

## **Volume One**

# **Why do girls get excluded from school? A small-scale qualitative investigation of the educational experiences of Key Stage 3 and 4 girls who are 'at risk of exclusion'**

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# Abstract

**Title:** *Why do girls get 'excluded' from school? A small scale qualitative investigation of the educational experiences of KS3 and KS4 girls who are 'at risk of exclusion'.*

**Background:** Levels of both fixed term and permanent exclusion from school, have caused widespread concern over the past 20 years. Most recent figures record permanent exclusion at approximately 6,500 pupils in England in the year 2008/2009 (DCSF, 2010). However, in comparison to research interest received by their male counterparts, the needs of girls appear to have been largely overlooked.

**Rationale/aims:** In response to a lack of research nationally, and priorities within my Local Authority, I have carried out an exploratory study, which investigates the phenomenon of KS3/KS4 girls who are judged to be 'at risk' of permanent exclusion.

**Methodology:** The substantive element of the current research used semi-structured interviews with a small number girls (n=2), their parents (n=2), associated school staff professionals (n=2) and external professionals involved in this area (n=4). Analysis of interview data was carried out using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework (i.e. Smith et al 2009).

**Findings:** Following a macro-analysis of interview data, findings are discussed from a Bio-ecological Systems Theory (Process-Person-Context-Time model) perspective of development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

**Conclusions:** The research concludes with a discussion of findings in the context of my employing Local Authority, offering implications for practice and future research in the area of girls and school exclusion.

What a journey...

To my family and friends- for your support and patience, and for dealing with the unpredictable moods and frequent absences.

For Michelle – we did it...

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# Chapter One: Introduction

This volume of work is the first of two distinct volumes that comprise the thesis requirements of the three-year Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham.

As part of this course, Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) maintain a dual role, as both an employed professional within a Local Authority setting and also as a graduate researcher. Within their Local Authority setting, TEPs are asked to carry out a substantive piece of research which constitutes a unique contribution to the field of Educational Psychology, whilst meeting the academic standards expected of Doctoral research.

Through careful negotiation with stakeholders within my employing Local Authority- Overdale City<sup>1</sup>, the area of 'girls who are at risk of permanent exclusion from school' was agreed as an area of shared interest, as discussion was taking place within the authority into the short- and long-term provision available for this key client group.

According to Osler et al (2002), around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a strong upward trend in the number of children and young people being excluded from school, both on a fixed-term and permanent basis, caused widespread concern. Although this number seems to have levelled out over recent years, it remains unacceptably high (OFSTED, 2005). A continuing high level of exclusion from schools is significant, given the links between school exclusion and related academic failure, and long-term social exclusion and disaffection. For these reasons, promoting school inclusion and reducing exclusions has remained a fixed item in successive Governments' policy throughout the last three decades and has been the focus of numerous documents seeking to guide schools on tackling challenging behaviour and in using school exclusion.

Historically, interest in the phenomenon of school exclusion focused on males, who have always been, and remain, over-represented within the population of children excluded from school. However, comprising 20-25% of all excluded

<sup>1</sup> To preserve anonymity, the location of the local study will be referred to as Overdale City

children and young people in 2008/9 (DCSF, 2010), girls represent a significant minority.

Despite a general commitment to increase social inclusion, it appears girls' needs have been largely overlooked in favour of their male counterparts. The results of this has been that not much is known about the educational trajectories of girls who find themselves excluded, either fixed-term or permanently, from school.

In response to the lack of research into this area nationally and due to local priorities (see Section 2.7-2.9 for more detail), I have carried out a piece of exploratory research to investigate the educational experiences of a number of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 girls who are judged by the Local Authority to be 'at risk of permanent exclusion'. In doing so, I hope to provide information at a local level as to how and why a small proportion of girls find themselves excluded from school, and to offer suggestions on how to respond to girls' challenging behaviour earlier and more effectively, so that schools can avoid, where possible, the disciplinary sanction of exclusion.

The research took place over a 23-month period from September 2009 to August 2011 within Overdale City.

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In order to comprehend the area of school exclusion, both in general and in relation to girls, Chapter 2 presents a thorough discussion of literature in the related areas. This review of a field which has, to date, received relatively sparse attention comprises the context within which current research sits, and as such highlights the potential of such research to offer unique insights into why girls are excluded from school. Chapter 2 also presents a local picture of the area of behaviour and exclusion in Overdale City, as well as a detailed outline of the current research rationale and specific areas of investigation.

Following this review of literature, in Chapter 3 I have discussed in detail the methodology employed in the research, including a discussion of the

ontological and epistemological roots of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as a key factor in the decisions I have made relating to sample selection and methods of data collection.

As the current research is exploratory and IPA is, in essence, theory-emergent rather than theory-dependent (Smith et al, 2009), in Chapter 4 I present key research findings from the current research and discuss these in relation wider existing literature. Furthermore, I have also contrasted current research findings against an integrated conceptual framework (Person-Process-Context-Time-PPCT) suggested by Bronfenbrenner (2005). This framework provides a structure on which to understand current findings and also to consider and plan future actions in the area of girls and exclusion.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I conclude by reflecting on the methodological limitations of the current research and subsequently by discussing findings within my own Local Authority context and suggest implications for practice and for future research in this area.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## 2.1. Literature Review Strategy

### 2.1.1 Literature search strategy

In order to identify literature from a wide range of sources, a number of different search engines was used. These consisted of The British Education Index (Australian, American and British Index), Swetswise, JSTOR, PsychInfo, PsychArticles and Google Scholar. Access to resources was granted by the University's Shibboleth Authentication. In using these search engines, a number of key terms were entered (See Box 2.1 for a list of search terms), which took into account international differences in terminology.

As would be expected, a large number of sources was gathered due to a 'snowballing effect' of selecting additional sources from reference lists.

#### *Box 2.1: Literature search key terms*

A Boolean search approach was used:

EBD and school	Exclusion and school
EBD and school and exclusion	Exclusion and school and gender
EBD and school and expulsion	Exclusion and school and girls
EBD and school and girls	Exclusion and school and women
EBD and school and women	
EBD and gender	Expulsion and school
	Expulsion and school and gender
Behaviour and school	Expulsion and school and girls
Behaviour and school and exclusion	Expulsion and school and women
Behaviour and school and expulsion	
Behaviour and school and girls	
Behaviour and school and women	
Behaviour and gender	

### 2.1.2 Selection of appropriate literature

Once the titles of sources were identified, references were initially screened based on the relevance of the research titles, and were subsequently refined by

reading the abstracts of more promising sources. This approach allowed me to determine the relevance of references to the current study.

### **2.1.3 Literature review objectives:**

The following objectives were addressed in pursuit of a thorough understanding of literature in the area of interest:

- to review and discuss relevant literature from government, academics and organisations within the field of interest;
- to consider implications of research to the area of girls and exclusion;
- to discuss how theoretical and research literature may, or may not, have changed/informed understanding and/or practice in relation to girls who experience school exclusion; and
- to identify and understand the theoretical positioning and possible impact of the research and findings on the external world.

This fourth objective is particularly important in current educational research, as qualitative methodologies gain more popularity in a political and economic domain historically dominated by positivist and post-positivist methodologies, which attempts to measure education in terms of efficiency, accountability and outcomes (Bourke, 2007). This issue will receive more attention in Section 3.2 of the current paper.

## **2.2 Rationale for Structure and Remit of Literature Review**

*'Education is often the key factor in deciding the range of choices that a young person has in their future life' (HM Treasury, 1999, in Osler et al, 2002).*

Consistent Government and media rhetoric relating to school achievement, particularly focusing on exam results and league tables, may create a view that exam grades are most important during our crucial and life-shaping school

years (Smith et al, 2009). Despite the obvious advantages of educational success, the risk of the 'standards agenda' is that the role of school is potentially seen in an isolated and narrow way. However, our entitlement curriculum embraces much more than this: in that personal qualities, such as resilience, are as/more important than educational attainment. Rutter (1999) defines resilience as a dynamic process involving interaction between risk and protective processes, internal and external to the individual, that act to modify the effects of an adverse life event. Fonagy et al (1994) suggests that 'over the past 15 years a great deal has been learned about so called "resilient" children and, as such, we are able to describe such children with a reasonable degree of accuracy' (p232). Rutter (1991) draws attention to the protective and restorative value of school experience:

*'Schooling does matter greatly. Moreover, the benefits can be surprisingly long lasting. That is not because school experiences have a permanent effect on a child's psychological brain structure, but rather because experiences at one point in a child's life tend to influence what happens afterwards in a complicated set of indirect chain reactions. ...School experiences of both academic and non-academic kinds can have a protective effect for children under stress and leading otherwise unrewarding lives... (p.9).*

Whilst the government boasts improvements in national test and examination results over the past 25 years (Ainscow et al, 2003; p.5), certain inequities have developed and persisted over time within education:

*'The reasons for these inequities can be complex and represent a mix of individual, social, cultural and economic factors that can be difficult to separate out and address effectively. In the current system of school accountability, league tables and increased opportunities for schools to control the nature of their intakes, understanding the educational trajectories of our most vulnerable young people is particularly pertinent'. (Smith et al, 2009; p.90)*

One such inequity surrounds the number of children excluded from school.

Over the past two decades, there has been considerable concern by educationalists, and subsequent interest, about a general rise in the number of pupils permanently excluded from school and the over-representation of certain populations amongst these figures (e.g. Daniels et al, 2003). Although representing a minority of the general school population, levels of exclusion remain at an unacceptable level (OFSTED, 2005).

In seeking to understand exclusion, it is essential to understand challenging behaviour is defined. As Lloyd (2005) reflects, the ways in which 'deviance is conceptualised, how it is understood and explained, influences practice' (p.2). Therefore, I begin my literature review by discussing the complexities that surround establishing a common definition of challenging behaviour and considering the implications of this for practice.

Of the many possible responses to challenging behaviour available to schools, guidance suggests that exclusion (both fixed-term and permanent) should be a last resort (DCSF, 2008). Yet, as recent government exclusion figures suggest, it is an option chosen a great number of times. To understand and explain this phenomenon, it is important to gain an understanding of the process of school exclusion. To achieve this, I will reflect on government policy initiatives of the recent past to see how schools were, and are, guided on using exclusion to support discipline in schools. In addition, I will highlight the levels and patterns of exclusion over recent years and discuss theoretical accounts of the causes and outcomes of exclusion.

Finally, and of central importance to the current area of investigation, I will discuss the relatively small area of research into girls and exclusion. Through this discussion, I will consider what we know about gendered behaviour and exclusion, and will examine the importance of how girls' challenging behaviour is interpreted. I will draw attention to recent exclusion figures and the complexities involved in capturing accurate data re: levels of exclusion. As the research becomes more focused on the current area of investigation (i.e. why girls get excluded), I will discuss what existing research tells us about perceptions of girls' exclusion.

In summary, it is important from the outset to develop an understanding of the complexities behind key issues in the definition of challenging behaviour and the phenomenon of exclusion, and highlight this complexity in relation to girls. In so doing, I aim to create a framework which provides a coherent account of the theoretical and methodological bases of the small-scale empirical study that forms the focus of the remainder of this volume.

## **2.3 Defining challenging behaviour**

Although the current paper is not primarily concerned with the historical and current debate regarding definitions of challenging behaviour, its presence is implicit and unavoidable in discussion about exclusion. As Lloyd (2005) suggests, we must understand how problem behaviour is constructed, produced and labelled in schools, to begin to unpack school practices. However, such attempts have not produced a universal definition or a common approach to identifying who pupils with behaviour difficulties are, where they should be placed, or what interventions are beneficial (Visser, 2003).

Visser (2003) laments international difficulties in defining challenging behaviour in schools, and suggests that this has always been an 'unsatisfactory enterprise' (p.10). Visser goes on to describe the journey from the ill-defined 'maladjusted' (in use from the 1930s until the 1980s and recognised in the Education Act, 1944), to the range of contemporary labels used in the present day, such as emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), disruptive, disturbed, out of control and delinquent. Lloyd (2005), however, argues that labels are produced through a discourse of disciplinary knowledge that is constituted by a complex mixture of professional, theoretical and personal perspectives (p133). Thus terms to describe so-called 'deviant' behaviour in today's society depend largely on the individual using them and by their experiences and attitudes of what is 'normal' and 'acceptable', and what is not (Farrell, 1995).

The 1981 Education Act introduced the generic term 'Special Educational Needs' to describe those children with difficulties which affected their ability to learn. At this point, EBD (Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) was

suggested as a category of Special Educational Needs, describing those children who displayed aggressive, inappropriate, bizarre or withdrawn behaviour that impedes normal social and personal development and learning.

Of central importance to current practice, the 2001 revised Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001) sets out the boundaries of EBD that may give rise to concern within education:

*'Emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning or that of the class group, despite having an individual management programme' (p61).*

Furthermore, the Code of Practice gives examples of what may constitute EBD:

*'...evidence of significant emotional or behavioural difficulties, as indicated by clear recorded examples of withdrawn or disruptive behaviour; a marked and persistent inability to concentrate; signs that the child experiences considerable frustration or distress in relation to their learning difficulties; difficulties in establishing and maintaining balanced relationships with their fellow pupils or with adults; and any other evidence of a significant delay in the development of life and social skills' (p89).*

The above definitions attempted to give guidance to schools about how to understand problem behaviour, and more importantly, a process of how to identify those children who present with significant and enduring needs, as opposed to the behaviours one might expect as part of a 'normal' adolescents developing maturity. Although Jones (2003) argues that the term EBD may allow policy makers to identify those pupils who require special provision but who do not necessarily experience learning difficulties, (without 'unduly' anchoring their SEN in psychopathology) (p147), these definitions remain ambiguous. A lack of an agreed definition and application of what constitutes 'challenging behaviour' in schools makes it difficult to gauge its full extent (OFSTED, 2005). Research commissioned by OFSTED indicated that when behaviour is discussed in schools there is little agreement as to the meaning or

use of terms to describe challenging behaviour (Visser, 2003). As such, international comparisons of the occurrence of challenging behaviour are difficult, as differences in prevalence may well be accounted for by different perceptions of what constitutes challenging behaviour. Cole et al (1998) estimate a prevalence of serious EBD at between 4-5%.

On reflection, given the disparity in terms used across services/sectors (e.g. health and education), I shall use the term SEBD (Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) rather than EBD, which acknowledges the wider impact/effect of behaviour on social experiences, and vice versa, and is congruent with more recent policy development (e.g. DCSF, 2008).

Reflecting on discourse about challenging behaviour, Barker (1996) sums up the utility of labelling what is a vast array of behaviours, with wide-ranging yet unique causes:

*'Efforts to create categories within what is a heterogeneous and wide ranging collection of patterns are commendable attempts to bring order out of chaos...'* (p.13).

Attempts to define EBD have led to confusion as to whether EBD refers to mental health difficulties or whether it refers to challenging behaviour in schools (Lloyd, 2005). Lloyd (2005) posits that the dominant medical model of challenging behaviour individualises 'the problem' and ignores the social processes of the construction of deviance, thus overlooking the individual experiences of the young people so labelled. Current multi-dimensional problem formulations of such difficulties give wider recognition of a more holistic, multi-dimensional and interactive approach, which inextricably puts the child within a complex system of interrelated influences. As such, the emphasis is now on the interaction between the biological and the social: nature *and* nurture (Jones, 2003).

However, Jones (2003) questions the contemporary construction of a 'disruptive pupil', arguing that the balance of emphasis has potentially strayed too far towards an educational/systemic model. Recent neuroscience research

may support this argument, opposing a move too far away from medical 'deficit' models of challenging behaviour (e.g. Schore, 2001; Siegel, 1999) in which atypical brain development may contribute to disruptive behaviour.

The movement from a medical model (which portrays the causes of problem behaviour as organic) to an educational model (focusing on school processes) has given impetus to schools and local authorities allocating targeted resources (such as funding and alternative provision placements) (Lloyd, 2005). Questions relating to resource allocation are symptomatic factors of wider concerns that the notion of EBD needs to be challenged, in that it serves the needs of the institution (the school) rather than those of the child (Thomas, 2006). As Lloyd points out, in focusing on school factors, the risk is that we may miss the individual complexities of each person's life.

Kauffman (2001) argues that:

*'The problem of definition is made all the more difficult by differences in conceptual models, differing purposes of definition, the complexities of measuring emotions and behaviour, and the range and variability of normal' (p23).*

Furthermore, Kauffman argues that challenging behaviour is not a thing that exists outside a social context, positing that challenging behaviour is socially constructed based upon whatever a culture's chosen authority figures designate as intolerable. It is therefore this behaviour that is considered to threaten the stability, security and values of that society (p.22). In the case of education, Kauffman's 'society' relates to school culture, and thus the same difficulty of subjectiveness is true for the cultural rules and behavioural expectations applied in the microsystems of the school. The notion of definitions as social constructions, as suggested by Kauffman (2001), is particularly important in the educational context as perceptions of challenging behaviour are relative and conditioned both by the context in which the behaviour occurs and by the observer's expectations (OFSTED, 2005). For example, what one teacher finds particularly challenging may appear to another teacher as mildly irritating.

After only a brief discussion of the definitions of challenging behaviour, it becomes clear that this issue is extremely complex: there is a long history that is populated by various attempts to define this category of pupil (Farrell, 1995).

As can be seen in the above discussion, a number of perspectives have been offered to understand and define challenging behaviour, from focusing on children's needs on a within-child (e.g. neurological) basis, to understanding the salient features of the school context in the social construction of challenging behaviour. These complimentary perspectives will be discussed in Section 4.5 within a bio-ecological context suggested by Bronfenbrenner (2005), which understands within-child factors within a complex set of interacting systems, over time.

To avoid ambiguity and confusion with problems of definition, the term 'challenging behaviours' will be used as a 'catch-all' descriptor in the current research. In doing so, I aim not to unnecessarily exclude any of the population without a label such as SEBD, which, as has been discussed, is inconsistent at best.

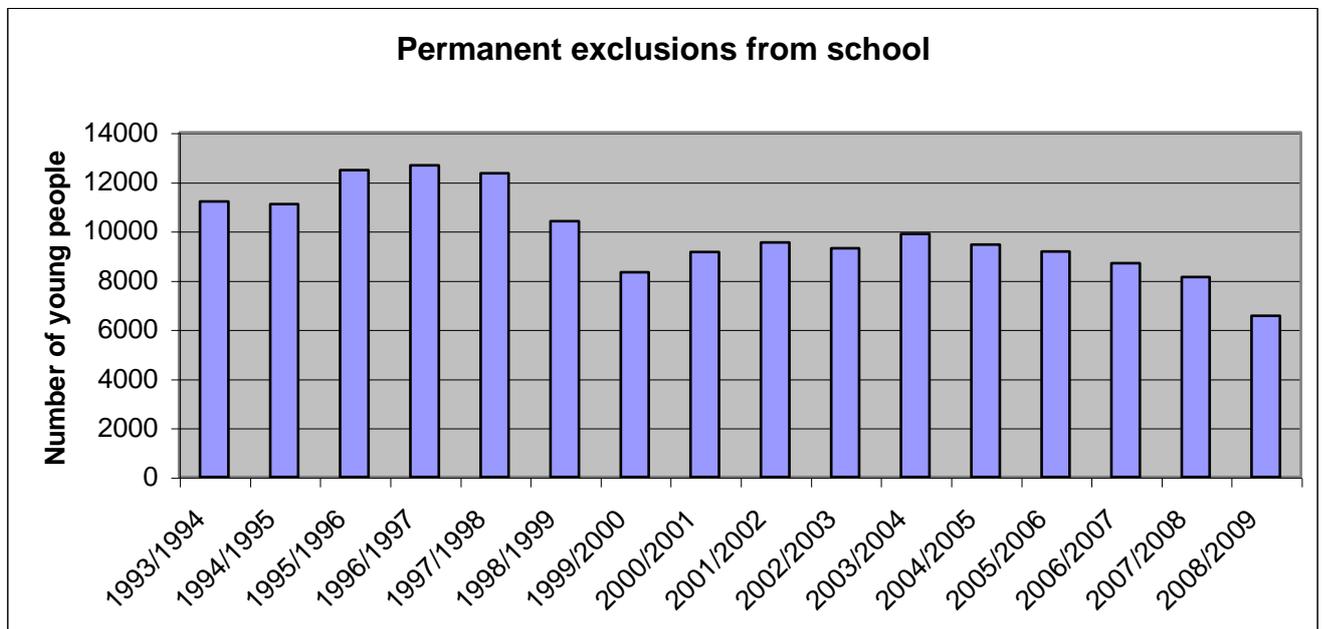
## 2.4 Exclusion

Table 2.1 provides a summary of guidance and policy over the last 20 years, which outlines legislation over the past two decades. Throughout Section 2.4, this timeline will provide a general structure for development of argument, providing a chronological framework in which to explore issues evolving from the legislative framework and research in this field. The rationale for selecting this timeframe was based on the increase in figures and interest in exclusion in the early 1990s.

### 2.4.1 Exclusion from school: an early picture.

The early 1990s saw a dramatic increase in the numbers of children being excluded from school (SEU, 1998; Parsons, 1999) (see Figures 2.1 and 2.1 for more detail<sup>2</sup>). According to Harris, Eden and Blair (2000), between 1990/1 and 1997/8 the number of pupils recorded as 'permanently excluded' from schools quadrupled from 2,900 in 1990/1 to 12,298 in 1997/8. This sharp increase caused widespread concern (Osler and Vincent, 2003). There has been an uneven general downward trend thereafter.

Figure 2.1: Permanent exclusions from schools



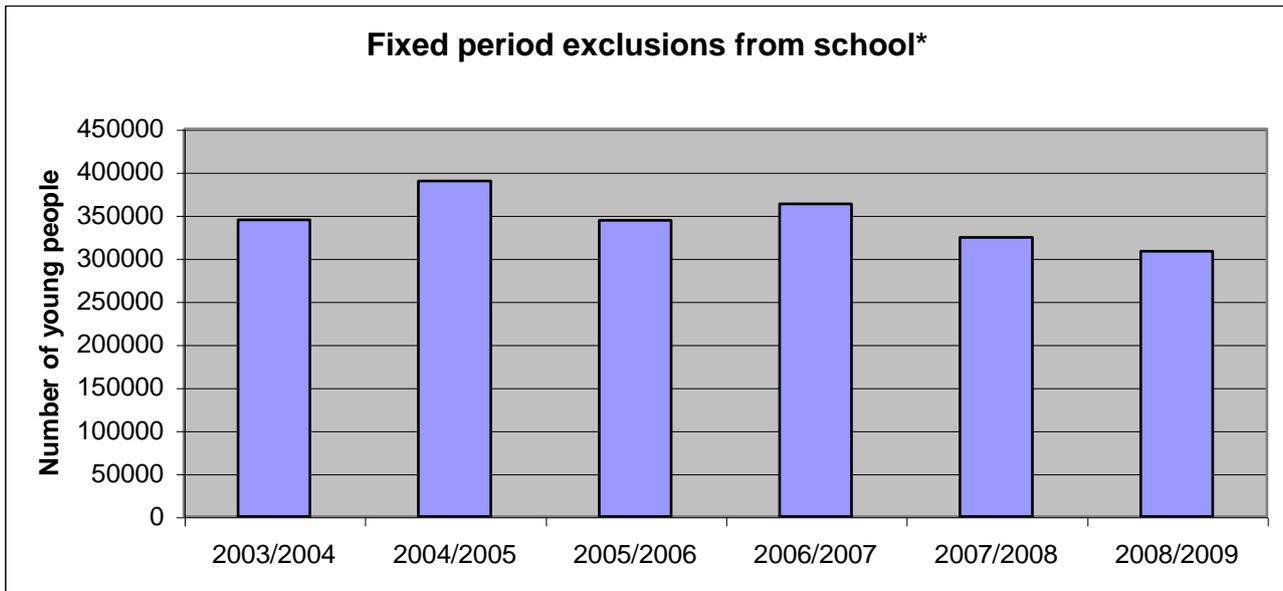
<sup>2</sup> Exclusion statistics were no longer available for the years prior to 1993/1994.

Table 2.1: The evolution of policy and guidance related to exclusion (Abridged and extended from Daniels et al, 2003)

Policy, practice and research	Key points
<i>1993 Education Act (DfE, 1993)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abolition of 'indefinite exclusion', leaving 'fixed-term' and 'permanent exclusion' as options available to schools.</li> </ul>
<i>'Pupils with Problems' Circulars 8/94, 9/94 &amp; 10/94 (DfE, 1994a &amp; b)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocated skilled teaching and behaviour management, and improvements at a whole school level to support behaviour, such as in school ethos and culture.</li> <li>Moving towards inclusion for all children in mainstream schools as advocated by the 1981 Education Act (DfE, 1981)</li> <li>Working collaboratively and establishing systems of participation with pupils, parents and other professionals</li> <li>Also stressed that exclusion (in particular, permanent exclusion) should be used as a last resort.</li> </ul>
<i>OFSTED Report on Exclusions (OFSTED, 1996)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argued that challenging behaviour and exclusions could be minimised through effective behaviour policies, suitable reward and punishment systems and good pastoral support.</li> <li>Suggested the possibility of changing content and method of delivery of the curriculum as a means of reducing exclusion.</li> </ul>
<i>Education Act 1996 (DfE, 1996)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required each Local Authority to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education in school or other setting for those children or young people excluded from school</li> </ul>
<i>Green Paper 'Excellence for All Children' (DfEE, 1997)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Called for effective behaviour policies in schools and LEAs</li> <li>Closer links between mainstream schools and PRUs advocated</li> </ul>
<i>Programme of Action (DfEE 1998a)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stressed that for a small percentage of pupils, alternative provision still has a place:</li> <li>'Approach will be practical, not dogmatic, and will put the needs of a individual children first' (Para 3.2, p13)</li> <li>Needs to be a range of high quality provision for children presenting with challenging behaviour</li> </ul>
<i>'Truancy and Exclusion Report' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government set a target of reducing the number of exclusions by one-third by 2002, which had a 'knock-on' effect on the number and types of exclusions.</li> <li>Noted inconsistencies of exclusion rates across LAs and recognised diverse range of factors that may lead to exclusion.</li> <li>Dual registration and internal exclusions suggested as alternatives to exclusion</li> </ul>
<i>Circular 1/98: Behaviour Support Plans (DfEE, 1998b)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) encouraged to 'ensure coherent, comprehensive and well-understood local arrangements for tackling pupil behaviour and discipline problems that cover a full range of needs' (DfEE, 1998b, para. 4, p4)</li> </ul>

<p><i>Social Exclusion Circulars 10/99 &amp; 11/99</i> (DfEE, 1999a &amp; 1999b)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explained law and emphasised good practice regarding pupil behaviour and discipline. Outlines legal and administrative responsibilities of LEAs.</li> <li>• Implemented Pastoral Support Plans (PSPs) to support those children who do not respond to normal school behaviour programmes</li> <li>• Advocated the use of Learning Support Units (LSUs): in-school units to facilitate support for challenging pupils</li> </ul>
<p><i>2002 Education Act</i> (DCSF 2002a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gave further information about the exclusion and appeals process, and clarified responsibility for reinstating a pupil:</li> <li>• The power to exclude rests with the Headteacher in charge of a maintained school, or teacher in charge of a PRU.</li> <li>• Fixed term periods can add up to no more than 45 days in a school year. There can be no indefinite exclusion.</li> <li>• 'Exclusion' as defined in this document meant to 'exclude on disciplinary grounds'.</li> <li>• Regulations were presented in <i>The Education (Pupil Exclusions and Appeals) (Maintained Schools) regulations (2002b)</i> and <i>The Education (Pupil Exclusions and Appeals) (Pupil Referral Units- PRUs) regulations (2002c)</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><i>The Education (Pupil exclusions) (miscellaneous amendments) regulations (DCSF 2004)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established the standards of proof required for exclusions. Any question as to whether a fact is established to be decided on the basis of probabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Managing Challenging Behaviour</i> (OFSTED, 2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gave an account of behaviour in schools based on national evidence and provided an analysis of behaviour based on OFSTED inspections.</li> <li>• Highlighted that the behaviour of some pupils, usually boys, remained a serious concern.</li> </ul>
<p><i>The Education (Pupil exclusions and Appeals) (miscellaneous amendments) regulations (DCSF 2006)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided changes to appeal hearings so that parents, headteachers, LAs and governing bodies must be allowed to appear, make oral and written representations and be represented.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil referral Units</i> (DCSF, 2007)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced regulations that LAs should provide equivalent full-time education from the 6<sup>th</sup> day of exclusion.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil referral Units</i> (DCSF, 2008)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several changes from 2007 guidance.</li> <li>• Existing and current guidance relating to exclusions. See Box 2.2 for more detail.</li> </ul>

Figure 2.2: Fixed term exclusions from schools



\* Recording of fixed period exclusions began in the academic year 2003/2004.

According to Hallam and Castle (2001), the recorded increase in the level of exclusion up to the mid-1990's appeared to have been caused by:

*a complex range of social and educational factors interacting together, suggesting that these factors include greater social deprivation, more single parent families, increasing child mental health problems pressure on schools to raise standards, the introduction of the national curriculum, testing and publication of league tables, pressure to include pupils with SEN, and competitiveness between schools (p169).*

However, after the steep rise in the early-mid 1990s, the period 1998/99 to 2000/01 saw a dip in numbers of recorded permanent exclusions (this will be commented upon further later in this section). Yet, entrenched in this dip and also across figures from other years, is that these quantitative records of exclusions represent a crude and potentially deceptive figure, in which numbers can be easily manipulated. As such, it would be interesting to gather other contextual data, e.g. comparing the numbers of children entering and occupying PRUs, undergoing managed moves, and even attendance figures.

Nevertheless, around the turn of the century, further rises and increased disquiet about the number of pupils who were excluded from school, both on a temporary and permanent basis brought about a number of government and other documents relating to pupil behaviour (Gray and Panter, 2000). Such research, government guidance and national reports provide insight into the behavioural and social dimensions of exclusion. The increased interest in exclusions provided a platform for researchers to unpick the roots of the problem and various influential studies in the 1990s highlighted the links between school exclusion and later social exclusion and delinquent activity (Charlton et al, 2004).

#### **2.4.2 Exclusion from school: outcomes for pupils.**

For many pupils, permanent exclusion from school marks the end of formal education, with approx 15% of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools eventually returning to mainstream schooling (Osler et al, 2002). However, these lost years matter and can have long-term and wide reaching effects on an individual. Both truancy and school exclusion are associated with a significantly higher likelihood of becoming a teenage parent, being unemployed or homeless later in life, or ending up in prison (SEU, 1998).

Daniels et al (2003) suggest that permanent exclusion is associated with wider social exclusion from society. Permanent exclusion is often associated with 'long periods without education, under-attainment and reduced employment opportunities, isolation and inaccessibility to social resources and the involvement of social services' (p163). Furthermore, Charlton et al (2004) argue that disaffection from school can lead to long-term alienation in society and can therefore serve to 'exacerbate what are already difficult circumstances for these young people' (Cullingford, 1999; p170). Berridge et al (2001) comment on this dilemma in more depth:

*'Permanent exclusion tended to trigger a complex chain of events which served to loosen the young person's affiliation and commitment to a conventional chain of life. The important transition was characterised by: the loss of time structures; a re-casting of*

*identity; a changed relationship with parents and siblings; the erosion of contact with pro-social peers and adults; closer association with similarly situated young people and heightened vulnerability to police surveillance' (p vi).*

However, although permanent exclusion may exacerbate poorer life outcomes, we must attend to the complexities of exclusion, and be aware that wider socio-cultural phenomena are involved.

Aside from the cost of exclusion to the individual, which has dominated research in this area, Street (2005) draws attention to the longer-term costs of exclusion for communities and society more generally. Parsons and Castle (1998) attempt to calculate the costs of exclusion to society. Although the costs related to individuals vary hugely and are based on estimates (an impure science), the costs to education are 'high- double normal mainstream education- for less than 10% of a full time education in the first year' (p277). These costs extend beyond education and affect other public sector services, such as the police, health and social services (See Table 2.2 above for a working model of costs suggested by Parsons and Castle, 1998).

*Table 2.2: An example of the costs of permanent exclusion from school (taken and expanded upon from Parsons and Castle, 1998; p280)*

<b>Services</b>	<b>Cost of managing the process of exclusion</b>	<b>Immediate costs (in year of exclusion)</b>	<b>Medium-term costs (in following full year)</b>	<b>Longer-term costs (up to 10 years)</b>
<b>Education</b>	Communication to education office, appeals, monitoring, external service support, PSP meetings.	Replacement/ alternative education, assessment, referrals to services, calls upon services, transport costs	Continued replacement education, induction or phased reintegration	Compensatory/second chance education, unemployment
<b>Social Services</b>	None	Social worker time for pupils and parents, services to avert family breakdown, increased family monitoring; Common Assessment Framework (CAF) meetings	Cost which may include residential care, residential education, transport and support for stressed/vulnerable families	Excessive/increased demands on services- child and family
<b>Police</b>	None	Police officer time involved in cautions, attending to excluded pupils and truants	Remand and multiple court appearances	Recidivism/criminality
<b>Health</b>	None	Involvement of GP with stressed parents, referral to psychiatrist	Attendance at child, adolescent and family therapy units	Longer term health problems

### 2.4.3 Exclusion from school: the late 1990s.

Given the significant and sustained rises in levels of exclusion in the first half of the 1990s, further rises have not been repeated thereafter (See *Figure 2.1*). The apparent downward trend post-1998 has been posited as a response to the Social Exclusion Unit's 'Truancy and Exclusion Report' (SEU, 1998), which set out the picture at the time and set strict goals to reduce the number of overall exclusions by one third by 2002 (Osler et al 2002). This was reflected in educational policy statements and guidance, which led to a number of initiatives to address challenging behaviour in schools (e.g. DfEE, 1999a & b; DfEE, 2000a & b, and Social Exclusion Unit, 1998), and also through voluntary agency publications (e.g. Children's Society, 1999; Include, 2000).

On the surface, such initiatives had the desired result of reducing numbers of exclusions, but Daniels et al (2003) argue the reduction in recorded permanent exclusions during 1997-2000 (and indeed still today) might be explained by a number of headteachers resorting to 'grey' exclusions in a bid to meet ambitious targets and avoid financial penalties. Since the 1993 Education Act, only two kinds of exclusion are recognised in law: fixed-term exclusion (in which a young person is not allowed on school premises for a set number of days), and permanent exclusion (which, as the name suggests, is an indefinite expulsion of the young person from school). However, just as exclusion in the wider sense moves away from the formal disciplinary process of school exclusion, Osler et al (2002) recognise the complex and dynamic nature of inclusion and exclusion:

*'It is our contention that individual students are not simply in one of two camps: excluded or included. Rather inclusion should be seen as part of a continuum, and any individual may move along that continuum at different points in his/her career' (p10).*

Disquiet about exclusion levels was exacerbated by allegations that official data were unreliable and invalid, due to underestimation of unofficial and informal exclusions (Charlton et al, 2004 - a point that will be picked up further throughout this paper, in relation to young women). As a result, the recorded

levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions may under-represent levels of exclusion from school.

Gray and Panter (2000) convey that: '[the] biggest concern is that formal exclusion may reduce as a result of current government initiatives, with pupils excluded in other ways, such as through reduced access to educational opportunity in school and increased use of alternative and unregulated options' (p7). In accord with this point, Gordon (2001) suggests that this narrow 'formal' view of exclusion (fixed-term and permanent) does not represent practice, as some schools use other unofficial and informal methods of exclusion. Gordon posits that two more types of exclusion may occur:

- 'voluntary exclusion' in which parents are asked voluntarily to withdraw their child from school, often under the threat of permanent exclusion and on the premise of how damaging an exclusion could be on future educational opportunities; and
- unofficial/informal exclusion, in which host schools use a variety of methods, such as internal isolation and condoned absence, to keep young people out of class/school (p70-71).

Consequently, the measurement of exclusions within national figures, in the formal sense, is misleading and unlikely to give a true reflection of those children missing out on educational opportunities on a regular basis.

