University of Huddersfield Repository

Taylor, Georgia

Living with the dyslexia label: Exploring the life narratives of students labelled with dyslexia in higher education from a sociocultural perspective.

Original Citation

Taylor, Georgia (2019) Living with the dyslexia label: Exploring the life narratives of students labelled with dyslexia in higher education from a sociocultural perspective. Masters thesis, University of Huddersfield.

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/34827/

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/

Living with the dyslexia label: Exploring the life narratives of students labelled with dyslexia in higher education from a sociocultural perspective.

Georgia Taylor

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research

The University of Huddersfield

February 2018

Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/ or schedules to this thesis) owns any copyright in it (the "Copyright") and s/he has given The University of Huddersfield the right to use such Copyright for any administrative, promotional, educational and/or teaching purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, may be made only in accordance with the regulations of the University Library. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of any patents, designs, trademarks and any and all other intellectual property rights except for the Copyright (the "Intellectual Property Rights") and any reproductions of copyright works, for example graphs and tables ("Reproductions"), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property Rights and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions.

Abstract

The present study explores the life narratives of higher education students labelled with dyslexia, with particular focus on their perceptions of the educational practices that enabled and disabled their learning. By situating learning and learning difficulty within the wider social and cultural context, the research was able to explore 'dyslexia' through the participants' experiences of participation and non-participation within different social practices, throughout their life. A total of 6 participants from the University of Huddersfield voluntarily took part in 2 interviews each. The data from the interviews was then analysed using thematic analysis, which was guided by communities of practice theory. The following four themes emerged from the data: *Disabling barriers within the education system, Being acquired by the 'disability' label, Enabling practices and Eesisting the disability label*. Overall, the main findings suggest that there are numerous learning barriers that exist within the education system as a result of marginalising practices, particularly at school and college. This has shown to have detrimental effects on the participants' learning identity and thus learning development. However, once the participants experienced legitimate participation within a practice they enjoyed and felt they were good at, their identity shifted from a marginal identity to a much more positive learning identity, which encouraged their motivation to learn. Importantly, through the exploration of life narratives, the research was therefore able to capture how identity fluctuates throughout the participants' learning journey, through participation and non-participation within different communities of practice. Therefore, the findings provide support against the view that learning and learning difficulty is a 'fixed innate ability' and ultimately encouraging the notion of life-long learning development.

Table of contents

Chapter One

Introduction/Literature review

1.1 Defining dyslexia

The literature surrounding dyslexia falls into a number of different categories. Within these different categories, various theoretical assumptions regarding where dyslexia comes from, how it is identified and how it is defined, are discussed. Starting with the most commonly used definition in the UK, dyslexia is often referred to as a 'specific learning difficulty' (SPLD). According to the international classification of diseases (ICD-10) (WHO, 2016), SPLDs are described as a mixed disorder of scholastic skills, which refers to an "ill-defined residual category of disorders in which both arithmetical and reading or spelling skills are significantly impaired, but in which the disorder is not solely explicable in terms of general mental retardation or of inadequate schooling".

Despite this official classification, authorities maintain different perspectives on dyslexia, resulting in different explanations of the 'condition'. Although there is a wide scope of dyslexia research, the cognitive approach seems to dominate the research field, with the focus surrounding the identification of the 'cognitive deficits' that are thought to underlie the 'disability', through numerous experimental methods. Consequently, experts from the field are responsible for shaping dyslexia assessment and support practices within the British education system (Cameron & Billington, 2015). The direction of practice is also influenced by many powerful organisations and groups, such as those associated with the British Dyslexia Association (BDA). For example, the BDA (2008), which is a charity organisation that represents dyslexic individuals, states that dyslexia is a genetic condition that involves numerous cognitive impairments and is resistant to conventional teaching methods, although its effects may be reduced by using appropriate, specific intervention such as supportive counselling or information technology. However, it could be argued that unless young people have received good literacy teaching in the first place, it is not possible to identify whether any literacy difficulties they experience can be attributed to dyslexia or poor teaching.

Moreover, although on a group basis the identification of cognitive skills that predict literacy outcomes (e.g. letter sound-phenome awareness) has made significant progress (Muter et al., 2004), the findings do not readily translate to accurate predictions at the individual level (Law et al., 2012; Puolakanaho et al., 2007). Although screening assessments are able to identify reduced risk for those who show initial delays, it seems to be increasingly challenging to identify those who are likely to show a decline in skills. Therefore, there remains a need to track the development of poor performers (Snowling et al., 2011), and to gain a greater understanding of the mechanisms that underlie why a child's language skills may decline after seeming to develop normally (Law et al., 2012). With this in mind, as Snowling et al. (2013) argued, the value and efficiency of costly screening and assessment practices is questionable.

One alternative method for screening and assessment is the use of educational interventions. If dyslexia is to be considered an educational problem, with learning difficulties arising from problems 'acquiring' literacy skills, then educational interventions will mainly focus on identifying an individual's learning difficulties and improving their literacy skills. Although much of the educational research is conducted alongside cognitive research, over the years it has encouraged more of a focus on the comparison of different methods of intervention and teaching, rather than wholly focusing on examining innate cognitive ability.

For example, the National Literacy Strategy was introduced in 1998 with the aim of engaging schools in developing a structured teaching programme of literacy. The programme involved creating training resources and methods to help guide the teaching of phonological skills as part of the reading process, in order to help identify and support those with low literacy attainment. Powerful opportunities to strengthen and develop these achievements are provided through frameworks such as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). As part of the EYFS the assessment of a child's progress from the age 3 to 5 years was introduced to schools in 2003, as a type of educational intervention that compares their development to the national age expectancy, to ensure the best practice for beginner readers (Rose, 2006). In an investigation conducted by Snowling et al. (2011) which analysed the EYFS profiling system, the system was found to be a valid educational screening tool for the identification of children at risk of dyslexia. Measures of language, communication and literacy were also found to be the best predictor of educational success.

However, Snowling (2013) argued that the gap between identifying a child's reading difficulties and applying the practice of supportive interventions is too long, and that when the interventions are eventually implemented they are very short, which means that the ongoing needs of those with dyslexia are often neglected. As a result, Snowling (2013) suggests that there needs to be more of a focus on the evaluation of the educational approaches and school based intervention programmes that are provided for those labelled as having special educational needs (SEN). It is also apparent that there is a limited focus on the specific influence of educational practices on one's identity as a learner. Therefore, the present research aims to address these issues.

As a whole, whilst the different areas contribute greatly to conversation, there is a limited focus on research concerning those labelled with 'dyslexia' and the socially situated aspects of learning and learning difficulty (Cameron & Billington, 2015). Taking these different categories into account, the present research aims to gain a more holistic view of 'dyslexia' by exploring the subjective experiences of those labelled with the 'disability', with particular focus on how different learning contexts and social practices may influence how one learns. The following section will therefore discuss and critique the different approaches and provide a rationale for the exploration of the social and cultural aspects of 'dyslexia'.

Starting with the more clinically operational descriptions of dyslexia that concern the relationship between dyslexia and certain cognitive abilities, many cognitive researchers define dyslexia as a genetically inherited, neurological condition (Francks et al., 2002; Siegel, 2006). Although this is a common view within the literature and has influenced large organisations such as the BDA, the issue of genetic inheritance remains inconclusive. Nevertheless, according to the cognitive neurological approach, dyslexia is to be embraced as a medical condition and is classed as one of the largest developmental 'disorders', which involves the need for clear diagnostic criteria (Singleton, 2002).

One of the predominant theories of dyslexia is influenced by the general agreement amongst cognitive researchers that there is direct link between phonological processing skills and reading ability (Snowling, 2008; Torgeson, 2004). It is therefore argued that those labelled with dyslexia have a deficit in phonological processing skills, more specifically, "the representation and processing of speech sounds" (Ramus, 2003, p.212 ; Vellutino et al., 2004). Despite the assumption that genetic factors are responsible for phonological deficits, there is no evidence of an established link between phonological awareness and the best-validated dyslexia risk genes

(Giraud & Ramus, 2013). Evidence supporting the phonological processing theory of dyslexia concludes that on tasks requiring phonological awareness, those labelled as dyslexic perform particularly poorly. From this perspective, it is therefore argued that there is a straightforward link between phonological deficit and the explanation of the behaviour that characterises 'dyslexia'.

Throughout the literature, the most common way of exploring the phonological processing theory seems to be through comparing the spelling error profiles of those labelled with dyslexia, to the error profiles of younger students who are considered to have 'normal' development. For example, Friend and Olson (2008) analysed and compared the spelling errors of 77 pairs of children; each pair included an older child with a spelling disability (SD) and a younger child with the same spelling ability, but without a SD. The findings confirmed that the spellings produced by younger children without an SD (mean age of 8 years) involved less phonological errors than those produced by older children with a SD (mean age of 11 years|). However, there seems to be an inconsistency amongst the literature, with numerous other studies reporting an inability to find a significant difference between the two spelling error profiles. For example, Cassar et al. (2005) compared 25 children identified with dyslexia (mean age of 11 years), with 25 younger children who were considered to be progressing 'normally' (mean age of 6 years) and found no significant difference between the two groups in regard to their phonological skills (phoneme counting and non-word spelling).

Regardless of the conflicting results, cognitive research continues to dominate the dyslexia research field, with deficits in phonological processing being one of the main ways to identify dyslexia. According to the cognitive approach, the neurobiological aspects of dyslexia and patient history should be emphasised, as well as quantification and qualification of clinical symptoms (i.e. reading and spelling performance), in order to provide a comprehensive framework for defining and identifying dyslexia (Habib & Giraud, 2013). It is therefore apparent that the main concern for cognitive research is to identify the processing deficits that underlie dyslexia (Riddick, 2010).

However, as well as the inconclusive genetic research, ambiguity within the research also becomes an issue as individuals show different combinations, expressions and levels of severity of these underlying difficulties, which is when the phenomenon of dyslexia starts to become extremely complex (Riddick, 2010). As with most learning difficulties, Siegel and Lipka (2008)

stated that even though the theoretical definitions may be reasonably agreed on, the difficulties start to appear when deciding when these definitions should be operationalised. For example, if a child seems to be behind with their learning, how behind do they have to be for it to be viewed as a disability and how is the disability quantified or judged? (Riddick, 2010). It could therefore be argued that the labelling of dyslexia is much subtler than academic discussions may suggest.

In a study which aimed to investigate the cognitive phenotypes of dyslexia, Snowling (2008) reported findings which suggest that literacy difficulties cannot be sufficiently explained by phonological deficits alone, and it is more likely for children with multiple deficits (including language difficulties) to experience reading failure. However, Snowling (2008) further stated that it is unseemly to question whether a deficiency in phonological processing skills is necessary or sufficient to be held accountable for dyslexia, as this type of question requires the use of arbitrary boundaries for defining deficits. Snowling (2008) therefore suggested that dyslexia is to be viewed as a continuously distributed dimension, which involves the placement of individuals on a continuum. From this perspective, those who are placed at the lower end of the continuum are more likely to have a deficiency in phonological skills; however, they are also more likely to have a deficiency in various other cognitive processes. Therefore, it seems as though dyslexia is being placed on a spectrum, which includes a variety of specific learning and language difficulties and a continuum between those who display a low, average and high standard of reading ability (Riddick, 2010).

However, the idea of a continuum starts to become difficult when deciding where to draw the line between individuals deemed to have 'dyslexia' and those deemed not to. It has also been argued that drawing the line may be seen as inappropriate, which then raises further questions in regard to the best way of characterising the continuum between, for example, good readers and poor readers (Riddick, 2010). Without a universally agreed on operational definition of dyslexia, it is difficult to be certain that assessments are measuring the same thing, which then questions the validity of the resultant diagnosis or classification of dyslexia (Siegel & Lipka, 2008). Furthermore, as 'dyslexia' is not made up of one unifying difficulty it raises uncertainty in whether children need to show similar difficulties or whether can they show completely different difficulties and still be called dyslexic (Riddick, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is the cognitive approach that has had the most influence in regard to shaping dyslexia assessment practices and support programmes. However, it could be argued that the

efficiency of the prevention and remediation programmes formulated as a result of this particular research is questionable. For example, if every 'dyslexic' shows different symptoms as a result of different cognitive deficits, how can prevention and remediation programmes for 'dyslexia' benefit all and provide coherent support? This issue is of great significance, particularly within mainstream schooling. Supporting evidence for this suggests that students labelled with dyslexia struggle to keep up with their non-dyslexic peers due to lack of educational support at an optimum level (Riddick, 2006). Furthermore, much of the cognitive research largely focuses on identifying deficits within an experimental setting, with less focus on the wider environmental context and the broader everyday influences, such as that of social practices, social relationships and an individual's view of themselves as a learner.

Given the questionable validity of 'dyslexia' as a scientific, neurological condition, in terms of education, it may be more useful to look beyond the cognitive difficulties 'dyslexia' most commonly represents and begin to understand its impact on individual lives. In order to understand dyslexia from this perspective, and explore how it may influence one's identity and learning identity, it seems most appropriate to adopt a socio-cultural approach. The socio-cultural approach thus situates learning and learning difficulty in its social context, which shifts the focus away from biological deficits (Horton, 2015), and attempts to understand disability in terms of participation in different social practices, with the hope of encouraging better provision for those labelled with impairments.

It is therefore clear that the definitions of dyslexia vary between different disciplines, from biological explanations to a more holistic theory, which situates learners in their wider social and cultural context. Such approaches seek to understand the meaning of dyslexia on lived experience.

Applying a socio-cultural approach to learning

By adopting a socio-cultural approach to learning and thus learning disability, we can begin to understand the importance of social context and the impact it has on encouraging and discouraging learning. Socio-cultural theories, which were first systemised and applied by Vygotsky, importantly recognise the social nature of learning, suggesting that learning happens when an individual engages in social activities, and interacts with other people. Vygotsky's theories thus emphasise the major role of social interaction in the development of cognition

(Vygotsky, 1978). Importantly, Vygotsky (1978) noted within his theory that the existence of cognitive processes is not to be denied, however, the development of such higher processes are to be understood as being embedded in experience within the socially situated context.

Many theoreticians have since developed on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theories, such as Lave and Wenger (1991), who demonstrate an understanding of learning through the communities of practice (CoP) theory. Similarly to Vygotsky (1978), Lave and Wenger (1991) challenge the traditional cognitive assumption that knowledge is constructed soley in an individual's head. Both theories share the same emphasis on social context, fundmentally suggesting that learning occurs through social interaction and engagement in social activities. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning takes place through participating in different communities of practice, therefore, the CoP theory seeks to understand how different kinds of social engagement may encourage or discourage learning development, rather than focusing on internal cognitive processes. However, it must be acknowledged that the focus on the social aspect of learning is not the displacement of the person, but is instead the view of the person as a social participant, rather than just a cognitive entity (Wenger, 2010). The present research will therefore explore and analyse learning and learning 'disability' in relation to the CoP theory.

1.2.1 The CoP theory of learning

Within the CoP theory, the development of learning and identity is understood through social relationships within particular contexts of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998). A CoP is defined as a group of people who share a common interest, craft or profession as well as similar values and beliefs. In order for a CoP to form, it must have: a shared *domain* of interest and knowledge which creates a common ground and inspires members to participate, a *community* which occurs when relationships develop through regular interaction and communication between members so they can learn from one another, and *practice* which refers to the specific focus around which the community develops i.e. through shared repertoires such as stories, experiences or problem solving, all of which sustain mutual engagement. The underpinning assumption of the theory therefore suggests that members of the group learn from each other through the sharing of knowledge and experiences, which encourages the individuals to grow and develop as they interact regularly (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In order for a new member of the CoP to become a legitimate, experienced member, they must go through a process called Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). LPP refers to when the newcomer (novice) initially participates in small, simple tasks within the community, learning through interaction with more knowledgeable and experienced members (old timers), until they have learnt and developed the skills and expertise they need to fully participate within the CoP. Wenger (1998) thus refers to knowledge as competence with respect to valued enterprises within a community, and knowing as a matter of actively participating in such enterprises, in other words, actively engaging in the world. Learning is therefore interpreted as becoming more competent in the community's practice. Participants within their so-called communities therefore learn through doing, becoming and belonging.

As one negotiates the meaning of their experience of membership within these social communities, they begin to develop a sense of identity. Wenger (1998, p153) argued that identity is experienced through competences that are demonstrated through sharing common enterprise, values, assumptions, purpose and communication within a CoP, which means that "we know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, useable, negotiable and we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive". It is therefore understood that through participation and non-participation within various different communities of practice, identity is socially constructed, and is negotiated through three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Engagement is defined by Wenger (1998, p173) as the "active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning". It is thus argued that our experience of who we are is profoundly shaped by the ways in which we engage with each other as we learn what we can do and how society responds to our actions, through the formation of trajectories and the unfolding of histories of practice. Imagination then refers to the process by which we begin to construct images of ourselves in the communities we inhibit and how we orient ourselves within these (Wenger, 2000). Finally, alignment involves "coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises" (Wenger 1998, p174). It is argued that engagement, imagination and alignment "each create relationships of belonging that expand identity through space and time" (Wenger, 1998, p181).

As one constructs their identity within different CoPs, they negotiate their "ability, facility and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration" (Wenger 1998, p197). In other words, they negotiate how they influence

activities within different communities of practice. Therefore, rather than acquiring knowledge, learning is about a change in identity in relation to different communities of practice. Wenger (1998) identifies: *participation*, which refers to the direct interaction between members of a community and *reification*, which refers to the creation of artefacts used to affect other people's behaviour, such as lesson plans or the national curriculum, as the two main ways of influencing within a community.

However, it is important to note that communities of practice are not isolated, and are in fact integrated into a much broader social system that includes other communities, thus it is understood that we live and learn across a complex, multiplicity of practices (Wenger, 2010). Learning as the production of practice therefore creates boundaries, as different communities of practice interact, either creating continuities or discontinuities of knowledge sharing. Through the process Wenger (1998) refers to as brokering, elements of one practice can be introduced into another, through the connections provided by people between different communities. However, a broker of any kind may be resisted by a community with high boundaries, as the community hold on to their regime of competence, which could mean the community may become stagnant. It is understood that participation and reification can both contribute to the discontinuity of a boundary. Wenger (1998) argued that sometimes a boundary can be reified through the use of explicit markers such as titles, dress or degrees, although he makes it clear that the absence of an explicit marker does not necessarily mean that the boundaries are non-existent. Instead, it is the effect that these subtle or not so subtle markers have on participation that determines the degree of the boundary. Therefore, although there may not be an explicit reification of the boundary itself, the outsider may be reified through certain barriers to participation.

It is from this perspective that we can understand the inclusion but also the exclusion many people face within society, due to the boundaries of certain communities of practice. For example, from an educational perspective, it could be argued that although on the surface the classroom practice may seem inclusive, it could in fact be considered a highly boundaried community due to its very linear way of learning, i.e. through the national curriculum and testing, which prevents many from participating in such practices and thus ultimately disables learning.

Wenger (1998) further challenges the traditional educational design, as he argues that learning is not about form as it belongs to the realm of experience and practice, and is thus an ongoing, integral part of our lives. From this perspective, it seems obscure that one would try and isolate it

from the wider social world and measure it through the use of strict regimes such as the national curriculum and national tests. As Wenger (1998, p229) argued, "One can design patterns or define procedures, but neither the patterns nor the procedures produce the practice as it unfolds. One can design systems of accountability and policies for communities of practice to live by, but one cannot design the practice that will emerge in response to such institutionalised systems. One can design roles but one cannot design the identities that will be constructed through these roles…One can design a curriculum but not learning". Therefore, it could be argued that although educational institutions have been designed for the purpose of encouraging learning, such strict regimes may limit the diversity of social and cultural practices within educational institutions, which in turn limits the opportunity for various different communities of practice to emerge, thus disabling learning opportunity.

To conclude, by using a socio-cultural approach as a lens to view the data, learning is interpreted as a social entity. More specifically, through the use of communities of practice theory, learning is interpreted as the process of becoming more competent in the community's practice through participation. The present research therefore aims to analyse how learning is enabled and disabled through the participants' experiences of participation and non-participation within different social practices. Importantly, the reality of inclusion and exclusion within educational institutions will therefore be explored, due to the potentially harmful consequences one could face as a result of being included in or out of certain settings (Lawthom, 2012).

1.3 What does it mean to be dyslexic?

If we are to look at the wider social and cultural context in which an individual develops, it can be argued that particular societal and cultural values will inevitably affect an individual's identity (Kozulin et al., 2003). Although dyslexia is described as having many aspects to it such as difficulties sequencing, organising and distinguishing between left and right (Riddick, 2010) the ICD-10 states that it is mainly characterised by impaired reading and spelling skills (WHO, 2016), both of which are fundamental to developing good literacy skills.

In legal terms, according to the Equality Act 2010, you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on your ability to do normal activities. From this perspective, dyslexia can be seen as a 'disability' as it has a negative effect on one's ability to participate in certain literacy practices that are aligned with school norms and behaviours. As Horton (2015) argued, in an environment where literacy is highly

valued, good literacy skills are deemed desirable however being illiterate is deemed as a morally unacceptable position and thus considered a 'disability'. It is therefore apparent that the wider disability community of practice is embedded within an ableist culture which regularly attends to 'disability' (Campbell, 2009), and privileges 'normal' individuals who are able to participate fully within society (Lawthom, 2012). If we apply CoP theory to learning disabilities we can therefore begin to acknowledge the exclusion of people considered to have 'impairments', such as those labelled with dyslexia, particularly in an environment where literacy is highly valued.

Consequently, in order to participate fully in society, one must be able to perform adequate literacy skills (Rashid & Brooks, 2010). However, as Dugdale & Clarke (2008) acknowledged, there are many reasons for why an individual may struggle with literacy, for example, if one has low aspirations, experience of disaffection with learning, or significantly struggles with certain aspects of education and requires additional help. Nevertheless, situated knowledge (the idea that knowledge cannot solely be an individual product) described by the CoP framework challenges the superior position that society traditionally places academic learning (Hammersley, 2005), suggesting that access to traditional learning contexts is often denied due to marginality and liminality (Lawthom, 2012).

As previously discussed, according to the CoP theory, learning is interpreted as becoming more competent in the community's practice, however, the potential to learn, belong and do etc is mediated by whether participation within the practice is allowed. It could be argued that those labelled as having a 'disability' are constantly trying to engage in and belong to a 'non-disabled' community of practice, that is 'mainstream' society (Lawthom, 2012). If we apply this to dyslexia, we can begin to understand the struggle that those labelled with dyslexia have when trying to participate within traditional learning contexts, and the wider social and cultural context of modern western society where literacy is perceived as a necessity.

From this perspective, it is understood that although the concept of dyslexia may stem from cognition it is merely cognitive differences rather than cognitive deficits that marginalise individuals. Simply, those who do not fall into the dominant category of individuals that think in a way that can easily make sense of literacy, which is fundamentally socially produced, are considered to have a 'learning disability' such as dyslexia. It can therefore be argued that because the influence that literacy has amongst culture and society is highly significant, the 21st century UK society can in fact be considered a disabling environment, which in turn suggests that those

who experience literacy difficulties are likely to find many aspects in life problematic (Horton, 2015).

Consequently, we can attempt to understand how the concept of the self emerges as both children and adults interpret the responses of other people to their actions, either verbally or nonverbally (Burden, 2005), within the social and cultural context in which they develop. It could be argued that societal perceptions and social practices have largely constructed the 'disability' that is associated with dyslexia, and has subsequently caused others to negatively interpret dyslexia as an undesirable difference, which encourages social marginalisation. For example, if one is considered 'disabled' then they are different, and social practices that advocate differential treatment for those considered to have certain 'disabilities', are put into action (Horton, 2015). Furthermore, Tett and Crowther (2011) stated that as a result of such practices, it is particular common for those who have literacy difficulties to develop a negative identity in relation to learning as they tend to internalise a deficit discourse and assume that experiences of learning 'failure' are solely their responsibility.

One study that supports this theory and explores the effects of marginalisation is that of Shifrer et al. (2013). They used data from the Education Longitudinal study to identify how many academic courses students labelled with learning difficulties completed by the time they finished school, in comparison to students who have similar social and academic backgrounds, attitudes and behaviours, but do not have a learning disability label. Despite suggesting that those labelled may have the ability to achieve the normative course standards when they receive the appropriate support from school, the findings confirmed that they completed less academic courses than those who were unlabelled. Findings also confirmed a large difference in the completion of college coursework, with those labelled falling short, even though they received similar results for their pervious coursework and shared similar non-cognitive abilities with students who were unlabelled. Although Shifrer et al. (2013) states that the results support the assumption that the 'disability' label may uphold marginalisation by establishing a status group which restricts academic opportunity, the reason why students labelled with a learning difficulty complete less academic courses than those without remains unclear. The evidence from the study does however highlight the possible negative influence school practices have on those labelled with learning difficulties when it comes to completing academic courses. Shifrer et al. (2013) suggested that it is likely that the label negatively influences the students' own self-belief and attitude, as well as

the teacher's perception of their ability, which consequently discourages the teacher to direct the students towards more challenging courses.

However, it could be argued that regardless of the label, if an individual shows difficulty learning then it follows that the teacher will have lower expectations for their academic outcome. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that in an inclusive environment, each individual's learning needs should be met, whether they are labelled or not, so that they receive the encouragement and support they need to feel fulfilled in their learning development. Evidence to support this comes from Tsovili (2004), who found that students who experienced a high amount of anxiety when reading, reported difficulties with their teachers lacking support emotionally and physically, disregarding their learning efforts, and expressing conflicting expectations that were often too high.

Following on from this, there seems to be an expanding amount of evidence which suggests that children who experience dyslexia related problems are more likely to develop a negative or distorted self-concept (Burden, 2005), which may be a result of their marginalised status. For example, a recent study conducted by Novita (2016) compared self-esteem and anxiety profiles of children with and without dyslexia and found that children with dyslexia have higher anxiety and lower self-esteem issues than children without. However, results only proved significant in specific domains such as a school setting, rather than the general living environment. Although these findings provide a significant cause and effect relationship, which supports the idea that individuals identified as dyslexic are more likely to experience negative emotional consequences, again, the exact causes of the anxiety and low self-esteem are unknown.

According to Pollak (2005), students may experience poor psychological well-being as a result of poor academic achievement as they internalise their problems, particularly as they recognise that they differ from their peers, with some students reporting that they have a 'neurological' difference. Furthermore, Ridsdale (2005) argued that a vicious cycle of low attainment and well-being may start to emerge, as children experience negative reactions from peers/adults, which reduces their self-esteem. However, it could be argued that the anxiety and self-esteem issues that an individual labelled with dyslexia experience go beyond marginalisation and labelling, and may also be caused by the frustration of constantly experiencing barriers in doing something to their own satisfaction. For example, in a study which aimed to investigate the role anxiety has on the lives of dyslexic adolescents, Tsovili (2004) found that individuals with the highest reading

anxiety reported their experiences of reading as 'tough' and 'difficult', with some describing it as a 'threat' and a stressful 'challenge'. Tsovili (2004) concluded that when adolescents with dyslexia experience reading difficulties and their past failures reoccur, they may experience an increased amount of threat, thus suggesting that the difficulty and frustration they experience whilst trying to read is largely responsible for their distress and anxiety.

Furthermore, Martin and Marsh (2003) argued that the fear of failure is a primary factor relevant to anxiety. However, academic resilience has been found to be a protective factor, which helps to reduce the fear of failure and encourages an individual who may be experiencing reading difficulties to accept academic setbacks and pressure (Martin, 2002), ultimately allowing them to develop the necessary self-efficacy beliefs to persevere and achieve their goals (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). Moreover, it has been argued that when an individual believes in their abilities and likelihood of achieving their goals, they are more likely to experience positive learning outcomes (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; Martin & Marsh, 2008).

Nevertheless, the findings support the need to further explore the social and cultural influences on learning and identity, particularly within an educational context, in order to understand the specific impact the classroom setting has on those identified as having learning difficulties. It is apparent that being labelled and diagnosed with dyslexia is a reality for many (Horten, 2015), thus the influence of the label requires increased attention. At the most basic level, it could be argued that a binary opposition is set up between normality and abnormality through the use of 'disability' labels (Shakespeare, 1996), which heavily influences policy, culture and society and in a society that values literacy and wealth production, those labelled as 'learning disabled' are defined as different, inadequate and less productive. It could be argued that how we perceive and interact with individuals could therefore construct 'disability' within our culture (Horten, 2015). In other words, it seems more likely that the literate will succeed in society due to their increased opportunities and their superior position, which unfortunately keeps those with less literacy skills in a dependant position (Collinson et al., 2012).

An approach related to a more social theory of learning therefore focuses on a disabled minority oppressed and excluded by society, rather than by their individual deficits, which brings attention to power and identity, as it places "moral responsibility on society to remove burdens which have been imposed, and to enable disabled people to participate" (Shakespeare, 2010, p.270).   It is clear that the impact of the dyslexia label goes beyond simply categorising individuals as having

special educational needs and can in fact impact on one's identity and social identity. As identity is central to human learning (Wenger, 1998), it seems of great significance to explore the impact that dyslexia labelling can have on the individual in regard to their self-concept and learning development.

1.4 The influence of the dyslexia label

There is controversy within the literature regarding the influence of the dyslexia label. Traditionally, sociological texts highlight the disruptive nature of labelling (Macdonald, 2010), suggesting that labelling is seen as a fundamental part in the construction of issues such as discrimination and stigmatization (Oliver, 2009). However, Quicke and Winter (1994) argue that whether labelling is deemed as an advantage or disadvantage largely depends on the context and nature of the given label. For example, as dyslexia is considered to be a 'hidden' disability due to its lack of physical symptoms, acquiring the label can be difficult (Horton, 2015), because unlike individuals with physical difficulties it is easier for those with dyslexia to pass as 'normal'. However, Riddick (2000) argued that less visible 'disabilities' such as dyslexia become much more visible in specific contexts, such as educational institutions, particularly to peers or powerful and important people, which can cause stigma. Riddick (2000) therefore suggests that a label is not necessary for stigma to occur, and that the absence of a label can also have a negative impact.

According to Dumit (2006) the only way a 'condition' such as dyslexia is recognised/accepted by the medical, psychological and educational professions is through an official diagnosis. Dumit (2006) argued that a person's difficulties must be proved real and legitimate in order for them to access supporting practices. Dumit (2006) further argued that without the acceptance or recognition of contested 'conditions', individuals may start to doubt their own difficulties, which can have a detrimental effect on their self-esteem and identity (Burden, 2005).

For example, Taylor et al. (2010) conducted a study that explored the level of self-esteem of children labelled as having 'dyslexia', in comparison to those labelled as having 'general special educational needs (SEN)'. The scores from the self-esteem tests proved to be significantly lower for the 'general SEN' group in comparison to both the 'dyslexia' and the control group (those unlabelled), suggesting that those with general SEN experience the lowest self-esteem. The self-esteem scores revealed no significant difference between those labelled with 'dyslexia' and those

without a label. Although the effects of the dyslexia label were not explored directly, from these findings Taylor et al. (2010) suggested that unlike the label of dyslexia, the label of 'general SEN' may negatively impact on a child's self-esteem, as it does not offer very much explanation for their academic difficulties. Findings also indicated that the availability of targeted interventions for those with a less specific label is lacking, thus suggesting that the 'dyslexia' label may be advantageous in terms of access to target interventions.

However, the assumptions of the differences derived from the results cannot be fully explained as there are multiple factors that may influence the self-esteem of a child, which the study has not considered, thus further investigation is required. Lauchlan and Boyle (2007) also argued that the adequacy of the supporting interventions that are provided after a child acquires the label is questionable. For example, are extra resources designed to simply tackle the label as opposed to attending to the individual needs of a child? Lauchlan and Boyle (2007) stated that there needs to be a greater understanding in regard to the nature of supporting interventions, particularly in mainstream education. According to Gillman et al. (2000, p389), parents, children and teachers often want their problems officially diagnosed and explained by scientific 'truths' or 'facts'; however, this can often lead to a 'disabled identity', as people with learning difficulties "remain embodied and within the definitional control of professionals". As discussed, the definition of dyslexia within the educational profession, such as that of teachers and educational psychologists, may be inconsistent. This ambiguity is likely to provoke confusion and a lack of clarity and consistency amongst the supportive practices offered, which seems to contradict the positive influence the labels are supposed to provide (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007).

In an attempt to explore the impact of labelling on teachers' beliefs, Gibbs and Elliot (2015) conducted a study involving 267 teachers from 23 different primary schools around the North-East. The teachers were asked to fill out two questionnaires: one questionnaire examined their efficacy beliefs and the other examined their beliefs on the underlying nature of the two terms 'dyslexia' and 'reading difficulty', which were the two variants of each questionnaire. In variant A, the word 'dyslexia' was used and in variant B, that term was replaced by the phrase 'reading difficulties'. The results suggested that the teachers' efficacy beliefs varied depending on the label. For example, the teachers seemed to regard 'dyslexia' as an 'unchangeable condition' and were thus less likely to believe in their ability to make a difference, suggesting that their experience did not contribute to their understanding of how to improve the ability of those with

dyslexia. Contrastingly, the teachers' response to the 'reading disability' label related more to the belief that greater experience positively influenced how much they would intervene, rather than to essentialist beliefs about 'reading difficulties'. The findings are of great significance as they identify the influence that 'superficial labels' have on teachers' ability to help pupils who are struggling, with particular negative beliefs regarding dyslexia.

To further this argument, Duchane et al. (2008) revealed how a lack of knowledge or misunderstandings regarding learning 'disabilities' can often provoke teacher stigma. Upton et al. (2005) also found that the lack of physical cues for 'invisible disabilities' such as dyslexia, can often trigger stigma, with findings suggesting that people (including those labelled with disabilities) often perceived individuals with more obvious limitations as more worthy of extra support, as opposed to those with less visible limitations. Upton et al. (2005) suggested that this is mainly a result of people assuming that learning difficulties are a consequence of low intelligence due to the lack of 'disability' cues, rather than disabling environmental issues. Rao (2004) also concluded that university faculty are more likely to provide accommodations for those labelled with dyslexia when they understand disability legislation or have previous teaching experience. Furthermore, Smythe (2010) addressed the question of assessing to a label or assessment of needs, and concluded that ultimately the label does not indicate what the problem is, except that there is a reading and writing problem, which was already known before the label was supplied. Instead, what is required is the assessment of individual needs, whether it is one to one phonics teaching or deciding which mind mapping software is most suitable.

In alignment with the argument against the use of 'disability' labels, Keil et al. (2006) states that labels perpetuate environmental barriers to inclusion. As well as teacher stigma, Leseyane (2018) et al. (2018) found that students labelled with dyslexia were less accepted by their peers. The reports from those labelled suggest that their peers did not understand their learning difficulties and that they were often centre of attention amongst the 'normal' learners as a result of their struggles, which made them vulnerable to bullying and ridicule. Denhart (2008) also discussed that students often refused to seek additional accommodations due to fear of being stigmatized, despite acknowledging that it would help them with their workload and increase their academic performance.

However, Riddick (2000) states that stigma occurs regardless of the label and that the label simply encapsulates the 'disability'. It could be argued that the existing stigma may be a consequence of the great emphasis placed on the relationship between literacy skills and success both in education and in life, which promotes inferiority for those who fall into the minority category (Jodrell, 2010) and learn in a different way to what the traditional education system values. For example, if learning differences were understood and accepted rather than stigmatized as a 'disability', the minority would no longer be seen as inferior within society and stigma may decrease. Riddick (2000) further stated that the level of stigma attached to the label can increase or decrease, depending on the relative form of the label and the cultural context in which it is being applied. For example, it can be argued that the term 'mentally handicapped'is often interpreted as a negative label, similarly to the terms 'dyslexia' and 'disability', whereas 'exceptional learner' portrays a more positive description of a person.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that by focusing on assessing each child's individual needs, including both their strengths and weaknesses, rather than assessing for a 'label', the social disadvantage and exclusion from mainstream society that the 'dyslexia' label upholds (Gillman et al., 2000), including the negative beliefs from teachers (Gibbs & Elliot, 2015), can be avoided. From this perspective, a much more inclusive learning approach could be applied, in order to supply greater provision for those needing support.

However, at the current government policy level it seems as though the label is a necessity for support to exist. Therefore, despite the discussed damaging preconceptions that labelling may have on individuals, it could be argued that the label also has its advantages, as it determines access to support. For example, if one is labelled as having a learning disability in higher education (HE), the government offers a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which can help fund specialist learning equipment such as computers (Student Finance England, 2018). Likewise, if pupils with learning difficulties are identified by schools, they are able to attract resources and receive the funding needed to support those with learning difficulties. Although there is not a formulated intervention strategy, the Code of Practice provides examples of the sort of supportive practices the schools should deploy, such as one-to-one tuition and group support as well as introducing special equipment or varied learning materials and training staff to provide strategies that are more effective for the student (Department for Education, 2015). The use of an individual educational plan to assess each child's progression in relation to targets is

also recommended. Keslair et al. (2012) argue that one of the SEN programmes main attractive features is that it attends to the needs of each individual, rather than targeting the whole class/school, thus the specific difficulties of each pupil are addressed. It has also been argued that each categorical label provides teachers and professionals with a general idea about the children's learning characteristics, and thus enables them to communicate with each other about what the best support may be (Henley et al., 2010).

However, the Department of Education (2015) revealed that the 'disability' criteria is often contested as it is based on professional interpretation, which could encourage an increase in the amount of students being labelled as having SEN. For example, if the SEN funding is influenced by the number of students labelled with SEN or low test scores, there may be an incentive to label more students as having SEN or to reinforce low achievement. Similarly, basing funding on pupil numbers in special schools could also increase the number of students attending special schools, which subsequently increases costs.

Office for Standards in Education's (OFSTED) (2010) special educational needs and disability review for 0-19 year olds also reported that although extra provision was provided in and out of school, for those labelled as having SEN, the quality of the provision was not good enough and did not significantly improve the child's attainment. The inspectors stated that additional provision within school was often making up for poor whole-class teaching or pastoral support, rather than helping those who needed a range of specialist support. The review further reported that there was too much of a focus on whether the provision was or was not provided rather than whether it was effective, thus the current needs of the children were not being met. OFSTED (2010) concluded that the SEN label was being used too widely, and those with low attainment and slow progress were too often identified as having SEN, when in reality their needs were no different from those of most other pupils. As a result, although on the surface it seems as though the label is helpful in the way that it attracts necessary resources, there remains to be a constant danger that limited resources and relatively expensive additional provision is being used incorrectly and thus not benefitting those who need it most.

Furthermore, Riddick (2000) acknowledged the importance of analysing 'disability' labels from both political and personal perspectives, and suggested that it would be useful to integrate these perspectives to provide a unified framework that establishes coherency. In regard to the more personal effects of the label, Riddick (2000) stated that the label must be deconstructed in order

to explore the impact that private and public labels can have on social and emotional development. The findings from Riddick's (2000) study, which aimed to examine the relationship between stigma and labelling, suggest that having a private label can be useful as it encourages personal understanding and control. The findings further suggest that the label may also be useful at the public level as it prevents others from perceiving them as lazy and stupid and thus accounts for their 'difference', however, some students reported that they were concerned about public labels due to fears of bullying and feelings of inferiority amongst their peers. Riddick (2000, p665) concluded that it may be advantageous to view formal labelling as an "historical process", in which individuals may use the label when it best suits them, i.e. as a means of support and raising awareness, then dispense of the label when it no longer serves a positive purpose. However, Riddick (2000) importantly noted that further research needs to be done to explore the social psychological factors that influence labelling.

Although there is a great amount of research that touches on the influence of the label, there is limited research directly exploring the personal consequences of the official diagnosis and thus the impact of the label, with a particularly scarce amount of recent research. Nevertheless, as Glazzard (2010) set out to investigate the factors that affect the self-esteem of learners, he found that a positive diagnosis of 'dyslexia' and 'ownership' of the label significantly contributed to one's self-esteem. Glazzard (2010) conducted semi-structured interviews with secondary-aged pupils who had received an official dyslexia diagnosis. Findings confirmed that a critical element for developing positive self-concept and self-esteem is being officially 'diagnosed' with dyslexia. Similarly to Riddick (2000), Glazzard (2010) stated that the participants felt like the 'dyslexia' label gave them a way of explaining their difficulties and a reason for their difficulties, which stopped them from viewing themselves as 'stupid' or 'thick', thus concluding that an early diagnosis of dyslexia is essential for developing a positive self-concept.

In addition, findings also suggest that prior to diagnosis, participants experienced low self-esteem and feelings of isolation due to negative interactions from peers and teachers. Although some participants felt supported by peers and teachers, others reported peer bullying and feelings of humiliation due to unfair treatment from teachers. However, Glazzard (2010) confirmed that there needs to be more contribution from the research field, in regard to the impact of the official diagnosis of dyslexia on a pupil's self-confidence and self-esteem.

According to Lauchlan and Boyle (2007), as well as the influence of the child's teacher and parents, it is extremely important that whole school issues, specific classroom factors and community issues are explored, and the influence they have on the child's difficulties is considered. Gillman et al. (2000) stated that when it comes to labelling the influence of the social or structural context is much less of a focus, and the label is often based on the notion of impairment within the individual. However, Poole (2003) importantly noted that if the focus is shifted away from the definition that suggests dyslexia is a problem within the individual, the influence of socio-cultural factors and individual differences could be explored. In turn, Poole (2003) stated that students will be free from 'constructed' failure and schools will also have the freedom to explore individuality and creativity in order to meet each student's unique needs. It is therefore important that the broader practices within the education system are explored in order to gain a deeper understanding of what may be disabling participation and thus learning.

1.5 Disabling barriers within the education system

Although understandings of dyslexia locate dyslexia within the individual, more recent social theories of learning offer a distributed explanation, where dyslexia can be understood to be a result of environmental barriers within society, particularly within environments where literacy is highly valued. As literacy skills seem to demonstrate intelligence and 'success' within society, it is of no surprise that those who experienced difficulty participating in the acquisition and performance of literacy in the educational community's approved ways, may also experience more generalised difficulties. In order for participation to occur, there needs be a shared understanding of the barriers that prevent one from learning in regard to whole school issues, specific classroom factors and community issues (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007), as concluded in the preceding section. The main focus must therefore be on breaking down the barriers to participation to enable one to learn. As Reid (2009, p.193) stated, "it is important to shift from the mind of viewing dyslexia as a 'disability' or 'deficit' and move towards a more positive and pro-active perspective" which involves attending to each student's individual needs in a holistic manner, when attempting to break down the learning barriers. This section will therefore explore different practices that may disable or cause a barrier to learning within educational contexts.

Although the amount of students labelled with dyslexia in HE is on the increase (Pino & Mortari, 2014), Wray (2013) noted that before 'dyslexic' individuals enter HE they face a complicated journey fraught with barriers, which can slow their progress and even stop them

completely in their tracks. For example, research suggests that for individuals labelled with dyslexia, it is their emotive response to failure, confusion and frustration that is deemed as one of the major barriers to learning. McNulty (2003) reported that for many adults with dyslexia, their school experiences are described as 'traumatic'. The findings also suggest that emotional scars can be left throughout adulthood due to the recollection of feeling stupid, inferior, lazy, and different, which are feelings that are often rooted in the distressing school experiences. McNulty (2003) importantly noted that the interplay between the participants' learning challenges and self-esteem issues were expressed as the central plots of their life narratives.

According to Burden (2005), there is a growing amount of evidence to suggest that the failure to recognise dyslexia related difficulties at school also increases the risk of developing a distorted self-concept. Burden (2005) further argued that the ability to overcome the detrimental effects of a negative self-image is increasingly challenging in later life, as well as school, unless individuals are encouraged to understand and approach their difficulties in a holistic manner, which includes generating an understanding of all aspects of their development. Self-concept is also an important factor in relation to the interpretation of experiences, as it significantly contributes towards helping individuals make sense or give meaning to them (Burden, 2005). For example, the role of a negative self-concept is likely to be responsible for one interpreting their failure on a learning task in global terms, rather than a one-off experience. Although it is possible that this negative self-concept can be shifted, it is understood that the process of positively changing how one sees themselves can be difficult and complex, meaning that no matter how much a teacher or lecturer positively reinforces the individual, a much more deep-rooted action is needed to see positive results (Burden, 2005).

In order to try to encourage positive learning emotion, we must therefore look at why an individual feels this way. It has been noted within the research that much of the failure experienced by those with dyslexia may be a consequence of unattainable targets, due to traditional assessment practices. For example, Reid (2012) stated that measuring educational progress seems to be a current trend within the education system, which consequently directs a focus towards variables that easily measure academic achievement. Reid (2012) further argues that traditional forms of assessment can obstruct a student who displays difficulties of a dyslexic nature, as there is usually a discrepancy between their understanding of the topic and their ability to display that understanding in written form. It could therefore be argued that the deficit lies within the assessment system of traditional educational institutions, which are unable to

accommodate for the diversity of learners. It is understood that the nature of such assessment practices may also lead to an individual internalizing failure, which can ultimately lead to low self-esteem (Burden, 2005; McNulty, 2003; Tett & Crowther, 2011)

Another barrier to learning that is continuously acknowledged within the literature is how individuals are either physically or emotionally excluded from educational practices, due to their lack of engagement with literacy-based learning. For example, when exploring the experiences of 'dyslexic' individuals, Collinson and Penketh (2010) reported that although pupils may have been officially included in mainstream education, there was the question of whether they were actively participating in 'legitimate' and 'authorised' learning. In some cases, this meant being physically removed from the classroom to a 'special' or separate area. Collinson and Penketh (2010) report that although creating a separate space for individuals or groups may have been a positive learning intention, the participants' stories described how they were physically removed from 'legitimate' learning spaces related to good grades and high teacher expectations, to a different space which appeared to be unrelated to the same type of academic 'success'.

The findings support that of Artiles (2003), who also highlighted the implications of segregated spaces, suggesting that although they may provide helpful support, they uphold difference by separating those who are deemed 'problematic' and thus privileging certain groups. Artiles discussed how segregating spaces are responsible for unequal treatment, and raising issues of social justice. The separation of abilities also causes recognition of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' within the educational community. Collinson and Penketh (2010) further report that some of the participants reacted to being removed from a 'legitimate' learning space, to one that was associated with difficulties and lower 'success' rate, by excluding themselves and truanting. The findings also confirm that those labelled with dyslexia may also experience a sense of non-physical exclusion, due to their teacher attitudes relating to low expectations of the learner, thus further damaging their self-concept. These findings are consistent with findings previously discussed (Gibbs & Elliot, 2015).

The literature therefore suggests that exclusion, whether it is through assessment practices, teacher expectations or physical removal from a classroom practice is still a reality for many, and certainly was a reality for many adults who went to school before society and educators began to acknowledge the importance of inclusion. It seems as though exclusion causes serious fimplications in regard to the formation of one's learning identity. However, it is encouraging

that despite their experiences, many students courageously pursue further education. It is therefore important that the experiences of students labelled with dyslexia in HE are explored, with the attempt of understanding what disables their learning, but what also what enables their motivation to learn and resist the disability label, by choosing to participate in university.

1.6 Promoting participation

Despite the noted effect of disability barriers within the education system, there is an increasing amount of literature regarding society's efforts to change the direction of the way in which children are educated, with the momentum of inclusion emerging in the 1970's (Chopra, 2008). According to Stiker (1997), the critical step towards preventing exclusion is promoting participation for all students, by valuing and accepting difference within the classroom, including those labelled as 'dyslexic'. This way, the equality amongst the students within the community is encouraged and their unique characteristics are valued, which provides greater learning opportunities as their personal needs and goals are addressed (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

From a CoP perspective, learning involves participation in a community of practice. In this sense, participation refers to the process of becoming active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities (Wenger, 1998). According to Noddings (1994), the ethical aspects of education must not be ignored, particularly in regard to teaching, with the aim of encouraging teacher-student and peer relationships. For example, Noddings (1994) discussed the importance of creating a caring environment through modelling and practicing, suggesting that a teacher must model and encourage caring relationships to ensure collaboration amongst the students. This allows for a high quality of caring peer interaction, thus promoting acceptance and support towards diverse learning needs, and encouraging improved academic achievement through the practice of small group work. Approaching education from this perspective gives the students opportunity to value their peers regardless of their learning needs, which allows those who require additional needs to become affirmed in the development of peer relationships as opposed to feeling inferior.

Although it could be argued that the research has been carried out in a different educational context, it does however support the CoP framework by encouraging the importance of providing a classroom environment in which the educators facilitate peer interaction and the equality of all pupils; which creates a learning community where similar values and beliefs about learning are demonstrated. According to Baglieri and Knopf (2004), an environment where students have the freedom to interact amongst those who are labelled and those who are not, is essential for

teaching students to care about themselves and others around them. Baglieri and Knopf (2004) therefore acknowledge the value of cooperative learning, as opposed to isolated and specialist support, and suggest that it must be encouraged through the provision of activities that promote a diverse way of accessing the curriculum and different forms of interaction.

In regard to fair access of the curriculum, Reid (2012) argued that the assessment process must also be designed in a way that accommodates for the demanding diversity and differential levels of study. One way to do this would be to introduce continuous and portfolio assessment, which refers to the assessment of a student's overall achievement, progression and effort on various learning tasks. Reid's (2012) argument also supports that of Craddock and Mathias (2009), who evaluated the initiative to vary the assessment options within taught university modules, with the aim of targeting low performance, particularly for those labelled with dyslexia. Findings concluded that the advantages of a student-centred approach to assessment may outweigh the disadvantages, suggesting that although a large amount of time will be consumed developing new assessment options, it will positively influence performance. For example, one of the main findings from the data revealed that when summative assessments were compared with formative assessments, it was clear that the latter had a more positive impact on the students' learning development, as the majority of participants felt encouraged and free of threat as they explored their strengths and weaknesses as opposed to hiding them. The respondents also valued the opportunities to obtain feedback on knowledge of performance, which ultimately led to a greater sense of achievement. Therefore, in relation to facilitating one's knowledge and understanding on a given topic, formative assessments were judged as being more helpful.

However, although the theory of inclusion within education may sound positive and appealing, in reality, the practice is much more complex as it conflicts with certain external, government policies. For example, the current English accountability structures were introduced following the Education Reform Act (1988), giving rise to polices such as the National curriculum, OFSTED, Key Stage testing, and a system of funding in which 'the money followed the pupil', with the aim of improving attainment. Such policies initiated by both prior Conservative and Labour governments continue to promote market accountability (Acquah, 2013), which encourages competition amongst different schools for pupils and resources. It is understood that students must achieve the expected level in national tests at the age of 11, 16, and 18, and that their results will be published and their school will be ranked in national league tables. OFSTED reports which regulate educational services are also being published by the government (Department for Education, 2018) and widely reported and continuously commented on by the media. Ultimately,

the school's reputation and consumer (parental) choice is influenced by these different sources of information (West et al., 2011). As Acquah (2013) discussed, schools that are not hitting the targets given are deemed as unattractive schools and their funding is likely to be decreased, as funding relies on the amount of students attending the school. Therefore, as a school becomes less popular, they will experience a drop in their overall budget.

