"No-one likes what I say": A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Problematic Absenteeism from School.

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Catherine Angharad Jones

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the discourse around problematic school non-attendance and the implications that it holds for facilitating change. It is currently estimated that around 1-2% of school-registered children and young people display problematic school non-attendance (Elliott & Place, 2019). High levels of absence from school is associated with several negative outcomes, including mental health difficulties, substance misuse, and social and economic deprivation (Kearney, 2008). Welsh statistics from the 2017 / 18 academic year report that 4.1% of adolescents in middle and secondary schools had attendance levels of 80% or below and are considered to be persistent absentees (Welsh Government, 2019).

A review of the literature suggests that inconsistencies in the conceptualisation and language around school absence may be inhibiting effective intervention by professionals (Kearney & Albano, 2004). This study uses Foucauldian discourse analysis methodology to explore the discourse around non-attendance. In particular, the focus is upon the actions that are available within the discourse for facilitating change.

Five persistent absentees aged 11-16 and three school staff members were interviewed for this study. Seven dominant discursive constructions of the school and non-attenders are identified in the results. These are: school as a place of control, school as a site of public identity, school as judgemental, school as a place that should care and support, non-attenders as 'becoming' and non-attenders as psychologically problematic. The implications of these for Educational Psychology practice are discussed.

Summary

This thesis comprises three distinct chapters. Part A presents an introduction to the study, a review of the literature and rationale for the research questions. This chapter begins by exploring the definition of problematic non-attendance and the diverse terminology within the field. These are considered alongside the socio-cultural context of the UK and developments in compulsory education over the past century.

The review then considers how discourse and power influence conceptualisation of the issue and suggests that analysis of discourse in this area would be beneficial. Three studies that have taken a discourse-analytic approach in this area are introduced and critically reviewed, forming the rationale for the present study.

Part B presents an empirical paper that outlines the rationale, methodology, method and results for the study. Findings are discussed and strengths, limitations and implications for further research are identified.

Part C, the critical appraisal, presents a reflective and reflexive account of the research process and the role of the researcher. It begins with an account of the research inception and how this influenced the research aims and the researcher's orientation to the study. The ontology and epistemology, methodology, data collection and data analysis are critically evaluated and contributions to knowledge and to practice are considered.

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Part 1: Major Literature Review

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1. Introduction

Regular attendance at school is an expectation that is widely accepted by children and their families in the U.K. The positive impact of educational attainment on life outcomes such as health and employment is well established and rarely questioned (Stacey, 1998). As most of the population receive their education by attending school, good attendance is considered by most to be both desirable and important for children and adolescents (Pellegrini, 2007). School non-attendance is therefore a cause for great concern, with the issue of regular low attendance identified in the research literature as a serious issue of public health (Hawkrigg & Payne, 2014; Kearney, 2008a).

Poor school attendance is associated with a range of negative outcomes for children and young people, including a greater risk of experiencing poor mental health, specific psychological disorders, suicide and substance misuse over both the short and longer term (Flakierska-Praquin, Lindström & Gillbers, 1997; Guttmacher, Weitzman, Kapadia & Weinberg, 2002; Kearney, 2008a; King, Tonge, Gullone & Ollendick et al., 2001; McCune & Hynes, 2005). Adverse social and educational outcomes for young non-attenders include difficulties in sustaining positive family and peer relationships (King & Bernstein, 2001), lower academic achievement (Carroll, 2010) and school drop-out, with all the social and economic difficulties in adulthood that are known to be associated with drop-out and low levels of education (Havik, Bru & Ertesvåg, 2015; Kearney, 2008a; Kearney, 2001, King & Bernstein, 2001). Ongoing research and increased understanding of the phenomenon of non-attendance is therefore relevant to all professionals seeking to safeguard the wellbeing and life prospects of children and young people, including school staff, policymakers and educational psychologists.

1.1 Problematic and Non-problematic Absenteeism

Occasional non-attendance may be considered normal behaviour (Evans, 2000). It is estimated that 5 – 20% of young people absent from school on any given day (Kearney, 2003), with research from the US suggesting that over half of all high school students occasionally skip classes (Guare & Cooper, 2003; cited in Kearney, 2008a). Nevertheless, the assumption underpinning the research in this area is that there are different types of absenteeism, some of which may be classified as reasonable, while others are a cause for concern. Kearney (2003) suggests that a starting point for professionals working with children with low attendance is to establish whether a child's absence can be considered 'problematic' or 'non-problematic'.

The distinguishing features between problematic and non-problematic absence according to Kearney (2003) are whether it is detrimental to the child, and whether parents and professionals

consider the absence to be "legitimate" (Kearney 2003, p. 59). There must be consensus upon this point; if there is disagreement, the absence is deemed problematic (Kearney, 2003). The evaluative role played by adults is also emphasised by similar terminology including authorised and unauthorised excused and unexcused absences (Kearney, 2008b). While Local Authorities often provide guidelines regarding the absences that may be permitted from school, determining what may be considered legitimate or excusable is often a highly subjective process. The existence of an attendance difficulty may therefore ultimately be determined not by any definitive criteria, but by school staff's appraisal of the situation.

Aside from the possibility of bias in determining what constitutes legitimate absence, the information held by staff about a child's absence may be incomplete: the literature suggests that parents of children with low attendance may not always be forthcoming in telling school staff and other professionals about the reasons for their child's absence (Heyne, Gren-Landell, Melvin & Gentle-Genitty, 2019; Bools, Foster, Brown & Berg, 1990). There is therefore a risk that pupil absence may appear to be excusable / non-problematic, when in fact the child would benefit from intervention such as may only be offered to pupils absent for reasons deemed to be more problematic in nature (Heyne et al., 2019).

1.2 Defining Problematic Non-attendance

The lack of a clear definition of what constitutes problematic absence has led to considerable diversity within the research literature. This diversity exists across at least three interrelated dimensions.

Firstly, there is variation within the features that are used to identify and classify problematic non-attendance. The primary indicator is the length of time a child is absent from school, missing either several consecutive weeks or a cumulation of short-term absences. Information about the emotional state of the child, their behaviour and whether or not the parent or school are aware of- or indeed responsible for- the absence, may also be used to inform the way in which schools and researchers interpret absence and identify attendance problems (Berg, Nichols & Pritchard, 1969; Kearney 2003; Kearney 2008b). There is considerable inconsistency in the application of these features; the length of time participants have been absent and the emotional, behavioural and systemic factors used to identify the absence as problematic vary between studies, with the result that few are directly comparable.

Secondly, there is variation in the causal attributions made regarding these features; in reviewing the literature it is apparent that school non-attendance tends to be constructed as either a clinical, behavioural or systemic difficulty, with differing approaches to intervention implicated by each construct. Thirdly, there is variation in the language that has developed to capture the complexity of each construction. In a recent review of the literature, Heyne et al. (2019) identified a total of 45 different terms that have been used to refer to problematic absence between 1932 and 2019. The most prevalent terms include *truancy, school phobia, school refusal, school refusal behaviour* and *extended non-attendance.* These terms defy simple definition: not only has the terminology relating to school absence changed over time in line with the development of educational and psychological discourse, there is inconsistency in the way it is used. The multiplicity of terminology, together with the complexity of the behaviour and heterogeneity of the population, have created an inconsistent literature base wherein comparison, synthesis and meta-analysis are challenging tasks (Kearney, 2003).

1.3 Prevalence and Demographics

It is difficult to give a meaningful estimate regarding the prevalence of problematic absenteeism, as the prevalence of problematic non-attendance depends in large part upon the stringency of the criteria used to define it (King & Ollendick et al., 1998). Studies in the US typically report figures in the range of 0.4% (Ollendick & Mayer, 1984; cited by King & Ollendick et al., 1998) to approximately 5% (Last & Strauss, 1990). It is also estimated that while a small proportion of children may be affected at any one time, up to 21% may be affected at some point in their schooling (Kearney & Albano, 2004).

As in the US, UK data is inconsistent. It is also relatively scarce. Depending on the way it is defined, prevalence of school attendance difficulties have been estimated as high as 80%, with this proportion of infant school children experiencing difficulties in a study by Moore (1966). However this study employed very broad criteria, including all children who had expressed a desire not to attend school within the past year. In contrast, more recent research suggests that the prevalence in the UK is around 1-2% (Elliott, 1999; Gulliford & Miller, 2015; West Sussex, 2017; Thambirajah, Grandison & DeHayes, 2008). It is noted by Reid (2003, 2008) that caution should be taken in interpreting statistics based upon school attendance data: this type of data may be unreliable due to inconsistency in the way that absences are recorded across different UK local authorities. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that attendance statistics tend to underestimate levels of absence in schools (Reid, 2003), which may result in part from the pressure placed upon schools to report 'good' attendance data (Reid, 2008).

While some reviews cite no association between attendance difficulties and the sex, ethnicity or socioeconomic status (SES) of pupils (e.g. Pellegrini, 2007), in the case of ethnicity and SES at least, there appears to be some bias within the literature. Lyon and Cotler (2007) report statistics from the US indicating that ethnic minority students are disproportionately affected by problematic absenteeism. While the overall population of African Americans in the US was recorded as 15.7% in 2005, they accounted for 25% of petitioned truancy cases between 1990 and 1999 (Puzzanchera, Stahl, Finnegan, Tierney & Snyder, 2003). It appears, however, that these children and young people are severely under-represented in participant groups. A systematic review of the intervention literature by Maynard, Brendel, Bulanda, Heyne, Thompson and Pigott (2015) revealed that only half of the studies in their review reported information on the ethnicity of participants and of those that did, all participant groups but one were primarily white. In their own review of the literature, Lyon and Cotler (2007) found only three studies where fewer than 90% of the participants were white.

Similar evidence of sampling bias is reported regarding SES; a significant association between low SES and problematic non-attendance is reported by Attwood and Croll (2006). Data for their study was taken from a representative sample generated by the British Household Panel Survey. While several reviews of the literature report no relationship between socioeconomic status and problematic non-attendance (Fremont, 2003; Pellegrini, 2007), here again, the diversity of participant groups must be taken into account. Lyon and Cotler (2007) report that while there is slightly more economic diversity than ethnic diversity within participant groups, information regarding the socioeconomic status of participants is still lacking in the majority of studies. The data that does exist suggests an under-representation of pupils from poorer backgrounds. The associations found by Attwood and Croll (2006) and Lyon and Cotler (2007) suggest not only that students from both ethnic minority and lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be at even greater risk of problematic non-attendance, they are also likely to be under-represented within the research literature. It is suggested by Lyon and Croll (2007) that this under-representation may be due, in part, to lower engagement rates with mental-health services and the tendency for clinical research in this area to sample participants from in-patient and out-patient clinics. The implications of the under-representation of at-risk groups within the literature include: limitations to the validity and generalisability of the knowledge-base, limitations to the efficacy of intervention and the perpetuation of social injustice.

1.4 Social Constructionism

The conceptual and linguistic diversity within this field speaks to the constructive nature of language. The labelling, re-labelling and sub-categorisation of non-attendance suggest researchers' and practitioners' need to capture aspects of the phenomenon that they do not perceive to be adequately represented within the existing discourse, or to update constructs that they deem to be outdated. As new terminology becomes standard and the discourse develops, further new terminology is generated in response. An example of terminology being used to support a conceptual shift is Kearney's (1993) choice of *school refusal behaviour* when introducing the School Refusal Assessment Scale. This marked a subtle but significant departure from the previously prevalent term s*chool refusal.* By focusing upon the behavioural aspects of non-attendance, Kearney's new term encompassed a sub-set of non-attenders who had previously only been referred to as *truants.* While *school refusal* had previously referred to children and young people displaying affective disorders (Hersov, 1960), following Kearney's (1993) paper this term is now sometimes used to refer to all non-attenders, as an abbreviated form of *school refusal behaviour* (Kearney & Sims, 1997, Lyon & Cotler, 2007). A further example may be seen in Pellegrini's 2007 paper, where the term *extended non-attendance* is introduced as an alternative to *school refusal* out of a desire to "describe the behaviour neutrally" (p.65), thus avoiding the attribution of control underpinning use of the word 'refusal' and encouraging a systemic focus on the school.

As the identification of cases of problematic non-attendance relies so heavily upon individual constructions and analysis of the young person's presentation, it is important not only to gain an understanding of the constructs held by professionals around non-attendance, but to consider the role played by language and its constructive influence on our understanding, actions and experience.

Within the social constructionist paradigm, language is seen as a social action, the use of which constructs human knowledge and understanding about the world (Burr, 2015). Rather than search for a truth regarding any given phenomenon, a social constructionist stance rejects the idea that there is an objective reality, instead asking how the phenomenon in question is understood and performed by people. This stance is well suited to the research of problematic non-attendance, as no single universally agreed definition has been produced: this is a heterogeneous phenomenon experienced daily by schools, children, families and professionals, as they attempt to determine the meaning and legitimacy of absence and how best to respond to it.

1.5 Discourse and Power

The idea that language constructs reality can be traced to work of mid-20th Century structuralist and post-structuralist theorists including Saussure, Barthes and Foucault (Burr, 2015). Structuralism proposed that language is a socially constructed system (structure) of reference points that, while

not constituting reality itself, is applied consistently by humans to our experiences in order to make sense of them (Burr, 2015). As there is nothing inherent about a word that indicates the object to which it refers, we can only understand what it means insofar as it differs from other known objects and insofar as it is used consistently (Burr, 2015; Saussure, 2004). Saussure proposed that "language is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual" (Saussure, 2004, p.59). In other words, to a structuralist, language is a fixed tool that we apply in order to delineate, order and construct our lives in a way that is meaningful to us and to others. Post-structuralism argues that while the meaning of words and language may appear to be fixed, in fact it is not so; meanings change over time, reflecting the interests that are served by constructing the world in a given way. As such, language can reveal a great deal about the power structures of society and how these have evolved over time (Burr, 2015).

Discourses are patterns of language and meaning: "ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination" (Foucault, 2004, p.91). Examples given by Foucault include concepts of science, literature, fiction and politics (p.91). Foucauldian theory posits that the discourses that develop, evolve and become commonplace reflect the presence of power in society. If language is accepted as the means by which knowledge is created, it brings with it assumptions about the way the world works, how people should conduct themselves and which behaviours are (and are not) allowed. Burr (2015) notes that to have power in a Foucauldian sense doesn't necessarily mean to have control over resources or over others, but to "define the world or a person in such a way that allows you to do the things that you want" (p.80). The more a given discourse appears to reflect 'common sense' the more powerful it is, as acting outside of what is permissible within these discourses becomes immediately delegitimised and othered (Burr, 2015).

1.6 Being Child-Centred

The academic discourse around school non-attendance, while diverse in many ways, is uniform in the sense that it is generated by adults. As previously outlined, the fundamental starting point advocated by Kearney, one of the most prolific researchers in this area, is for adults to identify whether the absence is illegitimate (Kearney, 2003). There is little room within this conceptualisation for non-attendance to be both problematic *and* legitimate; either the problem is illegitimate absence, or the absence is not a problem. An issue that might be conceived as both problematic and legitimate could, for example, concern the running of the school. This possibility is not accommodated, however, as the power to determine what is and is not legitimate is given to the school. A further question to be asked of this discourse, therefore, is: problematic for whom? Whose freedom to act is being enabled, and whose is being restricted by the term 'problematic non-

attendance'? As a term originating in the professional literature, it would seem to empower adults to take action to ensure that attendance improves, representing only adult concerns (albeit in the presumed best interests of the child).

Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified in 1989, children have had the right to voice an opinion and to be listened to when decisions are made about matters that concern them. In the years since the convention, the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) policy placed an emphasis upon the importance of listening to the voice of the child, while the 2015 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) required that every Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) include a section expressing pupil views. Similar developments are currently under way in Wales, with person-centred practice lying at the core of the Draft Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2018). The 'voice' of every child with an individual development plan will be heard through the creation and sharing of a One Page Profile, and children young people who are involved in tribunal proceedings will have the option of a 'case friend' to support them through the process (Welsh Government, 2015).

While clearly established as best practice, policy alone may not, however, be enough to ensure that children and young people feel empowered to express their point of view and to be heard in matters concerning their education. Goodfellow (2019) cautions against the view that pupil voice is something that can be gained or possessed and suggests that in institutionalised contexts, children's voices and citizenship becomes highly regulated. Attempts by professionals to enable children to share their views within the educational system may therefore be unavoidably limited.

While it may not be possible to mitigate the influence of institutional regulation, a discursive approach takes a somewhat more radical stance by making institutional power explicit. It does not claim to 'give voice' to a population or 'make knowable' the lived experience of an individual; to the contrary, a central idea within Foucauldian theory is that of 'the death of the subject' (Burr, 2015). This position argues that language - rather than being a means by which is it possible to access and understand the lived experience of an individual - is the means by which knowledge and therefore experiences are created. In other words, the discourse itself- rather than the participants- becomes the primary subject. While this approach cannot make any truth-claims regarding the psychological experiences of participants, it is able to explore the way in which they are positioned within the discourse, identify 'allowable' actions and explore avenues for change.

1.7 The Current Study

This study takes a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of teacher and pupil discourse when discussing problematic non-attendance at school. This aims of this research are to identify the ways in which non-attendance is constructed, examine the way in which individuals are positioned by the discourse, and to explore the implications for change from an educational psychology perspective. The following review will focus upon the literature in relation to the construction of school non-attendance. It will begin with an introduction to the search terms used when reviewing the literature and offer a rationale for the choice of terminology for this study. It will then contextualise the research by summarising the development of expectations around school attendance in the U.K. from the late 19th Century to 2019. This context is helpful in charting the political and societal influences that have driven the development of discourse regarding non-attendance and its construction as a problem of various kinds. The third section will focus on the ways in which problematic attendance is constructed in the literature. Three overarching constructs will be examined, namely the clinical construction, the behavioural construction and the systemic construction. The strengths, limitations and approaches to intervention relevant to each construction will also be summarised.

The fourth section will review findings and implications of three studies that have employed discourse analysis to explore the phenomenon of problematic non-attendance. The chapter will conclude with a rationale for the approach taken within the current study and an introduction to the research questions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Terminology

As the philosophical stance of this study focuses upon the constructive nature of language, terminological diversity is embraced. Where this review refers to prior research, the terminology reflects that which is used in the original research. In all other instances, the terms *non-attendance* or *problematic non-attendance* will be used, as appropriate. These terms were chosen to minimise alignment with any specific construction or discourse and to avoid conceptual confusion. In the empirical study, the term *persistent non-attendance* is used. This is because it is the term used by the Welsh Government (2015) when referring to problematic attendance levels of 80% or below (Welsh Government 2015, 2019). As the research aimed to explore the discourse used in practice, it was necessary to use the terminology and criteria most familiar to schools.

The first psychological exploration of children's non-attendance at school was by Broadwin (1932) in an article titled *A Contribution to the Study of Truancy* published by The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. This paper was the first to describe a form of non-attendance characterised by fear and anxiety. In the UK, the earliest paper to describe non-attendance in such terms was by Partridge (1939) who referred to *psychoneurotic truancy* as one of four categories of non-attendance, namely: the hysterical, the 'desiderative', where the difficulty was believed to result from the home, the rebellious, and finally the psychoneurotic group. Thus the heterogeneity of school non-attendance was recognised even as it was conceived as an area of psychological interest; in the years since Partridge's categorisation in 1939, the terms used to describe and categorise school non-attendance have changed but continue to be no less varied, and considerably more numerous.

One of the first challenges encountered when researching this area is to identify not only the relevant terminology within the literature both past and present, but to identify the precise phenomenon referred to in each case. Heyne et al., (2019) have listed no fewer than 38 terms referring either to the concept of absence triggered by a psychological difficulty or to problematic non-attendance more generally. This diversity of definition and conceptualisation has been implicated by scholars who note a lack of progress in the field, particularly in regard to the development of interventions (Elliott, 1999; Kearney & Albano, 2004).

2.2 Search Terms

With the diversity of relevant search terms in mind, the initial task in reviewing the literature was to identify the most relevant texts relating to absence from school. This process began with a search of two key professional journals, Educational and Child Psychology and Educational Psychology in Practice, to identify all articles since 1990 that related to school non-attendance. Following this initial search, Psychinfo, Web of Science and ERIC databases were used alongside Cardiff University library catalogue and Google Scholar to undertake a comprehensive search of the literature between 2000 and 2019 (Further information available in Appendix A). This keyword search included a range of the most relevant terminology including *school refusal*, *school phobia*, *school anxiety*, *truancy* and persistent, chronic and extended *non-attendance*. The results of this search were then further refined by limiting to peer-reviewed journals and articles containing key words in the title or abstract. The most relevant texts were identified from the results of this search (see Appendix A) and from this point a snowball approach was taken in selecting literature to review. Finally, the search was repeated and limited to theses since 2010. This approach ensured that no relevant material was excluded due to terminology alone, while limiting the scope of the review to those studies most relevant to the present area of interest.

