview	11.21

Interview Transcript

Researcher (R), Interviewee (I), Self-correction (-),

emphasis by interviewee (*italics*), natural pause (,), sustained pause (.), gestures [ ]

1.	R	So how long have you been in your current role?
2.	I	Since March 2020, so almost two years as SENDCO
3.	R	Yeah, how are you finding that?
4.	I	It's good I really enjoy it, it's very very busy though especially in our school
5.	R	Are you teaching as well?
6.	I	Yeah so I teach three days a week and then I'm out of class Thursday Friday for PPA, SENDCO time and forest school time so it's busy [laughs]
7.	R	Yeah I bet [laughs] and how long have your worked at this school altogether?
8.	I	Erm since 2014 nearly eight years now
9.	R	Okay so have you worked here since qualifying?
10.	I	No I worked in [town name] previously for five years, so I've been teaching for thirteen years now I think
11.	R	Ok, wow. So if we think about children at risk of exclusion as obviously that's the purpose of today's interview, if you think about exclusion what does that mean to you and what is the purpose of it?
12.	I	So my view of it is when a school kind of can't accommodate that child anymore and it's having an impact on the other children and it's kind of a last resort that they're going to have to exclude the child
13.	R	Right
14.	I	Erm we've had here significant behaviours but the children have just been sort of suspended for a day or two or isolation on their own and exclusion is a last resort here because we see it sort of as we need to give the children chances and if we can't -if we sort of send them off then who's going to help them to succeed? Erm so it is a big last resort for us here
15.	R	Okay. So then you made a bit of a distinction between a fixed term exclusion and a permanent exclusion. How do you view a fixed term exclusion, if a permanent exclusion is the last resort?
16.	I	Yeah just kind of the step before really and it doesn't happen a lot it's only if the behaviour is significant or if they're presenting as a danger to staff or other children erm then they're not obviously allowed on the premises for that fixed term erm and also to have an impact on their behaviour and show them that you can't behave that way

17.	R	Okay
18.	I	Erm some of our older children have been quite aggressive and violent as well so they're the children that then go to those fixed term exclusions
19.	R	How do you think it does impact them?
20.	I	I think some of them enjoy it and they like being at home and they don't have to come to school and some of -in the past some of them have not been bothered at all but the majority of them they don't like they've been excluded from their friends and they know that their friends are still coming in because they talk to them on social media or see them at the park or whatever erm and they know that they're missing out on school and I think a lot of our children feel safe here, they like being here and when we're saying no you can't come in they sort of realise then like I've pushed it too far
21.	R	Okay
22.	I	So those children that I can think of that have had fixed term exclusions when they've gone on to high school they'll come back and visit us here and they'll sort of remember their time here as really happy and positive and they'll say oh you were much kinder here than at high school
23.	R	Right okay
24.	I	So yeah I think they do realise most of them that they have pushed it too far and their behaviour usually improves, especially when parents are on board as well though as some of the parents will just let them do what they want for them days that they're not in school they can go out and play or go to the park, so them children are just having a great time whereas some of them are really strict with them and will keep them at home and treat it more seriously
25.	R	So do you think fixed term exclusions also have an effect on parents as well?
26.	I	Yeah most of our parents yeah, yeah particularly the ones that present with the challenging behaviours because they don't want the child at home because the behaviour is even more challenging at home so they can't handle it so it does have a bigger impact on them parents. And some of our parents as well they don't want that for their children. Some of them I don't think has an impact on their parents as they just see it as oh the school are kicking them out for a couple of days rather than taking it seriously
27.	R	Ok so is it sometimes more of a sense of injustice?
28.	I	Yeah, like the school are being unfair to the child in some way
INTERVIEW PAUSED – PHONE CALL FOR INTERVIEWEE		
29.	R	So I've got a little activity that we can do, I'm not grading you on it or anything like that it's just to generate ideas. Do you like drawing?
30.	I	Yeah I'm not very good at it though [laughs]
31.	R	[laughs] don't worry I'm not going to look at the drawings -you can draw if you want but you don't have to. So, have you ever heard of the Ideal Self?
32.	I	Yeah yeah
33.	R	Okay great, so basically we will be using that model facilitate the conversation. In your mind I'd like you to think about a child that is at risk of exclusion and you can have a little doodle while you're thinking if that helps. So if you think about what does the child present like, what is their personality like? And then we will explore that
34.	I	Does it matter if they are SEN? Because that's the one that comes to my mind at the minute