As a result, the contemporary standards and audit culture at both national and international levels has generated an increased amount of pressure on schools to improve the educational attainment of their students, which amplifies a focus on under-performing students, as the main focus is to narrow down the gap in ability between 'underachievers' and those deemed 'academically successful'. Therefore, whilst schools are required to include all children, they are also required to increase their over-all academic results, including that of 'under-achieving' individuals who are not able to reach the 'normative' test scores. Consequently, segregation and social satisfaction is accentuated, as the emphasis is directed towards constructing the success of students along fixed and narrow lines (Keddie, 2012). For example, schools are required to undergo a thorough inspection, where a 'good school' is narrowly defined through academic attainment (Runswick-Cole, 2011). This restricted view of attainment, which focuses on literacy, numeracy and science tests, not only tightens the curriculum but also promotes 'common culture', and ignores diversity (Apple, 2001).

In an attempt to narrow the achievement gap between the 'under-achieving' students and their more educationally successful peers, schools must collect and assess student data in qauntiative categories that are easy to measure (Keddie, 2012). According the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2012), effective schools should utilize a diverse selection of performance data including prior attainment, teacher assessment, pupil tracking information and RAISE online forward estimates, when setting targets for pupils. Such schools should look to their own data first, i.e. what they know about their pupils' abilities, whilst also considering pupil characteristics to ensure expectations for traditionally under performing groups (such as ethnicity and social class). Although the Department for Education (2012) stated that there are no longer statutory targets covering Early Years, looked after children and underperforming groups after 2011, it is said that local authorities will still want to bring about improvements by focusing on these priority areas.

Therefore, despite the inclusive agenda, children are continuously tested from as early as possible, in order to reveal 'disability' and 'difference', with the aim of maintaining or improving

standards. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework set the curriculum and expected standards of a young child's development, in which educational professionals are expected to compare various different areas of a young child's development against the typical development for children their age (Department for Education and Skills, 2007). Such categorical data is expected to "help with planning, to study trends and to monitor the outcomes of initiatives and interventions for pupils with different types of SEN" (Department for Education and Skills, 2005, p.1). However, Florian et al (2006) importantly acknowledge that despite government polices promoting classification as a necessary process to identify those eligible for extra support and resources, categorising individuals often follows a medical discourse, which ignores the complexity of human differences, maintains the stigma associated with difference and does not always benefit those who need support. As a result, the identity of those with learning differences continues to be essentialised, in a particular negative manner (Lawson et al., 2013).

It has been further argued that although categorical data creates a sense of authority and objectivity, it is a crude representation of students' educational performance (Keddie, 2012). For example, Ball (2010, p.155) described these representations as a way to reduce and commodify the student to an ability in ways that give rise to economies of worth that value students differently". It could therefore be argued that these economies maintain the binary line between the 'able' and the 'disabled' (Benjamin, 2000). Findings from Benjamin (2002) confirm this binary division, concluding that although attempts are often made towards an inclusive school culture, normative examination results are maintained, due the strict expectation that schools must meet the requirements of the standards agenda. This thus implies that those who do not meet up to the standards agenda's version of success are seen as deficit. Therefore, it could be argued that within these economies, 'difference' is constructed as being unable to meet the required standards, which then causes problems for schools who are responsible for their students' attainment (Muijs et al., 2011).

Therefore, as Runswick-Cole (2011) acknowledged, despite the existing inclusion agenda, the competing policy demands of the standards agenda continuously results in the exclusion of certain pupils. As previously discussed, this can have long-term, damaging effects on those labelled as having learning difficulties. Interestingly, despite the demand for the inclusion of children within mainstream schools, research suggests that some children actually feel more included in specialist schools (Nalavany et al., 2011).

Nalavany et al. (2011) importantly explored the role of different educational settings and their effect on long-term well-being throughout adulthood. Consistent with McNulty's (2003) findings, the results suggest that an adult's mental health and self-esteem is negatively influenced by their educational experience, particularly when they struggle academically. The findings also suggest that those who attended specialist schools during childhood were significantly less likely to be clinically diagnosed with anxiety or depression, experience less emotional distress in regard to the dyslexia related difficulties they experienced, and had significantly higher levels of self-esteem than those who attended traditional schools. Nalavany et al. (2011) concluded that the long-term socio-emotional adjustment was directly influenced by the specific environment of the specialist schools, such as sufficiently trained teachers to meet the emotional and academic needs of students, alongside a community of peer support; an environment which is lacking amongst traditional schools, amid a culture of ableism and marketisation. It is understood that through positively affecting emotional experience, the supportive environment provided by the specialist school may in-directly encourage positive self-esteem, ultimately making the emotional experience for adults with dyslexia less distressing.

The results consistently support the findings from numerous studies that demonstrate the present day experiences of adults labelled with dyslexia that attend traditional schools and are encapsulated by emotional distress and low self-esteem [see for example McNulty (2003)]. Importantly, the findings from Goldberg et al.'s (2003) study suggest that 'successful' adults who experience dyslexia related difficulties overcome their emotional challenges by developing coping strategies. The coping strategies described include asking for assistance, perserverance, noticing and dealing with situations that might trigger anxiety, ignoring critical people, utilizing effective social support systems, planning ahead to make their goals achievable and regularly changing activities to avoid the build-up of stress. The findings concluded that the ability to develop effective coping strategies predicts greater success than certain academic skills. Nalavany et al. (2011) then further argued that it is possible that the specialist setting helps cultivate and develop these adaptive emotional strategies.

If we look at the specialist school as a broad community of practice, we can see how learning may be enabled as members of the community practice the same values and begin to feel a sense of belongingness. In relation to the barriers they may have faced, they also develop a sense of common identity and acceptance as they notice similarities begin to emerge through interaction with each other. This way, through the promotion of collaborative learning and peer interaction,

pupils can therefore use their different experiences, strategies and ideas to determine solutions and build innovations. As Runswick-Cole (2011) argued, the fact that separate spaces hold the responsibility of a 'safe place' for children and families, away from the constant pressure the 'inclusive system' upholds, is not surprising. According to Campbell (2009), separate spaces are highly valued as they represent a sanctuary like place, away from societies albeist gaze, which gives those who struggle to learn within the traditional school environment the opportunity to step back and recover from the demands.

However, it could be argued that the use of specialist schools in comparison with traditional schools upholds marginalisation and thus the label 'learning disabilities', and is again a way of categorising the population, promoting the conception of 'able' and 'less able' groups of individuals within society and prolonging the existing stigma. It could therefore be argued that for a truly inclusive environment, all children/adults should come together as a community within an educational institution and the learning diversity between the pupils should be valued and expressed. From this inclusive perspective, it is important that educators understand that it is not only those labelled with dyslexia that require adaptation, modifications and accommodations of the general education system (Ellis, 1997), because although it seems desirable, it continues to separate the students and infers that the adaptations are 'different' from the 'normal' curriculum. As a result, this understanding often causes simplification within the curriculum and again teacher expectations (Ellis, 1997). This over-simplification is therefore deemed as an ineffective instructional practice that confirms the conception that students labelled with dyslexia are less able (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

It is evident from the literature, that through the use of appropriate teaching and learning techniques, which are designed to reduce the de-motivating effects of failure and emotional distress, it is likely that participation within educational learning communities will be enabled. It can therefore be argued that although the strategies may not directly improve one's literacy skills, they will positively affect learning by increasing motivation, self-esteem and sense of achievement, so that the learner feels encouraged, and wants to continue practicing. As a whole, educators and society can work together to provide better opportunities for those labelled as dyslexic, to enhance their resilience and participation in educational practices, which should help prevent the negative emotional consequences of exclusion or non-participation (Orenstein, 2012).

The number of students labelled with 'dyslexia' attending university is on the increase (Pino & Mortari, 2014). One reason for this may be the particular progression in promoting inclusive learning within higher education. According to the Higher Education Association (HEA),

The culture of inclusive learning which is promoted through teaching is described as a strategy to allow all students to develop in their academic, professional and personal life, in order to achieve their goals. In 2011, the UK HEA introduced a one-year development change, which involved the transition towards a more inclusive environment in higher education. Within the inclusive learning culture, all aspects of learning at different levels are taken into account, from curriculum design to academic practice, and equality is continuously promoted particularly for certain 'protected characteristics' such as students with learning disabilities (O'Donnell et al., 2012).

However, although it is not a contested area, there is not yet a single unified understanding of inclusion in HE (O'Donnell et al., 2012), and previous research has suggested that there is still a a very diverse understanding of inclusive learning amongst many educational professionals, which is reflected in their teaching. For example, policy makers continue to use language that upholds a deficit perception of disability equality (May & Bridger, 2010). O'Donnell et al. (2012) therefore argued that the HEA's definition of an inclusion does not reflect the institutions understanding of inclusion, nor the academics, and is instead underpinned by a widening participation agenda. For example, although a large number of polices, strategies and initiatives reflect the university's commitment towards the development of an inclusive culture, many academics reveal that they were unaware of the existence and content of such policies, initiatives and strategies. Furthermore, academics were also unsure of how they would change their teaching and assessment to accommodate for these polices and strategies.

It could therefore be argued that much more research is needed to contribute towards developing an understanding of the subjective experiences of the various 'inclusive' social and cultural practices in HE, and the influence they have on participation and thus learning development for those labelled with dyslexia. Although the research concerning university students is progressing, there is limited focus on how the students negotiate their 'dyslexia' throughout higher education (Pirttimaa et al. 2015), particularly in regard to their past educational experiences. It could be argued that this is due to the cognitive approach dominating a large body of the dyslexia research,

shifting the research focus towards the importance of early identification and 'diagnosis' of dyslexia, which prioritises the sample of school aged children and often ignores the socio-cultural aspect of learning. The present research therefore aims to address these issues.

Furthermore, it remains of particular importance to examine the university environment as well as other educational institutions as the culture is believed to differ substantially from institutions such as school and colleges, as Westwood (2000) stated, it is often referred to as a semi-directed education system. It is therefore understood that students must learn how to study independently, thus requiring self-discipline and motivation to complete the work set by the lecturers (Michail, 2010). Despite the differences, the university culture is consistent with other educational institutions in the way that literacy is highly valued. However, there seems to be a particular on-going pressure to prove oneself intellectually through demonstrating this high standard of literacy in HE (Collinson & Penketh, 2010), which may continue to prove difficult for those labelled with dyslexia.

Nevertheless, one study that explored how academic ability has been defined by the dominant discourse of literacy (Collinson & Penketh, 2010), found that although the students' stories reflect 'academic failure' as young learners, individuals are able to re-enter education as mature learners as they resist their past exclusion and gain qualifications in higher education, which is often due to the low expectations in compulsory education acting as an incentive to succeed. However, it is how the students express their different positions of literacy throughout their narratives which helps us to understand the shift in 'academic success'. For example, Collin and Penketh's (2010, p.17) findings demonstrate a clear shift in the positioning of literacy, as it transfers from being a "central concern and deficit in compulsory education-based narratives to being of seemingly marginal importance for these learners as undergraduates", despite the use of written assignments to assess the specific programmes studied. From these findings, it is evident that these learner narratives go through a distinct change at the point of returning to learn.

According to Collinson and Penketh (2010), these undergraduate stories are positively influenced by the relationships that the students build with their tutors and other staff, particularly relationships which concern their potential to achieve academically, rather than their 'learning disability'. The findings emphasise the significant influence specific attitudes and concepts relating to literacy and academic ability can have on students, which further supports the need for

academic staff to understand and practice a more inclusive approach in regard to their teaching and learning styles.

However, findings from O'donnell et al. (2012) support the existing inconsistency between supportive inclusive policies and performed practices. O'donnell (2002)concluded that academic staff often expressed the view that students are over reliant on their help and support, and should seek guidance themselves if they struggle to engage in certain academic practices, despite previous research indicating that many students do not always understand what is meant by being an independent learner. The data further revealed that academic staff feel as though the provision of extra support for those who have different learning needs is beyond their job role and claim that they do not have the time to provide the support suggested. The use of various non-academic support services were therefore mentioned by the staff as being essential in terms of facilitating student participation within the HE community. Although, the perception that students must be independent was still withstanding, as they suggested that the student must seek the necessary support themselves, if they find engaging with or understanding various academic practices, challenging.

However, for many students that continue to struggle academically within university, there is a likelihood that they may not disclose their struggles, either because they think that they can cope by themselves (Richardson and Wydell, 2003) or the fear of the associated stigma (Kendall, 2016). Pino and Mortari (2014) noted that this is particularly challenging in HE, as the possibility of academic staff meeting the needs of students and encouraging their participation in supportive university practices is therefore dependent on the students' choice to self-identify as 'dyslexic' and seek 'special' support, which thus maintains the existence of disablist practices.

Despite the progression towards a more inclusive learning environment, research further suggests that an early 'diagnosis' of dyslexia helped students accept their problems and seek the necessary support to cope and succeed in their chosen field. Contrastingly, as Illingworth (as cited in Pirttimaa et al., 2015) argued, for adults in HE who had not yet been identified as dyslexic, it was found to be particularly difficult for them due to the time they have had to create compensatory strategies, which may make it increasingly harder for them to recognize what their main problem with studying, is.

In a study exploring the identity construction of university students labelled with dyslexia, Cameron and Billington (2015, p1237) found that in HE, navigating the meaning of dyslexia is a difficult process for many and the process of accepting and rejecting the label will continue to shift depending on the context it is given i.e. how it is conceptualized and by whom. For example, findings suggest that being 'dyslexic' can be seen as an escape from undesirable positions such as accusations of intellectual inferiority. However, findings also report that students feel insecure opening up about their 'disability' to others, due to the fear that others will perceive dyslexia as a "myth, an excuse or as a kind of mental retardation". Findings also suggest that this belief that others uphold a negative view of dyslexia strongly influences their decision about what adjustments they will take, in relation to their dyslexia related difficulties. Therefore, although findings suggest that being labelled with 'dyslexia' can be an escape from accusations of intellectual inferiority, it has been argued that it is particularly difficult for university students as they attempt to make sense of the link between literacy difficulties and a potentially undervalued position in educational contexts (Cameron & Billington, 2015).

Although the research is scarce, further research supporting the inconsistency of 'inclusive' practices is that of Cameron and Nunkoosing (2011). The findings provide valuable evidence supporting the accusation that lecturing staff do in fact uphold different opinions on what adjustments are fair for those labelled with 'dyslexia', due to their different understanding of dyslexia and previous personal and meaningful experiences with a 'dyslexic' individual. For example, in a study which involved 13 members of academic teaching staff from three closely related departments within one faculty at one university in England, findings suggest that a lecturer's recognition of dyslexia, alongside their interest and the amount of support they offer, is often significantly influenced by whether they have had a personal and meaningful experience with 'dyslexic' students, colleagues, friends or family members. Those who have had meaningful experiences with those labelled with dyslexia are more likely to recognise their difficulties, enrich their understanding and offer their support to others, in comparison to lecturers who haven't had any personal experiences with those labelled as dyslexic, and therefore do not appear to develop the same understanding and thus support.

Further studies from that of Holloway (2001) also investigated the experiences of students labelled with dyslexia in HE, and suggested that the communication between the student and academic staff has often proved difficult as the academic staff appear too busy to help and often

lack knowledge, understanding and training about dyslexia related difficulties, alongside inconsistent provision within and between departments. Riddell and Weedon (2006) state that some academic staff also questioned the fairness of the extra materials and additional contact offered to those labelled with dyslexia, as well as whether those struggling with dyslexia related difficulties should even be given a place at university at all.

As well as the different perspectives of academic staff influencing the students' experience of inclusion in HE, researchers continue to address the need for improved assessment practices within higher education. For example, Boud and Falchikov (2006, p411) report that the discourse of assessment, which is dominated by an "individualistic, norm-referenced orientation of assessment", contradicts its purpose, as it is incompatible with the goal of encouraging learning development. Boud & Falchikov (2006) express concern for the constraints placed on student learning as a result of such assessment practices, suggesting that student learning is disabled due to the increasing focus on grading, which prevents students from acquiring the broader set of skills required for their personal growth/achievement, as the students become distracted attending to the judgment of others.

In a report analysing the nine-year teaching quality assessment exercises carried out by the QAA for universities in England and Northern Ireland, the inadequacy of assessment practices was highlighted as one of the main problems within higher education. According to the report, one of the main weaknesses within higher education was the limited range of assessment methods. For example, traditional exams were over relied on which limited the students' ability to display a true reflection of their learning achievements, as exam success often reflected skills in recalling knowledge rather than the use of higher-cognition. Furthermore, assessment tasks often failed to establish a difference between the intellectual demands required at varying levels of study, and feedback was deemed insufficient due to the lack of constructive comments, which were needed to improve performance, particularly for those who struggled (Baty, 2004; QAA, 2003).

Although the reports are now dated, Mortimore (2013) more recently argued that despite the increasing demand disability legalisations (e.g. Disability Discrimination Code of Practice, Disability Rights Commission, 2007) put on inclusive institutional policy and practice within higher education, in order to meet the needs of students, surveys of provision indicate mixed levels of student satisfaction. Through the exploration of the attitudes and practices of lecturers, management, policy and students, findings suggest that although the process of

inclusion was expressed at each level, there was a weak connection amongst the inclusive work of university management, policy and facilitators and lecturers. It could therefore be argued that disablist practices exist due to inconsistencies within the systems connecting the levels; hence addressing these gaps may strengthen their system, and ensure a more holistic approach to inclusion.

According to O'Donnell et al. (2012), the idea that government policies and legislation will be enough to promote positive development of inclusion within individual practices in HE is problematic, due to the complexity of inter-relationships connecting each level of the university system. O'Donnell et al. (2012) further argued that despite being enacted by individual academics, learning and teaching practices within higher education are embedded in social and cultural practices. The inseparable relationship between the individual and the institution is also emphasised by May and Bridger (2010), who insisted that there must be a simultaneous focus on both factors in order to bring a cultural change towards more inclusive practices within HE.

As the research suggests, academics believe that students should be 'independent' learners and thus express the view that they are not responsible for the inclusion of new students. However, through the use of the CoP theoretical framework, O'Donnell et al. (2012) argued that barriers to participation will be maintained, and newcomers (students) will never become legitimate members of the community, if the old-timers (academic staff) constantly deny opportunity for students to learn from them. Therefore, there needs to be a clear understanding amongst the students and academics regarding the valued practices of HE and support must be given to encourage participation within these practices, and ultimately facilitate student learning.

Research to support the need to develop new valued practices within HE is that of Pino and Mortari (2014), who conducted a systematic review focusing on how different methods used for teaching, support and accommodation influence the learning experiences of those labelled with dyslexia. Findings suggest that assessment practices within HE could cause stress and anxiety, however, teaching approaches that do not follow a traditional format (such as lecturing) were positively evaluated by the students, particularly methods that allowed them to utilize their communication and creativity to demonstrate their learning achievements. This type of teaching was deployed in environments that offered a diverse range of study material that was easily accessible to all students, as well as the opportunity for students to freely process information in their own time, rather than under extreme pressure. The literature therefore suggests that the

possibility of gaining control of the medium, particularly through interactive and student centred teaching approaches, is a fundamental aspect of successful learning experiences.

1.8 – Summary of themes

In summary, due to the ambiguity regarding the definition of dyslexia and the questionable validity of 'dyslexia' as a scientific, neurological condition, it is important that dyslexia is explored beyond the cognitive difficulties that it most commonly represents; in order to understand the impact it has on individual lives. From the literature discussed it is clear that the term dyslexia upholds a very powerful meaning for those labelled, particularly in regard to their educational experiences, in school, college and higher education. By acknowledging a socio-cultural approach to learning and discussing and applying the communities of practice theory throughout the literature review, learning and thus learning disability is instead situated within the wider social and cultural context, and more specifically understood through participation and non-participation within different social and cultural practices. From this perspective, we can begin to understand how certain practices within the education system can both encourage and discourage participation for many individuals, which ultimately influences learning development.

One of the major issues discussed throughout the literature is the reality of labelling individuals as having a learning disability. It is understood that there are many advantages of labelling, such as attracting resources required to help and support dyslexic individuals, however it is clear that labelling can also negatively affect teacher attitudes, and encourage exclusive practices which have a huge responsibility in regard to marginalising students (Baglieri & Knoph, 2004). It could therefore be argued that as long as educational institutions legitimize dyslexia as a physical or mental reality, marginalisation and segregated educational settings will be justified and differential treatment will be continued. Furthermore, despite the literature showing an evident shift towards inclusive learning from a government level within educational institutions, it seems as though many of the practices at the teacher-student level have not always followed. This could be due to the demands of conflicting government policies, which uphold a marketised approach to teaching and learning by promoting a heavy focus on targets, a strict national curriculum, and competition between schools, which ultimately keeps disablist practices alive.

In regard to disablist practices, there seems to be a continuous acknowledgment throughout the literature focusing on how individuals are either physically or emotionally excluded from educational practices due to their lack of engagement with literacy-based learning, despite being

officially 'included' in mainstream education (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). Throughout the discussion of disabling barriers within the education system, it seems as though assessment practices, teacher expectations and the physical removal from a classroom practice have been an exclusive reality for many, and all contribute towards non-participation, which ultimately discourages learning and causes serious implications in regard to the formation of one's learning identity.

Despite the particular progression in promoting inclusive learning within higher education, the literature suggests that the existence of such 'inclusive' practices within higher education is also questionable. For example, research has shown that there is inconsistency between supportive inclusive polices and performed practices (O'Donnell et al. 2012), with findings revealing that academic staff did not believe they were responsible for facilitating student engagement in educational practices and that students should take on the role of independent learners.

Interestingly, although the university environment differs substantially from other educational institutions in the way that it is heavily based on independent learning, it seems as though very similar issues arise. Findings suggest that there is a great deal of confusion between staff in regard to how much support should be given (Cameron & Nunkoosing 2011), and that teaching approaches that went beyond the traditional format (such as lecturing) and focused on student-centred interactive techniques were more effective (Pino & Mortari, 2014). However, as Pino and Mortari (2014) acknowledged, it is particularly challenging within HE, as students must self-identify as being dyslexic in order to receive the support they need from academics. The literature demonstrates the difficulties one my face as they try to navigate dyslexia throughout university. On one hand dyslexia can be seen as an escape from intellectual inferiority, however on the other hand, students are reluctant to gain the dyslexia label due to the stigma attached to it. This makes it particularly difficult for them as they attempt to make sense of the link between literacy difficulties and a potentially undervalued position in educational contexts (Cameron & Billington, 2015).

Interestingly, despite the perceived difficulties noted throughout the literature, the number of students labelled with dyslexia attending university is on the increase (Pino & Mortari, 2014). Therefore, it seems desirable to explore the personal learning experiences of students in HE over their life time, in order to gain a deeper insight into how they were encouraged to eventually progress academically into higher education. The themes from the literature review have

therefore influenced the present research focus and directed it towards exploring how the participants have negotiated their 'dyslexia' throughout their lives, with a particular focus on how participation and non-participation in different social and cultural practices may have influenced their learning development within different educational contexts. From the literature, it is clear that those labelled with dyslexia face a number of barriers within education. However, it is also clear that society as a whole is attempting to dissolve these barriers, with the aim of creating a fully inclusive educational environment, although the promotion of participation and inclusion within certain educational institutions has proved to be a complex practice. The reality of inclusion and exclusion is therefore evident throughout the literature, including how certain practices within the education system may enable and disable learning. However, there seems to be a gap in regard to how the process of participation becomes marginalised of legitimized and how this ultimately affects ones learning development and identity, particularly from a personal perspective.

1.9 Aims

The present research will therefore aim to examine how the personal histories of those labelled with dyslexia interacts with their social environment to help construct what dyslexia means to an individual within a specific social context (Burden, 2005).

The following project will therefore aim to:

- Explore the learning experiences of HE students labelled with dyslexia and analyse in relation to CoP theory.

- Explore the participants' perceptions of educational practices that enabled and disabled their learning.

Chapter Two

Methodology

In this chapter, I will begin by presenting the philosophical assumptions that underpin the present research, with a following discussion of the research strategy and the chosen empirical techniques that have been applied. I will discuss the concepts of ontology and epistemology and their relevance to our understanding of research and explore where the present research is situated amongst existing research traditions, regarding dyslexia research.

2.1 Philosophical assumptions

The aim of the present research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of students in HE, who have been labelled with dyslexia. Different approaches to studying human learning and 'learning difficulties' influence the focus of interest, how a study is designed and how the findings are interpreted (Streitlien, 2000). Within dyslexia research, particularly within the early writing of learning disability studies, the dominant framework for understanding 'dyslexia' seems to be positivism (Martin, 2013). The underlying assumptions of positivism are that we can understand the phenomenon of dyslexia through empirical observation and that scientific knowledge is objective and can be obtained independently of the context in which the observation is made (Martin, 2013). From this positivist perspective it is argued that the characteristics associated with 'dyslexia' are biological in nature, and the influence of wider environmental factors are ignored (Horton, 2015). As the field is rooted in this biological and neurological tradition, the majority of dyslexia research has taken a quantitative approach and has focused on identifying the underlying neural processes that explain specific learning problems (Keogh et al., 1997).

However, this perspective has been questioned as there continues of agreement concerning the underlying scientific explanations (Riddell & Weedon, 2006). In a systematic review of research on dyslexia, Rice and Brooks (2004) concluded that the term 'dyslexia' is problematic due to the diversity of overlapping definitions, which then causes issues with the validity of identification techniques, as there is a sense of uncertainty in regard to whether the researchers have interpreted dyslexia in the same way. Researchers' evaluations of effective interventions were also deemed unreliable, as they were unable to judge the outcome of such methods. Corker & Shakespeare (2002, p209) claimed that there is a large amount of confusion surrounding the topic of learning

disabilities, such as dyslexia, arguing that the taken for granted distinction between disabled and non-disabled people is questionable. They further argue that "social categories are a result of what society perceives, not a result of a particular ability", suggesting that it is an indefinite misconception that the construction of learning 'disabilities' and the associated negative values are real. Campbell (2017, p3) supports this suggesting that it is "social circumstances and shared assumptions" that underlie specialist understanding of such 'conditions'. Riddell and Weedon (2006) state that although it may be useful politically and legally to construct social categories and determine a division between the 'disabled' and the 'non-disabled', it may be inconsistent with their experience, as one's learning identity may fluctuate as their learning difficulties are experienced in different ways, over their life course. For example, what is constructed as an impairment at one point may be viewed differently at another point in their life (Riddell & Weedon, 2006). In order to explore this further, the present research aims to examine the participants' learning experiences, with the central focus being on the exploration of the wider social and cultural context in regard to the dyslexia phenomenon. The research thus intends to explore the social and cultural influences underlying the participants' behaviour, attitudes, identity and experiences towards learning, and how these may change over time.

The philosophical assumptions underpinning the present research therefore derive from a socio-cultural approach, which concerns the relationship between humans and the social environment. This approach therefore calls into question the positive paradigm formerly discussed, by suggesting that there is a lack of measuring tools for dyslexia therefore the subjective judgment from professionals is necessary (Rice & Brooks, 2004) which consequently emphasises the importance of understanding dyslexia from a more personal, subjective perspective. By adopting a socio-cultural approach to understanding 'dyslexia', I was able to explore the social construction of dyslexia, which involves identifying certain social conditions that construct this specific learning difficultly, and the social systems that influence the ways in which an individual with this label negotiates living and learning with it.

In contrast to the cognitive paradigm and the 'learning as acquisition theories' which are regarded broadly as mentalist in their orientation, the socio-cultural approach uses a different frame of reference that relates to context and thus explores learning through participation, rather than the viewing cognition as a computer like, symbol-based activity inside the individual mind (Strietlien, 2000). From this particular position it is understood that knowing means belonging,

participating and communicating within one's social environment and the conception of identity is understood as the fluid human being and the way it is closely linked to participation and learning in a community (Mason, 2007). Thus, the ontology of the socio-cultural approach suggests that cognition is culturally mediated and is an activity that cannot be considered separately from the context in which is takes place, rather than an entity in the head of an individual (Mason, 2007). From this socio-cultural perspective, it is therefore understood that problematic interpersonal relationships or complications that arise from the learning environment, may influence learning difficulties as they interfere with effective learning, which questions the validity of assumptions that suggest barriers to learning are created simply by a 'biological condition' (Anderson, 2008).

Given the questionable validity of these assumptions, it is important that future research explores each individual's wider social and cultural context in order to understand the possible environmental influences that may disable learning, rather than viewing the presence of cognitive impairment as the key element in defining 'disability' (Riddell & Weedon, 2006). However, it must be noted that the socio-cultural approach recognises individual variation and does not completely ignore human biology. For example, from a socio-cultural perspective, knowledge is constructed through the interaction of an individual's unique characteristics (such as biological differences), cultural artefacts (such as language) and the social context in which they live (Vygotsky, 1978). As Göncü & Gauvain,(2012) noted, constraints of the biological system may interact with the social context in which an individual develops and cause difficulty learning. Consequently, the focus on the social aspect of learning is not seen as a displacement of the person but rather an emphasis on the person as a social participant (Wenger, 2010).

In summary, as the socio-cultural approach emphasises that an individual's intellectual development is inherently involved with participation in social and cultural activities, by implication, the development and expression of learning difficulties are also inherently involved with the nature of an individual's social and cultural activities (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). The chosen unit of analysis is therefore based on the individual students' account of their experiences, in order to gain a deeper insight into the influence that participation and non-participation within different social practices may have on their learning development, from a more personal perspective.

2.2 Method

Due to the ontological assumptions of the present research, it is understood that the research aims will allow a deeper understanding of each participant's unique learning experiences i.e. what enables and disables their learning and how they negotiate their 'dyslexia', whilst exploring their wider social and cultural context. In order to fulfil these aims, the following research must employ a qualitative epistemology. In qualitative research there is a more flexible approach to analysing data, which allows the researcher to explore theory and utilize methods that provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' social world (Taylor & Ali, 2017). Such methods are particularly helpful for exploring context, and analysing how each participant makes sense of their own personal, social and cultural experiences and beliefs (Ritchie et al., 2013), which may have been overlooked through the use of methods such as structured questionnaires and experiments (Tracy, 2013).

From this, timeline interviews were judged as being the most appropriate method of data collection in order to understand each participant's life-long, subjective experiences of learning both in and out of education, in rich detail (Taylor & Ali, 2017). One of the most important aspects of the timeline interview is the way in which it is designed to explore an individual's own perception of their life, as it requires the participant to talk freely about their experiences, which enhances personal importance and encourages reflection on the critical events within their life history. According to Adriansen (2012, p41), the purpose of life history research is to "understand how the patterns of different life stories can be related to their wider historical, social, environmental and political context." In this particular research, the main focus is on the participants' learning experiences, thus the timeline interviews emphasised the personal importance of the different educational experiences that each participant had been through over their life time, and how the experiences influenced how each participant made sense of their learning development, including the 'learning difficulties' they faced.

By telling stories of their learning experiences both in and outside of educational environments, and how they negotiated being labelled with dyslexia throughout their life, the participants are able to reconstruct a coherent life narrative through reflection, which allows the researcher to make meaningful interpretations of their life events (Crawford et al. 2002; Neimeyer, 2004).

It is said that through the use of narratives, the personal and the social interact, and the stories that emerge reflect context specific, situated understandings, thus suggesting that the storyteller is an "embodied knower" within the specific culture, which encourages the participants' awareness of their own unfinished identity and knowledge (Crawford et al., 2002, p176). The narrative, story-telling approach was therefore deemed most appropriate for the present research, due to its ability to facilitate the participants' reflection on meaningful experiences, and reveal the influence of the broader social and cultural context on experience (Leung, 2010). This contrasts with the dominant quantitative work on dyslexia that uses numerical data to describe phenomena and thus overlooks the meaning of such experience (Rahman, 2016). The cultural and historical context of each participant's personal story was examined through their expression of internal thoughts and subjective feelings and attitudes. The following analysis then involves exploring the underlying issues and meaning of the participants' experience, within their social and cultural context (Goodwin, 2012).

In order to grasp the participants' experience within their social and cultural context the interviews were approached from a socio-cultural perspective. Due to the flexibility of timeline interviews, the researcher was able to apply prior knowledge of CoP theory, which influenced the content of the interviews i.e. the prompts that were asked. By approaching the interviews from a CoP perspective, the participants' experiences of various social practices were explored, with a particular focus on what enabled or disabled their learning throughout their life. Although there were no set questions planned, the prompts and topics revised mainly focused on inclusion and exclusion of the participants within different educational environments. The process of inclusion and exclusion are implicit to the term 'community' as people are counted in and out of settings with potentially serious consequences. The form that these communities may take and how participation is facilitated or prevented must be theorized in order to understand inclusion and exclusion (Lawthom, 2012) particularly for those labelled with a 'disability' such as dyslexia, within mainstream society.

Wenger (1998) also describes learning as central to human identity, thus by viewing learning as social participation - as one becomes more competent in the community's practices through participation in them - the individual is then seen as an active participant within the practice and is able to construct a positive learning identity through these communities. By letting the participant narrate their story, the researcher is able to analyse how each individual constructs

their unique sense of identity, and also how the social and cultural context into which they were born shapes it (Burden, 2005), helping unfold how the participant may have negotiated their 'learning difficulties' throughout their life.

One of the main strengths of timeline interviews that complement the present research is its strong emphasis on holism (Adriansen, 2012). Goodson & Sikes (2001) argued that lives are a whole, the private and public cannot be separate, and that lives are contextualized, thus should be understood and studied this way. By using the timeline method "the chances of seeing events and perceptions of these events in context with wider life experiences are increased" (Adriansen, 2012, p43), which again compliments the choice of analysing the data using CoP theory. A further advantage of using timeline interviews is the use of props i.e. a pen and paper. During the interview, the interviewee is able to jot down important life events and construct their timeline of relevant learning experiences on paper. This method is particularly useful as it breaks down the assumption of linearity of a chronological timeline in the way that it steers away from the natural, coherent, rational and linear way of telling a story. Instead, through using this technique, the interviewee may realise that whilst attempting to place events in chronological order, the events may have not occurred in the same order they originally remembered. As a result, the interviewee may construct and de-construct their story, as they realise alternative patterns of cause and effect (Adriansen, 20120.

However, in this particular research the visual technique of written timelines was not deemed as appropriate, as it brought a sense of anxiousness into the interviewing environment. Although the present research planned to use this visual technique during the interviews, once the interviews were conducted it seemed less appropriate and more of a disadvantage as most of the participants struggled to transfer their thoughts onto paper and therefore decided against writing down their learning experiences. In order to keep the interview calm and ensure the interviewee was comfortable when explaining their learning experiences, the vocal interview went ahead, however the visual techniques did not proceed.

2.2.1 Participants

The sample of participants consisted of 6 volunteer students from the University of Huddersfield. The participants volunteered via the disability office, by replying to an open email concerning the nature of the present research, in which they each arranged a time and date for the said interview. The information sheet that was attached to the email and sent to the students can

be accessed in Appendix 1. Each interview took place in a private room, either in the university library or Masters research building, to ensure as little distractions as possible. The participants were all White British, however, their age, gender, the age they were labelled with dyslexia and what they studied at university all varied. Each participant had been labelled with dyslexia at some point in their life and they all attended the University of Huddersfield at the time the research took place. These two variables were considered the only important common variables between the 6 students. All participants received an information sheet prior to the interview, which was reviewed before the interview took place.

Table 1: A table to show the biological and historical background of the 6 participants.

Pseudonyms	Age	Assessed as dyslexic in:	University studies
Neil	40	University	Masters degree in Information Systems Management
Lily	35	University	Masters degree in Graphic communication
Sandra	20	College	Undergraduate degree in Health and Social with counselling
Ella	20	Primary school	Undergraduate degree in Childcare
Kylie	21	University	Undergraduate degree in Psychology
Sheila	56	University	Undergraduate degree in Textiles

2.2.2 Data collection

Before each timeline interview took place, the participant was re-informed of the nature of timeline interviews. However as formerly discussed, the visual technique of written timelines was decided against. Each participant was reminded of the nature of the research and was given the information sheet, which had been previously emailed to them, so they could refresh their memory. However, the majority of participants chose not to read it as they explained they had difficulties reading large sections of information whilst in the company of others, so a verbal overview was also given.

Each participant was asked to discuss their learning journey, which was described as a holistic way of discussing all their learning experiences, both in and out of educational settings, therefore they were told to include anything they felt contributed to themselves as a learner throughout their life and the present time. The participants were made aware that they could discuss both positive and negative aspects of their learning journey, including what may have enabled and disabled their learning over the years. However, they were reminded that they did not have to discuss anything they did not feel comfortable talking about.

As the method encouraged free flowing conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, the use of pre-determined questions was unnecessary. However, some of the issues that were raised were further explored and the prompts used were approached from a socio-cultural perspective, as formerly discussed. The participants were also given the option of creating their timeline on paper however as previously discussed this did not go ahead. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the participants could choose their preferred way of delivering their learning journeys. Each participant was made aware that the interview was being recorded, and the recordings were later transcribed into a word-documented format. The interviews varied in length, with each participant lasting from around 40-90 minutes.

Once the data was collected, transcribed and analysed, the researcher then conducted a second interview with each participant. This interview consisted of feeding back the researcher's interpretation and analytical position of the participants' data as a whole, which involved the discussion of the personal influence of the 'disability' label, as this was the main theme that emerged from the first interview. Interview questions for the second interview were not prepared, however prompts were used throughout the interview. The prompts were influenced by each participant's conversation and the knowledge gained from their first interview. Please see Apendices 4-12 for the full interview transcripts.

2.2.3 Data analysis

As there were two sets of interview data, a first-pass analysis was conducted. This involved a first pass review of the transcripts from the participants' first interview, in order to extract meaningful and relevant passages within the text. The general ideas that emerged then informed the topic of the second interview, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' learning experiences. As discussed, the main theme that emerged from the first analysis was the influence of the 'disability' label, as all 6 participants discussed the topic.

Once the second set of interview data was transcribed, both sets were combined and thematically analysed together. Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for this particular research due to its theoretically flexible approach towards analysing qualitative data. This method was chosen as it allows the researcher to explore the way individuals make sense of their meaningful experiences, as well as acknowledging how their experience is influenced by social and cultural context. One significant advantage of thematic analysis is that it is theoretically flexible, unlike other types of analysis such as IPA and grounded theory, which are theoretically bounded to a pre-existing framework. This allows the researcher to approach the research from their own theoretical position (Braun & Clarke, 2006), for instance social and cultural, which is the chosen theoretical position for the present study. The data collected was directed towards social and cultural influences, with a specific focus on CoP theory, which helped guide the analysis and recognise the main themes within the data. Due to the ontological underpinnings of the present research, theoretical thematic analysis was used in a way to theorise the social and cultural contexts in which the participants are placed, and the influence this has on their learning journey.

The first step of thematic analysis involved transcribing each interview, which gave the researcher the opportunity to become familiar with the interview data. Once all of the data was transcribed and the researcher had read through the transcripts enough times to grasp a clear understanding of the content, initial codes were noted alongside the transcripts which reflected the general content of the data. From the codes, meaningful patterns started to emerge creating sub-themes, which after careful analysis were integrated to create 4 main themes: *Disabling barriers, Being acquired by the disability label, Enabling practices and Resisting the disability label*. The themes were then thoroughly reviewed, which involved refinement and looking for relationships between them in order to make sense of the data as a whole, and then analysed with reference to the aims of the present study, CoP theory and previous literature.

2.2.4 Ethics

The research project was reviewed by the SREP at the University of Huddersfield and full ethical approval was obtained. Once the study was approved, the participants were then approached via email. An information sheet (Appendix 1) and consent form (Appendix 2) were also given to each participant prior to the research being carried out. Participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw before, during and after the interviews (up until the process of analysis, which was dated 1.05.17). This was detailed in the participation information sheet and

participants were required to consent to this. In order to maintain the participants' anonymity, pseudo names were used throughout the report. Any personal information that may have linked back to their identification was also taken out. After the interview, the participants were given a debrief form (Appendix 3) which informed them of the research teams contact details should they have any further questions, or wish to seek psychological support.

Chapter Three

Analysis/discussion

Through thematically analysing the data from both interviews using the communities of practice theory, four main themes emerged: *Disabling barriers, Being acquired by the 'disability' label, Enabling practices and Resisting the 'disability' label.*

3.1 Disabling barriers

All the participants reveal that they disengaged from 'academic' learning at some point in their life due to academic procedures and the school/college culture, which undermined feelings of legitimacy in educational practices, making it difficult for them to participate fully within the educational community. Through the application of communities of practice theory, learning is reconceptualised as a social entity, which is largely influenced by our experience of participating in daily life, rather than through the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Wenger, 1998). However, according to Wenger (2010, p3) "learning as the production of practice creates boundaries, not because participants are trying to exclude others (though this can be the case) but because sharing a history of learning ends up distinguishing those who were involved from those who were not. They share an enterprise, an understanding of what matters, relationships, as well as the resources that their history has produced". Therefore, as well as encouraging learning, communities of practice can also be the source of limits, differences and contradictions, also called discontinuities (Wenger, 1998). Boundaries can thus be interpreted as social and cultural differences between practices that are fundamentally dual and ambiguous in nature, as they can either lead to facilitated learning, new ideas and positive interaction between practices, or to separation, fragmentation, and disconnection (Wenger, 2000).

The theme therefore analyses the subjective experience of exclusion through educational practices such as assessment, support and teaching strategies/attitudes, through the eyes of a labelled student, and how their feelings of non-legitimate participation in such practices subsequently discredited their capability as a learner. For example, all the participants report that they had particularly bad experiences during their school life. Lily states how her first experiences in Primary school were "*horrendous*". Furthermore, Ella and Lily discuss how they were excluded from the classroom practice in an attempt to improve their reading and writing

skills. However, both participants reveal how this exclusion disabled their learning even further as their participation in the classroom practice was delegitimized:

> *"So it was the 1980s and erm there was no real support with people with special educational needs at my school but there was a lot, it was really multicultural...I did end up going to an English as a second language class, so everybody that I was with were Chinese people...Erm that was, I did think 'oh hang on a minute, I'm not learning a different language why am I in this class?'... When I would go back to my normal class it was kind of like, then I wasn't being included because I'd been out." (Lily, interview one)*

The above quote is an example of a boundary that serves as a critical source of discontinuity in terms of interaction and sharing knowledge. It is clear that the schools organizational structure is fragmented as different meanings, identities and discontinuities between boundaries emerge within the interlinked processes of the schools 'supportive' practices. For example, although the purpose of the practice was to facilitate learning, it instead caused feelings of disconnection and separation and thus discouraged participation. It could be argued that there was a cultural boundary which prevented knowledge sharing and interaction, as Lily was placed into a practice with students who spoke a different language to herself, which may have caused feelings of unfamiliarity as a she was unable to identify with them, thus causing difficulty participating.

Furthermore, it is also apparent from the above quote that dyslexia was understood and treated in less sophisticated ways in the 1980s. Whilst the school clearly recognised a need in Lily and perhaps though a different pedagogical approach would help, the threat to Lily's identity is being positioned as a non-native English speaker, which served to exclude and undermine her learning identity. In terms of CoP theory, learning and participation is enabled when the participants in the community experience a sense of belongingness, as they learn through doing, becoming and belonging (Wenger, 1998). However, it seems as though Lily struggled to negotiate her membership in both the classroom practice and in the English as a second language class, which left her feeling marginalised. According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p.53) "identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another", however, the negotiation of identities in a CoP is not always equivalent for every member, as demonstrated by Lily. It seems as though Lily is struggling to find her sense of self as a learner, due to the inequitable positioning within the school practices, and as she acknowledges her inability to identify with others it becomes difficult for Lily to feel like she belongs within the educational community, which causes difficulty participating and thus learning:

"Erm so that was really quite difficult, that was quite stressful bearing in mind I was only like 5 or 6. I didn't make much progress in primary, I went to secondary school not being able to read and write." (Lily, interview one)

Although the concept of dyslexia has evolved over the years with progressive understanding and support being offered in schools, the nature of supporting practices seem to have remained the same. Ella, who went to school twenty years later than Lily, discusses how her inclusion within the school community was also discouraged in an attempt to control and accelerate the rate of her learning:

"I hated school. I hated everything about it because it was so embarrassing what they had me do. So when they were doing things like drama and art and things like that which I loved at school or sports as well, I remember they'd take me out of P.E. classes, they'd sit me at the back of the classroom and ask me to spell all these words over and over and it was just me that couldn't do it... the more I tried the more I couldn't do it, I felt like I was in nursery, I didn't want to go to school anymore." (Ella, interview one)

Through the term 'community', as well as the process of inclusion, we can also begin to acknowledge the implicit process of exclusion (Lawthom, 2012). In regard to the classroom practice, the children are all learning to read and write, demonstrating a clear community of practice where 'good' or 'clever' pupils are able to participate, a place where literacy skills are valued, and problem behaviour is managed. In this case, the recognised difficulties Lily and Ella are experiencing is seen as problem behaviour, and the support offered is about curing or changing the problem behaviour, with no intention of changing the educational context.

It is therefore clear for both participants that the school's pedagogy is based on the assumption that learning is an individual process (Wenger, 1998) and is something that can be acquired, or even acquired faster through intensified passive learning techniques. However, from the CoP perspective learning is linked to participation thus the objective is not to acquire any specific knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991) but rather to become more competent in that community's practice through participation, which requires knowledge and expertise (Wenger et al., 2002). Therefore, instead of employing techniques that serve the purpose of 'fixing' a learning 'deficit', it would seem more advantageous to challenge and shape the educational environment to one that promotes equality and encourages participation, in order to make them feel valued, reveal their strengths and overall encourage learning. For Ella in particular, it seems as though the school promotes the idea that learning is best separated from the rest of her activities, such as dancing, sport and art, which are obviously less valued practices within the school when compared to

'academic' subjects. According to Wenger (1998, p4) "knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises and knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world". The values the education system promotes therefore make it difficult for individuals who struggle with literacy to participate and become actively engaged in the classroom practice, and the lack of inclusion ultimately discourages learning. It has also prevented Ella from participating in activities which she "*loves*" and activities where her learning may have flourished due to her interest in the practice. Although some of the students didn't report about experiences of being explicitly excluded from their class, all the participants recognised that they were 'different' to their peers, through marginalising practices within the school community and the classroom, which created a sense of "*not fitting in*":

> *"People kept on saying 'well you're special' and I thought, well if I'm so special why am I being taken away from my friends in the other class?... I knew there was something wrong with me. I knew my mum did too, I think that's why we moved schools." (Lily, interview one)*

> *"You can see what all these other people are doing in class and I was just like, I can't do that. The teachers call you stupid and lazy, and you do start to believe them." (Sheila, interview one)*

> *"I struggled with my work in primary school…and I put it down to not doing well and not fitting in with the others in the classroom and the playground, I did think I was thick." (Neil, interview two)*

> *"When you're young and you don't really know much about dyslexia being taken out of the class and being treated different to everyone else and realising your friends can do the work and you can't then obviously that has a big effect on your confidence." (Neil, interview two)*

> *"At a young age at school it's kind of frustrating because you don't think it's a problem and then when everybody else is around you and you know they can all do it. I think they were four of us in that class that were sat on a table that really didn't know much about stuff...It's kind of defeatist because you think what's the point in trying?" (Sandra, interview one)*

It is interesting that even from a young age learners are actively engaged in searching for meaning in their environment. However, as Wenger (2010, p2) states "no matter how much external effort is made to shape, dictate, or mandate practice, in the end it reflects the meanings arrived at by those engaged in it". Although the purpose of educational practices is to encourage

learning, the participants perceive the classroom as a place where difference doesn't belong, where it is stigmatized and unwelcomed, particularly as they recognise that they struggle to conform to the school sanctioned behaviours more than their peers, which subsequently reinforces feelings of intellectual inferiority. Philosophical theorising on matters of identity, subjectivity and difference, suggest that in order for one to feel included and equal the standardised norm must be decentred and the excitement of difference as variety must be celebrated (Gowar, 2014). However, due to the way the educational community responds to learning difference, it seems as though the participants have all perceived their difference as an externally imposed tag rather than positive self-identification.

From a CoP perspective, the pattern of life for children labelled as being 'different' or 'learning disabled' is that of being on the margins of the mainstream, of communities that go on around them but without them (Tobbell & Lawthom, 2005). For some students, as a result of their undermined membership within their classroom practice, their focus shifts from trying to learn, to actively changing their behaviour to something considered more 'desirable' to their classroom peers:

> *"I think when I was at school I was the class clown and I think I was like that to cover up my own feelings of inadequacy and that was projected on me by other people." (Sheila, interview one)*

> *"I wanted to do all the things that they did and erm to fit in you have you try and hide it. It's one of those, if you can't read, everybody likes somebody that causes a fuss so you either become the class clown so that everybody likes you or you do all the work and show off that way." (Neil, interview two)*

The above quotes suggest how the participants' self-concept and thus behaviour is strongly shaped by the perception of others. According to Burden (2005), subjective, personal attitudes and feelings construct ones self-concept, and personal attributes are given meaning through societies perception of social 'values' and 'norms'. It therefore suggests that those who exhibit characteristics that are deemed socially undesirable will begin to perceive themselves as undesirable (Cameron, 2016). It seems as though Neil and Sheila change their behaviour to distract the attention away from their 'undesirable characteristics' and start behaving in a way that is deemed desirable to their peers. Again, the quotes demonstrate the power of social membership and the need to belong. Due to the participants feeling like they were not valued within the educational community, they began to act in a way that gave them identity beyond the

academic, in order to feel a sense of belonging within the classroom practice. Their focus therefore shifted from trying to belong academically to trying to belong in a social group, with the hope that being valued socially will ultimately make them feel included and accepted by their peers within the classroom practice. The need to be valued by their peers therefore overlooked the need to learn, which may have caused them to fall further behind academically.

The participants also discuss how they eventually stopped trying to participate in practices where their efforts and learning capability was misunderstood:

> *"So I struggled all the way through school and then it got to the final year...I remember the head tutor saying 'you can forget about the last four years this is the year that matters'. Well, I took that the wrong way and I just thought, I've done four years of working really hard and you're telling me it's been a waste of time and this year is the one that matters? So I lost it and never attended school much that year." (Neil, interview one)*

> *"So you kind of get into the frame of mind of well 'even my teachers told me I'm not going to pass it so what's the point in trying?'" (Sandra, interview one)*

> *"It got to the point where he'd say 'Ella can you read this out' and I'd say no... I felt strongly that he talked to me like an idiot, he made me feel like an idiot and that used to just, it would wind me round the bend and it just disengaged me so when I was in his class I wasn't learning. So he did yeah, I feel like he buggered that up for me...I stopped going to his classes." (Ella, interview one)*

> *"The teacher said there's no point you doing it (GCSE's) because you're not gonna get them, you don't want to get them... It was really quite difficult because it was always kind of like 'oh well she's going to be a problem'. I started skiving but no one actually asked me 'why are you not coming to school?' and if they'd only asked me I might have got the help and not dropped out." (Lily, interview one)*

It is evident that the teacher's comments and attitudes make the participants feel undervalued and inferior by either disregarding their efforts, intelligence or capability to learn. It is clear that the participants are trying to participate in a school community that doesn't understand them, or that they don't understand, which makes it difficult for them to identify as a legitimate member of the educational community and thus as a competent learner. Furthermore, Wenger (1998, p9) states that "if one proceeds without reflecting on their fundamental assumptions about the nature of learning, they run an increasing risk that their conceptions will have misleading ramifications". It could be argued that the education system leaves little room for the participants to reflect on their own learning as it is designed in a way that suggests every child must learn the same, thus

making it difficult for the participants to negotiate differentiated identities. From this perspective, the education system can be seen as a way of controling learning, by deciding what should and should not be learnt through curriculums, and defining 'success' and 'failure'(Wenger, 1998). Failure is therefore defined through bad grades and non-participation and non-participation is assumed as lack of interest to learn or subversive behaviour. On the other hand, competence and success in learning is defined through pleasing the teacher by following instruction, good grades and in Ella's case, reading out-loud. For Neil it seems as though he became frustrated with his undervalued position as a learner in the school community as his efforts went unrecognised, which he then interpreted as meaningless, causing him to become de-motivated to continue participating. However, Wenger (1998, p270) acknowledged that "what appears to be a lack of interest in learning may not reflect a resistance to learning or an inability to learn, it may reflect a genuine thirst for learning of a kind that engages one's identity on a meaningful trajectory and affords some ownership of meaning. To an institution focused on instruction in terms of reified subject matters sequestered from actual practice, this attitude will simply appear as failure to learn." For Lily, Sandra and Ella it appears that their undervalued positions as learners within the school community were strongly projected on them by their teachers, who follow a pedagogy that internalises failure and assumes that the individual is to blame for non-participation or underachievement, which further decreases their motivation to participate. In a similar way, the time limited, formal assessments that determine whether one is successful in learning seem to also undermine the participants' learning capability, which discourages their confidence and identity as a successful learner:

"Whilst a lot of my work was predicted A's and B's on my performance in class and things like that, when it actually came to producing the work and doing the exams I always really fell short of that and I was always a disappointing student." (Sheila, interview two).