#### **2.4.4 Exclusion from school: Recent guidance and figures**

Despite fluctuations over the past 20 years, the most recent figures record permanent exclusion at approximately 6,500 pupils in the year 2008/2009, a drop of almost 20% from the previous year. There appear to be various explanations for this trend, such as widely improved behaviour in schools or further evidence of different forms of exclusion as discussed above. Addressing this point, the most recent figures (DCSF, 2010) suggest the latter; the DCSF states that although there have been some difficulties in obtaining accurate figures from school returns of exclusion figures that may account for an undercount of approx 1% of permanent exclusions, 'Local Authorities and schools have been working in a number of ways to reduce the need for

exclusion, for example, by focussing on improved behaviour and by employing alternatives to exclusion such as managed moves' (p6). Although obviously not ideal, such initiatives as managed moves maintain the continuity of education for children, where previously they may have found themselves subject to exclusions.

The most recent guidance relating to exclusion was released in September 2008: Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil Referral Units (DCSF, 2008). (Box 2.2 presents key points that are relevant to the current research). Although there are a number of parts to the exclusion process which aim to ensure an element of objectivity and the right of appeal, the act of exclusion remains an inherently individual social act (Macrae et al, 2003). Furthermore, Parffrey (1995) argues:

*Exclusion from school is a matter of attitudes, our attitudes to our children who misbehave, our attitudes to the staff and schools who try to cater for their needs, our attitude to the parents of such children, our attitude to how we think they should be treated.'* (p129).

Osler et al (2001) argue that despite individual differences/characteristics in exclusions, it seems likely that the biggest factor that influences whether a child will be excluded is the particular school s/he attends (OFSTED, 1996). The subjective interpretation (from a single person to a Local Authority level) of the application of guidance materials, may explain why practice to combat exclusion on a widespread basis is an inconsistent and erratic process within local authorities, schools and communities (The Children's Society, 1999).

*Box 2.2: Key points from current guidance: Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil Referral Units (DCSF, 2008).*

This guidance affects all maintained nurseries, schools, PRUs and specialist provision . Although the guidance does not have the force of statute, Headteachers, PRU managers, governing bodies, and LAs must have regard to this guidance. There is an expectation is that it will be followed unless there is good reason not to do so.

- Permanent exclusion will normally be the last resort after a range of measures have been tried to improve the pupil's behaviour (Para. 1). Permanent exclusion is an acknowledgement that the school has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the child (Para. 16). The guidance recommends a range of additional measures appropriate for those at risk of exclusion.
- Headteachers should be able to refer pupils identified as a risk of exclusion to alternative or additional provision to meet their needs. The school continues to be responsible for child unless s/he is permanently excluded (*Para. 1*).
- Schools must have policies, procedures and staff training to promote good behaviour and prevent poor behaviour. These policies should be publicised so that pupils, parents and staff are aware of expectations (*Para. 2*).
- The behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion is sometimes driven by complex combinations of social, emotional and health problems, so involvement of the LA and other services should be coordinated (*Para. 10*)
- The guidance suggests a number of alternatives to exclusion: restorative justice, mediation, internal exclusion, managed move (*Para. 11*).
- The decision to permanently exclude should come only 'in response to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy, where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school' (*Para. 13*).
- Informal or unofficial exclusions are illegal regardless of whether they are done with the agreement of parents and carers (*Para. 27*)

#### **2.4.5 Causes of exclusion**

Hart (2002) argues that, over the past 20 years, there are well-documented teacher perceptions that violent and aggressive behaviour is getting worse in schools. The media have represented this rise in terms of reports of more widespread disaffection amongst youth and declining school behaviour (Osler and Vincent, 2003). Furthermore, Hart (2002) emphasises that these

perceptions play an important role as they shape our responses. Exclusion from school might be perceived as the more extreme end of the continuum of disciplinary responses to behaviour in schools (Hayden, 2003). However, research/figures (e.g. OFSTED, 2005) indicate that the most common form of poor behaviour is persistent, low level disruption of lessons that wears down staff and interrupts learning. Extreme acts of violence remain very rare and are carried out by a small proportion of pupils (OFSTED, 2005, p4). Most recent statistics (DCSF, 2010) suggest that the most common reason for exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour, making up approx. 30% of permanent and 23% of fixed term exclusions. Only 11% of permanent exclusions and 5% of fixed term exclusions were due to physical assault against an adult (p3).

Whereas factors associated with exclusion have tended to be examined from an individual standpoint, a great deal of research has focused on the factors that may lead to the behaviour that may lead to exclusion in these specific children and young people. Critics of a deficit model of exclusion, in which the causes of exclusion are seen as originating from pupils' social and behavioural inadequacies, argue that to understand exclusion better, we must look more closely at the complex role and impact of school context, teaching and national educational policy (Rustique-Forrester, 2001).

According to Charlton et al (2004), causes of exclusion can include 'one or more of social, emotional and educational factors' (p263). More specifically, Charlton et al suggest a number of factors which may elevate exclusion levels:

- inadequate home backgrounds;
- pupil mental health problems;
- pressures on schools to raise their academic and attendance profiles;
- school-related issues which exacerbate pupils' personal, academic and social needs (such as inadequacies of the curriculum); and more recently
- tensions between the government's agendas on inclusion and achievement (p263).

Concern about the social nature of school exclusion data has been raised by Vulliamy and Webb, (2001). The worry is that these data are socially constructed and therefore reflect the different meanings that can be accorded to them by the participants and the social context involved (Smith et al, 2009; p98). Osler et al (2002) suggest that exclusion is instead, primarily a school management issue. Macrae et al (2003) argue that in addition to the individual child's behaviour, exclusion depends on the culture of the school, the resources, the needs of the staff and social circumstances (p94).

On a national strategy level, Dyson et al (2003) draw attention to the tensions between equity and social inclusion in the inclusion agenda (DFES, 2002d) and the requirement to drive up educational standards, given the 'backcloth of the standards agenda' (Dyson et al, 2003; p6). More specifically, this "incremental dissonance" (Thomas & Loxley, 2001: p96) makes it difficult for schools to focus on emotional well-being and social inclusion, whilst being continuously held accountable for their academic performance levels.

*Government initiatives in education are not always compatible with moves towards inclusive education. In particular... a culture which seems to measure quality in terms of narrowly focused examination and test results may not acknowledge the excellent work going on in schools to support pupils experiencing difficulties (Ainscow et al, 1999; p139).*

Consequently, 'a school culture driven by outcomes can exacerbate the problems of their lowest attainers and those least able to cope with education' (Macrae, 2003, p94). However, more recently government strategy, such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), has acknowledged the utility of focusing on outcomes of the 'whole child', and in doing so attempts to bridge the divide between the emotional and academic aspects of school.

#### **2.4.6 Who gets excluded?**

Over the course of the last 30 years, much is known about the characteristics of those young people who are most vulnerable to exclusion (Parsons, 1999).

There appears to be an unjustified variation in exclusion rates and disproportionate exclusion of pupils from minority populations. More specifically, they are more likely to be pupils who are marginalized and disadvantaged in other ways, e.g. poor socio-economic circumstances (Hayden, 2003, p629). Furthermore, Hayden suggests that in attempts to reduce the problem of exclusion, it makes sense to try to understand which populations may appear most vulnerable and 'at risk' through over-representations in exclusion figures.

Historically, several populations have remained over-represented in the exclusion figures. According to Booth (1996), at that time, the groups of young people most vulnerable to school exclusion were:

- boys;
- African/Caribbean boys;
- school age mothers;
- students with low attainment;
- disabled students;
- travellers; and
- children and young people in care.

Several of these groups have received a great deal of research interest since the paper by Booth. Box 2.3 presents examples of what research tells us about some of these vulnerable populations. However, of specific interest to the current study, is the unequal representation of gender within exclusion figures. This will be dealt with in more depth in the following section of the literature review.

### *Box 2.3 Examples of research into vulnerable populations in school exclusion*

- Children in care (e.g. Jackson, 2001): Some have argued that looked after children are the most vulnerable group of children in education (BPS, 2006). Jackson (2001) argues that looked after children are as much as eighty times more likely to be excluded, compared to a child living within their birth family.
- Children with SEN: Although there has been a reduction of those children with SEN who are excluded over recent years, the proportion is still disproportionately high and over 2/3 of those young people permanently excluded have been identified as having SEN (DCSF, 2008, p27). According to the most recent government statistics, pupils with SEN (both with and without statements) are over 8 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than those pupils with no SEN (0.54% in comparison to 0.09% from the remainder of the general school population (DCSF, 2010, p2). However, this may be ambiguous, as many of those children may be put on the register and receive a statement primarily related to their level of challenging behaviour (e.g. SEBD).
- Ethnic group: According to the most recent government statistics (DCSF, 2008, p27), the rate of permanent exclusion was highest for Gypsy/Roma (0.38% of the school population), traveller of Irish Heritage (0.30% of the school population), and Black Caribbean (0.30%) ethnic groups. Black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely to be permanently excluded than the school population as a whole (DCSF, 2010, p2). DCSF (2008) guidance states that although figures have fallen in recent years, there is still a disproportionately high rate for Black Caribbean and Mixed Black/White Caribbean pupils, especially boys (p 32).

### **2.4.7 Summary**

Even with the most recent decrease in recorded levels of permanent exclusion from school, it is apparent that a child's actual behaviour is not the only factor to affect the risk of exclusion. As such, this decrease does not necessarily signal success of government policy and a general move towards generally better behaviour.

Exclusion has received a great deal of attention, from research, policy and guidance, and from the media, so much so that we now have a greater understanding of the costs, causes, vulnerable and at-risk groups, and how to respond to challenging behaviour through implementation of policy and guidance.

However, a number of problems persist. Previous research into exclusion has defined school exclusion in terms of official fixed term or permanent exclusion in response to disciplinary offences (Osler and Vincent, 2003). This, it seems, is inadequate, given the use of other forms of exclusion across schools and Local Authorities (Daniels et al, 2003; Osler and Vincent, 2003). Crude measurement figures highlight how positivistic methods of data collection, historically used by central government in this area, fail to give the depth of consideration needed to understand the reasons behind exclusion, which is essentially a complex, multi-faceted, and multi-dimensional concept, experienced uniquely by affected individuals.

## **2.5 Girls and exclusion**

*'At first glance young women appear to have benefited most from changes in education in previous years. They appear to be outperforming boys at both GCSE and 'A' Level and are more likely to enter higher education... As a result, concern has shifted towards male 'underachievement' and upon the need to address the imbalance' (Dennison and Coleman, 2000, p3).*

Implicit in this assertion is an underlying message that girls' successes have come at the expense of their male counterparts (Kenway, 2003). This is emphasised in the public image of success. Supporters suggest that the gender 'see-saw' (Collins et al, 2000, p38) of educational advantage has moved in favour of females, with some researchers suggesting that trends in exam performance have gone 'too far in empowering girls' (Lloyd, 2005; p9). Nevertheless, argument pertaining to the feminisation of teaching and learning in school is not supported by research (Osler and Vincent, 2003). According to Archer (2004), 'issues surrounding girls, their identities and schooling have effectively fallen off the educational agenda against a backdrop of popular concerns over a 'crisis in masculinity' and widespread male 'underachievement' (p101). As such, populist and policy discussions have focused on the underachievement of boys (Hayes, 1998).

Osler and Vincent (2003) suggest that the disparity in attention, both in rhetoric and reality, received by boys and girls is most marked in relation to school exclusions. In the most recent statistics from the academic year 2008/2009, girls constitute approximately 22% of the total number of permanent exclusions and 25% of the total number of fixed term exclusions (DCSF, 2010). In real terms, this equates to approximately 1,440 girls who experienced permanent exclusion and 92,150 fixed term exclusions. The over-representation of boys within exclusion figures, both fixed-period and permanent, means that the attention that has focused on the area of exclusion remains primarily aimed at the needs of boys (Osler et al, 2002).

Although girls form a substantial minority of the total number of exclusions, both on a fixed period and permanent basis, they have been largely overlooked in school exclusion prevention strategies and research (Osler and Vincent, 2002). On an academic level, although articles on girls' education continue to be published, scholarly books on girls' schooling are relatively rare (Lloyd, 2005).

Historically, research into gender differences in the classroom have focused on positivist/empiricist studies of the experiences of girls, such as gendered physical and verbal interactions (e.g. Spender, 1982; Stanworth 1981) and the effects of these interactions on power relationships (Francis, 2005; Reay, 2001). Research at this time was characterised by positivist methods which involved observing and analysing patterns of behaviour (Table 2.3 offers an outline of the some of the key findings in this area). However, in focusing on broad trends observed in classrooms, critics (e.g. Kershner, 2007) argued that research risked simplifying the behaviour of girls (and boys) and ignoring the complex and unique circumstances of each girl, and of the behaviour exhibited.

Lloyd (2005) argues that there are a number of dynamic and interacting factors that affect girls' behaviour, most notably:

- classroom behaviour and interactions;
- mental health and emotional well-being;
- social identity and relationships; and

- gender/sexual identity, in which individuals internalise the reputations and normative notions of sex gendered behaviour.

*Table 2.3: key findings relating to gendered classroom behaviours (abridged from Francis, 2005; p9-22)*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Research finding</b>
Stanworth (1981)	Boys receive far more teacher attention and time than do females. As a group, boys tend to create more noise and monopolise more attention than females; girls tend to be quieter in the classroom and are less noticed.
Riddell (1989)	Girls tend to engage in low-level, non-confrontational or unnoticed forms of resistance, such as chatting amongst peers, and attending to their appearance, whereas boys more frequently engage in more incidents of confrontational resistance. This further exacerbates girls' invisibility (Osler et al, 2002).
Connolly (2003)	Boys take up more physical space than do their female counterparts.
Belotti (1975)	Girls tend to take on a 'quasi-teacher' role in which they help to attend to the needs of boys, whether providing equipment or learning support.
Reay (2001)	Girls tend to defer to boys in mixed classroom interactions, thus reinforcing boys' dominance at the expense of their own needs and rights

In response to epistemological research dilemmas, Kershner (2007) argues that more studies should employ a qualitative approach that taps into the social world of the classroom to complement quantitative approaches, like those used in the above studies. Furthermore, Bourke (2007) posits that teachers' knowledge does not rely on a body of factual information, but is 'practical, interactive and responsive to wider political and social change' (p8).

In a review of literature from the past 30 years, Skelton and Francis (2003) report 'little change in the perceptions applied to girls, girls' classroom behaviour and girls' experiences' (in Francis, 2005; p9). In a review of literature of the preceding decade, Kenway (2005) states that she was unable to locate any studies that addressed the question of school exclusion- let alone girls and exclusion. More specifically:

*'There has been a distinct lack of interest in the problem of girls' exclusion from school, from policy makers, research funding bodies and professional groups' (Osler and Vincent, 2003; p12).*

Consequently, it would appear that national policies and local practices have been created from an incomplete and limited knowledge base (Lloyd, 2005).

### **2.5.1 Problems with definition**

As noted in Section 2.4.3, 'Top-line' statistics hide inequalities in relation to experiences of exclusion from school (Archer, 2004). Although girls form a minority among students experiencing formal, officially recorded disciplinary exclusion, their patterns of behaviour may cause them to be particularly vulnerable to other types of exclusion, e.g. through withdrawal, disengagement and through non-attendance. Osler et al (2002) argue that school exclusion, as both a concept and an act, is wider than this formal exclusion we commonly associate with challenging classroom behaviour, and is linked to gender.

Current exclusion figures may therefore form the 'tip of an iceberg' for girls, with the number of 'hidden' exclusions (not officially recorded) increasing this number considerably (Osler and Hill, 1999). In addition to formal, official exclusions and informal, unofficial exclusions described in Section 2.4.3, Osler et al. (2002) find growing evidence amongst girls of 'self-exclusion', through feelings such as isolation and/or distress. Although, these factors do not prevent the girls from accessing the school setting, they may have consequences as significant as formal disciplinary exclusion as disengagement and withdrawal may restrict an individual's access to education and support, which may lead more generally to social exclusion' (Osler et al, 2002).

In addressing their needs, Lloyd, (2000) suggests that we need to support girls without diminishing their strengths and without seeing them as powerless victims. Not only is the provision of effective and accessible support a key factor in any attempts to reduce the number of exclusions, both official and unofficial, amongst this group; it may help a greater number of girls to achieve their potential (Osler et al, 2002). Highlighting the complexity of the issues

around girls and exclusion, Lloyd (2000) describes that gendered patterns of exclusion may be explained by the following factors:

- girls' deviance in school may be different to boys';
- schools may have gendered models of deviance;
- schools employ different strategies with boys and girls;
- teachers respond differently in classrooms to girls and boys;
- the ethos and culture of the school is likely to be gendered; and
- commitment to equal opportunities affects how schools respond to deviance (p261).

Two key points come out of the above: firstly, that girls' actual behaviour may be different from their male counterparts (such as classroom behaviours identified previously); and secondly, both boys' and girls' behaviour is subject to interpretation. Implicit in the latter factor is the social construction of challenging behaviour. Both these will be briefly explored separately.

Firstly, the construction of gender identity involves particular types of behaviour that demonstrate gender allegiance. This manifests itself in males/females tending to exhibit different behaviours, most notably in the classroom (Francis, 2005; p10). Box 2.4 (overleaf) presents examples of research into gendered behaviour.

Secondly, female deviance can be understood in two ways: first in terms of 'breaking formal rules and the visible patterns of the formal disciplinary structures; and second as young women's conflict with the more complex processes that produce the well-behaved pupil'. (Lloyd, 2005; p130). In support of this, O'Neil (2005) argues:

*Adolescent girls face conflicting personal and political expectation: adolescence involves challenge, while femininity is about conformity. Some behaviours that are normalised for boys through conceptions of emerging masculinities continue to be seen as a transgression of the female role for girls, indicating individual pathology, and that they*

are 'out of control' and in need of intervention and resocialisation into 'culturally defined femininity' (p114).

*Box 2.4: Research examples of gendered behaviour*

- Lloyd (1992) suggests that girls are more likely to engage in persistent everyday misbehaviour rather than dramatic episodes of conflict (in Lloyd, 2005; p131).
- Increasing studies into girls' social geography (e.g. exploring friendship patterns and social identity) suggest that the social aspect of school is most important and that friendships provide an important platform for understanding the everyday tensions between girls (Brown, 2005). Strength and support through relationships is important, but is both an asset and danger. Girls who lack a social network and access to peer support are more likely to self-exclude and use avoidance strategies (Osler and Vincent, 2003; p101).
- Osler and Vincent (2003) suggest that current definitions of problem behaviour, together with perceptions of gender role/behaviour mean that physically and verbally aggressive behaviour tends to lead to action by the school (p76). However, whilst accepting that there are some girls and young women that do engage in this kind of behaviour, much of girls' behaviour does not fit under the traditional covenant of violent children and young people (Brown, 2005; 64). Brown draws attention to other types of aggression that may be more readily presented by girls:
  - relational aggression (e.g. social exclusion of/by peers);
  - indirect aggression (e.g. non-verbal aggression, such as staring); and
  - social aggression (e.g. manipulation of interpersonal relationships).

These different types of aggression are particularly difficult to detect. Intentions, hurtful or otherwise, may be ambiguous and somewhat difficult to interpret (Crozier and Dimmock, 1999). Therefore, the behaviours that girls present may make them less likely either to attract early support or, at later stages experience disciplinary exclusion as a formal consequence of their actions.

Social and political attitudes to girls and young women reinforce the feminine role and punish those whose behaviour is socially constructed as 'troublesome'; even when it is no more than a normal part of adolescent experimentation, condoned in boys and young men (O'Neil 2005; p124). As a result of these social boundaries, girls suffer a 'double deviance' (Osler and Vincent, 2003), in which they behave in a way which breaks the rules and expectations of school, but also behave in a way which is judged unbecoming to their gender stereotype. Therefore, extremes of behaviours in girls may be seen as more extreme and receive harsher punishments.

Gender not only affects how we conceptualise and identify those in need, but also the ways in which service providers respond to problem behaviour and allocate resources. Reflecting on school and Local Authority responses to

gendered differences in behaviour patterns, inconsistencies begin to appear between girls and boys. For example, Daniels et al (1999) found disparities both in terms of numbers who attend and in the provision available in boys' and girls' access to special schools. Daniels et al also found that, in general, boys receive more support and more expensive types of support than do girls.

Osler and Vincent (2003) identify a dilemma with this: if alternative provision caters more for needs of boys and more boys access such provision, this 'inevitably creates a self-perpetuating cycle, making it more difficult for girls to access such support' (p80).

### **2.5.2 Key research into girls' exclusion**

In response to the lack of research into girls' exclusion, a key piece of research was carried out by Osler et al (2002) and discussed further in the book *Girls and Exclusion: Rethinking the Agenda* (2003). The principle behind the research was that:

*Unless we identify the specific but varied needs of girls, policies and practices which attempt to reduce social exclusion, truancy and disaffection are unlikely to have any significant impact on the wider problem of social exclusion (Osler and Vincent, 2003; p155).*

This seminal study, commissioned by Joseph Rowntree Foundation, sought to unpick the problem of girls and school exclusion through engagement with key stakeholders in the process of exclusion, including participation by the girls themselves. The study gathered information through four key strands: focus group and individual interviews with a total of 81 girls of secondary school age; interviews with 10 parents; interviews with a range of professionals; and a review of relevant literature from government, academics and voluntary organisations working in the area. The uniqueness of the research was that it drew on girls' own perceptions of school life, difficulties and potential causes for disaffection, their perceptions of the way exclusion occurs, their strategies for resolving problems, and responses of service providers (e.g. schools, Local

Authorities and voluntary agencies) (Osler and Vincent, 2003). Several general themes were identified in the study:

- Girls are not a priority within schools and Local Authorities.
- The invisibility of girls' difficulties has serious consequences in terms of their access to help.
- The nature of help on offer assumes that provision is equally available for both boys and girls.
- Girls' responsiveness to sources of help is complex.
- Identification of girls' needs and the subsequent provision of services are compartmentalised. That is, there is poor coordination of services that support the various needs of girls.
- The use of truancy, self-exclusion and internal exclusion were reported by the girls, which emphasised the occurrence and/or use of unofficial and unrecorded exclusions.
- Gender appears to be an important influence on decisions to exclude a person formally.
- Bullying is a serious problem and appears to be a significant factor contributing to girls' decisions to self-exclude (p3-4).

Of particular interest to the current study, Osler et al (2002) asked the girls, parents and professionals to reflect on the use of exclusion as a disciplinary sanction. Of the 81 girls participating in the study, one quarter had been subject to fixed term or permanent exclusion. Osler and Vincent comment that the girls showed considerable insight and clarity in identifying what makes an inclusive school, both in terms of interpersonal factors and structural/organisational issues (Osler and Vincent, 2003;p134). Several key themes were identified:

- The girls associated formal disciplinary exclusion with externalising behaviour, such as verbally abusive behaviour, regular non-compliance with school rules or teacher instructions, persistent disruption or violence (p113).
- Perceived inconsistencies in the way exclusion was applied as a sanction permeated the girls', parents' and professionals' perceptions. The decision to exclude was perceived as being

influenced by other factors besides the severity of the incident, such as the attitude of the particular teacher involved, the mood of the teacher, the student's reputation and the teacher's perception of the student (p114).

- Professionals conveyed that exclusions reflected teacher stress and a lack of alternative strategies (p114).
- Girls understood that varying exclusion rates between schools reflected school ethos and procedural issues, rather than the behaviour of the individual girls. Schools that did not readily exclude were described by students as more accepting, tolerant and supportive of students (p115).
- The girls conveyed that they were dubious about the impact of sanctions used by schools, instead arguing that the individual's desire to change was the most important factor to facilitating inclusion (p118).

Whilst the findings of the Osler and Vincent study are interesting and have potentially wide implications for practice at the individual, school and systemic level, the reporting of the study leaves it open to criticism. Archer (2004) suggests that the research is 'rather light on theory and somewhat descriptive in its presentation of the data' (p102). Osler and Vincent neglect to present sufficient detail or reflect in any great depth about their approach to the research (including epistemological positioning), the design/methodology employed, and the limits of the study in situ and within a complex ecological transactional context. As a result, the extent to which the researchers reflect on wider influences in the study is not clear and nor subsequently, is it evident whether it is appropriate to relate findings to the external world and whether findings and implications can be generalised beyond the research sample. In addition, the failure to be reflexive does not acknowledge the double hermeneutic inherent in the research, in which the researchers are interpreting the participants' interpretation of their experiences of exclusion. These omissions seem likely to result from pragmatic influences upon the way the research is reported for the benefit of research sponsors. However, the present study can direct more time and energy to these points and, as such, they are addressed in greater detail.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Through an in-depth discussion of research, both historical and current and including guidance and policy, the preceding sections have outlined and discussed key issues relating to how challenging behaviour is defined and conceptualised and responded to formally and informally in terms of exclusion (in its many forms), and how exclusion relates to girls. This last dimension forms the focus of the current study.

For gender equity to be attained, Osler and Vincent (2003) argue that we need to find out generally which children are achieving and which are not, and which groups are being included and which are not. Girls may not be a minority group in terms of overall numbers, like Looked After Children or minority ethnic groups, but they represent a significant number of those children being excluded from school. Despite a high number of girls experiencing formal disciplinary exclusion each year, they have been largely overlooked due to the over-representation of their male counterparts, and the contingent focus on boys' under-achievement, challenging behaviour and exclusion.

Several key themes permeate the discussion this far:

- There are problems with definition which occur at all levels: from defining challenging behaviour, defining and applying exclusion, and with both of these in relation to girls' exclusion.
- Exclusion can have wide reaching effects on the outcomes, both in the short and long term and in school and wider society, for children and young people.
- The causes of exclusion are complex and unique to each case.
- Current figures may underestimate the full extent of the levels of exclusion, especially for girls. Exclusion, as a definition, is too narrow and excludes informal, unofficial forms of exclusion.
- It appears exclusion guidance is interpreted and applied in different ways. How we interpret it affects how we define and respond this phenomenon.
- There has been a lack of research into the issue of girls and exclusion.

Collins et al (2000) provides a useful analogy which forces us to look wider and in more depth at the complexities facing girls, suggesting that we need to attend to the 'gender jigsaw' (that is, how gender is constructed within females), in addition to the 'gender see-saw' (how gender is constructed/compared between males and females) (p38). As such, Lloyd's (2005) model of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) (See Box 2.5 overleaf) provides a useful summary of the complexities of defining challenging behaviour in girls:

*Box 2.5: Lloyd's (2005) model for understanding girls' behaviour.*

- that the concept of EBD in practice is relational, not reflecting a fixed objective or measurable condition;
- that girls and young women are constructed and labelled as deviant or with 'EBD' in shifting professional discourses;
- that understanding the process of construction and labelling requires a complex, multi-dimensional model incorporating the movements of power on and between the different but related levels of the social world;
- that young women are subject to disciplinary processes but also resistant to these processes, exerting their own power in school;
- that the disciplinary processes are gendered, classed and racialised;
- the impact on and in schools of wider structural inequalities and of a range of dominant and minority cultures and cultural sources;
- the relevance of competing policy interests, professional expert discourses, financial and funding pressures, and commercial promotion;
- the operation of power in the micropolitics of schooling;
- that for an understanding of 'problem girls' it is necessary to perceive all these factors in an enmeshed and dynamic relationship with each other and with the individual choices and responses of young women;
- that young women respond to these processes with individual human feelings, and these have to be included in the model. A complex multidimensional approach includes the acknowledgment that individual young women have their own subjectivities and may have personal troubles;
- that understanding personal troubles should begin with the biographies and voices of the girls and young women, acknowledging the many dimensions of their lives in and out of school;
- that the way in which these troubles are expressed and described reflects the enmeshing of the individual understanding with the complex range of social factors. Both are necessary for an adequate account; and
- that a diverse range of factors is involved in the construction and professional labelling of educational deviance, demonstrating the inadequacy of the dominant psycho-medical models.

Taken from Lloyd (2005; p139/140)

Finally, research methodology has historically focussed on empirical nomothetic studies into the area of exclusion, whereas, with recent recognition of the value of qualitative idiographic studies (e.g. Willig, 2008), research is beginning to focus in more depth on the experiences of girls in context and the social constructedness of exclusion (e.g. Osler et al, 2002). Brown and Lind (2005) argue that 'we should join with young women... in creating different culture stories, images and realities that open pathways to power and possibilities' (p121).

## **2.7 Local Context - Behaviour and Exclusion in Overdale City**

As part of an Education Improvement Partnership (EIP), all Secondary Schools in Overdale City operate within the framework of a Behaviour and Attendance Partnership, advocated nationally (e.g. DCSF, 2010), which provides an additional layer of support and challenge to the development of positive emotional well-being and behaviours for learning in all partnership schools. The aim of this framework is to ensure the full and sustainable engagement of all Overdale's learners, supported by all members of the partnership.

Since 2008, the Secondary EIP agreed a resolution to reduce permanent exclusion to zero, and since that time has operated a 'zero exclusion protocol'. Within the protocol, headteachers reserve the right to exclude pupils permanently, only under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any school deemed not to comply with this protocol may be asked to find financial support for any specialist provision put in place.

Pupils who display enduring difficulties or commit a serious offence that would normally warrant a permanent exclusion are referred to the 'Student Sharing Panel' (SSP), to consider the student's risk of permanent exclusion alongside specialist provision options accessed through the Secondary Behaviour Support Service (SBSS). Box 2.6 presents the model of provision options open to the SSP.

As can be seen from the above, services within the Local Authority (i.e. the EIP, Behaviour and Attendance Partnership and SBSS) respond and provide

support to schools which identify pupils 'at risk of permanent exclusion'. Consequently, the number of permanent exclusions has reduced since the 'Zero Exclusion Protocol' was introduced, from an average of 53 permanent exclusions per year to three in the last academic year.

*Box 2.6: Specialist provision options in Overdale City*

**Stage 1 (Immediately following an incident / decision to exclude):** A fixed period exclusion of 5 days will be issued, pending further investigation / arrangement of alternative suitable education provision. An initial fixed period exclusion of 5 days is all that is required as the SBSS will provide full time provision for the pupil from the 6<sup>th</sup> day and for an initial period of 12 weeks.

**Stage 2 (Day 1):** Contact the SBSS or EIP to advise SSP and SBSS of situation

**Stage 3 (Day 2-5):** Convene Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) level 3 meeting if this has not already been held. PSP level 3 meeting will agree provision options and provisional exit strategy.

**Stage 4 (Day 6+):** If necessary, the pupil will attend the SBSS's Specialist Learning & Assessment Centre and will be provided with an appropriate full time programme, lasting up to 12 weeks, during which time the pupil will be prepared and support arrangements will put in place to achieve the agreed exit strategy.

**Stage 5 (Week 4-6):** A progress review meeting will be held at the Specialist Learning & Assessment Centre: At this review meeting future provision & support arrangements will be agreed and the exit strategy confirmed.

**Stage 6:** (At 12 weeks or less if deemed suitable): Pupil will progress into suitable education provision:

- Return to the referring school with or without support, as agreed with the school.
- A Managed Move to an alternative school with or without support, as agreed between both schools. This is facilitated by a 'fair access protocol': a protocol that ensures the placement of challenging pupils on a points system.
- Attendance at a more specialist placement with the agreement of the referring school

*Once a pupil is at this stage, and if it is **not** deemed to be appropriate for them to return to their school placement, section 29(3) of the 2002 Education Act can be applied, this allows the Governing Body of a school to direct a parent / carer to accept a suitable alternative provision for their child and is a means by which the school can ensure that the pupil does not return to the school while this remains inappropriate.*

**Specialist Placements:**

For those pupils for whom a specialist placement is deemed to be most appropriate a suitable placement will be agreed during the 12 week assessment period. A specialist placement may include one or more of the following options:-

- An Alternative Provider Placement (brokered by the SBSS)
- A Special School Placement.
- A Personalised Learning Programme (brokered by the SBSS and Special Education Service).

However, of particular relevance to the present study is that there is some disparity between the provision options available to males and females who display challenging behaviour and are 'at risk of permanent exclusion'. At the current time, the Local Authority has no special schools that can facilitate short-

or long-term placements for girls. Those girls whose mainstream schools are not able to meet their significant, complex and enduring needs remain within the hierarchy of support provided by the SBSS. This particular aspect of provision forms a salient contextual feature which influenced the current study.

## **2.8 Rationale of current research**

My rationale for this research reflects my dual role as a graduate researcher at the University of Birmingham and my role as a Local Authority employee.

Firstly, as is evident in the above Literature Review, in what appears to be a response to the over-representation of boys in exclusion figures, there is an obvious gender inequity in research into exclusion in favour of boys. The current research aimed to add to the knowledge base in research into girls and school exclusion.

Secondly, the challenging behaviour of KS3/4 girls, and the need to ensure appropriate provision to ensure their inclusion is a current priority within my Local Authority (LA) due to:

- The current strain on short-term alternative provision for girls who present with challenging behaviour and are on the verge of exclusion;
- The self-evident need to address this phenomenon, since LA data show a year-on-year increases in numbers of girls at risk of exclusion;
- The LA entering a consultation process as to whether to establish separate specialised provision to address the needs of girls considered to be at risk of exclusion. Such provisions would help to ensure that these girls' needs could be met within the Authority and reduce the requirements to send students to out of city placements. The research will provide information which can contribute to this wider consultation and decision making processes within the LA.

## 2.9 Area of investigation

As an exploratory study, the research aims to gather information in three key areas:

- why girls get excluded in the context of Overdale City;
- the educational experiences of Key stage 3/4 girls at risk of exclusion; and
- the factors that facilitate /inhibit the inclusion of Key Stage 3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools.

Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework as the primary methodology in the current research allows me to interpret participants' lived experiences of challenging behaviour and school exclusion in a thorough and robust way. The in-depth qualitative, interpretative and idiographic focus of this approach provides a justification to explore phenomena from the perspective of a small number of participants, in that it represent an insight into experiences, in a particular setting, at a particular time. The current research represents a unique contribution to the field of girls and exclusion as it represents an investigation of the educational experiences of girls at risk of exclusion, in Overdale City, at a particular point in time.

The insights developed from my analyses will find application in negotiated developments to future practice and provisions to address the needs of these, and similar girls.

# Chapter Three: Method

## 3.1 Introduction

The underlying aim of the current research is, in essence, exploratory. I was interested in girls' exclusion in context, from a number of stakeholder perspectives, within the Local Authority. Therefore, a flexible research design was employed. It was my intention to:

- find out what is understood, both in previous research and by the research participants, in a little understood situation;
- assess a phenomenon, to ask questions and to seek new insights;
- generate ideas for future research; and
- draw out implications and offer recommendations (Robson, 2002).

The research was approached from a phenomenological perspective, exploring 'reality' through participants' subjective experience. In order to address the research questions in depth, an idiographic approach was employed, and so, only a small sample was used. The purpose of this was to experience and interpret the phenomena by developing an in-depth and detailed understanding of a small number of participants, rather than a surface-level understanding across a wider range of participants.

To meet this purpose, research was conducted in three simultaneous phases: collation of descriptive profiles of two focus girls from Overdale's central database, a documentary analysis of school file information, and as the main method of data gathering, semi-structured interviews.

Within this chapter, I explore my chosen methodology prior to a discussion of the procedure used. As Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) suggest:

*'[our] ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, and these, in turn, give rise to methodological assumptions; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection' (p21).*

In short, our understanding of the very essence of 'being', affects how we acquire, come to understand and disseminate knowledge.

I have chosen Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; e.g. Smith et al, 2009) as a research method/design because it best represents the viewpoint I considered most helpful to structure my explanation of how the world works, from the vantage point of those who are considered to be 'at risk of permanent exclusion' by the Local Authority.

Within this introduction to methodology, it is appropriate to begin by tracing the ontological and epistemological origins of IPA, in order to provide a context for my selection of research design, and provide a platform for the discussion of findings.

## **3.2 Research Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

### **3.2.1 The evolution of qualitative 'subjectivist' approaches to research**

*People have long been concerned with coming to grips with their environment and understanding the nature of phenomena it presents to their senses' (Cohen et al, 2007: p5).*

IPA has evolved against a backdrop of a philosophical debate in social science research. In the context of social research, individual or groups of people are normally the object of investigation. Our pursuit of knowledge depends on our concept of our place in the world: conscious or unconscious, actor or reactor.