2.3 The History of School Attendance Expectations in the UK

Until the late 19th Century, there was no state education in the UK. Schools were predominantly run by the Church and very much reflected social class divides (Gillard, 2018). In the wake of the industrial revolution however, it became necessary to improve the skills of the workforce and maintain international competitivity. The expansion of the electorate to include working-class men with the Reform Act of 1967 also brought with it the need for an increased level of education in the general population (Politics, 2019). The first Education Act in 1870 saw the introduction of school boards, elected locally to manage the creation and administration of schools across the UK. Schooling was subsequently made compulsory by a further act in 1880, requiring that all children aged between 5 and 10 receive an education (Education Act, 1870; Parliament, 2019a). There followed a series of further reforms expanding school provision, with acts in 1893, 1899 and 1918 raising the school leaving age to 11, 13 and 14 respectively (Gillard, 2018; Parliament, 2019b.). The economic depression of the 1920s and second world war resulted in little further reform until the Education Acts of 1944 (effective from 1947) and 1972, which saw compulsory education extend firstly to 15 and later to 16-year-olds (Gillard, 2018).

With the introduction of compulsory schooling came the problem of non-attendance, and the creation of a new discourse concerning the reasons why a minority of the school-age population either would not, or could not, conform to this new norm. As demonstrated by Partridge's 1939 paper in the Journal of Mental Science (now The British Journal of Psychiatry) this discourse soon began to construct non-attendance in pathological terms.

Concurrent to the development of clinical discourse was the development of political discourse around the importance and value of school attendance both to individuals and society in general. The government became progressively more involved in the running of schools through the middle of the century. With the economic downturn of the 1970s came the concern that schools in the UK were not serving the interests of the country and its citizens (Children, Schools and Families Committee [CSFC], 2009). Development of a National Curriculum was overseen by two new advisory bodies, the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council, and the curriculum was finally introduced in 1988 (CSFC, 2009).

By the early 21st Century, improving school attendance figures had become a key point in educational policy. The *Improving School Attendance in England* report by the National Audit Office (2005) notes that "Reducing total absence and unauthorised absence from school are among the Department [for Education and Skills]'s highest priorities"(p.1) it also highlights the importance of the National Attendance Strategy in not only enabling parents and schools to take action to support

good attendance, but to facilitate work done by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) to further improve levels of attendance. In spite of government spending of £560 million pounds between 2005 and 2006 on reducing levels of absence from school, however, very little reduction in levels of absence was seen (Attwood & Croll, 2006).

The increased focus on the issue of non-attendance in 2005/6 was motivated at least in part by concern regarding a high correlation between unauthorised absences and free school meals (Attwood & Coll, 2006); suggesting that improving attendance formed part of government strategy to reduce poverty. As with the introduction of compulsory education at the turn of the century and the National Curriculum in 1988, the role of the school thus continued to be closely associated with the economic prosperity of citizens on both individual and societal levels.

Within the past decade, the percentage of absence from school that is tolerated has fallen steadily. While in 2005 the level of tolerated absence in English schools was 20%, this was reduced to 15% in 2011 (Department for Education, 2011) and to 10% in 2015 (Department for Education, 2017). The research cited by the Department for Education (2017) focuses strongly upon the association between school attendance and academic achievement. In Wales, the level of absence defined as 'persistent' remains at 20% (Welsh Government 2015, 2019).

2.4 Problematic Factors

As outlined in the introduction, problematic non-attendance is a concept that has developed within an academic and professional discourse to describe the attendance of those pupils who are subjectively assessed as having illegitimate reasons for not being at school. Several criteria have, however, been described in the literature to aid in the identification of pupils whose attendance may be considered problematic. The criteria most often cited are by Berg et al. (1969, p.123), consisting of:

1) Severe difficulty in attending school —often amounting to prolonged absence.

2) Severe emotional upset - shown by such symptoms as excessive fearfulness, undue tempers, misery, or complaints of feeling ill without obvious organic cause on being faced with the prospect of going to school.

3) *Staying at home with the knowledge of the parents-* when they should be at school, at some stage in the course of the disorder.

4) *Absence of significant anti-social disorders* such as stealing, lying, wandering, destructiveness and sexual misbehaviour.

2.4.1 Extent of absence. Berg et al. (1969) does not define prolonged absence. Ideas regarding what constitutes an acceptable level of absence vary; the governments of England and Wales, for example, currently have different criteria regarding what is deemed an unacceptable level of absence (Department for Education, 2017; Welsh Government, 2019), setting limits on absence at 10% and 20% respectively. The literature is no less diverse. Kearney (2003) initially suggests the threshold be set at 50% absence during a two-week period, however subsequent suggestions by the same author include 25% absence over two weeks, or absence for 10 days over a 15-week period (Kearney, 2008b). Several studies adopt the criteria created by the schools from which they recruit participants, however there is considerable variation between schools regarding the level of absence that is considered acceptable, e.g. four days' absence within a month (Gage, Sugai, Lunde & DeLoreto, 2013), 11 or more days absence within in a year (Schmitt, Balles & Venesky, 2013) and around 20 days absence within a year (Wood et al., 2012).

Kearney (2001) suggests a continuum of seven stages, ranging from school attendance under duress to the most severe cases of complete non-attendance for an extended period (Figure 1). It is interesting to note here that Kearney does not consider non-attendance to be an essential element; the first two stages simply portray a reluctance to attend. The inconsistency regarding the level of absence within participant groups seriously limits the comparability of studies and hampers efforts to develop a more unified construct of problematic non-attendance.

I	I	I	I	I	I	I
School attendance under duress and pleas for non-attendance	Repeated misbehaviours in the morning to avoid school	Repeated tardiness in the morning followed by attendance	Periodic absences or skipping of classes	Repeated absences or skipping of classes mixed with attendance	Complete absence from school during a certain period of the school year	Complete absence from school for an extended period of time

Figure 1: Continuum of school refusal behaviour on the basis of attendance. From *School Refusal Behaviour in Youth: A Functional Approach to Assessment and Treatment* (p.7) by C.A. Kearney, 2001.

2.4.2 Emotional responses. The second criterion for identifying problematic non attendance suggested by Berg et al. (1969) and commonly applied within the field is severe emotional upset. Berg and colleagues do not propose a definition regarding what is considered

'severe'. In later papers the requirement that upset be 'severe' was removed and additional information was provided regarding expected presentation of emotional upset, including somatic complaints such as headache and pallor, tummy upset and diarrhoea (Berg, 1997; Berg, 1996; cited by Heyne et al., 2019). Further examples of typical emotional responses include fear, panic, crying, temper tantrums and threats of self-harm (Fremont, 2003). While the inclusion criteria for some studies include a diagnosable anxiety disorder, e.g. Heyne et al., (2002), this is not always the case (Heyne et al., 2019).

According to Berg et al. (1969), emotional response is a factor distinguishing *school refusal/school phobia* from *truancy.* While children identified as falling within the former category were considered to be absent due to emotional distress, those identified as truants were considered not to have such symptoms but to be displaying defiant behaviour (Elliott, 1999). Nevertheless, these distinctions are not observed in subsequent literature, where the lower sense of well-being and high incidence of depression among children and young people considered to be truants is highlighted (e.g. Attwood & Croll, 2015; Egger, Costello & Angold, 2003; Ek & Eriksson, 2013).

2.4.3 Behaviour. The behavioural aspects captured by Berg et al (1969) include the activities a child is engaged in while out of school (i.e. remaining at home versus going out) and the presence of anti-social behaviour. There is a lack of consensus regarding the validity of categorising problematic non-attenders according to behaviour. In respect of the differentiation between *truancy* and *school refusal/phobia* outlined above, the expected behaviour (staying at home vs defiant and antisocial behaviour) is not mutually exclusive; in practice, distinguishing delinquency from emotional difficulties on the basis of behaviour is problematic. For example, a study by Bools et al. (1990) found that several young people fulfilled the criteria for both 'truant' and 'anxious' profiles, whereas other non-attenders met the criteria for neither.

The variation within each of these problematic factors demonstrates the conceptual variation that exists around the subject of problematic non-attendance, even when endeavouring to apply definitive criteria. When exploring the literature, therefore, applying criteria or terminology as conceptual boundaries is likely to be unhelpful. To avoid this confusion, the approach taken in the following section is to examine three broad conceptual constructions or paradigms for problematic non-attendance: the clinical construction, the behavioural construction and the systemic construction. Each section will review the terminology and approaches to intervention that are relevant within each construction.

2.5 The Clinical Construction of Problematic Non-attendance

The clinical construction of non-attendance is among the most prevalent in the academic literature (Pellegrini, 2007). It locates the cause of the problem within the child, usually in the form of a psychological difficulty, for example separation anxiety or conduct disorder.

The clinical discourse is most easily identified by its use of medical terminology including *diagnosis*, *symptoms*, *disorder* and *cure*. Unsurprisingly, these terms are most prevalent in literature published by journals such as *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* and *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*. Broadwin's (1932) and Partridge's (1939) descriptors of neurotic truancy were among the first to position non-attenders within a clinical discourse, distinguishing between children considered deviant for not attending school and those deemed to be absent for disordered emotional reasons. This clinical construction was further developed by Johnson, Flastein, Szurek and Svendsen's who introduced the term *school phobia* (1941). 'Phobia' indicates a pathological and irrational fear, which in this case is related specifically to the school situation (Ek & Eriksson, 2013). While several other clinical terms appear in the literature, including *mother-philes* (Davidson, 1960) *internalising school refusal disorder* (Young, Brasic, Kisnadwala, & Leven, 1990; cited by Kearney, 2003), and *psychological absentee* (Reid, 1985; cited by Heyne et al., 2019), *school phobia* and *school refusal* are the most prevalent when describing absence from school due to emotional distress (Pellegrini, 2007). In recent years, the term *school phobia* has become somewhat outdated; there is a growing consensus that while children may experience phobic reactions when faced with the prospect of going to school, where a phobic stimulus can be identified it is usually more general in nature (e.g. leaving home, social situations or public speaking). It is therefore not necessarily limited to the school environment and a diagnosis of specific phobia is more appropriate (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Within the past decade, the more favoured term to describe a specific antipathy directed towards school has been *school refusal.*

The association between non-attendance and diagnosable disorder is well established. Several studies have examined the prevalence of diagnosed disorders among children and young people with problematic attendance. A study by Egger Costello and Angold (2003) included participants both with and without symptoms of anxiety (identified as either 'school refusers' or 'truants'). 24.5% of participants identified as school refusers received a diagnosis, with the most commonly given diagnoses being depression, separation anxiety, conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. Among the group identified as truan*ts*, 25.4% received a diagnosis, with the most commonly given diagnoses being depression, conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. Similar findings are reported by Kearney and Albano (2004) who found that 22.4% of participants were diagnosed as

having separation anxiety disorder, 10.5% generalised anxiety disorder, 8.4% oppositional defiant disorder and 4.9% depression. In addition to mental health disorders, other symptoms cited within the clinical literature include physiological signs of distress. These include muscle tension, breathing irregularity, nausea, dizziness, pallor and pain in the head or stomach with no identifiable organic cause (Bernstein et al., 1997; King & Ollendick et al., 1998).

Claims of causality are often linked to separation anxiety, where emotional dysregulation in the brain is thought to be the underlying mechanism giving rise to school refusal (Bagnell, 2011; Elliot & Place, 2019). Elliott (1999) notes, however, that separation anxiety is more commonly implicated in the literature concerning younger children. He suggests that this may indicate that separation anxiety is an age-related effect and may therefore be less relevant in cases of adolescent school refusal. Further, it could be argued that separation anxiety is a normal part of development during childhood, with research by Granell de Aldaz et al. (1985; cited by King & Ollendick et al., 1998) finding that almost a fifth of children aged from 3 to 14 with normal attendance were fearful of going to school.

Considering the heterogeneity of the issue of non-attendance, it is likely that in some cases mental health difficulties result in non-attendance, while in others non-attendance precipitates a decline in mental health. In a review of the literature, Ek & Eriksson (2013) note that anxiety and depression are thought to interact with non-attendance and intensify each other. Nevertheless, a definitive causal link has yet to be established and mental health difficulties and problematic non-attendance can thus far only be considered correlates (Bernstein & Garfinkel, 1986; cited by Elliott, 1999).

Despite the lack of an established causal link, the association between mental health difficulties (especially anxiety) and problematic non-attendance is such that they are often considered indicative of each other (Heyne, 2019; Elliott & Place, 2019). There is some confusion however regarding whether school refusal is considered an indicator of a diagnosable mental health disorder, or whether diagnosed disorders are prerequisites for school refusal. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Third Edition (DSM III) implemented between 1978 and 1994, listed *truancy* as a symptom of conduct disorder and *school refusal* as a symptom of separation anxiety (Berg, Butler, Franklin, Hayes, Lucas & Sims, 1993). An example in the literature is a case study by Hagopian and Slifer (1993), where the child was diagnosed with separation anxiety due to her meeting six of the nine DSM-3R criteria, including refusal to go to school. In other studies, however, anxiety is a criterion for *school refusal.*

While Berg's aforementioned criteria do not specifically refer to diagnosis, the operationalisation of these criteria often includes a diagnosed disorder. For example, in a study examining the role of self-efficacy in mediating CBT outcomes for adolescents described as school refusers, Heyne, Sauter, van Widenfelt, Vermeiren and Westenberg (2011) state that based upon Berg's criteria, their participants were required to have: a diagnosed anxiety disorder (excluding OCD ad PTSD) and no diagnosis of conduct disorder.

While references to both truancy and school refusal no longer appear in the DSM, now in its Fifth edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) or the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems – 10th Edition (World Health Organisation, 2018), their association with conduct and anxiety disorders remain well established (Kearney, 2003, Lauchlan, 2003). These associations reinforce the clinical discourse around non-attendance and may divert the attention of professionals away from the school environment as a site for change (Pellegrini, (2007).

The most common intervention for problematic non-attendance advocated within a clinical paradigm is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). A randomised control trial by King & Tongue et al. (1998) tested the efficacy of a six-week CBT intervention with 34 children and adolescents aged five to 15. Results indicated that participants within the treatment group experienced a significant improvement in school attendance following the intervention. A follow-up study by King et al., (2001) reported that the improvement was maintained for 16 of the original participants. While encouraging, the study was small with a high drop-out rate. When reviewing the literature, there appears to be a consensus that the evidence supporting CBT approaches is tentative at best and only evidenced for cases where young people are experiencing anxiety (Thambirajah et al., 2008; Maynard et al., 2015, Kearney, 2008). Maynard et al., (2015, 2018) conducted a meta-analysis of the efficacy of psychosocial interventions for school non-attendance and note that the literature is characterised by a lack of rigour, including small sample sizes and inadequate control-groups. While Maynard and colleagues ensured a rigorous approach in their own meta-analysis, from 39 studies identified as relevant at the screening stage, just eight met the eligibility criteria for their review. Consequently, the meta-analysis itself was limited in the analyses that could be performed (Maynard et al., 2015). While tentative conclusions may be drawn from the quantitative literature, the diversity within the field poses a significant challenge to generalisability and limits practical application within a population that is characterised by heterogeneity.

2.6 The Behavioural Construction of Problematic Non-attendance

In 1993, Kearney and Silverman presented a functional model for assessing and intervening in cases of problematic non-attendance. This marked a significant departure from the construct of non-attendance as disordered, as within a clinical discourse. To the contrary, a functional model constructs behaviour as adaptive as opposed to dysfunctional.

The approach proposed by Kearney & Silverman (1993) constructs non-attendance as achieving one of the following: a) avoidance of anxiety affecting objects or situations related to a school setting; b) escape from aversive social or evaluative situations; c) attention-getting behaviour, or d) positive tangible reinforcement. The first two functions are maintained by negative reinforcement, while the latter two are maintained by positive reinforcement (Kearney et al., 2004). This conceptualisation of non-attendance underpins the development of the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) (Kearney & Silverman, 1993) and later the School Refusal Assessment Scale – Revised (SRAS-R) (Kearney, 2002).

The SRAS assesses only the behaviour and motivations of a child. It may be used to assess the behaviour of any child, regardless of whether diagnoses have been given and regardless of the extent of their absence, emotional state or behavioural tendencies. Kearney and Silverman (1993) question the extent to which the distinction between the concepts of *school refusers* (deemed to be anxious) and *truants* (deemed to be delinquent) is helpful, given the narrow criteria for each and the diverse reasons why children may not attend school. The term used by Kearney and colleagues within this discourse, therefore, is *school refusal behaviour*. This term is intended to be applied inclusively to all children and young people whose attendance patterns would benefit from further assessment.

One of the benefits of the SRAS is that it facilitates an individualised approach to intervention, enabling professionals to identify the various relevant 'push' and 'pull' factors underlying a child's non-attendance (West Sussex, 2017). Rather than constructing children and young people as the victims of a disorder, the behavioural discourse ascribes agency to them. The behavioural construct therefore attributes non-attendance as "child-motivated" (Kearney, 2002, p.235). While problematic non-attendance within this discourse is commonly referred to as *school refusal behaviour*, is it also sometimes referred to by the shorter *school refusal* (e.g. Kearney & Sims, 1997; Lyon & Cotler, 2007). This holds the potential for some confusion as the term is understood differently to the way it is most commonly used within the clinical discourse.

The four motivational factors described by Kearney & Silverman (1993) are not the only models within this discourse; Heyne et al., (2019) cite further research suggesting alternative functions,

including three-factor models (Knollmann, Sicking, Hebebrand & Reissner, 2017; cited by Heyne et al. 2019). While the SRAS is designed to be inclusive, aspects of problematic non-attendance may not be well accounted for by this model, as some pupils with poor attendance have been found to have low scores for all factors (Heyne et al., 2019). While Heyne and colleagues (2019) cite this as evidence that the SRAS does not capture all factors contributing to school non-attendance, it may also result from the nature of the scale as a self-report measure. Issues around construct validity and common method variance are oft-cited limitations to this form of data collection (Chan, 2009) alongside the possibility of demand effects. Nevertheless, Nuttall & Woods (2013) note that the SRAS's focus on behaviour may not take sufficient account of individual cognitive and affective factors such as thoughts and fears of failure, which have been found to predict attendance. Further factors which may not be fully accounted for by the SRAS are listed by Heyne et al. (2019) and include subjective health complaints, bullying, sleeping difficulties, learning difficulties, and the support and management available from teachers and parents.

Although the behavioural discourse empowers young people to a greater extent than the clinical discourse, the construction of absence as child-motivated and a behavioural difficulty can be accompanied by judgement. While the clinical discourse relates *truancy* to conduct disorder, within a behavioural discourse *truancy* may be constructed as poor behavioural choices. *Truancy* is described by Elliott (1999) as behaviour resulting from a lack of interest in school. It does not involve anxiety and reflects an "unwillingness to conform to the school's expectations and code of behaviour" (p. 1001). The implication is that where there are no clinical symptoms, non-attendance must be a deliberate choice; children and young people labelled truants are therefore considered culpable for the disruption caused to their own education and to others (Lyon & Cotler, 2007). Southwell (2006) states that truancy is often seen as a sign of defectiveness, and "a badness in its own right [...] a precursor of almost certain delinquency and failure" (p. 92). Such negative constructions are deeply problematic and may result in the criminalisation of children and young people who have unmet needs (Southwell, 2006).

While the behavioural discourse does not pathologise non-attenders, it does nevertheless maintain a within-child construction of the difficulty, albeit with greater emphasis on the impact of interpersonal and environmental factors. The aim of the SRAS is to identify the necessary corrective approach, with the child remaining the focus of intervention.

The primary advantages of a behavioural construction of problematic non-attendance are its inclusivity, its move away from the definitional difficulties that are inherent within the clinical discourse, and the focus on individually tailored intervention. Treatment outcome studies have

suggested that the SRAS is effective in assisting with the identification of suitable interventions (Kearney, 2002).

The implications for intervention within a behavioural discourse tend to be behaviourist in nature. Positive and negative reinforcement, and positive and negative punishment are the classic behaviourist approaches to facilitating change; examples of intervention for parents listed by King & Ollendick et al. (1998) includes instruction on "command giving" and advice regarding a suitable level of firmness (p. 9; King & Ollendick et al. 1998). For schools, training include the correct use of positive and negative reinforcement (King & Ollendick et al. 1998). For children and young people, systematic desensitisation through graded exposure is the usual method (Thambirajah et al., 2008). While King & Ollendick et al., (1998) found that behavioural interventions were, to a limited extent, effective in facilitating a return to school, Thabirajah et al., (2008) note that there is a serious lack of methodologically sound research evidencing the efficacy of behavioural approaches with young people.

2.7 The Systemic Construction of Problematic Non-attendance

A systemic construction of problematic non-attendance does not view the child in isolation but as part of a much broader system (Kearney 2008a). Within a systemic discourse, the difficulty is not constructed as internal to the child, rather it is constructed as the outcome of a systemic failure. This discourse is less ubiquitous in the broader literature than the clinical and behavioural discourses, however it is increasingly prevalent in the field of educational psychology.