"I revised and revised I knew the work but when it came to my exam, I was so stressed I literally couldn't read the words on the page." (Ella, interview one)

"It's just hard for people you know to be able to show their skills in a university course because it's just all criteria and you just find it frustrating because you know people don't understand." (Sandra, interview one)

"I'm a really slow reader so I always run out of time in my exams, it's not like I can't do it, but I lose a lot of marks because I can never finish it in time." (Kylie, interview one)

"We had a written exam in class and I were dreading it, so I didn't turn up that day for class." (Neil, interview one).

"Exams are a memory test if you've got a crap memory then you're screwed." (Sandra, interview one)

From a societal point of view, it is clear that the policies that shape school cultures need to be revised, as the national curriculum and standardised tests can be seen as tools that work to oppress both teachers and students, which reflects a ridged construction of ability and thus success (Tobbell & Lawthom, 2005). The aim of the assessment process is to measure learning by comparing national abilities and categorising students into 'intelligent' and 'unintelligent' and 'successful' and 'failures'. Therefore, for the participants the assessment process can be seen as much more than just an intellectual exercise as it has very real effects on their lives and can have long-term damaging effects on their identity as learners. For some, grading can feed into their self-image, which can be seen as Sheila refers to herself as a *"disappointing student"*. It seems as though the education system does not value one's learning progression but instead values the ability to cope with the arbitrary demands of standardised tests, which seems to disregard the participants' learning capability. From this, it can be argued that the nature of the assessment criteria is what allows a learning disability to exist, causing stress, anxiety and frustration.

According the Lave and Wenger (1991, p23), there is a difference between a 'teaching curriculum' which seems to be promoted through standardised tests and a 'learning curriculum'. "A learning curriculum is a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the perspective of learners and is essentially situated. However, it is not something that can be considered in isolation or manipulated in arbitrary terms in isolation from the social relationships that shape participation." A teaching curriculum however "supplies and therefore limits structuring resources for learning, the meaning of what is learned and control of access to it is mediated through an instructor's participation by an external view of what knowing is about". A curriculum for life-long learning has to encourage learners to go beyond the contexts in which they find themselves, which the teaching curriculum and standardised tests prohibit. From the CoP perspective, as Hammersley (2005) argued, the process of learning should not be isolated from others and is not encouraged by following ridged, rule-based methods, but rather through participating in a community, interacting with others and sharing tactics to construct knowledge and the necessary skills to effectively participate in the activity. From this perspective, learning should be assessed and evaluated by experienced members of the relevant community, who can

offer their value judgement of learning development, rather than through administrated tests that test explicit criteria.

3.2 Being acquired by the 'disability' label

In terms of learning, the marginalising practices, which promoted feelings of inadequacy within the educational community, seemed to have deeper effects than success or failure in acquiring elements of the curriculum. As Wenger (1998, p.229) acknowledged, "One can design roles, but one cannot design the identities that will be constructed in those roles". As a result, all the participants seemed to have developed a fragile learning identity, which resulted in low self-esteem and consequently lead to them either dropping out of education early or deciding against immediately continuing their studies into college or university. All of the participants discussed how they felt as though they didn't belong within the 'educational' vocation, and for some of the participants, this negative trajectory seemed to reflect how they began to think of themselves as disabled, which subsequently further impacted on their participation:

> *"All the anxiety, and stress I felt throughout my life, all the 'oh she's lazy, oh she's underachieving, why isn't she achieving her potential?' especially from my teachers. I knew how much I tried but it felt like everybody dismissed it and it really drains your confidence and you really do start to believe it and that has been with my whole life." (Sheila, interview one)*

> *"I think it's the whole legacy of it, because it's spoken about like 'oh you're a slow learner', or 'you're special or well 'Taylor can do this I wonder why you can't? 'It's the whole thing of that, that whole weight of that then you start to believe it because if you're hearing it all the time you're going to start believing it aren't you... Maybe I need hypnosis or something." (Lily, interview one)*

> *"You feel like everybody else is getting really good marks and then you're getting shit marks, it really does affect your confidence and you just think you know you start to think that you're stupid or you're thick or you can't do it and if somebody would have said to me in high school that I'd come to university I'd have been like no." (Sandra, interview one)*

> *"I took a year out partly because of the stress of everything...I decided that I wanted to go into property, I wanted this year out. I could have gone to university to do it, I got the grades to but I kind of decided that I wanted to have a go at it on my own without a degree because I was so fed up on education...I was fed up of being talked to like an idiot, of having to work my socks off and just being told you know 'this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong.'" (Ella, interview one)*

According to Wenger (1998, p.226) "learning whatever form it takes changes who we are by changing our ability to participate, to belong and to negotiate meaning and this ability is

configured socially with respect to practices, communities and economies of meaning where it shapes our identities". As a result of the participants' marginalised position within the educational community, their identity was shaped as incompetent which negatively impacted their choice to further participate in certain practices, particularly those which value 'academic' ability. It seems as though the participants have internalised their difficulties and failure, which has ultimately damaged their self-concept, as they start to blame themselves for struggling and not fitting into the educational community. As learning is central to human identity (Wenger, 1998), it is not surprising that the participants attribute their learning problems as a problem within themselves, subsequently causing stress, anxiety and frustration. For Ella and Neil, the frustration resulted in them refusing to participate in both educational and professional work practices. In a similar way, Kylie and Lily decided against participating within further educational practices due to the overwhelming feelings of stress and anxiety:

> *"I've quit so many jobs just over things like taking a note over a phone." (Neil, interview one)*

> *"It got to the point where he would say 'Ella can you read out?' and I'd just say no." (Ella, interview two)*

> *"I was sat there thinking all along, I'm being told you know, 'we appreciate you're dyslexic, we know how it works' and so I was always under the impression that they know how it works and it will get better and it was just a rough period and stuff like that and it was just that whole thing at the end 'oh yeah, what is it [dyslexia]? And I thought, you know what I can't do this and left." (Ella, interview one)*

> *"I started skiving because I felt so anxious, it was horrible. Like being eleven and thinking why do I feel like this? And I didn't know it was anxiety erm and I just thought I've got to get out of these situations." (Lily, interview one)*

> *"I found university ridiculously overwhelming the first time round...I were doing kind of two courses mixed into one it was like ridiculous information overload and it just freaked me out and I panicked I were like no I don't want to do this, I can't do this." (Kylie, interview one)*

It may be that the participants have become acquired by the notion of 'disability' and their marginalised status, and are allowing their learning struggles to define them, which further undermines their capability as a learner and a legitimate participant within the wider societal community. As Wenger (1998, P.164) states "we know who we are by what is familiar and by what we can negotiate and make use of and that we know who we are not by what is unfamiliar,

unwieldy and out of our purview". Therefore, what we are not can also become a large part of how we define ourselves (Wenger, 1998). It seems as though the participants have developed an identity which is heavily influenced by what they are not, as a result of societal values and norms which are reflected in both the workplace and educational institutions. According to Wenger (1998) for those who are not yet full members of a community, non-participation can either become peripheral or marginal depending on the relations of participation that rend non-participation either enabling or problematic. In regard to peripherality, newcomers are given the opportunity to explore new ideas and concepts, however this can become marginalised within established regimes of competence - when the opportunity for members to become full participants is denied, or experience – when experiences are ignored, repressed or despised. For the participants, it could be argued that non-participation has become marginality and thus problematic, through the process of repressed and ignored experiences. In this case, it is the non-participation aspect that dominates and comes to define a restricted form of participation (Wenger, 1998).

From this perspective, we can begin to understand how problematic the process of full participation in everyday practices can be for individuals when there is a constant focus on what they can't do, which may be reinforced when there is a lack of encouragement and understanding from other members of the community. As a result of the fragile learning identity the participants have developed through past marginalising experiences in education, it is not surprising that they are quick to disengage when they make a mistake or feel as though they are misunderstood or incapable. It could be argued that the notion of disability has restricted them from full participation as they position themselves as unequal and inadequate members of the community, trying to participate in communities that go on around them and without them, which ultimately leads to non-membership.

According to the CoP theory, building an identity therefore consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities. Therefore, we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves (Wenger, 1998). It is clear that as well as the participants defining themselves through their own experience through participation and non-participation, they also define themselves through the way in which they believe others perceive them. It seems as though the perceived

social stigma associated with the term learning 'disability' therefore had a huge impact on the participants' identity and thus behaviour:

> *"It would embarrass me and I would feel really ashamed because no one in the class, the class didn't know I was dyslexic." (Ella, interview two)*

> *"I think people understand it's spelling and reading but they don't really understand any more than that and there's another stigma I think about if you're highly intelligent that you can't have it as well and that really annoys me... I think there's two types of ways you can react to it really, I think you can do a really good job of covering it up which is basically what the lady said to me when she did my tests." (Kylie, interview one)*

> *"There was no way I was going to tell them I was dyslexic...I was basically gonna do what I did in all the other universities and just hide." (Neil, interview one)*

> *"If you had a learning disability you would pick the option for extra time, if you didn't you would take the normal test... There was basically a label on the screen big enough for everyone around me to see saying I was dyslexic or saying I had a learning disability so I quickly switched it off and started the normal test because I didn't want anyone to see." (Neil, interview one)*

> *"It's one of those conditions where you're almost ashamed I think that's how I've felt because I knew I wasn't stupid and I think I'm quite an intelligent person but there's always that feeling of inadequacy and not performing well so sometimes I have tried to hide it." (Sheila, interview one)*

Stigma is most commonly defined by Goffman (1963) as a perceived negative difference of an individual, which is collectively conceptualised by society, and in turn, may negatively affect that individual's 'normal' identity. Stigma is therefore not to be interpreted as a personal attribute, but rather as an occurrence between an individual with a difference and an 'normal' individual or social group, who evaluate that particular difference in a negative manner. The perceived stigma the participants experience therefore negatively interferes with their ability to participate fully within the educational community. Although the participants do not discuss direct experiences of discrimination, it could be argued that the shame and belief that others won't accept their differences has derived from self-discrimination and their own inability to accept their learning differences, as a result of their fragile learning identity.

Again, the above quotes illustrate how powerful the notion of disability and marginalisation can be and how the participants have become acquired by their marginalised position within society. According to the CoP theory, constructing an identity and modes of belonging in educational practices consists of engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 1998). In terms of

engagement, Wenger (2000) states that our experience of who we are is profoundly shaped by the ways in which we engage with each other as we learn what we can do and how the world responds to our actions. However, for the participants, their experience is one of incompetence as they define themselves through what they can't do and through non-participation, which makes it difficult for them to engage in practices. The concept of imagination then refers to how we construct an image of ourselves in the communities we inhabit and how we orientate ourselves within these, which involves scenario planning and envisaging future possibilities about ourselves, our communities and our orientation within the world. However, it seems as though the rigid institutions leave little room for the participants to explore who they are and who they could be, making it difficult for them to express their strengths and explore the positive aspects of their differences and thus progress in learning, which further reinforces their negative and marginal learning identity. Finally, alignment is the process of making sure we fit so that our activities are sufficiently aligned with other processes in order for them to become effective beyond our engagement, which is a central part of our identity as it decides what we are and what we are not. The process of alignment therefore entails "looking beyond the boundaries of a particular community of practice and considering its relations to other related communities, and its place within wider communities" (Clarke, 2008, p92), through coordinating our energies, actions and practices. However, in the same way it has the ability to amplify our power and our sense of the possible, it can also be blind and disempowering making us vulnerable to delusion and abuse (Wenger, 2000). For the participants, through their marginalised position within educational communities the process of alignment is experienced as dis-empowering, as they align themselves in the demand for alignment from others. From this perspective, it could be argued that whilst the participants may have been introduced to the possibilities of practice through initial guidance and modelling within schools, a lack of ownership was created as a result of the great emphasis placed on procedures and compliance. The lack of ownership may give the participants no control over their learning, which consequently shifts their focus from their own learning needs and progress, to trying to hide and distract the attention away from their learning needs and behaviour, in order to feel accepted within the educational community.

In order to resist and actively counter the negative effects of stigma, such as status loss and discrimination, the participants discussed how they created ways to try and fit into what they believe to be the 'norms' of society, which ultimately disabled their learning even further. It could therefore be argued that the notion of disability and marginalisation led to the participants

creating a self-destructive identity, as they excluded themselves from practices and ignored and covered up their own learning needs, positioning themselves as less able, inferior and inadequate.

As well as the participants positioning themselves as inadequate within present educational practices, some of them also started to position themselves as inadequate within practices they were yet to participate in:

> *"I looked at doing my Masters through an open university thinking, 'well I don't know if I could cope with that again.'" (Neil, interview one)*

> *"It was a huge decision as I felt as though I was setting myself up to fail again. I think it effected why I chose to do textiles, as less academic course." (Sheila, interview one)*

> *"And I was like what's the point, I'll never get in uni, I'll never get in because you've got to have tests and stuff before you get in." (Lily, interview one)*

> *"I'd always thought I was thick even when I got onto my MA I thought I was thick." (Lily. interview one)*

As Wenger (1998, p.155) acknowledged in regard to learning as identity, "we are always simultaneously dealing with specific situations, participating in life histories of certain practices and involved in becoming certain persons and as trajectories our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present". From this perspective, learning can be seen as a journey through landscapes and practices. "Through engagement, imagination and alignment our identities come to reflect the landscape in which we live and our experience of it" (Wenger, 2000, p5). As the participants consistently refer to 'not belonging' within academic practices, they continue to support the idea of a fixed ability, which undermines their potential participation in future practices and contributes towards to construction of a marginalised identity.

The findings therefore emphasise the impact emotion has on life-long learning and the development of a learning identity. By understanding learning through social and participatory activity rather than the transmission of knowledge, we can begin to understand why one may start to struggle as they begin to perceive themselves as inadequate or incapable of learning, as they start to define themselves through their non-participatory experiences. Therefore, the important issue here is how the participants experience and make sense of their learning development, and how this influences their self-perception and choice. From this theoretical perspective, it is

important that the arrangements of both educational and workplace practices support the formation of learning communities, allowing participants to contribute in a variety of interdependent ways that then become material for building an identity, rather than appropriating learning and institutionalizing it into an engineered process. It can therefore be argued that what the participants learn is what allows them to contribute to the enterprise of the community and to engage with others around that enterprise, which will then make them feel a sense of legitimacy within the community, giving them the opportunity to feel as though they are capable of participating in broader enterprises.

3.3 Enabling practices

From the CoP perspective, learning is not a time-limited activity dependant on individual cognition and is not restricted to progress only in education institutions. Instead, learning is a continuous process that is embedded in social activity (Tobbell & Lawthom, 2005). Although the participants have discussed numerous barriers to learning, particularly within the education system, they also discuss their experiences of many enabling practices in which they were able to participate fully, at different stages of their lives. From the data, it is clear that once the participants felt like valued members of a particular community of practice, a sense of legitimacy began to emerge and they began to develop a positive learning identity, which then further enabled their participation and thus learning in broader enterprises. The theme therefore explores the social and cultural context of the different enabling practices, both in and outside of formal education, which encouraged the participants' learning and motivation.

As the participants discuss moments in their lives where they felt their learning was enabled, importantly, they all seem to refer to changes within the environmental context, rather than their cognitive abilities. For Kylie, Neil, Lily and Sandra, their learning seemed to be enabled when they were participating outside of the traditional classroom context and in more of a relaxed and flexible environment:

> *"We were in a room and there was a couple of other people but it was mostly one to one. The other people were also dyslexic so it wasn't like I was in a classroom and they were asking me to do stuff in front of everyone, so it was quite nice and relaxed... You learn a lot faster because you don't feel the pressure or embarrassment." (Ella, interview one)*

> *"In Australia the classrooms have got er, their classrooms are weird shapes. They've got like a dome attached so you'd have two classrooms like here, then you'd have a dome in*

the middle which is just like a quiet room with a computer in so if you need to be away from other students you'd just do in there." (Neil, interview one)

"I remember picking up this book called Tree Horn Treasure and I remember being able to read some of the words on it and it was really well illustrated so I think that's what, having that pressure off me and just bring on my own and picking a book, I could understand some of the words and that's like a massive deal." (Lily, interview one)

"I think uni is better in the way that it lets you have your own freedom to be able to go away and write what you want in your own time around that subject whereas college is 'this is what we want' and they usually spoon feed you information." (Sandra, interview one).

The above quotes demonstrate that 'dyslexia' can be defined as a social construct rather than a learning disability in certain communities, particularly within educational institutions such as school and college where the practices consist of rigid structures and strict rules. As Wenger (1998, p.229) states, "One can articulate patterns or define procedures but neither the patterns nor the procedures produce the practice as it unfolds. One can design systems of accountability and policies for communities of practice to live by, but one cannot design the practices that will emerge in response to such institutional systems. One can attempt to institutionalize a community of practice but the community of practice itself will slip through the cracks and remain distinct from its institutionalization". For the participants, it seems as though the classroom practices, which are specifically designed to develop learning are so disabling that participation cannot happen. However, once the participants step out of the classroom context and into an environment where they have the freedom to learn at their own pace, in a home community, or in Ella's case, a community within the school that is much more relaxed, away from the labelling, stigma and pressure, the participants' learning flourishes and they no longer have the same issues with 'dyslexia'. Again, although the participants state that for this particular aspect of their learning they didn't benefit from interacting with others, it continues to demonstrate the social engagement with the world and thus the social entity of learning as the participants have interacted with members of the school community in the classroom practice and turned their relations with others and with the world accordingly. In this sense, they have acknowledged and understood who they are and who they are not, where they can and can't learn, who they can and can't work alongside and what works best for them. They have taken ownership of their learning and by doing so they have overcome the learning barriers they were faced with within the classroom practice.

However, the participants didn't always learn best outside of the classroom practice. The participants also discuss their experiences of full participation in educational practices and how their learning was enabled when they experienced a nurturing teacher-student relationship. When the students felt as though they shared some sort of understanding with their teacher - exploration, negotiation and ownership of knowledge was explored - all of which involved an identity shift for most of the participants, as they began to engage with their teacher, their learning and their practice. For some, this involved a teacher-student relationship within the classroom practice and for others this involved one to one dyslexia tutors:

> "So like English and maths were a no go area for me but then in the second year I did have a really nice English teacher erm so that encouraged me to go in 'cause she didn't sort of pounce on people or pick on people so I thought I'm going to be alright here I can handle this." (Lily, interview one)

> "I remember my politics teachers, they were so proactive in helping me and stuff like erm they'd give me copies where it would be like if I got a huge block of text they'd break it down for me. I remember one of my teachers Mark, gave me summaries of things which were short and stuff like that...When I had the support and help with the actual subject I really enjoyed it so I picked them at college to do." (Ella, interview one)

> "My dyslexia tutor is what changed me the most...This one particular occasion I was just stressed out and I had so much on erm and she just said 'how you doing?' and I said 'oh I've had a really bad day' and I explained to her that I've got so much going on and I can't concentrate and she said 'explain to me what's in your head' basically and then she said 'that's because of your dyslexia this, this and this' and it was just such a relief because somebody confirmed to me that what's going on in my head is actually because I'm dyslexic...I was buzzing that day because she just made everything, everything that was going on made sense to me and since then I've been coming on leaps and bounds...I think it's good the fact she said to me she's dyslexic, I mean, it makes a lot more sense." (Neil, interview one)

> "Especially dyslexia tutors. They have the empathy don't they 'cause they know what it's like and they know what it's like to feel inadequate and they just know how to help you." (Sheila, interview two)

> "There was a professor that I spoke to and they just mentioned that they were dyslexic and I said 'oh but' and we had this conversation she was just really like 'you can do this, you can definitely do it, this is not a disability, you're going to be really good at problem solving' erm and so then reading about dyslexia it just sort of empowered me." (Lily, interview one)

The data suggests that teacher-pupil interactions and relationships are closely related to their pedagogic styles. A positive relationship between student and experts (teachers) within the

community is developed when the teacher interacts with the student, creating a nurturing and understanding relationship which encourages both the participants emotional and learning development, making them feel like valued members within the classroom practice. The above quotes therefore illustrate how powerful the teacher's role is within the school community in regard to shaping the participants' learning identities, helping them towards developing an identity of engagement and legitimate participation. In Ella and Lily's case, rather than removing them from mainstream educational practices, their teachers invested their time and provided them with encouragement and guidance, which gave them the confidence they needed to participate in the classroom practice. Instead of focusing on what the participants can't do, the teachers used their expert knowledge to help them build on what they can do, making them feel like valued members of the school community. Consistent with findings from Li et al., (2009), if we look at the classroom as a community of practice, it is clear that the authority figure that the teachers possess gives them control over what constitutes as legitimate participation. Therefore, no matter how ridged the regulations of practices within the classroom may appear, it seems as though teachers have the ability to shape practices in ways that either encourage or discourage learning. By changing the practice from the traditional strict, rule based environment as mentioned in theme 1, which involved very structured ways of learning and teaching, the teachers instead provide a safe environment for the participants to engage in learning, by making them feel as though they belong within the school community.

According to Wenger (2002), a strong learning community is made up of positive social interactions, which build trusting relationships between members and provides a place where resources such as tools, stories, ideas and documents can be shared to construct knowledge within that particular domain. For Neil, Sheila and Lily, the meetings they had with their tutors provided a comfortable environment for them to share information and negotiate ways to apply new ideas and strategies to practice. Away from the university lectures and essay writing, the informal gathering allowed them to interact with their tutor, sharing stories about their experience, creating a place where they can openly communicate with experts. Through this process, they were able to learn new solutions to problems they may have faced within the practice. A key aspect of the CoP theory suggests that learning is enabled through the contribution of shared enterprise and a sense of belonging within the community (Wenger, 1996). Findings are therefore consistent with Li et al. (2009), who suggest that informal interactions between practitioners leads to positive practice, as members share ideas to comes up with new

solutions to reoccurring problems, which ultimately enables full legitimate participation as they begin to feel as though they belong within the community.

Furthermore, as well as tutors constituting learning resources through an informal, relaxed, one to one pedagogical approach, the tutors also constitute learning resources through their own membership in relevant communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). By sharing stories of experience and participation as a 'dyslexic' individual, it seems as though the tutors were able to identify with Lily, Neil and Sheila as a professional authority figure, but also as a fellow 'dyslexic' participant within the university community. Through this shared identification, the participants are able to build a trusting relationship with mutual understanding and respect, which again further enables their learning as they engage deeper within the practice.

The importance of developing supportive and meaningful relationships, which are heavily based on shared values and mutual respect, is also clear within the professional work organisations the participants experienced:

> *"I used to work with, there was me and this other lady Anne. She was such a help like she'd check over all my work and make sure I was doing it all correctly and stuff like that and she was teaching me how to do things and we were going about things and she was steadily giving me more roles to do and things. So I was learning things and she worked at my pace and it was really good, she made me feel comfortable and I felt as though I could progress." (Ella, interview one)*

> *"I worked for an engraving company er and it didn't matter to them, I'd constantly made errors with the engraving plates… I persevered with them because I liked the two brothers that had the business. One was right strict and one wasn't and I liked that sort of, it worked. If I had a problem I knew which one to go to, so he kind of helped me and showed me the ropes. It made me think twice about giving up" (Neil, interview one)*

> *"After my MA, I got a job as a research assistant for a bit actually...My tutor was fantastic and she does loads of stuff that involves music and erm really visual presentations and using lots of metaphors so it's not just looking at that horrible sheet it's sort of imaginative. So that really inspired me… I wanted to research how you can learn through sort of experience and like handling things in a social way as well so everybody's going to have a different experience...So we got the project done and then I thought 'oh I'm so interested in education now" (Lily, interview one).*

According to Lave & Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, individuals acquire professional skills through legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) which leads to membership in a community of practice. LPP refers to the learning experience of newcomers, and highlights

the process of when a newcomer becomes a full legitimate member of the community, by learning the relevant knowledge and skills through active and effective participation. All the participants discuss experiences of having a supportive relationship with an experienced co-worker or tutor, which allowed them to develop the skills and knowledge they needed, and helped towards creating a sense of stability and belongingness within their professional work organisations, or in Lily's case, the confidence and knowledge to expand to broader enterprises. It seems that through the constant interactions with the old-timers, the participants began to understand and adapt to the nature and shared values of the practice. Furthermore, through the development of knowledgeable skills, they began to reconstruct their identity from a newcomer, to a legitimate participant, which allowed them to build up the confidence they needed to develop their own working strategies, which ultimately motivated them to carry on progressing further. It is particularly interesting to note that although Lily described her past educational experiences as *"horrendous"* as discussed in theme one, once she experienced education in the light of different social and cultural practices - particularly those less structured and dominated by essay writing - she was able to develop the skills she needed to progress in the area. With the help of numerous supportive teachers, tutors and co-workers who shared the same values as Lily and inspired her to expand on those values throughout her learning journey, she eventually reconstructed her learning identity from negative to positive and grew to enjoy and progress within education.

Importantly, despite the different learning journeys, all the participants discussed how their learning flourished within HE due to the freedom they had, due to the less structured practices, support from tutors and technology:

"At university I found that a lot more people are a lot more accepting of well the lecturers and the seminar tutors are a lot more accepting of 'you learn how you want to learn' which really helps me learn." (Ella, interview one)

"Even so, the support at university, the help, there's mentors I can go to, there's academic support that I can go to and if I had that throughout my O levels and A levels I would have probably passed them and it would have taken away all my anxiety and stress that I felt throughout my life." (Sheila, interview one)

"My MA was a really great experience, really empowering. Because you're left up to your own devices more. I kind of found out what I was really interested in and
found out more about myself and that made me a lot more confident." (Lily, interview one)

"So I went up to the Open University with the view to do a full degree there erm and I did my certificate in higher education and I loved it. I could work at home, read the books at my own pace erm deadlines didn't really bother me." (Neil, interview one)

Unlike school and college, from the participants' perspective it seems as though universities have a much more inclusive culture, which allows the participants to reflect on their own learning style, in an environment where they feel comfortable and accepted. Without the rigid learning designs that they discussed experiencing in school, the participants were able to explore strategies best suited to themselves, with the knowledge that they also have the opportunity to access additional support, such as one to one tutors. For the individual, the CoP theory argues that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their community (Wenger, 1998). For the participants, it seems as though university provided the necessary practices to allow them to get over the barriers to learning they had experienced throughout their life. Once the participants were given the opportunity to engage in the community and develop their skills and knowledge, they were able to contribute to the practice, which allowed them to reconstruct their learning identity to a much more positive one, as they worked towards full legitimate membership within the university practice, which ultimately boosted their confidence and learning development.

3.4 Resisting the disability label

Throughout the discussion of the participants' learning journeys, it became clear that although at certain points in their lives the participants experienced being acquired by the marginalisation and the notion of disability as discussed in theme two, with the help of enabling practices and social relationships which encouraged motivation and a positive self-concept, the participants were able to resist these negative attributes that came along with the label of dyslexia. Although it is clear that the participants' learning identity fluctuated throughout their life, the theme importantly discusses significant moments where they no longer thought of themselves as disabled, which gave them the confidence they needed to progress in their learning and positively reconstruct their learning identity, particularly leading up to HE and within HE.

It seems that for most of the participants, once they found something they were good at, they developed an interest in it and became particularly motivated to learn and progress in the chosen area:

"So when I left college, whilst I was at college I had a work placement and I worked at an advertisement company so when I left college I ended up working for them and they'd bought at the time a new Macintosh computer and I was good with computers so they just left me to it and that's when I got into graphic design." (Neil, interview one)

"So I went to that art college class and it was just this whole other experience, something that I've not, never really experienced before apart from maybe primary school and that was printing, different types of printing. Obviously like screen printing, etching, I just loved it and thought 'god you know what I reckon I can do this' So that was, that gave me the confidence to think right I'm gonna try and get on erm like a BTEC or something erm and what I'll do is I'll just try to get college to take me on so I can re-do my GCSE's." (Lily, interview one)

"Politics was my passion. I absolutely loved it to bits and erm I was really good at it. There was me and another boy in the class and we were both so passionate about it and we really loved it and stuff and we were erm opposite ends of the political spectrum and stuff like that. I remember my politics teacher Dave, he used to get me and Tom to stand up and he'd give us a question and write it on the board and we'd have to debate it...I got two A's and an A*." (Ella, interview one)

"College was alright. I came out with distinctions. I got er a DD* D so. But I think that was more down to the fact that I was interested in the area so I was better at it, more motivated and stuff." (Sandra, interview one).

The above quotes again illustrate the powerful connection between learning and identity, and how learning, whether it is in the workplace or educational institutions, cannot be controlled but can flourish once one is able to identify with the practice, engage in the practice and begin to create constructive experiences, which ultimately contribute towards developing a positive learning identity. According to Wenger (1998, p152), membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence. In this context "our membership constitutes our identity not just through reified markers of membership but more fundamentally through the forms of competence it entails". Therefore, "we experience and manifest ourselves by what we recognise and what we don't, what we grasp immediately and what we can't interpret, what we can appropriate and what alienates us, what we can press into service and what we can't use, what we can negotiate and what remains out of reach. We know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, useable, negotiable we know who we are not by what is foreign opaque unwieldy and unproductive" (Wenger, 1998 p.153). Although the participants are conscious of their marginalised position within society due to previous marginalising practices within the education system, the above quotes highlight examples of moments in their lives where their focus shifted

away from what they can't do and who they are not, and towards what they can do, who they are, what they are achieving and what they want to achieve in the future. Once they experienced enjoyable collaboration, self-directed learning, or the practice simply ignited interest, it seems as though the participants felt a sense of competence as they felt comfortable expressing themselves, particularly in Ella and Lily's experience, which encouraged motivation and ultimately created a shift in their learning identity. For example, the above quotes illustrate how the participants resist the notion of disability, as they stopped viewing themselves as marginalised participants within society and began to view themselves as learners, by believing in their ability to learn and actively seeking and engaging in life experiences with a learning attitude. This is particularly clear as they refer to practices they are 'good' at, or achieving high grades in and in Lily's case, discussing future engagements in broader enterprises.

Importantly, from the communities of practice perspective, the work of identity is ongoing and although significant identity issues may be apparent at certain points of a person's life, identity is something that is constantly renegotiated (Wenger, 1998). For example, although the participants were hesitant to go back into education due to their past educational experiences, once they experienced participating in new communities of practice outside of education, they again resisted their marginal identity and renegotiated their ability to participate in HE. This is because these were practices that they were passionate about, were able to relate to, shared similar values with other members of the community and were able to actively engage in:

> *"My whole family do sailing and I volunteer at it on a Friday night… I love like erm we have this thing where we do sail ability, where we teach disabled people to sail and things like that...I remember just sitting and talking with these people and actually like I loved it so much and how much we just connected and bonded and stuff like that and got to know each other and how none of them misbehaved with me at all...And I do think it's because I know what it's like to be talked to like an idiot, I think they get talked to like an idiot all the time. And that's why I decided to go and do childhood studies at uni because like I enjoyed it so much building a bond and like a relationship with these kids that I wanted to do it all the time." (Ella, interview one)*

> *"So I worked with them for a while then I decided I wanted to get some qualifications really… I was interested in computers, particularly interested in the ethical hacking side of things, so I started to look at university courses" (Neil, interview one)*
> *"I just started doing loads of art work and I had that break from reading and writing which was amazing. Then I started doing loads of free lance design work erm I was really getting in to that but then I was working on my own a lot and I missed working with people. And I thought, well I've got the experience now and I've always kind of regretted not sort of*

doing well before in education so I applied for an MA in graphic communication...I wanted to research how you can learn through sort of experience and like handling things in a social way." (Lily, interview one)

"I think one of the reasons I came back to university was to prove to myself that I can do this, that I do have the ability, and I've always had this artistic streak in me that i've wanted to fulfil and I felt like that's what I needed to indulge so I applied for the second time to do textiles." (Sheila, interview one)

"I enjoy what I'm doing now health and social yeah. I kind of got into it because of my mental health background with my own depression and my mum, my mum's got depression as well...I find it really interesting and it's something that I've seen how different people in my family have been able to function and deal with and it's what I want to do...Having that knowledge of how different people can deal with stuff like that really helps in places like that." (Sandra, interview one)

From this we can understand that "learning is not just acquiring skills and information it is becoming a certain person – a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of community" (Wenger 2010, p180). It could therefore be argued that once the participants were given the opportunity to participate and engage in practices that have different values to those within school/college, they were able to take ownership of their learning, acknowledge their strengths and contribute to the shared knowledge of the community. This seemed to positively shape their learning identity and give them the confidence they needed to participate in HE. According to Farnsworth et al. (2016), knowledge is not just information, but an experience of living in a landscape of practice and negotiating one's position in it. Instead of focusing on the struggles they may experience with reading and writing and the 'academic' side of university, like the participants did once they left education early on in their learning journey, they have instead acknowledged through their experience within different communities of practice, that the areas they are good at entail different definitions of competence. Although they recognised that they may struggle with reading and writing, they also recognise that are able to progress and contribute towards the areas they are interested in or can relate to in a more practical way.

A previously discussed, according to CoP theory, identity formation and learning consist of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities through engagement, imagination and alignment. As one negotiates participation in broader systems, one needs to make sense of both the system and their position in it, in order to create relationships of identification that can potentially extend across the whole system (Wenger, 2010). From the

above quotes, it is clear that through the participants' engagement in communities of practice outside of education, the participants have learnt and contributed towards the CoP's regime of competence through interaction and involvement in that particular community, creating a sense of knowledge within the practice. For instance, Ella has understood and developed the skills needed to teach children how to sail, through interacting with the children every week and Sandra has connected to her own experience and her family's experience of mental health in order to develop the skills and knowledge to help others with similar experiences, and eventually become a counsellor. As well as engaging in practices, the aspect of imagination in identity formation is clear as the participants were able to see themselves as members of the community at the present time and in the future. This is evident as they discussed their motivation to carry on their learning development with the hope of becoming a qualified professional in their chosen area, whether it's in child care, graphic design, counselling etc. The final aspect of identity formation is alignment, which occurs when participants align their regime of competence within a community, with that of the broader social context, in order for their identity and knowledge to evolve (Wenger, 2000). In order to construct new professional identities as full members of their chosen future profession, the participants have aligned their actions with the demands of that particular profession and have developed a sense of belonging through actively participating in a range of academic, professional and social practices in their chosen area. This is particularly clear for Sandra, Lily and Ella as they recognise their position as valuable members of the profession and feel as though their existing identities align with evolving identities in whichever profession they have chosen. Although Sandra and Lily are still working towards becoming a professional counsellor and a disability teacher, Lily has now achieved the qualifications she needed to become a teacher for those with literacy problems:

"The course doesn't make you that, a good nurse, a good counsellor a good this. It's your knowledge, the person you are, especially like nursing and counselling, it's your personality. It's nothing to do with what you write down, especially counselling this is talking therapy, why do I need to write everything down? I could be a good counsellor it's just you need to hit that grade boundary, it's the system, I just need to get through the system first." (Sandra, interview one)

"I remember one of the teachers that came up with them saying that, there was this one boy Daryl, they said since he's been coming sailing he's been acting so much better, he's not been kicking off and stuff like that...The fact that me coming up here on a Friday night to sail and having these sort of friendships with them it's resulted in them being better in school and acting nicer and things like that. I was just like, if I can do that all the time,

because I can relate to them then it's going to, I feel like that's so much more rewarding than anything else, that's why I've decided I want to do it as a job." (Ella, interview one)

"I work with students that also have literacy problems, because you know they're like 17 and my writing is significantly better than theirs so I'm able to work with people who need to improve their vocab when they are describing art work and things so that's something I've thought has been a benefit to them but to me too. But I can say to them 'look I know how you feel because I'm dyslexic, that is how you do it.'" (Lily, interview one)

Interestingly, all the participants discuss experiences of further resisting the notion of disability and renegotiating their marginalised identity, as they report on how they no longer needed the support and assistance that came with the disability label once they started to reflect on their own learning within the practices of HE, particularly after receiving the 'dyslexia' diagnosis:

"So once you know that you're dyslexic, I suppose once you accept that that's not a disability as such you just have to do things differently and there are some benefits as well." (Neil, interview one)

"I'm a much more confident learner since I got the label… I've learnt to relax more, not to stress out if I can't do something, and take the time to reflect you know when I'm struggling... And I don't think I've even asked, I think there's once since then that I've asked for an extension which is strange really 'cause you would think that I'd need more time cause I'm basically giving myself a break from the work do you'd think that would take me longer but it doesn't." (Neil, interview two)

"So coming back to university and also getting that diagnosis has made me realise that I can do this. My confidence has gone up hugely. My husband say's I'm a different person, he said you've got so much enthusiasm...I did go and see the academic support staff and they were really supportive and helpful and as I say I've gradually, not weaned myself off them but needed them less and it was really just reassurance I think, that I could do it, that I wasn't being stupid and I was worrying unnecessarily." (Sheila, interview one)

"I think I'm good at knowing how I need to help myself if that makes sense? Because I was doing that I could kind of do it on my own. So I dedicate more time to revision, I dedicate more time to reading erm I'd spend longer on my essays you know...I found my own way round of dealing with it if that makes sense." (Kylie, interview one)

"It was having the diagnosis that really helped me with my MA. Knowing that, I'd got like certification that I was not thick because I got an IQ of 20 too. And then I thought 'ha, I'm not thick, this means that I can do it'. So I thought if I work hard, it's going to be horrible but if I work hard enough I can do it." (Lily, interview one)

According to Wenger (1998, p.58) reification, which is defined as the process of "treating an abstraction as substantially existing or a concrete material object" shapes our experience and can do so in very concrete ways. In this sense, labelling can be seen as the process of reification. For reification to become meaningful, participation must be implied i.e. accepting or refusing that label, and living that label (Farnsworth et al., 2016). As discussed in theme 2, it could be argued that the participants reified the 'disability' aspect of the label and became acquired by the notion of disability, which influenced the construction of their marginalised identity. However, once the participants learnt more about themselves through their participation in various communities of practice, and their official 'diagnosis', it seems that although they accepted the label, they learnt to resist the notion of 'disability' and the marginalisation that came with it. By using the notion of 'disability' and marginalisation as a means to reflect on their learning, they took ownership of their learning, and reconstructed their learning identity in a way that allowed them to participate and identify with the academic practices of HE. Instead of reifying the dyslexia label in a way that provides accurate and definitive statements about themselves, the above quotes illustrate how the participants began to interpret the label in a way that allows them to understand more about their own learning and identify themselves in their own terms, not society's general assumptions.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The present research aimed to explore the life narratives of higher education students labelled with dyslexia, with particular focus on their perceptions of the educational practices that enabled and disabled their learning. By situating learning and learning difficulty within the wider social and cultural context, the research was able to explore 'dyslexia' through the participants' experiences of participation and non-participation within different social practices, throughout their life.

As the majority of studies within the dyslexia research field are approached from a cognitive perspective, there tends to be a dominant focus on identifying the 'cognitive deficits' that are thought to underlie dyslexia. The present research therefore contributes to the research field by shedding light on the more personal and social aspects of being labelled with dyslexia. In doing so, the findings highlight the influence that social context has on developing a positive/negative learning identity, and the impact it thus has learning development. The research also addresses the research gap within the field, which concerns how the process of participation, particularly within educational practices, may become marginalised or legitimised when one is labelled with dyslexia, and the influence this has on the development of a positive learning identity and thus learning development.

4.1 Key findings

From the data, it is clear that all of the participants experienced numerous barriers to learning as a result of marginalising practices, particularly at school and college, which had detrimental effects on their learning identity and thus learning development. However, once they experienced legitimate participation within a practice they enjoyed and felt they were good at, their identity shifted from a marginal identity to a much more positive learning identity, which encouraged their motivation to learn, and for some of the participants encouraged them to re-renter education. Importantly, through the exploration of life narratives, the research was therefore able to capture how identity fluctuates throughout the participants' learning journey, through participation and non-participation within different communities of practice. The latter provides support against the view that learning and learning difficulty is a 'fixed innate ability' and ultimately encouraging the notion of life-long learning development. Interestingly, despite previous

research suggesting that the dyslexia label upholds social marginalisation, all the participants report on how it gave them a sense of relief and allowed them to reflect on their own personal learning style, rather than trying to fit into the strict learning style that the traditional educational system promotes, which ultimately disabled their learning. It could therefore be argued that it is not the 'disability' label as such that creates the sense of marginalisation, but rather the traditional educational practices and the 'differential' treatment that is introduced if one does not learn the 'traditional way'. The data revealed that one way of resisting the societal marginalisation, is through exploring one's own learning identity, by acknowledging strengths as well as weaknesses through actively participating in different practices. Contrastingly to school and college, the research suggests that HE offered the practices the participants needed to feel as though they could express their own learning style, due to its inclusive culture. As a result, the participants no longer needed as much of the 'disability' support offered, as they developed their own learning strategies. The research therefore supports the notion that HE is in fact moving towards a more inclusive learning culture despite previous research reporting the continued existence of disablist practices as a result of inconsistencies between the complex university system.

4.2 Limitations

4.2.1 Methods used

A major limitation of the present study was the small sample size. As the participants were recruited on a volunteer basis through the University of Huddersfield's disability office, there was little control over how many participants took part thus limiting the amount of data collected. Subsequently, although the researcher originally planned to recruit 10 participants, only 6 suitable participants were available. In order to retrieve a sufficient amount of data collection, two interviews were therefore conducted with the 6 volunteer participants. However, 3 of the 6 participants did not respond in regard to taking part in the second interview, therefore the data collection was again restricted. Although generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute (Leung, 2015), it could be argued that the research is not the generalized truth due to such a small sample size taken from one university. Nevertheless, the research has still contributed to our understanding of what it means to be dyslexic from a socio-cultural perspective.

In regard to the chosen method of data collection, although timeline interviews were judged as being most suitable method for exploring significant life experiences, all of the participants chose not to take part in the visual side of the timeline i.e. communicating their life narrative timeline in written form, due to their struggles with reading and writing. Although this was deemed as the most appropriate option, the visual technique is a useful tool to help remember and coherently organize the participants' most significant life events, therefore the participants may have been at a disadvantage when attempting to re call their experiences, which may have negatively influenced the validity of the data.

Furthermore, although the second, semi structured interview was used as an attempt to gather a more detailed account of the participants' experiences, the data collected seemed to repeat a large amount of the data retrieved in the first interview. However, this may have been a limitation on the researcher's behalf, in regard to interviewing techniques such as the choice of questions asked and the use of sufficient probes, due to a lack of interview experience.

4.2.2 Analysis

In terms of the theory used to analyse the data, although CoP has provided a very detailed analysis, particularly in terms of identity development and inclusion and exclusion, the research could be considered partial, as it does not capture the influences of the much broader social and cultural context such as the government policies and legislations regarding dyslexia. Therefore, it could be argued that the analysis was restricted to exploring only the immediate social influences and ignored the much wider social systems, which may also influence one's experiences of living with the dyslexia label.

4.3 Recommendations and future research

Despite the limitations, the research has met the research aims and has provided detailed accounts of what it is like living with the dyslexia label, with significant insight into what enables and disables learning. From this, several suggestions in relation to shaping practices within the education system could be made, to allow those with different learning needs the opportunity to learn efficiently. The research therefore provides insightful recommendations about changing the nature of certain educational practices and social relationships within these practices, in order to promote participation within the educational community. Overall, the findings may help contribute towards developing a more inclusive culture in schools and colleges as well as HE.

However, in order to maximise the efficiency of recommended supporting practices, it would be useful for future research to also explore the different educational practices as an outsider, by analysing the participants' participation through observation as well as through the use of subjective experience. By acknowledging different perspectives and combining the use of self-reported, subjective experiences and observations, the research will be able to grasp a more holistic perspective of living with the dyslexia label. It may also be useful for future research to explore the data using a variety of different social learning theories which situate dyslexia in it's even broader social context, such as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. This way, the influence of both the immediate and the much wider social systems which go beyond educational practices, can be explored as a whole.

References

Acquah, D. (2013). *School Accountability in England: Past, Present and Future*. Manchester: AQA Centre for Education Research and Policy. Retrieved from https://cerp.aqa.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_upload/CERP_RP_DA_12112012.pdf.

Adriansen, H. (2012). Timeline interviews: A tool for conducting life history research. *Qualitative Studies*, *3*(1), 40-55. Retrieved from https://tidsskrift.dk/qual/article/view/6272.

Anderson, R. E. (2008). *Dyslexia and Inclusion: Supporting Classroom Reading With 7-11 Year Olds*. Leicester: UKLA Publ.

Apple, M. (2001). 'Comparing neo-liberal projects and equality in education'. *Comparative Education*, 37(4), 409–423. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060120091229.

Artiles, A.J. (2003). Special education's changing identity: Paradoxes and dilemmas in views of culture and space. *Harvard Educational Review, 73* (2), 164-202. doi: 10.17763/haer.73.2.j78t573x377j7106.

Baglieri, S., & Knopf, J. H. (2004). Normalizing difference in inclusive teaching. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(6), 525-529. doi: 10.1177/00222194040370060701.

Ball, S. J. (2010). New class inequalities in education: Why education policy may be looking in the wrong place! Education policy, civil society and social class. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *30*(3/4), 155-166. doi: 10.1108/01443331011033346.

Baty, P. (2004). Flaws in marking revealed by QAA. *The Times Higher Education Supplement.* Retrieved from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/flaws-in-marking-revealed-by-qaa/186852.article.

Benjamin, S. (2002) 'Valuing diversity': a cliché for the 21st century*? International Journal of Inclusive Education, 6*(4), 309-323. doi: 10.1080/13603110210145949.

Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (2006). Aligning assessment with long-term learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 31*(4), 399-413. doi: 10.1080/02602930600679050.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

British Dyslexia Association. (2008). *Dylexia Research Information*. Retrieved from https://bdadyslexia.org.uk.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Burden, R. (2005). *Dyslexia and Self-Concept: Seeking a Dyslexic Identity*. London: Whurr.

Cameron, H. E. (2016). Beyond cognitive deficit: The everyday lived experience of dyslexic students at university. *Disability & Society, 31*(2), 223-18. 10.1080/09687599.2016.1152951.

Cameron, H., & Billington, T. (2015). The discursive construction of dyslexia by students in higher education as a moral and intellectual good. *Disability & Society, 30*(8), 1225-1240. doi: 10.1080/09687599.2015.1083846.

Cameron, H., & Nunkoosing, K. (2011). Lecturer perspectives on dyslexia and dyslexic students within one faculty at one university in England. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(3), 341-352. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2011.641002.

Campbell, F. (2009). *Contours of ableism: The production of disability and abledness*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Campbell, S. C. (2017). *The social construction of dyslexia in UK higher education* (Doctoral thesis). Retrieved from http://shura.shu.ac.uk/16990/1/SCampbell_2017_DEd_SocialConstructionDyslexia.pdf.

Cassar, M., Treiman, R., Moats, L., Pollo, T. C., & Kessler, B. (2005). How do the spellings of children with dyslexia compare with those of non-dyslexic children?. *Reading and Writing*, *18*(1), 27-49. doi: 10.1007/s11145-004-2345-x.

Chapman, J. W., & Tunmer, W. E. (2003). Reading difficulties, reading-related self-perceptions, and strategies for overcoming negative self-beliefs. *Reading &Writing Quarterly*, *19*(1), 5-24. doi: 10.1080/10573560308205.

Chopra, R. (2008). Factors Influencing Elementary School Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education. In *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Edinburgh,* Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/174842.pdf.

Clarke, M. (2008). *Language teacher identities: Co-constructing discourse and community*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Collinson, C., & Penketh, C. (2010). 'sit in the corner and don't eat the crayons': Postgraduates with dyslexia and the dominant 'lexic' discourse. *Disability & Society, 25*(1), 7- 19. doi:10.1080/09687590903363274.

Collinson, C., Dunne, L., & Woolhouse, C. (2012). Re-visioning disability and dyslexia down the camera lens: Interpretations of representations on UK university websites and in a UK government guidance paper. *Studies in Higher Education, 37*(7), 859-873. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.555817.

Corker, M., & Shakespeare, T. (2002). *Disability/postmodernity: Embodying disability theory*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Craddock, D., & Mathias, H. (2009). Assessment options in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34*(2), 127-140. doi: 10.1080/02602930801956026.

Crawford, F., Dickinson, J., & Leitmann, S. (2002). Mirroring meaning making: Narrative ways of reflecting on practice for action. *Qualitative Social Work, 1*(2), 170-190. doi:10.1177/1473325002001002618.

Denhart, H. (2008). Deconstructing Barriers: Perceptions of Students Labelled with Learning Disabilities in Higher Education. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 41 (6). 483-97. doi: 10.1177/0022219408321151.

Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Data collection by type of special educational need.* Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7736/1/DFES-1889-2005.pdf.

Department for Education and Skills. (2007). *The Early Years Foundation Stage*. Retrieved from http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears.

Department for Education. (2012). *Guidance for local authorities and schools on education performance targets for 2012.* Retrieved from http://thegrid.org.uk/leadership/schoolimprovement/documents/2012%20_target%20_setting_gui dance.pdf.

Department for Education. (2015). *Research on funding for young people with special educational needs.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-for-young-people-with-special-educational-needs.

Department for Education. (2018). *What academies, free schools and colleges should publish online.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online.

Disability Rights Commission. (2007). *The Disability Discrimination Code of Practice (Providers of Post 16 Education).* Retrieved from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1496/made.

Duchane, K. A., Leung, R. W., & Coulter-Kern, R. (2008). Preservice physical educator attitude toward teaching students with disabilities. *Clinical Kinesiology: Journal of the American Kinesiotherapy Association*, *62*(3), 16-21.

Dugdale, G., & Clark, C. (2008). *Literacy changes lives: An advocacy resource*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Dumit, J. (2006). Illnesses you have to fight to get: Facts as forces in uncertain, emergent illnesses. *Social Science & Medicine, 62*(3), 577-590. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.06.018.

Ellis, E. S. (1997). Watering up the curriculum for adolescents with learning disabilities: Goals of the knowledge dimension. *Remedial and Special Education*, *18*(6), 326-346.