35.	R	No, just whatever you are thinking. It can be a child that you know or a culmination of children.
36.	I	Erm [drawing and making notes] I'm just making bullet points here [laughs]
37.	R	That's fine [laughs] do you want to describe the child to me?
38.	I	YEP, So there's a couple erm in mind. They are very much on their own agenda
39.	R	Okay
40.	I	Nonverbal communicators. Erm or very limited and everything is sort of expressed physically or erm like aggressively, running out of the classroom running up and down corridors, disrupting other people, throwing kicking hitting
41.	R	Okay
42.	I	Erm not able to be in the mainstream classroom and really disruptive to the other children
43.	R	So how would you describe that behaviour as a whole?
44.	I	Erm what in term of like?
45.	R	Would it be what you expect or is it out of the norm?
46.	I	Erm it's out of the norm but it is linked to their special need
47.	R	Okay
48.	I	Erm and the needs that they have. The children that I'm thinking of had quite severe autism
49.	R	Okay
50.	I	Erm but at the point where staff are struggling to cope, staff are being hurt children are being hurt erm they're not accessing anything learning wise in the mainstream classroom erm so very much being excluded within school
51.	R	Okay
52.	I	Yeah erm yeah so we're kind of like at crisis point of where do we go, we've had some support of other agencies as well with them like SENDOs and people like that so
53.	R	Okay
54.	I	They are in need of specialist provision but it's waiting for that point and it could possibly end up that exclusion might have to happen
55.	R	Okay so is it because the wait for the provision that you think they need is so far in the future that they're not going to be able to cope?
56.	I	Yeah so it's not yet been agreed erm it should be in the next couple months that that would be right for them erm our link EP backs both of the cases, and they're shocked that they're actually a mainstream school to start with. Erm and yeah the weight is so long with we've asked for support from specialist teachers but the wait for that is still spring term erm we've got a lot of really experienced TAs who are used to dealing with those things but even their strategies are running thin now
57.	R	Yeah
58.	I	and it might work for a day but it doesn't work the day after so it's just constantly finding new things erm one of the children We have to have staff working on a 15 minute input and rotating around because it was so intense with that child.
59.	R	Okay

60.	I	Erm both physically for the staff member and mentally draining so it is pulling on our resources a lot,
61.	R	So I was going to ask then -with the wait, what impact is that having on either the staff or the child the other children?
62.	I	Well the child's not making progress. Not happy erm which they are display with those behaviours and then obviously staff are getting very stressed with it erm mentally drained physically drained erm which is then obviously coming to us as SLT because. we're trying to support them and we do what we can erm it's the cost as well to school -we've had to employ specialist TAs erm through supply agencies to be one to one with these children but we're not getting funding for one to one support
63.	R	Right
64.	I	Erm but that's what we need to do to meet that child's needs so yeah and even that now is not -no longer working so -and then the other children in the classroom being around that behaviour a lot erm they're frightened of the child so it affects the social side of the child's development erm and then obviously they're going home telling their parents so it affects the parent of the child because they know that other parents should see their child as being naughty or having these needs and not having any friends and things like that. So it does affect everybody involved really erm siblings as well in school -we've got older siblings and they know that their friends see their sibling behave in that way
65.	R	Okay
66.	I	and some of them with laugh or saying things to him erm and it does upset him so yeah.
67.	R	It sounds really challenging
68.	I	It is it's kind of come to a head this week so with staff being erm struggling *really* struggling, so yeah we're meeting after this to discuss what we can do
69.	R	Okay
70.	I	It's got to that point so
71.	R	Yeah so you mentioned that as SLT you're trying to support staff, in what way have you been able to try and do that?
72.	I	So obviously getting in this specialist support in the first place, erm listening to their concerns really and saying well what can we do? Who can we move around? Can we change anything? One of the children is on reduced timetables so she *only* comes in in the afternoon because she cannot cope with a full day, we've modified staff down in nursery so that support is available for one of the children in the morning who attends in the morning. Parents do want her to come all day but we said that *at the moment* we can't meet that need staffing wise
73.	R	Okay
74.	I	Erm and then that staff member moves over to reception to support a child that comes in in the afternoon with significant behaviours and then we've had to juggle around staff from nursery erm and work with the numbers of children that are in to go and support a child in key stage one who is displaying similar behaviours so it's -and also we've got one of our TAs in particular is brilliant with ASD children she's got *so* much experience so I always go to her for advice and strategies but everyone else does as well and she's given us loads of strategies to put in place -she's worked with the child as well but even she's finding it really difficult and she's out of ideas