The terminology within this discourse is diverse and tends to reflect a conscious avoidance of any within-person attributions. The term *extended school non-attendance* proposed by Pellegrini (2007), for example, focuses attention upon the school and succeeds in describing the absence while avoiding making any causal attributions (Pellegrini, 2007). Similarly, Lauchlan (2003) advocates a multi-systems approach and employs the term *chronic non-attendance,* citing the unhelpful subcategorisation of non-attenders.

There is significant evidence to support the case that "absenteeism is not just about the absentee but also has to do with the home, the school, the neighbourhood in which the home and school are situated and, in sociological terms, society as well" (Carroll, 1997, p.27; cited by Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor, 2000, p. 353). As outlined in the introduction to this review, non-attendance is a socially-created difficulty; Goodman and Scott (2012) make the point that there is no such difficulty

as 'shopping refusal', for example, although this would surely emerge if shopping became a compulsory activity for our children.

The family and home-based factors that have been found to influence school attendance range from bereavement and family stress to parental mental health difficulties, over-protection or under-involvement (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Further, parents may in fact be deliberately facilitating and encouraging their child's non-attendance; this phenomenon is known as *school withdrawal* (Kearney, 2008a, 2008b) and represents a subset of problematic non-attendance that is not well accommodated by either the clinical or behavioural discourses around non-attendance, where the locus for non-attendance is placed within the child.

A further type of attendance difficulty located in the system and which is not recognised by clinical or behavioural discourses is that of *school exclusion* (Heyne et al., 2019). While not traditionally considered to be an attendance difficulty due to its 'excused' nature on the part of the school, Heyne et al. (2019) argue that disciplinary exclusion, when inappropriate, (i.e. outside accepted guidelines; unfair; nontransparent; inconsiderate of the student's needs) be regarded as a school attendance problem." (p. 9). Other reasons that implicate the school system include a stressful school climate, poor pupil-teacher relationships and perceived unfairness (Attwood & Croll, 2006). Southwell (2006) strongly asserts that the problem of non-attendance represents an inadequate school system, ill-equipped or unprepared to meet the young non-attender's needs.

An ecological model for supporting the reintegration of problematic non-attenders is proposed by Nuttall & Woods (2013). This model acknowledges the importance of contextual influences on child attendance; while psychological factors are acknowledged as influential, these are constructed as nested within and related to school, family and wider systemic factors. The "interaction of factors across and within systems" (p.361) is emphasised, as is a "whole school approach" (p. 359) in ensuring effective communication, early intervention and prevention of attendance difficulties.

Beyond the factors concerning the individual child, family and school at the micro-, meso- and exo-systemic levels (Bronfenbrenner 1979) problematic non-attendance may also reflect difficulties in the macro and even chronosystem; in other words, broader societal issues may become manifest in children's reluctance to attend school. One such difficulty is social inequality. As noted in the introduction, findings by Lyon and Cotler (2007) and Attwood and Croll (2006) indicate that children of lower socioeconomic status or from minority ethnic backgrounds may be disproportionately

represented among those with problematic non-attendance, despite being under-represented within the literature.

Morrison, Strang and Braithwaite (2001) present a model which may be helpful when constructing the relationship between individuals and broader institutional structures. It is proposed that the relationship between individuals and institutions are reciprocal; while schools are central in the development of citizens, engagement with institutional systems is also important in upholding the responsibilities owed to citizens by these institutions (Morrison, Strang & Braithwaite, 2001). Morrison et al. (2001) suggest that "given that macrosocial processes of institutions inform and nurture the micro-psychological processes of individuals and vice-versa, what we know about the underpinnings of social life at the micro level should reflect practice at the macro level" (p.196). As examples, Morrison at al. explain that an assumption that people are driven by self-interest leads to the development of behavioural systems, whereas an awareness of a desire for affirming relationships may lead to nurture-based approaches. This model describes a functional relationship between institutions and individuals that meet each other's needs; however, the case of problematic non-attendance may be considered an example where this reciprocity has broken down.

As outlined in the introduction, discourse is considered by Foucauldian analysts to be the means through which we construct knowledge, understand our reality, and enact and reinforce power structures and relationships. Southwell (2006) identifies the struggle for power as lying at the centre of his own experience of truancy, invoking a discourse of suffering and oppression: "truancy is the resistance of an oppression, a criticism of certain aspects of our schools and is connected to our powerlessness to effect change" (p.93). It is noted by Pellegrini (2007) that competing discourses may compound difficulties in cases of problematic non-attendance.

2.8 The Discourse of Problematic Non-Attendance
A greater understanding of the discourse around problematic non-attendance may shed light upon the ways in which power relationships within and beyond the education system influence the opportunities for effecting change at an individual level. Following a search of the psychological and educational literature, three studies were identified that have taken a discourse analysis approach to problematic non-attendance. In a published paper by Yoneyama (2000), the discourse of *tokokyohi*- which translates as *school phobia/refusal*- among both adults and young people is explored. A doctoral thesis from the UK by Baker (2015) examines the impact of adult discourse upon young people's experiences of non-attendance, and a further British doctoral thesis by Clissold (2018)

compares discourses by young people, parents and staff, with particular focus on the construction of 'anxious non-attendance'.

2.8.1 Yoneyama (2000). Yoneyama's (2000) paper describes the discourse surrounding *tokokyohi,* a phenomenon that coincides with Berg et al's (1969) definition of *school refusal.* Yoneyama (2000) further describes it as a spectrum, where involuntary behaviour becomes gradually 'wilful' over time. As with *school refusal,* there is no universally accepted conceptualisation of *tokokyohi,* however it is usually considered to be distinct from *truancy.* Yoneyama draws upon the literature base to explore the differing discourses around non-attendance. The adult discourse was found to construct *tokokyohi* in four differing ways: a) through psychiatric discourse: a mental illness; b) through behavioural discourse: as laziness; c) through citizen's discourse: as resistance to school and d) through socio-medical discourse: as school burnout. Yoneyama posits that these four constructions present children and young people with "an image of how they should perceive themselves" (p.91), making available only the roles of drop-out, mental or physical invalid, school-resister or lazy-self, or more broadly 'social failure', 'social victim' or 'social resister'.

Yoneyama (2000) reports that the discourse from young people displays a transformation in subjectivity. A progression from 'I cannot go to school', through 'I want to but cannot go' and ' I do not go' to eventually a 'discovery of self and reappraisal' reveals that the issue at stake for young people experiencing *tokokyohi* is their sense of selfhood. *Tokokyohi* is constructed as a response to the perceived existential threat posed by a restrictive and controlling education system (Yoneyama, 2000). Yoneyama speculates that the crisis of selfhood and subsequent transformation experienced by young people "has the potential to transform that society" (p.92), as the phenomenon of *tokokyohi* is precipitating a "legitimation crisis" (p. 92) in Japanese culture. The inter-relatedness between the crisis of the self and the crisis within the broader institutional and social systems suggests that a discursive analysis is a fruitful means of parsing and exploring complex systemic issues and relationships.

By considering the interaction between social discourse and the subjective experience of pupils, Yoneyama makes a novel contribution to the literature. While her findings are highly culturally specific and cannot be generalised beyond Japan, they demonstrate the potential that discourse analysis holds for the exploration of social phenomena. Limitations to the study include the lack of detail regarding the epistemological position adopted by the research and the methods of analysis. The lack of transparency regarding the role of the researcher and process by which texts were selected for analysis is a serious limitation that lays the validity of the findings open to question.

2.8.2 Baker (2015). The impact of adult discourse upon the subjective experience of young non-attenders was further explored in a thesis by Baker (2015). The research focused upon the lived experiences of young people considered to be *extended school non-attenders*. This was achieved through an interpretative phenomenological analysis of young people's experiences, alongside an analysis of the discourse of parents, education welfare officers and a teaching assistant. Baker draws upon Willig's (2013) framework for Foucauldian discourse analysis in analysing the adult data. The findings indicate that the most dominant constructions of *extended school non-attendance* among the adult participants were as a medical or mental health issue, as the result of resource or support issues, or as resulting from issues of time and delay. Other prominent constructions included family/parental issues and school-related issues, among others. Baker concludes that the impact of adult discourse upon the lived experiences of young people is highly varied. As is noted by Baker (2015), this conclusion is unsurprising, considering the heterogeneity within the population.

There is no single universally accepted method for undertaking a Foucauldian discourse analysis; each method proposed within the literature varied slightly both in process and in focus. Willig (2013) concedes that her framework for analysis, while drawing upon Foucauldian theory does "not constitute a full analysis in the Foucauldian sense" (p.131). This is due to her approach's orientation towards understanding the subjective experience of the individual, as is encapsulated by her sixth and final stage, titled 'subjectivity'. A more strictly Foucauldian approach might include greater consideration of the historical and institutional influences within the discourse, focusing less upon individual experience in favour of broader social issues such as the discourse's ideological effects (Parker, 1992). By following Willig's methodology and combining it with interpretative phenomenological analysis, Baker's results are unsurprisingly highly individualised. The study offers a rich confirmation of the heterogeneity within the population of non-attenders and the importance of individualised approaches. No implications can be drawn, however, regarding the broader constructive role of the discourse in terms of group identity and UK institutional and social systems, as was offered for Japan by Yoneyama (2000).

2.8.3 Clissold (2018). Research conducted by Clissold (2018) explored the extent to which the term *anxious non-attenders*, the term favoured by a specific Local Authority, was consistent with the constructs of extended non-attendance held by young non-attenders, their parents and their teachers. Unlike Baker, Clissold's primary focus is on the construction of non-attendance, rather than the experience, and adopted a 'discursive psychology' approach, looking for patterns and meaning in situated language use, as opposed to a Foucauldian analysis (Clissold, 2018). Findings from the study tend to support previous findings of heterogeneity; pupil discourses, for example, included four

over-arching discourses, containing 13 further discourses. Overall, Clissold (2018) concluded that while constructs of anxiety were prevalent in the discourse of both school staff and parents, the heterogeneity was such that overall, the term *anxious non-attendance* could not be thought of as fully representative of the complex constructions held within the participant group.

Clissold's findings echo Pellegrini's (2007) observation that constructions between participants were often in conflict with each other. Parents and school staff held each other responsible for the child's difficulties and Clissold (2018) notes that such clashing constructs will pose a systemic challenge to educational psychologists and other professionals working to bring about change. The research also identifies the manifestation of power dynamics within the discourse, where pupils are constructed as a vulnerable group, allowing adults to take a dominant role (Clissold, 2018). Further examination of power through a Foucauldian discourse analysis is identified by Clissold as a fruitful direction for future research.

2.9 Research Questions

This study will take a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of discourse around problematic non-attendance at school. This approach was chosen in order to overcome two barriers to change that have been inherent thus far in the field. The first barrier is the confused conceptualisation of the issue of non-attendance. Rather than constraining the research to a single definition, the radical social-constructionist philosophy adopted by a Foucauldian approach takes discourse itself as the subject, thus avoiding, to a degree, the limitations of nomenclature. The second barrier lies in the heterogeneity of the issue and consequent paucity of generalisable findings. The lack of a universally agreed definition places considerable limitations on what can be achieved through positivistic research methods. Despite being a subject of continued political, professional and academic interest for well over fifty years in the UK, few generalisable conclusions or universally evidenced interventions have been developed. By focusing not upon individual characteristics but upon the constructive power of discourse, a Foucauldian analysis holds the potential for drawing conclusions of a more unifying and transferrable nature.

Drawing upon Foucauldian methodology, this study will analyse the discourse generated by young non-attenders of secondary school age and teaching staff to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 How are schools and non-attenders constructed by the discourse around problematic non-attendance?

RQ2 What power relationships are perpetuated by the discourse and what positions are available?

RQ3 What opportunities for action, intervention and change are available?

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"No one likes what I say": A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Problematic Absenteeism from School.

Part 2: An Empirical Study

Word count: 5,448

<center>**1. Introduction**</center>

All children have the right to an education. This right is enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and in the UK, the majority of children receive this education by attending school. While the primary function of school attendance may be to receive an academic education, it can be argued that school attendance is key to the development of the citizen (Pellegrini, 2007). During their time at school, children also receive an education in cultural values, social expectations and behavioural norms (Pellegrini, 2007).

1.1 The Problem of Non-Attendance

During the 2017/18 academic year in Wales, the overall absence rate in middle and secondary schools was 6.2%. 4.1% of pupils had an attendance rate of below 80% and were classed as 'persistent absentees' (Welsh Government, 2015). Persistent absence from school is a cause for concern due to its association with negative life outcomes; it has been described in the literature as a "critical public health problem" (Kearney, 2008a; p.465). Mental health difficulties, including anxiety and depression, are prominent features of school non-attendance, with evidence to suggest that non-attenders continue to experience psychological difficulties well into adulthood (Flakierska-Praquin, Lindström & Gillberg, 1997; McCune & Hynes, 2005). Although it is yet to be established whether the relationship between school absence and poor mental health is causal (Inglés, Gonzálvez-Maciá, García-Fernández, Vicent, & Martínez-Monteagudo, 2015), anxiety is widely considered to be a key maintaining factor for school absence (Kearney, 2008a; King et al., 1998). Additional adverse associations include lower academic achievement and levels of employment (Lyon & Cotler, 2007; Fremont, 2003; Gregory & Purcell, 2014), relational difficulties with family and peers (King & Bernstein, 2001) and substance misuse (Guttmacher, Weitzman, Kapadia, & Weinberg, 2002; Kearney, 2008a)

1.2 Definition of Problematic Absenteeism

Establishing contributory factors, outcomes and associations in the area of school non-attendance is challenging. This is due to inconsistency within the literature regarding how problematic absenteeism should be defined. While the Welsh Government (2019) currently considers attendance levels below 80% to be indicative of persistent absenteeism, this descriptive term is unrelated to the concept of absenteeism as a psychological difficulty. Within the research literature, there is variation regarding the features of school absenteeism that are considered indicative of a psychological concern. Attempts have been made to classify sub-types of non-attendance, giving rise to differential descriptors such as *truancy* (often conceived of as wilful absence indicative of

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delinquency) and *school refusal* (a term usually used to refer to absenteeism resulting from emotional distress) (Heyne et al., 2019). Other terms within the field include *school phobia* (Berg et al. 1969), *chronic absenteeism* (Lauchlan, 2003) and *extended non-attendance* (Pellegrini, 2007). The differentiation between *school refusal* and *truancy* is unclear. Making differential diagnoses between behavioural difficulties and psychological difficulties fundamentally problematic; it is no surprise that when tested in a study by Bools, Foster, Brown & Berg (1990) some non-attenders met the criteria for both descriptors while others met the criteria for neither. Terminology within the literature tends to be used inconsistently and sometimes interchangeably; *truancy* for example may be used to encompass all unwarranted absences from school (Berg, 1997) or to absences characterised by anti-social behaviour and lack of interest in schoolwork (Fremont, 2003). *School refusal* often refers to school absence characterised by emotional upset, but is sometimes used in lieu of the longer phrase *School refusal behaviour*, which is intended to encompass all problematic absenteeism (Heyne et al., 2019).

1.3 Implications for the Application of Psychology

The definitional confusion around attendance difficulties has been implicated in the lack of a robust evidence base for approaches to intervention (Elliott, 1999; Kearney & Albano, 2004). While cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is considered the most well-evidenced approach (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008); a meta-analysis of the evidence base for CBT by Maynard, Heyne, Brendel, Bulanda, Thompson, and Pigott (2018) notes the diversity within the field and a paucity of rigorous methodologies. Small, unrepresentative samples have led to bias within the literature base more generally (Maynard et al, 2018), particularly in regard to ethnic, racial and economic diversity (Lyon & Cotler, 2007). Thus, what might be perceived as the purely linguistic or theoretical problem of definition can have serious implications for the effective and socially-just application of psychology by educational psychologists.

1.4 A Social Constructionist Approach

While attempts to develop a universally-accepted conceptualisation and definitive criteria for problematic non-attendance have resulted in a confused literature-base, a non-essentialist approach to understanding this difficulty may be more helpful. As compulsory *education* was not introduced in the UK until the late 19th Century (Gillard, 2018), school non-attendance as a problem has its roots in societal expectations and conventions and may be considered a socially-constructed difficulty. Furthermore, going to school is an activity that is highly institutionalised and regulated; the families of children who do not attend school regularly may be fined by the state (Gov.uk, 2019) while pupils

who have good attendance are rewarded in school (OFSTED, 2013). A social constructionist approach to researching non-attendance is indicated on two counts: firstly, by acknowledging non-attendance as a socially-situated and socially-constructed problem, it may be understood in a way that is more sensitively applied to practice. Secondly, it allows a systemically-orientated view of non-attendance, together with, and an exploration of, the way in which systems of power, manifested through discourse, regulate opportunities for action and intervention. This stance is known as 'macro' social constructionism (Burr, 2015).

1.5 Discourse

Social-constructionists view language and discourse as key to the construction of knowledge and individual reality (Burr, 2015). The analysis of discourse offers an opportunity to explore this process. Following a search of the literature, three studies applying discourse analysis to the subject of problematic non-attendance were identified. Yoneyama (2000) applied a discourse-analytic method to the literature around problematic school absence (*tokokyohi)* in Japan. Her findings describe a transformation in the subjective experience of young non-attenders, from a position of incapacity to one of self-discovery and the critical reappraisal of school. Positioning her findings in the context of a Japanese culture, Yoneyama (2009) concludes that this counter-discourse from young people constitutes a legitimation crisis for schools in Japan. While the study findings are not generalisable beyond Japanese culture, this study demonstrates the value of applying discourse-analytic techniques to examine how opposing discourses compete to position non-attenders and schools. Within a UK context, Clissold (2018) employed a discursive approach to explore the construction of problematic non-attendance among school staff, non-attenders and parents. She identified conflicting constructions among participants and the tendency for some discourses to dominate over others. Clissold concludes that a further study focusing on the power inherent within discourse would offer a more in-depth illumination of this process (Clissold, 2018).

A Foucauldian approach was adopted by Baker (2015) in a hybrid study that explored the impact of adult discourses upon young non-attenders' lived experiences (analysed through interpretative phenomenological analysis). Findings highlighted the individual nature of personal constructions of non-attendance, while also highlighting the predominance of clinical discourse. As Baker's (2015) study was orientated towards the lived experience of non-attendance, the 'macro'-level social construction of non-attendance from a systemic perspective was not explored.

1.6 The Current Study

Despite a growing interest in discursive analytic techniques in Educational Psychology (Pomerantz, 2008), few studies have taken this approach to the question of problematic non-attendance. While research within the UK context has begun to explore the impact of discourse upon individual experiences (e.g. Baker, 2015; Clissold, 2018), there exists a gap in the literature regarding the role played by discourse in opening up or closing down opportunities for action and change. The current study will address this issue by employing a Foucauldian methodology to the analysis of discourse around non-attendance. The research questions are:

RQ1 How are schools and non-attenders constructed by the discourse around problematic non-attendance?

RQ2 What power relationships are perpetuated by the discourse and what positions are available?

RQ3 What opportunities for action, intervention and change are available?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Two participant groups were chosen for this study: young people aged 11-16 and school pastoral staff. The 11-16 age-group was selected because adolescence is one of two periods where school non-attendance is most common. Onset peaks upon entry to Primary school aged 5-6 and entry to secondary school aged 11-13 (Pellegrini, 2007), with research suggesting that the majority referred for clinical treatment are in the 11-16 age bracket (Goodman & Scott, 2012; Last & Strauss, 1990; McShane, Walter & Rey, 2001).

While the number of clinical referrals may not necessarily reflect prevalence, it may be an indication that non-attendance is increasingly complex (Heyne & Sauter, 2012) and less easily managed by families and schools when children reach adolescence. Goodman and Scott (2012) suggest that as children become older they are less easily physically compelled to attend school; this may explain the increased referral rate and the focus on this age-group within the educational psychology literature, e.g. Baker & Bishop (2015), Billington (2018), Gregory & Purcell (2014), Nuttall & Woods (2013).

Staff within a pastoral role were selected as the second participant group, due to their familiarity with issues around school non-attendance. It was desirable that participants would already be engaged with the discourse around non-attendance in their professional role, due to the analytic focus of this study.

A total of five young people and three members of staff consented to participate in the study. Participants were recruited from five separate schools. The distribution of participants between schools is shown in Table 1. Two were mainstream secondary schools and three were alternative provision settings for young people with social, emotional or mental health needs.

Table 1
Study participants by type of school.

	Members of Staff	Young People
School A - Mainstream Secondary	1	1
School B – Mainstream Secondary		1
School C – Secondary SEMH Provision	1	2
School D – Secondary SEMH Provision	1	
School E – Secondary SEMH Provision		1

2.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Cardiff University Board of Ethics prior to recruitment for this study. Non-attendance is strongly associated with emotional distress (Heyne & Sauter, 2012) and many researchers consider anxiety to be an essential characteristic in identifying problematic non-attendance (e.g. Heyne & Sauter, 2012). For this reason, the study was flexible in design in order to be responsive to the needs of young participants. Foremost importance was given to the three main ethical concerns in research with children and young people, namely informed consent, power relationships and confidentiality (Kirk, 2007). Participants were given the opportunity to meet the researcher up to three times. In line with recommendations by Hill (2005), the first meeting was introductory, providing young people with the opportunity to give informed consent in person. It also provided an opportunity for the researcher and participant to begin to develop a rapport (Spratling, Coke & Minick, 2012). Data collection occurred during the second session, while the third session was optional. The third session was offered due to the ethical principle of beneficence, ensuring the least possible harm to participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). As the research engaged with young people who may be facing a chronic difficulty or mental health problems, it was important that maximum support should be offered. The research held the potential to prompt distressing thoughts and feelings, or conversely to plant seeds of positive change. In either instance, the option of a follow-on session with a parent or teacher ensured that the young person received the necessary support in the wake of their interview.