The more established, traditional, objective view of social science argues that reality exists independently of us, which therefore enables social reality to be subjected to the same deterministic principles as natural science (i.e. cause, effect and predictability). However, a relativist view of social science, in its purist sense, argues that 'there is no external reality independent of human consciousness; there are only different sets of meanings and classifications that people attach to the world' (Robson, 2002: p22). This latter view suggests that humans are independent of the rules governing natural science and are

different from inanimate objects: the key being a focus on subjectivity and individual interpretation: 'man is a subject not a science' (Pring, 2000: 32). The contradiction can be seen as one of objectivity (positivism) contrasted with subjectivity (relativism). Both views of capturing the 'truth' about individual and social behaviour are constructed upon different ways of interpreting its very nature (Cohen et al, 2007). In essence, researchers may be presented with the same problem but go about solving it in very different ways.

However, the traditional scientific approach remains questionable as it cannot adequately explain the nature of cognition, affect and interaction with one's environment (the failure to account for how two individuals may react differently to the same stimuli, or indeed the same person to the same stimuli at two different times). As alternatives to positivist approaches, qualitative approaches possess several distinctive features (Cohen et al, 2007) (see Box 3.1). Within the overarching subjectivist (relativist) paradigm, constructivist approaches (also referred to as interpretive and naturalistic) see the role of research as helping to uncover multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. As such, this paradigm accepts the influence of choice, freedom, intention, individuality and moral responsibility.

*Box 3.1: Distinctive features of the qualitative approaches to social science research*

- People are deliberate and creative in their actions, they act intentionally and make meanings in and through their activities;
- People actively construct their social world- they are not cultural dopes or passive dopes of positivism;
- situations are fluid and changing rather than fixed or static; event and behaviour evolve over time and are richly affected by context- they are 'situated activities';
- Events and individuals are unique and largely non- generalisable;
- A view that the social world should be studied in its natural state, without the intervention of, or manipulation by, the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983);
- Fidelity to the phenomena being studied is fundamental;
- People interpret events, contexts and situations, and act on the bases of those events;
- There are multiple interpretations of, and perspectives on, single events and situations;
- Reality is multi-layered and complex;
- We need to interpret events through the eyes of the participant rather than the researcher.

*Taken from Cohen et al, 2007; p21)*

Within the subjectivist paradigm, the interpretivist approach is characterized by a concern for the individual (Cohen et al, p23), and aims to understand the subjective world of human experience: the meaning behind social action.

*What distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful. Thus to understand a social action, the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute the actions (Schwandt, 2000; p191)*

All interpretative enquirers share a set of commitments: that they are highly critical of scientism and reject an anthropology of the disengaged, controlling, instrumental self (Schwandt, 2000). Interpretive researchers begin with individuals and aim to understand their interpretations of their world around them. Theory does not precede research (as in hypothesis testing, within positivism) and instead is grounded in, and emerges from, the data corpus (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The pursuit of universal theory gives way to 'multifaceted and varied images of human behaviour' (Cohen, 2007; p22).

### **3.2.2 Phenomenology**

Within the qualitative interpretative paradigm of social science research, there are numerous variants of approach, many that overlap, but each with subtle but important ontological, epistemological and methodological differences. Phenomenology is one such approach.

Developed in the early twentieth century, phenomenology, in its broadest meaning, is a 'philosophical standpoint which advocates the study of direct experience, taken at face value' (Cohen et al, 2007; p22). Whereas the scientific method takes the world for granted and wants to understand it, phenomenology asks what motivates a person to say something 'is' (Giorgi, 1997; p239). Philosophical phenomenology aims to 'strip back' what we think we know about a phenomenon, and return to the totality of lived experiences that belong to a single person (Giorgi, 1997).

*[Phenomenology] aims to return to things themselves, as they appear to us perceivers, and to set aside, or bracket, that which we*

*think we already know about them. In other words, phenomenology is interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings in particular contexts, and at particular times, rather than abstract statements about the nature of the world in general' (Willig, 2008; p52).*

Concerned with the experiential underpinnings of knowledge, Husserl highlights the subjectivity of the life world (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000; 489), arguing that we are active participants in our 'life world', as opposed to passive recipients.

*'Individuals approach the life world with a stock of knowledge composed of ordinary constructs and categories that are social in origin. These images, beliefs, values and attitudes are applied to aspects of experience, thus making them meaningful and giving them a semblance of everyday familiarity (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000; p489)*

By accepting the role of preconceptions (e.g. attitudes) and prior knowledge, Phenomenology can be seen to address positivism's difficulties with cognition, and to give a rationale for how two individuals can perceive the same phenomenon in different ways (Willig, 2008). Husserl (1970) posits that through a process of 'disciplined naivety', that is, the suspension of all implicit and explicit assumptions, we are able to study the structures of conscious experience. As such, Husserl (1970) advocates a rigorous descriptive approach.

Interpretative phenomenology departs from philosophical phenomenology because it does not try to separate description and interpretation. Interpretative phenomenology rejects the concept of phenomenological reduction and accepts insights from the hermeneutic tradition (e.g. Gadamer, 1975): that all description constitutes a form of interpretation. Instead, Willig (2008) argues that a process of reflexivity (akin to a 'reductionist attitude') allows the researcher critically to examine their own assumptions, in order to understand how they know something 'is'. As Nightingale and Cromby (1999) posit, reflexivity is an 'awareness of contribution and construction throughout the research process' (p228).

### 3.2.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is a relatively new methodology, developed specifically within the field of Psychology. Whereas other qualitative methods have sought to study basic social processes, IPA was designed to gain insight into individual participants' psychological world (Smith et al, 2009). Although IPA initially developed within health psychology, the growth of its popularity over the past decade has seen IPA applied to other areas of psychology and a diverse range of psychological enquiry (Reid et al, 2005). Furthermore, Reid et al propose that the growth of interest in IPA as a method may perhaps be explained because it shares a broadly realist ontology: that the world exists, although we can only access people's experiences via their (and subsequently our) interpretations of it. Therefore, from a philosophical standpoint, IPA offers a framework on which to carry out real world research within a setting that may allow implications to resonate in other/wider contexts.

According to Smith and Osborn (2008), a significant difference between IPA and purist phenomenology is that IPA rejects phenomenological reduction as a means of returning to experience:

*“one cannot directly access an ‘insider’ perspective completely, as access depends on, and is complicated by, the researchers' own conceptions, as they try to make sense of the participants' world’.*  
(p53).

IPA is phenomenological in that it seeks to explore personal experience and perceptions on their own terms, rather than attributing experiences to some pre-determined or overly discriminate categories (Smith and Osborn, 2008; p1). IPA does not make grand statements about the external world, or claims to validate participants' experiences as 'true' or 'false'. Instead, it accepts the subjectivity of human perceptions as evidence of each person's own lived experiences of reality.

IPA advocates a reflexive attitude in research, which acknowledges the dynamic role for the researcher within the research process and the 'researched' (Smith et

al, 2009). As a result, the process can be said to present a double hermeneutic (Gadamer, 1975); the researcher is interpreting the participants' interpretation of their experiences. Whilst taking a person's account at face value, a detailed IPA analysis can ask critical questions about the participant's implicit and explicit meaning (Smith and Osborn, 2008). In doing so, the researcher is able to make interpretations that suggest meaning, cognition, affect and action (Reid et al, 2005). Box 3.2 presents the key characteristics of IPA as suggested by Reid et al (2005).

IPA is congruent with idiographic research. In contrast to nomothetic methods employed in more traditional psychological research, which make claims at a group or population level (Smith et al, 2009), IPA commits to 'intensive and detailed engagement with individual cases - only integrated at later stages in the research' (Willig, 2008; p57). By focusing on particularity (sometimes through individual cases), IPA aims to understanding the perspectives of particular people, in a particular context (Smith et al, 2009).

*Box 3.2: Key characteristics of IPA, as suggested by Reid et al (2005; p20)*

- IPA is an inductive approach. It does not test hypotheses and prior assumptions are avoided. IPA aims to capture the meanings that participants assign to their experiences
- Participants are experts in their own experiences and can offer researchers an understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings through telling their own stories, in their own words, and in as much detail as possible. Participants are recruited because of their expertise in the phenomenon being explored
- Researchers reduce the complexity of experiential data through rigorous and systematic analysis. Analysis relies on people making sense of the world and their experiences, firstly for the participant, and secondly for the analyst
- Analyses usually maintain some level of focus on what is distinct, but will also attempt to balance this against what is shared
- A successful analysis is interpretative, and results are not given as a statement of facts. They are subjective, transparent and plausible.

### **3.2.4 Limitations of IPA**

Although a relatively new development in the area of qualitative methodologies, IPA suffers from two key conceptual and practical limitations as does all phenomenological research: namely, the role of language and the role of

explanation versus description (Willig, 2008). Both of these points need consideration when presenting research employing IPA.

The first and potentially more important limitation of IPA involves the role of language. Methods of data collection in IPA, such as semi-structured interviews and diaries, give linguistic expression to individuals' experiences. However, the same event can be described in many different ways (Smith et al, 2009). Language essentially provides the building blocks of the social world. It is important therefore that researchers consider that when participants interact in the research process, they do so in a social context, which shapes the meaning they articulate within this context (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000). Furthermore, 'people struggle to articulate what they are thinking or feeling, and there may be reasons why they do not wish to disclose' (Smith and Osborn, 2008; p54). Therefore, we must acknowledge that our access to participants' life-worlds depends on the vehicle of language, which is in itself, subjective, unique and likely to differ across different contexts.

Secondly, Smith et al (2009) question the extent to which we can separate description and opinion, which brings into question the nature of the accounts needed for analysis. This distinction is important because it will affect the choices researchers make about suitability of participants and also has implications for the temporal framing of questions that are asked during interviews. Questions should therefore be framed to reflect on the 'lived' past experience of a phenomenon.

### **3.2.5 Rationale for using IPA**

I have thus far introduced the evolution and main ideas behind IPA. I aimed to provide sufficiently detailed account of key ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the approach. These attributes were relevant to both my rationale for using IPA and my motivation for making certain methodological decisions.

In summary, my reasons for choosing IPA are:

- IPA fits with my personal ontological and epistemological assumptions; that the life world of participants can be accessed, albeit through the eyes of participants, each of whom can offer his/her individual interpretation.
- IPA is theory-emergent rather than theory-dependent, thus providing a platform for fresh insight into particular phenomena and the capacity to contribute to theory development.
- From a pragmatic point of view, IPA as a methodology is appropriate to my research questions: that is, it provides me with a qualitative framework through which I can gather a rich and detailed picture of the individual and shared experiences of the participants, based on the realist ontological assumption that the world exists independently to us.
- IPA is psychological: it places humans as 'active constructors' of information, rather than 'passive recipients'.
- IPA supports the use of my preferred method of data collection: semi-structured interviews.
- As a methodology, IPA is reflexive: that is; it acknowledges and accepts the role of the researcher within the study.
- IPA affords a clear and systematic process to analyse data.

### **3.3 Ethics**

This study was subjected to a rigorous and robust ethical review process and has been granted ethical approval by the University of Birmingham 'Arts and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee'.

I was required to consider in depth, and address, ethical requirements/concerns relating, for example, to recruitment, informed consent, withdrawal, confidentiality, and both the benefits and risks of the research. However, given that ethical research practice is a dynamic process, which often changes throughout the research process (Smith et al, 2009), a number of changes to my plan were made during the research process, which will be detailed below.

For the purpose of this report I will address the main ethical issues in tabular form.

According to the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009) Code of Practice, research should be conducted that adheres to four ethical principles, which constitute the main domains of responsibility within which ethical requirements are considered. These are respect; competence; responsibility; and integrity (p9). Table 3.1 sets out how these principles have been applied in the context of the current study. I understand that a new Code of Research Ethics has been published since this date (BPS, 2011); however, the previous Code of Ethics was still applicable during the planning and implementation stage of my research.

Table 3.1: Application of ethical principles to the current study

Ethical Principle*	Standards	Application in current study
<b>RESPECT</b>	<i>GENERAL RESPECT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of interviewees was respected throughout the research process</li> <li>- Details of the research were presented to potential participants prior to the research in the form of information sheets and consent forms</li> </ul>
	<i>PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants' identity/data are confidential, as each participant and data set has been assigned an individual code. This will ensure that participants' identity cannot be traced in this report</li> <li>- only I, as the researcher, have had access to data</li> <li>- data were kept in accordance with LA protocol for data storage</li> </ul>
	<i>INFORMED CONSENT</i>	<p><i>Access to the local authority database (recruitment of participants):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As a Local Authority officer, I am permitted to access Local Authority central database</li> </ul> <p><i>Interviews/psycho-social profile:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to gather fully 'informed' consent, all participants were given information sheets which included the rationale, aims and envisaged outcomes of the study. Information sheets for the young girls were differentiated, so that the information given and language used was relevant/accessible to all participants. See Appendices A1, A2 and A3 for copies of information sheets</li> <li>- Consent forms were again individually differentiated for each client group. All participants provided written consent to take part in the study. See Appendices A4-7 for a copy of consent forms for each client group. Furthermore, consent forms were discussed with potential participants prior to any interview. In the case of the girls and their parents, this was achieved through an initial home-visit, and in the case of external and teaching professionals, through telephone contact</li> <li>- Parental consent forms sought parents' written consent to access school file information</li> <li>- Teaching professionals' consent letters sought written consent from the headteacher and the member of staff to be interviewed. Consent was also required for access to school file information</li> <li>- Before and following each interview, all participants were read a set of standardised instructions and standardised debrief respectively (See Appendix A8 and A9), which reiterated the conditions of informed consent, the right to withdraw, confidentiality, safeguarding and the conditions for termination of the research</li> </ul>
	<i>SELF-DETERMINATION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The right to withdraw was included within consent letters and again during the standardised instructions and debrief</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCE</b>	<i>AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familiarity with BPS Ethical Code of Practice was maintained at all times</li> </ul>

	<i>ETHICAL DECISION MAKING</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical issues were identified and considered before research commenced through a the ethical process of the University of Birmingham 'Arts and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee'</li> <li>- Any ethical dilemmas during the research process were recognise and recorded</li> </ul>
	<i>LIMITS OF COMPETENCE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I practised within my competence levels at all times</li> <li>- I am able to justify reasons for decision-making within my research</li> </ul>
	<i>RECOGNISING IMPAIRMENTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At all times within the research, I was vigilant in checking for any impairments to my own personal practice and to the participation of staff and children involved with the research were identified. Supervision supported this process of scrutiny</li> </ul>
<b>REPSONSIBILITY</b>	<i>GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I was mindful of potential risks to researchers and participants, and of my own responsibilities to limit and contain any such risk</li> </ul>
	<i>TERMINATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conditions of termination were included in the consent letters and during standardised instructions</li> <li>- If at any point, it had appeared that the research would be of no benefit to the participants, the research would be terminated</li> </ul>
	<i>PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Due consideration was given of individual needs of respondents, and arrangements made to accommodate these</li> <li>- All participants were informed of the safeguarding procedure within the consent forms and within the standardised instructions</li> <li>- Any issues that arose that required further action would have been followed up</li> </ul>
	<i>DEBRIEFING</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All participants were debriefed following the interview. This included informing participants of the research process and discussing the means by which the findings would be disseminated</li> <li>- Debrief to all parties involved in the research was mediated though provision of a copy of the Public Domain Briefing (See Appendix A10) and an offer of a further visit to discuss findings</li> </ul>
<b>INTEGRITY</b>	<i>HONESTY AND ACCURACY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High standards of honesty and transparency about research decisions were maintained</li> <li>- Within information sheets, participants were provided with contact details and those of my Local Authority supervisor and university research supervisor</li> </ul>
	<i>AVOIDING EXPLOITATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The parameters of my professional role within the context of the research was clarified prior to the research through the consent forms and the standardised instructions, and following the completion of the research, thorough the standardised debrief</li> <li>- Any potential conflicts of interest and inequity of power relationships were considered and addressed throughout the research</li> </ul>
	<i>MAINTAINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional relationships were maintained at all times</li> </ul>
	<i>ETHICAL MISCONDUCT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I was prepared (at any point) to challenge colleagues/clients/participants who may act against strict ethical guidelines adhered to in this study</li> </ul>

\*According to the BPS (2009)

### 3.4 Reflexivity: My position as a researcher

As discussed earlier in the section discussing IPA, a key principle of this methodology is reflexivity, which Nightingale and Cromby (1999) describe as an 'awareness of (the researcher's own) contribution and construction throughout the research process' (p228). By using IPA I accept that I played a central role in the research, not only through my interpretation of the participants' life world, but also through the potential effects that my involvement may have had on participants. Box 3.3 attempts to outline my position as a researcher, and my values, interests and assumptions in relation to the research area. In articulating these subjective influences, I acknowledge my understanding of the role that these may have played in my understanding of the broad phenomenon of girls at risk of exclusion.

#### *Box 3.3: An outline of my position as a researcher*

*The following views represent my own personal opinions and in no way represents the views of Overdale Local Authority.*

##### **Position**

- As a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in the Local Authority (LA) in which the research is undertaken, I represent an agent of the LA as well as a researcher.
- Within my remit as a TEP, I have encountered numerous cases involving girls at risk of exclusion, both in mainstream school and, through my involvement within the Psychology Service's Vulnerable Children's Team, and the Secondary Behaviour Support Service.
- As a male, I do not have direct experience of the educational experiences of girls.

##### **Values/interests/assumptions**

I believe that:

- the lack of interest, research, resources and emphasis on girls who display challenging behaviour marginalizes girls' needs;
- girls' needs are generally misunderstood within schools and are often overlooked in favour of their male counterparts ;
- the current lack of provision for girls within the local authority is unacceptable;
- inclusion should be a stable concept, applied consistently across the LA;
- there is too much focus on presenting behaviours, rather than on the underlying causes of those behaviours; and
- theoretically, with an allowance for within child factors, childrens' behaviour develops within a context of a number of multi-dimensional and interacting reciprocal influences (e.g. the family, the school, culture).

Given my dual Local Authority and university graduate researcher roles whilst carrying out the research, I accept that my preconceptions, knowledge, and attitudes were likely to influence my interpretation of data, and that my role as an employee of the Local Authority may affect the answers given by participants. Although these potential influences are largely unavoidable, I took steps, where possible, to minimise the effects of my personal role within the research, such as by:

- writing down my reflections between interview transcripts in an attempt to 'bracket' previous thoughts; and
- carrying out credibility checks (see Section 3.8: Trustworthiness of research findings).

### **3.5 Participants**

As Smith et al (2009) suggest, sampling must be theoretically consistent with the theoretical orientation of a chosen methodology. 'IPA challenges the traditional linear relationship between number of participants and value of research' (Reid et al, 2005; p22). Here again, IPA takes an idiographic approach, concerned with efforts to understand the meaning of both contingent, and incidental, and often subjective phenomena, as a result of intensive and detailed engagement with a small number of cases. As Smith et al suggest, larger data sets tend to inhibit the analyst's ability to reflect in detail on each case.

According to Willig (2008), IPA typically involves small, homogenous samples, purposively selected because they share experience of a particular situation, event or condition, and for whom the research question is meaningful. Through a process of 'triangulation' (exploration of one phenomenon from multiple perspectives) IPA can help to develop a more detailed and multifaceted account of that phenomenon (Smith et al, 2009). Homogeneity within the current study is not claimed for individual characteristics of the participants, but rather through a shared experience of risk of exclusion in relation to a specific case, and as defined in the participant selection criteria below.

From the outset, it must be noted that the process of engaging participants in the research was complex. As such, the original plan to recruit participants for the present study needed to be changed within the sampling process. This will be discussed for each point in the participant recruitment process.

Originally, in order to ensure homogeneity of characteristics relevant to the research remit, participants within the current study were identified using several criteria (See Box 3.4).

*Box 3.4: Original sample selection criteria/rationale*

Participants must:

1. be female;
2. be at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 (as of September 2010);
3. not be known to the Psychology Service (i.e. no previous or open referral);
4. not have a statement of special educational needs;
5. not be known to Social Services;
6. be at risk of permanent exclusion due to challenging behaviour; and
7. be attending a secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) either on a full-time or part-time basis (therefore not in full-time mainstream education).

The Local Authority central database generated of a whole cohort of girls who met these criteria. I originally planned to randomly select from this group to draw a specific case study sample. At this point, three cases would be selected from the total possible sample. Additionally, the decision was made to assist the Local Authority by gaining, as far as possible with so small a sample, a 'city-wide' perspective. Therefore, I aimed to include girls from three different schools within the sample. If the young person picked out of the hat attended the same school as one already selected, the second young person would not be included in the final sample, and another girl would be chosen.

However, contrary to this planned process of recruitment set out in my ethics submission, in discussion with my thesis supervisor and two key professionals

to be interviewed in the research, I came to the view that, given the turbulent social backgrounds of some of the girls identified, their inclusion in the research would not be appropriate at this juncture. Furthermore, it was also suggested that for those participants who it was appropriate to contact, 'cold calling' was not suitable, and instead required a process of mediation through a professional with an existing relationship with the girl/family. Consequently, a list of potential participants was sent to each individual setting manager to consider which girls would be appropriate on the basis of poor attendance, current turbulent social background; poorly developed oral communication skills and/or capacity to understand the research agenda and/or questions would not be approached. Thereafter, a setting leader with an established relationship with the family contacted each parent of the pupils who met these further criteria to explain my role, the research and seek permission for me to contact them individually.

After an initial search, carried out on the 13th December 2010, 19 girls were identified as currently attending a Key Stage 3/4 PRU. Box 3.4 reports key facts about potential participants and the process and outcome of the initial recruitment process. The main challenge arising from this process was that parents/carers of the target girls (who needed initially to consent to the study) did not consent to participate, thus ruling out interviews with the girls and school staff: only one family consented to the process, which placed the research in jeopardy. Rather than a failure within the research design, I would suggest that this is a realistic risk of working with such girls and families, some of whom may have negative experiences of external services and of education itself, and may be disengaged (or whom may never have engaged) with their child's education.

Due to non-engagement and the insufficient participants recruited, I decided that the original criteria had been too stringent. Consequently, I decided to 'loosen' selection criteria 3 and 5 listed above (see Table 3.2), to allow the inclusion of those girls known to the Psychology Service and those girls who were known to social services but not in public or alternative care placements outside of their own family. Therefore, a further search was carried out on 16<sup>th</sup>

January 2011. Box 3.5 reports key facts about potential participants and the process and outcome of the secondary recruitment process, through which, eventually two cases were recruited to the study. Rather than the purposive sampling approach that was originally envisaged, the sampling technique subsequently evolved into an opportunity sampling approach.

*Box 3.5: key facts and outcomes of the recruitment process following the initial phase of recruitment on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010.*

Using the original sampling criteria, according to the Local Authority central database as of December 13<sup>th</sup> 2010:

**Key facts-**

- A total of 19 girls was known to the SBSS and attended a provision within the Secondary Federated Pupil Referral Service (SFPRS) on either a part-time or full time basis.
- Of the 19 girls, three had an SFPRS provision recorded as their 'on-roll school'. The other 16 were dual registered with a mainstream school.
- These girls were drawn from nine different mainstream schools;
- These girls represented the following year groups:

Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
3 (16.5%)	6 (31%)	4 (21%)	6 (31.5%)

- Of these girls, only seven were known to the Psychology Service.
- One girl had a statement of special educational needs.
- No girls were within the 'Looked After' System (i.e. in the care of the Local Authority) or foster placement)

**Outcome-**

- Of the 19 girls, 11 were deemed to fit the selection criteria for inclusion in the research sample.
- Of these 11 girls, only five were considered by staff within the SBSS to be appropriate for inclusion in the research sample.
- Of these five girls- two families did not engage with the setting manager and two chose not to participate following my contact with them.
- One Year 11 girl and her family chose to engage with the research at this point.

*Box 3.6: key facts and outcomes of the recruitment process following the second phase of recruitment on January 16th 2011.*

*After experiences of initial non-engagement, another search was undertaken. According to the Local Authority central database, as of January 16<sup>th</sup> 2011:*

**Key facts-**

- *A total of 27 girls was known to the SBSS and attended a provision within the Secondary Federated Pupil Referral Service (SFPRS) on either a part-time or full time basis.*
- *Of the 27 girls, three (11%) had an SFPRS provision as their 'on-role school'. The other 16 were dual registered with a mainstream school;*
- *These girls represented nine different mainstream schools;*
- *These girls represented the following year groups:*

Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
6 (22%)	9 (33%)	5 (19%)	7 (26%)

- *Of these girls, 13 (48%) were known to the Psychology Service;*
- *Three (11%) girls were within the 'Looked After' System (i.e. in the care of the Local Authority and/or foster placement)and so were excluded form the potential research sample.*
- *Only 3 (11%) of girls had statements of special educational needs*

**Outcome-**

- *Of the 27 girls, eight had started at a KS3/4 PRU in the period between the first and second searches.*
- *Of the total 27 girls, including those identified in the previous search:*
  - *eight were deemed inappropriate and excluded in discussion with setting managers due to the complexity of the case and/or due to turbulence in the home;*
  - *seven were deemed inappropriate and excluded due to poor attendance and failure to engage with the Key Stage 3/4 PRUs;*
  - *one girl had moved out of the city and one girl had been educated prior to the PRU in another Local Authority;*
  - *three girls were in Local Authority care;*
  - *three girls/families declined to take part in the research following contact with the family;*
  - *two girls were excluded from the potential research sample due to their attending the same school as the girl who had already consented to take part in the research; and*
  - *in addition to the girl/family recruited in the previous search, one more girl/family consented to take part.*

Following the recruitment of two focus cases, a number of participants were recruited to triangulate information, and thus provide additional and alternative perspectives, within the case studies. More specifically, these additional participants were:

- the inclusion manager currently working at each girl's identified 'on-roll school'; and
- the parents/carers of girls each girl.

In addition, four external professionals, involved directly with the Local Authority's response to girls at risk of exclusion, were included:

- a professional from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service with significant experience of Pupil Referral Units;
- a senior professional working within a Local Authority's Pupil Referral Units;
- a senior member of staff working within a Local Authority Special School for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; and
- a senior member of staff within the Local Authority's Specialist Behaviour Support Service.

A key difference in the recruitment of participants was that the individual girls, their parents/carers, and the member of staff from their school had a specific case study focus on the experiences of the particular girl with whom they were involved, whereas the external professionals took a general focus on their experiences of all girls in the cohort. The external professionals interpret and describe the phenomena which forms the focus of inquiry more generally, than do the other research participants.

### **3.6 Method: Procedure**

The research was conducted in three phases, which were carried out simultaneously:

- 1) an investigation of descriptive information about the two girls from data held on the Local Authority central database;
- 2) development of student psycho-social profiles; and
- 3) semi-structured interviews with research participants.

### **3.6.1 Descriptive information from the Local Authority central database**

During this phase of the research, I used the Local Authority central database to abstract anonymous descriptive details about both girls who participated in the research. This was important to provide contextual information about each girl's background and recorded educational experiences. Additionally, I have also provided descriptive details of the larger population deemed to be at risk of permanent exclusion, to illustrate the extent to which the two cases represent the larger population.

Access to the database was granted by the Local Authority and the conditions of this were discussed and approved by the Local Authority Information Governance Team, who were confident re: compliance with the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998). The condition of this was that information re-examined confidential and that no data by which participants could be identified could be reported in the final thesis.

These data are presented in Section 4.1: Findings- *Descriptive case information from central Local Authority database.*

### **3.6.2 Psycho-social profiles**

Following the identification and selection of the two focus girls, a detailed study of school records was carried out in order to complete a psychosocial profile for each girl. This 'case review' part of the research adopted a narrative approach to plot the experiences of each young person as these were represented in school files (see Appendix 11 for psychosocial profile proforma).

The aim of this part of the research was to explore psychosocial variability amongst the sample, highlight any shared/unique experiences and also, given the idiographic focus of the current study, to provide a contextual basis to each participant within the analysis. Files were analysed according to three broad titles: medical history, social history and educational history. Summarised

psycho-social profiles are presented in Section 4.2: *Findings- Psychosocial profile*.

I acknowledge the limitations of using school files to complete psycho-social profiles. For example, schools files will vary in the extent, detail and quality of information, according to differences in staff, personal style, school policy and perhaps the underlying status of 'inclusion' held by each school.

### **3.6.3 Interviews**

According to Willig (2008), semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection for qualitative research in psychology. As Kvale (1996) suggests, the use of interviews in research marks a departure from 'seeing human subjects as simply manipulable, and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations' (p11). Key characteristics of a research interview proposed by Kvale (1996) are summarized in in Box 3.6.

Smith et al (2009) posit that the data collection method best suited to IPA is the semi-structured interview, which allows the researcher to access a rich, detailed, first-person account of participants' experiences. The benefits of one-to-one semi-structured interviews are that they are:

*... easily managed, allowing rapport to be developed and give participants the chance and space to think, speak and be heard (Smith et al, 2009; p57).*

A further benefit of the semi-structured interview in this context was that this method of data collection afforded me the flexibility to share conversational control and both lead, and also follow participants' descriptions of their life world.

*Box 3.7: Key characteristics of a research interview (Kvale, 1996; p30)*

Interviews should:

- 1) engage, understand and interpret the key features of the lifeworlds of the participants;
- 2) use natural language to gather and understand qualitative knowledge;
- 3) be able to reveal and explore the nuanced descriptions of the lifeworlds of the participants;
- 4) elicit descriptions of specific situations and actions, rather than generalities;
- 5) adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena, rather than being too pre-structured;
- 6) focus on specific ideas and themes, i.e. have direction, but avoid being too tightly structured;
- 7) accept the ambiguity and contradictions of situations where they occur in participants' accounts, if this is a fair reflection of the ambiguous and contradictory situation in which they find themselves;
- 8) accept that the interview may provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves;
- 9) regard interviews as an interpersonal encounter, with all that this entails; and
- 10) be a positive and enriching experience for all participants.

Such methods provide participants with an opportunity to tell a story, speak freely and reflectively, and develop ideas and discuss concerns in some detail (Smith et al, 2009; p56). The in-depth 'individual' accounts gathered by semi-structured interview fit with the idiographic approach of IPA; that is, IPA benefits from an intimate and detailed focus on one (or a few) person's experiences, rather than a great number of 'thin' data. IPA researchers are aware that interviews are not a 'neutral' means of data collection. They are reflexively aware of their constant dynamic role in the research process, from research genesis, to interview, to data analysis and interpretation.

Interview schedules were informed by established conventions for semi-structured interviews (e.g. Willig, 2008; Smith et al, 2009). Interview questions were developed to access information relating to the three core research questions for the present study. In the broadest sense, questions related to;

- the girl's experiences of mainstream schools;
- the factors that inhibited the girl's inclusion in mainstream schools; and
- why girls get excluded.

To address the research aims thoroughly, the interview schedules comprised a relatively small number of open-ended questions. According to Spradley's (1979) types of interview question, the current study uses mainly descriptive, structural and evaluative questions. From these questions, probes/prompts were used to elicit elaboration or examples/illustrations of events or experiences. Questions were worded in the past tense, so that they would elicit participants' description of their 'lived' experience. Questions which may have allowed participants to give their opinions were avoided. However, I accept that this is not possible to achieve fully, given that perspectives are personal and inherently laced with value judgement.

Given that the interviews were carried out with four different respondent groups (the girls, their parents, a member of staff at their on-roll school and external professionals involved in work with girls at risk of exclusion), the wording and focus of interviews needed to be differentiated for each group (i.e taking into account participants' age, linguistic skills and experience in the area of girls' exclusion). Firstly, the wording of questions was considered closely during the development of the interview schedules to ensure that 'plain English' was used (and jargon removed), so that all parties could access each question. Interview questions for external professionals were given a general focus, whereas the other three groups were given a 'case-specific' focus. See Appendices A12-15 for copies of the interview schedules.

As the research was conducted to address existing concerns/priorities within the local authority, interview schedules were discussed with my Local Authority research supervisor during the development stage, to ensure appropriate focus and clarity. However, care was taken not to manipulate or lead participants through questioning, which is consistent with what Gubruim and Holstein (2000) describe as a reflexive approach to interviews.

To adhere to the iterative principles of IPA, basic counselling techniques were used during the interviews to check participants' meaning. For example, when asking for additional points, I reminded participants of previous points they had

made. Also, and if a specific point lacked clarity, I repeated my understanding of the participant's answer to allow a chance for confirmation, disconfirmation, or reframing to give additional clarity. Importantly, judicious efforts were made to avoid asking leading questions.

As prescribed within IPA, the interview data were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim into script for analysis. As advocated by Smith et al (2009), only information that was to be analysed was transcribed. Therefore prosodic aspects of the recordings were omitted.

### **3.7 Analysis: procedure**

Fundamental to the process of any analysis using IPA is that the analyst travels on a journey of understanding participants' worlds at an abstract and conceptual level. The aim of this journey is to explore similarities and differences across cases, and produce a rigorous analysis of any patterns of meaning that may underlie participants' reflections on their shared experience (Smith et al, 2009).

Data in the current study were analysed according to the principles of IPA set out by Reid et al (2005), who posit that:

*IPA can be characterised by a set of common processes (e.g. moving from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative), and principles (e.g. a commitment to an understanding of the participant's point of view, and a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in particular contexts) which are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task (Reid et al, 2005; p21).*

Analysis in the current study adhered to the structure set out by Smith et al (2009). Although there is a great deal of flexibility in the analytical approach for studies using IPA, I chose to follow this heuristic structure due to my

inexperience in the method, and thus to ensure that I would provide a detailed interpretative analysis which involved ‘flexible thinking, processes of reduction, expansion, revision, creativity and innovation’ (Smith et al, 2009; p81). Each step offered a different vantage point on the data, so that analysis moved through different levels of interpretation as it progressed. Table 3.2 outlines the stages of analysis according to Smith et al’s structure, and also how this structure was applied in the current study.

Analysis can be described as a joint venture that involves both the participant and the analyst.

*Although the primary concern of IPA is the lived experience of the participant and the meaning which the participant makes of that lived experience, the end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking (p80).*

Consequently, implicit within the steps described by Smith et al is a need for reflexivity at the analysis stage of IPA.

*Table 3.2: Smith et al’s (2009) six steps of IPA analysis and their application in the present study.*

		<b>Key elements</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Reading and re-reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As it sounds, this section involves immersing oneself in the text by reading and repeatedly re-reading the interview scripts.</li> <li>• The key is to slow down the temptation for quick and easy reduction and synopsis (p82). The reader is asked to bracket (or delay) initial instinctive observations and reflections.</li> </ul> <p><i>In practice: Following completion of the transcription the script was read and then re-read to familiarise myself with the text. No notes were made at this stage.</i></p>

Step 2	<b>Initial noting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This level of analysis is the most detailed and time consuming.</li> <li>• This stage involves examining semantic content and language on an exploratory level. The analyst retains an open mind and notes anything of interest in the transcript. In doing so, the analyst begins to understand how a participant talks about, understands and thinks about an issue.</li> <li>• This stage is flexible: there are no rules or conventions to follow. Analysis is likely to comment on similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying.</li> <li>• There is expected to be a descriptive core of comments (akin to phenomenological roots, which are close to the participant's explicit meaning). Also, there will be interpretative notes, which look deeper into the 'why' of the data. Data can be analysed at three levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- descriptive comments: understanding phrases, key words and explanations presented by the participant;</li> <li>- linguistic comments: reflecting on the language used by the participant; and</li> <li>- conceptual comments: interrogating the data to unpick underlying meaning behind the text at an abstract and implicit level.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>In practice:</i>  <i>Whilst re-reading the text, significant/interesting text was highlighted. Following this, each page was re-read and initial comments relating to descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were made in a column to the right of the main text. It was my aim, as much as possible, to treat each text independently and to put aside (or 'bracket') my previous knowledge of the area and experience of other texts.</i></p>
Step 3	<b>Developing emergent themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this stage, the original whole becomes a set of parts. By analysing exploratory comments into emerging themes, the analyst attempts to reduce the volume of data (script and notes), whilst still maintaining complexity, in terms of mapping the interrelationships, connexions and patterns between introductory notes (p91)</li> <li>• Themes are grounded in the detail of the study, whilst having enough abstraction to be conceptual.</li> </ul> <p><i>In practice:</i>  <i>Initial notes were analysed and grouped into emergent themes. These themes reflected both the detailed description of the participant and my interpretation (the double hermeneutic). These themes were recorded in a column to the right of my initial notes. (See Appendix A16 for a copy an example of this stage of analysis.)</i></p>
Step 4	<b>Searching for connexions across emergent themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this stage, emergent themes are re-reorganised/grouped to produce a structure, which highlights the most interesting and important aspects of the participants account. These groups are called super-ordinate themes.</li> <li>• Some themes are excluded, based on their lack of relevance to the research questions.</li> </ul> <p><i>In practice:</i>  <i>Themes were put onto post-it notes and reorganised into overarching and related super-ordinate themes. These super-ordinate themes were then organised within a table. (See Appendix A17 for a copy of this stage of Analysis)</i></p>
Step 5	<b>Moving to the next case</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetition of the above processes.</li> <li>• In keeping with idiographic commitment and phenomenological principles, analysts should 'bracket' the knowledge acquired in other analyses, so that fresh insights can emerge from the data.</li> </ul> <p><i>In practice: stages 1-4 were repeated in their entirety.</i></p>
Step 6	<b>Looking for patterns across cases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysts look for themes or super ordinate themes which recur across cases.</li> </ul> <p><i>In practice:</i>  <i>Tables were placed side-by-side and compared with one another. Similarities were grouped using highlighter pens. A table of themes was produced for the group, showing how themes are nested within superordinate themes, and illustrating the themes for each participant.</i></p>

In the context of the current study, given the initial broad focus needed for good qualitative research, and subsequently how this focus was translated into open-ended interview questions, a huge breadth of data was collected. As a consequence, several decisions had to be made in order to analyse data with sufficient conceptual depth, and present a concise summary of research findings. Therefore, through discussion with my research supervisors, I made several key decisions, which are discussed below.