Farnsworth, V., Kleanthous, I., & Wenger-Trayner, E. (2016). Communities of Practice as a social theory of learning: A conversation with Etienne Wenger. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 64*(2), 139-160. doi: 10.1080/00071005.2015.1133799.

Fawcett, A., & Nicolson, R. (2008). *Dyslexia, Learning, and the Brain*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Florian, L., Hollenweger, J., Simeonsson, R. J., Wedell, K., Riddell, S., Terzi, L., & Holland, A. (2006). Cross-cultural perspectives on the classification of children with disabilities: Part I. Issues in the classification of children with disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 40*(1), 36-45. doi:10.1177/0022466906040001040

Francks, C. MacPhie, I. L, & Monaco, A.P. (2002). The genetic basis of dyslexia. *Lancet Neurology, 1*(8), 483-490. doi:10.1016/S1474-4422(02)00221-1.

Friend, A., & Olson, R. K. (2008). Phonological spelling and reading deficits in children with spelling disabilities. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, *12*(1), 90-105. doi: 10.1080/10888430701773876.

Gibbs, S., & Elliott, J. (2015). The differential effects of labelling: How do 'dyslexia' and 'reading difficulties' affect teachers' beliefs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 30*(3), 323-337. doi:10.1080/08856257.2015.1022999.

Gillman, M., Heyman, B., & Swain, J. (2000). What's in a name? the implications of diagnosis for people with learning difficulties and their family carers. *Disability & Society, 15*(3), 389-409. doi: 10.1080/713661959.

Giraud, A. L., & Ramus, F. (2013). Neurogenetics and auditory processing in developmental dyslexia. *Current opinion in neurobiology*, *23*(1), 37-42. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2012.09.003.

Glazzard, J. (2010). The impact of dyslexia on pupils' self-esteem. *Support for Learning, 25*(2), 63-69. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9604.2010.01442.x.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon and Shuster.

Goldberg, R. J., Higgins, E. L., Raskind, M. H., & Herman, K. L. (2003). Predictors of success in individuals with learning disabilities: A qualitative analysis of a 20-Year longitudinal study. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 18*(4), 222-236. doi:10.1111/1540-5826.00077.

Göncü, A., & Gauvain, M. (2012). Sociocultural approaches to educational psychology: Theory, research, and application. In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan, C. B. McCormick, G. M. Sinatra, & J. Sweller (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook, Vol. 1: Theories, constructs, and critical issues* (pp. 123-152). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Goodson, I. F., & Sikes, P. J. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings: Learning from lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Goodwin, J. (2012). *SAGE Biographical Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Gowar, C. (2014). *Inclusive Communities: A research report.* London: Disability Rights UK.

Habib, M., & Giraud, K. (2013). Dyslexia. In *Handbook of clinical neurology* (pp. 229-235). doi:10.1016/B978-0-444-52891-9.00023-3.

Hammersley, M. (2005). What can the literature on Communities of Practice tell us about educational research? Reflections on some recent proposals. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *28*(1), 5-21. doi:10.180/01406720500036653.

Henley, M., Ramsey, R.S., & Algozzine, R.F. (2010). *Labelling and Disadvantages of Labelling*. London: Prentice Hall.

Holloway, S. (2001). The experience of higher education from the perspective of disabled students. *Disability & Society, 16*(4), 597-615. doi:10.1080/09687590120059568.

Horton, K. (2015). *The narrative construction of dyslexic identities in adults* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://orca.cf.ac.uk/75556/1/Kimberley%20Horton%20Final%20Thesis%20ORCA.pdf.

J, Rose. (2006). *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*. Retrieved from https://www.catchup.org/resources/711/independent_review_of_the_teaching_of_early_reading.pdf.

Jodrell, D. (2010). Social-Identity and Self-Efficacy Concern for Disability Labels. *Psychology Teaching Review*, *16*(2), 111-121. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ920105.pdf.

Keddie, A. (2012). *Matters of autonomy and accountability in the English schooling policy context: constraints and possibilities.* Brisbane: University of Queensland.

Keil, S., Miller, O., & Cobb, R. (2006). Special educational needs and disability. *British Journal of Special Education, 33*(4), 168-172. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8578.2006.00435.x.

Kendall, L. (2016) Higher education and disability: Exploring student experiences. *Cogent Education*, *3*(1) doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2016.1256142.

Keogh, B. K., Gallimore, R., & Weisner, T. (1997). A sociocultural perspective on learning and learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, *12*(2), 107-113.

Keslair, F., Maurin, E., & McNally, S. (2012). Every child matters? An evaluation of "Special Educational Needs" programmes in England. *Economics of education review*, *31*(6), 932-948. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2012.06.005.

Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V. S., & Miller, S. M. (Eds.). (2003). *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context. Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive, and Computational Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lauchlan, F., & Boyle, C. (2007). Is the use of labels in special education helpful? *Support for Learning, 22*(1), 36-42. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9604.2007.00443.x.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Law, J., Rush, R., Anandan, C., Cox, M., & Wood, R. (2012). Predicting language change between 3 and 5 years and its implications for early identification. *Pediatrics, 130*(1), 132-7 doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-1673.

Lawson, H., Boyask, R., & Waite, S. (2013). Construction of difference and diversity within policy and practice in England. *Cambridge journal of education*, *43*(1), 107-122. doi: 10.1080/0305764X.2012.749216.

Lawthom, R. (2012). Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice and Disability Studies. In *Disability and Social Theory* (pp. 233-251). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Leseyane, M., Mandende, P., Makgato, M., & Cekiso, M. (2018). Dyslexic learners' experiences with their peers and teachers in special and mainstream primary schools in North-West Province. *African Journal of Disability,7* (0), 1-7. doi: 10.4102/ajod.v7i0.363.

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability and generalizability in qualitative research. Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 4(3), 324-327. doi: 10.4103/2249-4863.161306.

Leung, P. P. Y. (2010). Autobiographical timeline: A narrative and life story approach in understanding meaning-making in cancer patients. *Illness, Crisis & Loss, 18*(2), 111-127. doi:10.2190/IL.18.2.c.

Li, L. C., Grimshaw, J. M., Nielsen, C., Judd, M., Coyte, P. C., & Graham, I. D. (2009). Evolution of wenger's concept of Community of Practice. *Implementation Science: IS, 4*(1), 11-11. doi: 10.1186/1748-5908-4-11.

Macdonald, S. J. (2010). Towards a social reality of dyslexia. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38*(4), 271-279. doi:10.1111/j.1468-3156.2009.00601.x.

Martin, A. (2002) Motivation and academic resilience: Developing a model for student enhancement. *Australian Journal of Education*, *46*(1), 34-49. doi: 10.1177/000494410204600104.

Martin, A. J., & Marsh, H. W. (2003). Fear of failure: Friend or foe?. *Australian Psychologist*, *38*(1), 31-38. doi: 10.1080/00050060310001706997.

Martin, A. J., & Marsh, H. W. (2008). Academic buoyancy: Towards an understanding of students' everyday academic resilience. *Journal of school psychology*, *46*(1), 53-83. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2007.01.002.

Martin, D. (2013). *Researching dyslexia in multilingual settings: diverse perspectives*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Mason, L. (2007). Introduction: Bridging the cognitive and sociocultural approaches in research on conceptual change: Is it feasible? *Educational Psychologist, 42*(1), 1-7. doi:10.1080/00461520709336914.

May, H., & Bridger, K. (2010). *Developing and embedding inclusive policy and practice in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy.

McNulty, M. A. (2003). Dyslexia and the life course. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 36*(4), 363-381. doi: 10.1177/00222194030360040701.

Michail, K. (2010). *Dyslexia: The experiences of university students with dyslexia* (Doctoral thesis). Retrieved from http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/1055/1/Michail10PhD.pdf.

Mortimore, T. (2013). Dyslexia in higher education: Creating a fully inclusive institution. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 13*(1), 38-47. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-3802.2012.01231.x.

Muijs, D., Ainscow, M., Chapman, C., & West, M. (2011). *Collaboration and networking in education*. London: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-94-007-0283-7.

Muter, V., Hulme, C., Snowling, M. J., & Stevenson, J. (2004). Phonemes, rimes, vocabulary, and grammatical skills as foundations of early reading development: evidence from a longitudinal study. *Developmental psychology*, *40*(5), 665. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.40.5.665.

Nalavany, B. A., Carawan, L. W., & Brown, L. J. (2011). Considering the role of traditional and specialist schools: Do school experiences impact the emotional well-being and self-esteem of adults with dyslexia? *British Journal of Special Education, 38*(4), 191-200. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00523.x.

Neimeyer, R. A. (2004). Fostering posttraumatic growth: A narrative elaboration. *Psychological inquiry*, *15*(1), 53-59. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stable/20447202.

Noddings, N. (1994). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. In *The education feminism reader* (pp. 171-183). New York: Routledge.

Novita, S. (2016). Secondary symptoms of dyslexia: A comparison of self-esteem and anxiety profiles of children with and without dyslexia. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 31*(2), 279-288. doi:10.1080/08856257.2015.1125694.

O'Donnell, V., Tobbell, J., Bradshaw, C., & Richmond, E. (2012). Participation in Inclusive Learning and Teaching Practices in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Academic Staff Identity and Change. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education*, *1*(2), 67 - 75. Retrieved from http://infonomics-society.org/wp-content/uploads/ijtie/published-papers/volume-1-2012/Participation-in-Inclusive-Learning-and-Teaching-Practices-in-Higher-Education-A-Qualitative-Study-of-Academic-Staff-Identity-and-Change.pdf.

Office for Standards in Education. (2010). *The special educational needs and disability review: A statement is not enough.* Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1145/1/Special%20education%20needs%20and%20disability%20review.pdf

Oliver, M. (2009). *Understanding disability: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Orenstein, M. (2012). *Smart but stuck: how resilience frees imprisoned intelligence from learning disabilities* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Pino, M., & Mortari, L. (2014). The inclusion of students with dyslexia in higher education: A systematic review using narrative synthesis. *Dyslexia, 20*(4), 346-369. doi:10.1002/dys.1484.

Pirttimaa, R., Takala, M., & Ladonlahti, T. (2015). Students in higher education with reading and writing difficulties. *Education Inquiry*, *6*(1), 24277. doi: 10.3402/ edui.v6.24277.

Pollak, D. (2005). *Dyslexia, the self and higher education: Learning life histories of students identified as dyslexic*. London: Trentham Books Ltd.

Poole, J. (2003). Dyslexia: A wider view. The contribution of an ecological paradigm to current issues. *Educational research*, *45*(2), 167-180. doi: 10.1080/001388032000103253.

Puolakanaho, A., Ahonen, T., Aro, M., Eklund, K., Leppänen, P. H., Poikkeus, A. M., & Lyytinen, H. (2007). Very early phonological and language skills: estimating individual risk of reading disability. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *48*(9), 923-931. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01763.x.

Quality Assurance Agency. (2003). *Learning from subject review 1993–2001: Sharing good practice*. Glouchester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Quicke, J., & Winter, C. (1994). Labelling and learning: An interactionist perspective. *Support for Learning*, *9*(1), 16-21. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9604.1994.tb00150.x

Rahman, M. S. (2016). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language ''Testing and Assessment'' research: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *6*(1), 102. doi: 10.5539/jel.v6n1p102.

Ramus, F. (2003). Developmental dyslexia: Specific phonological deficit or general sensorimotor dysfunction? *Current Opinion in Neurobiology, 13*(2), 212-218. doi: 10.1016/S0959-4388(03)00035-7.

Rao, S. (2004). Faculty attitudes and students with disabilities in higher education: A literature review. *College Student Journal*, *38*(2), 191-199.

Rashid, S., & Brooks, G. (2010). *The levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy of 13-to 19-year-olds in England, 1948-2009*. Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21953/1/doc_4690.pdf.

Reid, G. (2009). Identifying and overcoming the barriers to learning in an inclusive context. In G. Reid (Ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Dyslexia* (pp. 193-202). New York: Routledge.

Reid, G. (2012). *Dyslexia and inclusion: Classroom approaches for assessment, teaching and learning.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Rice, M., & Brooks, G. (2004). *Developmental dyslexia in adults: A research review*. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Richardson, J. T. E., & Wydell, T. N. (2003). The representation and attainment of students with dyslexia in UK higher education. *Reading and Writing, 16*(5), 475-503. doi:10.1023/A:1024261927214.

Riddell, S., & Weedon, E. (2006). What counts as a reasonable adjustment? dyslexic students and the concept of fair assessment. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 16*(1), 57-73. doi: 10.1080/19620210600804301.

Riddick, B. (2000). An examination of the relationship between labelling and stigmatisation with special reference to dyslexia. *Disability & Society, 15*(4), 653-667. doi:10.1080/09687590050058233.

Riddick, B. (2006). Dyslexia friendly schools in the UK. *Topics in Language Disorders*, *26*(2), 144-156. doi: 10.1097/00011363-200604000-00006.

Riddick, B. (2010). *Living with dyslexia: The social and emotional consequences of specific learning difficulties/disabilities (2nd ed.)*. London: Routledge.

Ridsdale, J. (2005). Dyslexia and self-esteem. In M. Turner & J. Rack (Eds.) *The study of dyslexia* (pp. 249-280). New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers (2nd ed.).* London: Sage Publications.

Rogoff, B., & Chavajay, P. (1995). What's become of research on the cultural basis of cognitive development? *American Psychologist, 50*(10), 859-877. doi:10.1037/0003066X.50.10.859.

Runswick-Cole, K. (2011). Time to end the bias towards inclusive education?. *British Journal of Special Education*, *38*(3), 112-119. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00514.x.

Shakespeare, T. (1996). Disability, identity and difference. In C. Barnes & G. Mercer (Eds.) *Exploring the divide: Illness and disability* (pp. 94-113). Leeds: The disability press.

Shakespeare, T. (2010). The Social Model of Disability. In L.J. Davies (Eds.), *The Disability Studies Reader.* (pp.266-73). New York: Routledge.

Shifrer, D., Callahan, R. M., & Muller, C. (2013). Equity or marginalization? the high school course-taking of students labeled with a learning disability. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(4), 656-682. doi: 10.3102/0002831213479439.

Siegel, L. & Lipka, O. (2008). The Definition of Learning Disabilities: Who is the Individual with Learning Disabilities?. In G. Reid, A. Fawcett, F. Manis, & F . E. Siegel (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of dyslexia*. London: Sage Publications.

Siegel, L. S. (2006). Perspectives on dyslexia. *Paediatrics & child health*, *11*(9), 581-587. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2528651/.

Siegel, L. S. (2006). Perspectives on dyslexia. *Paediatrics & child health*, *11*(9), 581-587. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2528651/.

Singleton, C. (2002). Dyslexia: Cognitive factors and implications for literacy. In G. Reid & J. Wearmouth (Eds.) *Dyslexia and literacy: theory and practice* (pp. 115-129). Chichester: Wiley.

Smythe, I. (2010). *Dyslexia in the digital age: making IT work*. London: Bloomsbury.

Snowling, M. J. (2001). From language to reading and dyslexia. *Dyslexia, 7*(1), 37-46. Doi: 10.1002/dys.185.

Snowling, M. J. (2008). Specific disorders and broader phenotypes: The case of dyslexia. *Quarterly journal of experimental psychology*, *61*(1), 142-156. doi: 10.1080/17470210701508830.

Snowling, M. J. (2013). Early identification and interventions for dyslexia: a contemporary view. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *13*(1), 7-14. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2012.01262.x.

Snowling, M. J., Hulme, C., Bailey, A. M., Stothard, S. E. & Lindsay, G. (2011). *Better Communication Research Project: Language and Literacy Attainment of Pupils during Early Years and through KS2: Does Teacher Assessment at Five provide a Valid Measure of Children's Current and Future Educational Attainments? Research Brief (DFE-RR172A)*. Retrieved from *https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED526910.pdf.*

Stiker, H.J. (1997). *A history of disability*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Streitlien, A. (2000). Learning through interaction. In *The European Conference on Educational Research*, *Edinburgh*. Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001588.htm.

Student Finance England. (2018). *Extra help – Disabled Students' Allowance*. Retrieved from http://media.slc.co.uk/sfe/1718/ft/sfe_dsa_guide_1718_d.pdf.

Taylor, G., & Ali, N. (2017). Learning and living overseas: Exploring factors that influence meaningful learning and assimilation: How international students adjust to studying in the UK from a socio-cultural perspective. *Education Sciences, 7*(1), 35. doi:10.3390/educsci7010035.

Taylor, L. M., Hume, I. R., & Welsh, N. (2010). Labelling and self-esteem: The impact of using specific vs. generic labels. *Educational Psychology, 30*(2), 191-202. doi: 10.1080/01443410903494478.

Tett, L. & Crowther, J. (2011). Learning and identity in literacy progams. In *Adult Education Research Conference Toronto*, Retrieved from https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2011/papers/101.

Tinklin, T., Riddell, S., & Wilson, A. (2004). Policy and provision for disabled students in higher education in scotland and england: The current state of play. *Studies in Higher Education, 29*(5), 637-657. doi: 10.1080/0307507042000261599.

Tobbell, J., & Lawthom, R. (2005). Dispensing with labels: Enabling children and professionals to share a Community of Practice. *Educational and child psychology*, *22*(3), 8997.

Torgerson, C., Brooks, G., & Hall, J. (2006). *A systematic review of the research literature on the use of phonics in the teaching of reading and spelling*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

Torgesen, J. K. (2004). Lessons Learned from Research on Interventions for Students Who Have Difficulty Learning to Read. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 355-382). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Tracy, S.J. (2013*). Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Chichester:Wiley-Blackwell.

Tsovili, T. D. (2004). The relationship between language teachers' attitudes and the state-trait anxiety of adolescents with dyslexia. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *27*(1), 69-86. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9817.2004.00215.x.

Upton, T. D., Harper, D. C., & Wadsworth, J. (2005). Postsecondary attitudes toward persons with disabilities: A comparison of college students with and without disabilities. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, *36*(3), 24.

Vellutino, F. R., Fletcher, J. M., Snowling, M. J., & Scanlon, D.M. (2004). Specific reading disability (dyslexia): What have we learned in the past four decades? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(1), 2-40. Doi:10.1046/j.0021-9630.2003.00305.x.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and Language.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wenger, E. (1996). How we learn. Communities of Practice. The social fabric of a learning organization. *The Healthcare Forum Journal, 39*(4), 20.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of Practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, *7*(2), 225-246. doi: 10.1177/135050840072002.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder. W. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*: *A Guide to Managing Knowledge.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of Practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept. In *Social learning systems and Communities of Practice* (pp. 179-198). London: Springer.

West, A., Mattei, P., & Roberts, J. (2011). Accountability and sanctions in English schools. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *59*(1), 41-62. doi: 10.1080/00071005.2010.529416.

Westwood, P. (2000) Steppin up: from school to university. In I. Smythe (Ed) *The Dyslexia Handbook*. Reading: BDA.

World Health Organisation. (2016). *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision*. Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2016/en#/F81.

Wray, M. (2013). Comparing disabled students' entry to higher education with their nondisabled peers — barriers and enablers to success. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 14*(3), 87-101. doi: 10.5456/WPLL.14.3.87.

Zhao, J. Y., Zhang, B., & Yu, G. (2008). Effects of concealable stigma for learning disabilities. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, *36*(9), 1179-1188. doi: 10.2224/sbp.2008.36.9.1179.

Appendices

Participant information sheet

"Living with the dyslexia label: Exploring the life narratives of students labelled with dyslexia in Higher Education from a socio-cultural perspective.*"*

You are being invited to take part in a study exploring the learning journey and life experiences of those labelled with dyslexia in higher education.

Before you agree to take part it is important to understand why the research is taking place and what it will involve. Please take some time to read through this information sheet carefully, and discuss it with your researcher if you wish. If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher. Contact numbers and emails are provided below.

What is the study about?

The present research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of those living and learning with dyslexia have been through and how they negotiate dyslexia whilst studying in University. As much of the research surrounding this subject is based on statistics and testing those with dyslexia, it would be both interesting and practical to understand dyslexia from a more personal and subjective perspective.

The data and research from this study may even lead to the recommendation of advanced support systems both inside and outside of the academic environment.

Do I have to take part?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you do take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and if you change your mind at any point (except when the work is due to be analysed) you have the right to withdraw your data without giving a reason.

If you do take part you **do not** have to discuss anything you do not wish to talk about. Your identity will also remain anonymous as personal information that may identify you will not be included and a pseudo name will be used at all times.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting around 30/40 minutes. The interview will not involve any structured questions and allows you to talk freely about your experiences of living and learning with dyslexia. However, if you get stuck for things to talk about during the interview the researcher will use prompt questions to help you. Each interview will be recorded for research purposes and then later transcribed onto a word document. The recording will only be read by the researchers involved with the project.

Will my identity be disclosed and what will happen with the information?

Your participation in the interview will remain anonymous as pseudo names will be used throughout the research. Any personal information that may link back to your identification will not be included. All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure, however it is anticipated that the research will be published in articles and report. Your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form. Only the researcher and supervisors have access to the personal and identifable information provided. However, if the interviewee indicates that s/he or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, the researcher would approach the safegaurding lead identified within each host organisation.

The information gathered will be used to present a report and academic papers in order to present the findings of the study to the public. Anonymised comments and views expressed by participants will e included in these publications, as well as stories created by the researcher to reflect the experiences of participants.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you require additional information about the study, or have any queries regarding the study before or after it takes place please contact the researcher on:

Georgia Taylor: Georgia.taylor@hud.ac.uk.

You can also contact the project supervisors on:

Dr Jane Tobbell: J.tobell@hud.ac.uk

Dr Lynda Turner: l.turner@hud.ac.uk.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *Living with the dyslexia label: Exploring the life narratives of students labelled with dyslexia in Higher Education from a socio-cultural perspective.*

Please circle the correct answer to each statement below concerning the collection and use of the research data:

I have read and understood the information sheet.

YES   **NO**

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study.

YES   **NO**

I have had my questions answered satisfactorily.

YES   **NO**

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until the analysis of the data, without giving an explanation.

YES   **NO**

I agree to the interview being digitally recorded and the contents used for research purposes.

YES   **NO**

I understand that my identity will be protected and that all data will be anonymous.

YES   **NO**

I agree to the data (in line with conditions outlined above) being used by other bona fide researchers.

YES   **NO**

I would like to see a copy of the data in which I feature.

YES   **NO**

NAME (printed) _____

Signature_____ **Date**_____

DEBRIEF FORM

Project title: "Living and learning with dyslexia: A socio-cultural perspective"

Researcher: Post graduate researcher at Huddersfield University.

Supervisor: Jane Tobbell & Lynda Turner

Thank you for your participation in this study which aimed to explore the experiences of students labelled with dyslexia both in and out of education.

Participant's rights:

You have the right to withdraw any data that you have provided up to the analysis stage in on the

1.05.17.

Confidentiality:

Pseudo names will be used to maintain anonymity and all data will remain confidential.

Contact information:

If you have any queries about the study you can contact the researcher via email:
georgia.taylor@hud.ac.uk

The project supervisor, Jane Tobbell, will also be available to answer any questions and can be contacted via email: **J.tobbell@hud.ac.uk**

Counselling services:

If you feel like you have experienced any sort of psychological distress from taking part in this study, or you feel as though certain issues may have been raised during the study that you would like to talk about further, please contact the counselling services at Huddersfield University. Contact details are shown below:

• Attend the Wellbeing Drop-in, iPoint, Level 4, Student Central, 11.00am Monday to Friday.
• Ring 01484 471001 or e-mail ipoint@hud.ac.uk to make an initial appointment. After this initial meeting, which will be with one of our Wellbeing Advisers, they will refer you to counselling if this is the right option for you.

 Thank you for your participation in this study.

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focuses on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Erm, well it took, I was diagnosed with dyslexia at junior school, but it took them, it wasn't the school themselves that realised erm and well that, at the time it didn't annoy me because I didn't know anything really. I remember my parents often saying how annoyed they were that the school never recognised it and it took a family friend whose son was diagnosed with dyslexia to say 'oh maybe you should get Ella tested' and things like that. Erm, but pretty much what I was doing was erm and this is the only reason I can think why the school didn't pick up on it, was that they'd read a book in class and then when we went to do private reading, I'd pick the book they'd just read in class and I would have remembered, because it was just simple like Biff and Chip books and stuff, I would have remembered it.

I: *So how old were you when this happened?*

P: Er this was just as far as I can remember from junior school from erm it was up until about year 4 year 5, that's when I was officially diagnosed. Erm, and i'd er, yeah, what the teachers didn't notice was that I was reading faster than I was turning the page. So yeah, it was my parents and this family friend that noticed, actually Ella is saying words that aren't even on this page, why? And so they actually just tested me on books id never read before ((laughs)) and there was no way I could actually translate what was written on the page, I could not read at all. Erm, and this was like year 4, so i'm not sure how old you'd be, it would be about 9/10 that age, I genuinely could not read anything cause I didn't understand the words or anything like that.

I: *Were you confident writing?*

P: No, the erm, I could kind of string sentences along and get my way around things and stuff but I couldn't form a sentence the way my year could and stuff and this is why my mum and dad were so annoyed at the school that they'd not noticed anything erm because I went through all

these tests and things like that and there was so much I couldn't do. Erm, so I went, I got diagnosed.

I: *How did it make you feel when it was acknowledged that you were at a different level to your class mates?*

P: I can't remember too much, but I remember not noticing it because no one had ever said to me 'Ella you can't read or Ella you're not very good at spelling', I thought I was exactly the same as everyone else, I thought no one could string a sentence and no one can read and no one can do this and stuff because no one had ever told me they just like erm. Like if they told me to spell a word or something like that I'd erm, because you know I knew my alphabets and stuff like that you know, I'd be spelling it very much phonetically. I'd have no idea how to spell that word, they'd say 'cat' you know and 'c-a-t' you know nobody actually picked on

I wasn't saying 'C-A-T' I was just spelling it out, making the sounds. And it was little bits and bats like that but I thought everybody else was the same, because nobody had picked up on it. But then once, my parents, they took me somewhere independent and they said 'yeah she's very dyslexic' erm they, my mum and dad went to the school, they explained this, showed them and they thought this is going to help and they're going to bring in some support, it's going to make things better. Erm and they erm ((laughs)), the feeling after that happened, I hated it. I hated school, I hated everything about it because it was so embarrassing what they had me do. So when they were doing things like drama and art and things like that which I loved at school or sport as well, I remember they'd take me out of P.E classes, they'd sit me at the back of the classroom and ask me to spell all these words over and over and it was just me that couldn't do it. I felt like everyone was looking at me, it was awful, I hated it so much. It was like year 5, year 6 towards the end and it was really basic words. Now I look back on it like they were they were asking me to spell cat and dog and look and things like that and I remember now since I knew everybody else could spell those words and it was just me. I just felt so embarrassed and so like, they made me feel like I was an idiot and I was stupid and because it's not, my intelligence was perfectly the same as all of them, it was just I, my brain processed things differently to them and stuff but at the time I didn't know that and I was just, I felt so, the more I tried the more I couldn't do it, I felt like I was in nursery, I didn't want to go to school anymore. I used to come home crying and not want to go to school the next day and stuff like that cause I knew it was just going to be the same. Erm, and that's when my mum and dad said to them 'I don't want you to do anymore with Ella at

the school, we're going to help her out of school, you just teach the, like you have her in class and you do things that everybody else does and maybe give her a bit of support here and there but we don't want you to, we'll get stuff out of school'. And I got, it was light therapy, which was like, you know how some people have like the coloured films over work, I don't need that anymore cause I had this. It was like in a dark room and they showed me all these different colours and lights and things like that and from needing a pink film over all my work I can now just see perfectly on white, like white paper. So that was like year 6, it was my mum and dad who went, they researched all this, it was them going round finding all these alternative methods and things like that, they sent me to private tutors and stuff like that. I mean I was really lucky that my parents could do this and stuff because if not

I would have been left and I wouldn't have gone anywhere. But I could, all of this outside support and things like that brought me up so much to speed when I was actually talked to like a normal child and I wasn't, it was one to one so I didn't feel like everyone was looking at me and it was okay to make mistakes and do something wrong because I didn't feel like I was embarrassing myself, that it were erm and I progressed really fast then when I was with someone er when it was just me and the tutor and they knew what dyslexia was and how it worked and how what was best to help me. And then, erm after all of that I got to high school and they put like a programme in place where erm on a morning instead of going to tutorial and things like that I'd erm do reading and spelling and stuff like that and that was up till about year 8 I did that and that brought me up to a pace, where I was you know.

I: *Was it just you or were you in a group?*

P: Er it was just, we were in a room and there was a couple of other people but it was just mostly one to one. The other people were also dyslexic so it wasn't like I was in a classroom and they were asking me to do stuff in front of everyone so it was quite nice and relaxed. And when I've talked to other friends who are dyslexic and stuff like that they've felt the exact same that when it's kind of like in more of a relaxed environment and its one to one with someone and you're not put in front of everybody you learn a lot faster because you don't feel the pressure or embarrassment. So yeah so the private tuition and stuff like that and the high school one to ones in the morning they got me up to a higher speed with some support like here and there to be able to do my GCSE's and stuff like that independently. So and I er carried on with that my er English teachers and things like that were fully aware I had dyslexia and it was quite severe and that er

they were all kind or like, they had a meeting with my parents it was all set up, so they were aware that up to about the age of 9 I couldn't read at all and this is how much i've caught up and there's still quite a lot I need to do but I'm up to a level where it's possible I can do things and stuff, so give her patience, giver her time and stuff like that. Er, this really helped me.

I: *So was that a meeting with your parents and tutor?*

P: Yeah, it was my mum and dad and the person who kind of like, at high school had the one to ones with and my English teachers, my science teachers and my history teachers and stuff, people like them where writing is really key thing, like I didn't have it with my maths teacher because maths was fine.

I: *So you didn't have a problem with maths?*

P: No, it was just writing and reading, numbers for some reason I could just do and it were, I was a lot stronger at maths than I was with my writing and my reading. Erm, so I could always do that. Erm and then, they, like the teachers from these talks you know they gave me extra time, I got extra times in the exams and stuff like that, a reader and my teacher gave me loads of extra support and things like that which was really good. The GCSE'S I got, I could get into college up here which is the really good one and I was so chuffed with myself because I'd worked my socks off for it erm but I don't think I would of got there if mum and dad had never intervened when I was at junior school and if high school hadn't been that proactive at getting me one to one I know I wouldn't of done it ((laughs)). Because, I remember sitting in the exams for GCSE's and I remember getting a big block of text and staring at it and I remember thinking if I didn't have a reader I don't know what I would have done because it's kind of like even though I can now read to a certain extent erm the minute it's like a big block of writing I'm lost. Erm, I can read paragraphs at a time but I need them sectioned off like a big thing it just, everything goes to pot ((laughs)). Erm, and so it was really good having those in the exams. And then I got up to college erm and at college they very much, they'll give you help if you ask for it and I found all of my teacher bar one, no two, all of them except two were really really good with it, they were so.

I: *So did you tell them you were dyslexic?*
P: Yeah, I went up to them, it was on the system anyway that I was, but I also thought it would be best for me to go up to them and explain, cause dyslexia means so many different things. So

you know, I went up to them all at the beginning of the year and said that erm I can spell for the most part but a lot, I've been taught to spell phonetically, because in high school I was told when I did my GCSE's that you get, I think it was only 4 marks deducted for spelling but you get half marks deducted if it's not readable. So they taught me to spell a lot of things, if I didn't know how to spell it spell it phonetically, so at least even if my spelling is absolutely wrong and atrocious I'd only lose four marks instead of half marks with it being completely unreadable and things like that. So I said to them a lot of my spelling, especially if its new words will be phonetically, just if, as long as you show me which word it is and make sure it's clear how you do spell it, not scribbled, in capitals or whatever I'll be absolutely fine, I'll learn it and stuff. Don't ask me to read out in class because when I'm under a stressful situation like that everything, I cannot read erm it's pointless, you will be here for weeks kind of thing ((laughs)), erm and stuff. And lots of my teachers, I remember my politics teachers they were so proactive in helping me and stuff like that erm they'd give me copies where it would be, like if I got a huge block of text they'd break it down for me. I remember one of my teachers Mark gave me summaries of things which were short and stuff like that erm but most of that was because I went up to him and I said 'this is what doesn't work for me, this is what does' and stuff and I used to go up and see him and ask for his help and things like that.

I: *So do you think If you didn't do that you would have still be supported in the same way?*

P: No because I think they kind of take a similar approach to university like erm in a lot of my classes erm I don't think at uni, I don't think I would have got the help with things I'm struggling with unless I asked and I think I don't think its publicised enough, especially at college, especially at university, that if you do come and ask for help you will get it. You see so many people drowning in everything and they don't know what to do because nobodies offered them the help and I think that's something that really, I think they need to stress, not and I, a lot of people are quite happy to work independently and don't need that help but just for the chance that you've got someone that's really dyslexic or really struggles with something, that needs to be expressed and like really pushed because they erm you know they say like 'we don't have time to come and find everyone who's got an issue but if you feel you're struggling come talk to us, come see us' and stuff like that because so many people. I mean I'm quite lucky that I'm a very confident person anyway and I would go up to someone and say I don't know what to do but there's so many people that wouldn't do that and wouldn't feel confident enough to say 'I'm

struggling'. People, especially when I was at college because it was this whole thing of 'oh we're better than Cambridge and we're better than Eton' and all of that, that people felt like if they were failing they couldn't let anybody know. Erm but really if you did, there's so much support there and I feel like that, that was

the one grudge I had against college was that they didn't advertise that that they would help. I feel like a lot of people thought it was quite a stern environment and you weren't allowed it and you had to be clever and stuff and it wasn't that I found, I found that it was a really helpful and supportive environment but that's because I went looking for it. But yeah there was two teachers at college that were awful, like I, you know erm, my first one ((laughs)) I actually, cause I'd really, once I got to grips with it I really loved English language, I loved the, although I couldn't spell and a lot of the reading was hard, when I had support and help with that the actual subject I really enjoyed it, so I picked that at college to do. So I had this teacher and again I went up to her at the start and I explained the situation and stuff and oh she were awful ((laughs)). Yeah she made me read out in class, she said 'if you don't do it you'll never learn'. I was, I used to have absolute rows with her it was really bad because I used to say 'well look no it's not me not learning, I am learning I'm just learning in a different way'.

I: *Just lack of understanding…*

P: Yeah it was and it shocked me especially that she was an English teacher, that, and she'd been in high schools and stuff. I appreciate in college you don't actually have to have a teaching degree to teach but she had, she'd been in high schools before, she'd come to college and stuff like that so she should be aware of it and stuff because by the time I was in high school it was definitely a known thing. Erm, but they, yeah she was just, she, I'd have, I think I had erm yeah I had this thing with the college where I was allowed extensions on say, if it was like erm not my official pieces but if it was like an essay I had to write for class or something like that I'd be allowed id have a bit of lenience with things because it would take me a lot longer. Like if it was a week, i'd be allowed a week and a few days or something to get it done and she were well aware of this it was all on the system. But, when my mum and dad went to parents evening she went and, I have never had a late piece of work for her, but she was going on about how everything was late and how I wasn't doing anything and stuff like that and I dropped her class I was like.

I: *Just because of your teacher?*

P: Just because of her cause I just couldn't it was, it was like arguing with an idiot, like you know people say you can't reason with someone stupid and it was like that. I'm not saying she were an idiot she wasn't, she was clearly a very intelligent woman but she'd got her own, her own idea of what was going on and she wasn't willing to break away from that, she wasn't willing to sit down and talk to me and erm see actually what I need, how I learnt or what was going on and stuff like that, she was very closed minded about what dyslexia was.
Dyslexia meant you can't read and write and I think she was annoyed ((laughs)) that I was in her class, she was kind of like 'well you can't read and write what you doing here, you're in English'.

I: *She said that?*

P: She didn't say that no but that's the impression that she gave, no she erm, yeah no I er, but it, and then there was a philosophy teacher and I told him, I had a different one in first year and he was so supportive he was really nice you know. He used to help me through things and stuff like that you know if there was a big bulk of text and stuff like that he used to say
'are you alright with that or do you want me to print it off all broken down into paragraphs?' and stuff like that. So he'd be really good with things, but in the second year I got a different teacher and I said to, I explained the same thing to him I said 'you know, you won't know caused I didn't have you last year but I am dyslexic don't ask me any…' and in every class you could almost guarantee he would ask me to read out and stuff and it got to the point where he'd say 'Ella can you read this out?' and I'd say 'no' ((laughs)). Everyone else, it sounds awful because I had these two people who were erm I was just really unfortunate with, but the whole of college were fantastic, it were just these two and it was such, it was such a lack of education about what it was erm that I felt like I didn't, I felt like in some ways it's their ignorance but in other ways its, they've never actually been told what dyslexia really is and how it works and how it's not like we can't read or write or we've chosen not to learn or anything like that. It's how our brain processes words and things and language and things erm and it takes us a lot longer to process it. Erm, and so asking us to read, it's going to take us a lot longer than it is someone else because their brain is wired differently to ours and stuff and they didn't see it like that, they were very obviously, it was

very obvious in their mind that dyslexia was you just, you were illiterate or you'd not learnt to read or write, not that you couldn't, it was you know, it was quite.

I: *So did the lack of support from those two teachers seem to affect your grades?*

P: Well I dropped English so I didn't get a grade in that, but in philosophy I went from a grade B to a C, so I got a B in my first year then I got a C in my last year.

I: *With that teacher?*

P: Yeah, erm it was partly that, I would blame him in a way because towards the end when it came to exam periods I stopped going to his classes cause I went up and I got everything I needed and then when it was just revision and stuff like that I was like 'I'm not dealing with him'. Either my, I had two politics teachers and even one of my politics teachers said 'don't go to his lesson' ((laughs)) because he could see how stressed I was getting about it and he could see how much like he said 'you can tell when you're going to his lessons because you look miserable and stuff, when you normally leave politics you're fine, you're happy and stuff like that but when you go in to philosophy you can see that you're miserable and you don't want to go and stuff' and he said 'when it's your exams as long as you go off and you you know use that time to revise, you're going to get more from that than you are going to his lessons, you're just going to get yourself bogged down and there's no point doing that'. So that's what I did, I stopped going, I didn't put as much effort in like.

I: *So in a way he disabled your learning because you need that support to learn…*

P: Yeah, like even you know, even if, I've always like, cause I've had teachers that I've never liked before but they've never talked to me like I'm an idiot or they've never, he, I felt really strongly that he talked to me like I was an idiot he made me feel like an idiot and that used to just, it would wind me round the bend and it's just, and it disengaged me, so when I was in his class I wasn't learning. So he did yeah, I feel like he buggared that up for me. It's simply down to lack of education and ignorance and things like that because you know it's ((laughs)) it's like, I mean I'm not comparing myself to someone in a wheelchair but it's like, so many people think 'oh poor them, they can't do anything' when in actual fact, like look at this you can do wheel chair sports and all of these amazing things you can still do and you know just because they're paralyzed doesn't mean they can't talk you know ((laughs)), they've still got a functioning brain

and everything like that but yet people pity them and stuff like that. I don't, I've never wanted to be pitied, I've just wanted to be understood that I take longer and things like that and it's always been that sort of, I felt I felt, when I've got my back up and I've ended up not doing the work or not getting the grade I should of, it's always been because I felt like I've been talked to like I was stupid and that, and I'm not. Like I've always, I can erm, like I've always been commented on like even though I couldn't read or I couldn't spell and things like that, from a really early age my vocabulary has been amazing like people used to talk to me when I was a child and be amazed how old I was because of the words I was using. And I used to love words and talking and things like that and I've always, if someone, like erm, like in lectures for example here at university I can listen to a whole lecture and I'd be able to re sight it back to someone. My memory is fantastic with stuff like that, and I love, if I listen I learn so much, ask me to read it in a book and I'm lost. And that's all it takes for someone to, if someone sat down with me and just said. And I've told, most of my lecturers know they will never see me writing notes and I don't because if I put my head down to write notes I'll miss like a hundred things and stuff.

I: *It's just different ways of learning isn't it…*

P: Yeah, and its erm and stuff. At university I've found that a lot more people are a lot more accepted of well the lecturers and the seminar tutors are a lot more accepting of 'you learn how you want to learn', which really helps me learn. I feel like through high school and college and junior school and things like that there's so much structure and they don't give you that, if I went to someone in high school and said, one of my teachers at high school and said 'I don't learn like that, this is how I learn' I don't think they'd, they'd be like 'oh but no, this is how we teach' and I'd be like 'yeah but this is how…' ((laughs)). I think, where uni there's a whole lot more freedom really, you know like I can go away, like, if I'm interested in something I'll go away and I'll research it by myself and I'll do my own things and stuff like that but I don't, I won't ever write anything down apart from like when I'm doing my own little notes and stuff like that. When I'm doing my own research and things I'll never sit there in a class or a lecture and stuff with me writing anything because It's pointless for me, it really is, there's no point in me doing it at all.

I: *So what happened at the end of college, did you go straight to uni?*

P: No, I erm, well I got my grades ((laughs)), one of them, in my politics, oh I could have cried. So, my politics was my passion I absolutely loved it to bits and erm ((laughs)) I was really good at it. There was me and another boy in the class and we were both so passionate about it and we really loved it and stuff and we were erm opposite ends of the political spectrum and stuff like that. I remember my politics teacher Dave he used to get me and Tom to stand up and he'd give us a question and write it on the board and we'd have to debate it and people would write down what we were arguing and stuff like that ((laughs)). Erm and so all my stuff, absolutely knew all my stuff like I can even talk like for lengths about it now and things but er I ended up cocking up, I got two A's and an A* and I cocked up my last exam that much because of an ex boyfriend. I know, it was awful but that, it just, it shows how stress can revert everything like how far I'd come, like now can spell and I can read and everything like that but something stressful can send it rocketing back to the start and stuff like that so. He kept me up till, oh when was it, oh it was the night before, it was the, it was the subject, it was on the topic that I struggled on the most and he come round to my house and he'd er kept me up, he come round at about 10 at night and didn't leave till about 4 in the morning shouting at me, saying 'you're not spending, paying enough attention to me' and all of this ((laughs)).

I: *Is that because you were trying to revise for your exams and things?*

P: Oh yeah yeah, I have exams. I'm sorry you know just because you don't doesn't mean I don't you know, I've got exams you know. I told you I wouldn't be around that much and stuff but no he were fuming and it was awful, so that was over very quickly ((laughs)).

I: *So was your exam the next day?*

P: Yeah, next day. So I didn't go to sleep till about, cause he left at four, erm and I, I feel so sorry for my mum and dad because they were trying to get him to go out and leave and go and stuff like that, they were like 'she has an exam in the morning' everything like that. Erm, problem was he's 6 ft 6, a big rugby player and everything like that so it was like whatever my mum and dad did it would be absolutely useless ((laughs)). There was this whole element of, you can say what you want but if you actually physically try to get him out of the door it's not happening and stuff like that. Erm they kind of wanted him to just go, they didn't want a fight and in the end he did leave at 4 ((laughs)), so after that you're all riled up anyway, so it was about 5 I got to sleep and my exam was at 9 in the morning. I was so stressed, I literally couldn't, I couldn't read the words

on the page. I remember going to my politics teacher after the exam and just breaking down and crying to them and I couldn't I genuinely, I was looking at it and it wasn't that I was tired and it wasn't that I was like annoyed or upset or anything like that, I was looking, it was like no matter how tired or annoyed I am now or like how whatever, I can read a line on a page but like that I'd just gone back to square one. I revised and revised I knew the work but when it came to my exam, I was so stressed I literally couldn't read the words on the page. I could work out 'I' and 'and' and things like that but I genuinely, when it was like parliament, I remember staring at the word parliament and not having a clue what on earth that said. I could not string the letters together and it just shows how stress and people causing stress on things can affect it. And I think, there needs to be, I remember after that exam thinking that, there needs to be more, how do you put it like, so say if you do an exam and someone busts in and starts making a riot everyone gets given their potential grade and stuff like that erm I feel like there needs to be more consideration like that for people with dyslexia. Like I mean, I know that it was the circumstances and I don't think enough people realise, like my politics teachers could completely vouch that I was in no mind to sit that exam and stuff, that a lot of stress had gone on and things like that and they could of, even like, they could of got a doctor in and seen that I hadn't had any sleep and I was so tired and everything like that and with like being dyslexic I think there should be more things in place for stuff like that to like. Me going in the morning and saying 'look I am in no state to do this exam, this is what happened' and things like that and maybe let me do it in the afternoon or something like that. I wouldn't have minded, I think I would have been so much better, even if I'd of been in isolation all morning and then gone into the exam in the afternoon, at least I would have had that time to catch up on sleep and relax and calm myself down and everything like that. I don't think there's that, there isn't that sort of support there, you either do it on the day or you don't. I remember being told ((laughs), erm a few erm, it was like a few months after it I went to go and see my politics teachers and stuff like that about, and they said 'do you want to know what your biggest mistake was?' and I said 'go on then' and they said 'you put your name on the paper' and I said 'what do you mean?' and apparently if you don't write anything on the paper, you're not saying you're in a fight state to do the exam. The minute you write something, even if it's just your name on the date or something, you're accepting that you're in a fit state to do the exam and you can't re take, you can't do it again and stuff like that. So that was it, if I'd not written anything, I literally wrote my name on the front of it and then not done anything else and stuff like that and they tried to dispute it and everything like that for me

but it just didn't go through. I mean, I ended up with a B, which it's kind of a bit like I'm complaining but it's only because I didn't get my top grade. Like, B's fantastic, B's such a good grade and like now I'm annoyed and it annoys me but I'm over it and I'm happy with my B, it could have gone so much worse than a B and stuff like that. Erm and it got me into university. But yeah, after I left college I took a year out, I er, I think it was partly because of the stress of everything erm I wanted to go into property.

I: *Did you split up with your boyfriend then?*

P: Oh yeah, that was completely over. Done with. It was that night, I just said 'do you know what if you're going to be like that then you can sod off, fat chance anything's going to be like…' ((laughs)), oh he was so strange, he was such a strange boy.

I: *Does he know that happened?*

P: Oh yeah yeah yeah. The worst thing is, was his mum and my mum are like really good friends, that's how we met erm and stuff. So there was like an element of like what do we say, aw his mum gave him an absolute bollocking, aw yeah, Helen did ((laughs)). It was ridiculous, she couldn't believe it. Because like, they kind of knew he was a bit of a loose cannon, like he is, and I knew that when I was when I was, all through when I was with him and stuff like that but most of the time he was such a nice person but it just takes one thing to really annoy me and you're gone, you can't, and there's nothing you can do, it's really bad. Like you genuinely, if he were my size or whatever, you could put, you could do something, you could push him out the door or something but because he was like this humongous human being ((laughs)) there's nothing you can do. I'm sat there going, I genuinely can't do anything, I can't, I'm absolutely powerless against you and stuff like that. Like, I knew he'd never hurt anyone, like he wasn't like that but it would be pointless me even attempting to push him out of the door or make him go away because I wouldn't be able to. He'd stand there and I'd be pushing him full force and he wouldn't move, you know cause he was blooming heavy. I remember he sat on me once by accident and I couldn't breathe, it was awful.

I: *How long were you with him for?*

P: Erm, it was just under a year when we broke up. Yeah, it wasn't a year yet. That was one of the big things he was complaining about he was like 'we're coming up to a year and you're not even spending time with me' and things like that. And I was like 'you know what after I finished

my exams I would have given you all the time you wanted, I would of made it up to you the fact I wouldn't of been there' and it was like, no, aw it were crackers. He were crackers. But yeah so I took a year, my boyfriend now is a lot more nice and calm ((laughs)) and doesn't shout and doesn't get angry and goes to bed at 10 o'clock, so its lovely ((laughs)) he's asleep. Erm, yeah he er, so after that I decided to go, I wanted to go into property, I wanted this year out. I could have gone to university to do it, I got the grades to but I kind of decided that I wanted t to have a go on it my own, without a degree because I was so fed up of education. I was so fed up of being like, I didn't know at the time how much like university gives you that freedom to learn how you want to, I thought it was going to be just like college and I was going to get, and I was fed up of being talked to like an idiot and I was fed up of having to, you know, work my socks off to just be told 'this is wrong, that's wrong, this is wrong' and then not have any help, I was fed up of that. So, I erm, I had this year out and stuff and I worked in, I worked in an estate agents and god it were awful. It put me off estate agents for life. It started off really great and they knew I were dyslexic from the start. I explained it in the interview, I said 'you know I am dyslexic, you know, I do struggle with these things' and stuff and the person interviewing me, she was like the managering director actually, she said 'aw don't worry I think I'm a bit dyslexic as well'. So I was like, oh she knows what it is and stuff like that. Turns out she had no clue, it was just that she wasn't very good at spelling. She actually had no clue whatsoever about what it was. She was getting at me for taking a really long time to write erm tenancy agreements or contracts and things like that and I was like, well I'm doing it as fast as I can and stuff like that. You know, erm, just the simple little things, like erm I'd spell something slightly wrong and I was like, well that's why people check my work over and things like that. Like I had erm, I used to work with a lady called er, there was like me and this other lady, Anne. She was such a help like she'd check over all my work and make sure I was doing it all correctly and stuff like that and she was teaching me how to do things and we were going about things and she was steadily giving me more roles to do and things. So I was learning things and she worked at my pace and it was really good, she made me feel comfortable and I felt as though I could progress and then we got a new manager in and within a week of her being there she fired Anne and then gave me all of Anne's work. So I was there, I'd only been there about September, October, November, December, four months? Because she fired her at the beginning of January, so four months and I was doing a full time sales role.

I: *So did you originally work part time?*

P: No, I was erm, I was there full time but I was a junior, they called me a junior negotiator. So erm I was being trained to be a full negotiator and things like that. I'd never, I'd never put a whole sale through in my life, I'd never done about surveys, I'd not learnt anything about them. I'd not learnt anything about what solicitors do, anything about how to close a sale, any of this stuff that I needed to know how to do to do this job I was given, I hadn't learnt and then all of a sudden that was me. I remember, time after time after time after time because they were like 'well why isn't this done, why isn't that done, why isn't this done' and stuff like that and I was like 'because I don't know how to do it'. It was awful, and I left in the end, I just couldn't. I was there for about four months with all this and I thought, no it will get better it will get better and I kept asking for help, saying I need help and they were like 'oh we'll give it to you when we've got time' and they never did and stuff like that. Erm, ((laughs)) in the end I ended up having like a discussion with one of the ladies there and her saying 'you've got dyslexia haven't you?' and I went 'yeah' and she went 'what actually is it?'