The issue of anonymity was important to safeguard the identity of participants. Some young people and staff members were recruited from the same schools. While this was not made known to them, the possibility that they would become aware of each other's involvement is reasonably high. Likewise, during the research process the local authority became aware of which schools I was

visiting. Participant identifiers have therefore been omitted from this empirical paper, to protect participants from being identified via a process of elimination. Data extracts are marked 'P' or 'S' to indicate whether the speaker is a staff member or young person. For a table detailing the ethical issues and safeguards put in place to minimise risk and maximise benefits to participants, please refer to Appendix B

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The literature contains varying criteria for when non-attendance becomes problematic (Hawkrigg & Payne, 2014). For example, Kearney (2003) suggests >50% absence within a two-week period, whereas other studies screen participants for psychological difficulties using a questionnaire (e.g. Egger, Costello & Angold, 2003) or use local authority referral systems (e.g. Tolin et al., 2009). The criterion selected for this study was 80% attendance or below, as this is currently the definition of persistent non-attendance for schools in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019).

Baker and Bishop (2015) note that governmental definitions of persistent absence do not necessarily correspond with the populations described within the research literature as school refusers, school phobic, extended non-attenders or similar. However, as explored in the introductory chapter, this paper posits that non-attendance can only be conceived as a difficulty in the context of societal expectations regarding acceptable attendance; expectations which are rooted in governmental policy. As a discourse analysis, it was important that the phenomenon under investigation was meaningful to staff and pupils and reflected the experience of participants; sensitivity to context is also important in ensure quality in research (Yardley, 2000; please refer to Appendix C). The Welsh Government's definition of persistent non-attendance, as the most widely known and used definition in Welsh schools, was therefore adopted in this study as a means of selecting participants and defining problematic non-attendance. Data collection was undertaken during the autumn term, therefore young people whose attendance was 80% or lower at the end of the preceding school term (summer 2018) were considered eligible for the study.

School staff were eligible to participate if they were currently employed in a pastoral role and had experience of working with non-attenders and their families. Non-teaching staff were eligible to take part, however all those who opted in were teachers.

Following gatekeeper permission, young people and staff who met the eligibility criteria were identified jointly by school senior management and their education welfare officer. Information was distributed through the school gatekeeper and participants opted into the study by contacting the researcher directly. Copies of information sheets and consent forms are available in Appendices D-H.

2.4 Materials

Young participants were given the opportunity to draw a life-map (Appendix I) as a visual support when sharing their experiences. This draws upon the life history grid (Anderson & Brown, 1980) and the Map Action Planning System (MAPS) by Forest, Pearpoint, & O'Brien (1996). The life history grid invites participants to record key events in a chronological grid, to support the narration of life events (Anderson & Brown, 1980). The life map in this study adopted the chronological principle, with information being recorded graphically along a picture of a path. There was flexibility regarding the number of points. Participants were encouraged to plot events, places, relationships or any other key points to aid them in discussing their experiences. Additionally, the 'Who am I' and 'The Dream' headings were included from the MAPS tool by (Forest, Pearpoint & O'Brian, 1996). These headings were presented in boxes at opposite corners of the life map page, with space to mind-map, illustrate or list ideas under these headings. Conversation around the Who am I box formed the introduction to the interview, while the Dream was explored towards the end. This helped to ensure that the interview concluded positively and with hope looking towards the future. The life maps were optional and were not included in the analysis. Using the life map was optional, due to the flexible nature of the study design.

2.5 Design and Procedure

This study is a Foucauldian discourse analysis, sitting within a social constructionist paradigm. Upon receiving signed consent forms, data were collected through unstructured interviews, one hour in length. Each adult participant met the researcher on a single occasion lasting up to one hour. Each young participant was given the opportunity to meet the researcher up to three times. All participants provided informed consent before meeting the researcher and could withdraw from the study at any time. Age-appropriate information sheets were produced for young people (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007; Roberts, 2000), using accessible language and featuring a photograph of the researcher (Appendix D).

The first session with the young participants was introductory and lasted between 10 to 20 minutes. Its purpose was to introduce the life-map tool, begin to develop a rapport and offer additional information if requested.

Data collection took place during the second session, lasting up to one hour. Two young people chose to use the life-map tool, the other three declined. This session was audio-recorded using an encrypted digital recording device.

A third follow-up visit was offered to all young people, lasting up to one hour. The purpose of this was to ensure that the life-map activity had been satisfactorily concluded from the participant's

point of view and that they had been given sufficient opportunity to discuss and explore their hopes and plans for their future. Only one participant accepted the offer of a third visit.

Staff interviews were conducted in a single session lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. The interview was guided by a loose interview schedule (Appendix J).

2.6 Ontology and Epistemology

The study is positioned within a relativist ontology and social-constructionist epistemology. The methodology was Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), which is rooted in post-structuralist and deconstructionist philosophy. In the field of psychological research, the corresponding epistemological stance is that of 'macro' social constructionism (Burr, 2015). While 'micro' social-constructionism posits that knowledge and meaning are actively constructed by people, macro social constructionism proposes that institutional practices and systems of power hold influence over the type of knowledge that can be constructed (Burr, 2015) through the mechanism of discourse. While a critical realist perspective is possible when conducting FDA, a social constructionist stance was taken as it acknowledges the influence of the researcher in constructing findings (Willig, 2013)

2.7 Data Analysis

Consistency between theory, methodology and analysis is key to ensuring quality in qualitative research (Yardley, 2000). The epistemological and ontological assumptions and understanding of the researcher were therefore taken into account when designing the analytic process. The analysis comprised steps taken primarily from Willig (2013) and from Parker (1992) (See Appendices K and L for further details of these analytic methods). Willig (2013) positions her six stages of analysis between the 'detailed and wide-ranging' (p.131) method proposed by Parker (1992) and the shorter method by Kendall and Wickham (1999) which nonetheless presupposes 'a more advanced conceptual understanding' of the method (p.131). Parker's approach is most closely aligned with Foucauldian theory, including consideration of the historical and political origins of discourse and its relationship to institutions, power and ideology (Hook, 2007). Willig's approach, however, places greater emphasis upon the relationship between discourse and practice, exploring the implications of discourse for individual subjectivity (Willig, 2013).

The steps taken were as follow:

Table 2
The Analytical Approach to Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Stage	Description	Rationale	Procedure

| 1. Identify discursive objects | Parker (1992) explains that "Discourse is about objects" (p.8). Undertaking a discourse analysis involves focusing on language as a representational practice, by which phenomena are brought into being. 'The School' and 'The non-attender' were identified as objects in the data when they were the primary focus of what was being discussed. Data were coded in yellow where the non-attender was the object and blue when the school was the object. Where both were objects within the same passage, data were coded in green to represent both school and young person. This was done in order to retain the context around coded data and avoid fragmentation. These passages were analysed twice, in relation to both the school and non-attender as objects. This approach was taken due to the 'macro' focus on meaning and context in Foucauldian discourse analysis; fragmentation of the text would lend itself more to a linguistic level of analysis. An example of this stage of analysis is included in Appendix M. | This stage of analysis draws upon the third stage of Parker's (1992) 20 stages of analysis: *Asking which objects are described* (p.9) (see Appendix L). It was necessary to identify the data most relevant to each of my chosen discursive objects (the school and the non-attender) before embarking on Willig's framework for analysis. | This stage was undertaken electronically. The coded transcripts were then used as reference points during later stages of the analysis. The transcripts remained intact, as dividing the data into separate documents would result in fragmentation and a loss of context. For examples please see Appendices M and N |
| 2. Coding interpretive repertoires. | Interpretative repertoires are systems of terminology and | This stage draws from the first stage of Willig's (2013) framework for analysis: | This stage was initially undertaken using NVivo |

	figures of speech that construct an object in a given way (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2013). Within each transcript, interpretative repertoires relating to the discursive objects were identified and coded. This resulted in four groups of repertoires: School staff talking about non-attenders. School staff talking about school. Non-attenders talking about school. Non-attenders talking about themselves.	'Identify discursive constructions'(p.131) (see Appendix K). It also continues to draw on the Parker's third stage and also his fourth stage (Appendix L): 'Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse' (p.9). The focus upon interpretative repertoires draws upon the work of Potter & Wetherell (1987).	software. However, when reaching later stages of the analysis it was necessary to work with physical notes, therefore the process was repeated using post-it notes to identify interpretive repertoires within the transcripts. Please see Appendix N stage 2 for an example of this process.
3. Cross-reference transcripts to identify common constructions	The interpretive repertoires were cross-referenced to identify common constructions of schools and non-attenders across both participant groups.	Like stage two, this stage also draws upon Willig's first stage of analysis. The quantity of data to be analysed in relation to two discursive objects necessitated a multi-levelled and iterative approach to the identification of discursive constructions. For a reflection on the role of the researcher, please see Part 3, section 8.3.	This stage was a highly reflexive and iterative process. The data were separated into four groups: young people's constructs of themselves, young people's constructs of school, staff's constructs of non-attenders and staff constructs of school. Within each group, a series of codes (e.g. letters, numbers, symbols, colours) were developed to cross-reference related repertoires and identify common constructions (Appendix N, stage 3).
4. Constructions were located within wider discourse.	The discursive constructions of school and non-attenders were located within broader discourses, including for	Stage four followed Willig's second stage of analysis: 'Locate constructions within wider discourses' (p.132).	In stage 4, repertoires that drew upon the same wider discourses were clustered

	example: economic, health, moral and developmental discourses. A reflexive approach was taken (see Chapter 3, section 8.3).		together. This was also a highly reflexive process (See Part 3, section 8.3). For examples from this process, please see Appendix N stage 4).
5. Identifying subject positions and the actions available to them within these repertoires.	The positions and actions available for subjects within the discourse were identified and explored using Harré's Positioning Theory (2008). This process was conducted on the most dominant discursive constructions. For further information about this decision, see Chapter 3 section 8.3.	Stage five draws upon Willig's fourth and fifth stages of analysis (p.132 of Willig, 2013) and Parker's fifth, sixth and seventh stages (pp. 10-12, 1992). The framework for analysis offered by Willig and Parker was expanded to include aspects of positioning theory as proposed by Harré (2008). This includes looking at the illocutionary force (social significance of what is said, at the time when it is said), distribution of rights and duties (of the subjects within the construction) and the story line (what narrative is being supported by this construction) (Harré, 2008). For discussion about the omission of Willig's third stage, please see chapter 3, section 7.	Stages 5 – 7 were completed electronically, by completing the analysis tables alongside close consideration of Harré (2008). Please See Appendix N stages 5-7 for examples of this process.
6. Consider the power relations within the discourse and the ideological effects of the discourse.	This stage involved considering who stands to lose and gain from the employment of the discourse: which view of the world is reinforced and which are supressed?	This stage of the analysis draws on Parker's (1992) stages eight and 15-18. A consideration of Parker's final steps (19&20) which focus on how discourse "connects with other discourses to sanction oppression" (p.20) and how this has developed through history, is not included. Neither is Willig's stage six, "subjectivity" (p.133) (see Chapter 3, section 10).	

7. Consider implications for practice.	What opportunities for positive change are made available within this discourse and how might an educational psychologist facilitate this?	This final stage is specific to my research questions and as such does not draw directly from either of the frameworks by Willig or Parker. Insofar as it considers opportunities for action it is similar to Willig's stage five; however this final stage assumes a critical stance. While acknowledging that educational psychologists are themselves participants in discourse and engage in the co-construction of issues around non-attendance, this final stage asks what actions may become available to an educational psychologist who is taking a critical approach to the discourse and seeking to facilitate change.	

3. Results

In reporting the findings of this study it is important to acknowledge that they must be framed by the researcher's own knowledge and experience. When conducting a discourse analysis, the separation of researcher from the research is impossible (Parker, 1992; Taylor, 2001). The ontological orientation of this study posits that knowledge is socially constructed by discourse; therefore the participatory role of the researcher must be recognised. A reflexive appraisal of the analytical process is offered in Part 3.

19 discursive constructions were identified during analysis. Full results tables for research question one, including all coded data are included in Appendix O. All 19 constructions are reported in response to the first research question: 'How are schools and non-attenders constructed by the discourse?'. The seven most prominent constructions have been selected for in-depth analysis to answer the second and third research questions: 'What power relationships are perpetuated by the discourse and what positions are available?' And: 'What opportunities for action, intervention and change are available within the discourse?'. The full results for research questions two and three are available in Appendix P.

The dominance of each construction was identified according to two factors: representativeness (out of a total number of eight participants, seven or eight demonstrated these constructions) and prevalence (20 coded extracts or more). Information about the distribution of the data is included in Appendix Q. A discussion regarding this decision-making process is included in Part 3, section 8.2

3.1   Research Question One

How are schools and non-attenders constructed by the discourse around problematic non-attendance?

3.1.1 Constructions of school. Seven constructions of school were found to be prevalent in the discourse of young people and staff. These were: a place where hard work should pay off; a place of control; a place of judgement; a site of public identity; a place that should care for and support young people; a place that is unenjoyable, and a place that has a duty of care.

P = Pupil participant
S = Staff participant
R = Researcher
… = Hesitation (<1 second)
[Pause]   =   Pause 1-3 seconds
[long pause] =   Pause 3< seconds
[Redacted]   =   Information redacted for confidentiality reasons.
Underline   =   Slight emphasis
CAPITALS   =   Heavy emphasis
"speech marks" = Quotation

Figure 2: Key for illustrative extracts.

A place where hard work should pay off. This construct drew upon an economic discourse and depicted school as a place where effort was invested in the hope of consequent gains. Often though not always financial, the school was constructed as a place where the effort either paid off or did not; the value of school was judged on this basis:

Table 3
A Place where hard work should pay off

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A place where hard work should pay off	*P- Look at all these accountants, they would have not got anything if they didn't go to school and listened.* *S- we've got to get them to realise that qualifications <u>are important</u> and they <u>will</u> shape their future .* *R- How are you planning on getting through the next seven months?*

	P- I'll have to knuckle down now.

A place of control. This construction of school encompassed subordinate constructs of the school as authoritarian, rigid, rule-driven and but also lacking the capacity to act with autonomy. Participants constructed it as a place where they were dictated to and where they could exercise no personal autonomy:

Table 4
A Place of Control

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A Place of Control	P- Like I said, no one likes what I say. R-Sorry? P-No-one likes what I say. They can't deal with the truth. They get all mad at me for it. P- It's about like, you HAVE to do this, you, like, when they tell you you HAVE to, S- And the things that had triggered him was that the teachers, again, with that rigid approach P- because I go to college every week, being there, and comparing it to school, it's just so much like a prison here.

A place of judgement. Participants constructed schools as places where they were judged according to binary constructs such as good/bad, right/wrong. Schools took the role of arbiter for justice and were judged to be fair or unfair in their execution of this role:

Table 5
A Place of Judgement

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A Place of Judgement	R- So what does success mean to you? P- Proving everyone wrong. They say, they say that you need school… you do, but you can achieve anything if you believe in it. P- Um, well me [friend 1] and [friend 2] are known as the bad girls or whatever, […] R- Who do you think thinks about you that way? P- Everyone in school [laughs] R- Even teachers? P- Yeah R- Really? P- Yeah you know like every year has it… like, the bad boys and the bad girls. Like, we're known as the bad girls. S-And if somebody's struck down with an illness for a fortnight because they've got glandular fever or whatever, then that's not fair either because they WOULD have been in school but they were ill, and they were genuinely ill.

A site of public identity. This construction saw school as a place where individuals become publicly 'known'. This could happen through group membership, perceptions of belonging, social demographic, inquiry by others or expression of individuality in a public space. This aspect of being at school was valued by some but disliked by others:

Table 6

A Site of Public Identity

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A Site of Public Identity	P- I mean because [this school – name redacted] is a bit different to [other school- name redacted] the people-wise. R- Is it? P- Yeah like so… [other school] is like more naughtier kids and [this school] is like more [redacted] kids and better behaved. R- Okay P- People would say that me, [friend 1] and [friend 2] belong in [other school]. S- in nice schools you see kids who are individual and who can be individual, in edgy schools they more… conform, and they wanna be <u>normal.</u> P- Because none of the teachers knew. And [name] that's the student, that one person knew. And it felt good cause nobody treated me differently

A place that should care for and support young people. Schools were constructed as being in a relationship with pupils. The nature of the relationship was akin to a parent/child relationship, where the senior partner should show nurture and care. Schools were constructed as either fulfilling or falling short in this role:

Table 7

A Place That Should Care For and Support Young People

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A place that should care for and support young people.	S- a lot of kids, if you take off, take things away from them, they don't really care, because they haven't got much anyway, um… so it's all about relationships P-Most of them fucking hate me. I know they do. P-They acted like they didn't even care and it's like, really, you're supposed to HELP people not make them feel like shit.

A place that is unenjoyable School was constructed in terms of their enjoyability. Within this construction, 'good' schools were fun, whereas 'bad' schools were boring or pressurised:

Table 8 *A place that is Unenjoyable*	
Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
A place that is unenjoyable	R- Okay. Why couldn't you be arsed? P- Just boring. It has to be a fun lesson. S- If you'd told me that I HAD to study Geography because Media Studies wasn't on the timetable, I would not have been happy. So, schools are having to get rid of the elements that are making education really enjoyable for pupils S- I think as well [pause] school needs to provide positive experiences for the pupils so they do engage, and so they DO feel positive about going to lessons

Having a duty of care. This construction was distinct from the construct of a school as being a place that should care for and support pupils. This construction did not draw on a relational discourse but one of safeguarding; schools were seen as responsible for the safety of young people:

Table 9
School Have a Duty of Care

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
School have a duty of care	*S- I think basically, with the whole confidentiality thing, in our lessons I think we're letting our pupils down by keeping things so confidential. You know, the same with drugs and alcohol […] if I don't know that so-and-so's got a friend who takes drugs, how can I keep that person safe?* *S- But of course we were like a safety net, so if it wasn't going to work, we were going to pick him up and try to figure it out.* *S- You know weekly safe and well visits to make sure that we've seen the child, make sure that we've done all we can with regards to safeguarding*

3.1.2 Constructions of non-attenders

In the process of 'becoming'. Non-attenders were constructed as being in a state of development. They were orientated in terms of the past and future, with the possibility of change as an inherent part of who they are:

Table 10
Non-attenders are in the Process of Becoming

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are in the process of becoming	*P- I'm just proud of myself. Cause looking there and seeing how far I've progressed* *P- But if you don't go through the stuff that you went through, you wouldn't be the person that you are today.* *S- I have heard of a pupil who received a letter um, about attendance, and he's turned around and said 'dad says I have to be here, so I'm here,* *and I'll be coming in tomorrow', incidentally I saw him today, haven't seen him on a Wednesday for weeks, um, but then … is it permanent or is it short lived? Will it be forgotten again next week?*

Psychologically problematic. This construction of non-attenders saw them as the source of their own psychological distress. Repertoires contributing to this construction included 'having issues', being 'moody', emotionality and possessing weak or strong personal characteristics:

Table 11
Non-attenders as Psychologically Problematic

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders as psychologically problematic	*P- it wasn't specifically about school it was just about everything to do with like my anxiety. So like we spoke about my bereavement issues, maybe problems I have with myself, problems I have with other people, self confidence, and they've helped me let go of a lot of grief.* *S-she's very withdrawn, she's physically very withdrawn, um, she's also got her hair over her face so there are obviously some deep seated issues there* *P-And be in school upset and angry all the time, and I just, I didn't want to be here then. At all, so.*

Members of a social system. This construction drew upon the discourse of belonging. Non-attenders were constructed as part of a wider network of individuals and were evaluated in terms of how well they were accepted or 'fitted in':

Table 12

Non-attenders as Members of a Social System

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders as members of a social system	*S- how they fit in, you know, if somebody's not very academic, they see some of their friends, and maybe in year seven when people are a little bit more equal, academically, they're all starting in the same place… and they see some of their friends will be making advances faster than them.* *P- long term it probably wouldn't help cause I didn't have any friendship groups, I never went out after school to meet friends, I just wanted an isolated lifestyle, which I really wanted but which probably wasn't best for me.* *P- School's not for everybody.* *R-Do you feel school's not for you then?* *P- Looks like it don't it? I just can't get on with any teachers.*

Acceptable or unacceptable. Within this construction, non-attenders were categorised as either acceptable or unacceptable. interpretative repertoires contributing to this construction included being good/bad or at fault: frequently, they were constructed as both. It drew upon a moralistic discourse:

Table 13

Non-attenders as Acceptable or Unacceptable

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders as acceptable or unacceptable	*P- I'm an alright person, and then sometimes I'm not.* *P- I was doing alright, and that just threw me off and I was evil.* *P- I don't like knowing what's wrong with me and like, like people telling me what's wrong with me and stuff.*

Unwell. This construction drew upon the discourse of health and saw non-attenders as being unwell. This construction was distinct from that of being 'psychologically problematic' by virtue of the clinical interpretative repertoires that contributed to this construction, including that of disorder and illness:

Table 14

Non-attenders as unwell

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders as unwell	*P- Because I have… anxiety, depression, um, schizophrenia, but not very severe, and I think I have bipolar because I've got all the symptoms.* *P- I got into CAMHS. We'd previously tried to do that a couple of months before but I wasn't accepted because I wasn't sick enough* *S- ideas of what they need to do when they DO come back after an extended time off. Being whether they're non attenders purposefully or whether they've been ill.*

Products of their social environment. This construct of non-attenders contextualised them in terms of broader systems and environments; subordinate constructions saw non-attenders as symptoms of a problem within either the family, school or society in general:

Table 15
Non-attenders are Products of Their Social Environment

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are products of their social environment	S- It depends on the family attitude towards education, depends on peer group, depends on society in general S- Maybe, um… societal things, like holidays, or maybe a poor family may not get these opportunities and they just see these changes happening as they go up the school … that makes them maybe more isolated S- in some situations, um, the system has let them down to the point where they don't even know how to sit in a lesson for an hour

Constructed in relation to others. Non-attenders were constructed here in terms of their responses to, relationships with and attitudes towards other people. Subordinate constructions included being affected by others, being worthy of respect and either hating or feeling indifferent towards school:

Table 16
Non-attenders Were Constructed in Relation to Others

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are constructed in relation to others	P- A I think it was just, yeah, they were just <u>older</u> than me, I was the <u>youngest</u> out of <u>all</u> of them. So I was just really influenced with what they were doing all the time. I just liked them, I thought they were cool so like, you know, just be like them. P- I had a lot of, you know, I had a lot of support, […] but I had a lot of stable, you know, crutches, and I had a really big group of friends P- HORRIBLE to me, he calls me a slag, a tramp and everything, like, <u>really?</u> REALLY? REALLY [Shouting] …. It doesn't really bother me though to be honest.