75.	R	Right
76.	I	Erm so yeah we're meeting today to see what else we can do we've called reviews earlier because they've both got EHCPs erm and the EP is coming and the case managers to try and
77.	R	Okay
78.	I	yeah so the staff feel like we're trying to do stuff because I think sometimes they just feel like we just leave them to it but now it's trying to show that we are doing what we can
79.	R	Yeah
80.	I	We've got specialist teachers booked in for the spring term as well erm but it's whether that comes soon enough
81.	R	So this child is at risk of exclusion at the moment
82.	I	Yeah
83.	R	So if the child were to be excluded, what would the purpose of that exclusion be?
84.	I	It would be to ease the pressure in school really and to keep your children safe and her safe erm because the behaviour she's displaying - she's not happy she's very physical. Erm can be verbally aggressive but in a shouting sort of way. Not swearing at the moment. Erm. And to see if that has an impact on her really, her not being here and see if that upsets -kind of upsets her routine that sounds really wrong [laughs] but would she miss being in school and would she realises that she can't behave the way she's been doing and she needs to do what she's been told and I do think she would miss the relationships she's got with the one to one TA
85.	R	Right
86.	I	Even though at the moment she's like *go away I don't want to see you a*nd she's physical she's tackled her to the ground and all sorts in the corridor and erm I do think if she wasn't there she'd kind of think *oh well what's happened*
87.	R	Right
88.	I	Erm It's *really* hard because I know she's got she's got severe ASD but. it's at the point where we are like what do we do so that's what we need to talk about after
89.	R	Okay
90.	I	So yeah she's *at risk* of exclusion this term not permanent
91.	R	Okay yeah I was just about to ask that then with you saying you know it might be that she then misses school okay
92.	I	Yeah so she could come back
93.	R	Erm so if we carry on with this, so you've talked in great detail that was really good about how the child presents and their personality, erm so if you think about -they have a bag with them, what would the bag be like? What's in the bag, why have they got that in the bag? Is it something that they usually have in the bag?
94.	I	That's quite tricky [laughs] she'd probably have lots of sensory items in her bag. Erm that she would get out and use a lot erm. I'm trying to think
95.	R	So would she independently get them out of the bag?
96.	I	If she was expected to be doing something else she would then go and get those things out of the bag [laughs]
97.	R	Right to be defying.

98.	I	Erm to be defiant
99.	R	Okay
100.	I	Erm but she probably be prompted to use those things cause she does have things like that available for her
101.	R	Yeah
102.	I	But she needs bringing down from the behaviour and sort of pointing in the right direction to use those kind of strategies erm and she'd probably have her dad in the bag is she could -she really loves her dad and she'll scream if mum picks her up from school she'll cry and refuse to leave erm
103.	R	Okay, do they live together or are they separated?
104.	I	No they're separate erm so she's really -she is close to her mum as well but for some reason she sees her dad as just this golden person and [laughs] erm what does -she doesn't get to see him very often so she would probably like her dad available at all times
105.	R	Right yeah, so we can think more about that then like her family and her home life. So child at risk of exclusion what would their home life be like?
106.	I	Typical child at risk of exclusion I'd say it's a rocky home life, not really routined and probably some ACEs in there as well. Erm parents aren't really that engaged with school or them doing well or encouraging them. and. Just really unsettled and sort of not meeting their needs
107.	R	Okay
108.	I	Or just lacking discipline at home where the child just feels like they can just do whatever they want and it doesn't matter, erm because for a lot of the children in the past that have been at risk of fixed term exclusions or permanent erm they've got more respect for school staff than their own parents so when they're told off by us or we speak to them or whatever It's got more impact than when it's just the mum or the dad
109.	R	Okay, why do you think that is?
110.	I	I think it's the lack of discipline at home erm or just that -not having that routine or parents not really having much time for the child, whereas here we've got more time for them we spend all day with them. They build those relationships. Erm a few of the children that have had fixed time exclusion in the past about things like attachment issues with parents as well. And that's come out in their behaviour. So I think that relationship with the parents, hasn't been that solid
111.	R	Hmm, yeah. So going back to before when you said that sometimes a fixed term exclusion can make the child realise they want to be at school, do you think that can have an impact on the relationships they have with staffed once they've had an exclusion?
112.	I	Yeah I haven't seen it actually erm and we sort of come in with more respect and *apologetic* to the staff member. Erm particularly their class teacher that year erm and I think because they know we -cause obviously we have to have all of the meetings with parents and the child and everything to talk about the exclusion I think they then feel more noticed in school by all staff and then they feel like they've got that more. solid relationship with say our teacher and they know that he's checking in on their behaviour and when they do well they get the praise
113.	R	Right

114.	I	So I think some of them quite enjoy that because they noticed and they get in that respect from grownups and they get the praise from the grownups in school as well
115.	R	Okay
116.	I	Yeah, and I think some of them do realise and start to accept that they can't - that that's had an impact on their peers like their behaviour because they've had to be in isolation in school or fixed term exclusion they sort of realise then that you can't do that because look what you've done to your peers in class kind of thing you've disrupted their learning or hurt someone or
117.	R	Right
118.	I	Whatever they don't want to be around it I think they do start to realise
119.	R	So you said then about it can be quite a good impact on them when something is explained to them about why they can't act like that. Do you think that that is part of why behaviour then improves? Or would it improve anyway without that conversation?
120.	I	I think that they do need explaining to them why they can't behave that way, yeah. Erm we have that in our behaviour policy anyway, you know why've they gotten amber - We have on board like red amber green
121.	R	Okay
122.	I	Erm
123.	R	And every time they sort of, we say to a child like you need to move your name and we always explain what what they've done and why they can't be doing that
124.	I	Right
125.	R	And we have our five golden rules as well and they all know exactly what they are and why we need to behave that way. with each other. So yeah they do respond well to the explanation and understanding rather than someone just being like *don't do that*
126.	I	Yeah
127.	R	Yeah erm obviously it was more difficult the younger ones but we still try to do it [laughs] yeah
128.	I	So we've talked about what the a child at risk of exclusion would be like and what they would have in a bag, talked a bit about their home life and their family. How are they with their friends? So you've already mentioned that it can have a negative impact on their social interaction. Is that typical of what you would think a child at risk of exclusion would be like?
129.	R	Some of them yeah quite isolated and don't interact with their peers and the peers don't want to interact with them. Erm one child I can think of in the past hurt a lot of the peers, so they're still quite standoffish with that person because they remember. Erm but then some of the other children that have had fixed term exclusions have a close knit of friends who think. That person is like their idol
130.	I	Right
131.	R	And the way they behave is like *oh it's amazing* like look how disrespectful they're being
132.	I	Okay
133.	R	And they kind of respect it *in a way*. But then when they see them have an exclusion they kind of -they don't then mirror their behaviour. It kind of doesn't impact on them as well. So they think then *hmm* actually it's probably not that good. The way you're behaving erm