I: *Was this at the end as well?*

P: Yeah and that was when I was just like you know what ((laughs),) it was amazing. I was sat there thinking all along, I'm being told all along you know, 'we appreciate you're dyslexic, we know how it works' and so I was always under the impression that they know how it works and it will get better and it was just a rough period and stuff like that and it was just that whole thing at the end 'oh yeah, what is it?' and I just thought, you know what ((laughs)) I cannot do this and left. Erm, if I'd got that help like I was getting at the start, I would have been ((laughs)) and I kind of, my little victory against it was that four clients left when I left, they were like 'oh we were here because we liked working with Ella' and stuff like that because there was another lady there who was the new manager and people hated her. She were, apparently people didn't trust anything she'd say and this one lady actually said to her face, she said 'if you told me something I wouldn't believe it to save my life but if Ella told me the exact same thing I'd trust her', to this ladies face. I was trying so hard not to laugh, I really was. But, erm so that was my little victory and stuff like that and I think people could see, people didn't mind that it was taking me a while to get back to them because I think people could see, especially when they came into the office ((laughs)), how much work I had to do and how much I was just on my own in this, with all this work and stuff yano so really it was nice. The clients were fantastic and I loved them to bits but it was just the whole like, it was my big boss, and my

manager, they ruined everything for me because they'd hired me knowing I was dyslexic and then never bothered to find out what it was. I was completely capable, I knew I was capable of doing it, it was just that, you can't, they just overwhelmed me. All of a sudden I was doing my jobs and then all of a sudden I had someone else's jobs that I'd never done before and I had no idea how to do and stuff. And, I spent a huge amount of time learning and things like that and then they were wondering why I wasn't getting on with things and I was like 'because I just genuinely don't know how to do them' and it just didn't seem to, they were like 'well why haven't you learnt them?' and I were like 'because I learn slowly' and stuff like that. It was so, and I, I did I left and things like that. I'm now doing childhood studies which is completely different to that, completely and utterly different to.

I: *So did you just get into that through you're A levels?*

P: No it was more like, I got in and stuff like that but it was, I teach, my whole family do sailing and I volunteer at it on a Friday night. My brothers really high up in it and on a Friday night I taught children how to sail and things like that. And all the mums and all the parents were like 'Ella you're so good with kids, you need to work with kids' and stuff like that, 'screw estate agency and property and stuff like that, work with kids' and it finally kind of like sunk in. I was like, I do enjoy working with children and I like helping them and things like that. I love like erm we have this thing where we do sail ability where we teach disabled people to sail and things like that, and I remember we had this group of children from this shcool, erm it was this, you know like a special needs school. Well this was, it was like for really extreme behavioural problems. So there was, there was bars on the windows and the teachers were all allowed to restrain the children and stuff and I remember we had them come up. If they were good throughout the week they could come sailing as a reward and they were the best group of people I've ever worked with in my entire life. I loved them to bits, aw they were fantastic. Because, because I'd known what it was like to not be talked to like a human being, like a normal, like an intelligent human being. Some of these kids were some of the intelligent people I'd ever, but they'd just fly off the handle really like badly and stuff like

that or they'd be extremely autistic so they wouldn't be able to communicate like me and you could communicate but they'd be amazing at maths or anything like that and stuff. I remember just sitting and talking with these people and actually like I loved it so much and how much we just connected and bonded and stuff like that and got to know each other and how none of them

misbehaved with me at all and all of them were really pleasant, really polite and just lovely human beings and things like that. And I do think it's because I know what it's like to be talked to like an idiot. I think they get talked to like an idiot all the time.

I: *So you've got that understanding?*

P: Yeah, and that's why I decided to go and do childhood studies at uni because like I enjoyed so much building a bond and like a relationship with these kids that I wanted to do it all the time and I thought kind of like, I remember one of the teachers that came up with them saying that, there was this one boy Daryl, they said since he's been coming sailing he's been acting so much better, he's not been kicking off and stuff like that. His mood swings have been a lot down to earth and stuff like that and just little things like that, the fact that me coming up here on a Friday night to sail and having these sort of friendships with them its resulted in them being better in school and acting nicer and things like that. I was just like, if
I can do that all the time, because I can relate to them then its going to, I feel like that's so much more rewarding than anything else, that's why I've decided to do it as a job.

I: *So you finished at the estate agents and just went straight to uni?*

P: Yeah erm I had a few months between but it was so last minute. I applied the day of closing ((laughs)) aw it was ridiculous. I emailed college and said 'aw I want to go to university but I don't know how to fill in UCAS or anything like that you know it's been so long, erm can you show me how to do it?' and stuff like that and they were like 'oh yeah well you've missed the deadline for this year but we'll get it all ready for next year'. But I wasn't thinking and I came to the open day here at Huddersfield and they went 'no the deadlines tomorrow', and I just thought you know what, that's a sign. So I got it all filled in and got it all done and stuff like that and I just sent it off and submitted everything ((laughs)). I did all my UCAS and wrote my personal statement in an evening, oh my, it was the most stressful 24 hours of my life.

I: *I remember it took me so long to write mine…*

P: Yeah ((laughs)), I was like I was like 'oh my god this is utter garbage but okay'. But yeah erm yeah it was literally like, it, I just saw it as right this is happening I need to go and do this and I did it and I got on so.

I: *So what was it like when you first started? Did you tell anyone about your dyslexia?*

P: Yeah erm they kind of, the university knew because I'd gone through like erm the DSA and things like that, as dyslexic and erm and I told like all my seminar tutors I said that 'you know look I am dyslexic' and erm they were like 'well you just do what helps you, if you need any support just let us know'. And that's always how it's been and like if I've ever struggled with anything or everything, anything's ever not been or I've not understood something or, I've just emailed them and they've been so supportive and so helpful and things like that and they kind of, and I feel like it, I've enjoyed university a whole lot more than I thought I would because of this whole freedom you've got with your own learning and things like that you're not restrained you can learn how you want to learn and we're not going to stop you, we're not going to say you're doing it wrong and stuff like that. If you get the grades and you're doing it this way and you get the grades then do what you need to do kind of thing.

I: *So is there anything, any extra support that they offer or is it just limited to your seminars?*

P: I've got erm i've got like, it's like er, I don't actually know what they're called they're like one to one meetings but that's provided through DSA with erm, like it's, she's a dyslexia specialist erm and pretty much, we, there's not a lot we do but she's, I really appreciate her because she's, like say if I need to submit she gets all the, where I've, where the sentences don't make sense and my spellings and stuff like that you know. A lot of people can proof read their own work or they can get a friend to proof read their work and stuff like that. I don't feel like I can and like my mum can't even proof read my work because sometimes it's like illegible, but where she kind of, I feel like Claire can kind of work it out for some bizarre reason she can. Erm, and say if there's like, I really struggle with affect and effect, which one it is and stuff and she gives me exercises to do to learn how to do them, which ones which and stuff like that. She's been absolutely fantastic and things like that. Besides that I got erm like erm a bunch of software like erm I've got software on my laptop that will read web pages out for me and articles and stuff like that which is really good. It's read and write which I think is on all the computers at uni so so that's really good.

I: *Did they offer you that as soon as you started?*

P: No it was erm, erm, it took blooming ages. So I got, I was diagnosed with dyslexia...

I: *So did you have to do more tests when you got here?*

P: Yeah. So, years and years ago and they want the updated one erm the updated test. So what I just had throughout my education was, because I'd been diagnosed as a child, they'd just done like half, like just keeping sure, making sure it's not, what level I'm at, they'd never re assess me completely. So I had to have a full re assessment to be the one I could send off to DSA. Erm then I er, so I did that then I went for an interview to see what things were needed and then they processed everything, then they gave me a list of everything that was needed and then I had to go and get everything, it was Christmas by the time I got anything.

I: *Really?*

P: Yeah, but since then it's been fantastic.

I: *So you feel like you've got all the support that you needed?*

P: Yeah, and now, it does take a bloody long time but it's worth it, yeah yeah.

I: *How are you grades and everything? Are you in first year?*

P: Yeah first year yeah. I've been getting all firsts so far yeah, but I've completely, it's like, this is why I'm so keen about people knowing, you'll know from like your mum and your sister, intelligence isn't affected at all. Like I'm not the brightest person in the world but when I'm good at something I'm good at it like you know, like I am with this subject I seem to just get it and I'm really good, you know I work hard at it. And like politics I were just, I got it, it made sense to me I could understand it and I learnt so much and things like that and I was really good at it, but ask me to write down what, it is ((laughs)).

I: *Yeah I understand. That's similar to my mum, my mum's a childminder and she loves her job.She's great with the kids but as soon as they introduced the paperwork and started to make her document her work she starts to struggle and after 20 years of loving working as a childminder she started to hate her job and wanted to quit. She knows what she wants to say but finds it hard to put it down on paper.*

P: Yeah, it's all so many people care about and stuff like that you know, and I think there's not enough appreciation for the fact that people don't always work like that you know. I've been really lucky my course is all course work so I have this time to erm like write something then go through it and go through it again and go thought it again and again so like. I've had so much

support on how to write it and what to right and you know and what points to put it and stuff like that but your mum its so, I'd be startled with that, I wouldn't know what to do. My dad, he's not dyslexic but she struggles so much because he was, he did struggle, he struggled a lot during like school and stuff like that. And he didn't like just sitting down in a class and not doing, and just being talked at her couldn't do, it would wind him round the bend and stuff, and he did play up like he was you know, and he got kicked out of school at

15. And he's never, and there's so many things, so many jobs, cause he's always been so keen for me to get so much support and get all the support I can get because he's always said 'there's so many things that I couldn't do because I never learnt to do these things in school because there was no support there' and that's why he was always so keen. In junior school I got all this extra support and high school, like he made sure in high school everybody was like aware of it and what was best and stuff like that so.

I: *Yeah, it does make you think about what people could achieve if they had this extra support*

P: Yeah, well it's like, you see some of the most intelligent people in the world are dyslexic. Like there's erm I did a erm, for one of my things I had to do, it's like a display board but I had to do it on a certain topic and things like that. I chose dyslexia because it was something like I've lived with my whole life, I could talk about and things. Erm I found this, there's an architecture agency in New York that only employ dyslexic people because erm our, oh this is another thing I don't know my left and right, that's your right?

I: *Yeah, Yeah.*

P: The right hemisphere in your brain, dyslexics are naturally so much, it's so much more powerful than an average person's and that means our left side is weaker and erm but that side is the side that does creating and visual space and awareness and everything like that. And they did these tests where they got erm like erm floor plans and blue prints and stuff like that and they put purposely put flaws into the floors. And they tested how long it took non dyslexic's to figure them out and how long it took dyslexics to figure them out and the dyslexics it was almost instant, because their visual awareness and their special awareness is so much stronger than the average persons, they could just visual it and they could see them straight away.

I: *I feel like even though it's acknowledged in school not a lot is done about it*

P: Yeah, people don't, I think half the stuff I wouldn't have got if my mum and dad didn't push for it and theres so many parents who don't know about it and don't understand what it is and because I think to so many people dyslexia is that you can't read and write and it's not that it's the way you process things. If we'd like, if you could press a button and our brains would process things how normal people would we'd be able to read and write fine.

I: *Okay basically, so what I've found from my research is that there is conflicting views about being labelled with dyslexia. Some people may find it as a relief to have the label as it legitimises their difficulties and protects them from being considered 'stupid' or 'lazy' but some people have said that there is some sort of stigma attached to it and a way of singling individuals out, and with the way dyslexia is often portrayed within the education system, people may only see the diagnosis and not the person. So I wanted to do this interview to get a more detailed understanding of your views on labelling, and how you felt before and after you were labelled.*

P: Well I was like diagnosed in like year one or two kind of thing, it was towards kind of junior school.

I: *So how did you feel when you got labelled with dyslexia, can you remember?*

P: To one extent it did help me cause then I was like 'oh well it's not just be being an idiot, it's not just me being slow' and stuff like that, there is actually some things that my brain is just not programmed to do and that's why this is hard for me you know it's not just me being stupid. On the other hand it didn't, because I feel like teachers treated me differently. It was like, you weren't, I guess when, I know this sounds silly but my school, although it was recognised you could tell they had never come across it before and never had to deal with it much so they just saw it as 'oh she struggles to read and write so that just means she can't read and write and so we have to treat her like she's in nursery' and that was very embarrassing and stuff and because the school handled it really badly. So I was happy to have the label because it explained it to me but it annoyed me the way people reacted to it. I don't think it's the label necessarily, it's the stigma around it.

I: *Yeah. I've found that once individuals did get the label they got the support they needed, but that wasn't your case was it?*

P: No, my mum and dad didn't like the way the school was handling it, so they told the school to just back off really because it was, I was being taken like so out of like the fun things so like art or P.E. or drama. I was being taken out of those lessons to sit at the back of the classroom to be patronised telling me out to spell cat and dog and things like that. I knew how to spell those words you know it was when it was more complex things or further advanced things that I was struggling with. Erm, and so they then got help outside of school, they then went and found

private tutors and things like that who specialised in people, with people with dyslexia and things which really helped because they knew how to handle it and things like that.

I: *So you feel like the school didn't handle it in the right way then?*

P: Yeah pretty much.

I: *So can you remember how the extra support outside of school helped you?*

P: Erm they found different ways, they used loads of different methods. Instead of sitting, like in school you get like a list of words that you're meant to learn and then you get a test on them. And you sit there and you're meant to just learn these words and write them out and stuff like that. But for someone with dyslexia, so me, I couldn't read the words that were on the page to start off with, I didn't know how to break them down at that point and never mind write them out again it was just, you know it was ridiculous. And so the way, but when I got this outside help they'd do phonetic games with me like breaking words down. They'd use different methods of me learning how to work out a word than just the usual sit down, you get a list and you've got to work it out. Which to be honest, I feel like schools should all do that. More of them are doing it now but every, I think every kid would learn more from that and then spelling would be fun as well, because I really enjoyed that. I enjoyed the games, I enjoyed being able to do stuff like that. So I think it would help benefit everyone really and not just people with dyslexia.

I: *Do you think having this label of dyslexia affects how you see yourself as a learner?*

P: Erm, kind of no different to anyone else, I just learn differently. But I feel like that's probably because I'm a lot more of a confident person. I can see, especially the way certain things and the way people react to me and the way they've treated me and dealt with me and my dyslexia and things like that, someone who wouldn't be as confident or is not as. Like my parents have always brought me up to you know stand on my own two feet, I'm my own, you know if you think something's wrong you have to tell them it's wrong and things like that.
Someone who's not necessarily got those skills or isn't confident and things like that then I can see it absolutely shattering them and breaking them down and stuff like that because it wasn't nice the way they single you out and it's not nice the way they say oh you can't do this because you're dyslexic and things like that. It's not, no one with dyslexia can't do anything, they can do everything anyone else can do, and you've just got to get there a different way.

I: *Do you think it has affected your self confidence or your self-esteem at any point?*

P: When I was younger and they used to ask me to read out in class that would really like knock me down and stuff like that you know. Especially, even up to college like I had a teacher who I told I was dyslexic and that I couldn't read and stuff and we were doing you know it was a philosophy teacher and part of our thing was Buddhism which is in a different language anyway most of the words. I mean I struggle with my own language never mind a different one ((laughs)). And so, and he would ask me to read out all the time and it got to the point where he would say Ella can you read out ad I would just say no because, it would embarrass me and I would feel really ashamed because no one in the class, that class didn't know I was dyslexic. I mean if they did I'm pretty sure most of them wouldn't know what it actually is properly. Everybody's heard of it but not everybody knows what it is. And, I was sat there reading a passage and I'd be stumbling on loads of words and I'd feel, I'd feel stupid and I'd feel like I didn't know anything even though that wasn't the case at all. It was that he's put me in that bad situation, he's put me in that silly situation. That, that would knock me back and thing's but I feel like I was lucky enough to be someone who was just like well you know what screw him. But I've got friends that would, that would have absolutely destroyed them that would have really knocked them, they wouldn't have been, it would have affected them a lot more than say me.

I: *How did you find the support offered in Uni?*

P: Yeah. I've got, well there's, I've got my personal tutor at Uni and then my dyslexia one as well. The dyslexia one, well she, I found her really useful in that she will read through, me and her will have a meeting and she will go through my work and read through it and cause when I'm writing stuff I'll just be typing it out and the amount of times it doesn't make sense or I've used the wrong word in the wrong and stuff like that. So we go through it together and I make all the changes and I decide when something gets changed or not but she'll read through it and she'll be like well that's spelt, that's the wrong there and that's this and that's that and that needs to be swapped round and stuff. And I've found that so useful because I don't think I would have got the grades I've got because some of the stuff she did actually

read out to me did not make sense at all and so it had been really helpful having that. And also because she's like a dyslexia specialist she doesn't, she's not talked down to me, she's not even made me feel like 'oh I'm stupid because i've got these words mixed up' or anything like that, she just says 'oh'. And it's very one to one and very calm and things.   **I:** *Do you find that speaking to other people with dyslexia helps you?*

P: Yeah, my best friend she's got it as well. She's not as severe as me but she has got it. I think, it doesn't help two dyslexics being best friends ((laughs)) kind of thing, it's a bit silly. Like, although it's lovely in the way that I'm not alone, oh my god there's other people with it, I'm you know I'm not just this one person and that's really good and that was really good through junior school and everything and through high school, I had her. But we used to rely on each other too much because we'd be sat next to each other because we were the two that weren't clever in English and you don't learn off each other at all, you just stay the same. And I think that's one of the biggest things when it came to high school is that we was both alone and made most of our progress at high school because we weren't sat next to each other. And so I feel like it's good having those relationship with people who are dyslexic because it does, it gives you that confidence that you're not just on you own. But when it comes to learning I do think you need to be around people that are not dyslexic or you end up kind or clinging to each other a bit too much.

I: *So your view on the label, would you say it's helpful to label individuals?*

P: Yeah, erm yes I think the label, I don't mind the label but I feel like what needs to be more is more of an explanation of what it is. I feel like too many people get told 'you're dyslexic' and you're like right okay then, no idea what that is. Like, I mean a couple of weekends ago I was with my boyfriend in the pub and he got his mates round and two of them are dyslexic and I was like oh well how does it affect you? And stuff like that and they were like oh well I can't read and write. It's like they've been told that they're dyslexic but neither of them could tell me anything about what it was or how their brain worked or what helped them or stuff like that so they'd literally just been given this label and not been told how to deal with it, which I think is bad. I don't mind the label but I feel it's like how people deal with it or how people explain to someone with dyslexia what it is that I think is lacking and I feel like that's why there is the bad stigma around it because no one actually knows what it is.

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focus' on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Er, my dad was in the army so when I was a kid I went to lots of different schools. Erm, Catterick, Audenshaw, Germany and then back here. So as a child going to different schools, I struggled with my work in primary school, I suppose I struggled making friends and I struggled all the way through until I settled down into the UK then I just struggled with writing, obviously. And I put it down to not doing well and not fitting in with the others in the classroom and the playground, I did think I was thick. Erm until I was at erm not high school, junior school. And they had an IBM BBC computer to share and I spent most of my time on that and I found I enjoyed that more than I enjoyed sitting down and writing things. Then I went to high school and that was awful erm, I never really did anything writing wise very well. I did enjoy the design side of things.

I: *So at this point had no one picked up that you struggled?*

P: No, I do remember leaving school in Germany and the tradition there was to go around with a shirt and everybody sign it basically, erm and I didn't want anyone to ruin my shirt so I took a card and I remember the head teacher saying, writing something, but he made a joke and spelt school wrong and that hurt me a lot. But it was just I don't know what he was doing. I don't think he was being in sensitive I just think it was his way of saying it was okay but that didn't work for me. Erm, in the schools that I was moving around a lot in I think I was taken out a lot to do extra reading, that sort of thing, but when I went into high school, I can't remember what year it will have been, but there was one occasion where my music teacher pulled me to one side and said I think you're dyslexic and then I never heard anything again.

I*: So they didn't offer any support?*

P: No, not at all but we're talking a long time ago so I don't think it was recognised as much.

I think I slipped through the net. So I struggled all the way through high school and then it got to the final year and I remember for the final year we were all sat in the hall ready to start to new year and I remember the head tutor saying you can forget about the last four years this is the year that matters. Well, I took that the wrong way and I just thought i've done four years working really hard and you're telling me all that's been a waste of time and this years the one that matters? So I lost it and never attended school much that year. But I did attend my GSCES and failed miserably. Erm, I've still got GSCE's I didn't get fails but they still weren't very good. And I was trying to decide what I wanted to do after school and I couldn't think of any work that I wanted to go in to and a friend of mine went to er college so I thought id join him. Ended up on a different course to him for some reason er so that's when I started my BTEC. And again, I struggled all the way through, reasonable marks in most of the topics and in the final year there were three topics that I never handed in, I can't remember why, so I didn't get the BTEC certificates for that.

I: *So what did you find were your main struggles?*

P: Erm writing is the biggest thing for me. I couldn't sit down and write something in front of anybody. I've struggled with reading I'm really slow at reading but if I persevere with it I'm okay. So, yeah, I think I hid most of my writing skills with computers because I was dead in to design I was dead into computers as a whole. So when I left college I, while I was at college I had work placement and I worked at an advertisement company, so when I left college I ended up working for them and they'd bought at the time a new Macintosh computer and I was good with computers so they just left me to it and that's when I got into graphic design. Erm, and that went well for a while and then there was a time when they were short of a receptionist so I'd sort of do a bit of work on the desk waiting for customers to come in, that sort of thing, take phone calls. Erm and that's when I was taking phone calls but I was having to take notes and the boss sort of made a remark of me not taking my notes properly and things like that, so I walked out. I can't remember what I did between then. And then I ended up going back a couple of years later, as it happens they wanted me back so I started working for him again. So when I was working for this advertising company they brought on a erm database cleansing business, started running that. The guy, that was what I was good at coding, and I didn't realise that but I got in to coding through him and I started working for him and he came up to me one day and said I think you're dyslexic, there's a test you can do erm, and he got right annoyed that I wasn't so excited about it. And the

test was a ridiculous amount of money and I wasn't going to spend, I can't remember what it were, I wasn't going to spend money on a test when I might not be dyslexic, you know. So it didn't make a lot of sense and I couldn't see why it bothered him cause I didn't right anything for customers, customers didn't read anything that I wrote erm the code was working, it was just the comments I put in the code that he couldn't read because they didn't make sense to him. Erm, and then I left again shortly after that ((laughs)) probably when I'm confronted I get frustrated and leave. And then, what happened then, I just drifted then, different companies. Ah yeah, so I worked for an engraving company er, and it didn't matter to them, I'd constantly make errors with the engraving plates, so I would do the art work. I worked for this company twice, so the first time round I would do the art work then check it myself and that didn't quite work so well cause it would go up to the works and the guy who was making the plates wouldn't even look at my art work he'd just make the plate, there you go it's done and the customer would say oh its spelt wrong. So that wouldn't work so well. I preserved with them because I liked the two brothers that had the business. One was right strict and one wasn't and I liked that sort of, it worked. If I had a problem I knew which one of the two I could go to, so he kind of helped me and showed me the ropes. It made me think twice about giving up again. Erm, so then I introduced whilst I was working there a system basically where two people checked my work erm before it went up to get made and that worked really well cause, it was good, cause if they missed something I could blame them. Erm, so I worked for them for a while and then I decided I wanted to get some qualifications really, more than what I had at the time, erm because I could see it was a family run business and it was just getting smaller and smaller and I thought it's just going to close and I'd be looking for work and I'm not going to have any qualifications. So I went up to the open university with the view to do a full degree there erm and I did my certificate in higher education and I loved it. I could work at home, read the books at my own pace erm deadline didn't really bother me.

I: *What was that qualification in?*

P: Er, computers. But then when it came to picking my degree I couldn't find a course I wanted to do which is a shame really. So I toyed with that from about 2010 erm and decided that erm Id have a go at mainstream university. So yeah I was interested in computers, particularly interested in the ethical hacking side of things, so I started looking at University courses. And I found four universities that did that which was Abertay, Northumbria, Cambridge and Leeds Beckett. So

when I looked at those I was trying to decide whether I wanted to move or not and I wasn't sure I did the Abertay was a really good University for that particular course as far as I was aware. Er so I sent off all my applications and waited for them to come back. First one that came back was Leeds well Leeds met then, erm, which I wasn't sure I wanted to go to but I was grateful to get an acceptance letter. And then I got an acceptance letter from a lot, all of them apart from Abertay where they wanted me to go for an interview first which cost money so I didn't bother. Erm, I had to make a decision, so I went to Northumbria for their open day I think it was and Leeds and it was a tossup between those two really. And the only thing that made me decide was because they both had erm a study abroad for the second year element to them erm the one in Northumbria was the University I wanted to go to in Australia for my second year which was Edeth Cohit, and Leeds met it was erm, they had a placement in Australia but not that University, so I was a bit unsure whether I wanted to do that. And then as it turned out the Northumbria, that particular

University that I wanted to go to for my second year, wasn't doing it for some reason in the year I would be going, so then I just went straight to Leeds Beckett, met, whatever they are ((laughs)). So I did that. While I started my first year erm and you go round all the lectures and everything else and they give you all your information. One of the lectures was about disability services and that sort of thing. And they explained that I could have a test if I paid the first £50 then they would pay the rest. Erm, and I just wanted to know basically, I wanted to know If there was a reason for me being the way I was or am I done, am I just being lazy. Erm, so I paid the £50 went for my test, went through all the tests. I found it interesting. The best part of the test was my working memory part of the test where she would give me a load of letters and ask me to organise them in to, and I thought I'd done really well and gone and got my results and I'd not got one of them right, so yeah, that I found interesting cos I didn't notice, I thought I'd got it right so it kind of threw me a bit. Erm at the end of the test she said have you got any questions? And I said 'well am I dyslexic' and she says 'oh we don't label people'. And that's not good enough for me I need to know if I'm dyslexic or not so erm, she didn't do that. So I waited for the report to come through, hoping it would say dyslexic, somewhere in there saying dyslexic but it didn't. So it didn't reassure me at all, but you know at least it said there was a learning difficulty. Erm, well this was at the end, because it had taken so much time for the process to go through this was at the end of the first semester so I'd gone through most of the first semester not having the support that was available.

I: *Could you explain further on why you hope the tests would have said dyslexic? Do you think being labelled dyslexic would have a positive impact?*

P: At that time yeah, in fact any time not necessarily the label, just someone to say you are dyslexic, that's all I needed really. Erm, and I found that out recently but I'll explain that later. But erm, so to the latter end of the first semester erm I started getting all the stuff, so I got a free laptop but I looked at it and thought it's a bit late, but I have got another two years yet. So I got a free laptop, some tests for some glasses, filters all sorts of what you call it. So all the things I needed and they were going to show me how to use it all the software and everything, but at this point I was planning to go to Australia and their semesters start early and I had to do the second semester and then the first semester so that was a bit thrown out.

Erm, so I've got all this equipment and I got a little bit of training on it but because I was going to Australia I missed out on lots of other training. I was suppose to go back 2 or 3 more times to get my glasses to the right er screen. Erm, so I took all this kit with me, to Australia, registered with their disability services and er all they could really do is give me the things that I get now, the extensions on exams, er inform all my tutors and extensions with reports and things like that. Er, I did get a pen which was like a Dictaphone pen, but the size of that pen was just ridiculous and there's no way I'm going to sit in a lecture with basically 'i'm dyslexic', I may as well put a sticker on my head. That was something else I was glad at the fact I was dyslexic and I had this things, these tools if you like, erm but I felt guilt about that cause obviously others didn't. So I wanted to hide that, I didn't want others to know I was dyslexic I struggled with that. And with moving to Australia as well that was quite a weird sensation. Er, I was now struggling, not only was I struggling with dyslexia but also the shame of anybody finding out that I was dyslexic and I think that was more than the shame of spelling something wrong, but I persevered. Australia was pretty good, the tutors not as good as I found certainly this year, erm, with disability and that sort of thing. And I think I did eight modules, four modules per semester, and each module had an exam in it whereas here and Leeds Beckett had assignments.

I: *Do you prefer assignments to exams then?*

P: I don't know yet, I don't know. I dreaded the exams in Australia but I was glad the fact you just go in, you do it, and then you leave. You don't have to think about it anymore. Whereas assignments it's like 'oh deadline' and 'oh I want to get an extension, oh no not an extension', so i'm not sure I haven't made my mind up yet. Although, I've found that what they did over there,

they were really good cause the way that they set up exams was that everyone takes that exam at the same time and I think they had a university in Viet-Nam, so if there's a course going on in Viet-Nam, the same as the one in Australia, they would have the exam at exactly the same time with some sort of video theme and all sorts going on. Erm, but they would hire out a stadium, a football stadium to do all the exams because they needed a big room for all the students to go in to. I think the tutors even organised that. So, they did that but with my extra time I needed, I was given basically a room, a quite room, and a computer which I was surprised about with internet access ((laughs)). I wasn't allowed to use the internet and all that, okay, no I didn't I didn't, it was tempting a couple of times. So I had that.

I: *So were you on your own in this room?*

P: It was basically a normal classroom, but most of the time it was just me. There might be one or two other students doing it, the same exam, and I would have a tutor watching me to make sure I'm not cheating. Erm, so yeah that was really good. Erm and the fact I could do it on the computer was even better because writing I struggled with writing. I think what I find difficult with writing is I'm thinking about the writing and what I want to say at the same time and I can't do it. And if there's someone watching me then, so, I'm thinking they're going see whether I'm doing it right and it goes mad, whereas with a computer I can just type and if I get it wrong, I've got one word, if I get it wrong it tells me I've got it wrong and if I can't fix it I'll fix it as I go through. So I think that's why I liked computers so much because that was one little bit of thinking I didn't have to do. Erm, where was I, exams. I enjoyed the exams, I didn't do particularly well on them whether that was to do with anything to do with the fact it was an exam and not an assignment I don't know. And I was in Australia so I spent a lot of time on the beach, in the park having a BBQ so erm, it were good.

I: *So in Australia, apart from the technology did you receive any other support systems?*

P: Well, that's something else you see, in part of my contract with the Leeds Beckett university is that I would have erm a tutor to go see once every several week or something like that. But because it was at the latter end of the first semester to set that up it was too late.
So I asked if I could have like a skype conversation with them, that's not available, right okay. And because I went to Australia they, that funding didn't cover anyone in Australia to do it, so that was a bit of my contract that they wasn't able to facilitate because of where I was basically.

Nobody knew how to pay, who was going to pay for what? Erm there was a central office if I needed anything I could go to and there was a guy there and he was pretty good but I'm not sure what his disability was, I think he had sort of memory problem cause he would take me somewhere then look as if he was lost ((laughs)) and er I didn't ask him anymore cause er, it was like he knew where he was taking me, he took me there and pointed me in the right direction and id look at him and he'd look around as if like 'how have I got here'. So I didn't want to do it again ((laughs)). Aw poor lad ((laughs)). But they were pretty good in Australia, and then I come back to the UK, finished off my degree here. I had all sorts of problems with my ex partner at the time too. Erm, finished off my degree with Leeds

Beckett university, got my student support person erm wasn't very much help. I had two at one stage and one of them just became too complicated, she was late when we had meetings and didn't turn up or made excuses for not turning up and I just didn't make an appointment with her again. And the other guy, well he was okay but I basically just used him to proof read my work and he'd come back and say erm have a look at this, this doesn't really make sense which, it helped. Erm, and then I got my degree. And then I wasn't sure what to do next. Erm, I was debating whether to do a PHD or a masters erm there was a PHD scholarship going at Leeds Becket and I spoke to the tutor asking what he thought, whether I should do a PHD or should I do a masters first and he recommended I did a masters first rather than jumping straight into a PHD. So I started looking again for courses, and that's what brought me to Huddersfield.

I: *So what is it that you do your masters in?*

P: I'm doing a masters in information systems management. Erm, yeah so I registered with the disability services did all that again. I was three weeks late ((laughs)) as usual, erm, so I basically missed the deadline for the 19th when the course was starting, the 19th of September.

I just, I don't know how I did it bust I basically missed the deadline. One day I sat at the computer and I thought ill just send it, they can say yes or no. And I thought if they're not full, chances are they'll accept it. So that was a week and it came back again and they accepted it and I was like 'oh great okay then, now what do I do'. So I did all the processes, everything I could possibly do online to register, thinking I need to get this done and the one last thing I needed to do was come here to get my card and from my experience with Leeds Beckett it thought it was just the first few weeks of just getting in, and I didn't feel like I was missing anything. So three weeks passed by and I'd come and got my card and I needed to get my timetable next and that's

at west canal, canal west? Erm so I went down there, I don't know if you know it, but you go down the corridor and on the left is the timetable and it says student support and on the right is another office that says student something, something support. I'm looking round for support and I was told support something so I saw this door, this office and it turned out that was the support for students that are struggling coming into university. So I sat down with this guy and had a big chat with him and it was like really good, but I realised I was in the wrong place ((laughs)). It happens quite a but, but it's so annoying when you realise erm. Anyway yeah, it turned out to be quite useful actually it helped me a bit. Erm, and then I got my timetable then I got into the classes, but I missed out on the introduction so I don't even know who the head tutor is really, I guess, but erm all the little things I need to know I missed, which for me is really important because I'm lost then because I don't have that information I don't know where to get it from and I don't like to ask. So I struggled through the first semester, I did okay, I'm just trying to think when I first saw my disability tutor, it was a while. In fact I'm not even sure I saw her during the first semester. Ohh I did, the latter end of the first semester I saw her a couple of times. Er, but there was two students in the class er in my course that are very proud to be dyslexic and 'the tutors have to do this' and 'the tutors have to do that' and 'I'm dyslexic I cant do that', which I found quite embarrassing. There was no way I was going to tell them I was dyslexic.

I: *Not tell the students?*

P: Yeah the two other students, or any student basically, I was basically gonna do what I did in all the Universities and just hide. Not tell anybody when I submitted, so it's a case of 'oh did you submit?' 'Yeah I did yeah'.

I: *Why was it you think you did that?*

P: Well its stigma isn't it, if you get an extension there's something wrong, you know you've not done the work or you've been doing other things and you should of been doing the work. I felt that anyway. I don't know if anyone else felt it but I felt there was a stigma if you didn't hand your work in on time, if you wasn't, didn't have a learning disability then you had to be either making up and excuse as to why you didn't do it or have an illness or be dyslexic so I didn't want them to guess that I got the extension because I was dyslexic. In fact, I was walking around Leeds Beckett with a group of four student's erm, oh yeah god, and I tried to hide it from them, they obviously knew but I didn't tell them but I think they knew. Erm, I had like an exam in Leeds

Beckett which is going back a bit. In Leeds Beckett they didn't say it in the exam, it was like a multiple choice test that was on the computer so we all went into this room and they had, we had two options basically, if you had a learning disability you would pick the option for extra time, if you didn't have a learning disability you would take the normal test which is like an hour long or something like that. I'm sat there sweating and all the rest of it with this test, my mates are to the side and I've got students behind me and you sort of click on it once and it takes you on to this page and then if you click it again that's starting the exam but when I clicked on the disability one there's a big thing that said disability, learning disability, something. There was basically a label on the screen big enough for everyone around me to see saying I was dyslexic or saying I had a learning disability. So, I quickly switched pages and started the normal test because I didn't want anyone to see. The tutor obviously noticed that on his computer and came over and he didn't know what to do but in front of everybody he said, 'you've picked the wrong one you should have picked this one you've picked the wrong thing'. I just ignored him and carried on and he walked away and someone came in and he had this conversation in front of the class er what to do. They obviously didn't know what to do and he's panicking now cause he must feel responsible, so then he comes back up to me and says do you want to take the test again bla bla bla and I just wanted to go away so I said no I'll continue. Anyway, I finished the test, I can't remember what I got on that. It was just the embarrassment of being in the class with everybody, I'd of rather they did what they did in Australia, that were brilliant what they did in Australia, that was the best thing they could of done for me, put me in a separate room.

They even in Australia, the classrooms have got er, their classrooms are weird shapes.

They've got like a dome attached so you'd have two classrooms like here, then you'd have a dome in the middle which is just like a quite room with a computer in so if you need to be away from other students you'd just go in there.

I: *So that worked a lot better for you?*

P: It does yeah because its distraction. I mean biggest thing for me when I'm in class is listening to other people having conversations or tapping, that distracts me from actually either writing stuff up or taking in what I'm doing erm because I'm too busy, my minds just working on other things at the time. Erm, yeah so that was the most embarrassing time at Leeds Beckett, that was the final year I think, oh no, was it? I think that might have been just before I went to Australia. Yeah, it was before I went to Australia because the tutor said when

I had exams afterwards the tutor who he's a very conscientious tutor, he's from Australia, in fact he was another one of the reasons I went to Leeds cause of the Australia theme erm by the time I came back the second year he'd put into place all these things and they were brilliant because there was nothing to say I was dyslexic. I had an exam and all it did was show what time I had left. He'd obviously learnt from my experience and took it upon himself to fix it, which I felt, I felt better about him for that. Erm, and it was a really good system. Erm, I don't have exams here so I don't need to experience that. Erm so then coming back to this where the two students are dyslexic, well they say they are, I think they are. I didn't think at the beginning that they were, I just thought 'I'm dyslexic I can't do this' bla bla. I know for definite ones registered and I don't know about the other, the lady, whether she's registered or not. Erm, and it wouldn't matter if she's registered or not it doesn't matter but it's just the way that they're like 'I'm dyslexic, I can't do this, I can't do presentations because I'm dyslexic', but I want to do presentation because I need to. I want to do presentation and being dyslexic doesn't stop you from doing them it might make it harder but it doesn't stop you from doing it, the better I get at it the more confident I get and I'll overcome that. Erm, so I shunned away from those, tried to separate myself because if I started getting involved with them then erm other students might pick up that I'm dyslexic, things like that, so I just kept it to one side. With the presentations I was told within my thing that I could erm, they wasn't to ask me to do it up front erm basically like an extension so basically I can say I'm not ready to do it today but I'll do it whenever. Whereas these students basically told the tutors that they aren't doing it when the presentations are part of the degree, so if you don't do them I don't know how they compensate for that. Erm, and then I'm just thinking now there's all sorts of things that went on in Australia now with tutors. One tutor we had a written, oh that was terrible, we had a written exam in class and I were dreading it so I didn't turn up that day for class because I knew the exam was on that day. Erm it was basically on a bit of paper and you'd write your answers down and that was the worse thing. I contacted him saying I've got a disability, whether he read his emails or not I don't know but I didn't get a reply from it. So I skipped that class, I thought I'm not doing that er and when I went back I went into the class, I thought it was safe, id fail it and then I'd contact student services and deal with it. Erm so I went back the following week and he was basically saying why haven't you done it this that and the other, so I made some excuse and I don't know how I got hold of him but I basically told him what the situation was so he then allowed me to re sit the exam but in his office basically. So I went and did that and that was just as embarrassing cause I was still doing the same exam, it was

still hand written, there was only him there, the tutor. Erm, he was sat there, I mean he wasn't looking but he was sat there and I was trying to write stuff in front of him which is the worst thing for me. But erm, I got through it and I must have passed it so erm yeah, so that's something that frustrated me with Leeds Beckett and Australia, they had like a contract that they send round the all the tutors and I think in Australia it was like an email they send round to all the teachers, er yeah, leeds beckett and Australia was an email they sent round to all the tutors basically saying this student is dyslexic these are the things you need to accommodate for him where you can. But I found that none of the tutors read it or none of the tutors knew I had a learning disability, none of them knew about any of the provisions that were supposed to be there. I think one even tried to get me to read something at the time and er I was just so angry it really annoyed me. In fact that's when I think I realised that tutors didn't read my emails, they must get so many. So I've accepted the fact that it's not necessarily their fault, but it just frustrated me because I've got to constantly tell them that I've got a learning disability and it was like news to them when they should have known in the first place. I suppose it might explain why the students here sort of cry out that they have a learning disability. Er so yeah, I had lots of little things like that basically whilst I was doing my studies erm which did, I wanted to, I looked at doing my masters through the open university thinking 'well I don't know if I can cope with that again'. I also looked at the option of doing it part time rather than full time because

I thought over three years it's going to be easier for me to get through that, instead I decided, I think that was why I was a bit late with it because I was umming and ahhing what it was I wanted to do. Er, so then first semesters coming up to an end and I had my disability tutor and then we were going through or had some assignment due or something like that and I was just having one of those days where I had so much going on in my head. I had so many things

I needed, I had deadlines coming up and I just couldn't start one thing, it was all up there I just couldn't think 'right I'm going to do this now, I'm going do this now', I tried to organise my thoughts but I have these moments where my head is so busy I'm actually doing nothing.

My dyslexia tutor is what changed me the most, I was due to see er her because I didn't have uni in the morning and at that time id see her for an hour. Erm so yeah, this one particular occasion I was just stressed out I had so much on erm and she just said 'how you doing?' and I said 'oh ive had a really bad day'. I explained to her that i've got that much going on I can't concentrate and she said 'explain to me what's in your head' basically and then she said 'oh that's because of your dyslexia this, this and this and this'. And that was just like such a relief because somebody

confirmed to me that what's in my head is actually because I'm dyslexic and it was like coming out of the closet, it was just, I was like, I was buzzing that day because she just made everything, everything that was going on made sense to be then and since then I think I've been coming on leaps and bounds. The sessions before she sort of indicated that she was dyslexic which makes sense erm, er, so it was like I knew she was dyslexic but even with her I was sort of like you know always thinking she thinks I'm faking it. So yeah, I think it's good the fact she said to me she's dyslexic, I mean, it makes a lot more sense.

I: *So she's dyslexic too? Does it help talking to her then?*

P: It does now yeah. With that light bulb moment where erm she just explained it all and said 'yeah that's because you're dyslexic, that doesn't happen to other people'. Erm, it was just such a relief and I enjoy it. I've got a session with her in a bit erm yeah so, just it was you know I don't go round saying 'oh I'm dyslexic to everybody but I don't mind saying yeah I'm dyslexic if somebody asked me whereas I wouldn't before'. And I've found I don't get as stressed as much because she's explained it you know.

I: *So you're not getting frustrated with yourself*

P: Yeah I'm not kicking myself all the time erm and in fact I'm laughing, not only that but I'm noticing more about my disability you know, the tests I had right at the beginning where she give me a load of letter and words and told me and I didn't notice and I reckon if somebody did that to me again id get it wrong I think. So I'm learning even at this late stage I'm learning all about, I mean since that day that one day I was frustrated before, yeah I was frustrated before because going onto lecture capture there's a class at 9:15 on a Tuesday morning, well I'm not good in the morning anyway but at the time I were working at a bar so there was no chance I could make it at 9:15. I tried but I relied on the lecture captures and this particular Tuesday he was quite happy for the lecture captures to go on so I relied on those and on the third one the librarian had come in to explain the library and all this and id already struggled with the library and all this because the things that they do is really good apart from ordering books of the shelf. I mean in Australia and Leeds Beckett I could just click a button and I don't know whether that's part of my disability service or not, but I'd find a book on the computer, click a button and request it to be, somebody go to the shelf and pick it up erm and I didn't find that button here so a couple of times I struggled to get a book, a book I wanted out erm myself, sometimes it worked sometimes it

didn't it wasn't brilliant. But I noticed one time so I looked on and there was book I wanted but somebody already had it so, but then it give me an option to request it and as I requested it, that then comes back, it then goes on the shelf on level four at the back so I got my book and I thought 'oh it's just like

Leeds Becket and things' but at that time I thought 'oh I must of missed the button all the previous times' but on that occasion it was there so when I went to do it again I couldn't find the button again and I'm kicking myself thinking what am I getting wrong here? Why can't I do this? So I spoke to somebody in the library or I might of emailed disability services thinking, why is this not working? Whys it not there? And they said to order a book that's not already on loan I need to send an email to whoever with the book or list of books I want. So I was like right okay I'll do that. Er, I only wanted a couple at the time so I sent them off erm came to pick them up, went to the shelf thinking 'oh they're there, that's where the other book was' so I went round, looked for it, couldn't find it at all. So I talked to the librarian, said to her that I've got some books that I requested and erm I can't find them at the back and it sounded loud to me but she basically said 'we've found that dyslexics can't always find the books on the shelves so we have them in the back here', ah I could of just. So I bit my lip and I sat down, I sat there and she's got my books and she's scanning the card and she's doing all this and I'm sat there thinking I just want to leave. So I got my books and I'm thinking I'm not using that service again er and then so that sort of explains that side of things. Then I watch a lecture capture with this er librarian going through all the how to do searches, I knew most of it anyway, how to do searches all the rest of it, but the one thing she missed was the disability services there was nothing on there about how to request books. There was lots of how you go through the process of collecting books and things like that if you're struggling with, or there's anything in particular you want speak to the librarian this that and I was frustrated and I was going through, cause the reason I was going through the lecture from the beginning to the end was because we have a portfolio and every week we have to write something up about what happened in the session. Well I didn't, I wasn't there so I needed to get that information from somewhere erm so I got really, really frustrated as I was going through this erm and then one of the tasks er part of the session er was to go to the library to get a book and bring it back, 'let's just get students to run round get a book and come back'. Because I hadn't done it I emailed the er tutor and said 'if I was going to get a book it will have been this book' erm and I sent him a pretty awful, a frustrated email to him saying 'but with me being dyslexic I would have to email library services to get a book and then I'll be humiliated at the

desk' and I just basically explained without even realising, I explained just what had happened to me, for me to go and do that I can't just go run in run out with a book. Erm so i'm glad I wasn't in the class basically is what I was saying. Erm where am I going with that? ((laughs)). Er so that's how a lecture capture sort of worked for that and how there is a little bit of a system here that doesn't work for me erm it's the only system I've found that doesn't work for me here.

I: *Yeah, how do you go about getting books out of the library now?*

P: I don't, well what I've done so far is I'm allowed 20 books I think so I just went through all the reading lists for this semester and ordered all 20 out of frustration, all the ones I thought I needed, got the 20 er sent an email for the 20 books and they must have collected the 20 books and it took me about three days to go. I went in three times but I knew the system then and id come in, get my books and id go and id just be sat in the back until they collected them all. So now I've been in the library twice, ordered one book, took out a few books erm yeah I don't know to be honest, it's frustrating. I like the books, it's funny because

I prefer the books to the books online yeah. But those 20 that I've got, I haven't read them I've read some but not most of them. I've read the important one's but they're just sat at home ((laughs)). Erm and I dread it when somebody requests one of them and it's like 'omg I've got to take it back and I haven't even read it'. Erm so I had this light bulb moment with my tutor so that sort of happened around the same time I think, the frustration with the tutor about the library happened, just before that my frustrations were just coming out that's what happens when I've just got so much going on. It doesn't take much for me to blow up over little things because I'm too busy trying to work things out for myself. So I think that's when it all happened, erm and then I was so relaxed after coming out of that session it was unreal and I just wanted to know more so I spent all night looking into dyslexia which id never, I don't know why I'd never done it before you know. Erm I couldn't get enough I was looking at you tube clips, people explaining what it's like to be dyslexic and all sorts of stuff.

I: *Did that all help you then?*

P: Oh yeah definitely. Once that switch had been switched it was, it just couldn't get enough. I think I shunned away from it, I almost didn't want to be dyslexic, I don't wanna know about it yano. Erm, but I found that I can't remember what she said but basically, they were ways round. So once you know that you're dyslexic I suppose once you accept that that's not a disability as

such, you just have to do things differently and there are some benefits to it as well. So you know, being dyslexic doesn't mean you can't do something at all, where the stigma of that was always 'I can't do this because erm'. So it was just a light bulb moment and since then I've got a book that I'm reading, not as much as I would like to, erm and every page is like 'oh yeah'. It's just I read it and I'm like 'oh yeah that explains that and that explains that' and it's just really good to know because all those little things I can't even pick one out for example but all those little things it's like 'oh yeah they're talking about me here', it's just such a relief. Er and now we're up to sort of today and yeah I'm still struggling, I haven't learnt anything special that means I can suddenly fly through all my work but now I accept it its er something I'm living with.

I: *Do you feel like it's easier to learn now you know?*

P: I struggle to ask any questions at all for that fear, because and I said to my dyslexia student er tutor 'she keeps getting me to ask the tutor stuff and I said I don't want to come across as stupid' and she said 'the only stupid question is the one you didn't ask', but I still don't ask and I don't volunteer information in case its wrong because I feel stupid but what I find is that when someone else answers it it's like 'oh yeah I knew that', but then I wouldn't say that but you know it's like 'I knew that'. I don't ask questions I just nod my head and smile at the tutors and it frustrates them but there's no way I'm going to speak up in class in case I get it wrong. I've quit so many jobs just over things like taking a note on a phone. Well this is something else my tutor helps with, I'm working with my dissertation erm so I said to her one day I've got it, it's in there I just can't get it onto paper. I mean she's dyslexic but she's obviously figured out a way to bridge that writing gap. Also just to bring a bit of personal thing into it, at the moment I don't see my son but I write to him. Before I started writing to him I would write in capitals, don't know why I just started doing that at some point in my life. I started doing that and I didn't get out of the habit of it, think it was a way of hiding the speed of my writing in capitals, anyone writing in capitals is going to be slower than. But I wanted, he's 9, or 8 at the time, so I wanted to sort of show that I could have typed it if I wanted. I wanted to show that I was making an effort, so I started practicing erm normal writing. It took me a long time but I was doing it at home so it was alright, so I did that. Then he wrote me a letter back and he, I was looking at it and I knew his handwriting was quite bad before but I looked at it and erm forget the fact that he got some spelling wrong, that wasn't the most important thing to me, it was the fact his one was a

backwards one and he got it right but it was backwards and his B's were D's and things and I thought, hang on a minute I think he's dyslexic, based on that. I was scared to sort of say anything because I don't want him to be labelled if he's not and I've been doing this for a while now and it got to the point where I've got his school report so I emailed his tutor and basically said I think he might need some support with his writing and I explained that I was dyslexic bla bla bla and he went up a year and they started doing cohesive writing with him so I asked them 'can you send me some of his work sheets so I can see what he's doing'. So then I started doing that and I've noticed actually when I'm in a quiet room and I've not got people around me, I can write you know, the blocks that I get aren't as often because I'm concentrating on the writing and its flowing and it's just that pattern of, so I make less mistakes. And it's still a worry but because I now accept that I'm dyslexic and I know I'm dyslexic, I feel like I could probably help him with his writing as time goes on because I don't want him to struggle like I did and if I can catch it early he'll probably have a great school life because he can do the writing bit. I mean I've, I think my writing issue is basically erm I've avoided it for so long so I would have to start from scratch. Not only would I have to start from scratch but I'd have to learn a technique that works for me, for my dyslexia, which I'm trying to do now. There should be something there but I mean, I even wanted a Dictaphone that you could just talk into and then it would just type it for you, I mean that technologies not quite there yet.

I: *Did they give you any technology to help you in Huddersfield?*

P: Yeah they gave me a laptop with loads of fantastic things on but I think Australia, being six flights to and from, it just got hammered then it stopped working last year and I haven't got one since. So erm I was going to buy because you get a discount, in Australia you get a discount on some of the software, I was going to buy a dragon thing which is like a Dictaphone, because it was quite cheap but I was skint in Australia. As far as the funding is concerned I've already got the laptop, I could probably go back to them and say 'I had a laptop but it's broken', but I've nearly finished now so it's like 'do I really?' I'm managing as I am and it probably won't come till after I finish anyway, that's the only thing with this thing, the process is too slow. If they could speed that up it would be great you know. I went for that test virtually right at the beginning of the first semester and didn't get it until the late half of the second semester, so I struggled all that first year without the support I could have had, well that was just the system yeah so. I did come across something from disabilities and they had an iPhone, an iPod is what

they were giving out and I was like 'well where's my iPod?' ((laughs)) and they were like 'well you've got a smart phone' so I was like 'oh alright then'. But I think smart phones, I bought the SG that first year and I use it as a Dictaphone, I use it to take pictures of doors, so I can remember which door I'm going to, certainly things like that but they all, those little things add up and I don't know what I would of done in Australia without my phone. I used it for everything like taking notes, taking copies of work sheets, everything you know, bus timetable. I struggle with just looking at timetables so I have to look at it all the time and there's a free bus which takes us to university so I took a picture of the sheet they gave us just so I don't miss the bus. I mean the technology you get is really good at the moment and its only getting better.