Less able. An academic discourse was drawn upon to construct non-attenders as falling short in regard to the abilities or skills needed for academic success:

Table 17
Non-attenders are Less Able

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are less able	P- It's just, I'm REALLY bad at thinking about stuff. P- and you know, I wasn't very academic P- I wasn't very smart when I was younger, earlier in education, and I just couldn't really engage.

Individual. Non-attenders were constructed in terms of their individuality distinctiveness and deviation from the norm in a school setting:

Table 18
Non-attenders are Individuals

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are individuals	S- I think it can only be dealt with on a case-by-case situation, S- every individual I've worked with here, um, needs something different. Um … and they need the time and the patience from staff, but much earlier than they get it from <u>us</u>, if that makes sense? S- and I think it's more, it's individualised, for example we've got a young man who's come out of school and, he's, he's a great young man… and we've not really had <u>any</u> problems with him. R- Mhmm S- But the school really struggled with him […] for SOME the rules don't fit them, GENERALLY those ones, they need a slightly different rule.

Powerless. This construction of non-attenders focused overtly on their powerlessness. The subordinate constructs of being controlled and being confined were combined within this construct:

Table 19
Non-attenders are Powerless

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders are powerless	P- I wasn't allowed to socialise with anyone so the people that I'd actually talk to about how I'm feeling and everything, I couldn't see them. P- Just don't like being told what to do. R- How will you feel once you have actually left? P- Oh… just FREE. Just the FACT that I won't have to come here ever again.

Insubordinate. Non-attenders were constructed as insubordinate and resistant to authority. Within this construct, non-attenders behaviour was seen as a reactionary choice. Interpretative repertoires include retaliation, disruption and refusal:

Table 20
Non-attender as Insubordinate

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attender as Insubordinate	S- you got pupils who just do not want to engage however much you um, create bespoke timetable for them, um, maybe it's the idea of "I will not go to school" P- I wouldn't say it's a difficulty, to get out of bed, I just, just generally refuse to get out of bed. P- I felt like when I come to school like the teachers were gonna talk to me like that I'll just, do it back.

Capable. This positive construction of non-attenders reflected hope for the future and a sense of being in control:

Table 21
Non-attenders as Capable

Discursive Construction:	Illustrative extracts:
Non-attenders as capable	P- it won't be the end of the world if something bad DOES happen, because I can do other things to overcome that.

	P- They say, they say that you need school… you do, but you can achieve anything if you believe in it. *P- it wasn't there to solve all of my problems, I need to solve all of my problems with help, but that was just to take away the edge and balance the chemicals I guess*

3.1.3 Summary of results for research question one. Overall, the constructions of school were wide-ranging but inter-related. Its construction as a place where hard work pays off, a place of care and support, a place of entertainment and a place with a safeguarding duty of care all relate to the extent to which schools meet pupil needs. The constructs of school as a place of judgement and control invoke a sense of conflict, whereas it's construction as a site of public identity is created would tend to support Pellegrini's (2007) assertion that school is where citizens are created. Details regarding the distribution of the data and the prevalence of each construct may be seen in Appendix Q.

3.2 Research Questions Two and Three

What power relationships are perpetuated by the discourse and what positions are available? What opportunities for action, intervention and change are available?

The seven most prevalent discursive constructions are of:

- School as a place where hard work should pay off;
- School as a place of control;
- School as a site of public identity;
- School as judgemental;
- School as a place that should care for and support young people;
- Non-attenders as 'becoming';
- Non-attenders as psychologically problematic.

Each of these constructions was analysed in depth, drawing on Positioning Theory (Harré, 2008). The illocutionary force, distribution of rights and duties, story line and power relationships were explored in depth, with primary consideration given to the actions that were made available by these. The opportunities for change are presented in Table 22. Findings for research questions two and three are summarised at the end of this section; a full analysis of the data is offered in Appendix P.

Table 22

Summary of results for Research Question 3

Discourse:	Construction:	Opportunities for facilitating change:
Economic	School is a place where hard work pays off.	Meeting young people's immediate needs. Re-framing of success, failure, and 'the future'. A consultation approach.
Judicial	School is a place of Judgement	Communication and relationship-building. Person-centred practice. Restorative approaches.
Identity	School is a place of public identity	Analysis of soft systems within school to facilitate a 'safe space'.
Relational	School is a place that should care for and support young people.	Use relational discourse in identifying change issues: where pupil-staff relationships are *not* strained. Avoid relational discourse: to identify change issues where pupil-staff relationships *are* strained. Explore teacher factors e.g. stress.
Subjugation	School is a place of control	Solution focussed approaches and motivational interviewing Consultation models of service delivery.
Psychological	Non-attenders are psychologically problematic.	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
Developmental	Non-attenders are in the process of 'becoming'.	Holistic approaches Person-centred approaches Solution-focussed approaches.

3.2 Summary of results for research questions two and three.

The positions and power relationships within each of the seven primary discursive constructions hold a variety of opportunities for actions and implications for EP practice.

Within an economic discourse, school staff and young people were each positioned as determining the other's success. While school acted as gatekeeper to the future career and achievement of young people, young people's engagement as consumers of education signalled the value placed on the opportunities provided at school and of the work undertaken by staff. Within this discourse, a collaborative, consultative approach may therefore be beneficial, alongside further exploration and possible reframing of constructs such as 'success'.

The Judicial discourse positioned schools as legal authorities and administrators of justice. Young people on the other hand claimed positions of moral authority and resistors of injustice. Power struggles revolved around binary concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, and fair and unfair, as individuals sought to legitimise their own positions by delegitimising the position of other party. The implications for facilitating change include relationship-building and developing an understanding of the experiences of others. Person-centred and restorative approaches may therefore be helpful.

Discourses of identity positioned school as at odds with young people's sense of identity and belonging. Tension arose between private, public, individual and collective identities and the boundaries between them. Young people were positioned as subjects to be known while staff were positioned as responsible for gaining this knowledge. Systemic changes may be necessary in order to provide an environment where identity formation and development can be experienced safely and respectfully; both young people and staff need to feel safe and respected before they can become known by others. Analysis of the soft systems within schools may be helpful in identifying changes that will enhance the social and emotional safety of the school environment.

A relational discourse positioned school staff and young people as being in a relationship akin to that of parent and child. It was comparable to parent and child insofar as it was characterised as aspiring towards the nurture and care of children and focusing on child needs. Staff were positioned as the active parties charged with meeting the needs of young people, while the young people's position was passive. Nevertheless, this passive position was powerful in a Foucauldian sense because the needs and interests of young people were prioritised within this discourse. This discourse was consistent between staff and young people, suggesting that it may be helpful in establishing shared goals and values. Where relationships have broken down however, this discourse may invite blame or shame, particularly upon staff. Facilitating change may require the exploration of individual factors before focusing on relationship repair.

The discourse of subjugation constructed school as a place of control. Within this discourse, the duty of staff was to impose order. Young people were constructed as inherently rebellious, thereby positioning staff and young people as natural opponents in a struggle for autonomy and control.

Staff were placed in positions of both the controller and the controlled, being obliged to impose certain roles or uphold expectations by forces from the wider education system. The discourse therefore constructed the struggle of individuals to maintain control and autonomy within a system that imposes order and restrictions at every level. The primary actions made available by the discourse are to obey or opt out of the system. However, approaches that presuppose agency on the part of the service user – such as Solution Focussed Brief Therapy or Motivational Interviewing may be helpful in developing a sense of autonomy and empowerment while remaining a member of the system.

The psychological discourse located the reasons for non-attendance within the mental functioning of the young person and minimised the role of the school. Neither the young person nor school were in positions of power as the difficulty was constructed as being out of their control: this discourse handed authority to professionals with psychological knowledge, such as educational psychologists. The opportunities for action made available by this discourse include direct psychological and therapeutic intervention with young people; psychologists seeking to facilitate systemic change may therefore encounter resistance where this discourse is dominant.

The discourse of development contained the assumption of change at its core and as such may be one of the more fruitful discourses. Young people were positioned very much in the present; having moved on from the past and holding potential for the future. This discourse was empowering and hopeful for both young people and those around them who could influence their development. Child-centred, holistic, joint-systems approaches may be drawn upon successfully within this discourse. For further detail in relation to these results, please refer to Appendix P.

4. Discussion

This study employed Foucauldian Discourse Analysis methodology to explore how non-attendance at school was constructed by young non-attenders aged 11-16, and school staff. The researcher identified nineteen discursive constructions, seven of which were identified as particularly dominant and pervasive. These constructions were: School as a place where hard work should pay off; school as a place of control; school as a place of judgement; school as a site of public identity; school as a place that should care and support; young people as psychologically problematic, and young people as 'in the process of becoming'.

While situations of problematic non-attendance vary in their presentation and level of complexity, they hold the potential to be extremely complex with seemingly intractable difficulties across

multiple systems (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Frequently, pupils cannot seem to articulate why it is that they are not attending school, which poses a challenge to the adults seeking to support their return (Thambirajah et al., 2008). An awareness of discourse around non-attendance offers a helpful insight into the nature of the difficulty, as within a social constructionist / Foucauldian paradigm, discourse is considered to "form the objects of which they speak"(Foucault, 1979, p. 49). Not only can a focus on discursive constructions reveal information about the difficulty, it can also highlight the opportunities for action and change. EPs are more than passive observers of discourse; with an awareness of the ways in which the 'truth' of young people's difficulty is constructed comes an opportunity to make available "alternative 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of being'" (Pomerantz, 2008, p.10). While there is no limit to the ways in which non-attendance may be constructed or the discourses that may be drawn upon, the findings of this study nevertheless offer a starting point regarding the possibilities that may accompany several prominent discourses.

Each of the seven primary discursive constructions identified within this study carry implications for facilitating change and suggestions for psychological practice; a full and detailed exploration of each construction is included in Appendix P.

The construction of 'Young people as becoming', situated within a developmental discourse, appears to offer the greatest potential for facilitating change. A sense of impermanence, progress and change, coupled with an absence of blame and orientation towards the future lend themselves well to psychological intervention. A solution-focussed approach, as an approach wholly concerned with changing experience and the agency of the individual, may be particularly fruitful (e.g. Duncan, Hubble & Miller,1996).

One of the most limiting discursive constructions was that of the school as a site of control. This construction drew upon discourses of subjugation and manipulation; it positioned young people and school staff as natural opponents, with non-attenders exercising their right to free will despite the teachers' perceived duty to impose order. For both young people and staff, control was located outside of the self; while young people located it with school staff, staff participants located it within broader systems seen as imposing unwelcome constraints upon their practice. This construction disempowered both parties and left them at odds with each other.

The sense of powerlessness and need for control expressed by this construct chimes with findings within the wider literature (Billington, 2018; How, 2015; Nelson, 2013). Attwood & Croll (2006) report that young participants responded to attempts at control by adults through "generalized anti-authority response[s]" (p.480) This sense of generalised opposition is in keeping with the polarised positions identified within the discourses of subjugation and manipulation.

Discourses of subjugation and control may indicate a need for change within the soft systems of a school. Reynolds, Jones, Leger and Murgatroyd (1980; cited by Lauchlan, 2003) identified that schools with a high number of attendance problems have several shared characteristics, including strict rule enforcement and highly controlled behaviour management systems. Self Determination Theory (SDT) posits that autonomy is a fundamental psychological need, the denial of which may impact negatively on psychological development (Ryan & La Guardia, 2000). Research by Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob & Decourcey (2002) points to the advantages of applying SDT in the classroom: the authors report that autonomy-oriented teachers facilitated greater motivation and self-determination in their pupils than teachers who were control-orientated.

4.1 Limitations and Direction for Future Research

This study makes a novel contribution to the literature due to its methodological approach. While the linguistic inconsistency and confused constructions within this field are limiting for research in other paradigms, the discursive approach taken here has capitalised on these features to take a systemic view of the difficulty and explore opportunities for change. Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. Unfortunately, considering the need to address the under-representation of minority groups within this area, the participant sample were all white and of British heritage. No information about SES was gathered. While Foucauldian methodology is particularly well-suited to exploring marginalised positions, and while there is evidence of bias and exclusion not only within the education system but within this field of research (Lyon & Cotler, 2007), this study cannot contribute to the diversification of the literature base.

Methodologically, the cultural homogeneity between participants and the researcher may be considered advantageous, as shared characteristics between researcher and participants places fewer restraints on the areas of talk and topics addressed (Taylor, 2001). Nevertheless, an increased focus on minority groups is an important direction for future research in this area.

The results from the present study are very broad as they encompass a large number of discourses from two participant groups across multiple settings. As such it was necessary to prioritise the most prevalent discourses during analysis at the expense of less prominent discourses. A focus on the discourse of a single participant group or from a single setting may provide the opportunity for a more in-depth analysis and provide more detailed information regarding the potential for intervention. This may be a fruitful direction for future studies. Participatory action research projects that include staff and/or young people in the identification and analysis of their own discourses is a further possible avenue for research. This approach would not only maximise the credibility of results by minimising researcher influence but also provide opportunities for action to be taken in

settings as a direct result of the research. In this way, discourse-informed interventions may be developed and evaluated.

4.2 Conclusion

This study has contributed to the literature through a Foucauldian analysis of the discourse used by adolescent non-attenders and school staff to discuss the topic of problematic absenteeism. The methodology was chosen as it accommodates the linguistic and conceptual diversity within the field of problematic non-attendance, asking not how the phenomenon of 'non-attendance' is experienced or perceived, but about the implications for change carried by the various discursive constructions of both the school and the non-attender. The literature on problematic non-attendance includes contributions from a wide variety of professional fields and academic disciplines (Kearney, 2008b). It is noted by many that the resultant diversity of conceptualisation, definition and terminology has caused the literature to become confused. Indeed, the fractured and contradictory nature of much of the research has been implicated as the reason little progress towards effective intervention strategies have been made over the past century (Kearney, 2008b).

In contrast to the previous literature in this area, the current study adopted a post-structuralist / macro-social constructionist ontology. Within this paradigm, knowledge is thought to be created by language, rather than simply described by it. Additionally, both language and knowledge are thought to both represent and perpetuate power structures and relationships within society (Burr, 2015). This departure from an essentialist view of non-attendance side-steps the difficulties of nomenclature, asking instead what actions may be taken in light of the way in which the difficulty is constructed.

This paradigm is becoming increasingly prevalent in the field of psychology. In January 2018 the British Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) published the Power, Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone et al., 2018). This document urges mental health clinicians to reconsider essentialist psychiatric constructions of disorder and re-focus upon the socially-constructed nature of any difficulty. As has been argued here in the case of problematic non-attendance, Johnson et al. (2018) advocate a view that constructions of difficulty are labelled as such because they challenge conventional 'knowledge' and the systems of power that have given rise to it (Johnson et al., 2018).

By adopting an anti-essentialist paradigm, the findings from this study therefore reach across professional divisions in a way that is much needed in the literature around non-attendance. With continued research of this nature, there may be hope yet of developing an approach to non-

attendance that both respects the heterogeneity of the population and offers an effective and inclusive framework for intervention.

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"No one likes what I say": A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Problematic Absenteeism from School.

Part 3: Critical Appraisal

Word count: 5,603

1. Introduction

This chapter presents a critical appraisal of the research outlined in chapter two. It will take a reflective and reflexive stance towards the research process and the contribution to knowledge made by the study. It will focus specifically on the inception of the study, methodology, philosophical orientation, ethical considerations, analytical process and implications for knowledge and practice. It will be written in the first person, to reflect the present and active role of the author in all aspects of this research.

2. Inception of the Research

I began researching school non-attendance in response to three pieces of casework during my second year of Educational Psychology (EP) training. I did not have any prior experience of working with this difficulty and I knew very little about it. My approach to understanding the issue of non-attendance has, from the outset, been highly influenced by my use of Gameson & Rhydderch's (2008) Constructionist Model for Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA), the principal guiding framework for facilitating change that is used on the Cardiff doctoral training course.

Two of the three cases of non-attendance that introduced me to this area had a long history of involvement with Local Authority Services. The referrals I received were the latest of many; these children's files contained several reports cataloguing a series of failed interventions. The third case was sudden in onset, but set against a background of escalating crisis within the home. The sense I had when engaging with all these cases was helplessness from all concerned: neither school staff, family members or the young people themselves seemed able to rationalise their absence, nor did they demonstrate much enthusiasm or hope for re-establishing normal attendance. Everything had been 'tried before' or 'wouldn't work'.

I chose two of these cases as in-depth COMOIRA-based casework. My thinking around the profound 'stuck-ness' of each of these cases were therefore focussed on the four core principles of COMOIRA, namely:

1. Systemic Thinking
2. Enabling Dialogue
3. Social Constructionism
4. Informed Reasoned Action.

In every aspect, I perceived there to be barriers impeding change. As the young people I was working with had been disengaged from the school system for some time, relationships and communication between the school and the home had broken down. While many opportunities for systemic change within the school presented themselves, the child would need to attend in order to benefit from these. I began to question the position the young people occupied in relation to the school: while they were no longer active participants within the system, it continued to exert a strong influence over them. School was very much present in these young people's psychological lives even though they had not attended for months. This struck me as an imbalance of power and raised questions for me about the way in which the absence was constructed by the young people.

Enabling dialogue around the issue was also a significant challenge. While a strong narrative was offered by the mother in each case, the young people themselves either declined to meet me at all or would do so only in the presence of their mother, who exerted a strong influence over the manner of our meeting. With respect to 'informed reasoned action', as I engaged with the literature the lack of evidence-based approaches soon became apparent. I became aware not only of the confused and contradictory terminology around non-attendance, but of competing constructs. While I tended to think of non-attendance as a complex behavioural response, I was struck by the prevalence of the clinical literature cataloguing symptoms and referencing diagnosis. In particular, Kearney's (2008) description of non-attendance as a "critical public health problem" (p.465) jarred with my assumption that the difficulty lay in the educational and social sphere, rather than that of health. Additionally, the focus upon non-attendance as a 'public' as opposed to private issue made me question the social investment we place in the education of children and young people.

 The real-world implications of the uncertainty around school non-attendance were driven home for me during a high-stakes multiagency meeting regarding one of my cases. Nine professions were represented, alongside the parents. My awareness of the competing constructions regarding non-attendance was heightened by the potentially life-changing consequences that could follow from accepting one construction over another. In this specific case, its conception as symptom of psychiatric illness would have paved the way to a sectioning, whereas a social model would have suggested the need to initiate child-protection proceedings.

Most striking of all was the complete absence of the voice of the child: my attempts to facilitate this were dismissed within a clinical discourse, where the child was considered to be either a vessel for the views of his mother due to 'pathological enmeshment' , or 'out of his right mind'.