Firstly, I decided to refine my initial research questions in order to extrapolate and present findings based on a primary research question of 'why do Key Stage 3 and/or 4 girls get excluded in the context of Overdale City?'. Although this meant that the other two questions were not addressed directly, this broad question still presented an opportunity to understand the educational experiences involved in the phenomenon of girls' exclusions, and to interpret the factors that facilitate/inhibit the inclusion of these girls in a mainstream setting.

Secondly, rather than present findings at the level of each participant group (e.g. girls, parents), I decided to present findings at a macro level of analysis, integrating the girls', parents' and school professionals' lived experiences. My rationale is that this allowed me to unpick and interpret key themes at an appropriately conceptually and linguistically deep level of analysis to understand the complexity of each key theme, as is required in IPA. I believe this does not compromise the idiographic focus of my IPA study, as the carefully planned research methodology, and rigorous and robust layers of analysis show (See flow diagram representation of analysis process in Figure 3.1, which makes reference to examples of analysis at each level in Appendices 16 and 17).

The exception to this integrated approach to reporting the analysis was made in the case of the accounts of the four external professionals, which were analysed and reported separately. I felt that it was necessary to split the analysis in this way as questions were framed with a general focus on girls at risk of exclusion, rather than the case-specific level (i.e. 'why do girls get

excluded from school?', not 'why did X get excluded from school?'), and there were likely to be additional factors that may have influenced external professionals' perceptions.

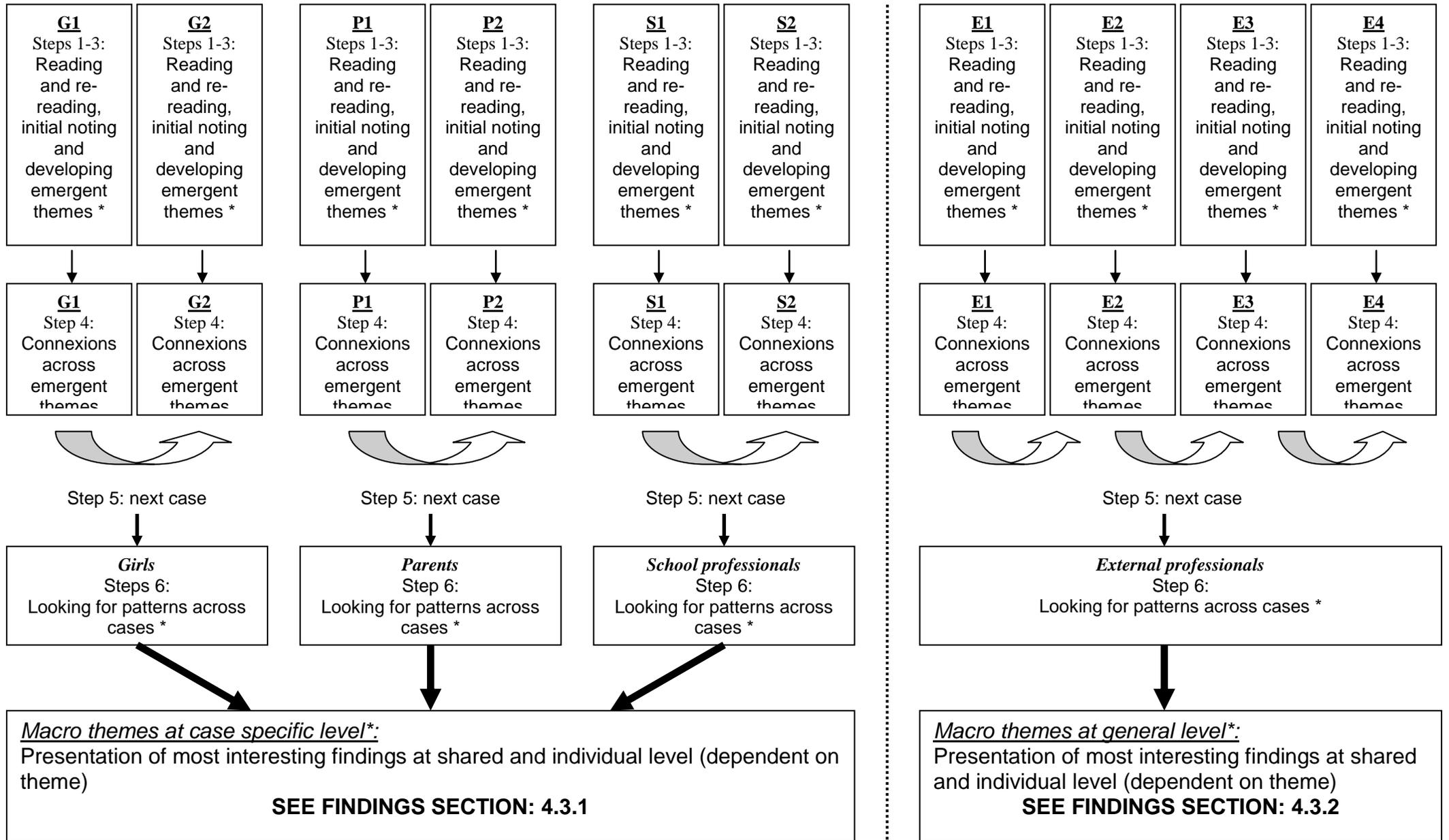
### **3.8 Trustworthiness of research findings**

With the hermeneutic cycle inherent in IPA research, and the small sample size used in the current study, I understand that truth claims remain tentative and analysis subjective. Consequently, in an attempt to move beyond the individual interpretation of data, there is a need, where possible, to engage in a process of 'credibility checks' (Barker and Pistrang, 2005) in studies using IPA (and indeed any robust qualitative study). Whilst I am aware that there will inevitably be individual variations in the interpretation of data, I took opportunities (at Stages 3 and 6 of the analysis process summarised in Figure 3.1 and prior to my macro level of analysis) to reflect on my interpretations with a colleague, who was experienced in qualitative research (my Local Authority research supervisor), to follow the 'paper trail through the stages and reflect on my process of analysis. Any queries were discussed in order to reach a consensus to ensure that 'extracts were assigned, and themes grouped, appropriately, and that the model reflected the participants' accounts' (Clare, 2003; p1021). Within this process, my decisions for grouping data in a particular way were discussed (and where appropriate, challenged). I felt that this presented a necessary (albeit imperfect) validity/credibility check within what is a highly subjective process.

To allow the participants' voices to be heard and acknowledged within the analytic process (Brocki and Wearden, 2006), verbatim quotes have been used to illustrate themes and super-ordinate themes. Punctuation has been added to quotes in the final report to enhance readability.

Figure 3.1: Process of analysis and reporting of findings

<b>Code</b>	G = Girl	P = Parent
	S = School staff	E = External professional

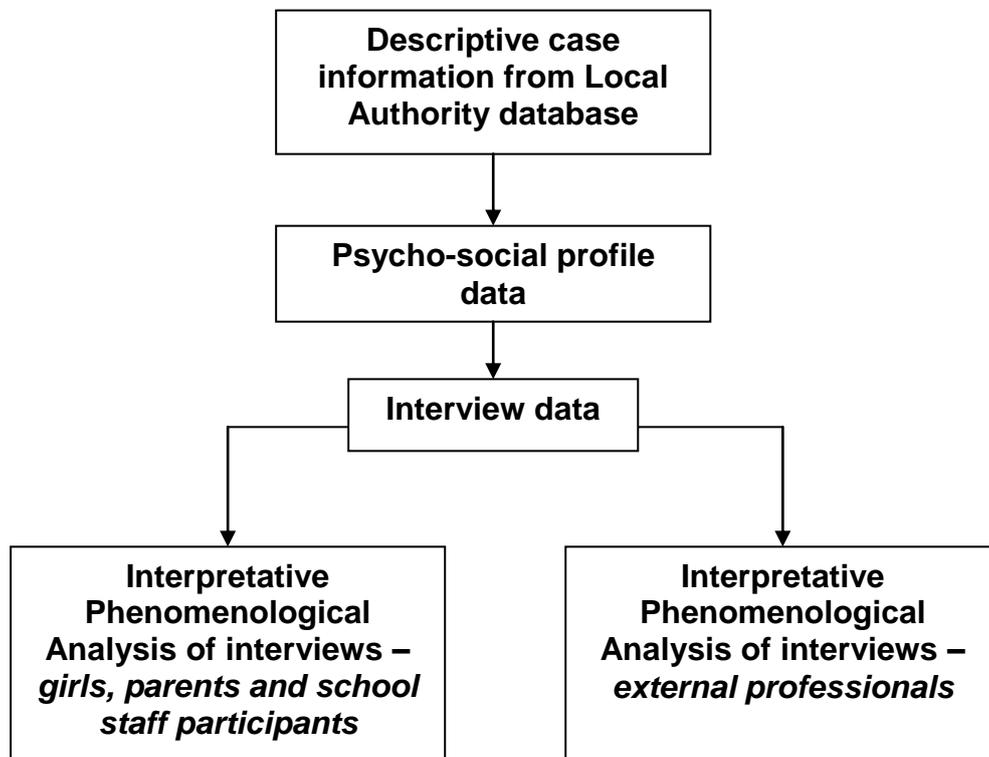


\* = 'Credibility checks' with supervisor

# Chapter Four: Findings

As discussed in the Chapter Three, findings for the current study are presented in three phases (following the three phases of investigation). The exception to this comes in the analysis of interview data, for which responses from the girls, parents and school staff participants have been analysed separately from the external professional participants. A rationale has been given for this in Section 3.7. Figure 4.1 presents a visual representation of the structure of the Findings chapter.

Figure 4.1: Structure of Findings chapter



Within this chapter, I have chosen to combine presentation, interpretation and discussion of significant findings. Where appropriate, this will include reference to existing theory and literature, which, due to the exploratory design of the study, may in some cases not have been introduced in the earlier literature review. I have made the decision to integrate presentation of findings and their interpretation in order to avoid repetition, and to allow discussion of specific themes in depth, *in situ*.

## 4.1 Phase One: *Descriptive case information from central Local Authority database*

Descriptive data were gathered from the central Local Authority database at the start of the research process. This data set is included to provide a context for the main interview stage of the research. Table 4.1 presents descriptive information about the two focus girls who participated in the current study. Given that this stage of investigation is not the substantive part of the research, I include only brief comment.

*Table 4.1: Descriptive information about each participating girl (data correct as of 18.02.11)*

	<b>Case 1</b>	<b>Case 2</b>
<b>Participant:</b>	G1 (Parents- P1, School staff-S1)	G2 (Parent- P2, School Staff-S2)
<b>Age (at time of interview):</b>	Age 16	Age 13
<b>National Curriculum year:</b>	Year 11	Year 8
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	White British	Black Caribbean
<b>Home language:</b>	English	English
<b>Current placement:</b>	Full time placement within SBSS provision	Dual placement in mainstream and SBSS provision
<b>SEN stage:</b>	School action plus	School action plus
<b>Known to Psychology Service:</b>	No	No
<b>In LA care:</b>	No	No
<b>Number of exclusions (including length):</b>	2007/8: 1 exclusion (totaling 3 days) 2008/9: 3 exclusions (totaling 35 days) 2009/10: 5 exclusions (totaling 31 days)	2010/11: 1 exclusion (totaling 1 day)
<b>Length of stay within SBSS provision:</b>	Full time since February 2010	Part-time since January 2011

Immediately obvious in the above table are the very different educational experiences of both participants. Of particular interest is the apparent wide variation in the total number of fixed-term exclusions each girl has

experienced, which ultimately led to attendance at a PRU. However, in order to interpret the above accurately, it must be noted that these girls attend different PRU settings, each of which meets the needs of different levels of challenging behaviour. In particular, G2 attends a short-stay PRU designed to reduce the risk of permanent exclusion through short-term attendance and intervention, while G1 attends a PRU setting that can meet the needs of girls who are out of mainstream school (although not formally permanently excluded) on a full-time and long-term basis.

In order to situate and provide a point of comparison for the participants in the context of the wider population of girls within the PRU system in Overdale City, I have included a table (See Table 4.2) containing descriptive data from the remaining 25 girls who attend PRUs either on a part- or full-time basis. There were no obvious trends within the descriptive data describing girls who were 'at-risk' of permanent exclusion as the demographic make-up of this population was varied.

In summary, the girls who attend PRU provision represent a diverse group, each of which has a unique set of characteristics and has encountered a unique set of experiences. Although such diversity makes it difficult to make comparisons with the current research findings, this point is useful in itself and signals the complexity of factors/circumstances for which girls may become excluded.

Table 4.2: Descriptive information about the remaining 25 girls who attend a PRU on either a part-time or full-time basis

<b>Descriptive information (details correct as of 18.02.11)</b>																															
<b>Number of girls:</b>	25 (not including two girls included in present study)																														
<b>Chronological Age:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Age 11 0</td> <td>Age 12 0</td> <td>Age 13 7</td> <td>Age 14 9</td> <td>Age 15 3</td> <td>Age 16 6</td> </tr> </table>	Age 11 0	Age 12 0	Age 13 7	Age 14 9	Age 15 3	Age 16 6																								
Age 11 0	Age 12 0	Age 13 7	Age 14 9	Age 15 3	Age 16 6																										
<b>National Curriculum year:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Year 7 0</td> <td>Year 8 5</td> <td>Year 9 9</td> <td>Year 10 6</td> <td>Year 11 5</td> </tr> </table>	Year 7 0	Year 8 5	Year 9 9	Year 10 6	Year 11 5																									
Year 7 0	Year 8 5	Year 9 9	Year 10 6	Year 11 5																											
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>White/black African 1</td> <td>White/black Caribbean 3</td> <td>White British 13</td> <td>Other White 2</td> <td>Black Caribbean 2</td> <td>White Asian 2</td> <td>Not declared 1</td> </tr> </table>	White/black African 1	White/black Caribbean 3	White British 13	Other White 2	Black Caribbean 2	White Asian 2	Not declared 1																							
White/black African 1	White/black Caribbean 3	White British 13	Other White 2	Black Caribbean 2	White Asian 2	Not declared 1																									
<b>Home language:</b>	English recorded as home language for all pupils																														
<b>Current placement:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Dual placement (mainstream/SBSS) 20</td> <td>Full time placement (SBSS) 3</td> <td>Educational Welfare investigating 1</td> <td>Awaiting placement 1</td> </tr> </table>	Dual placement (mainstream/SBSS) 20	Full time placement (SBSS) 3	Educational Welfare investigating 1	Awaiting placement 1																										
Dual placement (mainstream/SBSS) 20	Full time placement (SBSS) 3	Educational Welfare investigating 1	Awaiting placement 1																												
<b>SEN stage:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Statement 3</td> <td>School action + 12</td> <td>School Action 4</td> <td>None recorded 4</td> <td>Unknown 2</td> </tr> </table>	Statement 3	School action + 12	School Action 4	None recorded 4	Unknown 2																									
Statement 3	School action + 12	School Action 4	None recorded 4	Unknown 2																											
<b>Known to Psychology Service:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Known 13</td> <td>Not known 12</td> </tr> </table>	Known 13	Not known 12																												
Known 13	Not known 12																														
<b>In LA care:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>In care 3</td> <td>Not in care 22</td> </tr> </table>	In care 3	Not in care 22																												
In care 3	Not in care 22																														
<b>Number of girls/total number of days exclusions:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="3">Primary (days)</td> <td colspan="3">Secondary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0-5: 3</td> <td>5-10: 0</td> <td>10-15: 0</td> <td>15-20: 0</td> <td>20-30: 1</td> <td>30: 0</td> <td>0-5: 8</td> <td>5-10: 6</td> <td>10-15: 3</td> <td>15-20: 2</td> <td>20-30: 3</td> <td>30: 3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6">Range: 4-27</td> <td colspan="6">Mean: 13.5 Range: 0-53 days</td> </tr> </table>	Primary (days)			Secondary			0-5: 3	5-10: 0	10-15: 0	15-20: 0	20-30: 1	30: 0	0-5: 8	5-10: 6	10-15: 3	15-20: 2	20-30: 3	30: 3	Range: 4-27						Mean: 13.5 Range: 0-53 days					
Primary (days)			Secondary																												
0-5: 3	5-10: 0	10-15: 0	15-20: 0	20-30: 1	30: 0	0-5: 8	5-10: 6	10-15: 3	15-20: 2	20-30: 3	30: 3																				
Range: 4-27						Mean: 13.5 Range: 0-53 days																									
<b>Number of girls/length of stay within SBSS provision (to 18/02/11):</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>0-4 weeks: 6</td> <td>4-8 weeks: 3</td> <td>8-12 weeks: 1</td> <td>12-20 weeks: 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20-30 weeks: 6</td> <td>30-52 weeks: 0</td> <td>52+ weeks: 2</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	0-4 weeks: 6	4-8 weeks: 3	8-12 weeks: 1	12-20 weeks: 7	20-30 weeks: 6	30-52 weeks: 0	52+ weeks: 2																							
0-4 weeks: 6	4-8 weeks: 3	8-12 weeks: 1	12-20 weeks: 7																												
20-30 weeks: 6	30-52 weeks: 0	52+ weeks: 2																													

## **4.2 Phase Two: Psycho-social profiles**

This phase of analysis was carried out to build on the descriptive data presented in Stage One and provides further contextual information about the experiences of the two girls involved in the study. Information was collated from the school files for each girl.

Importantly, I made the decision to present only information from the file and to not add data that became apparent during the interview phase or my wider involvement with the girls. I made this decision because I believe the amount, type and quality of information held in the school file represents a revealing finding in itself and highlights each school's administrative approach/response to girls who present with challenging behaviour and are at risk of exclusion.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 present the psycho-social profile data. I will then give my key reflections below.

Figure 4.2: A psycho-social profile of Participant G1

<b>Name: G1</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>	<b>Age: 16</b>
<b>Ethnicity: White British</b>	<b>Home Language: English</b>	<b>SEN Stage: SA+</b>

<p><b>Medical Background:</b></p> <p>Diagnosis of ADHD given by Health Service. Receiving daily medication to control this Asthma.</p>
<p><b>Family/Social Background:</b></p> <p>Parents have engaged throughout. Attended most exclusion and reintegration meetings with school</p> <p>No other information about social background</p>
<p><b>School/Educational Background:</b></p> <p><b>Primary School</b>  Moved between two primary schools in Year 4. No reason cited</p> <p><b>Secondary School</b></p> <p>Moved out of mainstream classes to on-site inclusion/education unit part-time in Year 7</p> <p>Moved to attend PRU (Assessment Centre) in Winter Term 2010. After attempted reintegration, she was removed to A PRU on a full-time permanent basis. Remains on-roll at mainstream school</p> <p>Academic achievement:  Year 8- Spring term- English 4C Maths 3B  Year 9- Spring term – not recorded  Year 10- Summer Term – not recorded  Effort levels consistently recorded as unacceptable in maths</p> <p>Attendance:  Consistently between 90-95% across secondary school career up to point of moving to PRU</p> <p>Exclusions:  Nine periods of fixed-term exclusion during secondary school: totalling 69 days of exclusion  Reasons for exclusion: physical assault against pupil (25 days), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against children and adults (31days), and 13 days for ‘other’</p> <p>Other records:  Numerous records of detentions, parent meetings, behaviour report cards, behaviour contracts  No evidence of any external agency involvement</p>

Figure 4.3: A psycho-social profile of Participant G2

<b>Name: G2</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>	<b>Age: 13</b>
<b>Ethnicity: Black Caribbean</b>	<b>Home Language: English</b>	<b>SEN Stage: SA+</b>

<p><b>Medical Background:</b></p> <p>No medical history recorded</p>
<p><b>Family/Social Background:</b></p> <p>Parents separated Mother has engaged throughout</p> <p>No other information about social background</p>
<p><b>School/Educational Background:</b></p> <p><b>Primary School</b> Transition information included- academic progress age appropriate (Level 4b)</p> <p><b>Secondary School</b></p> <p>Year 7- Six isolations (spending time away from other children in an isolated environment) and 22 detentions. Work with Behaviour Support Team (BST) in school Year 8- Seven isolations, six detentions and one exclusion (physical assault against a child). Access to BST in school</p> <p>Part-time attendance (two days per week) at a PRU since January 2011</p> <p>Reasons cited for school consequences (e.g. detentions/isolations): poor punctuality, (lack of) caring and respect for others, cooperation, working independently, completing set tasks and poor general behaviour. It was not clear, from information in the file, whether there were thresholds for such behaviours.</p> <p>Difficulties with lateness</p> <p>Academic achievement: Age appropriate levels of achievement against the national curriculum</p> <p>Attendance: No records</p> <p>Other records: Detention records, report cards, parent contact records</p>

A number of key points emerged from the psycho-social profile stage of research:

- Information/evidence in both files was limited.
- There appears to be no consistent/systematic method of collecting and storing information between schools.
- There was no evidence of any detailed investigation or assessment model in relation to the girls challenging behaviour, particularly in a wider context to the presenting behaviour itself. School file information, in both schools, was made up predominantly of records of consequences (e.g. detentions, exclusion records etc).
- There was little, if any, evidence of external agency involvement in either school file.
- There was no detailed evidence of the strategies used or evaluation/analysis of the effectiveness of such interventions.
- There was no evidence of information relating to access to a PRU.

Considering the high profile of both girls who took part in the study, neither participating school appeared to have a robust or structured approach to recording information about pupils. Instead, schools files in both cases were used primarily as a 'behaviour incident log' rather than an active attempt systematically to investigate and evaluate any causes of behaviour difficulties.

Furthermore, the 'ad hoc' nature of recorded information suggested that there was no obvious assessment model being applied in the schools, through which the antecedents or causes of challenging behaviour could be investigated in a thorough and effective way. This could suggest that schools may underestimate the complexity of the causes of challenging behaviour, and as such, any responses may have limited effectiveness in trying to divert the negative trajectory of some girls towards exclusion from school.

The above findings are particularly important given that neither girl had accessed Educational Psychology Service involvement, despite being a relative behavioral priority in their respective schools, and the Local Authority.

### **4.3 Phase Three: *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Interview data***

This phase of analysis forms the substantive component of this research study, within which I have used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to interpret participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon of girls who present with challenging behaviour and are 'at risk of exclusion'.

Whilst I have chosen to report shared meaning expressed through macro-themes (across all levels of analysis), I have also been careful to highlight a 'flavour of diversity' in respondents' accounts (Larkin and Griffiths, 2004), by reporting inconsistencies, distinctions and participants' individual reflections. This is consistent with principles of IPA, to analyse the shared and the specific, the common and the distinct.

Themes are illustrated with extracts from participants' interview data.

#### **4.3.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of interviews: *Girls, parents and school staff participants***

This section of analysis explores the key themes that arose in the interviews with the girls, parents and members of school staff who took part in the study. Two participants at each level were selected, based on criteria outlined in Chapter Three, Section 3.5. In order to 'situate' the sample (Elliot et al, 1999) Box 4.1 provides important considerations that should be born in mind:

##### ***Box 4.1: Key research information relating to girls, parents and school staff***

- Key information about both girls (and in effect the parents) is summarised in the descriptive case information from the Local Authority central database (See Section 4.1) and psychosocial profiles (See Section 4.2).
- Parental interviews in one case comprised an interview with both a mother and stepfather (P1), and in the other case, an interview with the girl's mother (P2). In the case of Participant P1, in which both parents were interviewed simultaneously, I have noted the parent whose response is quoted.
- Both school staff professionals were inclusion managers within their respective schools, and as such held overall responsibility for challenging behaviour and inclusion. Both participants had substantive experience as classroom practitioners and in the role as inclusion manager.
- Claims for 'homogeneity' of the sample are based upon participants' shared experience of the phenomena that formed the primary focus of the inquiry (factors contributing to risks of exclusion for each girl).

Participants were presented with four core questions which explored their experiences of 'exclusion', their experiences within education, and the factors which, from their perspective, had facilitated/inhibited the inclusion of the particular girl in a mainstream school in Overdale City. Table 4.3 presents superordinate themes within interview data, and any further (subordinate) themes which contributed to those themes.

*Table 4.3: Superordinate themes from interviews with the girls, their parents and school staff*

<b>Macro Superordinate themes</b>	<b>Subordinate themes</b>
1. Causal attributions of challenging behaviour and/or exclusion	
2. School ethos of inclusion	- <i>tolerance</i> - <i>ownership and responsibility</i>
3. The effects of reputation on exclusion	
4. School approaches to tackling challenging behaviour and exclusion	- <i>schools respond primarily to presenting pupil behaviour, not causes (including feeling misunderstood)</i> - <i>assessment of needs</i> - <i>internal exclusion</i> - <i>external systems of support</i> - <i>unofficial/informal exclusion</i>
5. The impact of practical school setting/environment factors on exclusion	
6. Relationships and social identity	

### **1. Causal attributions of challenging behaviour and/or exclusion**

A key theme to emerge from the data across all levels of participant was how responses, implicitly and explicitly, conveyed personal perceptions/attributions of the causal factors contributing to challenging behaviour and subsequent risk of school exclusion. Weiner (1980) posits that affective and behavioural

responses to our own and others' past behaviour are influenced by attributions made on three levels: locus (internal and external), stability (transient or stable) and controllability (controllable or uncontrollable). As such, the attributions we give to others' behaviour will likely influence our expectations of future behaviour, as well as condition our own responses in similar circumstances.

Although in each case participants had their own unique stories to tell, there were patterns of congruence submerged within the data at each level as to why the significantly challenging behaviour that precipitated exclusions occurs. Overall, and in particular at the parent and school staff level, there was a general sense of 'mutual blaming and hostility' (Miller, 1996), in which defensive attributions were made against other parties. I will address this point from the perspectives of each client group.

Although both girls essentially recounted different experiences which they felt led to their challenging behaviour, one immediate reflection on the interview data with both girls was their ability to reflect, and their deep level of self-awareness. Both girls had an understanding of their actual behaviour (e.g. verbal and physical aggression and often violent behaviour) that put them at risk of exclusion, but importantly both girls reflected and explained their perceptions of the causes and precipitating factors of their behaviour and any 'exclusions'.

Rather than attribute complete responsibility to external factors (outside of their control), both girls initially placed a proportion of responsibility on themselves (an internal attribution), acknowledging the poor choices they had made. For example:

*'I had a bad attitude' G1*

*'I just kicked off for no reason most of the time' G1*

*'I've really bad behaviour. I've always had bad behaviour... I've always had a really bad temper' G2*

When asked to reflect upon wider influences on their behaviour, G1 described the effects of her ADHD at school, whereas G2 recounted her complex home situation and the acrimonious separation of her parents as a key factor contributing to her behaviour.

During the interviews, both girls highlighted specific factors that related to their school experiences which either facilitated or inhibited their inclusion in mainstream school, such as practical influences (e.g. support and the school environment- to be discussed in Section 4.3.1(5) and social and emotional factors (e.g. a lack of understanding by teachers, and feelings of rejection- to be discussed in Section 4.3.1(4)). The girls' focus on school factors draws parallels with findings from research carried out by Miller et al (2000). Using questionnaires with 105 Year 7 pupils, Miller et al found four significant factors in the pupils' causal attributions of behaviour: 'fairness of teacher actions', 'pupil vulnerability', 'adverse family circumstances', and 'strictness of classroom routines', with the first and fourth of these reflecting school-based influences.

Whilst both parents acknowledged within-child factors for behaviour, such as their daughters' attitudes and the poor choices that their child had made,

*'If you were to step out of line with G1... she would tell you. There would be no ifs and buts, don't matter how big you were... you would be told' P1(F)*

*'If she doesn't get what she wants, she refuses to play ball' P2*

the main focus of attention was on the wider external influences on their challenging behaviour. Parental perceptions of the causes of challenging behaviour initially focussed on the unique circumstances of their child's behaviour, such as ADHD and a complex and unsettled home situation:

*'Her attention span was virtually non-existent... She wasn't actually diagnosed [with ADHD] until a couple of years ago...'* P1(M)

*'Her behaviour deteriorated through some personal problems with regards to the separation of me and my partner' P2*

With this, parents showed an understanding of how presenting behaviours may be influenced by factors beyond the school.

However, both parents predominantly identified school factors, including reputation, staff responses to behaviour, and the school environment, which had potentially influenced and/or compounded behaviour difficulties within the school setting and thus made it difficult for their daughters to stay in school, as will be discussed more fully in Section 4.3.1(3). The general consensus amongst both parents was that the school should have taken more responsibility and done more to prevent the challenging behaviour:

*'She [inclusion manager] was brilliant to start with and then she turned into... just got to get rid of [her]' P1(M)*

*'Teachers have to take some responsibility as well' P2*

*'On the whole, I'm afraid they [the school] have failed her' P2*

Although parental attribution research has focussed largely on causal attributions of general behaviour and the subsequent effect on their own parenting styles (e.g. Dix et al, 1989), by carrying out a factor analysis of causal attributions of misbehaviour from questionnaires with 144 parents, Miller et al (2000) found that parents' attributions were best represented by three factors: 'fairness of teachers' actions', 'pupil vulnerability to peer influences and adverse family circumstances', and 'differentiation of classroom demands and expectations'. Similar to earlier research (cited above) by Miller et al (2000) on young people's attributions, there is a consistent theme across both respondent groups regarding the adverse influences of school procedures and behaviour management systems in schools.

School staff participants seemed to attribute the causes of challenging behaviour to a wide range of factors relating to each girl, such as the girl's social and family background, friendships and peer networks, and within-child factors (e.g. ADHD, attitude). For example:

*'She had this diagnosis of ADHD and unfortunately the medication didn't help' S1*

*'the complex home situation hasn't helped' S2*

*'She is an angry young girl' S2*

However, when reflecting on the influence of the school itself on challenging behaviour, school staff participants attributed causality primarily to impersonal and uncontrollable school-based influences, such as the setting, or staff-pupil ratios etc (See Section 4.3.1(5) for more detailed discussion of this area). For example:

*I mean in groups of eight, they have two staff; we are 1:30; the shortened day helps; the rewards schemes help... We can't replicate the things that they do...' S2*

School staff generally did not attribute the cause of challenging behaviours to the practical dimensions of classroom management or school effectiveness issues (e.g. procedures and systems).

Through interviews with teachers, Croll and Moses (1985) found that behaviour difficulties in children were perceived in two thirds of cases to be due to home factors, two-fifths to within child factors (such as ability/IQ or attitude) and only two to four hundredths due to any school factors. This finding is supported by research from Miller (1996) who found through 24 interviews with teachers that in seven out of ten cases origins of pupil behaviour difficulties were attributed to factors under parents' control.

Although based only on a small sample, data within the current study seem consistent with this pattern. Teachers' ideas about the causes of challenging behaviour are likely to affect the 'attitudes that they take towards the children and so influence the ways in which they react towards them' (Croll and Moses, 1985, p42). Such an emphasis on external influences on behaviour contrasts with a social model of behaviour suggested by Macrae et al (2003), who argue that exclusion depends on the culture of the school, its resources, the needs of the staff and social circumstances (p94).

As discussed in the earlier review of literature, the way in which deviance is conceptualised influences practice (Lloyd, 2005). However, Miller (1996) goes a step further than this and suggests that causal attributions are likely to be accompanied by an associated sense of responsibility and ‘blameworthiness’, which in turn are likely to influence the responses (including perhaps our effort) to such behaviour. This hypothesis is important, as similar patterns are visible in participants’ reflections on their experiences with exclusion. This theme relates to attributions of causality. Fiske and Taylor (1984) present a model that includes judgements about individuals’ responsibility to effect a solution to challenging behaviour, as well as its original cause (See Table 4.4).

*Table 4.4: Fiske and Taylor’s (1984) model of cause and responsibility for challenging behaviour*

	Responsibility for solution		
Responsibility for cause		Yes	No
	Yes	Moral model	Enlightenment model
	No	Compensatory model	Medical model

In this model, a person may be perceived as having responsibility for solving a problem, even though s/he may not be responsible for its origins (Miller, 1996). If we were to put the discussion of causal attribution against this model, we might hypothesise that:

- the girls generally took responsibility for the cause and solution to their problem, whilst at the same time attributing difficulties to school factors. This could be seen as aligning with the moral and compensatory models;
- the parents took some responsibility for the presenting challenging behaviour but predominantly attributed externally, thus aligning more with the moral model and enlightenment model; whereas
- the school staff participants signaled little responsibility for the origins of the behaviour whereas, at least in theory, they attempted to

compensate for this by their responses in school, so aligning with the compensatory model.

This model will be referred to again in the following sections.

## **2. Ethos of inclusion**

A central theme that emerged from the interviews at each level for all participants was the role that school ethos and responsibility played in a school's approach to inclusion. As discussed in relation to theories of causation, this focus on school ethos is related closely to perceptions of causal attributions, and focuses on the 'responsibility' element of the model suggested by Miller (1996). I have split this theme into two sub-themes: schools' tolerance level towards challenging behaviour; and perceptions of ownership of and responsibility for challenging behaviour in schools.

### **- Tolerance**

The concept of tolerance relates to how schools 'draw the line' between what is acceptable in the school setting, and thus what is not acceptable and may lead to negative consequences. Given the power of schools to determine their own behaviour code through policy and guidance (as proposed, for example, by DCSF, 2008), the parameters of appropriateness are defined by chosen authority figures (Kauffman, 2001): in the case of schools, the headteacher. In this regard, expectations are socially constructed and locally determined.

Of particular interest to this study is what behaviours are deemed so unacceptable that they may lead to exclusion from school. Apparently 'fixed' within each school staff participant interview was the idea of '*the line*' (S1), which when crossed, would mean that exclusion would be considered. This 'line' appeared to be defined in two ways: violence to other pupils or staff, and when a pupil's behaviour was judged to have significantly impacted upon other pupils' learning and welfare:

*'exclusion for violence to staff... at that point we had to do something' S1*

*'...unless she starts to exhibit violent attacks... I mean, if it's just slanging matches with people we will manage all of that' S2*

*'the impact of her behaviour on individual children on learning and lessons...you have to balance up the other children's safety and access to learning...'* S2

Despite the interviews taking place with participants from two separate schools, it appeared that there was (some) consistency across both cases. This may reflect what Miller (1996) describes as an 'orientation towards homeostasis' (p99), in which schools' responses to behaviour form an example of attempts to maintain a level of internal stability, or moral code, of behaviour. This would therefore likely affect the nature of school boundaries, and interactions that take place.

However, in one case, participants P1 and G1 suggested that the 'line' which the staff member had emphasised could move, based on the cumulative effects of behaviour, with particular focus on the effect of reputation. This will be discussed further in Section 4.3.1(3).