I: *So is uni going okay at the moment then?*

P: Yeah I think so. I mean I've still got deadlines, I've got erm my dissertation which is a scary thought. I've got a group one and these two dyslexics are in my group, we didn't get a choice of the groups and they're the two I'm having a problem with, and I'm like 'of all the people'. I even emailed, I think it was around the same time as my frustration, and I emailed the tutor and said why have you put three dyslexic students together? and he said erm what do they call it now? the contract I had wasn't considered in the criteria, it was just they wanted a mixture of male and female a mixture of races erm and a mixture of ages, it didn't include a mixture of abilities so we we're either going to sink or swim. Three dyslexics in one group was either going to make the group fantastically, you know, and all the rest of it or it's just going to sink and its sunk at the minute to the point where them two, I don't even know what they're doing. She's obviously got other issues going on which is a shame really she's, I don't know we've fallen out we was on whatsapp, she's not on whatsapp anymore she's working from home.

I: *So do you just work differently from them?*

P: Well yeah, this is why I suspect that she's not registered as disabled, disabled? Dyslexic, because she gets frustrated with deadlines, like everybody else does. Whereas now, I mean I did up until this light bulb moment really really hated asking for a written extension even though my first extension is virtually automatic they don't ask any questions, but I hated using it and at every university I have done. Erm I've hated asking. Australia was terrible because asking for an extension over there was just sacrilege erm and then I had to remind them that I was you know, and not only remind them that I had a disability but then remind them again, basically convince

them and they'd never believe me. So it got to a stage where I had to copy in the disabled department with all these emails that I'm sending the tutors reminding them, I shouldn't have to do that they should be reading their stuff. So up until my light bulb moment I really struggled with asking for an extension, but now it's like a couple of days before if I think I'm not ready ill just ask for an extension, it's done, where that would of stressed me out, I would of spent a week worrying about it. And I think she's at that stage where she's worrying about, she makes sure she hands her work in on time and all the rest of it, so that tells me she hasn't got a contract which states that she can get an automatic extension erm which I find surprising. But if she's got dyslexia and she's in university she should be tested. But I do know in Leeds Beckett, I mean they offered me £50 and they'll pay the rest and I think the test was £500, so she's in the same boat I was in when my boss came to me. Do you pay £500 to see and then you come through it and they're like 'oh there's nothing wrong with you', you know. That was, I was lucky I think, I don't know if every university does it at the same time but at Leeds Beckett that one time er they hadn't done it before so I'm glad I didn't go there a year earlier, it was just that one time and £50, well I can risk £50 to find out if I am or not but £500? The only time I've come across the paying factor of a test was my boss, he said I've come across this test. I can't remember but £500 seems about right and it's like why would I? Because back then if I got tested and they were like 'oh yeah your dyslexic', what does my £500 get me? It doesn't get me a free laptop,it doesn't get me all this software, I only get that when I'm in university, erm so I can see the problem there and that probably needs sorting out. I don't know what happens like with my son. Although this is where them two are different she's slightly older than him he's gone through school and college, he's done his undergraduate, now doing his masters and at some point in the system he has been tested, but that will have been through the school. I come across students that have been tested at school so it will have been the school that paid for it, but for me that wasn't even available till I got to working age. And then once I get in working age who's going to pay for me? My boss isn't going to pay for me what benefit does he get? But I had the opportunity when I went to university, she might have missed that, she did her undergraduate degree here and I don't know whether Huddersfield university offer that. Erm, so that might be part of her frustration as well. I'm talking to her as if she's sat there ((laughs)). So I need to understand that from her point of view erm, what barrier I can't get behind is 'I'm dyslexic, I can't, I can't do this because I'm dyslexic' and that really frustrates me to hear that because it's like 'yes you can, you just need to look at it differently, use the talents you've got to look at it a different way'. Erm so that's why

there are clashes, then I've got two Malaysian, a guy from Dubai er doing the code and he's like 'yeah I can do the code' and I'm looking at him thinking, no you can't ((laughs)), and he's just smiling and grinning going 'I can' and I'm thinking, you can't understand me can you, you can't understand a word I'm saying. So, I don't know how that groups going to work erm it's going to be fun we're having an Easter break, thank god.

I: *So is there no option to move groups?*

P: No, no basically the idea is you work in a group and you have no choice and he's purposely mixed us up. But I just wanted him, because these two are so close its unreal why didn't he split them up? He should have split them up but no, he decided to punish me and put them in my group ((laughs)) and then it's like, we had to go for this flamin' test to find out what sort of team player you are and I come up as er team leader every time and I didn't want that, and my disability as well, I didn't want to be. I always end up being a team leader at some point but I didn't, I don't, I didn't want that ((sighs)). But I suppose I'm hiding my disability somehow. Erm but when we came to this group thing, it was after the light bulb moment, she basically said to me 'stop beating yourself up over silly things that don't matter' and so we went for this test and I came up as team leader and it felt like, is it Hogwarts or something like that? Where they, that hat picks it out, it feels like that, 'Team leader? no, aw'
So it works out I'm supposedly team leader, so we sat there, who wants to be team leader? and I'm sat there thinking, I'm not telling them the results, they were all like 'I don't want to be team leader, I don't want to be'. So I said 'I'll be team leader' and then the following week they had the discussion 'oh we're not having a team leader now' and I was like 'alright okay when did that happen?' And I was like, oh this is just going really well. And then the following week we had a team leader but we're not calling it team leader, team driver ((laughs)). So it's great fun, I don't know where I'm driving them too like but ((laughs)).

I: Well I hope everything goes well, when is your hand in date?

P: June, June yeah. I've got my proposal to do or my dissertation in a week or two erm and then ive got the project which will be September which ergh is scary. It's what I do next though. I'm now looking at what to do when I leave after my masters. So I'm looking at PHD next or I've found, I've just come across what do they call it now? knowledge transfer programme, which basically it's a qualification of some kind where you work with a university and a company and

you get paid, this ones 25 to 30 grand a year but its only 18 months. After the 18 months the company will either employ you or not. But you work on a project, it's like your Masters project, so you work on a project for them in association with a university and its supported by the government and everything else and the one I've found, for my dissertation i'm doing erm well it's a bit complicated but i'm doing smart metres and the tariffs of switching between companies erm within, new smart metres are coming out in

2020 internet energy bla bla. And what I've looked with Northumbria, which is another university I was going to go to, they've got one, they've got a place so I've emailed the tutor and I've got to make an application form. But it's in the internet of energy which is my dissertation so that will, if I do good job of my dissertation, that will probably get me the place I would think, I would hope. So I thought I'll do that, I'll do it for 18 months, if I like it

I'll stop, if not I'll do my PHD. I could just stay in university forever, become a tutor why not? ((laughs)).

I: *So how long would your PHD be?*

P: I think three years. The one I was going to do was three years and i'd work at the university full time, but the pay I think its 14, it's an apprenticeship and you get 14,000 a year. So I'm looking, I might have to go into the real world and get a job ((laughs)

I: *Okay basically, so what I've found from my research is that there is conflicted views about being labelled with dyslexia. Some people may find it as a relief to have the label as it legitimises their difficulties and protects them from being considered stupid or lazy but some people have said that there is some sort of stigma attached to it and a way of singling individuals out, and with the way dyslexia is often portrayed within the education system, people may only see the diagnosis and not the person. So I wanted to do this interview to get a more detailed understanding of your views on labelling, and how you felt before and after you were labelled. I remember that you mentioned you felt both effects from the label.*

P: Both, absolutely both erm I still struggle with that now erm my son, he's having trouble at school and he's going for a test in September and the struggle with that is, do I get him labelled or not? My experience with university is absolutely, because he goes to high school in a years time and if he gets that help in junior school, the biggest part the biggest educational part of things I struggled with was in high school, so I want him to go into high school having learnt some new skills in the year at junior school and have the support there for him when he goes to high school and all the way through. Erm, so I think yeah definitely he needs that label, because without that label the government won't provide him with, the school can't accommodate his disability, his learning style, they can't accommodate that if he hasn't got the label.

I: *Yeah, they only get the right support once they have been labelled…*

P: But if I hadn't have gone to university and I hadn't gone through this process myself, I would be having a bigger dilemma of do I want him labelled or not? So I think yes that having the label for me was a relief but it has to be definite as well, it's not a case of 'oh you've got a learning disability', I don't think that's good enough. For me it wasn't because, just being told I had a learning difficulty didn't answer any of my questions and when I asked
'is it dyslexia?' she, the assessor just said we're not allowed, we don't label people anymore and that was no good to me. So I took the report to university and the university looked at it and they're looking for signs that they can say 'right we'll put a label on this' and they came up with the label dyslexia. But they're not qualified to do that, they had to put a label on for me to get the software that I needed and the extra time that I needed and that sort of thing, so they needed to

put a label on it. And, so it was only the beginning of this year, my disability tutor she's dyslexic as well and it was only one conversation we had and it was basically, I was explaining what was going on in my head and she said 'well that's because you're dyslexic, cause of your dyslexia' and since then my grades have hit the roof, it was just a weight of shoulders. Because before that I was like well I felt like I was almost cheating you know that extra time I get that other students don't get.

I: *Yeah, so you're kind of feeling guilty?*

P: Yeah, because it's like you know, if I needed an extension I'd get an extension and there's other students saying 'oh how did you do? Did you submit on time?' and you have to say 'yeah I submitted on time', which means that I might have an extra I think it's an extra three days or something like that where I could be finishing off the work. But I'm not allowed to speak to anyone about it because as far as they're concerned they've handed it in and so have I. I can't turn around and say 'oh no I've got an extensions' because they'll be like 'well why have you got an extension, I couldn't get an extension'. And it's you know, there's a bit of that going on.

I: *How did you feel as a learner prior to when you were officially labelled with dyslexia?*

P: Er, well I always suspected I had dyslexia erm but I didn't at school, at high school. I went to the college as well. Erm I don't know, I just found things took me longer to do, I always thought that I was not as good as everyone else but I was determined to be as good. I realised by then that if I wanted to do something I just had to work really hard at it. Erm, and I, I think
I did, I did college after school erm but I didn't get the, it was a BTEC and when I look back at the certificate I've got I missed the last three modules. I can't even remember why but I'm guessing I just gave up erm it might have got too hard or something like that and I give up. Then when I came to doing my undergraduate degree, that first year they were offering the tests for dyslexia or learning difficulties erm at a reduced price and they would pay the difference. For £50 I thought it was worth getting tested just to see and that was all it was at the time, to prove, to find out you know if I've got a learning disability then great that explains a lot, if I haven't then I just have to work harder. It turned out that I did erm but having, I don't think that having the diagnosis actually erm made a lot of difference really because I still had to work just as hard as I did before having the diagnosis. It took a while for the equipment to come and this and that just before I went to Australia so I didn't get the training that I needed because of the time difference,

because of the time the equipment arrived and I were leaving to Australia. Erm so basically given the equipment but not shown how to use it so I struggled with that a bit. Erm I think it was only really when I came to

Huddersfield University that made a change. I've had that little bit of a break from studying, I've gone back in to it and I already knew where to go to get the support I needed. So I basically, tried to get that in as soon as possible but there's still a time gap difference, time gap between. Erm informing the office when I registered that I had this learning disability, giving them all the information they needed to the point where I actually got the extensions, actually got the extra time and all that. Erm there is still a time difference and when you're waiting for all that you're struggling without the support, you're trying to do it all yourself. Er and, but as I say the light bulb moment for me was my tutor and the minute I got that label and then I you know, before that point I didn't want to talk about it with anybody, I didn't want to discuss the extra time and all the help I needed with my tutors in front of any students, tried to do it by email. I think there's a, there's still a stigma with tutors, some tutors accept dyslexia er or learning difficulties and some don't, some don't believe in it, and you get that just by having a conversation with them or asking for an extension of them. It's almost like they don't care erm and they're supposed to all get a notification that they've got, you know, this students got a learning difficultly, he gets this this and this, but I don't even think they read that. Erm I explained that to one tutor erm, what do they call it erm, can't remember what the term is for this tutor, this tutor basically my I forget the name, I went into see him because I had a problem with an extension I needed on the module and he was basically introducing himself saying 'I'm your whatever tutor' er any problems come and see me. So I went in to see him thinking he knew who I'd be, give him my name and he's know who I am he'd literally just sent me an email. I sat down with him, explained things and it was, he didn't know who I was at all, he had to look on his computer to see if I was on his group and I was like 'well hang on you've just sent me an email'. So he'd just sent a blank email to everybody and it's annoying because it's like that personal, it's not, there no personal touch if you like. He explained, the tutors got so many students and they can't look at everybody but that's wrong because if I've got a learning disability that tutor needs to know. So there must be, there has to be a flag you know, they won't have that many students that have got, have learning difficulties so they need to be aware. Otherwise I'm just battling with them, and they don't believe, until they've got, I don't know until they've looked on their computer and that they don't believe you, you know. And even then they don't know whether they want to give you the

extension or not and they have to check with another department whether they're allowed to or not and it's like 'well it should be straight forward this'.

I: *How do you think it effected your self-confidence and like your self-esteem?*

P: Oh massively, it still does. I might come across quite confident erm but in certain situations I'm not and that is down to my dyslexia. My confidence now is much better than it was three years ago so you know erm.

I: *Why do you think that is?*

P: Because of the relief. Since that light bulb moment my attitude has changed erm as well as my confidence but I think my confidence is more of a compensation. So I think I've developed to come across quite confident with people to avoid writing things down, to avoid certain aspects of my disability, erm it's not a disability, erm certain aspects I've developed a confidence trick. Now that's helped in a sense that I've not only got confidence trick but I've also got the stuff to back it up now. Erm, cause as soon as people get under the confidence and start quizzing you that's when I fall down because I can't, I can't collect the information quick enough for them to believe what I tell them is what I know. Erm and yeah.

I: *So are you feeling much more confident as a learner no you've got the label?*

P: Yeah I'm a much more confident learner since I got the label. As I say, from that light bulb moment my grades have improved. I've learnt to relax more, not stress out that I can't do something and take the take to reflect you know when I'm struggling, just walking away for five minutes and coming back rather than trying to get through it, trying to struggle through it. Erm it works, whereas I was adding more work and it only takes me longer anyway and when I came to a brick wall if you like, I just kept pounding on that brick wall and what I've learnt is that it's okay just to walk away, you know, take five minutes, do something else, come back and try again. You can do that as many times as you need to but eventually you do get through the wall. Erm, that's only happened from the light bulb. I've accepted that I am dyslexic, erm before that I still felt like I was a Freud.

I: *Yeah, sort of pressuring yourself to work a certain kind of way kind of and now you understand you work a different way and that's okay…*

P: Yeah, yeah. And I don't think I've even asked, I think there's once since then that I've asked for an extension which is strange really cause you would think that I'd need more time cause I'm basically giving myself a break from the work, so you'd think that would take longer but it doesn't. In reality it doesn't cause I'm all that time stressing and getting up tight you know I'm just wasting, I'm not actually doing any work, I feel like I'm doing work but I'm not actually doing any work so yeah, it's yeah.

I: Was it *your tutor who said that to you? She kind of showed you a bit more understanding didn't she? And you could relate to her?*

P: Well yeah, I think it's good the fact that she's said to me that she's dyslexic, I mean it makes a lot more sense. I like the tutors to sort of help me with my work, or not necessarily my work but with understanding things and processing what other tutors say. Erm, but they wasn't they had no learning disability they were just there to help and it was almost like they would come to me and be like 'well what do you need?' and I'm like well I don't know what I need surely you should be making suggestions. But this tutor knows what I need, you know erm and we worked out that colour coding is a big advantage for me. Always knew it but never really used it in a structured way erm so now when I'm reading journals erm I'll colour code different sections erm whereas before I'd just use yellow highlighter to highlight the whole thing and not split it down into sections and that works really well. And other strategies, useful things like the taking five minutes, trying to not spend more than 20 minutes on a bit of writing. And you know things like that, even if you're not dyslexic it's still an advantage to you. Erm but I just have to remember to do them instead of forcing myself to get through things.

I: *Well my supervisor said that all children should be taught you know like the children who get the extra learning, all children should be taught that extra learning from the start.*

P: Mmm, yeah. What I find annoying, I mean my son doesn't live with me but erm what I find really annoying is er he's been given extra reading time. He struggles with his reading at home but I think that's because his mums too busy and she can't sit down with him and give him the, he needs attention. Er, so what they've been doing is, they've been getting him to do extra reading in break time and so he's giving up his break time to do this extra reading which is unfair you know, why just because he finds reading difficult? All the other kids are allowed to go out and play an he's got to use that time where they're relaxing which is when he should be relaxing,

if not he should be relaxing more. So in reality he should be getting more breaks than the other kids and not forced to do more work during the time when he should be having a break.

I: *Yeah, it's not going to make him want to learn then is it? He's going to want to be out…*

P: Yeah and that's it. That's the things I had, the way you avoid it and you know when you're sat in the corridor and you're supposed to be reading you just don't. You're frustrated because you're being treated that way and you're being treated that way because you're not learning as quick as everyone else or you're not learning the same way as everyone else. So I think, certainly for me, school was the worst time of my life. But why have I got to university? I've gone to university to prove something to myself you know erm hopefully my experience might help him through school and into work when he finishes so.

I: *So are you glad you went to university and went through it all?*

P: Yeah I am, but it's not easy ((laughs)). University is not easy, erm certainly not for me but I've enjoyed most of it and I've certainly enjoyed this last year. Erm so I would recommend it to most people. Erm, you go in and do your first year, first years dead easy erm and it just gets progressively harder as you move on.

I: *Also I remember you mentioning those two students who also had 'dyslexia' and you didn't like to be openly associated with them, why was that?*

P: I think we all, I think it's a case of, for me in my mind, it's a case of, I've hidden my disabilities, my differences, like not being able to read and not being able to write. Somebody would give me a piece of paper to read and I'd pretend to read it and not actually read it. I'd look for key words that I can fire back at them. So I think it's a case of, erm, we've spent a lot of time hiding, me personally has spent a lot of time hiding my disability, my differences erm from other people. It's almost like you're still hiding from those that know. Erm, how do I explain it, it's like erm so you've got three of us and all we've done most of our life is hide what we can't do and they've put us together and we're hiding from each other what we can't do or what we can do because we don't want them stealing our trick if you like. I think it's a bit, a bit like that. And there's also an element of, I mean I, one lad was proudly dyslexic, but it was to a point where he would say things like 'I can't do presentations because I'm dyslexic' or 'I don't have to do presentations because I'm dyslexic'. And my attitude was, I want to do presentations because I'm

dyslexic, I have to work, it's going to take me longer but I want to do them because that's a skill that I want to have. He was using his disability to avoid work, make work easier if you like. Erm and to me that was the wrong attitude but that's how he, who am I to say how he should deal with his dyslexia? You know, dyslexia take's different forms so it's different for everybody. He might find it extremely difficult to do presentations and the way to get it across to the tutors is 'I can't do it because I'm dyslexic' and that's fine. But when I first met them it was almost like, you were wondering if they are or if they were just using that as an excuse and you don't really know, you know I've not seen there, there's like a contract that you have when you sign up for disabilities, I've not seen their contract so I don't know if they have one or not, they could say they've got one and not have one. Erm so there was him and the other lady and he had a dyslexia tutor but she never mentioned it so I'm suspecting but I might be completely wrong, she considers herself dyslexic but doesn't have the contract. Erm, but to get that contract you've got to go through the testing process and if she hasn't gone through the testing process it doesn't mean she's not dyslexic it just means she might not have had the funds to go through with the test. I were fortunate that Leeds Uni, Leeds Beckett or Leeds met when I was there, they offered that to me you know. I think the test was £500 and they offered it me for £50 you know. So I was lucky in that sense but not everybody is, which is again unfair. But if she's dyslexic, she's dyslexic. Reading some of her work, I can see some traits erm so but I'm not expert either so it's a case of you know what do you do? If you're dyslexic and you haven't been assessed, you know where do you go? You could say 'well assess me' but the university don't have somebody on campus that can assess, you go to an outside independent which you have got to pay money for, the university has got to pay money for. Erm, an it's something to do. So if all children were treated the same and they had a difficulty with reading these, they erm, the techniques that work for me are used instead of saying 'well lets assess them before these techniques are used, just use them anyway. They're either going to work or not anyway, just use them.

I: *Yeah I agree. It's like saying children should learn this one way within the education system and if you don't learn this way then you have a learning disability. But why should they have a disability just because they learn differently?*

P: Well that's it. I've come it, it's linear people. People who work in a, like my tutor, my supervisor, he wanted me to do this model but in his mind, in his mind I couldn't continue my dissertation without doing this model. But I was already here, I was already half way through my

dissertation in my head, he just wanted something from me that I couldn't give him until I'd worked out everything else. Erm, and yeah so, it's like well I'm having to, I'm having to work in my own way but I'm having to provide the result in a way that everybody else can read, that everybody else can follow. Once you've worked out that trick then you're well a head, if that makes any sense at all ((laughs)).

I: *No, yeah it does. So it's about finding the best way to handle it, which is why there is such controversy over the label I think…*

P: I think it's good in the way you get your support from it. I mean since that light bulb moment I've done a lot more research in to it that I didn't do before and I watch a lot of you tube and I watch a lot of TEDx nd that sort of thing and I don't think the labels a big deal, certainly as kids. When you're young and you don't really know much about dyslexia being taken out of the class and being treated different to everyone else and realising your friends can do the work and you can't then obviously that has a big effect on your confidence. If the teachers, the teachers in the school have got to get on board as well. It's a case of, if every child in the classroom knew that you were dyslexic, but it was treated as anything else, it would be normal. So it's like, you would get help from your friends because they know you're dyslexic and they're allowed to help you they're allowed to help you read things. Erm, it's like someone with a disability, so there's a child with a wheelchair you now what do you do? Pretend they haven't got a wheel chair? You don't, you can see the disability and the school accommodates for them. You know, dyslexia it's something that you can't see. Erm so I think the labels important because then it also says to the other children you know, you find this reading difficult because of your dyslexia, you know, not because you're stupid and not because you can't be bothered. So I do think, I'm in two minds but I do think it's important, the label is there. For other disabilities I don't know, you know for things like ADHD and things like that, I don't know whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, I really don't know. But for dyslexia, definitely. Erm and I'm pushing to have my son tested purely because I've picked it up and I've only picked it up because I've started with, with him not living with me,

I write to him an he's started to write back and on his first couple of letters I could tell he was dyslexic, well I believe he I dyslexic just on the things, the way he wrote. Quizzed his mum about it and it turns out he's struggling with his homework at home and I'm like well I'm not surprised. When I've got into contact with the school and I've quizzed them, what does he struggle with?

And this that and the other, in my head it all adds up. Erm how severe it is I don't know until he's been tested but he's a clever lad so to me I know he's dyslexic without him even having the test but I'm waiting for test so we can see his strengths and his weaknesses and then I can help him from there and the school will be able to help him and everybody else. So, but I don't know if I would have, I don't know, I said I wouldn't have known because when I got those letters, I knew I was myself dyslexic when I got those letters, but I could have easily just looked at those letters and said 'oh he's the same as me' not 'he's dyslexic like me'. I could have just thought he was copying me and then I probably wouldn't have known and I would have let him go through high school and that and have trouble in high school and that sort of them erm and not relate the two. So me knowing, me having that label has given me confidence in helping him to get that label. What they're like in school I don't know I hope they're a lot better than when I was there.

I: *Yeah. So why is it that you did hide, all the way through school and college and then work as well, why is it that you did hide your difficulties instead of speaking out about them? Because in the previous interview you did say when you were confronted about it you did just quit and avoid it…*

P: Erm, because I didn't have anything, I didn't have anything to blame. There's no reason to be, there's no reason to struggle. I couldn't understand why I was struggling. It was just building frustration. I didn't want all the people, it was stigma. Erm, I think it was just emotional, emotional. You could see what all these other people were doing and I was just like, I can't do that. But I didn't look at it like I can't do it, I believed I was stupid, I believed I was lazy. I wanted to do all the things that they did and erm to fit in you have you try and hide it. It's one of those, if you can't read, everybody likes somebody that causes a fuss so you either become the class clown so that everybody likes you or you do all the work and show off that way and I think that's what it is. You've got to fit in at school, you've got to go there every single day. If people are picking on you because you can't read, you know, I'd rather them pick on me because I'm running off somewhere you know. So I think it's just a coping mechanism in a way. So yeah.

I: *So what does being labelled with dyslexia actually mean to you then?*

P: It's a relief, it's definitely a relief. It means that where necessary I can say to somebody 'look I'm dyslexic, I do this'.

I: *Yeah, so you've been able to accept it more and tell other people?*

P: Yeah and I've got to stage where I'm still umming and ahhing and I've tried it a couple of times with job interviews where, on one I just told them basically that I was dyslexic. On the other I was going to and I chose not to but when I was walking out of the interview I wish I would have told them because some of the questions in the interview I knew, but it was the way they were explaining it to me, I just couldn't, I couldn't retrieve that information from them. If they knew I was dyslexic then they could of, they might have gone 'oh well erm'.

I: *I think society have constructed this negative association with the term dyslexia'*

P: Yeah I do, I do erm I watch a lot of TEDx things and they, they obviously promote the fact of dyslexia and things like that. They use icons like Richard Branson and things like that. There's a saying that erm one in three entrepreneurs are dyslexic and things like that and its great, younger kids with dyslexia have something to aspire to but it's like well, they're almost over doing it and saying dyslexia is a gift in certain areas and things like that and that they're making, that's almost like one extreme to the other. First dyslexia is a disability and erm these kids can't learn like the rest of us but then they're saying, these kids can't learn like the rest of us but then they're so special that they don't need to learn anymore. That's wrong, it needs to be in the middle, it needs to be equal. You can't go round saying, I don't want my son going round saying I've got dyslexia I'm better than you, I don't have to read or something like that, it's just another way to hide the fact he struggles with reading you know.

I: *I watched a programme called the dyslexia myth and they were saying a lot of people who are labelled with dyslexia are very creative and the schools are not letting them show that creativity, they're not letting them show that creativity. They're making them sit down and write and read etc. There's a place in New York that only hires dyslexic people apparently.*

P: Yeah my tutor told me that yeah. I thought that's a brilliant idea but can you do that, can you say well there's a job available but it's only for dyslexics. And then do you have to prove you're dyslexic? Erm yeah it's, I do, there are certain things I can do. Like with my supervisor, he couldn't see past this model that he wanted me to produce but I got to a stage where I don't even need the model, I've already got this information in my head but he wanted me to demonstrate it. Erm and I were so far past it, it was almost, I had to go back to sort of, I'd already worked out the, all the variables and everything I needed. I had to go

back to show him and that was the dilemma. Erm, there are, they're not gifts, I don't think they're gifts.

I: *So would you not like to see it that way then?*

P: Not necessarily no. I think erm, I'm just better at, like spatial awareness. My mates rubbish who I used to do delivery with and he's stock a van and I'd think well there's half that van that could still be used and I just fitted it all in. I tried to explain it to him that there is a difference, that's not reading or anything like that but I can picture things, I can picture things in scale, in my head. He needs to physically see the object and the space it needs to go in, it's just another way of thinking that's all.

I: *Exactly, people have different strengths.*

P: Yeah and if people learnt to their strengths you know you can.

I: *If you were allowed to do that…*

P: This is it you know. I find it strange from infant school and junior school it's like painting and using your hands and all this and then you get to high school and that all stops unless you pick an arts class, that all stops. Why? Why does it stop? Why do they teach you all these things and then suddenly go right pull all that down here's your pen and paper and your book? And exams and that's where it all starts in high school. All different countries have different methods erm I think it's, the biggest part of it has got to be reducing the stress. You know, if someone's got dyslexia or not, if they find something stressful, find a different way to do it. All the teachers want, is them to achieve, they want the answer and they want to know how they've got to the answer. But erm, why do they have to do, they have to learn it, you know it's the learning bit that's structured. They're saying right well the only way you can learn this is if you do this, this this and this in that order, that's wrong you know. As long as I do all those and then come up with that answer and formula if you like then what does it matter how long it's taken me to do section A and why do I have to go to section B when I can easily go to section C and then go back to section B. It's the structure and the process that for some reason, the educational system like. I don't know why they like it, but they do. Erm I did watch one that I found interesting that erm there was, I think it was the Victorian era where they started at school, when school started and before that kids were

allowed to you know, learn in their own way. So yeah, school, get rid of schools and we'll be alright.

I: *Yeah, it is getting worse though really isn't it.*

P: I don't know I think it's getting better, the awareness.

I: *Yeah schools are becoming more aware of those difficulties but the structure and the way they test things still isn't catering for those students. For example, OFSTED are getting stricter on structure and meeting targets etc.*

I: Yeah, everything's regimental. Basically you need this, this and this, these are the things you need. But who said that? Who's worked that out? Has somebody sat down and gone right well. It's like with modules, tutors are responsible for presenting a module to you and they've done it in their own way, how they learn. They've not gone oh well okay, how would somebody else learn? How would I give this information to somebody whose dyslexic? If they're not dyslexic. The same I go suppose for a tutor who is dyslexic, how do they go right that's how I would present it and then present it to students who aren't dyslexic, how would they do that? I find it easier I mean I wouldn't know because I'm not not dyslexic erm I'd find it easier to present my findings to somebody who's not dyslexic, one I've figured out everything first. So my reports that I do, I don't, that's something else you see, I don't discuss what I do like erm I need all the information so I don't take a lot of notes at all. In my head most of it, recording I take but I probably won't listen to them until I'm coming to my report. Erm, and if the tutor asks me a question about what we're doing I can't answer him, even if I know what he's on about, I can't answer him because I'm either too far behind or too far ahead. I need to do it my own way, I'm worried that he's going to interfere with that you know if he thinks I'm thinking about the wrong thing at the wrong time then he's going to try and pull me a bit back and say you know and well I don't want to listen to that yet, let me get this picked up and then I'll go back to that. So that's another thing where, just communicating with my tutor. I'd rather him just give me the information, I'll sort it out and then I'll give you what you need you know.

I: *So with your dyslexia tutor what is it that she actually does that helps you?*

P: Well sometimes, nothing. Sometimes we sit there and talk about electricity, we did that today. Erm, again it's just, she's just there purely for clarity. So if I'm struggling with a particular topic

erm I'll go to her and say like my tutor has asked me to do this but I don't, I don't understand it erm and if she's not able to er she can't do the work for me. She's not able to help me look at it in a way you know that helps me, she will be able to give me direction on what I need to ask to tutor. But erm the biggest help she's been to me is my time keeping, my time management because I will lose track of time constantly. I mean it still happens and it still hasn't stuck yet but erm just breaking tasks down and putting them into order. What I struggle with is when I write something down in a diary, like I've got this to do, I panic because once it's written down it's like, it's almost like gospel so I've got to do it. So if I say, right I need to read X amount of journals by Thursday, my stress levels go up because I've written it in a book and I have to then achieve that by Thursday and I know full well I'm not going do it, it's going to get to Thursday and I'll have three left, that's my stress level. So what I've come up with, a bit like a colour coded strategy and pencil. So I'll pencil something in so it can be rubbed out and moved, once it's achieved I can colour it and things like that just it's organisation. Once I've coloured it, I know it's done cause I can easily forget I've coloured it, so yeah.

I: *Just finding which strategy best suits you?*

P: Yeah, lots of different strategies and just different ways of looking at things. I'm dyslexic but I don't know what that means. I've not known of being dyslexic for a long time. I've done some more research recently and I've you know when you go for books, I went for a book a well worn book er in this library that I've started reading and I'll be flicking the pages like 'oh yeah, I do that, yeah'.

I: *So does that make you feel better?*

P: Absolutely. When somebodies talking to you er when you're reading this book and you find it's like this book is titled dyslexic, it's got dyslexic on the cover and you're reading it like 'oh yeah I do that, I do that'. You can identify with it, you can identify with dyslexia. Before that it was just like oh yeah, my things in the wrong order sometimes, I can't read you know I think I worked it out at 50 words a minute or something like that, no, less. My tutor gave me, I can't remember what they call it now, for presentations and basically it would erm go through each word letter by letter as a way of remembering er and the demo version er the slowest it went was 50 words per minute and that was too fast for me and I'm like trying to slow it down so I haven't bothered buying the package.

I: *Has any of the technology actually helped you?*

P: It did whilst I was in Australia yes because I had it all there. This year I've struggled because I had a year off, the computer I used last year wasn't working, the software was all on that machine. So I came here with a laptop that didn't have the specialist software erm the software's available on the machines here but I work from home because I can't deal with the distraction. Erm I can hook into the machine to get it from home but it's a slow connection and its only available certain times of the day. So I have struggled without the devices and things like that, I have struggled without them. Erm, I could easily get them. Erm, my phone in Australia, it was my Dictaphone, it was everything to me and I used it like mad. Because
I've had a year off, I've not got the same apps and I've got a slightly different phone and I've forgot what apps were helpful and what weren't and things like that, so I've not spent enough time setting myself up with all the tools I've just struggled on without them. Erm but I've found it easier this year and I think that's largely down to the tutor.

I: *Someone just understanding you as well?*

P: Yeah, yeah. I mean up until the point where she said 'that's because you're dyslexic' I mean she was still my tutor before that point erm but I was just going to see her each week and then trialling 'what we doing today?' 'Right we'll do this we'll work on your time keeping skills'. But from that moment it was like, well hang on I want to learn about this now, erm if I am dyslexic and I want to know all about it. But I don't think that up until that point, even with all the help I was getting, up until that one light bulb moment I don't think I even believed I was dyslexic, even then. You know, you're going to a specialist tutor, you're getting all the extra time and I still didn't believe I was dyslexic.

I: *Is that because you didn't really know about it, and all of a sudden you were given this label?*

P: I think it was, but then it's like, why didn't I research it before? I don't understand why I didn't bother. My attitude before that moment was erm 'oh I'm dyslexic, I must be dyslexic or whatever' and you just trust in the system. You trust that everything should, I'm getting extra time so I obviously need it. But even that, even the extra time, it's like one university gives you 25% and one 20% but why? What's the difference? Where are they getting their figures from/

You know erm but I say, it was a. Something I used to do a lot, I don't do it know funnily enough, I used to do it a lot, I used to get panicky and er I would have two or three deadlines coming up and I couldn't structure, I couldn't put them in order, I couldn't prioritise them. So I had them in my head and I'd jump from one to another to another to another and I'd spend all day doing that and this particular day it was I think er about four in the afternoon and I'll day I was just doing that and I went to see her and she said 'how are you doing?' and I just said 'well I've spent all day doing nothing' and she's like what you do mean? So I explained it to her and it was just a case of 'you've got this, this, this going on, this going on, she said well that's because of your dyslexia and that for me was just, you know. She sorted that out and it never happened again you know because of the strategy she gave me was, works. And it's a case of if one module, if you can't do one, get rid of it do it later, get them done first.

I: *Yeah, instead of staying on it and stressing about it.*

P: Well yeah this is it. I would look at everything as a whole big picture so these three modules to me was one big thing not three separate things, it was one thing erm and it's a case of I just had to say 'right not it's separate things, let's put that one there and that one there, let's look at that one first, and then let's look at that and then let's look at that' and that works better instead of trying to deal with everything at once. And I put that now to a lot of things that I do, not just studying but work and other things you know.

I: *What are you working as now?*

P: As now? Good question ((laughs)). I've got two jobs er three jobs. One is erm like a design erm for etching plates, another one is bar work and then myself employment which is more related to erm what I do here which is computers and system set ups and that sort of things.

I: *You sound busy!*

P: Typical dyslexic, he's got loads going on ((laughs)) but er I don't do so much of my self, well I say self employed but all of it is self-employed but erm I don't do so much of the computer side of things because I've, I need more time for my studying. But bar works great, because it's not every week it's just for weddings and there's a couple coming up actually. So, that is my distraction, I've taken that as a way of not studying, it's a case of while I'm behind the bar and I'm doing things behind the bar I'm not thinking 'right I need to do this, I need to do this paper, I

need to get this written down' so it's just like switch off time. So to me it's like I'm getting paid to switch off and then the design work is work from home anyway so that's what I would do if erm if I needed to take a break from my work I'll be like 'right okay I'll do this now' and then I'll go back to mine.

I: *So do you think the labels helped you with your life outside of university too then?*

P: Yes, definitely yeah. Because again I had these things going on but they were all one thing. Erm, it was all, it was just like, my work and my home life were one thing, I didn't separate work from home and all the problems at work would be the problems I had at home.
It's strange how it works. Erm, now, nothing's really changed but the way I look at it has changed. I'm like 'oh that's because I'm dyslexic'. There are certain things I need strategies for and there are certain things where I just think well that's just the way it is and just accept it. So, yeah.

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focus' on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Well, er, my grandfather was a headmaster, my mother was a primary school teacher and my father was a university lecturer, so I came from an academic family sort of thing. I went to school in the 1960's, probably around 65 when I first went to school. And the first ((laughs)), I mean it just wasn't recognised then for a start off, but the first thing that was brought to the attention of my mother was the fact that once I learnt to write and read and things I automatically wrote mirror writing and then they discovered that I could do mirror writing with both hands in both directions at the same time, and, erm, they just thought it was a bit weird I think ((laughs)) at first. Erm, but I was told I was lazy, I struggled to learn to read I found it very difficult and spelling was always a challenge.

I: *When you say that they labelled you at lazy, do you think this was because they didn't pick up on your difficulties?*

P: I presume so. I can't really remember to be honest. Erm, but because my grandfather and my mother read to me a lot, I liked stories and reading and writing and things like that so I gradually improved. But when I was at junior school my mother changed my school to the one when she actually taught because I was showing a very definite weakness in maths erm I couldn't sequence numbers and I'll be honest I've struggled with maths all my life. I did manage to get to grammar school but I never achieved my full potential I mean on my spoken work and what I could remember and things like that I was very capable but it never came out in exam results. If I do a continuous assessment, because its marked over a long time and they get a full range of my abilities I seem to come out quite well. But in an exam situation
I'm terrible. I get terrible terrible anxiety. I remember when I did my A level religious studies exam for example ((laughs)) it was just a coincidence that my teacher was invigilating the exam and I read the paper as you do, started writing, wrote reams and reams , thought I'd done really well and my teachers getting more and more agitated and I thought this is a bit weird and the end

of the exam she called me over and she said I'm not supposed to do this and I can't do anything about what you've written, but do you realise that you've written a whole essay what should of been on Joshua, on Jesus and I just never picked up on it. And I knew it was an Old Testament paper.

I: *How did that make you feel?*

P: It knocked my confidence completely, It had a huge knock on effect erm. I applied to go to university and I got a place at Salford to do chiropody based on my o level results because I failed my A levels apart from spoken English and so it was the time when they were changing all the grant system then and I was told I had to go to the nearest university and well the Salford university had just opened and I ended up going there which was a very much more academic course. I actually failed in my second year and I had to leave. Erm, I then went a did a typing and secretarial course.

I: *Do you feel like you could have had more support whilst you were at university?*

P: *Oh god yeah, there was none then no. You just did the work.*

I: *What year did you go the university?*

P: That would of been in 1978, 1979 ish, that I went there because I'd taken an extra year to try and re take my A levels. Erm, but you were just expected to go, do the work, and pass.
And I just, it wasn't through lack of trying, I mean, the practical work, I was really good at. I got really good marks It was purely the academic work. Especially the names of muscles and bones and insurgents I just really couldn't grasp. Erm, I relied on a lot of mnemonics to learn the work and do spelling as well all my life I've relied on things such as b-e-autiful and never eat cakes eat salad sandwiches and remain young. Its that sort of thing. And erm so i just thought that's me. I've struggled all my life. I've passed a chiropody exam with another erm era wading body so I have been a chiropodist and I've run my own business. And it's not that I'm stupid or thick it's just that I have always struggled academically.

I: Did you academic difficulties have an effect on you running your own business?

P: Erm, I think because I've put so... I mean I did have a lot of help from my mum and dad er she encouraged me by giving me comprehension passages you know how teachers do she put a lot of work in and my dad used to help me a lot with my maths. It got me up to a reasonable level.

I: *So you feel like you were supported by your family?*

P: Sort of yeah, erm it was the outside world where I struggled erm it just sort of erm I don't know. When I went to the secretarial college I could do typing, I could type for England but I couldn't do the short hand. And, I could write it but I couldn't read it back. And erm when I had my daughter who's now 27 erm when she went to school I recognised in her everything that I had struggled with, she was told she was lazy and of course I'd learned about dyslexia by then and I said to her class teacher oh do you think she could be dyslexic and they said oh no she's just lazy. And I knew she wasn't, I knew how hard she worked, and er it wasn't until they got a supply teacher in to do maternity cover and she called me in one day and said do you think there's any possibilities that Kate could be dyslexic and it was like hallelujah. I fought and fought and fought to get strategies in place for her. I paid for her to have an independent assessment which showed she was dyslexic but the school wouldn't do anything for her.

I: *Do you think the label of 'dyslexia' helps?*

P: Erm, it helps in that you know what the problem is. But to my mind the help comes far too late. Erm because I mean this was when Kate was 5 that she was discovered and all through junior school and even through high school the most I could ever get for her was 50 minutes extra in the exams when she was at high school for her O levels and her A levels. Now I paid for her to have private tuition with a specialist dyslexia teacher so Mrs Ed was marvellous with her and she went there she must of gone for about oh let me think it must of been about year or seven years. For her O levels and her A levels to get that support so she got those results. She worked her little socks off. And I mean, her spelling is still appalling ((laughs)) but she has gone on and she has passed her degree, she's got her MA and she's just training to be an English teacher and she wants to specialise in erm special educational needs, specifically dyslexia because she struggles with it so much and she knows what the struggle is for people. But had she had the support and had I had to support when I was at infant school or junior school and I can't understand why it doesn't happen, the achievement would be so much greater, you would achieve your full potential because you've got that support there. I mean coming to university recently, I've had things thrown at me right left and centre. I've got a computer and software packages that have been an absolute revolution to me and when they gave me the mind mapping software I actually burst into tears because it was like oh my god you know, what could I have done if I had this at school and it really

was a really emotional moment for me because I thought, I feel like this time, because I think one of the reasons I came back to university was to prove to myself that I can do this that I do have the ability, and I've always had this artistic streak in me that I've wanted to fulfil and I felt like that's what I needed to indulge So I applied for the second time to do textiles. I must admit that the course I am on which is textiles isn't as academic as the other course perhaps would be. Even so, the support at university, the help, there's mentors that I can go to, there's academic support that I can go to and if I had that throughout my O levels and A levels I would have probably passed them and it would of taken away all the anxiety and the stress that i felt throughout my life. All the oh she's lazy, all the oh she's under achieving, why isn't she achieving her potential, especially from my teachers. I knew how much I tried, but it felt like everybody dismissed it and it really drains your confidence and you really do start to believe it and that that has been with me my whole life. And I think that's part of the reason I fought so hard to get Kate the help as much as I could because I didn't want her to have that angst and this feeling of failure and I don't know this underachievement really.

I: *So you feel it affected your self esteem quite a lot?*

P: Yes, oh yes. Erm, it's the support, the support at University now though has given me so much confidence. I worked up until the year before last, last year I did an access course and this year I've come and it was a huge decision because I felt almost as if it was setting myself up to fail again and erm which I didn't want to do, which I think effected why I chose to do textiles, a less academic course. And because I felt it was, you know when I did my O levels and A levels art was a dead end job there was no future in it, yet i've always wanted to fulfil my artistic streak. So coming back to university has made me realise I can do this. My confidence has gone up hugely. My husband says I'm a different person, he said you've got so much enthusiasm , he says I've never seen you like this.

I: *So would you say your difficulties effected your home life then and family relationships?*

P: Oh yes, absolutely. Erm, I mean I've always been fairly outgoing erm but I think when I was at school I was the class clown and I think I was like that to cover up my own feelings of inadequacy and that that was projecting on me by other people. Erm and it was very hurtful really when I think about it. Well, it wasn't understood back then, I mean I'm 57 and back then it was like oh you know there isn't such a thing so we can't recognise it. But it does have such a huge

impact on your life. You can see what all these other people are doing in class and I was just like, I can't do that. The teachers call you stupid and lazy, and you do start to believe them. Erm the other thing that is associated with dyslexia which my daughter has as well is a condition called Irlen syndrome whereby you can't process certain wavelengths of white light and she has, well I have as well, glasses with filters which filters out those that your brain can't cope with. And if I think about it and I look at the paper and things it's like watching, you know when it's a really hot day and you look out into the distance and you get that shimmer and that heat haze on the road? It's like that all the time, that is my world. And if I put my filters on it doesn't take it away entirely but it certainly calms it down and my daughters the same she has this filters and that again takes a lot of angst out of your life because it like I said it calms things down, you don't have that perpetual tension that you feel.

And I don't think, it's something I haven't really thought about and analysed myself until today I suppose, but yes you live in a world of constant anxiety. I mean one of the things that I did do at school was the spoken English exam to boost my confidence, because I knew I couldn't read out loud very well and I was always nervous of it because it was reading and if someone hands you a piece of paper and says read that. I mean, when I look at a piece of paper and look at it I see all the lines between the words on the piece of paper so its getting over that and learning how to put these coping mechanisms in place. And that helped enormously, so now I'm quite confident with standing up and reading in public and talking to people. You were given passages to learn and passages to just read out and we had to prepare a presentation and deliver and it er did boost my confidence enormously but that was from a spoken perspective and I think from a writing perspective, my spelling is bad my grammar isn't good, my grammar in fact is terrible I couldn't tell you about syntax and whatever but I can write quite well but I think that's because it was drilled right into me almost like parrot fashion because that was the way it was taught. Erm, yeah it's erm a very strange condition and I don't think people realise just what a huge impact it has on people's lives from being very young. I remember Kate used to come home from school, it's just occurred to me now, and she used to get really really angry and frustrated and I used to say to her what's wrong? and she said its all gone wrong at school and I've got really strong feelings. Now obviously she was being told that she wasn't trying hard enough but she knew she was and she got that frustration that tension and she used to get really upset about it ((laughs)). And in the end we taught her how to beat up a cushion so that she could physically get rid of that angst and that anxiety erm, because it used to lead to behavioural problems. This is why I feel so passionately

that it ought to be recognised, all these processes that I've been allowed to enjoy and benefit from now ought to be put into place at a younger age. The children of today are more computer savvy, and get them to a computer and they can do it. I mean technology has flunked me so that's been a huge learning curve but i recognised the benefit of it and I think if children were given this software at a younger age it would revolutionise their learning experience, it really would. And I know Kate had it at university and she still uses it now for preparing her lessons, her academic learning.

I: *So what is that technology how does it help?*

P: I've got mind map, I've got Sonocent, I've got dragon and there's another one that I just can't remember. The mind mapping software, so if I'm essay planning I put in the essay title, idea one, it also writes the essay for you, idea one, put some comments in, idea two put some comments in. Then you shuffle them around till they're in the right order and lord be all you've almost got your essay. It just needs tweaking at the end. So it stops me being distracted because that's another thing, as you can tell I get side tracked by issues. My mother used to call me a shiny person ((laughs)) because somethings got my attention over there, and then that's got my attention somewhere else and I'm all over the place and the mind map software focuses my attention. So I can write out you know, answer that question, answer that question, answer that question, done. The Sonocent has been invaluable for lectures, erm, it's a software package whereby I can download the power point slides before the lecture, as the lecture is going on I can record it and add my notes at the same time. So I've got everything there and I can replay it take out bits that aren't relevant you know the conversation. Erm so I've just got at the end of the lecture, once I've edited it, just what is relevant to me, with a power point presentation alongside the appropriate slides. Well, that makes such a difference because you haven't got all the distractive narrative going on. Erm, the dragon software is one whereby, I mean as I say I'm quite good at touch typing so it doesn't, I don't really use it. But if you weren't good at typing you can actually read in a document and it would type it for you or you could regurgitate your ideas on an essay and it would write it for you so then you have the bones of your essay that you just need to go on and tweak, if that's the way you work. Erm but to have all this software is amazing and I just think it would benefit so many people if they brought it in earlier.

I: *So when was it that you were identified as having dyslexia?*

P: ((laughs)) It was actually when I was at college doing the access course erm because I used to get on really well with the other tutor because we had certain essays to do and she used to say "oh my god you've got the relevant points but they're all over the ruddy place". Yet to me it was perfectly well organised, it was well thought out but no id be, id have bits here bits there bits everywhere and I couldn't seem to pull them together to make a coherent, well a good essay. And she said to me when you go to university go and be tested for dyslexia. So as soon as I got here I went and got tested and they said you're quite dyslexic which suddenly made everything fall into place. I can't say it made me feel better but it made me think yeah yeah, that explains why I have been like I had and it explains why Kate is because I'm sure, I don't know whether it is, but I feels as though it could be genetically linked. Because I know my dad, he used to struggle with things, he said he never achieved at school what he was meant to achieve but that might just be my dad because he said he used to play about a bit as well. But yeah its erm, it has affected me all my life.

I: *Does it have an effect on your day to day life outside of education institutions?*

P:Erm, not too much. I think because at school we did a lot of mental maths and I am quite good at mental maths, so I don't have to write it down. One thing I did hate thinking about it was running my own business and doing the accounts. I always struggles with the accounts, erm, and sometimes I can't see you know, if I have erm typed something out I have to ask my husband where I've gone wrong er if it's like adding up figures, because I can't see where I've gone wrong. And erm it comes out when I'm playing games actually if I'm playing card games and I get excited or I'm not concentrating or what have you. If I put down cards and most people got one, two, three, four, five, from left to right I automatically do it the other way and it's just one of those weird things which I think goes back to the mirror writing things, really weird.

I: *Do you feel your interaction with your peers/teachers/family effected how you coped with the difficulties you were experiencing?*

P: Well, I think before as I say I used to try and cover up the hurt by being the class clown. Erm I always struggled with languages now I come to think about it. I was never good at writing French, I learned French. Ironically, it's really weird because if we go abroad my husband does the speaking of it and I do the reading of it because actually I'm quite good at reading French ((laughs)). I can make sense of it whereas he's better at speaking it. But I can't write it, if you ask me to write down French I can't. Erm, well I think now that I've got to an age where I've

accepted who and what I am erm and now I'm doing this for me. And I tend to try and meet people as an equal and understand that you know, they might be having problems that I don't know about erm because its one of those conditions that you're almost ashamed I think that's how I've felt because I knew I wasn't stupid and I think I'm quite an intelligent person on the whole. But there's always that feeling on inadequacy and not performing well so sometimes I have tried to hide it. I think now I'm quite articulate with my peers and my tutors but I do still struggle academically. It was daunting coming back and thinking that I'm going to have to write essays erm, but actually I've not done too bad and I've surprised myself and that has given me the confidence. I mean one thing I have struggled with and I think is a dyslexia input if you like, I have struggled with the cad lessons because I have information coming at me so quickly I've got to be looking at the board, looking at the screen, reading my notes, trying to do things and when I get overwhelmed with a lot of things I panic. When I first came to Uni we were having, it was a completely new environment I had to find my way around the Uni got inductions for this and inductions for the library and lesson and handing things on computers. And up until Christmas I felt absolutely overwhelmed and I don't think there's a week that went by where I didn't have some kind of panic and end up in tears and as things settled and the inductions got less and I knew my way around the Uni better. I settled and I, you know, feel quite comfortable now but it's taken me a long time. It's you know taken me about 6 months to get settled in and have that confidence.