The roots for this research are therefore firmly entrenched in my thinking around this casework and the circumstances through which I first came to engage with the literature on both non-attendance.

It is important to acknowledge these professional experiences, as they will undoubtedly have influenced my choice of research question and are likely to have also influenced my analysis of the data. It is necessary to be transparent in stating that from the outset, before developing my research questions, my motivation in researching this area was to:

- Explore the ways in which non-attendance is socially constructed
- Inform a child-centred construction of non-attendance
- Produce findings that are transferrable and applicable to practice.

3. Development of the Research Questions and Choice of Methodology

My motivation to contribute to a child-centred understanding of non-attendance led to the early identification of children or adolescents as the population of focus. The research design and methodology were, however, revised several times prior to data collection. The revisions reflected both developments in my ontological and epistemological understanding and the additional ethical considerations that accompanied each new approach. For further details regarding the ethical issues considered in designing this study please refer to Appendix B.

Having decided upon a child-centred focus, I initially considered employing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a means of exploring the lived experience of young non-attenders. An initial review of the literature revealed several such enquiries had been conducted within recent years, including studies by Gregory & Purcell (2014) and Baker & Bishop (2015). A limitation to this choice of analysis is noted by Baker & Bishop (2015), who felt that it "precluded more specific exploration of languages and discourses surrounding extended non-attendance" (Baker & Bishop, 2015, p.366). A frequent criticism of IPA is that it takes an uncritical stance towards language, assuming that the words used by participants capture the reality of their lived experience (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). While the person-centred orientation of IPA appealed, I wished for my research to take greater account of the systemic dimensions of non-attendance and to be sensitive to the influence of language.

Further limitations were noted by Gregory & Purcell (2014), who noted that the clustering of themes within their data "imposed an artificial distinctiveness upon what was a complex and sensitive set of findings" (p.45). As I was interested in exploring the complexity that I had already encountered within this area, I wished to avoid a methodology that might seek to harmonise this.

The heterogeneity within the population of non-attenders was a further limitation to this methodology; rigorous IPA requires a homogenous sample and is best suited to the exploration of

experiences that are both specific and novel (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). While it would be possible to select a homogenous sample of non-attenders, this would significantly limit the conclusions that could be drawn and transferability of findings to the wider population (Willig, 2013). These factors combined to make IPA an unsuitable methodology.

I next considered a narrative approach. This approach appealed to me as it focuses not only on what is said but the way in which it is said. It preserves a sense of sequence and consequence that may be lost through methods such as IPA (Robson, 2011). Narrative methodology posits that knowledge and experiences are organised in the form of mental scripts which, when explored, can offer insight into the way in which people understand and experience the world (Engel, 2005). Huberman & Miles (2002, p.220) note that "precisely because they are essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured". Huberman and Miles (2002) also assert that autobiographical narratives shape human identity and converge with narratives constructed by others to inform individuals' sense of reality. It was on this basis that narrative methodology was initially selected for this research and approved by Cardiff University Board of Ethics.

3.1 Developing the Life Map Tool

My experience with my three pieces of casework told me that eliciting a narrative from non-attenders might be challenging. Participant wellbeing and empowerment was therefore a key ethical consideration when designing the interview process (please see Appendix B). I therefore planned to facilitate interviews through the creation of a life-map tool. The life-map drew upon two tools; the life history grid (Anderson & Brown, 1980) and the Map Action Planning System (MAPS) designed by Forest, Pearpoint, & O'Brien (1996). The life history grid invites participants to record key events in a grid, to support the narration of complex or extended events (Anderson & Brown, 1980). I planned to adopt this principle, but with the information recorded graphically along a picture of a path. Participants would be free to annotate the path in whatever way they chose in advance of the data collection session, to support them in recounting their experiences of non-attendance. In addition, it would include a number of headings, taken from the MAPS person-centred planning tool designed by Forest, Pearpoint and O'Brian (1996). These headings were 'The Story so far', 'Who am I' and 'The Dream'. These headings were incorporated into the tool to focus the narrative and to maintain a positive orientation towards the future.

3.2 A Change of Methodology

It was not until further on in the process that I considered which specific analytical method I would use. Upon reflection, it would have been better to consider this in advance of designing the tools for

data-collection and gaining ethical approval. The analytic method I initially considered was that of the poetic structural approach by Gee (1991). This approach follows a structured procedure and analyses the data at both micro (word and small elements of speech) and macro (sentence and textual) levels (Gee, 1991). Upon researching this approach to analysis, I realised that Gee's ontological and epistemological position was not in keeping with my own and that this method of narrative analysis was not appropriate for my research aims. Yardley's (2000) criteria state that continuity in theory and method is a key consideration in designing high quality research, therefore a new analytical approach was required. It was through reading Gee's work that I was introduced to discourse analysis. Pomerantz's (2008) visualisation of the spectrum of approaches within discourse analysis (reproduced below in Table 4) clarified for me that a Foucauldian Discourse analysis was the methodology most in line with my systemically focussed and social-constructionist aims.

Table 23
A continuum of approaches to discourse analysis (taken in part from Pomerantz, 2008; p.7)

	Approach	Aims
Micro	Conversation Analysis	Investigates language above the sentence. Looks for patterns in structure and organisation, that is to say, the order of 'talk-in-interaction'.
	Ethnography of Communication	Seeks to identify what speech events occur in a particular community or culture. Considers the social or cultural significance of speaking in a particular way.
	Discursive Psychology	Attends to the 'Action orientation' of talk. Aims to identify *how* people *use* discursive resources in order to achieve interpersonal objectives in social interaction.
	Critical Discourse Analysis	Shows how phenomena such as race and gender are constructed in and through acts of speaking and writing.
Macro	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis	Recognises that people's identities, subject positions and objects of which they speak are being *continuously* restructured and redefined through speech.

4. Searching the Literature

The diversity of search terms applicable in this area proved to be challenging. While I could choose to limit my literature searches by terminology, this approach would result in missing potentially relevant results. As a starting point I developed a comprehensive search strategy designed to capture all of the most relevant literature in this area. Further details of these searches are included in Appendix A.

This search produced too many results for me to read systematically, however it provided me with a selection of relevant literature to gain an overview of this area. From here, a snowballing / backward-chaining method was used, whereby references within the relevant literature are consulted, alongside papers that cite the research in question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using literature reviews, meta-analyses and position papers as starting points, this method enabled me to gain an overview of the chronological development of the literature on non-attendance and understand how the discourse within the literature had evolved over time.

5. Reflections on Methodological Decisions

5.1 Interviews

While any form of data can be used for Foucauldian discourse analysis (Willig, 2013), I chose to use data from unstructured interviews with both pupils and staff. While the life map tool was available to offer direction in interviewing young people and a prompt sheet was developed to support staff interviews, these were supports rather than guides and all interviews remained unstructured. While the transcriptions of naturally-occurring conversations with service users would have greater ecological validity (Willig, 2013), this approach was not appropriate within the given time-frame. Further, the ecological validity would be impaired due to the ethical necessity of gaining informed consent before data collection (Willig, 2013).

An unstructured interviewing technique was chosen, which enables participants to "speak freely in their own terms" (Robson, 2011; p.288). One of the advantages to this was that the flexibility allowed participants to identify the aspects of their experiences that they felt were of greatest relevance and importance. I also I wished to minimise my influence upon participants' talk, however on reflection, this was not valid reasoning. In social constructionist research, the researcher/interviewer must always be acknowledged as an active participant and co-constructor of knowledge regardless of their approach to interview (Willig, 2013). Further, an unexpected advantage of conducting an unstructured interview was being able to incorporate elements of motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2012) where this opportunity presented itself. While this was not a planned element of data collection, in the interview situation I felt it would have been unethical not to take advantage of opportunities to make a helpful comment when these arose. For further details regarding the ethical considerations when conducting this research, please see Appendix B. Nevertheless, Potter & Wetherall (1987) advise that a detailed interview schedule should be followed to ensure that multiple interviews are conducted consistently and that participants remain focused on the topics on interest. The failure to follow a more structured

schedule resulted in a key limitation during data analysis: due to the less-focussed nature of the conversation, the participant's attention on the issue in hand was, at times, in doubt. It is possible that some data referred less to persistent non-attendance than to attendance or school concerns more generally.

5.2 Participants

In adopting Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) as my methodology, I added school staff as a second participant group. This was because educational psychologists increasingly adopt a Consultation method of service delivery (Wagner, 2000). Wagner (2000) describes Consultation as "established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems" (p. 11). As I aimed to support a child-centred understanding of non-attendance at a systemic level, and as such systems-level thinking is often engaged in with school staff, an exploration of staff discourse was thought to be most relevant.

The decision to include participants from both mainstream schools and specialist settings was one of practical necessity reflecting low levels of recruitment. While all participants met the criteria of attendance at 80% or below during the previous term, some of them had made progress in recent weeks, due to a change of setting. This is reflected in the data, as some young people discuss their most recent experiences of improvement, while others were experiencing greater difficulty in attending school. A homogenous sample is not required for FDA (Potter & Wetherall, 1986) who acknowledge that it is usual for sampling to depend, to an extent, upon availability. Nevertheless, the retrospective nature of some aspects of the interview is recognised as a limitation.

Potter & Wetherall (1987) note that in discourse analysis, a larger sample does not reflect the quality of a study; small samples may in fact be preferable due to the labour-intensive nature of discourse analysis. In retrospect, given this fact, it would have been preferable to recruit fewer participants. In the event, my decision to recruit 3-5 participants in each group reflected my inexperience with discourse analysis. Previously I had only engaged with IPA and Thematic analysis and my ideas about what constituted a 'small' sample drew upon those experiences.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Kirk (2007) states that the foremost ethical concerns when working with children and young people are the issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and power relationships. These were of central concern during the present study; a table detailing ethical issues and actions to mitigate these is included in Appendix B. Reflections concerning unanticipated ethical concerns are highlighted below.

It is noted by Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) that to omit information about the nature of a discourse analysis may be considered deceptive. Typically, participants expect that the focus of interest will be the content of the conversation, whereas in discourse analysis it is their use of language that is of research interest. For this reason, care was taken to inform participants of my approach both verbally and on the participant information sheets.

In two instances, pupils and staff were recruited from the same schools. One of the key ethical issues, therefore, was the potential for damaging pupil-staff relationships in the event that their data was identifiable within the research report. It was therefore important that participation in the research was kept confidential and all data was anonymised. In practice, confidentiality of participation was limited due to the choice made by all young participants to be interviewed at school. While the identity of participants were not made known to each other, it remained possible that they learned of each other's meetings with me. This raises the possibility that they may be identifiable to each other in the written report. Several actions were taken to mitigate against this threat to their anonymity:

- Participant identifiers have not been included in the research report. Participants are identified only as staff or pupils. This will prevent participants from being identified by process of elimination.
- Incidents or actions that might identify individuals were redacted at the point of transcription.
- No data extracts were used in the report where these might identify a participant to others whom they know.

A further unanticipated issue concerned my dual role as a researcher and trainee EP. While I ensured that all participants understood the capacity in which I was meeting them, one family shared the fact of their child's involvement with their education welfare officer (EWO). While I shared information about my study with the EWO, she did not appear to understand that I was not in a position to share the information I had received from the young participant. I was asked repeatedly to attend meetings to discuss suitable provision for this individual. My response to this was to contact the participant to check that the third follow-up meeting (which had initially been declined) was not now desired. When this meeting was declined a second time, I reminded them that they could contact me to request this follow-up meeting in the future, if desired. I reflected upon the ethical complexity of my dual role and considered that, were I to conduct a similar study in the future, it may be less ethically problematic to do so in a local authority other than the one where I work.

6. Ontology and Epistemology

It is possible to conduct FDA from either social constructionist or critical realist perspectives (Willig, 2013; Parker, 1992). Burr (2015) makes strong connections between discourse analysis and the social constructionist paradigm, therefore this was the position I adopted at the outset. However, the constructive power of discourse to shape individual experience also suggested that discourse could be regarded as existing independently from the individual. This did not seem to be in keeping with a social constructionist ontology and would seem to be more suggestive of a critical realist perspective. Critical realism posits that reality exists outside of individual experience, but that individuals have no means to observe this directly (Burr, 2015). I was undecided about my stance until I came to analyse the data I had collected. At this point, my own constructive role in identifying discourses became clear to me: I began questioning the way in which I was identifying discourses and the various options I had in describing them (e.g. I was unsure how to label a clinical/medical/health discourse, and whether this distinction was meaningful). I therefore felt that my analysis was also concerned with construction and that is was best encapsulated by a social constructionist ontology and epistemology.

7. Rationale for Analytical Procedure

Unlike in Conversation Analysis or Discursive Psychology, there is no single accepted method of conducting a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Burr, 2015). Carabine (2001) notes that rather than providing a methodology, what Foucauldian theory offers is a philosophical lens. The practical application of this lens will depend upon the individual researcher and their particular research questions. Several authors have, however, outlined possible procedures to guide novice discourse analysts, the most fully developed of which are by Parker (1992) and Willig (2013). In conducting my own analysis I drew upon the guidelines offered by both of these authors. Indeed, Willig (2013) cautions against adopting an overly rigid adherence to guidelines laid out by others, instead advocating that any approach taken should be grounded in an understanding of the theoretical framework.

Willig's six stages of analysis are detailed in Appendix K. While my analysis was broadly based upon these stages, I chose to depart from it in several ways. Firstly, Willig's (2013) first stage involves identifying the ways in which the object of interest (discursive object) is constructed. This presented an immediate difficulty, as I realised that while non-attendance was clearly the topic of discussion, it was rarely referred to directly. In fact most references to non-attendance were made by the

researcher; the data extracts below exemplify a how, when discussing non-attendance, the focus of participants shifted to themselves/young people or the school, which then become the main objects within the discourse:

> *Researcher: Okay now, so when you're at home, and you've woken up in the middle of the night and you've thought "I have to go to school and I don't want to" can you tell me any more about that?*
>
> *Participant: I just feel like I CAN'T do it. It's just like in the morning, I feel like I CAN'T do it and I'm stuck to my bed.*

> *Researcher: Were you going to school at this point?*
>
> *Participant: Yeah I was going to primary school full time. I didn't really have any support because they just thought I'd grow, I'd grow into it and I'd settle down after a short period of time.*

It therefore became apparent that 'non-attendance' was not an appropriate discursive object. I therefore selected two discursive objects, that of the school and the young non-attender (in the case of data from young participants, 'the self').

In retrospect, the identification of two research objects as the focus for analysis added considerable complexity to the process. While selecting a single object- either the school *or* the young person, would have resulted in a simpler analysis, this would have resulted in the loss of a significant amount of data. I also considered that a construction of both the school and young person are necessary for the concept of 'non-attendance' to be meaningful. Rather than limit the scope of my analysis, I decided to undertake what was essentially two parallel, though interrelated, analyses.

In order to undertake Willig (2013)'s first step, I needed to identify the data pertaining to each of my discursive objects. This stage was accommodated by Parker (1992), whose third stage of analysis involves the identification of objects within the data. An outline of each of Parker stages is given in Appendix L.

Following completion of Willig's second stage of analysis, I decided to omit stage three. Willig's third stage is titled Action Orientation and involves asking "what is gained from constructing the object in this particular way at this particular point within the text?" (p.132). This stage seemed to be more in keeping with the principles of discursive psychology, which is concerned with "what people do with language" (Willig, 2013, p.117). It is noted by Taylor (2001) that when engaging in discourse analysis:

> *"the analysis should be confined to the discourse rather than to the people who produced the talk or documents. The researcher should not aim, for example, to reveal the intentions and meaning or beliefs of speakers"* (p.19)

I therefore omitted this stage and progressed through stages four and five. I omitted Willig's sixth and final stage because it concerns "the relationship between discourse and subjectivity" (p.133). The exploration of subjectivity was not in line with the aims of my research: my research questions were designed to identify opportunities for change, therefore Willig's sixth stage would be an unnecessary deviation.

Willig (2013) acknowledges that her framework does not incorporate key Foucauldian concerns, including the identification of power and subjectification. As a key objective within my research was to identify the systemic implications of discourse, these aspects of Foucauldian theory were relevant to my analysis. The final stage of my analysis was loosely based upon Parker (1992)'s 15,16, 17th and 18th stages, however Parker's focus is broader than mine and includes a historical stance that extends beyond the scope of my research questions. I therefore limited my analysis to the consideration of how discourse and power impact on the lives of young people and others within the school system.

8. Reflections on Data Analysis

8.1 The Analytical Separation of Staff and Young People

While the analysis of the data from young people and school staff were initially coded and analysed separately, as my understanding of this approach deepened, I began to question my basis for doing so. Potter and Wetherall (1987) note that what is key in taking this approach is the abandonment of the idea of the self-as-entity: "the question becomes not what is the true nature of the self, but how the self is talked about, how is it theorised in discourse?"(p.102). They also quote Harré, who asserted that: "to be a self is not to be a certain kind of being but to be in possession of a certain type of theory"(Harré, 1985; cited in Potter & Wetherall, 1978, p.102). From this epistemological point of view, no additional value would be gained by analysing the data generated by young people separately from adults. The concept of 'the voice of the child' within this paradigm, may be best applied by considering the way in which the child is constructed by discourse. Consequently, I opted to combine the results obtained from all participants in the final stages of my analysis.

8.2 The Focus on Seven Prominent Constructions.

The decision to focus upon the most representative and prevalent discursive constructions reflected the view that it would be impossible to offer an analysis of 'all' discourses on this topic. This study does not claim to have comprehensively captured all possible discursive constructions of non-attenders and their schools. Rather, it offers an in-depth focus upon those constructions that were most salient and influential for the participants in this study. I took the decision, therefore, to optimise quality over quantity and report in greater detail on the seven most prevalent constructions.

I also noted that several of the discursive constructions for schools and non-attenders seemed to correspond. For example, the construction of school as a place of control seemed to correspond with the construction of non-attenders as insubordinate; the construction of school as a place of judgement seemed to correspond with the construction of non-attenders as acceptable or unacceptable; and the construction of school as a place where individuals become known seemed to correspond with both the construction of non-attenders as members of a social setting and being constructed in relation to others. This feature within the results may well be the result of separating the data during the first stage of analysis, where it was coded according to whether it referred to the school as the discursive object, or to the non-attender (see Appendix M). The corresponding themes may well reflect 'two sides of the same coin'; that is, two aspects of the same discursive construction. I concluded that an in-depth analysis of both constructions in answer to research questions two and three was likely to result in repetition, therefore decided to maintain my focus upon the seven most prominent findings.

Identifying the discursive objects (the school and the non-attender) within the data was challenging in part because I did not develop an interview schedule with these foci specifically in mind: initially, I had intended to focus on 'non-attendance' as the discursive object. In hindsight, a pilot study would have allowed for an improvement in my approach to interview prior to data collection. While a pilot study was included in my proposal, this did not happen due to low levels of recruitment and time restrictions.

The analysis could be improved by adopting a clearer differentiation between constructs of 'the school' and 'staff' as objects within the discourse. In coding for data relating to the school, I did not code references to individual teachers as constructs of 'school', however data characterised by collective pronouns such as 'they' were coded. In coding for young people, reference to individual non-attenders was included only insofar as it related to the issue of non-attendance. I made these

decisions based upon my own reading and understanding of what was being constructed within the transcript, however a clear protocol around this issue would add rigour to the analysis.

8.3 Reflexivity

In interpreting discourses, analysis draw upon own cultural knowledge, with different cultural positions producing different interpretations (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Reflexivity is the process by which researchers acknowledge their influence on the production of findings (Willig, 2013) and is an important element in ensuring that research process and results are transparent (Yardley, 2000. Please refer to Appendix C). My understanding of the purpose of reflexivity developed as the project progressed. For some time, I regarded reflexivity as a means of controlling for my own biases, not unlike the idea of bracketing within the field of phenomenology. Bracketing involves acknowledging the prior knowledge and experiences of the researcher and putting these aside, thereby minimising the researcher's personal influence on the analysis (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). This stance was unhelpful and hindered my ability to complete data analysis: a fundamental tenet within discourse analysis is that language constructs all knowledge and experience; I found that stages 2 and 4 of my analysis (identifying interpretative repertoires and locating the data within wider discourses) in particular, required me to draw on my own experience. The position of 'outside observer' is incompatible with the epistemology of discourse analysis, as the process of analysis and reflexivity themselves employ discourse (Parker, 1992). I found that progression with the analysis necessitated a "policy of openness" (Taylor, 2001, p.19), whereby my personal experiences and interests in the research area were acknowledged.

9.   Contribution to Knowledge

To assess the contribution to knowledge made by this study, the claims that are possible from a Foucauldian discourse analysis must be considered. The research was conducted in a social-constructionist paradigm and a qualitative methodology was employed. Qualitative methodologies are explorative in nature; they seek to understand experience as opposed to create generalisable knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Foucauldian Discourse Analysis takes a somewhat radical stance in the field of Psychology as it takes discourse, as opposed to individuals, as its object of study (Potter & Wetherall, 1987).