Participant S1 gives further insight into the rationale for tolerating or 'including' girls presenting with challenging behaviours in school:

*'you just put up with them at the end of it all, it looks bad on your records, your exclusions and bad on your statistics for GCSEs' S1.*

Interesting within the above quote is the isolated focus on the impact of poor behaviour on the school itself, and the absence of any mention of the potential benefits of inclusion in mainstream schools for the girls themselves, or indeed for peers within a process of socialisation which exposes them to a wide spectrum of behaviours from which they would not be shielded, and which they therefore needed to learn to mediate.

- Ownership and responsibility

Linked closely with the theme of tolerance again, this theme relates to how school staff perceive challenging behaviours and subsequently how willing

they are to keep these girls in mainstream school. Central to this idea, S2 described that there are just some girls who 'aren't mainstream girls'.

*'[there are girls] who cannot exist in mainstream' S2*

*'we have seen more challenging behaviour that can't be kept in mainstream...' S2*

This concept is consistent with the idea of the 'problem child' suggested by Lane (1990): the 'unteachable child' who may be pervasively challenging, and unresponsive.

Given this attitude, there was further evidence of how this affected school responses to behaviour. For example, both school staff participants talked about how 'these children' would be 'sent' (S1) out from school for intervention. However, this separation from the mainstream environment was met with animosity by participant P2, who described that:

*'As much as I know they're helping her, they're also dismissing because it's a lot easier to deal with... they can send her to [a PRU] and they can deal with it' P2*

*'...they are quick to brush the situation under the carpet' P2*

This 'separatist' distinction created between 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream' was also evident in the language used by the girls. Both girls were happy to use the term 'mainstream' when asked to reflect on their experiences, which I would consider to be a term used predominately by professionals. For example:

*'I'm not pleased I ain't got like an education and stuff, but pleased cos now I don't have to go to mainstream school. I didn't like it anyway'. S1*

*'...because it's a mainstream school... [it's] a bit more boring' S2*

The model suggested by Fiske and Taylor (1984) (See Table 4.4), would suggest that where school staff participants did not perceive the school's responsibility for the origins of any problem behaviour, they may only take

responsibility to solve the problem (the compensatory model) to a point, after which, due to the girls 'overstepping the line', the young person would potentially be pathologised as 'not a mainstream girl' (the medical model). Subsequently, it appears that responsibility to address the 'problem' behaviour would be passed to another agent, such as a PRU, for intervention.

### 3. The effects of reputation on exclusion

A third key theme to emerge from the data related to the effects of reputation and how these impact on girls' risk of exclusion. As Maclure et al (2011) describe, 'reputation is a public matter' (p3) in which a child becomes a problem in the eyes of others (teachers, school staff, class mates and other parents). Furthermore, Maclure et al posit:

*'Children's actions and demeanour are calibrated against powerful definitions, overt and tacit, of what counts as 'normal' development, orderly conduct and the 'proper' child. Yet, children are not entirely passive subjects: their interactions contribute to the fabrication of identity and reputation in the milieu of the classroom' (p3).*

In both parental interviews, participants conveyed their belief that a bad reputation played a role in schools' responses to challenging behaviour. This was particularly strong in the reflections of Participants P1. For example:

*'no matter what she done [she] got exclusions...' (M)  
'she got a name for herself. If there was a crowd in the room together... the teacher would tell them off but it would be X [their daughter] that would go the headmaster'. P1(F)*

This suggests that past experiences of behaviour may have a cumulative influence and as such alter the expectations and the way behaviour was perceived, judged and responded to by staff.

Furthermore, Participant P1 highlights the negative self-fulfilling prophecy associated with this phenomenon:

*'Because you've got a name for yourself- you become the person' P1(M)*

Where this quote emphasises that prior experiences/judgements (reputation) may have an effect on the young person's belief system, it seems that altered

school staff perceptions may evoke more negative responses, thus further perpetuating the negative cycle of expectations, behaviour, and responses, potentially reinforcing a girl's feelings of rejection:

*'If [she] continually gets a negative response from [school staff], she will respond negatively...'* P2

This may represent an example of the 'Pygmalion Effect' (e.g. Aronson, 2002), in which low teacher expectations can lead consciously or subconsciously to changes in teacher behaviour, which may in turn lead to poorer outcomes.

This theme of reputation and of changing teacher expectations appears to be affirmed by Participant S2 who commented that:

*'She more or less got herself into the situation of ... it was expected , her behaviour was expected, and she performed as expected... In teacher terms, they just got tired of it, they got tired of being abused...of her running through their classrooms'* S1

Both girls also expressed feelings that a 'bad reputation' (G1) appeared to impact on the number of times behaviour was deemed challenging and also the severity of response to it. Furthermore, G1 highlighted a temporal factor of reputation. As she spent full-time periods outside mainstream school in a PRU, G1 reflected that this reputation appeared to remain with her when attempts were made to reintegrate her back into the school following an initial period at a Pupil Referral Unit:

*'...it was like they was waiting for me to kick off so they could chuck me out... and as soon as I would do something little wrong, they just wanted an excuse for me to get out of school'* G1

Such feelings of rejection have been noted in previous research by Munn et al (2000). Using interviews with 11 young people (eight boys and three girls) to investigate the affective impact of school exclusion, Munn et al reported feelings of rejection and of unfairness amongst participants, as well as frustration at being labelled a troublemaker, on the part of excluded pupils.

It appears then that not only did the girls' reputations play a role in how schools responded to their challenging behaviour, but that for the girls, this

may manifest in feelings of rejection from the school: *'they just didn't want me there any more'* (G1). Once the relationship between school and pupil had broken down (in the case of G1, who had experienced a number of fixed term exclusions and had been out of her mainstream school for more than one year, as illustrated in Table 4.1), it appeared that inclusion or reintegration became problematic. I would suggest that this is evident in G1's reflection that she preferred to be at the Pupil Referral Unit than in mainstream school.

#### **4. School approaches to tackling challenging behaviour and exclusion**

This fourth key theme abstracted from the data fits closely with the model suggested earlier by Fiske and Taylor (1984) which highlights the relationship between attributions of causality, sense of responsibility and responses to behaviour. Data relating to the theme of schools' practical responses to challenging behaviour and prevention of exclusion formed a substantive part of the interviews of all three respondent groups.

Given the many strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour available to schools, including those suggested within national guidance and local protocols, this theme is particularly complex. Consequently, I have separated the superordinate theme into several more specific subordinate themes, namely:

- Schools respond primarily to presenting pupil behaviour, rather than its potential causes
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Alternatives to exclusion
- Unofficial/informal exclusion

As might be expected, not all participants contributed to each emergent theme, as they may not have been equally aware or have had an understanding of the particular processes that had occurred. Any such distinctions are noted.

- **Schools respond primarily to presenting pupil behaviour, rather than its potential causes**

This particular theme was evident within the interview data on two levels: firstly within school staff participants' explanation of their responses to challenging behaviour; and secondly through the parents' and girls' views about the way presenting behaviour was responded to. The former is discussed first.

A key theme to emerge from the interviews with school staff professionals, particularly from the language they used, related to a focus on presenting behaviour, rather than causal factors. Predominantly, school staff talked about behavioural strategies that had been put in place, or the graduated response of consequences available to schools, such as detentions, withdrawal, and exclusions: this will be discussed further later in this section.

Also implicit in the comments of school staff was a sense of separation between the role of PRUs and schools, in that if behaviour is outside schools' expectations, control and level of tolerance, girls are sent out to be 'fixed' so that they can function in the mainstream again. For example:

*'We don't want them [PRU] to teach them English, maths and science, that's the schools job, but to work on behaviour for that child to come back into school and we see some changes' S1*

*'We use [PRUs] as a vehicle for someone like (G2) to go there and be retrained really by the experts... that's the expectation... and she brings what she learns there into practice here' S2*

When compared with Fiske and Taylor's (1986) model of cause and responsibility (See Table 4.4), this may suggest positioning with the medical model of behaviour, in which schools may not accept responsibility for the origins of challenging behaviour and, outside of basic systems of behaviour management, may only accept responsibility to try and address it, up to a point. Such a narrow view of responsibility reflects an absence of ecosystemic thinking in relation to how schools may potentially seek to tackle challenging behaviour in schools, and thus reduce levels of exclusion.

This focus on presenting behaviour was also evident in how one school measured the outcomes of any interventions. Participant S2 expressed:

*'We are looking at measures all of the time as to how the challenging children are presenting and for us that's a good indicator' S2*

The primary focus on presenting behaviour evident within the school staff accounts was manifest in different ways for the parents and girls. This was expected, as the girls and parents who participated would obviously not have been able to play a role in responding to behaviour at the school level. This theme can be abstracted from parents' reflections on difficulties with identification, and in the girls', through a sense of feeling misunderstood.

At the parent level, it emerged that parents appeared to feel that the schools had not identified the roots of challenging behaviour, and that there was an over-reliance on consequences. As such, parents intimated that the schools' failure to get to the root of behaviours meant that they experienced limited success in changing behaviours.

*'I've got someone who is academically gifted... why is it her behaviour is like it is... we need to get to the root of the situation' P2*

*'[you would think]... being with her for X amount of hours a day, then they could see what we see... they should have seen what she needed' P1(M)*

At the level of the girls, both expressed feelings of being misunderstood by school staff. More specifically they reported that they were not listened to and that they were not taken seriously. Both girls seemed to have a mature understanding of the effects of thoughts and emotions on their behaviour; something that was not acknowledged in either school staff member's reflections on the causes of challenging behaviour in each case:

*'No-one ever thinks people our age get stressed because we are only kids and mostly adults use that phrase' G2*

*'They don't really care about our feelings, they just want us to get on with the work, and I can't get on with the work when I'm feeling angry and agitated' G2*

*'I needed to talk... then if you've got loads on your mind and you're in class and there's loads going on and then it's going to kick off' G1*

This apparent lack of understanding of the cognitive and emotional dimensions of behaviour perceived by girls emerged again when girls reflected upon their access to support. In particular, both girls highlighted the need for more 'talking' support in school. For one girl, mentors were cited as the key to inclusion, whereas the other girl called this pastoral support.

*'I don't have access to pastoral help....the more pastoral support I've had, the more happier I am to stay in school and the more trusted I am to stay in lessons'. G2*

*'I didn't have a mentor...I think if a mentor's help were there then I'd be able to do it... if you've got a mentor and you go outside for five minutes to speak and stuff, you calm down a little bit'. G1*

As the above quotes seem to suggest, both girls were confident that positive outcomes could be achieved if they accessed more support in school. When reflecting on their experiences within a PRU, both girls cited an increased frequency of emotional support as important to their success.

The importance of such emotional support in schools appears to have gathered momentum nationally over the past decade due to increased focus on how schools, as a universal service, can promote mental health and emotional well-being. Following the success of the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TAMHS) Project (DfES, 2005), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Review (DfE, 2008) suggests that professionals should look closely at how mainstream services, like schools and nurseries, can play a more effective role in promoting the emotional health and well-being of children (and families), to prevent mental health problems before they arise.

Furthermore, recognition of the value of ‘talking support’ in schools is set to receive further attention as the current government begins to implement the Children and Young Peoples Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) initiative in late 2011/early 2012. The IAPT initiative aims to increase the range of young people who are able to access psychological therapies, beyond those who receive support from Specialist CAMHS, in order to enhance emotional well-being and promote positive mental health in a greater number of young people (YoungMinds 2011).

- **Assessment of Needs**

Within the data, several points emerged in relation to the assessment of the girls’ needs arising from their challenging behaviour. Throughout the interviews, both school staff talked in detail about the Pastoral Support Plan (PSP: DfEE, 1999) process: a process that involves a graduated response to challenging behaviour to coordinate support for a particular child and prevent exclusion from school. However, S1 expressed her dissatisfaction about the bureaucratic nature of this process and its limitations in identifying and responding to the girl’s needs.

*‘It’s like she had these endless pastoral meetings, there is this thing in the authority where this person is on the pastoral support programme and I have said over and over again, it’s a piece of paper... it’s a recording of a meeting.’ S1*

Participant S1 goes on to say that these plans are difficult to implement and are ‘hard to police’, given the number of PSPs that a school might have. Therefore, S1 suggests that these plans are of limited effectiveness in preventing a continuing negative trajectory for young people (in this instance girls) towards exclusion.

Similar in structure but not in focus to the PSP process, Statutory Assessment is recommended within the Special Needs Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001), for those children whose significant, complex and enduring needs persist, despite a graduated response of extensive internal and external support in school. As such, these children require resources and provision above and beyond that which can ordinarily be offered in school. The process of Statutory

Assessment is designed to gather and coordinate a range of assessments from a number of professionals, in order to produce a statement of special educational needs. This statement represents a legal document which details the nature, aims, strategies, facilitates and resources needed to meet those needs. If required, the statement stays with a pupil for the duration of their school career, to the age of 19 years (DfE, 2001).

It appeared that there was a lack of clarity about this process of statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN), and a suggestion that the PSP and Statutory Assessment processes run parallel and often conflict. S1 sums up the crossover between the two processes:

*'[We have a] two tiered system of kids who go down the SEN route with their behaviour and they get to see an EP [Educational Psychologist] and then they go down the pastoral route and they do not get to see an EP' S1*

S2 gives a rationale for using the Statutory Assessment process:

*'You've got C (PRU), you've got the N (PRU), you've got the D (PRU); if all that fails and you've got a very disturbed youngster, the only process is a lengthy process: statementing, provision to the special school. You wait for 6 months, 12 months for a place to become available and you get them in'.  
S2*

This comment is interesting for a number of reasons: it conveys, (as one would expect) that statutory assessment is considered part of a graduated response, but also implies that the Statutory Assessment process is, rather than to identify and set out appropriate support and provision, only utilised to move a child to a special school. Consequently, the young person may not access the support that a statement may offer in a mainstream school.

Furthermore, it could be possible that schools passed on a lack of clarity/understanding of the SEN/Statutory Assessment process to parents when discussing its potential. P1 describes her experiences of discussing Statutory Assessment with the school inclusion manager.

*'[S1] was on about statementing her but we didn't understand the ins and outs about that anyway so we didn't... Statementing meant that you had got a kid that was...dippy, a nutter, that's the way I looked at it... it didn't sound very good anyway'. P1(M)*

The above comment demonstrates that there appear to have been difficulties in communicating the purpose of Statutory Assessment for a girl with significantly challenging behaviour.

In essence, a key question to emerge from the above is whether challenging behaviour is viewed as a special educational need. This point echoes difficulties with defining challenging behaviour as discussed in Section 2.3 the introduction (e.g. Visser, 2003; and Lloyd, 2005), and may demonstrate a focus on a medical-deficit model of behaviour (in which a label may serve the purpose of the institution), rather than a socio-educational model (in which a label is useful in identifying and supporting the needs of a child) (Thomas, 2006).

It appears then, that the assessment route that children follow in schools depends on an orientation of the referrer to identify challenging behaviour in isolation, or as a special educational need. This may have implications for how exclusion figures for children with SEN are recorded and interpreted. Pupils with SEN (both with and without statements) are over 8 times more likely to be permanently excluded than those pupils with no SEN (DCSF, 2010). However, given the uncertainty of how challenging behaviour is defined in schools (i.e. as a special need, or not), in practice the accuracy of this figure may be prone to under- or overestimation, and thus should be treated with caution.

#### - **Internal exclusion**

Within the interviews, the girls and the school staff participants highlighted the use of internal systems to address challenging behaviour that occur within the school. At the lower levels, such systems included detentions and report cards, whereas at a higher level, participants reported the use of internal exclusion.

Whereas, one school (Case 1) had access to on-site provision (*'the base' G1*) to which to remove participant G1 from 'mainstream' lessons, a comparable facility was not available in the other school. Whereas S1 described this provision as a useful resource as a short-term intervention in which to support

learning and change behaviour, G1 conveyed that this resource was used as a long-term strategy in school:

*'Since I went in that school, I was in withdrawal from like Year 7 'til I left' G1*

Whilst recounting her experiences at school, G2 also said that she had experienced internal withdrawal, which was confirmed by the school staff participant:

*'I'd get put in isolation' G2*

*'We only had one formal exclusion, we have had seven internal ones, but one formal' S2*

The use of internal withdrawal is particularly interesting when discussed in relation to unofficial exclusion. If applying a wide definition of exclusion as posited by Gordon (2001), such 'internal exclusion' might mask national estimates of school exclusion. However, although it seems likely, it is yet to be determined whether such internal exclusion places children at risk of the poor outcomes generally associated with exclusion, such as under-attainment, reduced employment opportunities and a recasting of social identity, as associated with permanent exclusion (e.g. Daniels et al, 2003; Berridge et al, 2001). Furthermore, it seems that girls' access to an 'entitlement curriculum' is compromised, which risks contributing to a vicious circle where their capacity to engage with the 'mainstream' curriculum is progressively undermined by disruption to learning during periods of exclusion.

#### **- External systems of support**

As part of a graduated response to challenging behaviour, schools also have access to wider Local Authority systems. Current findings suggest there was a conflict of opinion in the school staff interview data as to how effective these external systems were. Whereas, S1 described the role of the Secondary Behaviour Support Service (SBSS) and the support the school had been given in positive terms, S1 also described her frustrations about other external systems of support. More specifically, this frustration focussed on significant differences between the PRU environment and that which mainstream

schools could offer, both before pupils attended the specialist provision and following reintegration.

*SBSS need to understand this is how the child behaves with you but with us, this is how... we get her back in school and she is a friggin nightmare'*  
S1

*'They are coming back to the same old environment aren't they and they are coming back to the same old staff'* S1

*'It's like there is no joining up, nothing seamless there for the kids and nothing seamless there for the staff'* S1

Following the use of internal behaviour systems within schools and the use of external systems of support (e.g. PRUs), school staff participants expressed feelings of frustration at a lack of alternatives and having 'exhausted' (S1) all support options. This, it appears, led to feelings of helplessness amongst both participants.

*'There are not many options available to mainstream schools once the child presses the self-destruct button...'* S2

*'We had tried everything, LSU [Learning Support Unit = PRU], mentoring, the base, SBSS or the PRUs as it was called then, and there was nowhere to go...'* S2

*'Once you have taken that child through everything, and there is no more, you know your hands are tied'* S1

Of particular interest to the current study, given its aim of helping the decision making process and local arrangements for short-term and long-term provision, S2 conveyed frustration at the lack of specialist provision available, specifically for girls, locally.

*'There isn't enough provision... [no special school places] is such an indictment of the LA's lack of commitment to the girls herein because it is having to purchase provision from alternative providers'* S2

Although S2 expressed that this did not affect how these girls were treated, or decision-making on a day-to-day basis, this factor appeared to compound difficulties when all other options were perceived to have failed.

Such a finding resonates with previous research by Osler and Vincent (2003), as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.5. More specifically that girls are not a priority, that the nature of help on offer assumes that provision is equally available for both boys and girls (which apparently is not the case) and that there is poor coordination of services to identify and support girls needs. Such influences potentially increase the possibility that girls' needs are not met, further placing them at risk of short- and long-term educational and social disadvantage.

- **Informal/unofficial exclusions**

As described above, schools have a range of options available to them to support girls who present with challenging behaviour. However, in the light of a perceived lack of alternatives expressed by both school staff participants once internal/external systems had been used, all participants in Case 1 described the use of unofficial/informal exclusions:

*'She is permanently excluded. She is not allowed back or anywhere near... they say she was excluded without the stamp'. P1(M)*

*'They said I am permanently excluded but like some people get permanently excluded without the stamp, I didn't get the stamp'. G1*

*'There isn't anywhere else, but okay you are now off our site permanently, without the permanent exclusion' S1*

These comments are not only illuminating, confirming the use of this type of exclusion, but also for the language used to describe this phenomenon. The use of 'without the stamp' or 'without the permanent exclusion' implies that schools intentionally use this process with an understanding that exclusions are unofficial and informal. Participants described such exclusions with conditions similar to a permanent exclusion, albeit without the formal exclusion label, and the entitlement this gives (such as statutory rights of appeal, short-term access to work provided by school, and access to full-time education from the 6<sup>th</sup> day of exclusion- See Box 2.2).

A rationale for this recourse to 'informal' exclusion can be offered at both a national and local level, although the former likely influences the latter. Firstly,

on a national policy level, the parameters of exclusion in the most recent guidance on behaviour and exclusion (*Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil Referral Units*, DCSF, 2008) remain a 'grey area'. For example, Paragraph 11 suggests that a number of alternatives to exclusion, such as internal exclusion and managed moves should be used, whereas Paragraph 27 suggests the illegality of informal or unofficial exclusion. However, by not defining what constitutes informal/unofficial exclusion, the guidance leaves too much ground open to interpretation by Local Authorities and by schools. When considered against a backdrop of increasing pressures on schools, such as scrutiny of behaviour/exclusion by OFSTED frameworks (e.g. OFSTED, 2005) and tensions between inclusion and achievement agendas (Charlton et al, 2004), it seems plausible that both schools and Local Authorities may avoid accountability/sanctions by employing a narrow view of formal/official exclusion.

Secondly, the lack of clarity in national guidance will influence ethos and practice at a local level. More specifically, in Overdale City the use of unofficial/informal exclusions may potentially signal the pressure placed on schools to adhere to the Local Authority's 'Zero Exclusion' Protocol. Whereas in the past, or in other Local Authorities, formal permanent exclusion proceedings may be initiated, the Overdale City policy 'necessitates' exclusion being 'hidden' and remaining formally unrecorded. In essence, each girl remains '*on their [school] records*' (P1), but does not attend mainstream provision of any kind.

The presence of this type of exclusion is important given the point by Gray and Panter (2000), that informal and unregulated forms of exclusion may lead to an underestimate of national figures of exclusion. Therefore, the recent reported downward trend in exclusion figures post 2003/4 (See Figures 2.1 and 2.2) may be explained by schools getting better at changing challenging behaviour and preventing exclusion, or alternatively may raise questions re: whether Local Authorities and schools are becoming more adept at using alternative forms of internal or informal/unofficial exclusions. This becomes particularly worrying if by this process, young people miss out on support

networks, which may lead to, and potentially exacerbate, the negative outcomes associated with exclusion (e.g. Parsons and Castle, 1998). Also, as noted earlier in this theme, children and families subsequently forfeit their statutory rights.

### **5. The impact of practical school setting/environment factors on exclusion**

In addition to the responses of each school to problem behaviour, a key theme to emerge from the interview data, at each level of participant, related to the impact of the school setting on the girls' behaviour, and how this compounded challenging behaviour and subsequently put pupils at risk of exclusion. This theme was most evident when participants discussed the perceived discrepancies between the mainstream school environment and the specialist PRU setting.

The primary source of concern to emerge for both the parent and girl participants related to perceived difficulties with class size and pupil/teacher ratio. P1 offers a good example of this point:

*'personally I think it's down to the size of her classes... I think she was lacking in attention. Where a teacher can't give 30 pupils attention... if the class is made smaller they do get attention'. P1(M)*

Furthermore, it appears that both parents felt justified in their conclusion that staff-pupil ratios were important, due to the progress of the girls in the smaller PRU environment.

In support of this, G1 talked in depth about how she did not feel that the mainstream school environment was suited to her. In particular she cited the size of the mainstream setting and the number of pupils she came into contact with as a significant factor that might precipitate challenging behaviour.

*'Because they had loads of other students I'd just get frustrated... [in the PRU] it was smaller groups and I had my own teachers' G1*

With smaller groups, G1 suggested that she would receive more individual support, which was lacking in the mainstream classroom. In addition, she also attributed her progress in a PRU to the smaller environment, fewer pupils and a higher ratio of staff to support her.

As school staff participants had more experience across both school and PRU settings, they were able to go into more depth about the impact of the school setting on behaviour. However, for school staff participants, perceived differences between specialist and mainstream settings seemed also to be a cause of frustration, as they felt that there was little chance that they could replicate the setting and thus produce the same effect on children's behaviour.

*'I think it's partly to do with small groups, I mean in groups of eight, they have two staff, we are 1:30, the shortened day helps; the rewards schemes help... We can't replicate the things that they do...'* S2

*'Your sterile environment of the SBSS with half a dozen kids in the room, half a dozen support staff, playing basketball or whatever it is they do, teachers have to teach, that's all they're interested in...'* S1

Such feelings of frustration may directly affect schools' ethos of inclusion and sense of responsibility for responding to girls' challenging behaviour in the mainstream environment. The perception of an insurmountable resource differential (e.g. time, expertise, scope for flexibility and a child centred cf. subject-centred approach etc) between specialist provision and mainstream schools may lead schools to believe that the only way pupils with complex SEBD can access support is through external specialist provision, and thus reduce motivation to keep children in mainstream schools. This may also create a barrier to any attempts at reintegration.

Despite the emphasis on class size and pupil behaviour in the current study, it appears that research in this area is 'patchy' and far from conclusive (Blatchford and Martin, 1998). Although there appears that there is significant evidence of correlation between small class size and greater academic achievement (e.g. Finn & Achilles, 1999), the effect of class size on social and behavioural adjustment is less 'clean cut'.

Blatchford et al (2003) undertook a three-year longitudinal study of over 11,000 children in more than 500 classes across several Local Authorities. Using direct observation, teacher questionnaires and behaviour rating scales against the variable of class size, findings indicated that children in large classes were more likely to show off-task behaviour and were most likely to interact with peers. In relation to the current study, given that girls are most likely to be excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour (DCSF 2010), this finding adds support to the participants' views of high pupil-teacher ratio and poor behaviour. However, Blatchford et al (2003) also found an unexpected result, that small classes may lead to less social and more aggressive relations between pupils, which suggests that small class sizes may increase a young person's risk of exclusion.

In summary, it appears that the issue of class size and behaviour is much more complex than is described within participants' accounts, and may involve a multi-faceted mix of cognitive, emotional, social/relational and behavioural factors, in the classroom situation, all of which may impact on whether mainstream schools can meet the needs of pupils within mainstream schools.

## **6. Social identity and peer relationships**

According to Tarrant et al (2001) our friendships and social groups during adolescence are central in shaping of our social identity and self-esteem. Social identity has been described as:

*The part of an individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1982; p2)*

However, there appear to be important gender differences in how social identity and patterns of friendships are developed amongst girls and boys.

Girls' friendships have often been romanticised as a haven of warmth and support, intimate self-disclosure and trust (Frith, 2004). Research into this

area highlights how girls form different friendships than do their male counterparts. For example, findings suggest that:

- Girls' have smaller groups of friends, more exclusive friendships and more intimate, close, and self-destructing relationships than boys (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 2005); and
- Girls' attach great importance to their friendships, and report intense emotional attachments to one another (Griffiths, 1995).

However, on the contrary, contrasting representations of girls' friendships suggest that they can also be characterised as:

*'hierarchical cliques plagued by ever shifting and re-negotiated process of inclusion and exclusion and battles over power and status'. (Frith, 2004, p357)*

This contrast is made all the more important, as our representations of girls' friendships are 'mapped onto stereotypical and culturally evocative notions of respectable femininity' (Frith, 2004; p357).

A key theme to emerge from the interview data related to participants' perceptions of how the girls' efforts to develop a social identity, and relationships with peers, may represent a causal influence on challenging behaviour. This is consistent with Lloyd (2005), who suggested that social identity and relationships are amongst the many dynamic and interacting factors that affect girls' behaviour in schools. Within this theme three principal patterns emerged.

Firstly, school staff participants seemed to focus on the girls' pursuit of a strong social identity in order to 'stand out from the crowd':

*'She likes the notoriety of being the big I am... she likes to be looked up to...she's craving that attention, you know, she wants to be the one all girls and the lads think is tough and she's got a certain image...'* S2

*'G1 wanted to be in amongst them, [she] wanted to run with the pack'* S1

Central to these two comments is the idea that both girls were seeking attention, to fit in, and in the case of S2 to stand out, amongst their peer groups. Given that these answers were given to questions about why girls get excluded, it seems appropriate to suggest that the means through which girls endeavour to attain acceptance status and notoriety was considered to be through challenging behaviour.

A second theme to emerge from both parents and school professionals, related to the transience of friendships and peer relationships. More specifically, the girls were described as 'continually' making and breaking friendships in class and during unstructured times of the day. For example:

*'...she didn't stay with the same friends for long... she'd have a friend one week... and another one another week' P1*

*'...they hate each others' guts and then three days later you see them in big groups and they are kind of playing together' S2*

The fragility of girls' relationships may reflect a move away from prosocial peer networks towards other young people with similar behavioural and social difficulties. This hypothesis was supported at both the parent and school staff level, with their accounts suggesting that the girls tended to gravitate towards other children who displayed challenging behaviour. Considering the above point regarding the girls' pursuit of social status and identity, a constant shifting of relationships raises questions about the motivation of girls' social behaviour. The inter-changeable nature of girls' friendships may suggest that girls enter friendships in order to achieve some predefined goal, such as social status, popularity or even notoriety. To achieve this, girls may approach friendships in a 'trial and error' way where being popular, rather than having close friends, becomes more important (Michell, 1999).

On a third level and in contrast to the above, whilst reflecting on their school experiences during the interviews, both girls made implicit and explicit references to their feelings of social isolation in school:

*'I didn't get on well with a lot of the students' G1*

*'I had barely any friends' G2*

In summary, all three themes highlight a point made in Section 2.5 that where friendships may frequently be a source of strength and support for girls in school, there may be negative consequences if such friendships fail (Brown, 2005). One such consequence may be social isolation/exclusion.

The consequences of social isolation bare a striking similarity to that of young people excluded from school (e.g. Charlton et al, 2004), that may suggest that both evoke similar feelings, such as rejection and alienation, and thus may influence young people's negative trajectory of behaviour and possible exclusion. A mechanism for this was mentioned previously in this chapter, where school exclusion may, at least, weaken affiliation to positive friendship groups, and at worst restrict access to social networks altogether. The consequences of social isolation are wide-ranging and provide a key indicator of subsequent adjustment problems at school and later life (Wentzel and Asher, 1995). In the short-term, children who experience isolation may achieve poorly in secondary school and may experience higher than expected levels of truancy (or self-exclusion) and delinquency (Fredrickson, 1991), whereas in the long-term these children are more likely to experience mental health problems (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). While interpretation of these findings should be drawn cautiously as correlation does not demonstrate causality, it may also suggest that assessment of the needs of girls with SEBD should include sociometric analysis (e.g. Coie and Kupersmidt, 1983), so that where social isolation is identified, it is addressed promptly within the mainstream setting, using evidence-supported interventions such as Circle of Friends approaches (e.g. Fredrickson and Turner, 2003).

## **Summary**

The above section has presented the key themes/findings to emerge from the interviews with the girls, their parents and school staff. An immediate reflection on this section is the great diversity of factors that appear to influence challenging behaviour and exclusion. Findings indicate the influence of a number of settings/domains (e.g. family/home, school, social) ranging

from cognitive factors (e.g. perceptions, attitudes, sense of responsibility) to contextual influences (e.g. the role of the school environment).

When interpreted at a macro level, there appears to be consistency in the accounts of participants. However, when taken at a case level of analysis, the uniqueness of each girl's experiences emerges within what appear to be quite different ecological contexts.

Furthermore, not only do there appear to be key differences between cases, but also importance differences in each participant's reflections within each case. For example, where there seemed to be consistency in how all participants reflected upon some factors (e.g. reflections on informal/unofficial exclusion in the case of G1), there were big differences in how they reflected on others (e.g. girls' social relationships). Miller (1996) also notes these 'strong or polarised views' (p30) in pupil, parent and teacher attributions of behaviour. I would suggest that understanding these differences, through a process of parental and pupil consultation, is key to understanding the complexity of girls' behaviour and is pivotal if schools are to include girls such as G1 and G2 in mainstream schools.

To sum up, the data presented from the lived experiences recounted above draw attention to the complex picture involved with girls' behaviour, in which each girl's changing environment (including interactions with people) can over time shape behaviour, and where each girl can reciprocally shape her environment.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Interviews- *external professionals***

This section of analysis explores key themes that arose in the interviews with the external professionals who took part in the study. Participants comprised professionals who have significant experience of working with Key Stage 3 and 4 girls at risk of exclusion in Overdale City (See Box 4.2 for more detail).

*Box 4.2: Key information relating to external professionals.*

- The sample comprised\*:
  - a professional from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service with significant experience of Pupil Referral Units;
  - a senior professional working within one of the Local Authority's Pupil Referral Units;
  - a senior member of staff working within a Local Authority Special School for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; and
  - a senior member of staff within the Local Authority's Specialist Behaviour Support Service.
  
- All of the four professionals were women; all are employed by the Local Authority and, although they work at different sites, coordinate support across services.
  
- The 'homogeneity' required for IPA was based upon their shared experience of the target group (Key Stage 3 and 4 girls at risk of permanent exclusion).

*\*Codes that highlight the identity of each professional are not given so as to preserve anonymity*

As for other participant groups, the interviews comprised four key questions which explored participants' experiences of why girls get excluded, their educational experiences, and the factors that facilitate/inhibit their inclusion in mainstream schools. A key difference in the data from this group was that participants' responses were based on their general experience with this client group, as opposed to the specific case focus of the other participant groups. Table 4.5 (overleaf) presents three superordinate themes that arose from the interview data, and the subthemes contributing to these.

Overlap is common between themes; however my decisions to separate themes were based on the subtleties of conceptual meaning behind respondents' accounts and the level of support for the suggested themes amongst participants.

Table 4.5: Superordinate themes of external professional perspectives

<b>Superordinate themes</b>	<b>Subordinate themes</b>
1. Types of behaviour	
2. Perceptions of gender are central to our understanding and responses to girls' challenging behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professionals have a gendered model of deviance</li> <li>- Girls' social identity and gendered behaviour have changed over time</li> <li>- 'Invisibility' of girls' behaviour</li> <li>- A lack of understanding of girls' behaviour</li> </ul>
3. External professionals tend to take an holistic, multi-level approach to the factors that influence girls' inclusion/exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual/within-child factors</li> <li>- Family/social factors</li> <li>- School factors</li> <li>- Local Authority factors</li> </ul>

### **1. Types of behaviour**

Of particular interest, given the school participants' apparent preoccupation with presenting problems rather than risk/causal factors, is that two participants initially responded by detailing the types of girls' behaviour that generally led to exclusions (presenting SEBD), whereas the other participants immediately focussed on potential risk factors. This suggests that some external professionals may, as well as school-based teachers, tend to focus on observable behaviours before considering or addressing causal/risk factors.

Of the behaviours described by the external professionals, participant E1 gave a summary of her general experience of girls' behaviours:

*'Continual persistent disruption, defiance, refusal to follow instructions, but also there will be some violent and aggressive tendencies as well' E1*

This comment, suggests that girls at risk of exclusion more often present with a level of behaviour that persistently challenges authority/school rules and causes disruption to teaching and learning, than engage in significant incidents of extreme behaviour (e.g. violence/fighting). This is consistent with most recent national figures that record the reasons for exclusion across gender, as discussed in Section 2.1.4, where exclusions are largely based on persistent disruption rather than significant incidents (DCSF, 2010)

Consistent with Lloyd's (2005) view that girls' deviance may be different to that exhibited by boys; in describing their experiences of girls' challenging behaviour, most professionals indicated that girls' behaviours were expressed differently, for example:

*'Boys become physically fearless; girls become verbally fearless' E2*

Within participants' accounts, there appeared to be a subtle difference in the perceived intentions of girls' and boys' behaviour. For example, girls were described as 'subversive' (E2), suggesting that there was often considered to be a predetermined goal for their behaviour, whereas boys' behaviour tended to be described as reactive.

## **2. Perceptions of gender are central to our understanding and responses to girls challenging behaviour**

Colman (2001) describes gender as the 'behavioural, social and cultural attributes associated with sex' (p299). In contrast to the biological definition of sex (i.e. a chromosomal distinction), this definition positions gender as a social construction, which is open to interpretation and is likely to be influenced by many factors (e.g. culture and prior experience).

The current theme draws parallels with findings by Osler et al (2002) who suggested that gender appears to be a significant influence on decisions to formally exclude a young person. More specifically, the theme illustrates how expectations of gender consciously, and subconsciously, affect interpretation of girls' behaviours.