134.	I	Okay does it make a difference to the child? So if a child is kind of like the hero of their group are they more likely to change their behaviour?
135.	R	Yeah if the children react in that way if their friends in the group react in that way yeah, cause they kind of want to be here with that group of. With that group of friends
136.	I	Okay
137.	R	Erm sometimes I've seen them try it again when they're coming back and people aren't interested So yeah, I think there's some [laughs] but they're all different though aren't they [laughs] they all behave differently. I've got a few children - they've all left us now but the ones that used to push it to fixed term exclusion yeah they're the ones in my mind that I'm thinking of
138.	I	Okay yeah. So if we now think about the child in school, how would you describe them? What's their interest like in in the lessons and being part of the school community?
139.	R	They really enjoy being part of school community usually, all the fun things that we do. Erm they will be interested in learning. But as soon as something becomes difficult for them or challenge or they need some resilience, that's when they'll start to display the negative behaviours that escalate and lead to fixed term exclusions. Erm a lot of the time it's been all *serious* issues in the playground that have then escalated and come back into class. And then there's been a massive explosion of emotion really and tables and chairs going over and things like that
140.	I	Okay
141.	R	And hurting -physically hurting other people. Erm. But yeah they'd be quite compliant most of the time unless they've come in and they're having a bad day and can't express their emotions properly so we've got our wellbeing team who do a lot of work on emotions of particular children and how to expressive them
142.	I	Okay
143.	R	And our nurture group as well which is every morning now. Erm key children have been identified using the SNAP behaviour programme
144.	I	Right
145.	R	Erm and they're having that input so that when they come into class, they're ready to be here and learn cause some of them some things just like they've not been given any breakfast at home, can set them off for the day and it takes you about 2 hours to for them to actually say I'm hungry because they've just had this massive outburst of different emotions and they don't really know why
146.	I	Yeah
147.	R	Erm but yeah they always seemed quite happy until we're having a day like that, and then then behaviours, occur
148.	I	Uh huh, so when they're having a day like that, is it that something has triggered that?
149.	R	Usually yeah, erm we don't always find out what or why cause the children don't always understand that. Erm but it can be something to do with their home life particularly erm, or something out on the playground with their peers and they just cannot deal with it very well
150.	I	How would you describe their emotional literacy and
151.	R	Quite poor, yeah. Erm and even even with intensive support from the wellbeing team and in PSHE lessons and we have feelings monsters in class, right from being young we use colour monsters they're still not able to identify it in

		themselves like how they're feeling and some of them struggle to then identify it in others as well
152.	I	Right
153.	R	Erm or just expressing it appropriately. Erm and it's usually just physical outbursts rather than
154.	I	Okay
155.	R	in a more appropriate way
156.	I	Right and is it then those physical outbursts that are leading to the potential of being excluded?
157.	R	Yeah they seem to get worse and worse, so there'll be one, and then the next time they'll step it up even more
158.	I	Okay why do you think that is?
159.	R	I don't know to be honest because obviously as soon as they're one we put support in place and try and find out what's happening and they have really intensive support and maybe it's because the cause of what triggered it isn't sorted out because we don't always know or it's home life and we can only have so much impact on that. Erm a lot of our children have quite unsettled home lives or parents in prison and one of the children I'm thinking of their parents *currently* in prison
160.	I	Okay
161.	R	Erm and the whole time that he was in court and possibly going to prison was *horrendous* for that child they could not handle it at all even with support from staff here erm and it was all physical outbursts for the smallest thing just really physical and then, it escalated more and more so it would be just throwing something across the room, to then throwing chairs standing on tables running across hitting people on purpose running out the classroom trying to climb over fences, trying to escape from school and run home erm. So yeah if we can't have an impact on that home life and those triggers it does make it more difficult
162.	I	At what point do you think it tips in a way from being where you think we can support this child and put intervention in place to we can't support them anymore?
163.	R	It's when it's occurring frequently
164.	I	Okay
165.	R	Erm or if another child is physically hurt or staff member. It does take a lot because like I say we don't like doing it we'd always do sort of internal internal exclusion first and isolation erm. And then we start with. They still got a break and a lunchtime with the peers and then if it carries on then they get another one and then separate everything, erm before it would be fixed term at home erm but they have to push it I suppose I have to push it back far before it happens, so it's got to be really consistent all the time *really* disrupting the other children and also risk of physical harm. Yeah but it's not done lightly.
166.	I	No, is there anything erm that you think is effective in reducing that risk of exclusion. So for that child what would they then need to demonstrate to no longer be at risk of exclusion?
167.	R	So just the, appropriate behaviours really that I would expect of them, so our wellbeing team usually are really effective erm with their interventions. Erm I'm trying to think of an example. Yeah just having that -knowing they've got that adult to go to to support them if they need it, so we've got like the rainbow