I: *What support does the uni offer besides technology?*

P: I did have a mentor and I saw her up until Christmas really and then I decided that I'd try without, you know because it was another meeting that I had to try and fit in. And, the pressure of work from the course was increasing so I decided I'd try and managed on my own and I have, I haven't needed her. I did go and see the academic support staff and they were really supportive and helpful and as I say I've gradually not weaned myself off them but needed them less and it was really just reassurance I think, that I could do it. Erm, that I wasn't being stupid and I wasn't worrying unnecessarily. Perhaps I had sort of had misread a question or completely misinterpreted it but they helped me sort it out and clarified things and erm that has been immensely helpful. I certainly don't think there's been enough done about it to support people as I said and it's a shame you've got to get to university to get that support because I am certain that there are people that never come to university that would of benefitted from that support in there

every day life. I know people that would've. In fact, I know a guy in his 60's and he still cannot read and write and I think in this day and age that is almost criminal that this guy hasn't had the help, the support, the understanding that would've benefitted him in so many ways and perhaps, he's not an unintelligent man, he's got a heart of gold but he's always had really crap jobs because he didn't have the ability to read and write and it shouldn't all be about that. Because there's so many people who have dyslexia and its come out and you know they are gifted in so many ways I mean Dyson he's dyslexic and look what he's done and Richard Branson he's dyslexic. There's so many people who are and they obviously have talents and they're not stupid but so much emphasis is put on the ability to read and write and the academic achievements and I think that's important I'm not saying it isn't but there are ways to support people in the learning process.

I: *Okay basically, so what I've found from my research is that there is conflicted views about being labelled with dyslexia. Some people may find it as a relief to have the label as it legitimises their difficulties and protects them from being considered stupid or lazy but some people have said that there is some sort of stigma attached to it and a way of singling individuals out, and with the way dyslexia is often portrayed within the education system, people may only see the diagnosis and not the person. So I wanted to do this interview to get a more detailed understanding of your views on labelling, and how you felt before and after you were labelled.*

P: I was it was sort of brought up when I was at the access course and assessed last year when I started here erm and I suppose I found it was a relief to know it wasn't me that had just been thick and stupid. I mean I didn't think I was thick and stupid but it explains an awful lot from my younger days.

I: *Yeah. So prior to having the label, how did you see yourself as a learner within the education system?*

P: Erm, I think I just felt like I was academic erm I was more hands on rather than, although having said that I like doing research so that was like a counter intuitive thing if you see what I mean. So whilst I found it difficult and I've always struggled academically erm it explained why I couldn't learn like other people learned. Erm I never really thought of it as a label, I suppose it is. Some people class it as a label. It's more of an explanation of why I am the way I am.

I: *Do you think it had an effect on the way you learned after you were labelled with dyslexia?*

P: It certainly had an effect. Erm once I got all the packages that they were able to offer me, that has made a huge, made a huge difference in the way I learn.

I: *So it helped you get the right support then?*

P: Yes it did, it did, and things that I just never thought were available to me. Erm people pointed me in ways of doing things that I hadn't really thought about doing things in, you know like mind mapping and things like that. I hadn't been brought up with things like that so to just see how mind maps work and how they help me formulate my ideas and get them in some semblance of logical order really has been hugely helpful, yeah.

I: *When you did get the label did it have any effect on your self confidence or self esteem in anyway?*

P: I don't think it influenced by self confidence and self esteem, it was more understanding and it was a relief to know why I've always struggled. Erm, but I don't as fair as self confidence goes I don't think it really. I mean I'm fairly confident anyway erm I'm still, I still suffer with crisis of confidence in certain, at certain times, when I'm unsure of things.
Especially with computer based things. Now whether that's, I think it's partly to do with the dyslexia but not entirely. I think it's partly because I'm not very I.T. illiterate. But also I seem to suffer with, if I get overloaded with lots of information all at once I can't seem to process it and I seem to panic. So erm I've still got that. Erm, I think it's helped me analyse what happens to me and why I react like I do because I wouldn't have been able to tell you that about the computer before. It's just thinking about why I react so It's made me analyse myself more and the way I learn.

I: *What does dyslexia actually mean to you as a learner?*

P: Erm I think it means that I don't process information as the same way as other people or perhaps the same way as other people. I learn in a different way, it's not that I can't learn it's just that I learn differently and perhaps need different strategies and tools to help me to achieve my potential, that aren't offered as erm a first option if you like. I mean I was brought up in the system where you did your eleven plus and you either went to grammar school or you went to secondary school and grammar school was the more academic whereas secondary school they prepared you for more vocational training. I was fortunate enough to pass my eleven plus so I went to grammar school but having got there, whilst a lot of my work was predicted to be A's and B's on my performance in class and things like that, when it actually came to producing the work and doing the exams I always really fell short of that and I was always a disappointing student. Erm, and I often wonder if I'd been perhaps better suited to a less academic environment. It would have taken me down a very different path definitely, but I think I would have learned more efficiently shall we say. Erm, at the time there was a great deal of snob value erm about "oh you must go to grammar school" you know "it's only the thick ones that go to secondary school, those that will end up working in factories and mills" and things like that. But there is nothing wrong with that. I mean everybody has a different learning potential, everybody. Not everybody is cut out to be an academic and there are a lot of people who are very very

successful as hairdressers, musicians, people who start at the bottom of factories and work their way up to the top. There is nothing wrong with the vocational route at all and I think we under value that hugely in the education system. Apprenticeships are okay if they're done properly and I think to have this

"oh everybody must be taught together" is rubbish because it, the underachievers are left behind you know they can't keep up with the high level people. The upper level people are bored silly so you only really cater for the middle people, and do you do that well? Well no because you're too busy trying to entertain the other two levels. So to my mind streaming, having people in streams there's no determinant to it because it helps everybody get the best out of the education system.

I: *What's your view on the label then? Do you think the label has a positive impact*?

P: I don't think it's right to approach it is you know giving people a label. Erm but having said that I suppose it's inevitable really. Equally I don't think anybody should be ashamed. It's like saying "oh well somebody's disabled" that's just the way they are. It's, it shouldn't be used as a means to discriminate, it's just how some people are. They're wired differently.

I: *It's a social construct in a way isn't it?*

P: I think they do it with a lot of people. It's like ADHD isn't it. Erm you know they're brains are just wired differently. I don't think we should discriminate against anybody at all.

I: *A few of the findings suggest that taking children out of the classroom and singling them out to give them that extra support can have an effect on their self esteem and confidence when they realise they are not at the same level as their friends. What do you think about this?*

P: I think that depends how you approach it. Erm, if you encourage them and support them by saying you are special you a different but not doing it in a negative way and give them positive reinforcement there is no reason why they should feel that negative impact on their self confidence. It's the way it's done that's important. Er I agree that it could, it does have the potential to cause that problem but that's up to the teachers and what have you to devise a strategy where it's a positive outcome not a negative one.

I: *Yeah so it's about understanding the needs of individuals and knowing how to work with it.*

P: It's funny how you should be saying this actually. My daughter she's doing her teaching degree and she's just written her dissertation on dyslexia and Irlen syndrome. She want's to be a specialist teacher and she's the one who's dyslexic.

I: *Well hopefully that will help the children a lot if she's experienced what it's like to learn with dyslexia.*

P: Absolutely, absolutely. This is why, she's passionate about it, absolutely passionate about it.

I: *One student I have spoken to has also done that, she said she feels as though she will learn from the children as well as the children learning from her. She feels as though she is a positive role model of what you can achieve even when you struggle to learn within the education system.*

P: Well this is exactly what Kates doing. I mean she has struggled because of all the possible subjects she wanted to teach it was English. Well you know her spelling is still dreadful but you know she's not allowed it to stop her, she's not allowed it to stop her. And you know, I've been behind her 100% but she's mostly been behind herself 100%.

I: *Yeah. It seems that having that person, who understands or may have been through the same thing helps, especially a tutor who may also be dyslexic.*

P: Yeah, especially dyslexia tutors. They have the empathy don't they cause they know what it's like and they know what it's like to feel inadequate and they just know how to help you. Because you're so frustrated. It's er, it's really weird how your emotions kick in and disenfranchise you from what you can do. It's crazy really.

I: *I have definitely seen patterns throughout my data. If you get the right support, people can achieve their potential. The support seems to be particularly helpful in university.*

P: Yeah but it's too late. It's too late.

I: *Although some people don't get the opportunity to go to university and get that right support. For example, my mum she struggles but has never had the help or guidance.*

P: But if she would have had that put in place you know when she went to upper school when she was 10 or 11 she would have perhaps achieved better in her O levels and her A levels which would have given her more confidence to go and on and do what she's done.

I: *Yeah, I suppose it's important to recognise your difficulties and how to deal with them early on.*

P: Absolutely, absolutely. If I could say anything it needs screening at junior level. My daughter was assessed when she was about 7 when, no she wouldn't be as old as that, let me just think. Yeah she'd be about 7 when the teacher said do you think she could be and I paid for her to have this psychological evaluation and everything and the school wouldn't do anything. So I paid for her to have, I was in the fortunate position I could afford to pay for her to have extra support and tuition from a specialist dyslexia tutor and without that I don't think she would have don half as well.

I: *So your daughter didn't get much support from school then?*

P: No, all outside. Mrs Ed helped her put strategies in place, she gave her extra homework to do to help her learn her er spellings. She gave her things like basic mnemonics to her spell like B-E-A-UTIFUL, all that sort of thing that they just didn't bother with at school. I had to fight when she was at senior school to, in, they reluctantly gave her 15 minutes extra in exams and that's all the concession they could give her.

I: *I suppose it's not giving everyone a fair chance is it?*

P: No it isn't, it's not giving anybody a fair chance. Er and even if, like you said if they find a different way where everybody can be taught successfully in an integrated way, if not, then there are enough children who have the problem to say okay we'll have a class of you know kids with learning difficulties and we will concentrate their learning you know on their learning, there and allow them, you know stream them so they achieve their potential. Because I went to, I was thinking before I came here to do a, be a teaching assistant and I spent a couple of months at my local school and there were kids who were sitting there who could do erm you know quite complicated multiplication sums. There were some of those at the middle level sort of plodding a long learning as they went and then there were those at the bottom who had to sitting and I had to sit with them and colour circle and squares and triangles because that's all they were able to do. But had they had the time spent on them and that's what it means, time, doing things at a slower pace so they can understand that a triangle has one, two, three sides, a circle has one and a square has four. If that's all they learn that year that is something but you can't do that with the higher

achievers, so you've got to split them up. It's unfair I think, all for the sake of political correctness.

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focus' on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Okay so I wasn't diagnosed with dyslexia, that's probably a good starting point, until this year, but I've kind of known I've had it a lot longer than that. So probably about in year 5 or year 6, so I were about 10 years old some of my teachers, well one of my teachers in particular, was looking through everyone's books and just going through them. Erm and she was a tutor in our primary school erm and she was like erm not just dyslexia but a learning mentor and erm it was only a small primary school so she could go through everyone's and she just picked up that erm she thought I might have dyslexia. Erm I can't remember what it, I think she read some of my poems because we did poetry and she said that I had a really good understanding, a really good erm I don't know, way of putting things but the way I did it was slightly, structured slight strange. Erm so from there, in primary they don't rarely diagnose people I don't think so they just asked erm asked me to do toe by toe which is erm like what they erm, a scheme for some people who have dyslexia. I started doing toe by toe and then, this was in year six that I started doing that, and then I went to upper school and I went to the like learning people in the upper school and I said "I think I have dyslexia they've told me at my primary schools I think I have". Well they kind of disregarded it a little bit cause basically you get you SAT's results in year 6 and I was just an average for the UK do you know. So because my grades were like an average score they didn't really do anything about it so erm they just kind of said "well you're not struggling with your grades at the moment" that's not exactly what they said but you do you know what I mean "so we're not really going to do much about it". So then it didn't really bother me I just kind of went through school.

I: *Did you struggle with anything in particular?*

P: Well I think I did but not to an extent that it hindered my grades if that makes sense. So spelling, I'm not a very good speller erm I'm not erm, my structuring is probably a really weak point. So my essays would be all over the place erm things like that. Erm my sentence structure is sometimes a bit weird erm so I write things back to front in sentences. Erm and also another thing

that I've known for ages but I just put it down to being a slow reader is that I'm a really slow reader and I take in information really slow. But I think these things when you're in year 7, 8 and 9 even they don't cause you, if you've got a naturally like average intelligence I don't think they hinder you that much but when I start to get to do my exams, that's when I start to like I think not help me that I didn't have any help. Especially my exam time, I always run out of time in my exams. Especially, I think that got a lot worse in my A levels but erm yeah so in my final A level, this is skipping forward a bit but in my final

Alevel it wasn't even for just English related subjects it were like for maths and for science things as well so things that you don't even need to write a lot it's just about taking in the information and processing things. Erm and I think in my maths exam I did erm, there was seven big questions and I did four out of the seven just purely because I didn't get time to do the last three and I still managed to get, I think it was a B in that paper. I think it got to the point where people were dismissing it because I was still getting really good grades. You don't realise that if you would have got that extra help you could have done a lot better. Erm so then obviously I came to uni and I just told them all the difficulties I've been having so. Especially in, I remember cause I did English, maths and biology in A levels which is quite a range erm but in English she always used to pick me up on my structuring of my paragraphs erm the way I structured my sentences as well erm my spelling, punctuation. I'd do weird things like when I was saying 'a lot' I'd join the words together so things like that erm but I couldn't say "oh I have dyslexia" but it wasn't diagnosed. So it was just like "you need to work on this" but it was something I found really hard. Erm so I got to Uni and I, I was set that I had it but, so I said to them "can I get tested or anything?" I think at iPoint and they told me to go and see disability and then I did and obviously I got tested and I found out that I had it.

I: *So when you were in college did you receive any support?*

P: I think I'm good at knowing how I need to help myself if that makes sense? Because I was doing that I could kind of do it on my own. So I dedicate more time to revision, I dedicate more time to reading erm I'd spend longer on my essays you know. And erm basically they said a lot with the grades that because of my content they couldn't mark me down really that much for the other stuff that I struggled with erm so I just guess I found my own way round of dealing with it if that makes sense.

I: *So when you got to uni and you got given the label of dyslexia, what support did they offer you?*

P: Well yeah first of all, and this is the only reason I really got tested, was because I wanted the extra time in my exams, because I think that was the biggest thing I felt It was impacting me on. Er because obviously I knew, I'd done all the revision, I knew there were things that I needed to know but I wasn't managing to get it down in the time. Straight away once I'd had the test and everything I got 25% extra time on my exams which were the only thing really that I was that bothered about. Erm so I got that straight away and then I think I got a PSLP, I think that's the letters for it you know, like the learning support plan or something and then I get extra time on my library books so I don't have to take them back at the same time, I think it's one week I get longer now. Also I get erm some tuition so now I get an hour a week or two hours a week of tuition.

I: *Does the tuition help you?*

P: It does but I got it quite late. Well, I applied for my test in September and I think it took about a month and then I got told straight away, I got the report through really quickly that I had dyslexia but by the time PSLP plan was set up, and then you get put on a waiting list for a tutor. I only just got my tutor about three or four weeks ago, so like my academic years finished technically this week, Easter, and then we don't go back. So it's took nearly all my first year undergraduate study to get a tutor.

I: Do *you feel like it would have helped if you did have a tutor earlier? Has she helped you?*

P: Yeah but it's still quite early days to say really isn't it, but there are little things that have helped erm but yeah. I think the most important thing to me was it just being recognised because I think sometimes it, you don't want to just come across as being lazy. Like if you've not done the reading it's not because you haven't tried it's because you know you couldn't manage to do it, so I think that was the most important part for me. So I'll take the help from the tutor but I more just wanted the extra time and the recognition that I had it so I didn't appear just as lazy if I wasn't managing to meet my deadlines and things.

I: *Do you feel like learning how you want to learn independently helps then rather than the strict structure of school?*

P: Erm yeah I mean, I've always kind of had that mindset that I can do things myself and just took it upon myself to think "well this is hard but I'm going to do it anyway". Erm, but I think, I knew Uni entailed a lot more deadlines and erm a lot more pressure of exams and things like that so I thought I'm probably going to face this, and I've probably not faced it yet but second and third year, where I've got so much work I'm swamped and I'm not managing to get it all in, you know for the deadlines. I want them to be able to say right I need a bit of extra time to do things because you know of my dyslexia. And I do get that now, I can apply for short extensions without any other reason, so I can just say you know I've not physically been able to hand it in because I'm finding it difficult and then I get a short extension. So that's another thing that's probably been good about it as well.

I: *Have you been offered any technology to help you?*

P: Oh yeah, I've got some technology as well but again this hasn't come through yet. Well kind of, I got my technology through about I'd say about 3 or 4 weeks ago but erm they teach you how to use it and some people teach themselves but I'm really not with technology. So my tutors coming up to see me on the 19th of April I think so again it's like not.

I: *That's so bad.*

P: Yeah and by that time as well I think my final essay funnily enough is due in on the 19th of April so all the things that it would help me with they've all surpassed first year. The type of technology I have, there's one that helps you quicken up your reading I think and you can read audio books and things which will be helpful but then there's one that like helps you structure your essays by doing like interactive mind maps. Erm, and there's one, this is my favourite one, you put these head phones in and you speak and it types for you, which is really exciting ((laughs)). But erm, because it just, that's what I think, takes me ages to even type, I've got a really slow typing speed. Erm and it's not, it doesn't just affect me in uni,
I've got a job where I have to write reports as well so you know it doesn't just effect uni. But again I won't be really using that until after April, so.

I: *So you'd use all that in your work?*

P: Oh yeah I'm going to as well, might as well make the most of it but erm it's just a shame it's taken so long to get the ball rolling with it all really.

I: *At least you'll have it for second and third year like you said. Is there anything else outside of Uni that dyslexia does have an influence on?*

P: Erm I think, well I have really bad short-term memory erm and apparently that is actually to do with dyslexia. Erm and I didn't, so even when I thought I were dyslexic before, there were these things that, problems I had and I didn't even think even if I were dyslexic they were to do with it. So short term memory is definitely one of them. And do you know what's something that annoys me quite a lot is that people don't, you say "oh I've got a bad memory, bad short term memory" and then if you tell them it's to do with your dyslexia they don't believe you, because people don't think that that's to do with dyslexia and I'm like "no it seriously is" but they're like "no dyslexia is to do with reading isn't it?" and I'm like "no there's a lot more to it than that".

I: *Yeah, there's a lack of understanding isn't there? A lot of people don't really understand what it is.*

P: No, I think people understand it's spelling and reading but they don't really understand any more than that and there's another stigma I think about if you're highly intelligent that you can't have it as well and that really annoys me.

I: *So what would you say the biggest difficulties you have had to face are?*

P: Erm, I think just, I find my essay structuring, I know that's another thing to do with Uni but that's just an awful thing I, a lot of me is just, cause with work as well I have to write reports and just structuring things in a way that makes, links together is really difficult. So I'll start by talking about something, then I'll jump to something else, then something else, then I'll jump back to that thing and I know that's meant to be helped when you can type it but for me it doesn't even help that much, I still jump about even when I can move stuff about. Erm like if I'm writing an essay especially, I'll start typing and then I'll have a point and then later on I'll realise that I've talked about that point, so I'll try and move that so it links with the point above but then there's another little bit that links to the bit further down. So I'm like, it can't just be sorted by giving me fancy technology sometimes, do you know what I mean?

I: *Have you tried it out yet? Do you know whether it will work?*

P: No but I've kind of seen the way it works and although obviously I'll try it, I'm not completely hopeful that it will either. Erm because they do, the one that's meant to help me is this

mind map thing. So erm it, if you're writing an essay you could do a branch on one little mini topic, a branch on one little mini topic, then stem off there. But my problem is that things always link to each other so then I'm like, well it still doesn't help me structure it that well anyway, but I'm going to try it. She's shown me basically how to use it but I'm going to get proper training on it but I'll just have to see I guess with that.

I: *Did you have any support at A Level*

P: Erm no, none at all. I think my understanding was good but I think sometimes I was seriously hindered in the way I could put that down if that makes sense. Erm I struggled with my essay writing in English erm I mean I always got low marks and I think, I think I had as valid points as some people that were high marks but probably because of the way I wrote it more marks were hindered. And then I, like I said in subjects such as, I did biology and maths erm and sometimes just completely running out of time in exams, it makes a massive difference. I'm a really slow reader so I always run out of time in my exams, it's not like I can't do it but I lose a lot of marks because I can never finish it in time. Erm and people that did have, were told they had dyslexia could have 25% extra time and if I'd had that it would of made a big difference.

I: *So did they not test you for it in college then?*

P: No it was literally the attitude of "basically you're getting the grades so we're not going to do out about it". Because I was a high achiever at A-level so. I think the way they look at it in schools with funding is, if you've got someone who's getting A's and A stars at A-level and then you've got somebody who's getting, scraping by with maybe D's and C's or even someone who's failing, who are they going to test for it? Which, it's not really fair but that's the way they do it. I can understand it to an extent because they have to give the help to the people that most need it, but then it's frustrating sometimes that you don't have that recognition. Erm cause like I said it can come across that "you got a C in the exam, you just did average" when really you knew what you were doing.

I: *Your personality has probably got a lot to do with it too. You understand what you need to help you, so you just get on with it.*

P: Mmm, yeah. I think there's two types of ways you can react to it really. I think you can do a really good job of covering dyslexia up which is basically what the lady said to me when yano when she did all my tests and stuff.

I: *So she thought that's what you did?*

P: Yeah cause in their tests, erm they do a dyslexia test, they ask you questions and stuff, kind of how you've dealt with it and why you think you have it and stuff like that and she basically just said I've probably just done a really good job of covering it up you know till this point. Erm which, for example my A levels, I chose my A-levels because I did maths, obviously I keep saying this, but maths, Biology and English but I chose them because they were a good balance. I knew if I would of chose all essay subjects I'd be bogged down with essays. If I chose all maths they'd be too much going on like I couldn't remember it all, I couldn't deal with it all so I chose a really good balance across the subjects so I could balance things and that was I think a good coping mechanism of dealing with it. Erm but then some people I guess, they drown with it, rather than pushing through it. So I guess I just found a way to deal with it I guess.

I: *Yeah, you figured out your own coping strategies. So when you were in school did you, was there any noticeable struggles?*

P: Erm I think I was up until about erm, probably started to get GCSE level. Erm but yeah it's not really the work as in the academic ability, it was just more like I keep saying, the time and getting it down on paper, just the way I'd write things down, spelling, things like that really. Another thing is I don't really have the thing where words jump about on the page, I don't get that and I think a lot of people would think I'd get that. Erm so I didn't have that difficulty, but then again the reading was a big issue. Erm probably one of the biggest things I had was, I did English literature at AS and they asked me to, well we were reading this book called the kite runner and every week they'd be like "right read a chapter of this book" and it didn't sound, it doesn't sound like a big deal but I absolutely dreaded that like absolutely dreaded it. Because for me, some people in my class would be like "oh I'm just going to do it in the morning", you know the morning before the lesson or "I'm just going to read it the night before". But it would literally take me a few hours for like, you know, quite a few days to get through it and when you're in A-level and you've got a lot going on, I don't know it was quite a lot to manage. So something that the teacher considered a simple task, for me it wasn't a simple task. So then if she were like

"right all you're doing this week is reading a chapter so I want you to do this essay as well" you know because she didn't think it were a lot, it was quite a lot if that makes sense.

I: *At that point, do you think you might have had support if you talked to your teachers?*

P: Well I think as I go, as I went along in school I kind of started, although I did think I had it, dyslexia, I kind of did say to my teacher oh, I used to tell them erm "my Primary school said I had dyslexia" but it was really brushed away because I had really good grades. So it was kind of the point, where I didn't see the point of saying it anymore. And another thing is I kind of think I started to doubt myself a little bit at some points because I was like, it is quite contradicting to what I said earlier because I said I knew I had it, when I did but at the same time when people kept telling me "oh you can't have it because your grades are good" you start to think well can I? Or am I just struggling with a few things? Erm so no I didn't really reach out because I just didn't think I'd get anywhere with it. Erm then obviously I took, well I took a few years before I went to Uni, I took two gap years and I think I thought when I went to Uni I just I knew as soon as I started that I'd have to, I were going to go and get help for it because I thought I'm not struggling through three years of Uni erm when I could have extra help for it. And I knew, because you pay so much to come to Uni and because they have, well they have a lot more support there that if I did have it they'd have to do something about it so I just thought basically I think I just thought well I'll see in uni.

I: *What did you do in your gap years?*

P: Erm well in the first year I went to, well bit of a tragic story, I went to Liverpool Uni and then I were like no I hated it so I came home. I weren't there very long.

I: *Was that anything to do with the uni work?*

P: Erm well I guess a little bit. Well one I were in like quite a bad place at the time anyway but then second of all I found going to uni ridiculously overwhelming the first time round like the whole transition, moving a bit but more so the actual starting. You know when you, I don't even think this is anything to do with dyslexia, but you get there and they just hand you books and information and sheets.

I: *A few people I have interviewed have said that.*

P: Yeah I just, I just found it really overwhelming. And I did, I didn't know what I wanted to do so I did joint maths and joint biology and cause I were doing kind of two courses mixed into one it was like ridiculous information overload and it just freaked me out and I panicked I were like no I don't want to do this, I can't do this. So I came home and I worked for the rest of the year erm yeah I just, well I had quite a few jobs actually. I worked in home bargains and then I did some voluntary work cause I worked for a couple of charities then I got my job which I have no as well, erm which I work kind of work with children and families so. But that was last year, I'm going backwards now ((laughs)) this is opposite to what you said ((laughs)). Erm year before I did an extra year at sixth form erm I don't know why, I didn't know what I wanted to do so I were like right let's do an extra year at sixth form. I did chemistry and further maths in that year so.

I: *Did that go okay?*

P: Erm yeah but chemistry is very very hard and further maths isn't a light subject either so erm yeah. It were okay but to be honest that year were hard because all my friends had gone to uni, there were a few still left but not very many and erm I wasn't as busy as I had been, even though it were hard so I think I kind of just, it didn't keep me going as much. Er but I didn't know what I wanted to do so.

I: *So you went to college and did a third year, then you went to Liverpool? How long did you go to Liverpool for?*

P: Not long about five weeks probably and then came home and then erm started working like straight away. I worked as a Christmas elf as well that were another job, that were really fun ((laughs)) and I worked a few voluntary jobs and then I volunteered for the job I have now and then got the job I have now and that's just on Saturdays. So then I'm I kind of, I basically work, I got it through my mum's friend erm kind of is a business administrator in this charity and it's called Families Forward. Erm anyway basically it's kind of a contact centre so erm kids who can't see their parent for whatever reason can come to the centre if their ordered by court, to see their other parent and we kind of monitor the contact and things like that. Erm and then I have to write reports on the contact and things like that erm but I started volunteering for that because I didn't know if I were going to go back to Uni or anything so I thought oh it sounds like something I'd enjoy doing, a good job, I'll volunteer. And then they offered me erm a job there,

kind of a training job and then obviously that's just on Saturdays the contact so I still do that whilst I'm at Uni, so yeah.

I: *So you said you struggled writing the reports, does your work support you in anyway?*

P: Not really, I mean I told them that I have it but I just kind of said sometimes it takes me a bit longer to write things up and erm and they, people can acknowledge it but I don't think unless you've had it or you've had special training in it you really appreciate it. I mean especially because, I said to my, it's kind of funny really because I get paid, well I get paid ten hours a week but I work half 8 while about half 4 on a Saturday, well it's meant to be, but sometimes it can be like 5, half past, sometimes it's 4 so it varies. But I never work less than 8 hours average you know over the month, per week. So I really technically have two hours which I get paid to write all my reports and stuff but I never spend that long doing them, I always spend way longer. And it's kind of the case of, I don't think they appreciate that I do that do you know what I mean?

I: *Yeah, yeah.*

P: I still get it done but, the other week I think I had a really busy day I think I did five families and that's like five reports and they can take quite a while to write up, especially when I'm like messing around with them and stuff. And erm so I was like, a bit like, I think I said something like "oh I might have to get them to you slightly later" and she like "oh well it shouldn't take you too long should it" and I'm like "yeah ((laughs)), it will take me longer" do you know what I mean? ((laughs)).

I: *How long does it normally take you or does it just vary?*

P: It depends on the, how complicated the situation is that your kind of monitoring but I'd say probably if the, cause there's different kind of contact and stuff, if their fully supervised it can take like half an hour to an hour. Then I have some supported ones and they take like twenty minutes but I'd say the average one takes about 45 minutes, so it can take quite a long time. And then I think, I've had comments like "well you know you should be getting a bit quicker with them by now" and I'm kind of like well...

I: *Is it frustrating?*

P: Yeah just yeah, like you said a bit frustrating but it's just kind of one of them things you feel silly keep reiterating it and also sometimes I worry that people think I'm making an excuse as well.

I: *Yeah a few people have said that, one person said he didn't like saying it because he thought people might think he's making it up.*

P: Yeah. And people don't understand when you say dyslexia's part, is a disability, they're like "a disability?" there's a big stigma around it but yeah when I say, like when I say "oh you know it does take me while", people can't understand, her my boss included, and other people why it does take me so long. Even though they know I've got dyslexia I don't think they can piece the two things together.

I: *Yeah probably harder for them to understand like you said because you do have high intelligence.*

P: You'd think though in my job though that wouldn't make much of a difference because they don't, my academic ability in my job doesn't, I'm not saying you don't have to have any but it doesn't make that much difference as long as you have common sense and you're good at your job you don't need to be super clever to do it you just need to do it. But so you wouldn't think intelligence would come into it as much but you seem, I don't know it's really strange. But erm I do find there is a lack of understanding about it erm even when you've told someone, I don't know. I mean a lack of understanding you can look at that in my family like I think my family has a heavy run of dyslexia within it erm but similar to me none of them have been diagnosed because they haven't been to uni. So a few of my cousins I think have it and all their secondary school teachers have said they think they have but they haven't been diagnosed with it. And then I said, when I got to Uni I got tested for it and I told my family that I had it and they just can't believe it, they're like "are you kidding me?" and I'm like "no" and they're like "well…", one of my cousins you know and they're like "well she struggled so much and she hasn't been told she's got it" and I'm like "well yeah because she hasn't been tested for it at uni".

I: *Do you think having the label of dyslexia when you came to uni made you feel better?*

P: Well I think so yeah. I mean when I, when someone, when the lady, the psychologist who did it she was like "oh don't, it's not something you know, you know don't feel bad about having it

you know, you can, it's just something different and you can find a good way to deal with it". I can understand some people might feel bad about having it but I didn't, for me it were quite a relief, that's how I'd describe it because you know all the way through school I thought I had it and everyone's telling me "no you don't have it, you don't have it, you can't have it" you know, "your grades are too good'. And I'm finally like "yes, well I do actually" So it's just kind of a relief for me cause now I can finally say right I do and find a way to it deal with it. Erm whereas if I were told no I don't have it, I'd be thinking well great now I have all these things that I struggle with and I don't know what to do about any of them and no help with them, if that makes sense. Some people might not like being told they have it but for me it was just a bit of a relief cause I knew I could get help with it. Especially for the exam time, if I'd been told I hadn't had it and then I'd have had to do all my exams with no extra time.

I: *So you didn't get the extra time in college?*

P: No, no and that were a, that were a...

I: *So if you had it then, you had that support then maybe you could have done better?*

P: Yeah, I don't know how much difference it would have made in my ability, but I think it would of giving me a better chance to show my ability erm which is why I wanted it at uni. It wasn't really that I wanted the help, it were more, I mean that's great but that's not why I applied for the test. I wanted the extra time and the extra, basically leeway to allow me to show my ability if that makes sense. Erm I mean there's one thing that I'm still not completely happy about and that's I don't, basically one of my friends at Uni she gets erm, so when she's submitted an essay or exam they will basically be a bit more lenient on spelling and punctuation and things like that and they haven't, I haven't got that erm which is something that I'm trying to see if I can do about anything at the moment because my punctuation is terrible as well. Erm I really try with it like I'm trying to use at the moment semi colons and colons to cut my word count down but I'm just using them really badly.

I: *Have you got a mentor?*

P: Yeah, I mean she shows me how to use them and I'm like "oh yeah great" then I go away and I just start using them in my essays and it falls to pot yeah. Erm I mean I could not use them but I'm kind of getting to that point where I want to because it, you know, if you can use them

properly in a academic essay it looks good and it cuts my word count down and for me, some people with dyslexia probably find it hard to write a lot but I write millions and then find it really hard to get it into a kind of concise little chunk of information that makes sense. So I think if I could them properly it would be really helpful but in the most recent essay I've just done I just got all of them highlighted like inappropriate use of semi-colon and I'm like oh I thought I used them fine ((laughs)).

I: *Is there no technology to help you with punctuation?*

P: I don't think for the punctuation, I'm not sure. I keep seeing on you tube, this is completely irrelevant but this thing called Grammar Way I don't know whether you've heard of it and erm it keeps advertising it that's why I know about it and it says every time you make a spelling mistake or like for example if you use witch as in the word witch with a cat it will highlight stuff like that and say "do you mean to use this one?" and I've been thinking of downloading that because it sounds quite useful. But that's not software they told me to use that's just something that sounds quite useful. But yeah, I don't think there's anything like that with the software I've been using.

I: *So they can offer you leeway?*

P: I don't get the leeway with my grammar, that's my point so. My friend get's the leeway yeah, so if they, I don't think it's like, you can't consistently use it really wrong but I think they will overlook it if you use a few wrong and things like that and same with spelling, but I haven't got that at the moment. But I kind of, you can send, when you get your PSLP though you can kind of click accept or er like you've acknowledged it but not accept and my tutors just told me basically to acknowledge it but not accept it so that they will kind of talk to me about it but yeah I'm not sure about that one at the moment.

I: *So do you feel like you've been offered enough support at uni then?*

P: Erm yeah, apart from like I said it's come through quite late and I also think that they punctuation and spelling thing could be quite helped and I also think that people think because you're given a tutor it's a magic cure kind of thing but it's really not. It's like just because you see a tutor one hour or two hours a week doesn't mean that...

I: *Doesn't make that much of a difference?*

P: Well it does help but it's not going to make everything you're struggling with easier if that makes sense. Erm and I think, I think one thing that is kind of bothering me this year but it's not effecting me that much is the amount of deadlines I've kind of had. Erm so, first year, people keep going "oh well you think you've got a lot this year wait until second and third year" and I do get that, I know there's going to be loads more but I've worked so hard on these, like continuously and I've still, not struggled to get them in but I have found it a bit of a push and I'm thinking if I've found it like this this year what am I going to find it like next year or the year after? I don't know, no software or tutor or anything like that can really help you with doing, speeding up and doing things quicker can they?

I: *I found my first year harder than my second year, I don't know whether it's because it's such a big jump. I don't know what it was, I think it's because you're used to it too. What about your friends, you said you know someone with dyslexia? Does that help you in anyway?*

P: Erm kind of yeah but erm I think with them being, I mean, it's just kind of the case of sharing stories I guess. It doesn't necessarily make it easier or harder it's just, it just I think, the only thing it can help me with really is the fact that they can say "well I get this at my uni" and I'll go "well why haven't I got it?" ((laughs)) and go ask about it but erm other than that I don't think it makes really that much difference erm yeah.

I: *What are your plans for after uni?*

P: I have no idea ((laughs)). Yeah I've been through all sort of career ideas and I'm just kind of here. To be honest I'm kind of hoping and I know everyone hopes this but I'll get more of an idea as my course goes on because I've really enjoyed, because I do with counselling, I've really enjoyed the counselling side of it this year so I don't know we'll kind of see where that one goes. But I think if anything I wouldn't mind working, wouldn't mind working in schools of some sort. I thought about teaching but I don't know whether I could deal with the behaviour ((laughs)), but erm some kind of helping I think, erm yeah.

Appendix 11 – Interview transcript one (Sandra)

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focus' on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Well, probably primary school because that's when I first realised that there was something not right and I always found it hard, mainly with the maths and English side of stuff, writing, well writing in general to be honest and maths is just a no go area for me. So I've always been behind and really struggled and it wasn't till high school when I found out it was dyslexia.

I: *So did they not pick up on your academic struggles in primary?*

P: They kind of did, they knew there was something but, they did get somebody in but whatever they were doing never got finished so it never went anywhere.

I: *Can you remember struggling at that age?*

P: Yeah like numbers, erm I was very late. I still can't do maths I'm still trying to pass it. Erm, and English. Numbers, I'd do my numbers back to front and because I'm left handed as well. And I couldn't do the basic maths all the way through, couldn't pick my timetables up and could never pass anything to do with maths.

I: *How did that make you feel at such a young age can you remember?*

P: Er at a young age at school it's kind of frustrating because you don't think it's a problem and then when everybody else is around you and you know they can all do it. I think there was like four of us in the class that were sat on a table that really didn't know much about stuff like that, and adding, we can just about add, some of us. It's kind of sort of defeatist cause you think what's the point in trying?. And there was not really much support at that point, it wasn't till sort of year six when we were pulled out of class and had to do like specialist stuff with the tutor and try and do our maths and English there.

I: *Do you think that helped you?*

P: Not really, because they still didn't know what it was and at the end of the day all they wanted was you to pass like your SATS and your 11 plus if you did it and so it was kind of just focused around that and getting you enough to pass your SATS that were it.

I: *Rather than actually helping you efficiently?*

P: Yeah and like I said they did get somebody in, I did see somebody but it was never finished so nothing ever got, I never got support from that. And then when I went to high school, I think it was like year 8, year 9 that they found, figured out it was probably dyslexia, but then when they tested me I didn't come through, I didn't get the score to say that I was, they just told me that I had a bad memory and so I kind of got a bit of support but not out major. So I had to go all the way through high school erm.

I: *So were you struggling in high school as well?*

P: Yeah like I kept getting like E's up until sort of year 11 when I eventually got a D but my maths I failed that all the way through, think I got an F last time.

I: *So what sort of support did they offer you?*

P: It was sort of just like a bit of extra help in class or something like that it was nothing like firm or sort of set in place for like. So I kind of went through high school with the same problems of not being able to write, because I couldn't read or write when I left primary school so it was kind of already a problem then. And obviously in high school they expect you to have done it in primary school so they don't offer support either they just expect you to know it. So I kind of, year 7 I really struggled, and then year 8 I kind of got a bit more support but nothing concrete and then in year 9 they eventually tested me for dyslexia and it came back that I wasn't dyslexic. So I was like, well what does that, where does that leave me now? And they said that basically you've just got a bad memory so I was like, well is there anything I can do about it? And they were said, well there's not really much you can do about it. But eventually when I got to, it was college really, sort of everything got set in place and I got tested erm for dyslexia and dyspraxia and dyscalculia and it came back with a mixture of all of them, nothing set just a mixture. So I got dyslexia support so that help me through college.

I: *Can I just ask when you did your GCSE's, how did they go?*

P: Well I actually surprisingly didn't do that very bad on my erm, I failed my maths and English but I came out with science I got an A and a B. Yeah, I got about 4 or 5 C's and above, so it was what I needed to get on to college. I didn't actually do that bad it's mainly just around the maths and the English I had the problem with having sort of, not the writing, like the exams I did really bad with but I still managed to get like D's apart from obviously the ones I did pass, but there are areas I was interested in so I did a lot more work in them.

Like so, I didn't, I surprisingly say I didn't do that bad for my GCSE's ((laughs)) considering. It's my maths and my English mainly, like now I've come through college and I've failed my maths and English then I got I think that's when I got the C, then I got an F in maths. I ended up having to do a different, it was a bit like functional skills but not, it was a completely different thing at the time, it's probably all integrate now, I don't know. So I did that and I managed to pass that and I think I did that twice actually cause I think I did it in high school as well with maths, I had to do the adult literacy and numeracy something and I did that for maths. I did another thing for maths as well in year 11 but they were kind of just throwing anything at us just get us passes to show that we could do it at least some basic maths.

I: *How did that affect your school life?*

P: Erm, I think in a way it affected it because I kind of gave up. I gave up on maths a long time a go ((laughs)) cause I just knew I was never going to pass it. So I tried to concentrate on English but then it kind of got to the point like when you get to later high school and like, yeah you're not going to pass it. So you kind of get in to that frame of mind of well 'even my teachers told me i'm not going to pass it, what's the point in trying'. And then I managed to get in to college just because of the grade I got for my other GCSE's but I had to then obviously take it again and that's when I did the functional skills I think it's called, I can't remember, it's a different name for it but I can't remember what I actually did, it's a bit like functional skills. So, it mainly looked at your special awareness and stuff like that so it were just enough to manage to get me in to uni.

I: *So how did college go then? Did you get the right support?*

P: Er college was alright. I came out with distinctions, I got er a DD* D so. But I think that was more down to the fact I was interested in the area so I was better at it, more motivated and stuff

I: *What was it you did in college again sorry?*

P: Health and Social. Erm you know, you do get a lot of help in college anyway so I think it was more down to that I was interested in and they give you a lot more help than high school gave me.

I: *Do you think that's because you had finally been labelled with 'dyslexia'?*

P: Yeah, I think because I did have the traits it helped me a lot because a lot of its funding as well so if I hadn't even of got that I probably wouldn't have got the one to one support. So I think it is down to the fact of being able to say, well yeah you've got traits. And then obviously before you come to uni you do your actual report where they actually specially say what's wrong with you.

I: *So you feel like the one to one helped you then?*

P: Yeah, it helped me. I think with writing it's my organisation I can't, I have to just write stuff then go back so it helped me that way being able to go back and move things round and add like your punctuation and your spelling and things like that, so it really did help me get the grades that I did get. It helped me a bit with English but it's just with English I was doing Mice of Men and I absolutely hated that book so much and I just, I couldn't, to be honest I did it in high school, I did it in college and I've still never read the full book. I've read certain chapters that I needed to read but that's about it. I've watched parts of the film, it just doesn't interest me at all so I really struggled with that. And then obviously the questions, like at uni you know what you've got to put in you know what kind of area you've need to look at and sort of what they're looking for, whereas in an exam it's kind of like "well we don't know what questions you're going to get but we have a suspicion it could be around this", and you do all the learning around it and it'll be something completely different. One of them, they told us to look around the erm like gender roles and stuff like that, obviously Curly's wife and stuff like that, looking at how she didn't get named and all the historical thing of that time and then the question was something like "what's the resemblance between George killing Lenny and Candy killing his dog?" and it was like "what, I have no idea of anything for that". That was the last one I did and when I came to college and they were like it's of Mice of Men I was like "Im going to fail this". I said I'm not being funny but I absolutely hate the book, hate the film, I hate doing about it I've had enough of doing about it and it kind of just went from there that I just couldn't get in to it and I though aw I'll really try and read the book this time, I'll really try and pass it, I really need it and I fell asleep reading the book. So it was kind of you know the 'well we're not going anywhere with

this'. So, I wasn't expecting to pass to be honest with that, like I said I got an F in my maths and then I got an A and a C I think for whatever this other thing were that I was doing. I think it was something like, a standalone qualification that you did and it was valid at the time, I don't even think it's valid now.

I: *So you did that in college?*

P: Yeah. So I managed to get in college which is how I managed to get into uni. But I think more with uni now it's the organising I can't organise things logically.

I: *An essay?*

P: Yeah, especially like I'm really slow at writing as well and it takes me months. I have to start my assignments months in advance erm and it's just a nightmare really. First year you think oh this is alright, sort of get by and then deadline seasons comes and you think, I can't do this ((laughs)). All my assignments, because my grandma were poorly at the time she had cancer so deadline season it was just like, yeah.

I: *Did they offer you any help?*

P: They offered me extensions and stuff like that and I managed to get most of them in apart from one. But there's nothing that they can really do for you, because it has got to be in at the end of the day. So I failed one unit which I'm re doing this year so, I think the dyslexia itself I think, although I feel it is an issue especially with writing and you know, being able to do it the logical way of, like my assignments just all over the place. I think it's more, it's more, like uni this year has been better because of lecture capture and being able to, like last year I just couldn't take anything in there were like masses missing from my notes because I couldn't keep up, I couldn't write it quick enough and then this year with lecture capture its practically saved my life.

I: *Did they not offer it you in the first two years?*

P: No well lecture capture was only really brought out like this year, it was only brought out this year so it has really saved my life, being able to go back and listen to things I've missed or if I can't remember something fully I can go back and look at the lectures and stuff like that I think, I think that's been, it's been really good that they've done that this time. I think the problem with the uni is, in relation to dyslexia that I've found, is if you need to go and do a pro grad? pre grad?

whatever, post grad. Because like I'm doing counselling skills but not I'm not training so if I want to go on to train a lot of them ask for your maths and English and it's kind of like, when I came to this course I said 'you know listen there's no chance I'm going to pass my maths, my English I might get a chance at' and they was like "oh no you don't need it". Now I'm entering third year, I tried to get on to social work, post grad and they're wanting maths and English, mainly English and it's like 'well I haven't got it'. So now I've found that I'm at more of a disadvantage now because of not being able to get my

English and I'm at the point now where I'm not sure what's going to happen when I finish my third year because there's just no courses really. And training is just, I could, I might just be able to get on to a training course but it just depends on the training course and it's the specialist side of it as well, of being able to go in to child or adult or whatever and that's going to be the main thing where it's gonna. i'm gonna be at the disadvantage for. Before I came to counselling I applied for social work and they basically said well we'll put you in for clearance but we really prefer people with their maths and English. They sent me the thing for the interview but it was kind of clear that if somebody came with their maths and English

I wouldn't be even, make it on to the course. I was lucky that counselling accepted me but obviously now it's to the point.

I: *Getting hard. What are the other options for you?*

P: There's not really much option to do. I can't do another under grad so i'd have to do a post grad and all of them want English pretty much. Some of them will obviously be flexible on it, but it's kind of, I haven't got any other skills in any other area my main area is health and social. I can't do medicine...

I: *Is there not anyone out there that could help you get your maths and English? Have you not got another chance to do that?*

P: They haven't offered it yet but I'm gonna, I think I need to look around at the courses and see, like I say my options were either doing social work or going on to train but I've spoken to like the careers and stuff about it cause I don't think trainings gonna be an option for me at the moment. I suffer with depression so I thought it's not gonna be an area that's gonna be great to go in to, if I have depression myself listening to other people's problems is not gonna be great work. So I said "what are my options?" and they said there's not really any options unless I get

my English. The option they gave me was to take a year out and do my English but I don't really want to take a year out. I'd have to graduate, take a year out, do my English then come back and do a post grad, which, I'm 22 now a year out I'll be 23 then I'd have to do a post grad which is 2 to 3 years and it's like I don't really wanna be staying in education for that long you know. I need to, you know, you get to that point now where you need to be earning money and I just think that I'm not, as I am at the moment, I have a lot of health issues as well and I'm not gonna be able to earn the money, so I need to have something that

I can go in to and maybe come back to training after but there's really much point looking **I:** *Not much available?*

P: No, problem is it's just one of them areas it's just luck as to whether you get, there's people that are crying out for counsellors but obviously they want people with experience for, in a lot of charities and things like that you need to have experience in that area for the charity so it's just a bit of luck, it's whether you've got what they want at the time. I know one woman in my class and she's been volunteering and they've actually taken her on they said they didn't want her to be a volunteer they wanted her to be a member of staff, so she's been really lucky and she's got in to somewhere but other people just said 'well what about everybody else?'. Yano there's not much options round here unless you go to Leeds or places like that and so if you're stuck to an area, like all my family are from Huddersfield or Halifax and my boyfriend lives in Huddersfield, it's you know, moving to Leeds means is gonna mean i'm gonna be moving away from anybody. It's kind of at that moment, now is that period where its decision time of which one I choose, I either choose my family or my career and it's kind of like you know, my families quite close so it will be a big decision to make to cut myself off from my family and move away. And my mum, I've got, my mum's ill, my mum's got health issues as well so she needs somebody there so it's kind of a big decision to make at the moment. So I feel, I feel dyslexia, the problem with it is it's not so much education I think it's more society because the government and everything else is mainly focused around, you know they focus all your things around your maths and English you have to have your maths and English and for some people that's just not an option. And like making the English GCSE harder and stuff like that it means there are a lot more people that are failing and if you have got stuff like dyslexia, even in some cases people might not even know yet that they've got it, I think you're at a major disadvantage in society because they want these skills, if you don't have these skills you know, you just basically just sat there until somebody

decides maybe we'll give you a go. The problem is with things with dyslexia and dyspraxia is everybody's different. You will not find somebody that's the same as someone else, there will always be that slight alteration between and for education systems it is a hard one which is understandable because you can't cater for everybody, you need to be able to have people in but having a dyslexia specialist might not include something that somebody else needs. It is hard for sort of, especially like companies as well, depending on the area you want to go into like the council, like for me the council if I got private or public it's just societies way of working and if you don't, I think it's the same with anything though, if you don't fit with societies norms you know you've not really got a leg to stand on. I think it's the same with mental health as well and all that kind of thing, any sort of learning difficulties, mental health issues, even sometimes physical, you've just fallen in that category that's kind of out of the society norms and they feel like they can't cater for you but they could cater for you easily, it just might mean they need to put a bit more in and people aren't willing to do that now, it's all about, it's all about making money isn't it really.

I: *So do you enjoy what you're doing now?*

P: I enjoy what I'm doing now health and social yeah. I kind of got into it because of my mental health background, with my own depression and my mum, my mum's got depression as well and pretty much all my family have had something mental health along the way, I find it really interesting and it's something that i've seen how different people in my family have been able to function and deal and it's what I want to do.

I: *Yeah, do you think that kind of drove you towards it then?*

P: Yeah, you take that point of, nobodies the same and my experiences, my mum's experience and my sisters experience they're all different but having that knowledge of how different people can deal with stuff like that really helps in places like that. The counselling
I've been in, you've got a counsellor that's never had depression in their life they have no idea, they've all read it out of a text book and you think it's completely different. I think sometimes people forget that like with dyslexia as well because they think, well I've got dyslexia, and some people don't really pin point the fact that everybody has different things that they're good at. Like looking at me and my boyfriend my boyfriend is severely dyslexic whereas he's very good

at maths and English, whereas I'm good in other ways like I'm quite good at understanding things mentally but it's the speaking side of it and the writing side of it.

I: *Yeah, getting it down onto paper?*

P: Yeah and for some places, especially with counselling cause it is quite a speaking thing you know you're sat talking to people, it's quite hard if you're not able to do that in an effective way. So, if I'm like, we do skills sessions where we practice counselling and it's hard to form to that because it's a set thing, you will need to do this, this and this, where in reality it's not like that and unfortunately you need to show that you can do that to be able to pass that, to be able to pass that module. But I think, I think things need to be more flexible but it's obviously understandable that the university have this criteria, that they've been told that they've got to hit. If they don't hit it then you know that's their issue and they need to sort it out, so it's people that don't have a chance hitting that criteria that struggle because it's all funding, that's all it is, anything is funding. Especially with the learning difficulties, they're the ones that are getting hit, they're trying to make that less of an impact on their budget cause specialist dyslexia tutors it's gonna be a lot of them and they want that to be as small as possible, whereas there's more and more people that are becoming, like to uni and, that have some form of dyslexia. It might not be dyslexia it's self and it's kind of like, do we put the funding in to that? And I think it's wrong because there's people out there that are perfectly good, they have really good skills in the area that they want to do you know, and it's the knowledge behind it, you're just not catered for.