- **Professionals have a gendered model of deviance**

When asked a question specifically related to girls' behaviour, the tendency across all four professional was, without prompt, to compare girls' behaviour with that of boys: *"I don't actually find it dissimilar to boys"* (E1). Participant E2 offers a rationale for this viewpoint:

*"you can't look at why girls are kept in school without looking at why more boys are out of school"* (E2)

Consistent with principles of Personal Construct Psychology (e.g. Kelly, 1991; Fransella, 2005), one explanation for this mechanism of comparison is that we may have separate constructs (a system of beliefs about the world, built upon our personal experiences) for the 'challenging behaviour' of males and females, rather than a general construct 'challenging behaviour'. Therefore, it seems possible that we each build a set of beliefs, attitudes and expectations for each gender, through which our daily interactions and experiences are compared and contrasted. Examples of this from the interviews are:

*'SEBD is recognised much... it's not that it's recognised, it's associated more with males' E2*

*[For girls] 'there has always been that sort of bitchiness that they have amongst themselves' E1*

Similar to O'Neil (2005), who suggests that personal and political expectations of gendered behaviour effect how it is responded to (e.g. peer expectations and teacher perceptions), findings suggest that girls' challenging behaviour is seen in the context of societal and culturally appropriate female behaviour, as well as contrasted with expectations of male behaviour. Subsequently, expectations of behaviour influence how 'traditional' or 'extraordinary' behaviours would be conceptualised and responded to. Participant E2 acknowledges the possibility of a gendered response to deviance:

*'maybe as professionals we just sit there and say, that's just boys you know, that's what they do' E2*

The consequences of such a gendered model of deviance is that when (girls') behaviour deviates from our internal representations ('the norm'), it is likely that they will experience a heightened reaction, and perhaps suffer different consequences.

*'I think we are more shocked by girls in a way that we are not shocked by boys' E2*

*'Girls as a percentage group are higher level so they are more damaged' E3*

*'When a girl kicks off it's noticed more, so if a girl starts to be physically and verbally aggressive, that's the reason why they will be excluded' E3*

In effect, these girls may suffer from a 'double deviance' (Osler and Vincent, 2003), in which their behaviour breaks school expectations and also represents a transgression of the feminine role. Consequently, this may lead to attributions of individual pathology and attempts to re-socialise girls into 'culturally defined femininity' (O'Neil, 2005, p115). Although originally focussed on teaching professionals, this theme draws close comparison with Lloyd's (2000) explanation of gendered patterns of exclusion: more specifically that schools may have a gendered model of deviance and that the methods and culture of schools are likely to be gendered.

- **Girls' social identity and gendered behaviour have changed over time**

As Colman's (2001) definition of gender suggests, as a social construction, schematic representations of gendered behaviour are likely to be uniquely influenced by the dynamic and reciprocal transactions between ourselves and social and cultural influences, such as the family, friendships and the media, which may change over time and between generations.

A recurring theme in the interviews of professionals was that the phenomenon of girls' challenging behaviour has changed in what E1 called '*a shift of being*'.

This particular concept seemed to relate to females' behaviour becoming more externalised, their greater use of verbal and physical aggression, and an increasing frequency of violence amongst girls.

*'I remember when years ago... you wouldn't have girls who would necessarily be so violent' E1*

*They're much more inclined to take things a lot further now than they used to. A bit of slapping and pulling hair when I started working with these girls, it is now much more structured bullying they do and they are much more prone to violence than they used to be' E2*

One explanation offered for this is that *"girls [are] trying to emulate boys"* (E1). Reflecting back on the earlier theme of professionals' gendered model of deviance, where professionals may be drawn on comparisons between boys and girls to calibrate 'normal' and 'deviant' behaviour, the supposition here is that girls themselves may compare themselves with boys.

- **'Invisibility' of girls' behaviour**

One of the most prevalent themes to emerge from the data related to the (low) 'visibility' of girls' behaviour, resonating with the findings of Osler et al (2002), who had focused predominantly on the different types of behaviour girls presented, and the strategies girls themselves deployed to manage their problems. Professionals in the current study noted:

*'they're just not as visible because it [the problem behaviour] does manifest itself differently' E2*

*[Girls present with] 'not overt but covert behaviour' E1*

However, I would question this view that girls' needs are masked by their less extreme behaviour and suggest that although some girls' presenting behaviour is less outwardly extreme (and thus less 'visible') than boys' behaviour, it is schools' and professionals' 'openness' or 'readiness', and capacity to identify and respond to various behaviours (informed by expectations of gendered behaviour), which makes girls' behaviour more or less visible. Participant E2 illustrates this point:

*'In the right setting, girls can be hidden...'* E2

*'I am assuming [girls] have been overlooked by the way that boys are much more physical... [they] wouldn't appear on an Ed Psych's list because you have already got prominent boys'* E2

This may mean that, on the whole, girls' social, emotional and behavioural needs may be overlooked (and not be identified and subsequently receive appropriately targeted support) until they reach a point in which behaviour is externalised. Consequently, presenting behaviour may reach a point where it becomes not only challenging, but 'unfeminine'. As such, it may draw a heightened reaction:

*'the way girls act out either late or have been acting in for a while, they have been holding it inside and then suddenly it goes, it's that you know you haven't seen it coming in some respects so there is an element of surprise and it's not the norm'* E3

Furthermore, participants aligned the lack of visibility of girls' behaviour with difficulties identifying girls' needs. In contrast, due to the greater visibility of their behaviour, boys' needs may be picked up and interventions put into place at the expense of their female peers.

*'I don't think they are identified early, whereas the boys tend to be identified before they come through to secondary school'* E2

- **A lack of understanding of girls' behaviour**

Although there is an implicit pattern of a lack of understanding of girls' needs within all of the interview transcripts, E2 explicitly drew attention to this issue:

*'There is... a lack of understanding, a lack of empathy, a lack of...really getting down to the level of those young girls and teasing things out'* E2

This suggests that those people who work closely with challenging girls, such as school staff, parents and external professionals, may have a lack of understanding about the risk factors which may increase the chances of exclusion, the types of behaviours that girls present and how these are

different to boys, and also how best to intervene and allocate resources to help redirect the life chances of girls at risk of exclusion.

### **3. External professionals tend to take an holistic, multi-level approach to the factors that influence girls' inclusion/exclusion**

As Osler et al (2002) suggest, the factors that affect girls' challenging behaviour are particularly complex, and stem from a wide range of environmental influences (such as family/social backgrounds). A consistent element to emerge from interview data across participants was how the external professionals were mindful of the many factors that affect behaviour, and subsequent inclusion and exclusion. Within the interviews, participants highlighted a wide range of risk factors that might place girls at an increased risk of exclusion, across four key areas: the impact of Local Authority guidance/practice; school factors which may increase the risk of exclusion, social/family factors and individual within-child factors, each of which contains more specific sub-themes. I will address each of these levels in turn; however, due to the number of participants at this level I will include only the most relevant supporting quotes.

- **Local Authority factors in exclusion**

This sub-theme addresses the top-down influence of a number of Local Authority factors which may influence school practice leading to exclusion.

- Ownership of the problem and the power dynamic between schools and the Authority

Interview data indicate that there are tensions between the extent to which some girls should remain in school and which should be placed elsewhere by the Local Authority to prevent exclusions, in accordance with the zero exclusion protocol. More specifically, E3 considered that some schools are able to threaten exclusion as a means to access support, or have a girl 'removed'.

*[For reintegration, girls should] 'not just be parachuted in and expected to get on with it, but schools have a responsibility too' E1*

*'People give up and don't bother to do the bit they should be doing and change the factors within the mainstream because they think that we [external services] will just pick it up...'* E3

- Limited access to educational alternatives and a lack of SEBD provision for girls

This second point relates to how the Local Authority has historically allocated few resources to the phenomenon of girls and exclusion. Participant E2 described how a lack of specialist provision for girls influences how schools respond to challenging behaviour.

*'because we have two SEBD schools for males, it does influence you a little bit because you often hear schools say there isn't much point going for an SEBD statement for her because there is not girl's placements in the city' E2*

*[Schools] 'manage young people based on what's available' (E2)*

- Inconsistency within Local Authority protocols.

In this theme, participant E4 conveyed how protocols (and expectations) for inclusion (i.e. the steps which schools take in their attempts to support girls in mainstream schools) are inconsistently applied by external support services. This may inadvertently lead to inconsistency in how schools are able to access alternative provision across schools.

*[Exclusion] 'is a relatively short process these days...[schools] must have a list of various things that have taken place for and with that person... [however] there are many ways in which it is circumvented...not all of the systems have been maintained that are expected prior to entry...'* E4

- **School factors in exclusion**

Within this subtheme of interview data, participants discussed numerous school factors which influence exclusion. Here, three key factors were identified by participants, which reflect the wide-ranging pressures on schools by national guidance and local policy, as well as those which come from their individual power and responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils:

- Philosophy of the school/expectations

Here, two elements were referred to: that schools inconsistently apply an inclusive ethos, whereby some schools go further to facilitate inclusion for girls than do others; and secondly that external pressures (e.g. government initiatives/agendas) often change, which in turn means schools react differently to challenging behaviour.

*'in some schools there is a higher tolerance level than others, so the reason the child gets excluded from one school compared to another and the amount of days that they have can be very different' E3*

*'school went through a phase of being not tolerant at all of any forms of behaviour' E1*

- Tensions between achievement and inclusion

Consistent with Dyson et al (2003- discussed in Section 2.1.4) this point indicates that different pressures and agendas, national and local, cause a conflict of interest in which expectations for of inclusion contrast with pressures for achievement. Such 'incremental dissonance' (Thomas and Loxley, 2001, p96) would indicate that inclusion and high achievement do not go hand-in-hand, and that some schools may be pressured to choose one over the other.

*'...statistics and the pressure they are under, they are under scrutiny all of the time... challenging young girls are causing their results and attendance figures to go down and therefore it's a lot easier to say okay, we are not having them anymore' E1*

*Some secondary schools are rejecting because they don't understand and they don't feel as if these kids are appropriate for a place in mainstream...' E3*

- A significant change in ethos between phases of school and individual secondary schools

Of particular note within the interviews was how certain participants described primary school environments as more able to meet girls' needs more effectively, through closer relationships, smaller environment, more nurture, and greater opportunity to talk to the girls. Participants generally highlighted this factor as a significant reason for why girls' behaviour became more visible, following a settling in period in the first year, in Year 8 of secondary school.

*'Naughty girls seem to be managed differently at primary' E1*

*[Girls are] 'coped with within primary because of the context of primary and networking of teachers and the way they nurture the children compared to a separated secondary school' E3*

This may help to explain why, according to national figures (DfE 2010), the number of girls excluded from school peaks in secondary school.

Furthermore, Participant E4 made reference to the unique philosophy of 'inclusion' held in individual schools as a significant factor in why some girls were excluded and not others.

*'The philosophy of the management team, more than anything else, the philosophy and acceptance of the need, the awareness, the knowledge, the acceptance of reality and what these kids have been through' (E4)*

*'There needs to be a clear philosophy, a clear ethos that is visited regularly' (E4)*

- **Social/ family factors in exclusion**

A third level to emerge from the interview data related to external professional participants' perceptions of social and family factors in girls' exclusion. In particular, these factors appeared to range across three areas: how the family, community/culture and relationships may effect the behaviour of individual girls in a school context.

- The family setting

All participants highlighted the family context/environment as a significant risk factor in girls' exclusion. This is summarised well by Participant E3:

*'You need to look at the family dynamics, so the age of the parents, relationship with parents, the socio-economic background, the educational background of the child if they have moved around... whether there is alcohol or drug abuse in the family, whether there is mental health issues within the family, domestic violence...whether there is another member of the family open to child protection, social care and health...'* E3

Furthermore, Participant E3 addressed the influence of parental attitude towards gendered behaviour, which identified the importance of how girls are socialised according to gender, within a complex system of wider behavioural influences.

*'...a social phenomenon... the way that children are brought up by gender...'* E3

- Role of culture and community

Participant E3 placed behaviour within a reciprocal context of the local community and culture, and suggested cultural factors may bring about different expectations of gendered behaviour, and subsequently nurture different behaviours.

*'Obviously ethnicity is an issue, positively and negatively, and cultural background in that respect'* E3

*'Communities, where you live is another factor... most of the students from this group are from estates if you like, and again you have got that social difference...'* E2

- Relationships

Within both the school and across the wider environment outside school, girls' relationships were seen as an important factor that might explain why girls might be excluded. Girls' friendships were seen as both an important factor to facilitate inclusion, but also as a significant risk factor if these friendships broke down.

*'[The] biggest influence for girls is peer influence...how girls fit into their peer group... trying to be accepted...'* E2

*'...who they associate with, the ways that girls have fiercely passionate loyal friendships one week that don't exist the next week but when become fiercely passionate hatreds of each other...'* E3

- **Individual/within child factors in exclusion**

Of all the causal influences discussed by external professionals, within-child factors received the least support, in terms of the number of times they were discussed during the interviews. The two significant comments related specifically to maturity and cognitive ability.

- Maturity

Participant E1 implicated the role of puberty in why girls get excluded, in what she called the *'impact of adolescence'*. By this, it appears that Participant E1 was trying to understand how complex social and emotional factors might be affected by biological (e.g. hormonal) changes. Although not suggested widely in the sample, this factor may add to the complex picture surrounding the development of girls' behaviour, and at particular times in their lives.

- Cognitive ability

From her experience, Participant E3 described a pattern of language and literacy difficulties for those girls at risk of exclusion: *'A big link between language and literacy [and exclusion]'* (E3). This may manifest in a number of ways, such as acting girls' out due to difficulties in class, or potentially girls having difficulties communicate their needs due to language difficulties.

## **Summary**

Despite participants coming from different services, there was a general consistency in the responses across participants. However, given all participants' levels of experience and overview of the area of girls' behaviour and exclusion, in their individual capacities, each participant was able to offer

her unique insight into her past involvement and lived experience, and highlight specific issues on a more holistic and systemic level than was possible for the girls, their parents, and to a degree, for school staff.

Participants' accounts made explicit and implicit reference to how perceptions of gender are central to our understanding and interpretation of behaviour. Furthermore, participants predominantly focused on factors external to the child (such as the reciprocal influences of the family, their social surroundings, the school and the local authority) rather than any detailed attributions of within child factors.

However, despite their knowledge of the multi-dimensional influences on exclusion, participants did not appear as attuned to the influences that their own and other professionals' preconceptions, attitudes and beliefs about gender may have had when working with challenging girls and those at risk of exclusion. This finding is particularly important given all participants' central role in Local Authority decision-making processes about behaviour/exclusion and, as findings suggest, when such a gendered understanding of behaviour may subsequently affect how girls' needs are identified and responded to. In making girls' needs less visible, these gendered effects potentially limit girls' equitable access to resources and alternative provision.

The absence of research related specifically to external professionals' views of girls and exclusion makes it impossible to compare findings against previous literature. However, if we consider these findings against those casual factors identified by Charlton et al (2004) in Section 2.4, there is considerable consistency. However, whereas Charlton et al predominantly focus on a range of within-child, family/social and school factors, current research findings suggest that not enough attention is given to the conflict between how the government agendas for inclusion and achievement are translated and applied at a local level. More specifically, there appears to be great tension in Overdale City between the flexibility and power allowed to schools (specifically Headteachers) to define their own limits of behaviour/exclusion, and how Local Authority practices are developed in order to reduce the exclusion of girls who present with behaviour that is considered challenging,

in the face of national pressure and accountability on Local Authorities to reduce exclusion (e.g. SEU, 1998).

## **4.4 Summary**

Throughout this chapter, I have used a range of sources to interpret and discuss a wide range of factors that the analysis of interview responses suggest influence girls' exclusion. Although there has been significant overlap between responses and themes identified at each stage of analysis, the circumstances that had brought each girl to the point of exclusion are unique, multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and complex. Participants at all levels (girls, parents, school staff and external professionals) provided rich accounts of the educational circumstances/trajectories which had led to the point of exclusion in their school career. Participants' reflections on their lived experiences created a detailed picture of the many risk/protective factors that may influence how girls who present with challenging behaviour are included in, or excluded from mainstream school. As discussed above, these factors include (although not exclusively) the influence of within-child factors, the family, social background, school ethos and practice, and Local Authority policy and its implementation.

However, it is important to point out that risk does not imply causality, and indeed some children may develop a level of resilience that helps them to flourish despite various adversities. Furthermore, two children similar in their circumstances may come to achieve very different outcomes.

Theoretically, participants' responses in the case of both girls highlight the exceptional and multi-dimensional influences of a unique mix of factors at a number of levels, both in and out of school. This approach appears to align within a bio-ecological (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 2005) model of development. This model will receive more detailed discussion in the following section (See Section 4.5).

## 4.5 Findings: Integrating conceptual framework

*The meaning of theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework within which to explain connections among the phenomena under study and to provide insights in to the discovery of new connections' (Tudge et al, 2009; p198)*

Having used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a framework to analyse and interpret the data derived from participants, key findings that emerged from this analysis align with Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model of development. Although primarily a model for wider human development, this theory can be applied to research on behaviour and school exclusion, as behaviour is a product of such wider human development.

According to Lerner (2005), Bronfenbrenner has been both the standard of excellence and the professional conscience of human development over the last 60 years. During the middle of the twentieth century, Bronfenbrenner was not distracted by traditional additive behavioural genetics enquiry which sought to uncover how much variance was attributable to heredity and how much to the environment. Instead, Bronfenbrenner set out to delineate certain scientific limitations in prevailing approaches to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and find the mechanisms by which heredity and genetic factors transformed within the environment to develop into individual/behaviour differences, i.e. the transformation from genotype to phenotype. Cairns (1991) suggested the cardinal principle for this model is that genetic material does not produce finished traits but rather interacts with environmental experience in determining developmental outcomes.

More specifically, in its earliest form, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory placed emphasis on the role and influence of interrelated ecological layers of context, in close and wider proximity, *on* individuals' development. He described the individual within four nested levels (See Box 4.3 overleaf)

In addition, in the late 1980s, Bronfenbrenner added a new axis: the *chronosystem*. Whereas the passage of time had traditionally been synonymous with chronological age, the *chronosystem* highlighted temporal changes in the individual and in the surrounding environment, which allowed a person's developmental changes to be observed over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

*Box 4.3: Bronfenbrenner's four ecological layers of human development (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1989)*

- the *microsystem* (the immediate environment/setting in which individuals engage in particular activities in particular roles, e.g. school, family, peer group);
- the *mesosystem* (the mesosystem includes interrelations among major settings containing the developing person: a system of Microsystems);
- the *exosystem* (an extension of the mesosystem that embraces other social structures, formal and informal, that do not contain the developing person but impinge upon the immediate setting, e.g. the neighbourhood, media social networks); and
- the *macrosystem* (overarching institutional patterns of culture and subculture, e.g. economic, social, educational, legal and political, which encompass the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems).

However, critics (including Bronfenbrenner himself) of the earlier model focused on how the model appeared to have discounted the role that the individual plays on his/her own development, and for placing too much emphasis on context (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory in its most mature form, known as the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) is illustrated in Figure 4.4, and is explained in more detail in Table 4.6. According to Tudge et al (2009), the single most important difference from early theorising focuses on *proximal processes*, through which genetic potentials for effective psychological functioning (and in the case of the current study: behaviour) may be realised. Lerner (2005) succinctly summarises this contemporary model of human development:

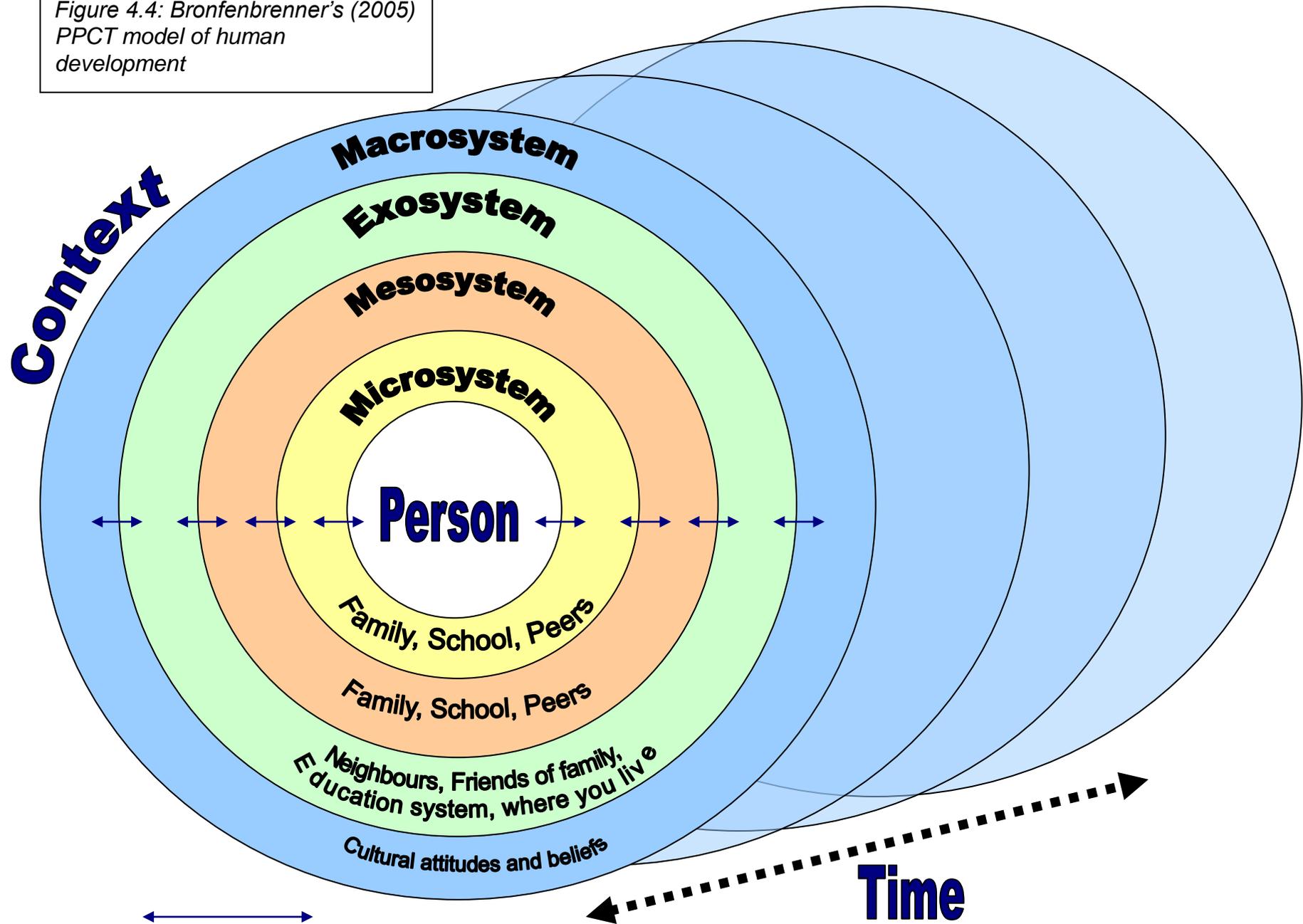
*Within the biological system, the individual, in dynamic relation to his or her temporally embedded, multi-level ecology, is an active agent in his/her own development... In sum, the individual's development is made by a synthesis, an integration, between the active person and his/her active context. (p xviii)*

Although not directly addressing Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model of human development, Cooper (2005) advocates the benefits of such 'biopsychosocial' perspectives, but also adds a note of caution in applying such theories to the area of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties:

*A biopsychosocial perspective can help overcome the impulse to blame and condemn, but it must never be allowed to encourage anyone to escape from the responsibility of overcoming SEBD. A biopsychosocial profile understanding will not be useful if it is allowed to be employed as a means for excusing or ignoring SEBD....The test of any theoretical approach will be the extent to which it gives rise to practical and humane forms of intervention that produce outcomes of benefit to the individual in relation to his or her social setting ' (p17)*

I will now discuss this model against findings in the current research.

Figure 4.4: Bronfenbrenner's (2005) PPCT model of human development



**Proximal processes:**  
interactions with other people,  
objects and environments

Table 4.6: Key elements of the PPCT model of human development (Abridged from Tudge et al, 2009; p200-202)

<p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- According to Bronfenbrenner, 'Proximal Processes' play a crucial role and are the primary mechanisms in development. These involve the fused and dynamic relation of the individual and the context (Lerner, 2005; p xv).</li> <li>- Based on two key propositions:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Human development takes place through progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active evolving biopsychosocial human organism, and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment. In order to be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; p572).</i></li> <li>2. <i>The form, power, content and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person; of the environment- both immediate and remote- in which the processes take place; the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration; and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and historical period during which the person has lived (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; p572).</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>- It is through engaging in these activities/interactions that a person comes to make sense of their world and comes to understand their place in it (Tudge et al, 2009).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Person</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Throughout the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's theories, he recognised the biological and genetic aspects of the person. However, in more recent models, Bronfenbrenner provided a clearer view of the individuals' role in multiple and continually changing contexts. In essence, the individual is an active participant in their own development, rather than a passive recipient.</li> <li>- This conceptual area includes the individuals' repertoire of biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural characteristics.</li> <li>- Bronfenbrenner focussed on three levels of personal characteristic the person brings to any given situation (Tudge et al, 2009):             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Demand characteristic</i>- immediate stimulus that is recognisable to another person, e.g. age, gender, skin colour and physical appearance. These may influence initial interactions because of expectations, preconceptions and attitudes.</li> <li>• <i>Resource characteristics</i>- not immediately obvious- these may be induced (with varying accuracy) form demand characteristics. These relate to mental and emotional resources (e.g. experiences, skills, intelligence) and social and material resources (e.g. good food, housing, parenting, educational opportunities etc).</li> <li>• <i>Force characteristics</i>- consisting of differences in temperament, motivation, persistence. A child may have similar resource characteristics may have very different developmental trajectories.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on the four interrelated systems as described in original models of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model (micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-systems) (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979).</li> <li>- Conceptualised as nested levels of the ecology of human development (Lerner, 2005; p xv). Central to this concept is that the person exists within and across complex interrelated and interconnected systems, in which proximal processes take place.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceptualised as involving 'multiple dimensions of temporality' (Lerner, 2005; p xv)</li> <li>- This concept is based on the idea that our environment is not constant and is continually changing. Current development is based on our socio-historical experience, which in turn influences our interactions. Bronfenbrenner (2005) divides this into:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>micro-time</i>: what's occurring during the course of some activity or interaction;</li> <li>• <i>meso-time</i>: extent to which interactions occur consistently; and</li> <li>• <i>macro-time</i>: akin to the chronosystem, including specific historical events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Within the current study, findings across all levels of participants draw parallels with the PPCT model suggested by Bronfenbrenner (2005). If we place each individual girl as the 'person', then this model provides a useful explanatory framework within which to understand how and why each girl had come to be at risk of permanent exclusion. To help illustrate how findings in this study fit against the PPCT model, I have presented the findings in figurative form (see Figure 4.5). Although each participant provides a unique standpoint as to why these two girls (in the case of the girls, parents and school staff), and the wider group of Key Stage 3 and 4 girls in Overdale City (in the case of the external professionals) get excluded from school, I have presented findings against the PPCT model from an holistic/integrated perspective, which includes all four layers of participants.

Although Bronfenbrenner himself (e.g. 2005) recognises that the PPCT model is not predictive, it has important implications for action, as well as reflection. Predicated on the concept of 'plasticity' (the potential for systematic change), Lerner (2005) suggests that the PPCT model legitimates an optimistic approach to the possibility that applications of the model may improve the course and context of human life (p ix). More specifically, the model provides an explanatory framework on which to hypothesise about where support, intervention and resources should be targeted and allocated in order to bring about developmental change. For example, to facilitate change for the girl participants in the current study, one should expect to understand the role of personal characteristics on proximal processes, within multiple layers of context, at a given point in time: a complex task for any professional.

In a real life context, against a backdrop of competing political agendas and limited personnel and material resources, the Bronfenbrenner PPCT model may help schools and external professionals to target particular areas in order to bring about realistic changes in behaviour and thus reduce the likelihood of girls being excluded from school

Figure 4.5: Research findings against a Bio-ecological PPCT model framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)

### Context

Within the current study, Participants attributed the causes of challenging behaviour and exclusion to numerous layers of context influence surrounding each girl. More specifically, interactions at the level of:

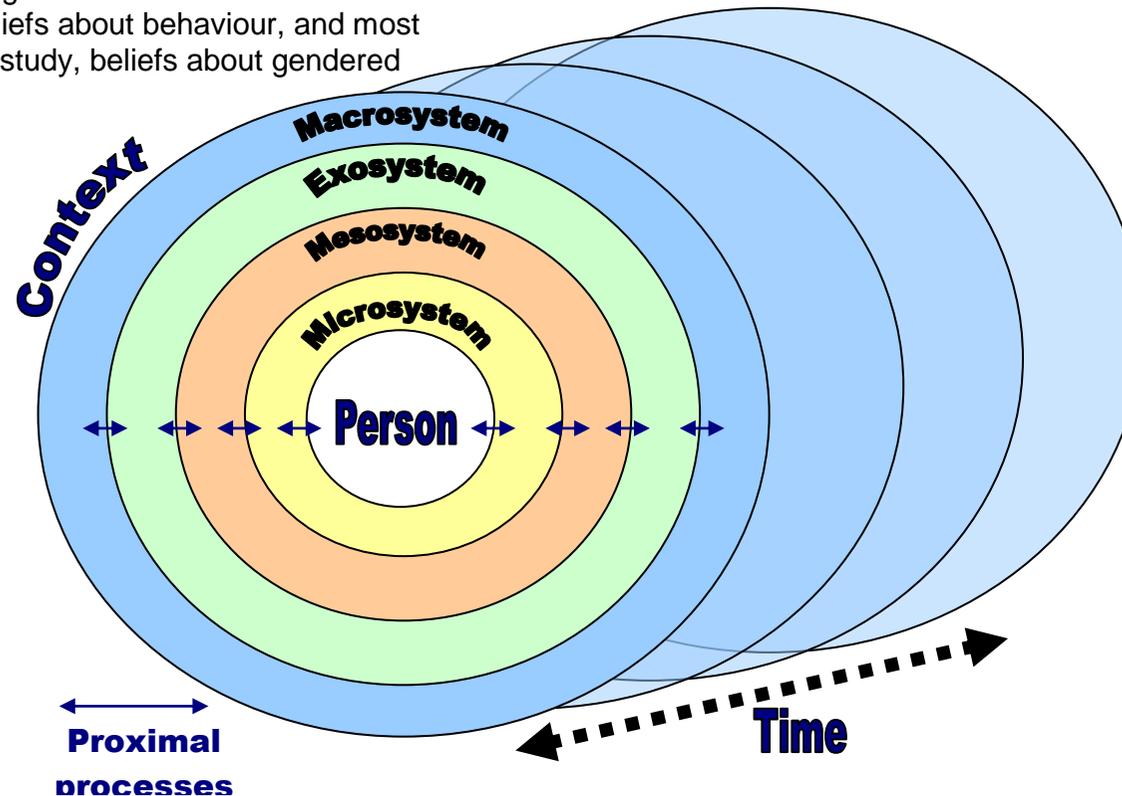
- *Micro-/Mesosystem*: peers (e.g. relationships, social identity- comparison against peers), school (ethos of inclusion, school responses to behaviour (including reputation), school views on SEN and access to support), the PRU, and influence of the family and social background.
- *Exosystem*: Local Authority (LA) policy relating to exclusion (e.g. Overdale City's Zero Exclusion Protocol), LA responses to challenging behaviour, pressures of conflicting national/local agendas.
- *Macrosystem*- cultural beliefs about behaviour, and most importantly to the current study, beliefs about gendered behaviour.

### Person

As would be expected, personal characteristics were cited as important in the girl's behaviour, and more widely as a risk/resilience factor. Within participants' interpretations of why girls get excluded, within-child factors did not receive as much attention as factors external to each girl. However, factors that were cited consisted of cognitive ability, maturity, and in one case ADHD was felt to be a significant reason why the particular girl presented with challenging behaviour and was subsequently at risk of exclusion.

Participants' appeared less aware that their responses were shaped by certain demand characteristics, i.e. gender and age (e.g. expectations of age related behaviour)

An example of the bi-directional influence of interactions (process) is observable in the girls' feelings, as a response to how they were treated. E.g. feelings of motivation as a result of feeling misunderstood.



### Proximal Processes

Participants' interpretations of why girls get excluded were based on the girls' interactions between different layers of context (i.e. person-context), across their life course (time).

According to the PPCT model, participants' own views are likely shaped by their own interactions.

### Time

Temporal elements underpinned many factors, based on the girls' socio-historical events. For example:

- behaviour develops over time due to interactions in each girls life course to date.
- the cumulative impact of reputation;
- participants' attitudes and beliefs towards girls behaviour, were constructed upon previous interactions relating to girls, and those who present with challenging behaviour.

# **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The findings reported in Chapter 4 set out to address the primary research question of ‘why do Key Stage 3 and/or 4 girls get excluded in the context of Overdale City?’ In so doing, it was also my aim to highlight key issues in relation to the educational experiences/trajectories of girls at risk of exclusion, alongside factors that may facilitate or inhibit the inclusion of this population in mainstream schools.

To achieve this, I have adopted an interpretative phenomenological approach and idiographic focus to gather information from a number of sources (e.g. the central Local Authority database, school files and semi-structured interviews) and engage with individuals who have direct experience of school exclusion: in this case, two girls, their parents, school staff and external professionals. Although based on a small sample, this approach was necessary in order to illuminate general and specific findings and provide a depth of understanding that can add to the local knowledge base about why girls get excluded from school in Overdale City.

In this concluding chapter of my thesis, I firstly consider key research findings in relation to applied practice in Overdale City and suggest recommendations for working with this small, but significant, population in the future. Following this, I address limitations of this research and offer possible solutions to any difficulties, before concluding this research report with a discussion of my final thoughts and suggestions for future research.

## **5.2 Key findings and implications/recommendations**

When looked at alongside the small, but increasing, body of research into the girls and exclusion, findings of the research indicate that there are important messages to be learned from engaging with key stakeholders in this area. As the literature in Chapter 2 suggests, the dominance of boys in exclusion

figures has meant that the experiences of girls have been overlooked, thus leading to a lack of understanding of girls' needs (e.g. Osler et al, 2002). Although there will obviously be some overlap in the circumstances leading to exclusion across both genders, a significant finding to emerge from the study (consistent with previous findings e.g. Osler et al, 2002) is that, in order to create a fuller picture, more attention needs to be given to girls who are at risk of exclusion.

From the outset, it is important to reflect on the limitations of the research and acknowledge challenges in generalising findings to a wider audience. In brief, caution should be taken in interpreting and in generalising research findings due to the small sample size and my choice of methodology. Section 5.3 discusses this in more detail.

Despite elements of overlap, in order to summarise key research findings and discuss what they mean for local practice, I have chosen to present key findings and implications separately for each phase of the research. Having refined my initial research questions within the dynamic research process (see Section 3.7 for a rationale of this decision), these findings relate directly to the primary research question.

#### 5.2.1 Phase One: Descriptive case information from Overdale City's central database

Key findings in this phase of the research relate primarily to the wide and varied characteristics/demographics of the two girls who participated in the study and the wider population of girls who are deemed 'at risk' of permanent exclusion. Box 5.1 explores findings and implications with more specificity and detail.

Whereas previous research, such as by Osler et al (2002), has argued that there are difficulties with monitoring and recording levels of school exclusion (See Section 2.5), current findings suggest that there are also difficulties with recording key information about these girls within Overdale City. This finding makes it difficult to identify 'at risk' groups and target resources and support initiatives accordingly. Subsequently, implications for practice from this phase

of research primarily focus on the accurate recording of information, in order to identify patterns for access to resources.