		room with is like a sensory room erm but it's just like a chill out space and our wellbeing staff are based in there
168.	I	Okay
169.	R	So they know that if there's an issue outside it's teaching them like *if you can't deal with it* then can come in and you can find a member of staff or the wellbeing team. That's usually successful for quite a few children at risk of exclusion. Erm. And then the interventions they will do one to one intensive support and they've got play therapy lego therapy talk for drawing all those kind of things erm that usually does have an impact cause then they're building that relationship with them *as well* and they know they've got that trusted adult, and then small - introducing them to small group work as well where some of their peers are involved and they're sort of taught about dealing with friendships in inappropriate ways. Erm I think those things like the play therapy do help them to deal with things are happening at home as well. That are unsettling them, yeah
170.	I	So that then goes back to having things explained to them.
171.	R	Yeah yeah
172.	I	OK, thank you. Erm so now if we think about child at risk of exclusion, what do you think their greatest fear is? Or might be?
173.	R	Probably that. Being isolated to be honest. That they're not going to be here with their peers with the staff that they know, yeah.
174.	I	Yeah
175.	R	Erm *I'm failing*. Because I think that when they're finding something difficult in class and the behaviour it impacts the behaviour, that's a fear of failure. Erm or feeling like that feeling and they just don't want to give it a go and a lack of resilience. So, yeah. I think. That's quite an interesting question. What's their greatest fear [laughs]. I think it *would be that,* that people don't want to be involved with them anymore their peers or the staff that they've known because they've been here for a long time when they grow up with us at primary school and being excluded from it all. Which is what you end up doing isn't it when you *exclude*
176.	I	So what do you think the impact is of the exclusion then? If that is their greatest fear, and then it is realised it happens.
177.	R	I suppose it could go one way or another couldn't it, it could make them realise that they are going to have to change their behaviour. Or, you've just made their greatest fear a reality and it could happen again and they might be then anxious and stressed and worried and that could negatively impact their behaviour as well.
178.	I	Okay
179.	R	I think. Cause it's harder because usually it's older children with fixed term exclusions erm who you can have that conversation with of explaining what, why and what we expect of them. And if they're still not meeting it then that's what's going to happen and it's a consequence, cause a lot of the children that I'm thinking of you know don't have consequences at home and school is the only place where there's consequences, so we have our reward system before anything else anyway. So yeah
180.	I	So why do you think their fixed term exclusions happen more as they get older?
181.	R	Behaviour becomes a lot more, physical and aggressive and dangerous really erm and they were in age where they understand what they're doing

182.	I	Okay
183.	R	And also work gets more challenging as they move through school so if they've not got that resilience and growth mindset it just, their behaviour just becomes even *worse*
184.	I	Yeah
185.	R	All that emotional literacy at that age, they're still not dealing with all their emotions and the feelings that they've got and life gets trickier as you get older doesn't it? So, yeah their behaviours become a lot more challenging. OK, so the behaviours become more challenging for the staff who are trying to teach them?
186.	I	yeah yeah and the children that are around them. They get more physical on the playground and things actually hurt people, rather than not [laughs].
187.	R	Right. So we've thought about their greatest fear, what do you think their history is like? How have they got to this point?
188.	I	That's a good question [laughs]
189.	R	Will anything significant have happened in their life?
190.	I	Some of them yeah. Some of them all that trauma. Erm, some of them just an unsettled home life nothing really, in particular just, maybe not routine or boundaries at home and older siblings are doing what they want so they then do what they want and that frustration. Erm yeah, or some of them. Just the underlying conditions that we're trying our best to meet the needs of but we're finding it difficult
191.	R	So why do you think staff find it difficult to meet those needs? Is it that we don't know where they are or the resources?
192.	I	We usually know what they are but it's usually resourcing it, actually having staff available for one to one to manage the behaviour or to keep them on track and it's that intensive support of, what they need to be here in the mainstream school, erm and we do adapt it to the child like five minutes work ten minutes break whatever they need and then they can come out of the classroom or work in the classroom it's just judging it on that day really. Erm, yeah I suppose the expectations are. For neurologically normal children aren't they in a mainstream primary school and not everybody is, so. Yeah.
193.	R	So earlier when you said that you think a child might sometimes be better in like specialist provision but it's the length of time it takes for that to happen. Do you feel that they have a different ethos or way of working to a mainstream school that is more supportive?
194.	I	It's definitely a different way of working, so smaller groups and more staff to a fewer number of children, but also more of a. free way for the children to work as well more. Sort of like, a continuous provision way erm where it's set up so that they can work for about five ten minutes short bursts and then do something else, and then they have movement breaks and things. And when we've got one to one we're able to put that in place *here* but it's still difficult erm and it's really difficult for the social development because. they might not be in the classroom, peers aren't interacting with them whereas I think, if they're in that provision with children with similar difficulties they're more like their peers and they'll feel more part of the group
195.	R	Okay
196.	I	Cause they do see from quite young age that they're different, so. That does have an impact on their self-esteem doesn't it