I: *So do you find that frustrating?*

P: Yeah, I think as a society it's wrong that it's got to this point where there's people still struggling. It's not like you know, 20 years ago when dyslexia or that was hardly ever heard of, and further than that when it was never heard of at all. It's you know becoming more and more common and more and more people are being diagnosed with it and I think that there needs to be some sort of flexibility in the criteria sometimes. I know they can't do it for everybody, they can't cater for every body but I think there needs to be something and you know it's just hard for people you know to be able to show their skills in a university course because it's just all criteria and you just, just find that it frustrating because you know people don't understand it more and you'd think they'd understand it more and they don't. You know, you try and speak to like your tutors and they'll say "oh well you need to speak to your dyslexia tutor, I don't understand this"

and it's like "well you're a tutor in a course, you need to be able to understand this". And like, I think that's with everything. I think dyslexia, like I said mental health, disabilities, learning disabilities they're all the same, they don't understand it. I don't expect them to have mental health awareness training or anything, that just wouldn't be viable but they should have some, something there that they can sort of say "well I've got some understanding of that", but you just don't. Especially on a counselling course, you'd think mental health and stuff like that but no it's just, you know it depends when your tutor actually became a counsellor, things have come on and changed. They might not have needed to understand that kind of stuff but it's really needed now and you need to be able to say to your tutor you know "I struggle with this is there any other way you think I could incorporate this, this criteria in a way that I can do it?"

I: *So do they not give you that flexibility then?*

P: No, they kind of, the problem is, it goes back to that criteria, that criteria has to be met. If you've done a slight understanding demonstration in your work but it still doesn't really say what it's supposed to say. Like same with college, you get a guiding sheet and it says "you have to say this" whereas if you've not said it in the exact way that their criteria says 'this is accepted' then there's nothing they can do, they can just say "oh we'll alter it a bit" and for some people, like I know for me that alteration still might not make sense, cause to you it makes perfect sense but to you it doesn't and it's like "well how does that not make sense to you?" I think it's understanding on both sides how, for somebody with dyslexia to understand that someone who's not dyslexic might not understand where you're going, where you're taking that piece you know, where you're taking that paragraph too, I think it's understanding on both sides.

I: *Does your dyslexia tutor not help you with that?*

P: Yeah but there's only so much they can do, you know. You can't take your assignment to a dyslexia one to one support and expect them to go through your whole assignment and they say "well you need to do this, you need to do that" because then again it's just plagiarism, it's not your work. So, you need to be able to have some skills whereas people like me don't have that kind of skill, to be able to read through and pick out what's not making sense.

I: *So even though you know it, you just can't put it across how they want it?*

P: Yeah, like when you're talking it's, cause it's all come through your mind it's a lot easier but when you're writing from your mind, your mind sees that as logic because like with dyslexia or dyspraxia or anything like that, to your brain it's like "yeah that makes sense" but then somebody reads it that's not dyslexic or even somebody that is dyslexic might look at it and think "I don't get what you mean there". So I think dyslexia at uni, I think dyslexia is good in the fact that it helps you be able to look through your brief, like your assignment briefs and it say's like you need to have this, this and this, but like I've read assignment criteria before and thought 'I have no idea what that's just said'. So having somebody there to be able to help you go through that and understand it from a different way.

I: *So is that like what your tutor would do?*

P: Yeah, and like, they do a bit of proof reading but like I say they're limited with what they can do with that without making it plagiarism and not your own work. But being able to help you in finding a way to understand what is needed in your assignment is sort of their area and
I think it's really good for that because like for me it's helped me a lot sometimes. Like I've read something and thought "I have no idea what that means" and then I've tried to make my own understanding of it which is completely the opposite of what they're actually wanting and then being able to go to a dyslexia session and they say "oh well what they're actually meaning in sort of basic terms is that they want this" and then you kind of sit there thinking "well why didn't it just say that" you know ((laughs)).

I: *So it's not like you can't do it you just need to go about it in a different way?*

P: Yeah, and I think that's how a lot of people with dyslexia will find in the coming years until they realise the full extent of how they need to change some things, it'll be, you'll spend all your time finding ways in which to work around, your own ways of working round things, you'll decide on your own strategies that you need to do and you know find the way that's best for you in the way you're learning. Even if you know it might not be fully set in stone that 'yeah I understand that', having those strategies is a lot better than not having anything at all. And then being able to go and see somebody that specialises in that and saying "well this is how I've understood it and how I got about it would, is that you know a way that you think would work?". And then they can offer you another way and you think actually yeah, that's a good way I like that. So it's more of a clarifying dyslexia support and I think, I think, I don't, it depends on how

you look at it because some people with dyslexia can be really good with exams, some people with dyslexia can be terrible at exams, so it's kind of...

I: *Too broad to pinpoint?*

P: Yeah, and I think that's the problem. There's just not enough effort put into actually understanding. It's not like a disability in the sense of a physical disability or anything like that. They can understand, like if someone's physically disabled you can understand the problems they will have and you can say 'well everybody with this physical disability can yano, well benefit from this' whereas dyslexia it's not like that, there's so many different variations they can't pin point an exact thing that will help everybody because there isn't anything, but I think there needs to be an awareness of that and more flexibility in that within an university organisation or any organisation like this.

I: *To make people aware as well...*

P: Yeah see it's, I think it' weird in this society, like this day in age and this society that some people don't even know what dyslexia is. You'd think with there being such thing in education about it now where they are trying to put things on you'd think they would know, and they'd be more awareness of it. Like you come to university and there's posters up and stuff like that about it and where to get support but to some people dyslexia is just a word, there's no meaning behind it and I think that's where the problem lies with stuff like that. It's just a word to some people who don't understand. Like drawing a conclusion to like depression, I've found when I've looked at stuff, when people say "oh I feel depressed" , depressed can mean anything to some people. Some people just think 'oh I'm just a bit fed up today, I'm depressed' but it's not like that at all. I think in a way dyslexia is like that because people just think dyslexic is 'oh they struggle with certain stuff' you know. Some people like think 'oh well it's just people that struggle to write' but it's not just that and I think that's where the awareness needs to be broadened. There is so many different areas that erm dyslexia can affect and I think that there's just, there is just no awareness around it around you know, it's not just a mental thing you know it affects, it does affect everything mentally but it effects as well some people's ability to speak logically, being able to put a sentence together logically and then there's writing something, being able to sentence it and paragraph it logically. They're completely different things, when you're looking at it as a whole they're just, they're all incorporated under mental but it's just one will be writing,

one will be speaking, one will be thinking. Your mental processes might be different and I think that's the problem, they're trying to incorporate under one thing to make it easier for them to just put funding into one thing. Same with like mental health and other disabilities, it's like 'oh we'll just put that funding on that and that funding on that' but not looking as a whole. Like, student finance offer a lot of stuff, you knoe you get your software and...

I: *Has any of that helped you?*

P: To be honest I don't really use a lot of it because I don't really know how to use it. You're given three hour long appointments where they taught me how to use it, which is just a general over view and then you, say you don't use it for a couple of weeks, like for me going back on I'm like, I have no idea how to use this, and I don't think it is enough. Like some of them do offer like the package comes with a how to guide so you can watch a video or you can read it, but some of them don't and you kind of just sat there like, I can't even remember how to use that. And I think some of them, the logic behind offering them is good, like dragon speak, being able to just talk into a microphone and it types it for you, that's okay but there is a lot of work that needs to be done of the software because it doesn't pick up words and you know it doesn't help you do it logically, there's no sort of exterior thing to it it's all just what you're talking so if that's what you struggle with it's kind of like, well it sounds like it's logic to you so. And especially because it doesn't offer anything to do with like punctuation you know like if you type on word and it will come up with like a blue line or a red line, it doesn't offer that so I don't think that it's fully effective I think that it could be, it could be more effective if a little work was done on it so it sort of does you know offer that, just a slightly different perspective of it of being able to identify bits that you have missed but.

I: *Have you not been offered the technology that does help you with structuring your essays?*

P: Oh there is one thing, I think there is software, I don't know whether I've got it. The problem is there's just so many that you can't remember the names of everything and what everyone does and yeah I think I wouldn't of been able to write without the software but at the same time I think that writing without the software is a lot better because, especially with your grammar side of it because I don't think that the grammar side of assignments is really looked at with these software's, it's just writing

I: *So do you struggle a lot with your grammar then?*

P: Yeah well, grammar, paragraphing, sentences, well mines mainly sentences and punctuation and grammar because I'll just write what I'm thinking then it will just be like 2000 words of just endless text ((laughs)) and nothing in between, not punctuation or anything. So then that's sort of when I would take my assignment to my tutor and say you know "can you sort of just give me some ideas of like paragraphs and then I can go through the paragraphs and if you keep reading it over and over you can start to identify where the pauses should be so you can put full stops in". Or you can identify when it's a long sentence so you can put a comma in and I think that sort of way stuff like that really does come in to its own, without it you kind of just, you just don't know and I think, I think that it's, it is good how we've come from not having no nothing to having these software's, having these tutors but I just do think there's a lot more along the way to go in, identifying the specific needs of people, I think that they should be able to like in your initial assessment for dyslexia they should be able to say "well this person will benefit from this" instead of just saying "right well we've got this, this and this that we can come from, that we can import into the you know sort of give into your assignments and help you with". They should be able to say "right well this won't work for you so why don't we try this" whereas that's where it falls down a bit, of, it needs experience unfortunately and you find if you've got an experienced dyslexia tutor, especially if they are actually dyslexic themselves it is a lot better but it's kind of, it goes back to the thing of then you're just being discriminatory against other people. So like, you can't say "oh well a dyslexia tutor needs to be dyslexic" because that tutor might be able to bring a different aspect into it but that tutor also needs to be able to be a bit more flexible and say "well this is my way of teaching erm but I also have this way or that way" whereas I think with teaching itself it goes, it's just set "I teach like this". Like, like high school we did little things about you know, if you, which kind of learner you were but it didn't make a difference what it came out as because they still taught you the same way, there's no difference in teaching so I think that's where it needs to be more evidence and more exploration around that because I think that would make it a lot easier for some people.

I: *How would you compare learning in Uni to learning in school or say college?*

P: I think uni is better in the way that it lets you have your own freedom to be able to go away and write what you want in your own time around that subject whereas college is 'this is what we want' and they usually spoon feed you the information of what they want. So I think college's way of doing stuff is good in, it gives you that aspect of it, of being able to look at the sheets and

pick off, look at a book that's been given to you and say "right well I can use this" and I think Uni's way of doing stuff, of being able to say right "this is what your assignments about, go and do it yourself". They're both good ways of doing things, but it needs to be more joined, that there's some aspects that they will tell you "right this is what you need" which in some cases they do but I think it needs to be more, more thought about the way they say like "go off and do it yourself". I think they should primarily look at that side of it.

I: *Do you think more direction?*

P: Yeah being directive but not in a fully directive way. I think that would be easier for some people. Like when I came from college to Uni it was a massive wake up call and I think you find like with my dyslexia I found it really hard to adapt from that method of teaching to this method of teaching and I think I spent the first year just trying to catch up. Like this year, first year I used to like make meetings with my tutors to understand what they actually wanted whereas this year I've been able to rely on that less and go about my own way of doing this, but being able to say "I'm not sure if I've got this sort of where it needs to be" and they'd say "no or yeah but you need to do this" And I think that's where it needs to go a bit more. But I think, I think Uni is better than college and primary school because it is funded, you pay for that learning. Whereas in college, it's funding so for every student that passes they may get a bit more funding and that's all they're concentrating on they're not bothered about anything else whereas Uni's got that, yeah you need funding, but you also have the side of "but you're paying so we'll help you". So I think that way of doing things is a lot better, instead of just like primary school you're basically just taken up to doing your SATS, you pass your SATS, great. If not, then they've got a problem cause they've got to then sort of explain themselves to their governing body of well "why have you got so many kids who have failed or have got this mark?" and college being you know "we want passes, we want everybody to pass we don't want anybody to fail". Where I find like when I were at college and doing my course, there were people on there that didn't give a shit you know, they just didn't care. They weren't bothered about the assignments. They'd wait till the week before it was due then the tutor would sit with them all that lesson, making sure that they got a pass.

And then there's people like me and a lot of the other, there's only obviously a few people that do it, and then there's me and the other class that have worked their arses off all year or all through the lesson to get that stuff and then when we need help it's like 'oh no we're just sat with these'

just so that they can get a pass. Then Uni's like you know, "it's down to you you're paying for it, you fail it's down on you". So yeah.

I: *So you do feel like you could be offered more support then?*

P: Yeah, they could offer more but I understand it's not just this ideal, it's a business at the end of the day it's not just a school, it's a business, and it's like anything private that you pay for you know, you pay for that.

I: *So what do you think you're going to do when you finish then?*

P: Er I've not decided. I've been looking at training courses and stuff but I spoke to my tutor and she said 'just leave it a bit longer until you get into your third year and then go from there cause you'll have more of an idea in your third year and just think about it, but don't spend too much time dwelling on it because you've got another year'.

I: *Do you think dyslexia affects you in day to day life?*

P: Yeah it affects your confidence, especially going in high school because with there being no support, no awareness around it and then everybody else you know you feel like everybody else is getting like really good marks and then you're getting shit marks, it really does affect your confidence and you just think you know you start to think that you're stupid or you're thick or you can't do it and like if somebody would of said to me in high school that I'd come to university I'd of been like no. There's too much emphasis placed on your academic ability. It's wrong the way it's gone, it's gone from being able to walk into any job that you wanted to "yeah you need this and this but we're not really that bothered" to "we want this" and I do think, like I said places that are crying out for certain things like people that are crying out for teachers or counsellors or nurses, but then it's like but you need to do this course to do it. The course doesn't make you that, a good nurse a good counsellor a good this. it's your knowledge, the person you are, especially like nursing and counselling, it's your personality. It's nothing to do with what you write down, especially counselling this is talking therapy, why do I need to write everything down? I could be a good counsellor it's just you need to hit that grade boundary, it's the system, I just need to get through the system first. Yano, it is wrong, it's a wrong way of doing it and I feel sorry for the younger generation of people that like, with dyslexia and stuff like that because they're just gonna struggle and it's only gonna get worse. They've made the GCSE's harder you

know it's just, that's gonna have a knock on effect with college, college is gonna want better grades and for some people like health and social. I got a C in health and social so I'm alright but that's an academic course. I think I had an exam but I'm not sure obviously now what they do so it's just gonna be harder, it's gonna be harder to get into college and university is gonna get harder to get into eventually and that's not even including tuition fees and stuff like that. It's gonna get to a point where university is gonna go backwards cause people won't be able to afford to come, they won't have the grades to come and it's just the way it's gonna be. They want people that are academically smart and in some cases that's, there's no need for it. You can understand somebody, like engineering that needs maths, you can understand why they need maths for engineering and like stuff like nursing you can understand why they need to know maths in the sense of, in relation to the medications but that academic course isn't going to make them a brilliant nurse you know they're already gonna be a great nurse. The fact that they want to go in to that profession at the start means that they'll have that personality and given some support and a supervisor they'll pick stuff up. I mean I know with nursing it's one of them, obviously you don't want to be giving somebody free blow with medication with people but that's what supervision is all about and like my old roommate were a nurse and she obviously did placements and it's like yeah, that shows, that should show her ability. And obviously you know she will get stuff wrong because she's learning and that's the point of the, being able to do that and have a supervisor. So I don't think the academic side of some stuff, there shouldn't be so much emphasis placed.

I: *Yeah, like the way you're tested?*

P: Yeah, exams are a memory test, if you've got a crap memory then you're screwed. I've had exams where I've literally sat outside the exam room reading my notes and I've still failed the exam because you just, when you're trying to cram it all in at once you can't take it in. You take so much in but then you've got to remember what you did at the start of the year at the end of the year and it's just, that's just not being able to do it for some people, some people just won't be able to go that far. I think I'm glad I left school when I did really because I would not have got, I wouldn't have passed my GCSE's. If I would have had to do my GCSE's now I would have probably failed them all. But the problem is, they made it harder and then they had to make it easier again because everybody failed and then they've made it harder again and then they'll just make it easier again because people will be failing, and not enough people will be coming

university, which will be money down to the government because they won't be getting much money back. So it should, it's just gonna be a case of, if you fall in the right period you'll have a great time, if not you'll just find it really hard. I'm glad I just have dyslexia and a few traits of the others because I know, I did art at one point and there was a lad in there that was autistic, he had a few other things wrong with him and he just couldn't cope in a classroom situation. He'd start pacing and you know he was just really nervous and it's people like him that I felt sorry for because he would of never, he wanted to be an animator and the courses just weren't catered for him and I don't think he even got on to the course he wanted to. They were just passing him from one course to another and it's awful, that's somebody's life that you've just thought 'oh well we can't have him so we'll just send him here'.

I: They need to find an efficient way to deal with these sorts of problem's don't they?

P: Yeah. I wish I would of kept in touch with him actually because I really hope, it was one of them, he was the nicest lad and it was one of them, I really hope you get to where you want to be but you know if he would of carried on in college he won't have got there. Unless he was one of these really lucky, and managed to get a place somewhere, I just think it's wrong. Its people lives that they're playing with you know they just place a price on your head and that's all they care about. As long as you fulfil that price they get the money, they're not bothered what happens. It's awful, it really is awful the way that people are, people are treated that way you know. I've said to my mum a few times, it's wrong that I can't do the job I want when they're crying out for social workers because I don't have my maths or my English. All it needs is for somebody to let you have that chance and if they have that chance then people would, you see people that have been given that chance like you know you hear about these stories and how people are really down in the dumps and they were given that chance and then they just totally changed and I think that's what they need to think about not "oh well we can't afford this person" or "we don't want to put the effort in".

I: *Yeah, everyone should be given a fair chance.*

P: Yeah, and it's not, they try to say it's a far society but it's not. If you fall into societies norms then you're great, if not, depending on what it is that you don't adhere to depends on whether you're going to make it in life or not and I think it's awful. Especially like cleaning, even

becoming cleaners now they're like "oh well we want this and we want that". What do you need that for? Everybody can clean.

I: *Yeah well they want to send my mum to college and she dropped out of school because she struggled academically and she said she's scared of losing a job she's so good at because she can't write to the standard they are now wanting. But she's been doing a job for 20 years and had no problems so why does she now suddenly have to go to college and get all these qualifications.*

P: Yeah, especially like you say if you've been doing a job for 20 years clearly you're good at that job or you would have been fired at that point ((laughs)). And I think jobs these days, I think they're just getting ridiculous. I got, I got erm refused 13 times from McDonalds and it's like really? I don't need a degree to put a burger together it's just, it is just so wrong.

I: Yeah I think who you know too is a big one.

P: See my sister works at McDonalds and I still failed to get in and she basically said to me that there's a questionnaire that you have to do online and if you, there's one question, and if you don't click the one answer they want you're basically straight away thrown out. I was like, what? Are you being serious? For McDonalds? Where do they expect people to go? Like I say I feel so sorry for the younger generation because they have got this to come through and you know jobs are just so hard to come by. You can't even get a supermarket job now because that's where all the student's go because it's the only job that most of us can get, we can't get any other job. I were lucky I got a job as a cleaner and I was lucky because it was just the fact that they needed somebody quick and I happened to live up the road from the school that needed cleaning and that's the only reason I got the job.

I: *Is that round here?*

P: No I had to leave it when I came to Uni but it was the only reason why I got the job because I literally live like a two minute walk away and they wanted somebody there and then I got the job the same day I went and that, that's it. Yano and they keep moaning about the benefit system and all these youngens that keep going on job seekers and stuff like that and then you think well you're not doing anything about it, you're making jobs so hard that they can't get them anyway. It's just ridiculous.

I: *Hi my names Georgia and my project focus' on exploring the social and emotional consequences of living with dyslexia. So the interview is very informal, and all it involves is you talking through your experiences of dyslexia from as far back as you can remember to the present time. So if you can just start by telling me a bit about yourself, what it is you struggle with and then we'll start to talk about your early school experiences and then go from there...*

P: Right I shall start with school was horrendous, primary school. And erm I'm pretty old ((laughs)). So it was in the 1980's and erm there was no real support with people with special educational needs at my school but there was a lot, it was really multicultural it was in erm a city in Nottingham. Erm and so they did pick up, there was something they thought was wrong with me. So I had this woman come round my house, this educational psychologist and she showed me these like old video tapes, like VCR, this is how old I am ((laughs)). Erm and they just couldn't understand why I couldn't read. Erm but that's all that happened within the local education authority I think. But any way I did end up going to English as a second language classes, so everybody that I was with were Chinese people ((laughs)). So when I was little I had a lot of Chinese friends ((laughs)) which was quite good when I was going to their house for tea. Erm that was, I did think 'oh hang on a minute, I'm not, I'm not learning a different language why am I in this class?' Erm, then my mum and dad made me move schools and it was a, er another really multicultural school but it was great and we did loads of like cultural capital stuff. I loved it but we did, it wasn't really, the national curriculum had come in but there didn't seem to be like much literacy or numeracy we did. I remember one occasion where we did some like proper maths and we were in this class and the teacher was giving us sums to do and it would be if you got that sum right you could leave the class and I was the last one there because I just didn't know how to do it. Erm.

I: *So they didn't offer you support?*

P: No

I: *Why did your mum move you?*
P: Well erm I knew there was something wrong with me and I knew my mum did too I think that's why we moved schools, I think she thought it might have been to do with the school. I think that she just thought that the other one was a bit too, we had like hymns and stuff at the

beginning of the day and it was a bit inappropriate for such a multicultural school, there was quite a few things erm that she wasn't happy about. Erm and also there was a teacher there that hit one of the Chinese kids that was in my class ((laughs)) she was really old, so maybe she, I don't know.

I: *So when you were put in a class with the Chinese students and you realised that English was your first language and maybe you shouldn't have been there, how did it make you feel? Can you remember?*

P: Erm I just wondered why, because I think people kept on saying "well you're just special" and I thought, well if I'm so special why am I being taken away from my friends in the other class?

I: *So you didn't really fully understand?*

P: No and like when I would go back to my normal class it was kind of like then I wasn't being included because I'd been out. Erm so that was really quite difficult, that was stressful bearing in mind I was only like 5 or 6. I didn't make much progress in primary. I went to secondary school not being able to read and write. Erm er then yeah so then I went to that other primary school which was really great for me personally. But, and we were really valued in the sense that we were seen as individuals erm with different abilities but erm there wasn't there didn't seem to be an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Erm and some of my friends actually their parents got them to do maths and stuff at home so even they seen that there was a problem that children weren't getting taught enough. Erm then I went to a secondary school.

I: *So what was the focus on in that school?*

P: ((laughs)) Erm we did like, I can't remember exactly. We had like storytelling, we did lots of playing and we did lots of like creative activities erm.

I: *But that worked for you?*

P: Well I think, I'm glad it, if I looked back at it I'm disappointed I didn't have that good start where erm you know I learnt how to write properly, I knew what a lower case letter and a capital was cause I didn't until I was like 11. The interesting thing was I couldn't read at that primary school then I moved to the other one when I was about 8 and I still couldn't read. But then they had this, it was this big old Victorian red brick school and they had this really really long corridor

and that was where they had all the library books and I thought I don't like er you know small sort of books that are gonna have loads of text in. So I flicked through, these were, they were erm they had like these bands on the spine and it told you which level was what so I could see what my friends were reading and then I could sort of gage where I was. Erm so I could read some word's but I wasn't very good at reading at all. And then I remember picking up this book called Tree Horns Treasure and I remember being able to read some of the words on it and it was really well illustrated so I think that's what, having that pressure off me and me just being on my own and picking a book, I could understand some of these words and that's like a massive deal. Erm incidentally you can't get this book it's American but my sister bought it me recently and it brought make loads of great memories I thought 'oh tree horns treasure' ((laughs)). Erm yeah so, and then in the respect of learning about different people and cultures, that was great for that school and so I think

I'm pleased that I had that experience, even if there wasn't that sort of academia there was the sort of social and cultural capital.

I: *Yeah. So where did you go after that school?*

P: Then my sister had gone to this school in this village and it was like a totally different ball game it was bloody awful ((laughs)). Erm and I got really anxious as soon as I started because of the formality of it because it wasn't just the uniforms it was like the whole classroom setting. Erm you were sort of pin pointed and pounced upon for answers and some

I didn't know, erm well pretty much all of them ((laughs)). I remember once we had this general knowledge quiz and I was really good at it, but apart from that I was just awful. But and there I felt that you weren't valued you were more like being processed like everybody had to be on the same level and of course I'd never had an experience of difference and differentiation, you know. I just thought that if you were not very good at writing you got put in a class, English is your second language, Chinese students ((laughs)). Erm so then I just stopped going in, from about 11 I would just start skiving all the time.

I: *So was that because you stuggled with what they were asking you to do?*

P: Yeah I started skiving because I felt so anxious, it was horrible. Like being 11 and thinking why do I feel like this and I didn't know it was anxiety, erm and I just thought I've got to get out of these situations. So like English and maths was a no go area really erm but then in the second

year I did have a really nice English teacher erm so that encouraged me to go in cause she didn't sort of pounce on people or pick on people so I thought I'm gonna be alright here I can handle this. Erm so I had her for two years but then I got this really horrible teacher again that used to pounce on you and erm.

I: *Did you find that the work was easier to do when you were with her then?*

P: Yeah, I actually started linking words together. So if there was really long words that I couldn't spell I would like break it down into three sections and because I didn't have that anxiety I could, I didn't have that pressure I could learn better. Because I wasn't constantly thinking 'oh god, oh god, oh shit' the whole way through. Erm but then, so I did well but you know I er made progress, so then I got put in a higher set when I was doing my GCSE's but there was a horrible teacher. And my biggest fear and something I'm still fearful of is reading out loud, because of that kind of legacy of not being able to do it. Because the worst, we were doing Romeo and Juliet and I had to bloody read this Shakespeare in front of the whole class and I just, oh it was horrible and it was really like staccato so it was kind of like 'duh, duh, duh' there was no flow to it. I specifically remember that so since then I've really avoided reading out loud. Yeah horrible, truly horrible. Erm yeah so then I just kept on like playing truant all the time so then they said to me 'oh there's no point in staying here cause you don't want to get your GCSE's' So I left school when I was 15.

I: *So they didn't recognise your struggles?*

P: Oh no one ever ever erm, I think it is complicated because I started being a bit naughty so erm cause coming from like a lovely nurturing school to one where you were just nobody and nothing.

I: *So it sort of made you disengage?*

P: Yeah and it was just the lack of respect and my sisters really really clever and they were always comparing me to her and so erm. It was really quite difficult because it was always kind of like, 'oh well she's going to be a problem'. I started skiving but no one actually asked me 'why are you not coming to school?' and if they'd only asked me I might have got the help and not dropped out. They did pick up on literacy problems cause I remember there was a parents evening and my mum said "oh so and so wants to know why you can't, you don't know er your

capital letter and your lower case" and so then I couldn't really tell my mum because I thought she was angry with me. So it was just like constant stress really, it was horrible.

I: *So you dropped out of school?*

P: I did yeah.

I: *So was that before you did you GCSE's*

P: Yeah so it was, it was probably like February of that year. So I didn't bother doing my mocks. Well I went to one mock exam and that was maths and I couldn't do it so I just did doodled on the paper I didn't know what to do.

I: *So what happened after school then?*

P: Erm well my mum said "oh well you might as well not go back" and the teacher said "there's no point you doing it cause you're not gonna get them". Then I thought well maybe, and so I thought what can I do? What can I do? And my brother was a cook at the YMCA so he got me a job ((laughs)) working in their canteen. And erm, I remember this really vividly, they said to me "oh you're artistic, can you make the trifles", you know like putting ice cream on ((laughs)). Erm and then somebody told me about a summer art class that was going on at er college and I thought "oh shall I do it, oh no I don't really want to be back in a school environment". Erm but they said "oh no well it won't be with school aged people and the tutors really cool and you get to call them by their first name so it's not at all strict". So I went to that art college and it was just this whole other experience, something that I've not, never really experienced before apart from maybe primary school and that was printing, different types of printing, obviously like screen printing, etching. I just loved it and thought
'god you know what i reckon I can do this'. So that was, that gave me the confidence to think right i'm gonna try and get on erm like a BTEC or something erm and what I'll do is ill just try and get college to take me on so I can re do my GCSEs'. Erm so after that summer when I finished working in the canteen ((laughs)) I enrolled in college in er, I enrolled in college and maths was compulsory and I had to do English but there English was a great experience because er there was loads of different sorts of people in the class erm and I wasn't just trapped in this class full of really articulate middle class girls, it was really super mixed. And the teacher had been a hospital porter and retrained to be a teacher so he was really sort of ordinary and down to

earth and he er did poetry with us and it was D.H. Lawrence so it was all about Nottingham so it was things that we could relate to. That's kind of when I got over my biggest hurdle of hating English, but I got a B and a C for my GCSE's, woo. So I did that and er at that particular college they weren't doing art so I went to an art evening course erm and I was doing GCSE and she said "I reckon you can just do A-Level". So she put me in for my A-level instead, that was last minute and I got an E. I thought, but I thought that's pretty cool to do a GCSE in one year and then she say "oh you know what I think you can do this". Maybe I should have said no because of all the work, it was quite a lot of work to do with everything else as well erm.

I: *What was that A-Level in sorry?*

P: Art. Erm so I should have just said no and but then I thought 'Ha i've got an A-level, even if it's an E I've got it before everybody in my school'. Yeah and then I went on to do a GNVQ in art. So, but then it was still not picked up so even in college it was not picked up.

I: *When was it that you got labelled with dyslexia?*

P: When I did my MA.

I: *So after college when you did your art, where did you go from there?*

P: Erm I went to Leeds Beckett but I hated it. So I stayed there for a year because my dad made me, it was really awful.

I: *How old were you at the time?*

P: Er 19? 18, 19.

I: *How come you didn't like it?*

P: Well the first day, it was, I was doing fine art and the fine art people are arseholes. I'm teaching fine art now but generally fine art teachers are arseholes. Erm, oh shit this is gonna be recorded. At least it's ordinary, ordinary conversation ((laughs)). We all went in there was about 60, 70 of us and on the wall he had all this photographs of all the students from the previous years and he put black marks like over their faces, these like crosses. And then he said "right you little bastards this is what happens if you disappoint me" and he started pointing saying all these people who had been kicked off and it was so intimidating it brought back all these horrible

feelings of anxiety that I'd had from school. Erm so then I just stopped going in and because it was so depressing, and I phoned my Dad and I asked if I could go home and he said no because he'd paid the fees. And erm not that it were, I think they were just paying my rent I should of said "hang on a minute" ((laughs)). So then I had a really really depressing year I thought 'oh god it's terrible' and then I thought 'well I can't let this stop me' because I'm quite sort of tenacious. Erm, so then I swapped to Sheffield Hallam and it was totally different environment it was lovely, there wasn't any of that. There was one nasty teacher who said when I was reading out loud "well you're clearly dyslexic" in front of the whole group ((laughs)). And then, so I spoke to my personal tutor and they said "oh well you're in your third year now so there's nothing you can do about it". Erm so I couldn't write and I think then they thought I was lazy because they said "how can you be so verbally articulate but then you can't write?" Erm yeah so.

I: *It's quite common to be labelled as lazy like that when you're intelligent.*

P: But I got a third overall so that was not great. Erm but my written work was so awful.

I: *And you had no support for that?*

P: No so then that was a bit disappointing. Erm so then after that I just got loads of rubbish jobs then funnily enough I thought 'oh I quite fancy working in a library i'll apply' and I got it. I got a job in a library and I thought 'Oh my god, this is crazy, what if I get found out?' Erm so I did that for a couple of years and then erm there was all these cuts and they asked people if they wanted to be made, you know go for voluntary redundancy. So I thought you know what I fancy a change, I don't mind going on the dole for a bit. So ((laughs)), and some days actually that was really difficult cause it was like all the reading and all the concentration and looking for things for people, so it was really good for researching but not really the greatest job for me. But they got me to do creative things there and I got, I got promoted there as well so erm.

I: *Did anyone you worked with pick up on it or?*
P: No, and do you know what I would have never of said anything, even if I'd have known then I wouldn't of ever said I've got difficulties with it. Because erm, I think even now people say horrible comments about dyslexia. Erm and a good example is, there was a specialist, there was a conference at the education department and erm it was about support staff and the woman was from Nottre Dam college in Leeds and she said and she was talking about all these different people that you can, that you need to support, because dyslexic people are less able. And I

thought oh that's a bit concerning that you're in charge of this support department and you're saying generally speaking that they're less able, because I don't think I'm lesser able.

I: *No I don't think you are. I think dyslexia is a social construct. Society has constructed this 'specific learning disability' when really these people don't have a disability they just learn differently to the social norms of education and learning. I think the education system should cater for everyone and they shouldn't label people.*

P: Yeah, and it's not, you know I know some dyslexic people that are amazing at maths yet I'm terrible so it's not all.

I: *It's just easy for people to label.*

P: Yeah, yeah. So then I took voluntary redundancy and went on the dole which was great, as in, it wasn't great having no money but I just started doing loads of art work and I had that break from reading and writing which was amazing. Then I started doing loads of free lance design work erm I was really getting in to that but then I was working on my own a lot and I miss working with people. And I thought, well I've got experience now and I've always kind of regretted not sort of doing well before in my education so I applied for an MA in graphic communication and thought 'oh I won't get on it but I'll just apply for it', but I did get on it.

I: *Where did you do that?*

P: Erm Nottingham Trent.Erm.

I: *And what was it that you did it in?*

P: Graphic communication but it was really research based. And then, I remember doing the first module and thinking "oh no I'm not gonna be able to do this' because it was all research and I thought 'oh god this is my life worst nightmare, i've got to write all this stuff and do all this research' And I worked my arse off, I worked so so so hard and I went to see my supervisor and she'd done me a formative mark and she said "you've got a distinction'"and I said "what the hell this is so crazy". So yeah my MA was a really great experience, really empowering. Because you're left up to your own devices more. I kind of found out what I was really interested in and found out more about myself and that made me a lot more confident. But when I started that,

when I started there I thought 'ah this is my opportunity to find out whether I am dyslexic' Erm so I went for a test and...

I: *Did you ask for the test?*

P: I went to, well there was a dyslexia drop in and I said "oh look, loads of people have said I'm dyslexic and I've had these struggles before". What made me do it was because I was going to lecture and I was missing things and then afterwards people in my class were talking about what had been said and I was like 'oh when did they say that?' Erm so then I thought oh I've got to sort this out now because I've got this really difficult modules to do. So I went to the dyslexia drop in and they said "we can test you but you have to erm say that you're disabled to do it, you're gonna have to sign this form for us to pay for you, you're gonna have to sign this form to say you think you've got a disability". I thought, oh that seems, that made me think, but I don't think I'm disabled? But then I thought I don't want to pay like however much, like £660 to test myself so I was like "oh yeah I'll sign this thing to say I'm disabled". Erm so I went for the test and there was loads of stuff about er like puzzle things and really awful stuff about erm theres this address of this person so it's like Mr Smith and he lives at so and so avenue and then they ask you a couple of minutes later "which was the address?" and that I couldn't do at all cause my short term memory is really really awful. Erm but then er but then I got the report and my IQ was like 120 so I thought, oh i'm not thick. I was like, oh yeah i'm above average ((laughs)). So that was a massive thing for me because i'd always thought I was thick even though I got on to the MA I thought I was thick. So that gave me loads of confidence to think you know, this is going to be really hard. I was upset when I found out. I did cry cause I thought, oh my god I am so that means I can never do anything about it. But then when I got that IQ thing I thought, oh my god this is like confirmation that
I can maybe do something and that I'm not totally thick. Because all my life I thought I was thick. Erm so I ended up getting a distinction for the whole thing for the whole MA.

I: *Wow, so when you got that label did you get any extra support?*

P: Yeah so the one to one support was not very good and they really hurried you and I think it was because it was, here I think they get people in don't they from er is it Ramstad or something they get people in. Erm but there they had people internally that they paid so I reckon there might have been some sort of maybe scam going on or something cause you've got, it's, you got

an allowance per year and it'd say how many hours you were allowed but they made it really difficult to access those people and then when you saw them they were trying to get it done in ten minutes and shove you off. Erm so there wasn't, there was no support apart from getting erm extra money for photocopying and things like that. Erm oh and then this really rubbish ((laughs)) er software called read and write. Have you heard of it?

I: *No…*

P: It's a robot, so you highlight your writing and a robot reads it back to you. But the voice it sounds like Stephen Hawkins it's er not, it's not fluent so it makes it different, difficult to hear it and understand it. But I think there is, it's got better now.

I: *What do you think it was that helped you learn then, helped you get a distinction in your masters?*

P: It was having the diagnosis that really helped me with my MA. Knowing that I'd got like certification that I was not thick because I got an IQ of 20 too. And then I thought 'ha I'm not thick, this means that I can do it' So I thought if I can work hard, it's gonna be horrible but if I work hard enough I can do it. Erm I, oh I was doing all this research and I had to research this, about work war two in Nottingham for my project and there was this professor that I spoke to and they just mentioned that they were dyslexic and I said 'oh, but' and we had this conversation she was just really like 'you can do this, you can definitely do it, this is not a disability, you're gonna be really good at problem solving'. Erm and so, and then reading about dyslexia it just sort of empowered me. I thought erm there are strengths to it rather than it all being weakness, so it's just finding ways that you can work around it.

I: *So you did your own research then?*

P: Mm.

I: So what did you do after you masters?

P: After my masters I had a year off, carried on doing my, oh no no no after my MA I got a job as a research assistant for a bit actually. Yeah because there was this tutor that didn't teach me, fine art tutor, not an arsehole, really really nice and she was really interested in my project erm because it was creating. My whole MA was about my whole educational experience really, so it was about haptic learning so touching things, being able to smell things, a visual way of learning.

I: *Is that how you learn?*

P: Erm maybe, for my own learning? In what sense?

I: *Like how do you prefer to learn?*

P: I think, well my tutor was fantastic and she does loads of stuff that involves music and erm really visual presentations and using lots of metaphors so it's not just looking at that horrible sheet it's sort of more imaginative. So that really inspired me. So i'd done loads of research about different children and children with er English as a second language and dyslexia and er whatever and, but I thought, what can I do my project about? I want to do it about something to do with Nottingham. And then I remembered when I was at my primary school the year above me erm they, the care taker had been down to the basement of this school and found this old wicker sort of wheelchair erm and bandages and walking canes and all this stuff so then there was this little bit of research done and they figured out it had been a hospital in the war. So then one of the teachers took that class down to have a look at the stuff and they were so excited but I only could hear about it in the play ground and like my imagination just started like whirling and I thought, oh my god this is so exciting and I kind of liked history. Erm and I thought if you can create that interest in a child then that's a really powerful thing and a lot of things I've learnt are from not in school it's from my own interest in different subjects. So it's kind of getting that little spark that can ignite that interest and then rolling with that. Erm but then I was interested in ways of visually working so I did some workshops and I worked with erm migrant children that had just come over that couldn't speak English. And then there was some translation so I'd give them an old piece of soap and one boy sniffed it and went "oh grampa". And so it was like even though these, even though children might not be able to read and write in English, or dyslexic children be able to read and write, there's something they can say verbally there's some sort of verbal articulation. So I wanted it, I wanted to research how you can learn through sort of

experience and like handling things and like in a social way as well so everybody's gonna have a different experience and then how that can break the barriers of the kid maybe in the classroom that never wants to speak out because they're dyslexic. But in some cases it could be that the dyslexic person speaks more because they have to verbally articulate it because they can't get it down in writing. So yeah it was really really interesting. So this er lecturer at Nottingham was doing this work about the, I think it was like the 170 years of Nottingham school of art, it's like

the oldest art school in England and she said "would you be interested in working with me on this research project to create resources for children about the school of art?" So that's what I did after my MA which was a really great experience. So we got all that project done and then I thought 'Oh i'm so interested in education now'. And I'd kind of wanted to teach for a long time but I thought I'm never gonna be able to do it because I haven't got a GCSE in maths, I'm not gonna be able to do it erm I've got my English but erm. My sister's a doctor at Sheffield Hallam the super clever one, who incidentally read one of my essays the other day and said "mmm, it's not argumentative enough". And I thought 'oh come on, can you not just say I can write now' ((laughs)). Erm yeah so, where was I? Oh yeah, so the teaching, she'd said "you know you ought to look at Huddersfield" cause her husband had done a teaching course here last year and I was like "oh i'll never get in, i'll never get in, because you've got to have tests and stuff before you get in". And she goes "oh you could do it, just apply, just apply". So I applied and I did all this presentation and it was, the subject you had to cover was 'why is lifelong learning important?' So I did this animated power point and it was about my whole experience it was from like school and then it had this stamp like going fail and then it had the trifles with the cream. Cause I just wanted to be honest about my experience and say the reason that lifelong learning is important is because it gives people different chances. Because the reason I've been able to get to where I am and overcome things is lifelong learning, because if it didn't exist I would still be working in the canteen squirting cream on those trifles wouldn't I. Yeah so er, I had my interview and the tutor was really lovely and I said, and then it came to the test, you know the English test where you've got to write about a current issue in FA? And I'd been revising and revising and I'd got all this content that I could put in it and suddenly there was this silence and everybody was writing and I thought 'oh my god'. And I think I got about one sentence down ((sighs)). Then she said "oh can you come and speak to me?" So she said "Your reference is really good, it says how hard working you are and all these things" She said "How have you got on with the writing?" And I had to turn this, turn this piece of paper round with like that much writing, you know like a sentence and I said '"Oh god". I said "If you let me go in another room and gave me 20 minutes I probably could of done it". Erm but she was so nice and she said "look if you've got an MA and a distinction you obviously can write". Erm...

I: *Did she know you had been labelled with dyslexia.*

P: I told her there and then I said "look I'm really dyslexic". The things is it's, it kind of fluctuates so, sometimes I'm absolutely fine and I find things you know like stress free and then with writing a lot or concentrating in lectures it makes me really really tired because it's like the constant concentration. Erm but I think this year's been a massive thing as well because I remember when it came to writing my first essay when I was here and I thought 'Oh my god i've never really done proper academic writing before, not in this way', so that was horrendous. But erm we had tutorials and I had a bit of a meltdown, not a crying one ((laughs)). My tutor said "it's okay, we'll find you strategies, we'll find you strategies". So she's been really encouraging. And then I wrote an essay last week and I said, she had like a proper argument erm in it and because it's kind of difficult to sometimes when you're writing you're too descriptive and it's hard knowing that you need to be argumentative to put points forward erm, but I do think I've improved on that.

I: *So when you have her that piece of paper what did she say?*

P: She just said "I know, I know you could". Like cause I said "if I could do it in another room and I had more time I could do it" and she said "I know you could". Because my references were really good and I'd got my MA I think she probably thought well you obviously can do it erm, cause I said "it's just the pressure, I can't do it if there's pressure put on me". And then even things that I've had in that class, I know I can read out loud but being asked to read out loud is horrible, but she doesn't really do it because there's so many dyslexic people in that class. I think we did it once in someone's micro lesson and she said afterwards "I wouldn't really get people to read out because it can cause them a lot of anxiety". Erm so having a tutor that really understands it, I've never been in that class really and felt anxious. The only time I felt anxious was when we did a memory game at the beginning of term. So we were all standing around in the massive circle and we had to do alliteration so it was things like er "charlie is cheerful" or something, you had to go round. I was like the fourth person and I couldn't remember anything that these other three people had said and that made me feel thick and I thought 'Oh god is it gonna be like this?' So that did make me anxious. Oh and then afterwards it was counting people in to groups, so there was like so many people in the class and you had to split them in to groups of something, but I just avoided that ((laughs)). So I'd just go, look at the paper or "oh I just need the toilet". So that's another thing about dyslexia it makes you quite assertive and crafty to find your way out of things.

I: *So when did you start your PGCE sorry?*

P: September.

I: *So how's it going then? Do you get the support you need from this uni?*

P: Yeah it's really good, the whole things been good, the whole process I think has been excellent. I know you're not representing this uni so I don't have to say this, I'm not saying this to butter them up at all. But I got a letter before I arrived before I even enrolled saying we're having this event for disabled people ((laughs)) erm, er whatever they call it here erm disability support. And I thought 'oh I'll go there because I'll get like a free glass of orange juice or something' ((laughs)). But I'd been allocated the person that was going to support me for dyslexia so that was really nice knowing that even before everything started there was someone there to support you. Erm so although she doesn't work with me directly erm she's told me about how I go about getting support erm you know for academic writing and whatever or for people to check things over. Erm and just knowing that they are there and you can go and speak to someone.

I: *So do you get any of the technology?*

P: Well disabled student allowance because of the Tories erm no offense if you're a Tory ((laughs)), erm they've put in like massive cuts so when I was doing my MA I got about £300 for books and photocopying. Now they were going to get me a computer but I had to pay towards it and I thought well I can't afford that, it's like £200 out of my student loan and that's quite a lot of money. And they were gonna get software on it and I thought, I kind of thought I don't want to have to talk in to a computer I want to be able to learn how to do it myself. Erm but then they've had, they give you no allowance for photocopying and books or anything and if anything, at any time of my life I've needed it more here because I can't read, I cannot read those E-books, I can't do it I hate them. It makes no sense, if I've got a book physically I can go through and line stuff and then hand type in quotes, those E-books are awful and the and the colour of the screen as well. I try and find the oldest books like getting some old educational research, I'll go for all the books that are ancient so they I can read the easily, if they're like white like that it's horrible.

I: *Really? Have you ever tried those filtered glasses?*

P: No because then they said I'd have to pay for those too. So it's basically this disabled student allowance said I was going to get nothing apart from if I was going to pay for this computer with just this software.

I: *Okay, that's not the best, but is your one to one support okay?*

P: Mmm ((laughs)), it fluctuates depending on person to person. I 've not really been going to it to be honest because something that I really struggle with that seems quite odd to people is punctuation, like where to put a comma and full stop. Because erm I kind of like scan the page and think 'oh should that go there?' then I'm speaking it and I think 'oh you know like that's where a comma needs to go for a breath' but I kind of like that's my last hurdle and when I learn it then I unlearn it again and I can't seem to learn it.

I: *Yeah a lot of people have said that.*

P: Really? What is it?

I: *I don't know, structuring as well.*

P: I often will write something and I'll put like a word that should be before it, afterwards. I often do that.

I: *So what would you say your main struggles are? Short term memory...*

P: Short term memory is awful. It has improved since I've been on this course I've been teaching because I've been on placement erm which has been brilliant.

I: *Your placement?*

P: Yeah, I work with students that also have literacy problems, because you know they're like 17, my writing is significantly better than theirs. So I'm able to work with people who need to improve their vocab when there's this describing art work and things, so that's something I've thought has been a benefit to them but to me too. But I can say to them "look I know how you feel because I'm dyslexic, this is how you do it" and then, but them knowing that I've got it and now I can do it, it gives them the belief that they can.

I: *Which is what helped you?*

P: You don't want someone talking down to you and saying "oh well I'm normal" or like people say "I'm normal " or "I'm ordinary". You want somebody that can understand you don't you, mmm. So yeah short term memory is the worst and it's just getting over this comma business. If I could master that I might think I can write but I still kind of don't think

I can. If someone says something's good I still think it's bad, I think they're being nice to me. And my sisters really critical and so when she read my, other people had read my essay and said "this is really good, I really understand it" and all these things. Then she read it and she was like "oh I think you need to be more critical, you could do this and have you thought about doing this subject as all one thing and looking at this and looking at that?" and i'm like "i've only got, it's only 2000 words I can only like skim the surface of stuff".

I: *Does your sister help you a lot then?*

P: No I don't ask her because I've got this massive chip on my shoulder and I know, I'm well aware of it and erm sometimes I think I can do it and I'll get really good feedback and then sometimes I think 'oh no, hang on a minute, my tutors so nice is she just being nice? Does she actually? am I, can I do it?' Erm but my sister is very, very academic and ultra confident and quite arrogant cause she's like head of her department erm so she'll just say it like it is but then a tiny little criticism I will take as a massive one. So I know it's probably just to do with me erm but I don't know whether I'll ever get over that, thinking, I don't know whether I'll ever get to the point where I think I can do it or I am good at it.

I: *What do you thinks stopping you?*

P: I think it's everything, I think it's this whole legacy of it, being spoken about like 'oh you're a slower learner' or 'you're special' or well 'Taylor can do this I wonder why you can't?' It's this whole thing of that, that whole weight of that then you start to believe it because if you're hearing it all the time you're going to start believing it aren't you. It's like er you know if you're in that, if someone's telling you something all the time you're going to start to believe it aren't you. If someone's saying "you are this" then you, I don't know then I suppose, maybe I need hypnosis or something ((laughs)).

I: *Surely you can do it if you've got distinctions!*

P: You would have thought so but for some reason I still don't, I still don't believe. I think now at and a lot of it is because I'm really competitive myself, I want to do the best I can and if there's anything that I've done that I think 'oh that's not good enough' then I'll be really critically about it, which is so strange considering when I was younger I just didn't give a toss about grades or anything.

I: *Maybe it's because you're interested in what you're learning now, you actually want to do **it**?*

P: Yeah, yeah. So what's you stance on it?

I: *Well I think that the label of dyslexia shouldn't exist. So I understand that some people have difficulty learning but I don't think that these people should be labelled as having a learning 'disability' just because they don't fit in with society's norms and the way society has created this whole education system and this specific way of learning. Because I believe many people learn differently and just because you don't learn like the majority of the population you should be labelled as having a learning disability. The education should really cater for everyone and they shouldn't say 'right this is how you learn and if you can't learn like this you're dyslexic'.*

P: Mmm, It has a detrimental effect.

I: *Exactly, because you mentioned that you felt as though you were 'thick' when you're not, you just learn differently.*

P: Yeah. I don't think I'm thick now. I've got over that I think I'm thick. I think I'm intelligent, but I think I can't write, that's how I think now. But yeah, I totally agree with you, and it should be, education should be about differentiation. Have you seen those talks by Ken Robinson? Ken Robinson would be really good to look at because his erm theory and I think he says it in this talk is that education has been for so long like this factory conveyor belt where the child goes in, they've all got to be at the same level.

I: *Just need to pass?*

P: Yeah and there's no differentiation and everybody is exactly the same and they're processed because of education coming back and the industrial revolution it's kind of like children are processed like a product. So you're sending them down the line and there's no room for 'you go off the line to have this done to you, you do that' or taken off the so called misfits, it's kind of

like you're going on this clear route therefore everybody should be on the same level and be as good as, but people can't be like that.

I: *You find a lot as well that when children get labelled naughty and lazy, they may start to disengage.*

P: Because you've got to have a distraction, you've got to come up with these things. That was like me in school I was really naughty. I used to set fire alarms off and stuff and tell the teacher to F off because I thought If I'm being labelled as being naughty then I'm gonna do it and this way I can get sent out of the class and I don't have to do this writing and I don't have to do this. Until you come up with these, these er, oh what's the word, like these.

I: *Kind of like an excuse?*

P: Yeah it's like this distractive, is that a word? ((laughs)). This sort of process of distraction isn't it where you're thinking 'right what can I do to get out of this?' I think to a certain extent it's social constructed, like with my experience and many other people's, experiences erm but then definitely people do learn differently and definitely everybody's different. So it's just finding peoples strengths and peoples weaknesses isn't it?