*Box 5.1: Descriptive case information from the Local Authority central database- Key findings and implications/recommendations*

#### **Key findings:**

- A) There was great diversity in the individual characteristics of girls who are at risk of exclusion (Section 4.1)**
- B) There was no obvious trend between the total number of fixed-term exclusions and placement in a PRU (Section 4.1)**
- C) Of the 27 girls who access PRU provision, 14 were not known to the psychology service (Section 4.1)**

#### **Implications/recommendations**

1. The uniqueness of each girl's circumstances and personal characteristics make it difficult to identify with confidence 'at risk' groups or therefore focus attention on any specific populations. In practice:
  - *Universal support initiatives targeting all girls would potentially ensure that access to appropriate support is equitable so that some girls are not excluded.*
2. There does not appear to be a common mechanism or shared understanding of the factors that should precede access to external support and resources. This means that there is a lack of equity in the ways pupils' access support and that this depends largely on the school that they attend. In practice:
  - *clear and consistent Local Authority-wide policy/guidance (including clear thresholds) about the circumstances through which schools may or may not access external support would help to ensure a consistent approach and equality of access to resources. Such thresholds may support/predetermine the level of involvement, investigation and data gathering by schools, and also clarify consistent parameters of which behaviours may be worthy of exclusion, and/or how many fixed-term exclusions would normally precipitate attendance at a PRU.*
3. There is a lack of parity in the way in which schools access the Educational Psychology Service as a source of external support. The way in which challenging behaviour is perceived, and thus responded to, may be affected by systems of internal communication in schools (i.e. between Special Needs Coordinator and Inclusion Manager) and/or whether the SENCO and inclusion manager are one and the same person. An alternative explanation could be that the Overdale City Psychology Service model of service delivery may be too rigid to allow for 'emergency' behaviour cases to be referred and investigated outside of six-monthly planning cycles. Therefore, these cases might not be responded to with sufficient flexibility and speed to avoid exclusion from school. In practice:
  - *further investigating the circumstances in which some girls have accessed support, whereas some have not, by the Psychology Service would help to ensure that all children, regardless of school, have an equal opportunity to access support*
  - *greater communication and a 'joined up' approach between school SENCOs and inclusion managers would support a more coherent, integrated approach to challenging behaviour and allow greater consistency in defining challenging behaviour as a Special Educational Need.*
  - *a review of the Psychology Service time allocation systems could unpick whether current systems allow enough flexibility to meet the needs of emergency cases of challenging behaviour across the school year, beyond the six-monthly planning meetings.*

## 5.2.2 Phase Two: Psycho-social profiles

Key findings in this second phase of research focused on how information relating to girls 'at risk of exclusion is recorded and stored. The significant focus of implications for practice focus on how to effectively collect and record information, so that schools can implement targeted and evidence based responses. See Box 5.2 for specific findings and implications for practice.

### *Box 5.2: Psychosocial profiles- Key findings and implications/ recommendations*

#### **Key findings:**

**A) Findings suggest that there was no consistent/systematic approach to collecting and storing information within or between schools (Section 4.2)**

#### **Implications/recommendations**

1. Considering the high level needs of both girls who took part in the study, neither participating schools had a robust and structured approach to recording information about pupils. Instead, schools' files in both cases were used primarily as a 'behaviour incident log' rather than an active attempt systematically to investigate and evaluate any causes of behaviour difficulties. The 'ad hoc' nature of recorded information suggested that there was no obvious assessment model being applied in the schools, through which the antecedents and causes of challenging behaviour could be investigated in a thorough and effective way. In practice:
  - *the introduction of a standard Local Authority-wide graduated assessment model, in which all schools used similar procedures, would ensure accountability and understanding of the necessity for initial investigation and information gathering by schools. A robust and effective administrative/monitoring system would be helpful on two levels: Firstly, to help staff to gain an in-depth understanding of each girl and allow an informed, systematic and evidence-based approach to planning support, intervention, and to resource allocation. Secondly, such an approach would also support any later outside agency involvement, as a large amount of data gathering would have been completed before any involvement, so that repetition would be limited and agency time could more profitably focus on contributing additional 'expert' perspectives on analysis of needs and supporting positive outcomes in each case.*

## 5.2.3 Phase Three: Analysis of interview data

As the substantive element of the research project, a greater number of key findings emerge from the analysis of interview data, which subsequently translate into a significant number of implications for practice. To prevent overlap, I have made the decision to present findings/implications from all participant groups together.

As presented in Chapter Four, findings relating to why Key Stage 3/4 girls get excluded from school in Overdale City cover a wide number of different areas. However, a number of key findings permeate discussion. See Box 5.3 for more detail.

*Box 5.3: Analysis of interview data- Key findings*

**Key findings- girls, parents and school staff:**

- A) The factors that influence girls' behaviour and exclusion are complex and are unique to the context of each individual - *Section 4.3.1(1)*
- B) Participants often had different perceptions of the causes of challenging behaviour- *Section 4.3.1(1)*
- C) 'Inclusion' is not a stable concept- *Section 4.3.1(2)*
- D) Extremes of challenging behaviour are not a 'mainstream' problem- *Section 4.3.1(2)*
- E) Schools appear to respond primarily to presenting behaviour rather than the causes of behaviour- *Section 4.3.1(4)*
- F) The way in which behaviour is defined affects how it is responded to- *Section 4.3.1(4)*
- G) There is a lack of provision available to schools to meet the needs of girls who present with challenging behaviour- *Section 4.3.1(4)*
- H) There was a perceived discrepancy between mainstream and PRU provision- *Section 4.3.1(4)*
- I) The use of internal and unofficial/informal exclusion was reported- *Section 4.3.1(4)*
- J) Understanding girls' relationships and developing social identity is key in understanding girls' behaviour- *Section 4.3.1(6)*

**Key findings- external professionals:**

- K) Perception of gender is central to our understanding and responses to girls' behaviour- *Section 4.3.2(2)*
- L) The 'invisibility' of girls' difficulties affects their access to resources- *Section 4.3.2(2)*
- M) There is a lack of understanding of girls' behaviour- *Section 4.3.2(2)*
- N) The factors that influence girls' behaviour (and subsequent exclusion) are multi-dimensional and complex- *Section 4.3.2(3)*

Given a motivation of the current study was to inform Local Authority practice with girls at risk of exclusion, findings suggest a number of implications/recommendations at both the school and Local Authority level.

This is consistent with previous research where, although direct research into girls' exclusion is relatively sparse (see Section 2.5), the small amount of research, such as that by Osler et al (2002), suggests implications primarily at the school, and Local Authority systems level. However, in making the following recommendations, I am particularly conscious of the need for an holistic approach, as supported by Bronfenbrenner (2005), in order to promote early intervention and, where possible, alter the educational trajectories of girls 'at risk' of exclusion.

Whilst I am aware of the methodological limitations of the current study (to be discussed in Section 5.3), the following points present a range of possible implications and recommendations to emerge from the study.

1. The above findings suggest that those working within schools must engage with key stakeholders to develop an informed understanding of the various and multiple antecedents of behaviour, both within and out of school.

- *[based on Finding A,B,E,F & N]* the introduction of a robust, graduated assessment model would allow schools and external services to approach challenging behaviour in an informed, systematic and evidence-based way. Consistency of approach, facilitated by a clear assessment model, would ensure that the antecedents of behaviour are more readily understood so that perceptions of behaviour and decisions about exclusion are based on more complete evidence. This would support information gathering and targeting/allocation of resources in schools, improve the exchange of information between schools, create a more seamless link between schools and external services, and would allow these external services to focus on target areas with a greater degree of accuracy. Furthermore, having a city-wide process of identifying and responding to challenging behaviour would ensure that schools were held more accountable for their responses and actions, and girls' entitlement to equality of opportunity and access safeguarded.
- *[based on Finding A,B, & N]* in order for any assessment model to succeed, an integrated approach to gathering information, which involves all stakeholders (e.g. girls, parents, teachers) and recognises the validity of different perceptions, would allow all parties to take an active role in building intervention plans and in promoting positive outcomes for 'at risk' girls.

2. There appears to be inconsistency in the way girls' behaviour is perceived and responded to in each school, which may result in pupils being excluded for vastly different behaviours. For example, where one girl may be excluded for hitting a pupil in one school, in another school a girl may be excluded for swearing at a teacher. This may reflect tensions between the power given to schools to include/exclude pupils in national guidance, and the role/accountability of the LA as gatekeeper to resources.

- *[based on Finding C,D,E & F]* discussion between educationalists about a city-wide behaviour policy, which includes thresholds for access to school focused (cf. pupil focused) support would help to establish clear standards and ensure consistency between schools, and help external services to prioritise time and resources to the most vulnerable pupils. Such descriptors should incorporate an understanding of girls' behaviour, so that girls' needs are not overlooked in favour of their male counterparts. A clear policy would also establish a degree of accountability, in which schools would need to maintain certain standards in order to receive Local Authority support.

3. A significant factor that defined how behaviour was responded to was whether or not challenging behaviour was defined as a Special Educational Need (SEN). Furthermore, any inconsistency may be compounded by confusion over the implementation of different processes in school, such as the SEN process and Pastoral Support Plan process (PSP).

- *[based on Finding E & F]* consideration should be given on whether it is possible to streamline the administrative process, so that there is a single process for behaviour and SEN. This may help to prevent confusion and support consistent interpretation and action across different schools.
- *[based on Finding E & F]* the implementation of a challenging behaviour 'pathway', similar to those at work in the LA for other special needs (i.e. Pathways for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) which sets out a structured approach to identification/assessment and graduated response, may help to ensure that schools are clear on how to identify and respond to challenging behaviour, and the process by which they can access external support. This recommendation is consistent with the recommendations discussed above regarding assessment models and thresholds within behaviour policies. Furthermore, this would also ensure that schools are accountable for their actions.

4. Findings suggest that inconsistencies between mainstream and Pupil Referral Unit settings potentially exacerbate difficulties experienced by

girls who are at risk of exclusion and widen the gap from mainstream school.

- [based on Finding G & H] in order to use Pupil Referral Units as a short-term provision, in response to a lack of more long-term provision, there should be greater coordination and more effective joined up working between mainstream settings and specialist provision (i.e. PRUs). More specifically, the Local Authority may wish to consider/examine whether more on-site provision/support in mainstream schools, at least in the first instance, may help to keep these girls in mainstream school in the long-term.
- [based on Finding G & H] longer and more supported reintegration into mainstream schools may help to bridge the gap between Pupil Referral Units and mainstream provision.
- [based on Finding G & H] Pupil Referral Units should include sufficient appropriately trained teachers so that children receive a quality experience of an appropriate curriculum, thus reducing the detrimental effects of missing the mainstream curriculum.
- [based on Finding G & H] consideration should be given to establishing robust long-term provision for girls, who despite a sustained period of investigation, intervention and evaluation/monitoring, are still finding the mainstream environment difficult.

5. The use of internal exclusion and informal/unofficial exclusion by schools indicated that the Local Authority affords a narrow view of exclusion. Such practice suggests that official statistics may underestimate the levels of exclusion from school.

- [based on Finding I] further investigation of the long-term outcomes for girls who experience internal exclusion and, more importantly, those who experience informal/unofficial exclusion from school is required.
- [based on Finding I] a more transparent system of recording exclusions from school, at the school and Local Authority level, would allow a more accurate representation of those girls who, due to their behaviour, are not able to access a mainstream school setting.

6. Girls' relationships and pursuit of social identity was reported to play a pivotal role in girls' behaviour and exclusion from school.

- [based on Finding J] greater recognition of the influence of girls' social experiences on their behaviour would allow professionals more fully to understand this possible antecedent of challenging behaviour. This would also allow, where appropriate, the targeting of interventions that focus on girls' social experiences/skills.

7. Participants' accounts of their experiences made implicit and explicit reference to how internalised representations of gender affected perceptions, expectations and responses towards girls who present with

challenging behaviour. More specifically, the behaviour of girls was largely compared to that of boys, and perceptions of behaviour were seen in the context of societal and culturally appropriate female behaviour. Findings suggested that there is a lack of understanding of how girls may present and how this may be different to boys, and that this influenced professionals' perceptions/expectations of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour. As a result, girls' needs appeared to be less visible, suggesting they may be less likely to be identified with early identification contingently jeopardised.

- *[based on Finding K]* reflection/evaluation of how gender perceptions impact on individual practice and how girls are represented in school and LA processes, would help inform understanding of whether there is equity in the way girls and boys are treated. For example, it may be useful to monitor how many girls access specific support initiatives. This may in turn require re-evaluation of whether/how current policy and practice may be marginalizing girls needs. Furthermore, schools should consider how their pastoral systems meet the needs of girls.
- *[based on Finding L & M]* school staff should receive (and cascade) further training about girls needs and behaviours so that they are able to identify and intervene with girls who are experiencing difficulties.
- *[based on Finding L & M]* it would be to girls' advantage if schools responded to vulnerability and risk factors rather than focusing on outward manifestations challenging behaviour. As girls may present differently to boys, this change of focus would ensure that girls' needs are rendered 'visible' and that girls are then able to access appropriate targeted support.
- *[based on Finding L & M]* efforts to facilitate and encourage girls' participation in pupil consultation initiatives should be considered, so that responses are tailored appropriately to meet girls' needs.

Reflecting on the key findings to emerge from the study and subsequent implications for practice, an important pattern surfaces relating to problems with the definition and early identification of girls' challenging behaviour, as a prerequisite of exclusion. These difficulties subsequently manifest in problems responding to challenging behaviour and how it is recorded. As discussed in Section 2.1, it appears that, particularly in relation to girls, the problem with defining challenging behaviour that has been described in previous literature over the past decade has still not been resolved. For example, despite wide definitions of challenging behaviour offered in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001), confusion remains as to how challenging

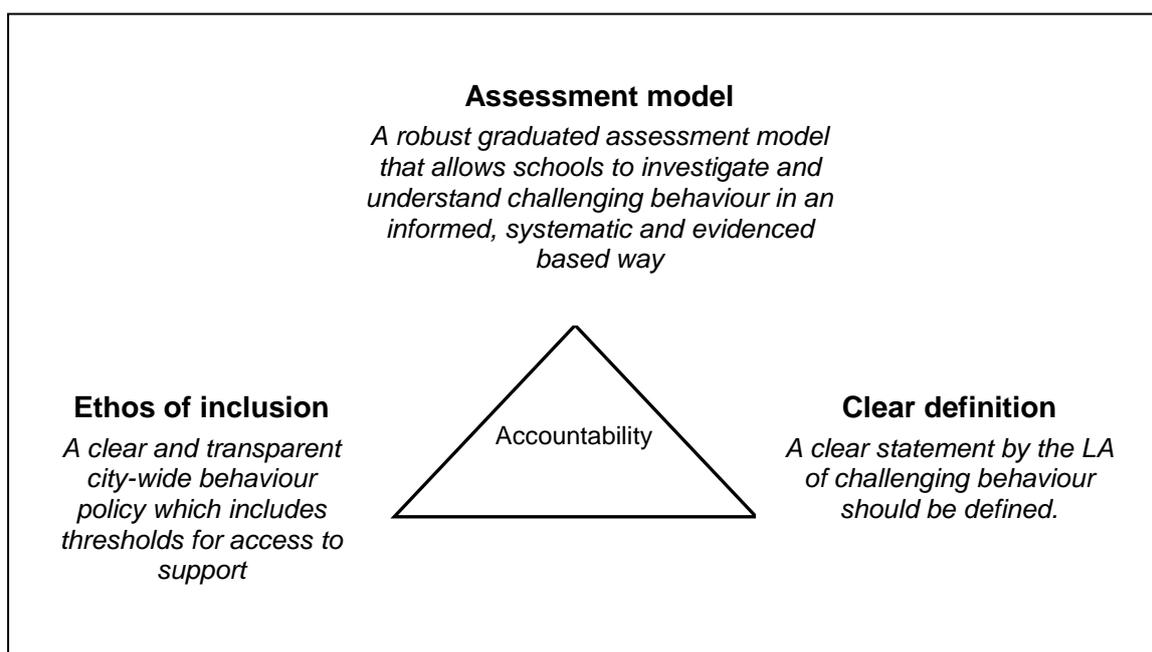
behaviour should be conceptualised and identified. This, in turn, has implications for girls who may present differently and potentially more covertly than boys (e.g. Lloyd, 1992; Brown 2005). This coincides with the current finding that there are challenges with identifying, understanding and responding to girls' behaviour.

#### 5.2.4 Developing an integrating framework for local practice in Overdale City

Given the apparent inconsistencies in the ways schools' operate in relation to school exclusion to emerge from research findings, the role of the Local Authority is particularly important. Despite their distal influence in decision-making about exclusion in schools (i.e. as an '*exo-/macro-system*' influence; Bronfenbrenner, 2005) due to the power given to individual headteachers to exclude pupils, it appears that Local Authorities can play an important role in mediating school processes and negotiating tensions between achievement and inclusion in relation to school exclusion.

In a local context, Figure 5.1 provides a simple integrated framework that would support the city-wide initial identification of girls, and effective responses, for both schools and the Local Authority within Overdale City.

*Figure 5.1: An integrated framework for identifying girls with challenging behaviour.*



The three elements of this framework are equally important:

- By having a robust and effective assessment model, schools are able to gather information about the antecedents of any behavioural difficulties, which will inform their response and the allocation of resources. Furthermore, this assessment model will provide a foundation for any outside agency involvement, if so needed.
- A clear city-wide ethos of inclusion would help to ensure that, despite the power of exclusion being held by individual Headteachers, that certain criteria/standards are expected in order to receive external support.
- A clear definition/understanding of challenging behaviour would help to ensure a consistency approach to the identification of challenging behaviour.

Based on this model, schools and professionals would be able in the short-term to identify and respond more effectively to girls' needs and thus, where possible, prevent school exclusion. In the long-term, this framework would also allow professionals to build a realistic picture of the number of girls who need support and tailor a robust and effective system of in-school and out-of-school provision that meet girls' complex needs.

### **5.3 Limitations**

In order to understand the position of the current research in a real world context (including the reliability and validity of reported findings), it is important to consider a number of methodological limitations that have arisen throughout the course of the research. These limitations relate primarily to my decision to use IPA as the means of analysing participants' interview data. More specifically, as discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.4, there are several limitations integral to the way information is gathered and analysed within IPA to provide an account of participants lived experiences of the focus phenomenon; in this case, girls at risk of exclusion.

The main points are considered in Table 5.1, with consideration of how these limitations could be addressed in future research. This table should be read in with consideration of the earlier discussion of IPA as a research methodology (See Section 3.2.4).

Table 5.1: Methodological limitations of the current study with suggestions/implications for future research

Limitations	Suggestions for future research
<p><b>Participants' accounts may be limited by their willingness to share information in the research context (Smith and Osborn, 2008).</b></p> <p>Applied research does not take place in a vacuum and as such participants' responses are likely to be influenced by the context in which the research takes place. Factors may include: participant position, researcher position, researcher-participant relationship, intentions of the research, intended audience, and participant's trust in processes of confidentiality and anonymity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allowing participants to preview the interview questions prior to the interview process. It may also be prudent to allow a certain amount of time between this notice and the actual interviews so that participants can reflect on their experiences with the phenomena in depth and over time.</li> <li>- Explaining to participants prior to research that they will be provided with a draft final copy of the research report so that they can see how their views have been reported.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participants' accounts are bound within the limits of their language (Smith et al, 2009)</b></p> <p>IPA relies on language as a vehicle with which to access participants' lived experiences. Despite appropriate differentiation of resources (including interview questions), participants understanding of questions may vary due to their language ability and their ability to articulate their experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to formulate appropriate resources and questions, it may be useful to discuss materials with individuals, unrelated to the research at each level of participant (e.g. KS3/4 girls, parents, teachers and professionals) prior to implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Findings are context-specific (Willig, 2008)</b></p> <p>The current research provides a specific insight into the chosen phenomenon in the specific context, at that time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By taking a longitudinal approach to the study in which participants are interviewed more than once, over a chosen period of time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IPA is a subjective process (Smith et al, 2009)</b></p> <p>Although grounded in extracts from the interviews, I acknowledge that my interpretations of participant's accounts are highly subjective. Furthermore, research findings are bound within a hermeneutic cycle in which the reader will interpret my interpretation of the participant's interpretations of the target phenomenon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More robust 'credibility checks' (Barker and Pistrang, 2005) in which another researcher, trained in IPA, may simultaneously analyse data to ensure a degree of inter-rater reliability.</li> <li>- By developing a robust iterative process in which my interpretations have been discussed, and validated with participants, prior to reporting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>It is difficult to generalise the current findings.</b></p> <p>Due to the small sample size and subjective nature of IPA research, participants' accounts may not be seen as representative of the wider population and therefore should not be generalised. Instead, any research findings may resonate with the reader, and as such be understood within their own context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By employing a larger research sample, at each level of participant.</li> <li>- By attempting to control factors of homogeneity within the sample more tightly.</li> </ul>

## 5.4 Critical reflections

According to Robson (2002), applied research is often complex and does not take place within a theoretical or real-world vacuum. Instead, it involves a flexible and dynamic process which is influenced by a number of variables, both internal and external to the research. One such influence, in the context of the current study, involved the influence of my dual research identity, as both an agent of the Local Authority in which the research took place, and as a graduate researcher. At this point, it is important to reflect critically upon a number of the decisions that I made within the current study, within its applied real-world research context. More specifically, in the following section I will comment upon a number of points:

- the value of IPA as a research methodology;
- the implications of the small sample size on the research conclusions; and
- the utility of Bronfenbrenner's (e.g. 2005) bio-ecological systems model within the current research.

I will now focus on these points in order.

### 5.4.1 The applicability of IPA as the principal research methodology

Although I chose to use IPA as the dominant methodology in the conceptualisation and design of the current research, and in the analysis of findings, several other approaches were considered during the early stages of the research process, but ruled out for various reasons. The two most significant of these, on which I will comment, were Thematic Analysis and Grounded Theory. Box 5.4 (overleaf) gives a brief outline of my analysis of the significant considerations in favour of, and against each of these methodologies. As is demonstrated within this synopsis, my reasons for deciding against these methodologies were based on both my epistemological positioning, personal preferences in research, and wider academic criticisms. Although Section 3.2 describes my rationale for choosing IPA as my research methodology, using IPA was not without its complications and required a well informed and flexible approach in its application. In particular, significant consideration was given to its applicability with small sample sizes and with the need for homogeneity.

**Thematic Analysis (TA - e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006)**

Reasons for:

- Methodology is both data and analyst driven.
- Methodology permits use of both deductive and inductive approaches to analysis
- TA is a flexible and pragmatic approach that can be applied to a number of research methodologies (and epistemological positions).
- Although relatively flexible in its application, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a clear and structured approach to analyse and seek patterns in data.
- Appropriate for research with qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews.

Reasons against:

- Whereas Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a 'theoretical freedom', in which TA can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, Atanki et al (2002) criticise this as an 'anything goes' approach in which there is no clear agreement about what TA is and how you go about doing it.
- Braun and Clarke (2006) accept that TA has limited kudos as an analytic method and is often used by researchers without the knowledge or skills to carry out a more sophisticated methodology.
- A lack of any specific psychologically-based rationale or theoretical orientation
- A lack of reflexivity. There is a lack of discussion regarding the influence of the hermeneutic cycle. TA accepts the role of projection, but does not generally detail how one might identify or counter this risk to valid interpretation.

**Grounded Theory (GT - e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967)**

Reasons for:

- Methodology is data driven.
- Inductive approach
- GT is an approach to developing theory that is grounded in systematically gathered and analysed data. It has trans-disciplinary identity.
- GT gives attention to complexity, variability and context of social/psychological phenomena (Robson, 2002)
- Provides a clear and structured approach to analyse and seek patterns in data.

Reasons against:

- Sampling is on a much larger scale for GT to allow greater generalisation
- Whereas GT is likely to push for a more conceptual exploratory level of analysis across respondents, IPA is able to give support a deeper level of analysis of individual experience through texture and nuance (Smith et al, 2009). A 'full fat' GT (Braun and Clarke, 2006) expects findings to generate a theoretical account. I did not presume, at the outset of my research, that this would be possible.
- The method does not sufficiently acknowledge the role of the researcher (e.g. interpretation) and dependence of observations on theory/perspective. I believe there is an impossibility of approaching findings without prior expectations, judgements etc, and that limiting pre-reading toward this end appears to be a tokenistic gesture.

As discussed in Section 3.2.5, a key factor in my decision to use IPA was its idiographic focus and its applicability in gaining a depth of information with small sample sizes. This was particularly important in the current study in which recruitment of participants proved difficult and where a small sample was employed. At this point, my decision to use IPA proved important as the method was best placed, amongst similar research methods, to analyse interview data with a small sample of participants from each client group (girls, parents, school staff and external professionals). Although it did not occur in this research, according to Smith et al (2009) IPA can also be used with single cases.

A further consideration in the current study related to the levels of homogeneity needed to use IPA. Given the small sample of participants (girls who, against the specified criteria were judged 'at risk' of exclusion), it was not possible to exercise tighter control over individual characteristics which each person must exhibit in order to be included in the research sample. Furthermore, given the epistemological position of IPA that every description constitutes interpretation and is based on each individual's unique experience, I am not convinced that such homogeneity makes findings any more complete or valid. As Smith et al (2009) suggest, participants are selected because they represent a perspective, rather than a population.

In the current study, as discussed in section 3.5, the concept of homogeneity was founded upon what Willig (2008) describes as 'shared experience': more specifically IPA typically involves small, homogeneous samples, purposefully selected because they share experience of a particular event or condition, and for whom the research question is meaningful.

This definition provides a justification for using IPA with all layers of participants, as each participant had 'shared and meaningful experience' of the target phenomenon' through either direct experience of being 'at risk of exclusion' (i.e. the girls, parents and school staff) or experience of the client group who have had direct experience (external professionals) of school exclusion. Although this suggests my choice of IPA was valid across all client

groups, this distinction provided the basis for my decision to approach the analysis of external professionals separately.

#### 5.4.2 Sample size and research conclusions

As described in Section 3.5, the recruitment of participants proved to be a challenge due to a number of practical reasons. For example, the aim of the study to triangulate experiences of the target phenomenon from multiple perspectives (i.e. the girls, their parents and school staff), and across a number of schools, made the process more difficult, as this meant that if one member of any triad did not consent to take part, the other two participants also needed to be excluded (see Section 3.5 for more discussion of complexities with recruiting a sample).

However, on a personal level, I feel that I may have been naive when planning the study to suppose that identifying a sample, would mean that they would consent to taking part of the study. This point is particularly salient, given the distressing experiences to which both the girls and parents were likely to have been prey, and potential subsequent disaffection/alienation with the education process.

As occurs with other research with a qualitative and idiographic orientation, the size of the sample employed within the study means that the findings are likely to have been influenced by only a small number of individual perspectives. Consequently, I cannot assume that these perspectives represent the views of the wider population who have experienced school exclusion or the 'threat' of school exclusion. Therefore the reported findings, subsequent implications for practice and conclusions must be treated with appropriate caution. An important element of any follow-up work should thus include a robust iterative process in which findings of the current study are compared and contrasted with the experiences of the wider population.

The issue of theoretical generalisation in IPA studies has been discussed in detail in key texts (e.g. Smith et al, 2009; Smith and Osborn, 2008) Reid et al, 2005). As Smith et al (2009) suggest, idiography does not eschew generalisation, and as such it is possible to think of theoretical transferability

rather than empirical generalisation. Through a process of rich, transparent and contextualised analysis, this should enable readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings from the current study to persons in contexts which are more, or less, similar.

#### 5.4.3 The utility of Bronfenbrenner's (e.g. 2005) bio-ecological systems model in the current research

As described in Section 4.5, findings in the current research aligned with a bio-ecological systems approach to human development. More specifically, participants' interpretations of why girls become excluded emphasised the girls' reciprocal interactions between different layers of context (e.g. the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem), across their life course.

The utility of this model arises from its capacity to identify the diverse factors operating at different ecological levels (e.g. family, peer group, classroom, curriculum, relationships with teachers, community influences), that may influence behaviour. Although each girl's experience represents a unique mix of historic and current contextual influences, this model represents a useful theoretical paradigm within which to consider individual circumstances, as well as shared experiences. Furthermore, such a model legitimates an optimistic approach to support, which suggests that by allocating resources and supporting critical areas within the complex nested systems which had, to date, singularly, or in combination, failed to address each girl's needs, girls may experience an altered trajectory in which risks of school exclusion are much reduced.

## 5.5 Concluding comment

As discussed in Chapter 2, general concern about levels of exclusion has not translated into improved understanding in relation to girls' behaviour and/or exclusion. Previous literature suggests the needs of girls within the context of challenging behaviour and exclusion have been overlooked in favour of boys, who represent the significant majority of the population who experience school exclusion (e.g. Osler et al, 2002). Consequently, although representing

a substantial minority, it appears that we know very little about the causes/antecedents, experiences and outcomes of exclusion for girls.

Through this piece of research I have sought to provide a rich and illustrative source of qualitative data from which to attempt to understand participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon of Key Stage 3/4 girls at risk of exclusion in a local context. Furthermore, in doing so, I have provided my Local Authority with information on which to build more effective and robust systems of support to meet girls needs in Overdale City.

The findings of the present study can be seen as adding to a small but increasing body of literature in relation to girls and exclusion. In essence, this research highlights the usefulness and importance of engaging with a range of participants in order to create improved understanding of the experiences of girls. Findings provide insight into the cognitive elements (e.g. perceptions, attitudes toward appropriate behaviour for girls) at work in school exclusion, and how these manifest at an applied level in schools.

Exclusion is a complex, multi-faceted and multidimensional concept. The issue of girls' behaviour is particularly complex, and is entwined within a gendered system that largely misunderstands girls' needs. Despite previous findings suggesting that that girls' behaviour is often different to that of boys (e.g. Brown, 2005; Lloyd, 2005; Osler and Vincent, 2003, Crozier and Dimmock, 1999), actual behaviour is not the only factor to affect exclusion. The crux of inequity and the source of any misunderstanding of girls' needs appear to stem from how challenging behaviour itself is defined, conceptualised and identified. It is only after this has taken place that any effective response/intervention (including accurate recording of behaviour and exclusion) by schools and local authorities can take place.

Those working in this area appear to have taken steps over the past 20 years to move from a within-child medical model of behaviour towards a socio-educational model that accepts the influence of multiple inter-related contexts on the child. As discussed in Section 4.5, Bronfenbrenner (2005) PPCT model of human development provides a useful lens through which to view

the multi-factorial, multi-level influences at work in children's development, and in this case, challenging behaviour. For those professionals working with girls at risk of exclusion from school, it seems vital that they attempt to gain an understanding of the unique circumstances and experiences of each girl, on which to inform a targeted and effective multi-modal, multi-level response.

However, there is a fundamental need to ensure that any processes involved in exclusion are centred on the needs of the child, rather than the needs of each institution. Most importantly, professionals need to reflect on and recognise the social processes at work in the construction of deviance (e.g. gender) in order fully to understand girls' behaviour and why they are so poorly represented in national discourses surrounding exclusion.

In summary, a literal interpretation of the plateau in recent exclusion figures could lead one to consider that schools have become more effective at identifying and responding to challenging behaviour, in order to reduce exclusion. However, such an interpretation would be naive. On the contrary, having looked in depth at the area of exclusion, particularly in relation to girls, the area is riddled with inconsistencies, tensions and complexities. Given what we know about the benefits of school inclusion, and the detrimental long-term consequences of exclusion, professionals have a responsibility to promote inclusion for both boys and girls. To prevent the needs of girls from continuing to be marginalized, girls should become a greater priority for professionals, educationalists and researchers.

To paraphrase a point made earlier by Collins et al (2000), there is a need to move beyond the idea of a 'gender seesaw', in pursuit of the 'gender jigsaw', which seeks to piece together an understanding of the complex interplay of factors which may place girls who exhibit challenging behaviour at risk of exclusion, with the aim of reducing rates of exclusion in the future.

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## **Chapter Seven: Appendices**

## Appendix A1- Information sheet: Research details



### Research title: *Why do girls get excluded?*

#### **The big picture:**

- Between 1991-96, the annual rate of pupils permanently excluded from state schools in England rose by 400% (Cooper et al, 2000).
- Since the turn of the century there have been further increases in the number of children and young people excluded from school, both on a fixed-term and permanent basis.
- Historically, research into the phenomenon of school exclusion has been focused on males who have always been, and remain, over-represented within the population of children excluded from school.
- In 2007/8, girls represented 22% of all permanent school exclusions and 25% of all fixed term exclusions (DCSF, SFR 18/2009). Since they comprise a substantial minority of all excluded pupils, the needs of girls need further investigation.
- There have been relatively few studies into the area of girls and exclusions. Therefore, little is known about the experiences of girls who find themselves at risk of exclusion.

#### **Locally:**

- There is currently a strain on short-term and long-term provision for girls who present with challenging behaviour and are on the verge of exclusion.
- The Local Authority is consulting as to whether to establish additional and/or different forms of specialist provision for girls who are at risk of exclusion.

## The research:

- Overall, the research aims to gather information on:
  - why girls get 'excluded'?
  - the educational experiences of KS3/4 girls at risk of exclusion.
  - what factors help and/or act as a barrier to the inclusion of KS3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools?
- To achieve this, several interviews will be carried out with the girls themselves, their parents, a member of staff from within each young person's school, and a number of professionals involved in the area of girls behaviour within the city. Interviews will take approx 1 hour.
- I hope to use feedback from girls, their parents and carers and staff who work with the girls in their schools and within the city, to improve understanding of girls' needs, and make recommendations for future practices to help these and similar girls.

## Appendix A2- Information sheet: Contact details

Research title:

**Why do girls get 'excluded'? A small scale qualitative investigation of the educational experiences of KS3 and KS4 girls who are 'at risk of exclusion'.**

The following research is being carried out on behalf of Overdale City Local Authority as part of the programme of study of Daniel Rouse, student at the University of Birmingham.

The research has been granted ethical approval through the University of Birmingham 'Arts and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee'.

For any further information regarding the study, in the first instance please contact the researcher:

Daniel Rouse  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
Overdale City Psychology Service



For any additional information (including any complaints), where contacting the researcher is not deemed appropriate, please contact the following persons:

Local Authority Supervisor contact~

Dr [redacted]  
Senior Educational Psychologist  
Overdale City Psychology Service



University of Birmingham Supervisor Contact~

Sue Morris  
Programme Director- Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology  
School of Education  
University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 2TT

## Appendix A3- Information sheet: Research details (differentiated)



### Research title: *Why do girls get excluded?*

#### **The big picture:**

- Between 1991-96, research studies show that the number of people permanently excluded from schools in England rose by 400%.
- Historically, research into school exclusion has been focused on males who have made up the majority of people excluded from school.
- In 2007/8, Government statistics show that girls made up 22% of all permanent school exclusions and 25% of all fixed term exclusions since this is still a large proportion of the total exclusions, the needs of girls require further investigation.
- There have been relatively few studies into the area of girls and exclusions. Therefore, not much is known about the experiences of girls who find themselves at risk of exclusion.

#### **Locally:**

- In response to the number of girls out of full-time schooling, the Local Authority is considering whether to develop another setting for girls who are at risk of exclusion.

#### **The research:**

- Overall, the research aims to gather information on:
  - why girls get 'excluded';
  - the educational experiences of KS3/4 girls at risk of exclusion; and
  - what factors help and/or act as a barrier to the inclusion of KS3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools.

- To achieve this, I hope to carry out interviews with girls, one or both of their parents, a member of staff from your school, and a number of professionals involved in the area of girls' behaviour within the city.
- I would like to invite you to be one of the young people I interview. If you agree to this, I will arrange to meet with you to carry out an interview. I will organise separate interviews with your parents, a member of staff from your school, and some of the professionals involved in supporting girls in similar circumstances to your own within the city.
- Interviews will take approx 1 hour.

I hope to use feedback from you, your parents and carers and staff who work with you in your schools, and with other girls in similar circumstances within the city, to help us to understand girls' needs, and make recommendations for future practices to support girls in similar situations to your own.

## Appendix A4- Consent form: Girls

Hi (Child's name)



☞ *Who am I and what do I want?*

☞ My name is Daniel Rouse and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am studying at the University of Birmingham, and as part of my course I'm carrying out some research for the Psychology Service. I would like you to take part.

### Title of my study: Why do girls get excluded?



☞ *What am I doing?*

My research interest is about how and why girls get excluded from school. I know that it must feel that it is the adults that make most of the day-to-day decisions, but I am really interested in what **YOU** think about why you're not at school full-time. I want to know what things were/weren't helpful in allowing you to stay at \_\_\_\_\_ school. As well as this, I want to know what things you would change in the future.

With this information, I hope that I can help XXXXXXXXX City make arrangements that will be of help to you and other girls who find themselves in a similar situation.



☞ *What's this got to do with you?*

If you think that you would like to be part of my research, I want to take a small amount of time (probably about 45 mins to an hour) to talk to you individually about your experiences.