To my knowledge, this is the only study to date that has employed a Foucauldian discourse analysis as a method for exploring possibilities for change in cases of problematic absenteeism. As such, it makes a novel contribution to the literature, exemplifying an approach to interpreting non-

attendance that avoids the conceptual confusion that predominates in the essentialist literature. Nevertheless, some scholars would raise criticisms of this methodology. Hook (2007) argues that "Foucault's conceptualization of discourse indispensably requires the role of historical contextualization"(p.37). While this study has located the issue of problematic absence within its historical context, the historiographic and genealogical aspects of Foucault's method were not included in my analysis (Parker, 1992). This was primarily because these aspects lie outside the scope of the research questions. Hook (2007) approaches Foucauldian analysis with a view to making truth-claims: "for Foucault, a study of discourse must necessarily entail a focus on discourse-as-knowledge, that is to say, on discourse as a matter of the social, historical and political conditions under which statements come to count as true or false" (p.37). Willig (2013) notes that where Foucauldian analysts aspire to make realist claims about the conditions that give rise to discourse, a critical-realist stance must be taken. As the position adopted by my study is social constructionist, Hook's criticism may be disapplied.

The analysis was somewhat ambitious in scope when considering the time available for its completion and my own skills as a novice researcher. While I believe the rationale to be sound, the results and implications generated through this study are necessarily limited by my own skill in operationalising the principles of a Foucauldian discourse analysis. This appraisal has outlined several practical, methodological and analytical choices which, upon reflection, have detracted from its rigour and validity. Nevertheless, I believe that this research makes a contribution to knowledge within this field by demonstrating the potential utility of a discursive approach when engaging with non-attendance. Several steps were taken to maximise the quality of this research according to the criteria put forward by Yardley (2000). Further information is provided in Appendix C.

10. Contribution to Practice

The value of a discourse analysis lies not in asking what is true, but in looking at construction and function (Potter & Wetherall, 1987). This study has not sought to contribute to the literature by making any claims of truth about non-attendance either as an extant phenomenon or as a lived experience; while the qualitative literature has established that school non-attendance is constructed in a variety of ways, the contribution made by this study is the exploration of the functionality of these constructions in relation to possibilities for intervention. As such, educational psychologists who adopt a social-constructionist orientation towards their work may find this study a helpful starting point when considering their approach to cases of non-attendance.

In exploring the discourse of young people alongside that of adults, this research offers an insight into the way non-attendance is constructed by multiple stakeholders within a system. A number of shared discourses were identified which may be helpful for EPs wishing to develop rapport and positive working relationships with both schools and young people. It must also be acknowledged however, that owing to the researcher's position as an adult within the education system, there may have been pupil discourses that were neither recognised by or accessible to the researcher. While the study recognises the importance of considering young people's discourses, a key objective for EPs in considering discourse in practice is to ensure that young people's discourse is heard and honoured alongside that of professionals. Much emphasis is placed on hearing 'pupil voice' within educational psychology practice (Hardy & Hobbs, 2017); by paying increased attention to young people's discourse we can work towards understanding their reality and meeting their needs by listening not only to 'what' they say, but 'how' they say it.

11. Personal Reflection

I have found this area of research to be highly influential on my thinking as a psychological practitioner. Before engaging in this research I had considered myself to be social-constructionist in my approach; however the macro-social constructionist approach taken in this study has deepened my understanding of the underpinning philosophy and implications for practice. I feel that as a result, I am a more reflective practitioner. In approaching casework, I have found myself asking not what is 'known' about a referral, but about the way it is talked about and the implications this may hold for my involvement.

As a researcher, I have learnt about the importance of gaining a full and thorough understanding of the ontology, epistemology and methodology of an approach before beginning data collection. This was a key challenge for me given the timeline for this project. In a similar vein, I have learnt about the importance of considering the time and available resources during study design, thus ensuring that research studies are both manageable and rigorous.

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Appendix A - Details of Literature Search

3rd August 2018 – Psycinfo Database

Psycinfo – Search 1 3/8/2018.
(Hits = 2738)

Database: PsycINFO <1806 to July Week 5 2018>
Search Strategy:
----
1   Non-attend*.mp. and school.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (156)
2   absen*.mp. and school.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (5936)
3   extended.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (1430)
4   chronic.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (4153)
5   school.tw. (327960)
6   3 and 5 (87)
7   4 and 5 (333)
8   persist*.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (3040)
9   5 and 8 (202)
10   school.mp. and phobi*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (1267)
11   (school adj3 phobi*).tw. (597)
12   (school adj4 refus*).tw. (803)
13   school anxiety.tw. (142)
14   truan*.tw. (1472)
15   1 or 2 or 6 or 7 or 9 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 (8514)
16   (absen* adj3 school).tw. (1291)
17   1 or 6 or 7 or 9 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 16 (4340)
18   from 17 keep 1-4340 (4340)
19   limit 17 to (peer reviewed journal and all journals) (2738)

This search was re-run and limited to the years 2010 – 2019 (see Search 2)

Psycinfo – Search 2 3/8/2018.
(Hits = 888)

Database: PsycINFO <1806 to July Week 5 2018>
Search Strategy:
----
1   Non-attend*.mp. and school.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (156)
2   absen*.mp. and school.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (5936)
3   extended.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (1430)
4   chronic.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (4153)
5   school.tw. (327960)
6   3 and 5 (87)
7   4 and 5 (333)
8   persist*.mp. and absen*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (3040)
9   5 and 8 (202)
10   school.mp. and phobi*.tw. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures] (1267)
11   (school adj3 phobi*).tw. (597)
12   (school adj4 refus*).tw. (803)
13   school anxiety.tw. (142)
14   truan*.tw. (1472)
15   1 or 2 or 6 or 7 or 9 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 (8514)
16   (absen* adj3 school).tw. (1291)
17   1 or 6 or 7 or 9 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 16 (4340)
18   from 17 keep 1-4340 (4340)
19   limit 17 to (peer reviewed journal and all journals) (2738)
20   limit 19 to yr="2000 - 2019" (1589)
21   limit 20 to yr="2010 - 2019" (888)

The hits from this search were downloaded. All 888 titles were categorised by relevance.

Most relevant: Reviews, meta-analyses, qualitative research, research with 11-16 age-group.

Least relevant: Neuroscience, highly specific populations.

Psycinfo – Search 3 9/10/2018.

(Hits = 3)

Database: PsycINFO <1806 to October Week 2 2018>

Search Strategy:

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1   school phobi*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (648)

2   school refus*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (745)

3   school absen*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (793)

4   School non atten*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (50)

5   1 or 2 or 3 or 4 (2043)

6   discourse.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (45710)

7   discourse analysis.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh] (11783)

8   6 or 7 (45710)

9   5 and 8 (3)

Results:

Clark, B. (2018). Students in transition: Introducing english language learners from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to U.S. History. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation.*

Best, J. (1994) Troubling children: Studies of children and social problems. Hawthorne, NY, US

Lock, M. (1991). Flawed jewels and national dis/order: Narratives on adolescent dissent in Japan. *The Journal of Psychohistory*. Vol.18, p. 507-531.

Other Database searches re. Discourse Analysis:

	Web of Science (1/11/18)	ERIC (27/10/18)
(school AND phobi*) OR (school AND refus*) OR (school AND absen*)	11,978	1,806
Search within the results for: "discourse analysis"	30	0

Appendix B – Ethical Considerations

The following table of considerations and actions was included in the proposal to the Cardiff Ethics Committee.

Consideration	Action(s)
Participants may become distressed during the interview	The researcher will ask participants whether they wish to continue with the research and remind them of their right to take a break, stop, or withdraw entirely from the research. Information about where participants can seek further support will be provided for participants as necessary, and on the debrief letter. The narrative activity will finish on a positive note and is designed to facillitate solution-focused thinking regarding the future. The interview is guided by the participant's life-map which they have created themselves. The participant is under no obligation to share information or discuss events or issues which they would find distressing. Participants will be reminded that they do not have to answer any questions posed by the researcher if they would rather not do so. The researcher will seek participants consent to inform their parent / guardian, if they become distressed during the interview.
Participants might feel distressed following the interview.	The interview will build towards a positive conclusion, thinking about goals and possibilities. The researcher will de-brief participants following their interview and will provide a debrief letter to both the participant and their parent / guardian. The de-brief time will provide an opportunity for participants to ask any further questions or raise any concerns. An additional follow-up session will be offered to provide an opportunity for participants to follow-up any thoughts or ideas generated by the interview. Participants will be given the

	opportunity to share their life map with others who are in a position to support them, such as family or school staff. The follow up session is a further opportunity to direct participants towards additional support if necessary.
Participants may feel anxious about taking part in the research or may feel shy or intimidated in the presence of the researcher.	The initial visit will provide an opportunity for participants to meet the researcher and start to establish a rapport before the interview. They will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any time. They and their parents will have the opportunity to ask questions. A member of the participant's family may be present during the interview, if that is preferred by the participant.
Participants may regret divulging personal information following the completion of the interview.	Participants will be informed that they can request for their data to be withdrawn from the study up until the 31st January 2019.
Participants may recognise peers when reading the research report.	All personally identifiable information, including locality will be anonymised. Other minor alterations may be made to quotations in the report (e.g. a change of pronoun) to preserve anonymity.
The researcher may be in possession of information which would benefit the participants, were it shared with their family or school.	The researcher will suggest to the participant they might like to show their life map and feed back to their family or school. The researcher will be available to facilitate this in a third session should the participant wish this. However, no information will be shared, within the bounds of confidentiality, without the participant's consent.
Participants may disclose incidents of abuse or other safeguarding concern regarding themselves or another person, during their narrative.	The researcher will identify the school/setting's safeguarding officer upon receiving consent from gatekeepers, before meeting the participants. The researcher will follow Cardiff University child protection and safeguarding procedures should a disclosure be made.
Participants or their families may recognise themselves or others in the research report.	Information regarding the participants will be fully anonymised in the research report. Details included in illustrative quotes may be excluded or

	changed (e.g. names of places or events) to preserve confidentiality. Participants will be informed during the initial session that they may recognise themselves in the final report, but that they should not be recognisable to others, or be able to recognise others. This information will be given prior to obtaining verbal consent.

Appendix C – Ensuring Quality in Qualitative Research

This table presents a summary of the ways in which this research meets Yardley's (2000) criteria for quality in qualitative research.

Criteria	The Present Study
Sensitivity to context *Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues.*	• The study is philosophically-informed; epistemology and ontology were carefully considered and the study does not make any unsupportable claims (e.g. to generalisation). • A thorough and comprehensive approach was taken to searching the literature. Care was taken not to exclude relevant studies from my search based upon terminology alone. • The researcher was aware of the socio-cultural setting, having been raised and educated in Wales and having worked as a teacher and trainee educational psychologist in the Welsh state education system for the past 10 years. She found that a rapport with both young people and school staff was developed quickly. • An awareness of power disparity was maintained throughout and measures taken to mitigate this as far as possible. This included details such as wearing informal clothing and bringing biscuits to interviews, flexibility around the use of the life map tool and around re-arranging dates for interview. An 'active listening' approach was taken to the unstructured interviews which allowed the participants to guide the talk and focus on what were, to them, the most salient issues. Care was taken to avoid an 'expert' position by emphasising that the experiences and views of participants were of importance to inform her understanding as an educational psychologist in training.
Commitment and rigour *In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence / skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis.*	• The researcher engaged in-depth with the topic not only in her capacity as a researcher, but in her capacity as a trainee EP. Her interest in the topic of school non-attendance developed in consequence to her professional involvement in casework of this type. • The researcher gathered a large quantity of high-quality data on the subject in question. The participant groups were suitable to answer the research question and time was spent ensuring a good understanding of the principles of a

	Foucauldian discourse analysis. Shortcomings in the selection of participants and the analytical procedure have been identified and reflected upon in Chapter 3.
transparency and coherence *Clarity and power* of *description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method: reflexivity.*	• The researcher has endeavoured to be transparent in her analytical method by detailing the process and the extent to which it draws upon other methods described within the methodological literature (Parker, 1992; Willig, 2008). A reflective account of the decisions taken during analysis is presented in Chapter 3. • Significant time and effort was spent ensuring that the theoretical premise of the research was reflected in both the methodology, the reported findings and in the conclusions drawn. • A reflexive approach was taken throughout the research process- an account of this reflexivity is offered in Chapter 3.
Impact and importance *Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers).*	• The post-structural stance of this study contributes a different theoretical approach to non-attendance. • The findings of this study offer several implications for the practice of educational psychologists in working with cases of problematic absenteeism. In line with the social constructionist paradigm, these findings do not claim any form of 'truth'. They do however point towards avenues for intervention that may be fruitful, in the consideration of the discourse employed when discussing non-attendance'.

Taken from Yardley, 2000, p. 219.

Appendix D – Information Sheet for Young People

School of Psychology, Cardiff University
Information Sheet

Project title: A discourse inquiry into adolescent experiences of
non-attendance at school.'

About this research project:

My name is Angharad Jones and I am a trainee educational
psychologist at Cardiff University.

I am doing some research about the experiences of young people who
find it difficult to go to school.

You are invited to take part in my research, if you would like to. Please
read this information sheet with a parent or carer before you decide if you want to take part.

Reason for the project:

Thousands of children and young people find it difficult to go to school. Young people can find it difficult
for lots of different reasons. Sometimes they don't know the reasons why they find it difficult, and that's
okay.

There is a lot of research about non-attendance, but not enough research includes the experiences of
the most important people of all: young people like you. I am doing this project because I'm interested in
hearing what it is like to be a young person who sometimes finds it difficult to go to school. I am
doing a 'discourse' analysis, which means I'm interested in the way that you talk about your thoughts and
experiences.

Why have I been asked?

You are invited to take part because you are:

- Aged 11 – 16 and:
- Have found it difficult to come to school recently (80% attendance or below either currently, or
  during the last full school term (summer 2018).

What does it involve?

If you take part, you can meet me just the once, or up to three times. The meetings can be at your home, at school, or somewhere else like a library, community centre or hub, wherever you prefer. This is an idea of what will do in the meetings:

Visit 1: (approx. 30 minutes). I will tell you about myself and the research project. You and your parents can ask questions and we can have a chat. I'll bring some art supplies with me and we can start some artwork about your life and experiences of school so far, called a map. If you're happy to see me again, we'll plan visit 2.

Visit 2: (up to 1 hour). In this visit we will chat about what you have written or drawn on your map. We will chat about what is important to you in your past, present and future. This is the information I will use for my research.

Visit 3: (up to 1 hour). If you would like to talk some more about your map artwork, I can return for a final visit. I can help you to share your map with other people such as your family or teacher, if you would like this. It is your choice whether or not you would like a third visit.

"These visits are flexible. If you don't enjoy artwork or would like to meet me fewer times we can plan to do some things differently.

What if I don't want to take part or if I change my mind?

You don't have to take part if you don't want to. If you agree to take part now you can still change your mind at any time, and you do not have to give a reason why.

What will happen to the information I share?

I will make an audio recording of our second meeting. The recording will only be heard by me. I will listen to it and write a transcript of what is said. I will remove all identifying information during transcription, no names of people and places that might be recognisable will appear in the transcript. This means that the information will not be traceable back to you or anyone else.

The audio recording of our conversation will be destroyed on the 31st January 2019. The interview transcript and a photograph / photocopy of your map will be stored securely for 5 years by the university and it will then be destroyed. Taking part in this research will not affect your rights or access to services/benefits in any way.

How to take part:

To take part in this research, you and your parent / carer should sign the attached consent forms. Your parent / carer will need to contact me at jonesca10@cardiff.ac.uk to let me know that you would like to take part and to arrange our first meeting.

I am aiming to meet five young people for this research and complete all the visits by 30th November 2018. The first five respondents will be accepted for the study.

You and your parent / carer are most welcome to contact me to ask any questions you may have before making up your mind. Please see my contact details in the next section.

Further Information:

You are welcome to email me at: jonesca10@cardiff.ac.uk, or you can e-mail my supervisor Dr Kyla Honey at: honeyk1@cardiff.ac.uk.

This research has received ethical approval by Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints these can be addressed to: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk. The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk. The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part in my research.

Angharad Jones
Educational Psychology Trainee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.
JonesCA10@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Information Sheet

'A discursive inquiry into non-attendance at school.'

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research project exploring the issue of extended non-attendance at school. Please read this information sheet before you decide if you would like to take part.

Who is doing this research?

My name is Angharad and I am a trainee educational psychologist at Cardiff University. This research project is being undertaken for my thesis.

What is the aim of the study?

The aim of the study is to gain an understanding of the way in which extended non-attendance is thought about both by pupils and by schools. It is hoped that this study will inform educational psychology practice in supporting pupils and schools to manage this issue effectively.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you have been identified as a staff member who is currently or has recently been professionally concerned by the attendance of a pupil/ pupils in your school.

What does it involve?

If you decide to participate, we will meet for an informal, unstructured interview, either at your place of work or at a public place of your choice. I will ask you to share

any experiences or thoughts you have with regard to pupil non-attendance at school. The interview is likely to last around 30 minutes, and no longer than an hour.

What happens if I don't want to participate or if I change my mind?

You are under no obligation to participate. If you are happy to participate, please complete the consent form and either return it to me using the pre-paid envelope, or bring it with you when we meet. If you agree to take part now you can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to the information I share?

I will make an audio-recording of the interview, which will only be heard by me. I will transcribe the recording, removing all identifiable information. The data will not be traceable back to you or to anyone else.

The audio recording will be destroyed on 31st January 2019. The transcript will be stored securely for 5 years by the university and will then be destroyed. Taking part in this research will not affect your rights or access to services/benefits in any way.

How to participate:

If you are happy to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return in the pre-paid envelope. Alternatively, I can collect it from you when we meet.

I am aiming to meet five staff members people for this research and complete all the interviews between 1st August and 30st November 2018. The first five respondents will be accepted for the study.

 You are most welcome to contact me to ask any questions you may have before making up your mind. Please see my contact details in the next section.

Questions and further information:

If you have any questions you are welcome to email me at: jonesca10@cardiff.ac.uk, or you can e-mail my supervisor Dr Kyla Honey at: honeyk1@cardiff.ac.uk.

This research has received ethical approval by Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints these can be addressed to: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk. The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part in my research.

Angharad Jones

Educational Psychology Trainee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.
JonesCA10@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Young Person Consent Form

If you agree to taking part in this study, please provide the following information, tick the boxes and sign below.

☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet and am happy to be asked about my school attendance.

☐ I understand that taking part is voluntary.

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

☐ I understand that the audio data I provide is confidential, that it will be transcribed, and that it will be made anonymous. I also understand that the audio data will be destroyed on 31st January 2019 and that after this date the transcribed data will be impossible to trace back to me. I understand that I can request my data or ask for it to be destroyed at any time up until 31st January 2019.

☐ I understand that findings from this research may be published in an anonymous form.

☐ I understand that at the end of the study I will be told about the research findings and may request a copy of the written report.

☐ I understand that I may ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with Angharad Jones or her supervisor Dr Kyla Honey, at Cardiff University.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Dr Kyla Honey*.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix G – Parental Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Parent / Guardian Consent Form

If you consent for your child to take part in this study, please provide the following information, tick the boxes and sign below.

Home address / preferred location to meet researcher: _____

(Note: You may reclaim travel expenses of up to £10, please keep all receipts).

Contact number: _____ Best time to call: _____

☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet and am happy for my child to be interviewed about his/her experiences as a school non-attender.

☐ I understand that taking part is voluntary.

☐ I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

☐ I understand that the audio data my child provides is confidential, that it will be transcribed and that it will be made anonymous. I also understand that the audio data will be destroyed on 31st January 2019 and that after this date the transcribed data will be impossible to trace back to him/her. I understand that my child can request his/her data or ask for it to be destroyed up until 31st January 2019.

☐ I understand that findings from this research may be published in an anonymous form.

☐ I understand that at the end of the study my child will be provided with information about the research findings and may request a copy of the written report.

☐ I understand that my child or I may ask any questions at any time. My child and I are free to discuss any concerns with Angharad Jones or her supervisor Dr Kyla Honey, at Cardiff University.

I, _____(NAME) consent for my child

_____(CHILD'S NAME) to participate in the study conducted by School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Dr Kyla Honey*.