197.	R	And what do you think their peers' view of them is?
198.	I	Our kids are *really* accepted here and they will help anyone but it is that they baby those children. So they will talk to them in a baby voice or they will get them everything that they need and hand it to them when actually they could probably do it themselves. Erm sometimes with children have not got a specific need but are at risk exclusion they might be frightened of them as well, so they do show some fear of like *what they're going to do* are they going to hurt me is he going to call me a name or
199.	R	Right
200.	I	You know they'll sit in the classroom a bit like *hmm* when they kick him off and be a bit afraid of what's going to happen. And I don't think they like seeing that disrespect to their teacher either the staff, you know, they're always a bit shocked. But yeah they are really accepting but they *do* treat them differently. Definitely.
201.	R	Uh huh, okay. So if we think about, we have thought about their history and the greatest fear, what do you think their future is like?
202.	I	Unless you can get the support in place. And it have an impact, it could be quite bleak. I know one of our children who moved on to high school who had fixed term exclusion here but also *all* the support we could possibly give outside agencies and things like that. He's really struggling at high school and some have ended up going to specialist provision for behaviour for high school or not in high school full time, so. Not a very academic future you know not getting any qualifications so not getting a job. Erm. So quite bleak for some of them if they're not responding to what we're trying to do. Yeah it does have an impact and I think when, we're doing transition and then the high school are then aware that this child has these difficult behaviours, it kind of can. Follow that child a bit and that's what they're expecting of them. But I also think sometimes those children expect it of themselves, when they're going up to high school so they know that that's what *they're like* if that makes sense so they might just behave that way cause that's the way I think they are right
203.	R	Right okay
204.	I	If we've not managed to have that impact
205.	R	How do you think that conversation impacts the support that's then put in place when they transition?
206.	I	Sometimes really positive way so they can carry on the work that we've been doing in terms of that wellbeing and nurture, and whatever strategies that we've found to be working. Erm sometimes I think just it's like *oh that's what that child's like* and as soon as they misbehave. Obviously at high school they're quite quick -well our feeder school are quite quick to do fixed term exclusions so. They would just sort of see it as oh they're behaving that way we'll exclude him for a day or two
207.	R	Right
208.	I	Erm cause I don't think again they've got the resources to meet the need of the number of children that are needing it. Or the time to put into that emotional - social emotional mental health side of things
209.	R	Uh-huh. So is there in your view an alternative to exclusion?
210.	I	The problem is we always try everything possible until we do. But sometimes it just seems to be the last resort and we have to use it. Erm we've tried things

		with our local schools like internal exclusion *to* another school so one of our TAs will go with the child to a *different* school and they'll work there
211.	R	Okay
212.	I	Our head teacher's got that sort of arrangement with other schools in our area erm so that they're out of the home they're still getting their education, and maybe that *one day* with one to one support from someone from here could have an impact maybe on their outlook on school or whatever the trigger is or the issue. Cause they can work on it together and realise there's people here to help them and support them erm
213.	R	Right. Is there a name for that?
214.	I	I think is it a school to school exclusion? Possibly
215.	R	Okay cause the thing I was going to ask is about is managed moves but I don't know whether that's what they are called here I don't know. Erm so have you heard of a managed move?
216.	I	Yeah, yeah
217.	R	And so I've printed that off [hands over Appendix 8] cause someone asked me for the definition of it
218.	I	What is the definition if it?
219.	R	So this is taken from the [Local Authority name] behaviour support tool, erm so that's the definition if you just want to have a read
220.	I	So that's what I thought it was
221.	R	So is that similar to your school to school?
222.	I	Not really no because it's more, they'll just go for that day or a couple of days and then they come back again to us, so it's just they're moved to a different setting for a couple of days
223.	R	Okay
224.	I	Most of the other children were at home. But maybe home life is too unsettled for them to be at home. You know when we worry about them being at home for those two full days or whatever it is and we still want them to be learning erm I think that probably works better because they've still got to go still expected *to do* work but we don't know anybody and they see what it would be like if they had to leave us here, if that makes sense? I've never experienced anyone who had a managed move though
225.	R	Okay so do you think then a managed move is just more of a longer term placement?
226.	I	Yeah, yeah I see it as being that they leave here and they are there longer term.
227.	R	Okay
228.	I	And we'll have children go to [short stay school] erm for fixed terms half term some for a year and then a couple even never come back to us, so I suppose that could be a managed move couldn't it yeah
229.	R	And how do you think that the school to school or a managed move impacts the child or them being at risk of exclusion?
230.	I	I think it can be good for something cause it is that fresh start and everything is brand new and they've got to -they're not stuck in their ways if that makes sense, if they've got into particular habits in one school. But then sometimes thinking it's really *harsh* cause you're meeting them away from everything they know, especially at primary when they've been here since they were probably three four, some of ours start at two so it is a massive change and if they're