Your parents have already said that it is okay for you to take part, provided that you are willing to do so, but I wanted to check with you.

Everything we talk about will be kept confidential. That means that although people will hear about the important things you say, no names will be used, so nobody will know who said what in the interviews. This means we can talk honestly about what has happened and how you feel about it.

☞ If you don't want to take part, don't worry; that's okay too. It's also okay if you agree to take part but then change your mind, either before or during our discussions.

If you want to know more about the research, you can ask \_\_\_\_\_ at the Individual Learning Centre or contact me, using the details below.

Please sign your name at the bottom of the next page if you would like to be involved.

Thank you in advance for your help,  
Daniel Rouse

Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Your consent:** Please read below and tick (✓) the boxes if you agree with them.

<b>1. I have read and understood the information about the project</b>	
<b>2. I agree to take part in the research</b>	
3. I understand that my views will be shared with others but that nobody will know who has said what and that my name will not be mentioned at any time in relation to these views	
4. I understand that I can leave the research at any time and that information collected before this point will be deleted if I request this	
5. I understand that our discussions will be audio-taped so that all of my views can be recorded accurately	

**My name:** ..... (full name)

**My signature:** ..... **Date:**.....

Daniel Rouse  
Trainee Educational Psychology Service  
Overdale City Psychology service  
[Redacted]

## Appendix A5- Consent form: Parents

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Daniel Rouse and I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for Overdale City Council. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

The Local Authority has asked me to carry out a piece of research which will look at the area of Key Stage 3 and 4 girls who are at risk of school exclusion. This will help to ensure that the Local Authority's services are able to meet the needs of young people in a similar position to your daughter.

I am planning to investigate the school records held about X and then carry out an interview with you, as X's parents/carers, a member of staff at X Community College, and also with X herself.

As a first step, I need to gain your **consent (agreement)** to look at school records held about your daughter in order to help me understand the factors that may have contributed to her difficulties in school, what actions were taken support her and address her needs, and the overall effectiveness these.

I am also seeking your consent to carry out an interview with yourselves and, if she agrees, a separate interview with your daughter.

During the interviews, information will be audio-taped so that it is recorded accurately. Information collected will be kept confidentially (that is, it will not be possible to identify any respondent or any school in the write-up of the research).

At any point, you have the right to **withdraw** from the research and, if you want to withdraw after the interview had taken place, you can contact me on the above phone number to discuss this. Child protection procedures will be followed which are set out by the Local Authority's child protection procedures, available at: \_\_\_\_\_

For any further information, in the first instance please contact me using the contact information below. For any additional information (including any complaints), where you may think that contacting me is not appropriate, please see the accompanying '*Additional Participation Sheet*' for the contact details of my supervisors.

At the end of the research (September 2011), I hope to come and discuss the findings of the research with you in more detail and discuss any changes to practice that may come out of the study.

Please take some time to think about whether you are willing to take part in the study and fill out the consent slip at the bottom of this letter, indicating which parts of the research you are willing to consent to.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Rouse

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**Please tick each box as relevant to show your consent**

- I give my permission for \_\_\_\_\_ School to allow access to my child's school records for the purpose of the research.
- I give my permission for my child, X, to be interviewed as part of the research, subject to her own agreement.
- I consent to being interviewed as part of the research.
- I give my permission for the findings of the research to be written up as part of a Doctoral Thesis.
- I understand that the views will be shared with others in the write up of the research but that school and individual information will remain anonymous (i.e. it will not be possible to identify any respondent or any school in the write-up of the research).
- I understand that I can leave the research at anytime and can ask for information collected before this point to be deleted.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped so that information is recorded accurately.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to young person: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel Rouse  
Trainee Educational Psychology Service  
Overdale City Psychology service  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix A6- Consent form: School staff

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)

My name is Daniel Rouse and I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for Overdale City Psychology. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham

The Local Authority has asked me to carry out a piece of research which will explore the area of young women who are at risk of school exclusion. The aims of this research are to explore:

- Why do girls get 'excluded'?
- What factors facilitate/inhibit the inclusion of KS3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools?

I hope that such research can provide a valuable opportunity to reflect about current processes and support systems and also to think about possible future developments to practice and / or provisions in [REDACTED] that may facilitate improved prevention, early intervention, effective management, reintegration and alternative arrangements for girls who may otherwise be at risk of exclusion.

To achieve this, my research is set to be in two parts:

- I am planning initially to investigate school file information held about X which will allow me to understand the background of each young person, precipitating factors, school responses and effectiveness of external support.;
- I will then carry out a semi-structured interview with a member of staff at X Community College (preferably a person at a senior management level who has experience of the processes within the school and Local Authority, and who has had close involvement with X, such as the SENCo/Inclusion Manager), a number of external professionals involved with girls' behaviour, with X's parents and also with X herself.

I have already gained written parental permission to access X's school records and also carry out interviews with themselves and X. To be able to do this, I also need to gain your **consent** to look at school information about X, and also to carry out an interview with a member of staff on school premises.

At any point, you would have the right to **withdraw** from the research and can contact me on the 'phone number below to discuss this. Interviews will be audio-taped to ensure that all important information is accurately recorded in situ. In the reporting of the research, individuals' and schools' names will be omitted to ensure **confidentiality**. Information will be **confidential** and stored securely. At the end of the research (planned to be in September 2011), I hope to come and discuss the findings of the research with you in more detail and discuss possible changes to practice which appear to be indicated by these research findings.

For any further information, in the first instance please contact me on the details below. For any additional information (including any complaints), where contacting you would not consider it appropriate to contact me as the researcher, please see the accompanying

'Additional Participation Sheet' for further contact details for my Local Authority and University supervisors.

Please take some time to think about whether you are willing to support this research and fill out the consent slip at the bottom of this letter, indicating which parts of the research to which you and a member of your staff would be willing to contribute.

Thank you in advance for your help.  
Yours sincerely,

Daniel Rouse  
*Trainee Educational Psychologist*

**Headteacher**

Name (in full): \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in by ticking the boxes to show your consent

- As Headteacher, I consent to give access to School records for the purpose of the research
- I consent to an interview to be carried out with a member of school staff on school premises. The person best placed to do this is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please be aware that the participation of a school partner for interview should be negotiated, so as to ensure that they have given their informed consent to participate. As such, please ask this person to read this letter and the enclosed information sheet, and fill out the bottom of this page.

- I give my permission to for the findings of the research to be written up as part of a Doctoral Thesis.
- I understand that the views will be shared with others in the write-up of the research but that school and individual information will remain anonymous.
- I understand that I can leave the research at any time and can require that information collected prior to this point should be deleted.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded to ensure that an accurate record is captured.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**Interviewee**

Name (in full): \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in by ticking the boxes to show your consent

- I have read the above information and consent to being interviewed as part of the research.
- I give my permission for the findings of the research to be written up as part of a Doctoral Thesis.
- I understand that my views will be shared with others in the write up of the research but that my name and personal information will remain anonymous.
- I understand that I can leave the research at any time and can require that information collected prior to this point should be deleted.
- I understand that our discussions will be audio-taped so that all of my views can be recorded accurately.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A7- Consent form: External Professionals

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Daniel Rouse and I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for [REDACTED]. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham

The Local Authority has asked me to carry out a piece of research which will explore the area of young women who are at risk of school exclusion, the aims of which are to explore:

- Why do girls get 'excluded'?
- What factors facilitate/inhibit the inclusion of KS3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools?

I hope that such research can provide a valuable opportunity to reflect about current processes and support systems and also to think about possible positive future developments to practise that may facilitate greater prevention, early intervention, effective management, reintegration and alternative arrangements for girls who may otherwise be at risk of exclusion.

To achieve this, my research is set to be in two parts:

- I am planning initially to investigate school file information held about four KS 3 or 4 girls who are at risk of exclusion, in order to build my understanding of the background of each young person, precipitating factors, school responses and effectiveness of external support.
- I will then carry out a semi-structured interview with a member of staff at each of the four Community Colleges at which these young people are on roll (preferably a person at a senior management level who has experience of the processes within the school and Local Authority, and who has had close involvement with the young person, such as the SENCo/Inclusion Manager), a number of professionals involved with girls' behaviour, with the young person's parents and also with young person herself.

As a professional who is closely involved in the area of girls' behaviour, I would like to interview you to find out your views on the above aims. (Interviews will be 45 minutes to one hour long).

To be able to do proceed with an interview, I need to gain your **consent**.

At any point, you would have the right to **withdraw** from the research and can contact me on the 'phone number below to discuss this. Interviews will be audio-taped to ensure that all important information is accurately recorded in situ. In the reporting of the research, individuals' and schools' names will be omitted to ensure **confidentiality**. Information will be **confidential** and stored securely. At the end of the research (planned to be in September 2011), I hope to come and discuss the findings

of the research with you in more detail and discuss possible changes for practice.

For any further information, in the first instance please contact me, using the details below. For any additional information (including any complaints), you judge that contacting me as the researcher is not appropriate, please see the accompanying 'Additional Participation Sheet' for further contact details of my Local Authority and University supervisors.

Please take some time to think about whether you are willing to support this research and fill out the consent slip at the bottom of this letter, indicating to which parts of the research you would be willing to contribute.

Thank you in advance for your help.  
Yours sincerely,

Daniel Rouse  
*Trainee Educational Psychologist*

**Interviewee**

Name (in full): \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in by ticking the boxes to show your consent

- I have read the above information and consent to being interviewed as part of the research
- I give my permission for the findings of the research to be written up as part of a Doctoral Thesis.
- I understand that my views will be shared with others in the write up of the research but that my name and personal information will remain anonymous
- I understand that I can leave the research at anytime and require that information collected prior to this point should be deleted
- I understand that our discussions will be audio-taped so that all of my views can be recorded accurately

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel Rouse  
Trainee Educational Psychology Service  
Overdale City Psychology service  


## Appendix A8- Standardised instructions

Thank you for coming. We're probably going to be talking for up to an hour at the most. I have a number of things that I want to discuss with you regarding \_\_\_\_\_. I want you to be able to talk openly and honestly: I won't stop you if you want to talk about something, but I may well steer you back towards specific topics.

As I set out in the consent letter, you have the right to stop the interview and withdraw from the process at any point. If you wish to do this please stop me and tell me. Also, the things that we talk about today will be confidential. This confidentiality will only be broken in exceptional circumstances, such as if something is mentioned that I feel shows you or someone else is at risk or in danger, if any disclosure describes something that is against the law, or if my not sharing information would not be in your best interest. Any such issues will be discussed with you if they arise. To safeguard confidentiality, I will use a code in the final report, so that no-one will know who has said what.

I have to point out that although we are talking about \_\_\_\_\_'s schooling and exclusions, I play no role in the decision-making process about schools or exclusions. I hope though that following this research, the findings may be used to improve the process of support for \_\_\_\_\_ and for girls in a similar situation.

Do you have any questions for me?

## Appendix A9- Standardised debrief

Thank you for your time. So what happens now? After I have completed all of the interviews, it will take a number of months to collate all of the information, to unpick all of the main points and to write a final report. I hope to have this completed by September 2011. At this point I will send you a copy of the final public domain report: a shorter report than the main doctoral thesis report but which will contain all of the main findings. At this point I will contact you to see if you would like us to meet up and discuss anything. In the meantime, you can contact me on this number (*present business card*) if you have any questions.

Do you have any questions for me now?

# Appendix A10- Public domain briefing presentation

Why do girls get 'excluded'? A small-scale qualitative investigation of the educational experiences of KS3 and KS4 girls who are 'at risk of exclusion'.

## *Aims*

- To introduce you to my research on girls and exclusion (e.g. purpose and rationale)
- To discuss some of the important issues in this area of exclusion, and more specifically exclusion when related to girls.
- To give detail about how I have gone about the task.

## *Rationale:*

The area of KS3/KS4 girls challenging behaviour, and inclusion is a current priority within the Local Authority (LA) due to:

- current strain
- LA consultation
- addressing the phenomenon that shows an increase in girls on the verge of exclusion from KS2 to KS3
- Lack of research

## *Area of investigation:*

As an explorative study, the research aims to gather information on:

- Why girls get 'excluded' in the context of my Local Authority?
- The educational experiences of KS3/4 girls at risk of exclusion.
- What factors facilitate/inhibit the inclusion of KS3/4 girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools?

## *Imagined Benefits*

The research will aim to:

- inform recommendations to support Local Authority practise when working with these and girls in a similar situation in the future.
- highlight good practice and inconsistent practice of schools.
- identify precipitating factors for girls exclusion, and thus support the inclusion (i.e. prevention, early intervention, intervention and reintegration) of girls who present with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools. This will also help to reduce the requirement of expensive Out Of City (OOC) placements by the Local Authority.
- inform Local Authority decision making relating to the future provision of alternative and specific girls' settings.

## Q

In the year 2008-2009, how many children were permanently excluded from school?

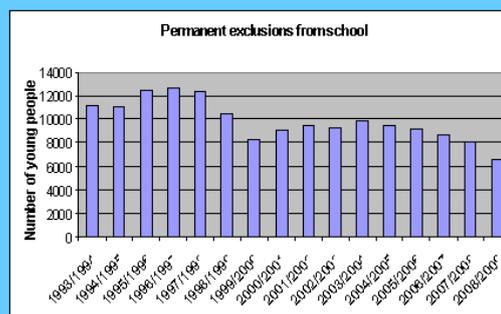
What was the percentage of boys and girls?

## The phenomenon

In 2008/09: 6550 children and young people were permanently excluded from school

Girls represented 22% of all permanent school exclusions and 25% of all fixed term exclusions (DCSF, SFR 18/2009).

In context: 1440 girls (DCSF, SFR 22/2010).  
A substantial minority!



## Some added context...

- It is our contention that individual students are not simply in one of two camps: excluded or included. Rather inclusion should be seen as part of a continuum, and any individual may move along that continuum at different points in his/her career' (p10).

## Causes of exclusion

- Types of behaviour
- Charlton et al (2004), causes of exclusion can include 'one or more of social, emotional and educational factors' (p263).
  - inadequate home backgrounds;
  - pupils mental health problems;
  - pressures on schools to raise their academic and attendance profiles;
  - school-related issues which exacerbate pupils' personal, academic and social needs (such as inadequacies of the curriculum); and more recently
  - tensions between the government's agendas on inclusion and achievement (p263).
- Tensions between the inclusion agenda (DFES, 2002a) and the requirement to drive up educational standards, given the 'backcloth of the standards agenda' (Dyson et al, 2003; p6).

## Exclusion: outcomes for pupils

'Permanent exclusion tended to trigger a complex chain of events which served to loosen the young person's affiliation and commitment to a conventional chain of life. The important transition was characterised by: the loss of time structures; a re-casting of identity; a changed relationship with parents and siblings; the erosion of contact with pro-social peers and adults; closer association with similarly situated young people and heightened vulnerability to police surveillance' (p. vi).

## Who gets excluded?

- According to Booth (1996), at that time the groups of young people most vulnerable and at risk to school exclusion were:
- boys;
- African/Caribbean boys;
- school age mothers;
- students with low attainment;
- disabled students;
- travellers; and
- children and young people in care.

*At first glance young women appear to have benefited most from changes in education in previous years. They appear to be outperforming boys at both GCSE and A' Level and are more likely to enter higher education... As a result, concern has shifted towards male 'underachievement' and upon the need to address the imbalance' (Dennison and Coleman, 2000, p3).*

- Girls have been largely overlooked in school exclusion prevention strategies and research (Osler and Vincent, 2002).
- Although articles on girls' education continue to be published, scholarly books on girls' schooling are relatively rare (Lloyd, 2005).
- Historically, research into gender differences in the classroom have focused on studies of the experiences of girls, such as gendered physical and verbal interactions

Source	Research finding
Stanworth (1981)	Boys receive far more teacher attention and time than do females. As a group, boys tend to create more noise and monopolise more attention than females; girls tend to be quieter in the classroom and are less noticed. Younger et al (2000) suggest this time differential may be explained by a greater amount of verbal disciplines for boys.
Riddell (1989)	Girls tend to engage in low-level, non-confrontational or unnoticed forms of resistance, such as chatting amongst peers, and attending to their appearance, whereas boys more frequently engage in more incidents of confrontational resistance. This further exacerbates girls' invisibility (Osler et al, 2002).
Connolly (2003)	Boys take up more physical space than do their female counterparts.
Belotti (1975)	Girls tend to take on a 'quasi-teacher' role in which they help to attend to the needs of boys, whether providing equipment or learning support.
Reay (2001)	Girls tend to defer to boys in mixed classroom interactions, thus reinforcing boys' dominance at the expense of their own needs and rights

- Lloyd (2000) describes that gendered patterns of exclusion may be explained by the following factors:
- Girls' deviance in school may be different to boys';
- schools may have gendered models of deviance;
- schools employ different strategies with boys and girls;
- teachers respond differently in classrooms to girls and boys;
- the ethos and culture of the school is likely to be gendered; and
- commitment to equal opportunities affects how schools respond to deviance. (P261).

## Gendered behaviour

- *Types of behaviour*
- *Social geography*
- *Aggression*

## *The impact of 'culturally defined femininity'*

## Osler and Vincent (2003)

- Girls are not a priority.
- The invisibility of girls' difficulties has serious consequences in terms of access to help.
- The nature of help on offer assumes that provision is equally available for both boys and girls.
- Girls' responsiveness to sources of help is complex.
- Identification of girls' needs and the subsequent provision of services are compartmentalised. That is, there is poor coordination of services that support the various needs of girls.
- The use of truancy, self exclusion and internal exclusion were reported by the girls, which emphasised the occurrence and/or use of unofficial and unrecorded exclusions.
- Gender appears to be an important influence on decisions to exclude a person formally.
- Bullying is a serious problem and appears to be a significant factor contributing to girls' decisions to self-exclude. (p3-4)

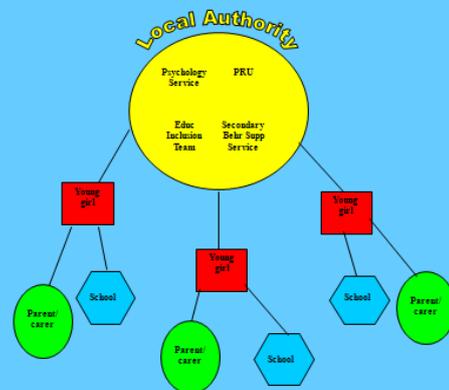
## Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Smith (1997) describes IPA as:

'an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in... accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts'

## Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

- IPA is a relatively new methodology, developed specifically within the field of health Psychology.
- Inductive approach
- Participants are experts in their own experiences
- rigorous and systematic analysis
- Findings are subjective, transparent and plausible.
- IPA engages in research at an idiographic level.
- Makes no grand statements
- Reflexive attitude



## Sample

1. female;
2. at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 (as of September 2010);
3. not known to the Psychology Service;
4. not known to Social Services;
5. not statemented for special educational needs;
6. at risk of permanent exclusion due to challenging behaviour; and
7. attending a secondary Pupil Referral Unit- PRU either on a full-time or part-time basis (therefore not in full-time mainstream education).

## Research tactics

Phase 1: **Information gathering: local exclusion statistics**

Phase 2: **Documentary analysis**

Phase 3: **Semi-structured interviews**

### Phase One: *Descriptive case information from central Local Authority database*

#### *Link to Tables*

- Different educational experiences
- No obvious patterns/trends
- Variation in number of exclusions experienced by each girl

### Phase Two: *Psycho-social profiles*

- Information/evidence in both files was limited.
- There appears to be no consistent/systematic method of collecting and storing information between schools.
- There was no evidence of any detailed investigation or assessment model in relation to the girls challenging behaviour, particularly in a wider context to the presenting behaviour itself. School file information, in both schools, was made up predominantly of records of consequences (e.g. detentions, exclusion records etc).
- There was little, if any, evidence of external agency involvement in either school file.
- There was no detailed evidence of the strategies used or evaluation/analysis of the effectiveness of such interventions.
- There was no evidence of information relating to access to a PRU.

### Phase Three: *Psycho-social profiles – Girls, parents and school staff*

1. Causal attributions of challenging behaviour and/or exclusion
2. School ethos of inclusion
  - tolerance
  - ownership and responsibility
3. The effects of reputation on exclusion
4. School approaches to tackling challenging behaviour and exclusion
  - schools respond primarily to presenting pupil behaviour, not causes (including feeling misunderstood)
  - assessment of needs
  - internal exclusion
  - external systems of support
  - unofficial/informal exclusion
5. The impact of practical school setting/environment factors on exclusion
6. Relationships and social identity

### Phase Three: *Psycho-social profiles – External professionals*

1. Types of behaviour
2. Perceptions of gender are central to our understanding and responses to girls' challenging behaviour
  - Professionals have a gendered model of deviance
  - Girls' social identity and gendered behaviour have changed over time
  - *The language used to describe girls' challenging behaviour transmits a message of intent*
  - Invisibility of girls' behaviour
  - A lack of understanding of girls' behaviour
3. External professionals tend to take an holistic, multi-level approach to the factors that influence girls' inclusion/exclusion
  - Individual/within-child factors
  - Family/social factors
  - School factors
  - Local Authority factors

### Integrating conceptual framework

Bronfenbrenner (2005) PPCT model  
Person, Process, Context, Time

*Link to figure 4.5*

the model provides an explanatory framework on which to hypothesise about where support, intervention and resources should be targeted and allocated in order to bring about developmental change

### Phase One: Implications/recommendations

- Universal support initiatives targeting all girls
- Clear and consistent Local Authority-wide policy/guidance (including clear thresholds) about the circumstances through which schools may or may not access external support would help to ensure a consistent approach and equality of access to resources.
- Further investigating the circumstances in which some girls have accessed support, whereas some have not, by the Psychology Service
- Greater communication and a 'joined up' approach between school SENCOs and inclusion managers
- A review of the Psychology Service time allocation systems could unpick whether current systems allow enough flexibility to meet the needs of emergency cases of challenging behaviour across the school year, beyond the six-monthly planning meetings.

## Phase Two: Implications/recommendations

- *The introduction of a standard Local Authority-wide graduated assessment model, in which all schools used similar procedures, would ensure accountability and understanding of the necessity for initial investigation and information gathering by schools.*

## Phase Three: Implications/recommendations

- the introduction of a robust, graduated assessment model would allow schools and external services to approach challenging behaviour in an informed, systematic and evidence-based way. Consistency of approach, facilitated by a clear assessment model, would ensure that the antecedents of behaviour are more readily understood so that perceptions of behaviour and decisions about exclusion are based on more complete evidence.
- in order for any assessment model to succeed, an integrated approach to gathering information, which involves all stakeholders (e.g. girls, parents, teachers) and recognises the validity of different perceptions.
- discussion between educationalists about a city-wide behaviour policy, which includes thresholds for access to school focused (cf. pupil focused) support would help to establish clear standards and ensure consistency between schools, and help external services to prioritise time and resources to the most vulnerable pupils.
- consideration should be given on whether it is possible to streamline the administrative process, so that there is a single process for behaviour and SEN.
- the implementation of a challenging behaviour 'pathway', similar to those at work in the LA for other special needs (i.e. Pathways for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) which sets out a structured approach to identification/assessment and graduated response.

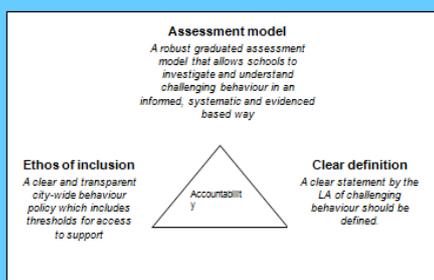
## Phase Three: Implications/recommendations

- in order to use Pupil Referral Units as a short-term provision, in response to a lack of more long-term provision, there should be greater coordination and more effective joined up working between mainstream settings and specialist provision (i.e. PRUs). More specifically, the Local Authority may wish to consider/examine whether more on-site provision/support in mainstream schools, at least in the first instance, may help to keep these girls in mainstream school in the long-term.
- longer and more supported reintegration into mainstream schools may help to bridge the gap between Pupil Referral Units and mainstream provision.
- Pupil Referral Units should include sufficient appropriately trained teachers so that children receive a quality experience of an appropriate curriculum, thus reducing the detrimental effects of missing the mainstream curriculum.
- consideration should be given to establishing robust long-term provision for girls, who despite a sustained period of investigation, intervention and evaluation/monitoring, are still finding the mainstream environment difficult.
- further investigation of the long-term outcomes for girls who experience internal exclusion and, more importantly, those who experience informal/unofficial exclusion from school is required.
- a more transparent system of recording exclusions from school, at the school and Local Authority level.

## Phase Three: Implications/recommendations

- greater recognition of the influence of girls' social experiences on their behaviour would allow professionals more fully to understand this possible antecedent of challenging behaviour.
- reflection/evaluation of how gender perceptions impact on individual practice and how girls are represented in school and LA processes, would help inform understanding of whether there is equity in the way girls and boys are treated. Furthermore, schools should consider how their pastoral systems meet the needs of girls.
- school staff should receive (and cascade) further training about girls needs and behaviours so that they are able to identify and intervene with girls who are experiencing difficulties.
- it would be to girls' advantage if schools responded to vulnerability and risk factors rather than focusing on outward manifestations of challenging behaviour. As girls may present differently to boys, this change of focus would ensure that girls' needs are rendered 'visible' and that girls are then able to access appropriate targeted support.
- efforts to facilitate and encourage girls' participation in pupil consultation initiatives should be considered, so that responses are tailored appropriately to meet girls' needs.

## Integrating model for Overdale City



There is a need to move beyond the idea of a 'gender seesaw', in pursuit of the 'gender jigsaw' (Collins et al, 2000), which seeks to piece together an understanding of the complex interplay of factors which may place girls who exhibit challenging behaviour at risk of exclusion, with the aim of reducing rates of exclusion in the future.

## Appendix A11- Psych-social profile template

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Gender:</b>	<b>DOB:</b>
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Home Language:</b>	<b>SEN Stage:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>School:</b>	<b>Other relevant information:</b>

**Medical Background:**

**Family/Social Background:**

**School/Educational Background:**

**Completed by:**

**Date:**

## Appendix A12- Interview questions: Girls

[Standardised instructions]

**1. From your experience, why do you think you were excluded?**

(Why else? Unpick. Are there any wider issues? Are there any more specific issues?)

**2. Tell me about that happened when you were at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(Specific or general. How have you come to be at the PRU? Then what?)

**3. From your experience, what do you think made it difficult for you to stay at \_\_\_\_\_? (What else?)**

**4. From your experience, what do you think helped you to stay at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(What things helped you to stay in school? What else?)

[Standardised debrief]

Prompts:

- Tell me more about...?
- Can you give more detail about...?
- What happened...?

Probes

- What do you mean by...?
- How did you feel when...?
- When? How? Why?

## Appendix A13- Interview questions: Parents

[Standardised instructions]

**1. From your experience, why do you think X was excluded?**

(Why else? Unpick. Are there any wider issues? Are there any more specific issues?)

**2. Tell me about that happened when X was at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(Specific or general. How has she come to be at the PRU?)

**3. From your experience, what factors/things do you think made it difficult for X to stay at \_\_\_\_\_? (What else?)**

**4. From your experience, what factors/things do you think helped X to stay at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(What things helped X to stay in school? What else?)

[Standardised debrief]

Prompts:

- Tell me more about...?
- Can you give more detail about...?
- What happened...?

Probes

- What do you mean by...?
- How did you feel when...?
- When? How? Why?

## Appendix A14- Interview questions: School staff

[Standardised instructions]

**1. From your experience, why do you think X was excluded?**

(Why else? Unpick. Are there any wider issues? Are there any more specific issues?)

**2. Tell me about that happened when X was at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(Specific or general. How has she come to be at the PRU?)

**3. From your experience, what factors/things do you think made it difficult for X to stay at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(What else? Is that just school issues?)

**4. From your experience, what factors/things do you think helped X to stay at \_\_\_\_\_?**

(What things helped X to stay in school? What else?)

[Standardised debrief]

Prompts:

- Tell me more about...?
- Can you give more detail about...?
- What happened...?

Probes

- What do you mean by...?
- How did you feel when...?
- When? How? Why?

## Appendix A15- Interview questions: External professionals

[Standardised instructions]

**1. From your experience working in X, why do girls get excluded?**

(Why else? Unpick. Are there any wider issues? Are there any more specific issues?)

**2. From your knowledge of working with girls at risk of exclusion in X, can you describe the types of experiences they have in mainstream schools?**

(Specific or general. It might be easier to imagine a specific case or few cases... How have these girls come to be at the PRU?)

**3. From your experience, what factors do you think inhibit the inclusion of these girls in mainstream schools in X?**

(What factors make it difficult for these girls to stay in mainstream school? What else?)

**4. From your experience, what factors do you think facilitate or support the inclusion of these girls in mainstream schools in X?**

(What things help these girls to stay in mainstream school? What else?)

[Standardised debrief]

Prompts:

- Tell me more about...?
- Can you give more detail about...?
- What happened...?

Probes

- What do you mean by...?
- How did you feel when...?
- When? How? Why?

## Appendix A16- Example extract of analysis: Stages 1-3 (Smith et al, 2009)

PARTICIPANT CODE: E1

DATE TRANSCRIBED: 25/02/11

No.	Text	Exploratory comments	Emergent themes
1.	D – So this is an interview with E1 at		
2.	the I [REDACTED] in the 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2011		
3.	D – So the first question - is again		
4.	quite a broad question, from your		
5.	experience of working in Leicester		
6.	why do girls get excluded? Again...,		
7.	quite a broad topic.		
8.	P – It is a broad topic. Why do girls		
9.	get excluded? I think a lot of the time		
10.	they get excluded because they		
11.	because they... <u>I don't actually find it</u>		
12.	<u>dissimilar to boys really, I wouldn't</u>	Are there gender stereotypes of behaviour	Girls compared with boys
13.	<u>say there is anything particularly</u>	Comparison with boys- not dissimilar	
14.	<u>pertaining to girls and certainly a lot</u>	Straight to the actual causes- presenting behaviour	
15.	of the experience of girls being		
16.	excluded is because <u>of continual</u>		
17.	<u>disruption</u> within lessons and	Causes of exclusion- types of behaviour (e.g. EBD)	Presenting behaviour- extremes of behaviour
18.	<u>violence as well</u> is something else	'violence as well'- unexpected? Presenting behaviours not causes	
19.	that girls are demonstrating which	Extremes of behaviour- more like boys. 'Double deviance?'	
20.	and also the fact if there has been a		
21.	<u>disagreement with another students</u> I	Peer relationships	Gendered behaviour
22.	tend to <u>find that with boys they</u>		
23.	<u>actually will ok they might just roll up</u>	Gender stereotyping?	
24.	<u>them and that's it then and it's is over</u>	Differences in behaviour- contrast to line 13-14	
25.	<u>whereas girls tend to continue it and</u>	Conflict in personal view and social view	
26.	<u>continue it and don't actually know</u>	Emotional element?	
27.	<u>when to stop.</u> I find also that girls		
28.	bear grudges as well as opposed to		
29.	boys. <u>Boys tend to shrug it off more</u>	Generalisation?	Girls compared with boys
30.	readily to shrug things off but girls		
31.	don't and they don't find it so easy to		
32.	do that and so <u>they will bear that</u>	Girls find it hard to forgive and forget. Behaviour lasts longer? Emotional element?	Emotional aspect of girls behaviour
33.	<u>grudge against other students</u> but		
34.	also against the staff as well.		
35.	Certainly their behaviour tends to be		
36.	<u>not overt but covert behaviour</u> I find	Differences in behaviour Less observable- visibility? Language associated with girls behaviour	Visibility of girls behaviour
37.	in terms of continual whispering and		
38.	lots of verbal assaults on people as		
39.	opposed to more... <u>I would</u>	Types of behaviour	Types of behaviour

<p>40. <u>associate more physical things with</u>  41. <u>boys but again as I said there have</u>  42. <u>been girls who clearly have displayed</u>  43. <u>a lot of violence.</u> They also try very  44. much to outdo [break in interview  45. due to outside disruption]  46. P - Sorry that's a little bit of a break! I  47. have forgotten what I was going to  48. say now.  49. D – you were saying  50. Oh yes and there is also a lot of  51. competition amongst girls as well and  52. I find that they try to <u>outdo</u> each other  53. quite a lot and if somebody doesn't  54. <u>come up to scratch in the way that</u>  55. <u>they look or in the way they present</u>  56. <u>themselves then girls will attack</u>  57. verbally other girls and be extremely  58. unpleasant to them. In terms of  59. accessing the curriculum because  60. that can be another reason why girls  61. kick off, I tend to find it is not the girls  62. really who do that because they <u>don't</u>  63. <u>understand the work that tends to be</u>  64. <u>more boys than girls who tend to do</u>  65. that than girls but no the reasons  66. really for exclusion are as as I say  67. the <u>continual persistent disruption,</u>  68. <u>defiance, refusal to follow instructions</u>  69. <u>but then also there will be some</u>  70. <u>violence aggressive tendencies</u> in  71. there as well. I can remember when  72. years ago when <u>I first started</u>  73. <u>teaching which is about 25 years' ago</u>  74. <u>that you wouldn't have girls who</u>  75. <u>would necessarily be so violent but</u>  76. <u>as the years have gone on I have</u>  77. <u>noticed more girls being more violent</u>  78. <u>and aggressive but clearly with boys</u>  79. <u>it has always been around</u> I think  80. with boys you know they will have s</p>		<p>As if there are clear gender roles/expectations</p> <p>Mentioned because of contrast to gender type Extremes of behaviour</p> <p>Motivations-girls trying to 'outdo' each other? Reactive vs motivated?</p> <p>Appearance? Sterotype? Identity? Problems with self-image and peer relations</p> <p>Verbal rather than physical?</p> <p>Difficulties with the curriculum</p> <p>Different reasons for behaviour- girls act out because of difficulties with work?</p> <p>Difference in frequency of challenging behaviour in girls</p> <p>Types of behaviour. Presenting problems</p> <p>Behaviour for girls has changed over time</p> <p>More violence- why?</p> <p>Where has this view come from? Always been around? Cultural beliefs? Gender stereotyping. More acceptance of violence in boys...</p>	<p>Gender role? Types of behaviour?</p> <p>Motivation of behaviour Intent?</p> <p>Self-image- identity? Comparison with peers.</p> <p>Causes of behaviour- curriculum</p> <p>Presenting behaviour</p> <p>Period of transition. Girls behaviour has changed.</p> <p>Girls behaviour stands out when extreme</p>
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Appendix A17- Example extract of analysis: Stages 4 (Smith et al, 2009)

TABLE OF THEMES

CODE:

THEMES - superordinate / general	PAGE / LINE	KEY WORDS/PHRASES
PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER ARE CENTRAL TO OUR UNDERSTANDING AND APPROACH TO GIRLS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR		
- Girls are constantly compared against their male counterparts	11-12 118 123/5	'I don't actually find it dissimilar to boys' 'girls trying to emulate boys' 'its almost like boys are trying to play catchup and whatever influence boys are having, girls now want to be involved'
- Professionals have a gendered model of deviance	29 40  83 87	'boys tend to shrug it off' 'I would associate more physical things with boys but again as I said there have been those girls who have displayed violence' 'violence in boys has always been around' 'Always been that sort of bitchiness that they have amongst themselves'
- Girls social identity/ gender has changed over time	101 106  76-8  92 111 125	'they want to be somebody' 'you have got to behave in this way, you have to look like this...' 'I remember when years ago... you wouldn't have girls who would necessarily be so violent'. 'move a stage further' 'a lot more girls into this streetwise stuff' 'shift of being'
GIRLS DEVIANCE IS DIFFERENT TO BOY	18 23/4  52	'Violence as well' 'Boys might just roll up them and that's it and then its over, whereas girls tend to continue it and don't know when to stop' 'continual persistent disruption, defiance, refusal to follow instructions, but also there will be violence and aggressive tendencies as well'
- Invisibility of girls behaviour	36	'Not overt but covert behaviour'
EXTERBNAL PROFESSIONALS TEND TO TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE FACTORS THAT INFLEUCE EXCLUSION	806  152 298 388	'not just parachuted in and expected to get on with it, but schools have to take responsibility too' 'Statistics and the pressure that is being piled on schools' 'because of the presutre they are under, they are under scrutiny all of the time' 'volume of students who need support'