		struggling with mental health issues or you know the social emotional side of things that could just trigger it even more couldn't it. Erm but for some children it's quite positive.
231.	R	Do you think that children who are at risk and manage moves often experience mental health or social, emotional, mental health issues?
232.	I	I say our children do yeah, the ones that are displaying it, that behaviour that leads to things like that they do have quite -yeah significant issues of that side of things. Just some of them just *really* lack of self esteem, self confidence erm. Just really poor mental health and in fact we've had a number of children recently over the last few years just say they wanna die and I don't want to be here anymore and they are the children that struggle with their emotions and will display those kinds of behaviours that we're talking about. Erm. So yeah just really poor mental health, particularly the ones who've experienced trauma. So children who've experienced -well we've got children whose parents have committed suicide in front of them and things like that, and they have had really significant traumatic experiences and it's just a massive impact on them. Erm. Yeah so they do seem to have social emotional mental health issues definitely
233.	R	And what do you think is needed for them to be able to help them then coping in the school?
234.	I	I think like professional mental health support, for a lot of them CAMHS is just a *nightmare* to get support from at the moment because they are just so snowed under because they've not got the resources and we were referred children with anxiety, self harming one of the children that was in hospital in summer and they've been self harming and the doctors said school needs find counsellor for them. Where are we -we don't -you know they're in a better position to find somebody in the NHS who's better at dealing with it. We are trying our best but everything is batted back to us at the moment for mental health and it's a *massive* strain on our resources and our ability, but as well like your own mental health you think about these children, it's awful I need to try and help them and you think where do we go? I know we've got a number of families with children with ASD and there struggling with behaviours at home. And mental health and dealing with the emotions and CAMHS will say -they've actually said to us that's where there's a gap in our service cause we'll diagnose what we can't support in any way, so we're constantly searching for charities and support for families so it's like a big snowball effect, isn't it? If you can't get a support in place early it just gets worse and worse
235.	R	So do you think that is then having an impact on the amount of children that are at risk of exclusion within primaries?
236.	I	I would think so yeah particularly with all the home schooling that they've just had to do over the past couple years and the unsettledness of at all. I think their mental health has been impacted. Erm we've just seen it ourselves in school it might not be coming out in negative behaviours really but the maturity is not as it was, and their ability to be independent, *really* relying on staff. Erm so we're doing a lot of work on that and making sure that we're minimising that impact really
237.	R	So who, who is the impact being minimised for?
238.	I	The children, yeah. The children I think. I know I'm saying they're reliant on the staff but it's getting that independence at the level that it should be at. Erm so there are like year five children and they're like *I'm at the end of my page what*

		do I do? Kind of next thing is like, well we turn over and go on to a new page but they're just not I don't know being at home a lot for last two years. It's just like they seem to have forgotten things like that [laughs] Or you say get a pencil and they're waiting for it to be handed to them erm so it's getting them ready to be more independent and how they should be
239.	R	And the expectations of the classroom?
240.	I	yeah yeah it does help with staff as well but yeah help them to grow up because I think a lot of themhave been babied a lot by parents, a lot whilst they have been at home, so I think we're only just starting to see these things like yesterday, one child said to me erm when I was at home I could eat my dinner fine because it was quiet but in the hall I find it difficult because it's noisy and it's just like they're comparing it now what it's like at home compared to school so yeah that's had an impact
241.	R	And so, is there anything any other comments that you want to make about exclusions or children at risk of exclusion? The processes of exclusion?
242.	I	I mean I'm not sure that it is something that is effective. You can see benefits to it and obviously negatives to it and the pros and cons, but it's schools having the resources and the support to deal with those behaviours, and I think just. People realising that we do get those challenging behaviours in primary cause there's a big assumption that it's not, it's just in high schools. And obviously the high schools have been given *counsellors* and things like that and a lot of money is being put into that probably not enough still but we still need that support and the earlier you can get it in, then surely the better the outcomes for the child. Erm there has to be other ways of doing it but, it's just hard to find the right way really. But yeah we always use as a *last* resort to everything else that we've tried first so. Yeah it's a hard one isn't it? [laughs] I hate the thought of them sort of being like *you're not coming in anymore* but if that's what we've got to *try* to have that impact then that's the only thing we can do isn't it and to keep everyone else safe yeah
243.	R	Thank you
	END OF RECORDING	

Appendix 10: Examples of Data Analysis

Example of stage one of the analysis in which any implicit or explicit references to the objects 'exclusion' or 'children at risk of exclusion' (or both) were manually highlighted on the transcriptions:

Interview Transcript

Researcher (R), Interviewee (I), Self-correction (-),

emphasis by interviewee (*italics*), natural pause (,), sustained pause (.), gestures [ ]

1.	R	Where are you at the moment? Where are you working?
2.	I	[school name] primary in [Local Authority name], so I started I was on supply as a one-to-one TA erm two years ago and then as she's moved up they've put me in reception
3.	R	Wow
4.	I	Yeah, they offered me the reception TA job so
5.	R	So are you enjoying it?
6.	I	Yeah I am, they're erm quite underprivileged children, so I'd say it's quite different to what I was used to at [previous school name] really, but it's lovely, They're nice, really nice, but like the parent involvement is like nothing [laughs]
7.	R	Oh right
8.	I	It's really like complete extremes from where I was
9.	R	Yeah
10.	I	Yeah, but it's good
11.	R	Good. So you've been there two years?
12.	I	Yeah
13.	R	How long have you been in primary education in total?
14.	I	Erm 14 years. I had a look last night on your thing, yeah
15.	R	Oh, wow
16.	I	Lots of that was at [previous school name]
17.	R	Yeah. So how long were you at [previous school name] for?
18.	I	Erm 11 years. No, 10. 10, yeah. Just over 10
19.	R	So from qualifying?
20.	I	Hmm
21.	R	And when you were at [previous school name], it was mainly year one, wasn't it?
22.	I	I started in reception. I did about three years in reception and then went off on maternity. Then went back, finished off reception then got put in year one
23.	R	Oh right
24.	I	And then the last year in year three [laughs]
25.	R	[laughs] which you didn't enjoy as much?
26.	I	Not at all [laughs]
27.	R	Erm, so in that time then have you had experience of exclusions or is it just like something that you know about or?
28.	I	Yeah, erm, not while it is was in my class but the-there was a child, well two, I think-I think two who were in my reception when they started and then as they moved up through the school they got excluded
29.	R	Yeah, okay
30.	I	Mainly behaviour, I think

Handwritten notes:

Discursive Constructs:
Children @ Risk (CARE)
Exclusions (EX)
Both

Agency: 'they got excluded'

around other children. And he's got to be in in his own room with a with an adult that he actually *likes* that he will listen to. Erm it's got to be probably the *same* person that same voice who stays calm all the time. Erm unfortunately the same child it is totally conflicted because what he wants is he wants to be with other children. And he doesn't want to be in that calm place -he wants to be

43.	R	Okay
44.	I	He wants to be where in the place which is not good for his his emotions and so it's kind of like a vicious circle. To erm to get into a calm frame of mind or to stay in a calm frame of mind, do some work, do some learning erm learning about his emotions, learning about relations with [inaudible] social skills. He refuses to go. At most of most of the time, to go into a place where he can actually give himself a chance. So it's almost like self self-sabotaging, although he doesn't realise it 'cause he's still too young this this child is five. Nearly six actually he's six but he's still very young. And erm emotionally he's more like a two year old. You know very very young in terms of understanding his own emotions and. Erm so
45.	R	Do you think that's quite typical of children generally who are risk of exclusion that they're quite young in their understanding of emotions?
46.	I	Erm very possibly there are common denominators. Erm I think the. I think either it's -in in some ways there's common denominators but, I think the reason that this particular child is at risk of exclusion is that we can't provide the right environment for him and his behaviours are not only self-sabotaging but they're actually erm sabotaging the outcomes for the rest of his classmates, because it does tend to set the emotional tone, higher. So there are two other children -well there's there's one other child who's who's they're not diagnosed yet but definitely has sort of identifiable special educational needs. There's another one who is just totally -the behaviour of this child is just *way more* interesting than anything else going on classroom. So it's just like totally zoned in and and and is very young in themselves, but erm is just addicted to this behaviour he just loves it you know it's difficult to beam off. There's another child who's. It's he's he's actually -another childhood has experienced an awful lot of domestic abuse, and is scared about it *goes rigid*. Erm and there are other children who were just scared of him and don't don't want to be friends *don't* want to be near him but this the the child is at risk of exclusion 'cause he's stru -he *wants* to be with them. He wants to have friends but he hasn't got the skills. The social skills 'cause his play quickly becomes over boisterous. It's quickly it's eas -he sort of suffocates he he *dominates*. This child is very probably autistic and ADHD he hasn't got any diagnosed but he's all on the relevant pathways and is under the relevant professionals. So he hasn't got the social skills. *Yet*. Because I know that he he I *know* that he will learn them in time and I *know* that I know that he's capable of making a lot of progress, but the impact on the other children in that class is is -at times it renders the class unteachable and he's *scaring* a lot of the children. So it's like the head and myself we've got to have that balancing act, or like what's better for the child – now we firmly believe this child should be in a special setting he should be, parents are totally against it. So we've had children like this one in the past. The difference has been. Erm parents have seen it and worked with us and we've been on the same page. Erm and they've actually moved into [special school] and and it's been the right move for them
47.	R	Okay
48.	I	And we know because we've kept in contact with the parent and we know that *that* is the right environment for them. They're not there because they're naughty it's it's being done as a positive thing whereas, the the parents of the child in question. They erm, one is it totally it *denies* that there's behaviours like that at home but then forgets herself and tells us all what happens
49.	R	Okay