Signed:

Date:

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Staff Consent Form

If you agree to taking part in this study, please provide the following information, tick the boxes and sign below.
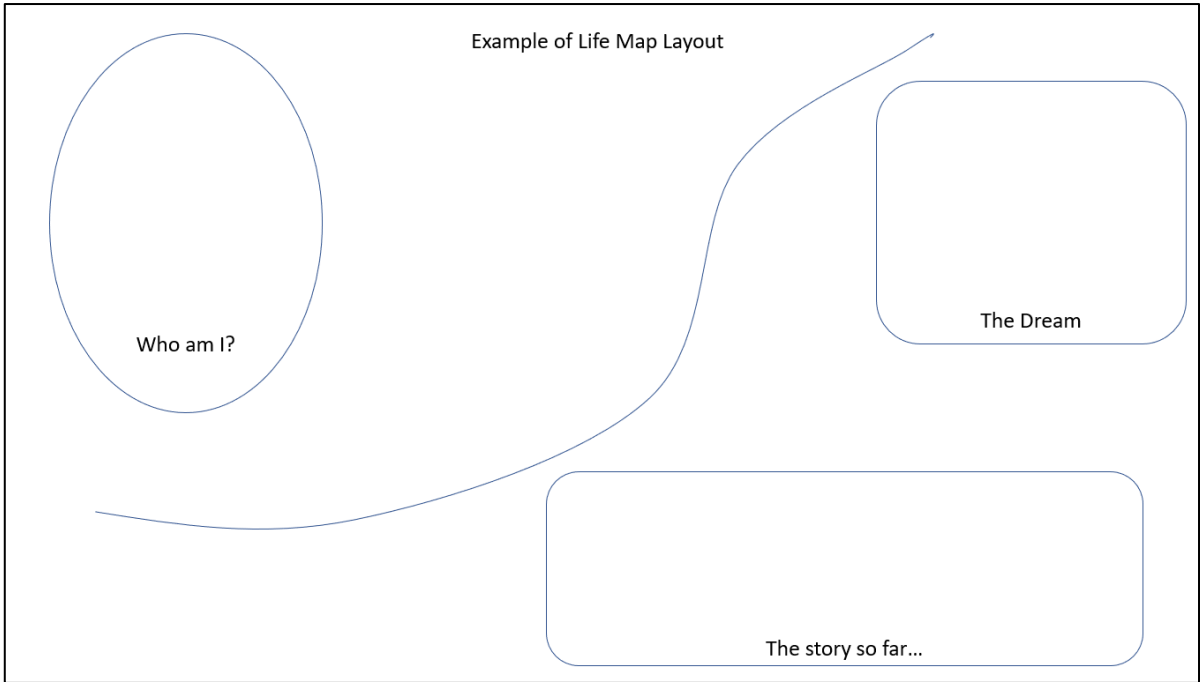
☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet and am happy to be asked about my experiences and views as a member of school staff.

☐ I understand that taking part is voluntary.

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

☐ I understand that the audio data I provide is confidential, that it will be transcribed, and that it will be made anonymous. I also understand that the audio data will be destroyed on 31st January 2019 and that after this date the transcribed data will be impossible to trace back to me. I understand that I can request my data or ask for it to be destroyed at any time up until 31st January 2019.

☐ I understand that findings from this research may be published in an anonymous form.

☐ I understand that at the end of the study I will be told about the research findings and may request a copy of the written report.

☐ I understand that I may ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with Angharad Jones or her supervisor Dr Kyla Honey, at Cardiff University.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Dr Kyla Honey*.

Signed:

Date:

Example of Life Map Layout

Who am I?

The Dream

The story so far…

What experience do you have of children with low attendance?

How does your school approach non-attendance?

Can you take me through the situation of one of the young people you're thinking of?

What did you feel was causing the non-attendance?

What do you think needed to change in order for the situation to improve?

In cases of non-attendance, what do you think is the role of the school?

Does pupil non-attendance have an impact on the way you do your job?

What, in your opinion, is the best way to approach non-attendance?

Appendix K – Analytic Approach by Willig (2013)

(Orange shading indicates that elements of this stage featured in my analysis.)

Willig (2013)
Stage 1: Discursive constructions: Identify how the discursive object is constructed by participants.
Stage 2: Discourses: Locate discursive constructions within wider discourses.
Stage 3: Action orientation: what is gained from constructing the object in this particular way?
Stage 4: Positionings: Consider how the discourse constructs subjects as well as objects and how it makes certain positions available.
Stage 5: Practice: A systematic exploration of the ways in which discursive constructions and the subject positions contained within them open up or close down opportunities for action.
Stage 6: Subjectivity: Tracing the consequences of taking up various subject positions for the participants' subjective experience.

Appendix L – Analytic Approach by Parker (1992)

(Shading indicates that elements of this stage featured in my analysis.)

Parker (1992)
Stage 1: Treating objects of study as texts which are described, put into words.
Stage 2: Exploring connotations through some sort of free association which is best done with other people
Stage 3: Asking which objects are referred to, and describing them.
Stage 4: Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse.
Stage 5: Specifying what types of person are talked about in this discourse, some of which may already have been identified as objects.
Stage 6: Speculating about what the people can say in the discourse, what you could say if you identified with them.
Stage 7: Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents.
Stage 8: Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology.
Stage 9: Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other and looking at the different objects they constitute.
Stage 10: Identifying points where they overlap, where they constitute what look like the 'same' objects in different ways.
Stage 11: Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, perhaps implicitly, and addresses different audiences.
Stage 12: Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, a matter which involves moral / political choices on the part of the analyst.
Stage 13: Looking at how and where the discourses emerged
Stage 14: Describing how they have changed, and told a story, usually about how they refer to things which were always there to be discovered.
Stage 15: Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used.
Stage 16: Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted which this or that discourse is used.
Stage 17: Looking at which categories of person gain and lose from the employment of the discourse.
Stage 18: Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse.
Stage 19: Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression.
Stage 20: Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history.

Appendix M – Identifying Discursive Objects

Transcript 2 – Staff 2

Yellow = non-attender is the discursive object

Blue = school is the discursive object

Green = both school and non-attender are discursive objects within the passage.

A = Participant

R = Researcher

A I think a lot of them, if you ask them, um, will be using their computers, their social media etc of an evening and of an early morning, and maybe they're tired. And maybe their perception of reality as well changes I think as a result of that, not based on any research, but I DO FEEL there is a DEFINITE connection, um, correlation, between you know, how much social media they use, or maybe just generally they're, maybe not always non-attenders but students' perceptions of themselves and their peers really. I can be quite isolating I think.

R Yeah. And you mentioned things like low self-esteem as well, so there's the view of the school, but also their view of themselves?

A I think so, themselves, and how they fit in, you know, if somebody's not very academic, they see some of their friends, and maybe in year seven when people are a little bit more equal, academically, they're all starting in the same place… and they see some of their friends will be making advances faster than them. Maybe, um… societal things, like holidays, or maybe a poor family may not get these opportunities and they just see these changes happening as they go up the school … that makes them maybe more isolated. Know what I'm trying to say?

R Yeah.

A I don't know if it's true but it's just something I just observe.

R Yeah of course. And what do you feel the role of the school is then, in dealing with this problem?

A So, we've obviously been in [Redacted] and attendance was one of the issues because [redacted] 95% is sort of the baseline [Redacted] so this year we're doing the 95. So we can then identify pupils much quicker. And maybe we would see patrwm [patterns] patterns of behaviour, one day this week, one day that week, a different day this week, a different day that week, so you can see just the one days, to me, if you're not really ill and taking the day off, d'you know what I mean?

R Yeah

A And parents can say "right you need to go to school". Um, what was I going to say?

R About how you

A What we do to help. So now we've much more formalised pattern of monitoring so rather than it being ME speaking with [name] it's now all the progress leaders. So they've got a much clearer view of where the weaknesses are. One thing that I've tried to use, uh, I've used it with pupils who I've spoken to is this, um, [redacted] which is ideas of what they need to do when they DO come back after an extended time off. Being whether they're non attenders purposefully or whether they've been ill.

Appendix N – Analytical Procedure

Stage 1

Stage 1 was undertaken electronically. Photo 1 is a screen caption of a transcript that has been coded according to discursive objects within the discourse.

Yellow = non-attender is the discursive object

Blue = school is the discursive object

Green = both school and non-attender are discursive objects within the passage.

A = Participant

R = Researcher

A I think a lot of them, if you ask them, um, will be using their computers, their social media etc of an evening and of an early morning, and maybe they're tired. And maybe their perception of reality as well changes I think as a result of that, not based on any research, but I DO FEEL there is a DEFINITE connection, um, correlation, between you know, how much social media they use, or maybe just generally they're, maybe not always non-attenders but students' perceptions of themselves and their peers really. I can be quite isolating I think.

R Yeah. And you mentioned things like low self-esteem as well, so there's the view of the school, but also their view of themselves?

A I think so, themselves, and how they fit in, you know, if somebody's not very academic, they see some of their friends, and maybe in year seven when people are a little bit more equal, academically, they're all starting in the same place… and they see some of their friends will be making advances faster than them. Maybe, um… societal things, like holidays, or maybe a poor family may not get these opportunities and they just see these changes happening as they go up the school … that makes them maybe more isolated. Know what I'm trying to say?

R Yeah.

A I don't know if it's true but it's just something I just observe.

R Yeah of course. And what do you feel the role of the school is then, in dealing with this problem?

A So, we've obviously been in [Redacted] and attendance was one of the issues because [redacted] 95% is sort of the baseline [Redacted] so this year we're doing the 95. So we can then identify pupils much quicker. And maybe we would see patrwm [patterns] patterns of behaviour, one day this week, one day that week, a different day this week, a different day that week, so you can see just the one days, to me, if you're not really ill and taking the day off, d'you know what I mean?

R Yeah

A And parents can say, "right you need to go to school". Um, what was I going to say?

R About how you

A What we do to help. So now we've much more formalised pattern of monitoring so rather than it being ME speaking with [name] it's now all the progress leaders. So they've got a much clearer view of where the weaknesses are. One thing that I've tried to use, uh, I've used it with pupils who I've spoken to is this, um, [redacted] which is ideas of what they need to do when they DO come back after an extended time off. Being whether they're non attenders purposefully or whether they've been ill.

Photo 1

Stage 2

Stage 2 of the analysis is depicted in Photo 2a. The yellow post-it notes were used to identify interpreative repertoires. This process was repeated for all transripts (photo 2b and 2c).

Photo 2a

Photo 2b

Photo 2c

Stage 3

Stage 3 was a relexive and iterative process. Photo 3a shows an early stage of the process where interperative repertoires were clustered together under tentative headings for each construct. Photo 3b shows a later stage, which included tracking the transcripts where each construction appeared (recorded by the coloured tally).
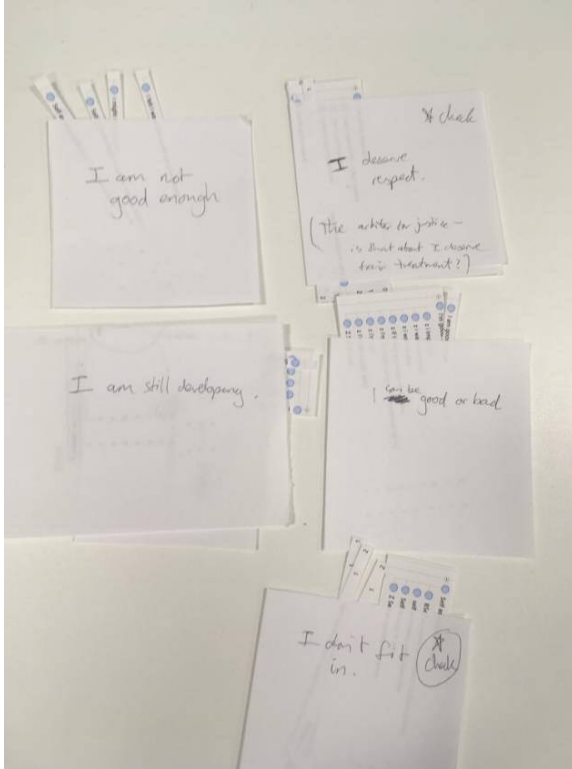

Photo 3a
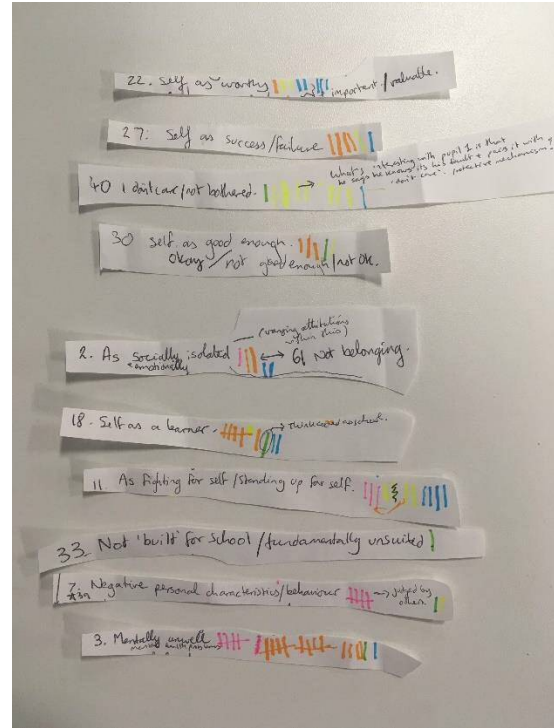
Photo 3b

Stage 4

Stage 4 involved locating the discursive constructions within wider discourses. This process was also iterative with continuous refining and reflexion. Photo 4a shows an early stage in the process of grouping discursive constructions. Photo 4b shows a later stage where I began organising the data electronically in tables.

Photo 4a
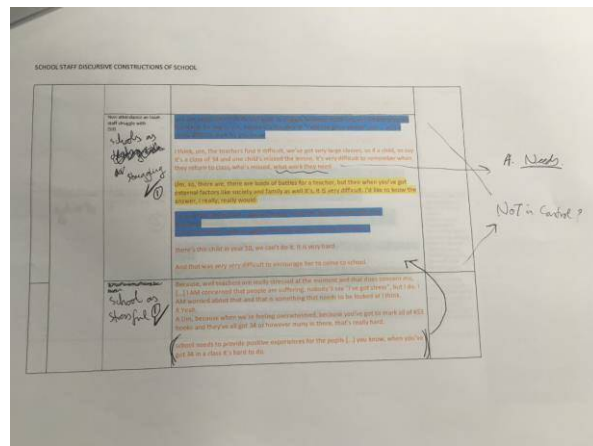
Photo 4b

Stages 5 - 7

Stages 5-7 2 of the analysis were completed electronically. Notes, including the reseracher's thoughts and reflections were initially noted down in relation to Research questions 2 and 3, which were explored in stages 5-7. These notes were later discarded or developed as the analysis progressed and the results were further refined. Examples of these notes can be seen in photos 5a, 5b and 5c.

Photo 5a

Photo 5b

C Just telling me to get OUT and stuff, for no reason.

A Um... I think teachers should be fair. On everyone as well

it's just like, again, like the little things but they it all just adds up in the end, and like they're not fair.

. I was just like well why doesn't she have to do it then? Like, it's not fair.

R Is there anything else at all you'd like to say before I go?
A Just that they should be fair. And less sexist as well
R Yeah?
A Well not sexist, it's like ... sportist I guess

C Yes. And I was like hold on a minute. If ANY other person asked to go to the toilet you'd let them go straight away

90% of all the time I've SPENT in school I've been bullied or punished for stuff I HAVEN'T done.
R So you say 90%, I suppose the 10% that was better is
V This school, literally. Yeah everything else I've either been punished for things that I HAVEN'T done, or, I've been bullied. So THIS school I don't get bullied and I don't get blamed for stuff that I HAVEN'T done I'll hold my hand up and say you know, I've done it, but apart from here I couldn't even BREATHE without 'oh you've done this now go home'.

It happened ALL the time, 90% of the time, okay maybe 50% of the time I would do something, but then the other 50 someone ELSE would do it and I'd get the blame for it.

Subject- YP & school

Position:
Illocutionary force / conditions of meaningfulness: YP is a complainant; they have suffered due to the miscarriage (in all but one case, below) of justice. School has the power to create a narrative of right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable.

Rights & duties: Schools have a duty to make judgements taking all interests equally and fairly into account. YP have the right to be treated fairly; this means a) in a manner befitting their true behaviour and intention and b) without discrimination.
Storyline: YP's behaviour and rejection of school is justified because school rejected them first- on an unfair basis. (Below: YP accepts discomfort as fair).

Thoughts: Equity vs equality. In the case below YP accepts that he cannot listen to music to help himself calm down because this is not fair.
Consider: Potential conflict between a dislike of conformity and desire for fairness (YP's construct: all treated the same). What is need is served by each discourse?
Staff concepts around individual / bespoke approaches.

Photo 5c

Appendix O – Full results for RQ1

Research Question One : Discursive constructions of the school.

Black = YP participant 1   Green= YP participant 2   Purple= YP participant 3   Pink= YP participant 4

Blue= YP participant 5   Brown= Staff participant 1   Orange= Staff participant 2   Red= Staff participant 3

For summary of data distribution, see Appendix N

Economic			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: A place where hard work should pay off Discourse: Economic	School facilitates a successful future.	Getting qualified for a job.	Look at all these accountants, they would have not got anything if they didn't go to school and listened. Hopefully stay in school. And have a good job. So hopefully I'll get all the GCSEs I'll need to get into to college down in [place], to do the hair and beauty course Level 2 straight away then Well obviously I still don't like school but I 've just got to get it done at the end of the day. Cause I do want to get my GCSEs and everything And, it's not like, when you actually, like, unless you actually have a really important job you have to wear a uniform, it's not like you have to wear a uniform when you're outside in a job or something.
		Training for career	I find really frustrating, because if education isn't valued now we're not going to have solicitors and doctors and barristers in the next fifty years, you know? I'm seeing a massive reduction in creative courses. One of my GCSEs was Media Studies. What on earth can you do with Media studies?
		Having a positive future.	And live his life to his fullest. That's it. Okay, So you're coming into school, do the maths coursework, get that done. Anything else that you're planning for yourself? Then have a good future. And what do you think made you say to yourself "Okay, I'm going to give it a go"? Erm, I think it was just the passion to like, to have a future
		Being successful	He, he didn't, he got kicked out of school so HE doesn't have ANY GCSEs or anything now. So I thought, I'm going to do better than him. Like otherwise, he'll just do better than me. Um they were trying to persuade me to come into school, um, cause you know my mum wanted me to be happy and do well Yeah. What sort of things were you finding most stressful in mainstream? Um, I think it was […] um, the , the sort of feeling like I was a failure

	School as a worksite	Having to work	And I want to sort of improve and you know, do well in my GCSEs but not put myself under so much pressure that I have another break.
			Okay. What if they give you choices, how do you feel about that? That'd be better, but, I just HATE working.
			You're supposed to do work, but I just sleep.
			What stuff did you do that makes you say, "oh yeah I was a good kid?" Do work and stuff, that's it. I don't remember really but, yea.
			Nah we didn't have lessons, we'd just get work, written work and you'd just have to do that.
			it was still overwhelming, you know, socialising, I wasn't socialising, I wasn't doing any work, I was missing so many days, I wasn't doing any homework
			That was a very hard time for me because they were like, my teachers are just going to say I'm useless if I don't do all this work
			I was so much more focused, and there wasn't any pressure to do loads and loads of work, because with mainstream it was SO stressful for me.
			How are you planning on getting through the next seven months? I'll have to knuckle down now.
			I had good friends and everything and I liked school. The work and everything.
		Struggling with non-attenders	he's a great young man… and we've not really had <u>any</u> problems with him. Mhmm But the school really struggled with him and he had low attendance
			Um, schools then can refer, because, you know, schools work very hard to get students in
			with the best will in the world, teachers do TRY,
			there's this child in year 10, we can't do it. It is very hard.
			And that was very very difficult to encourage her to come to school.
			you got pupils who just do not want to engage however much you um, create bespoke timetable for them, um, maybe it's the idea of "I will not go to school", um … so it's really difficult then to, you know
			I think, um, the teachers find it difficult, we've got very large classes, so if a child, so say it's a class of 34 and one child's missed the lesson, it's very difficult to remember when they return to class, who's missed, what work they need
			Um, so, there are, there are loads of battles for a teacher, but then when you've got external factors like society and family as well it's, it IS very difficult. I'd like to know the answer, I really, really would.
		School lacking resources necessary to do a good job.	I have time to think and time to reflect on what happens, but in mainstream you don't have that luxury. You're lucky if you can remember what you had for lunch at the end of the day
			…, but then at the same time I fully appreciate schools are MASSIVELY underfunded, um, schools are MASSIVELY

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			underfunded to be able to support the curriculum as it is, um, let alone be able to cater for, um … a large number of individuals who need extra support. Um, so … that essentially is the problem here, it's the fact that we just don't have enough money, you know, and we don't really have the staff either to do it BUT the logistics of having 1500 kids in a school and them being able to make allowances for our one, quite often there are flashpoints, you know.
	School as worth it.	Attending is worthwhile.	I've got a little brother as well … I'm going to make sure he stays in school … Yeah 'cause people say school's shit, it's not. Don't fuck up school. Literally that's all I have to say to him. Even though he didn't do any like, his school, he still wants ME to do it. My granny's like bribing me a bit with school to be honest What do you get from her for coming to school? £5 a day That's very decent Yeah Fair play. That works then? Yeah How have you coped? I don't… I didn't like yesterday either. No I'm sure. You didn't LIKE it, and yet here you are. I just didn't want my mum to get fined. And if she goes to court and stuff she can't be a nurse. Because I didn't ACTUALLY… I DID want to get kicked out, but I knew that I didn't ACTUALLY WANT to if you get what I mean? Yeah that's when I like thought, I need to do school, for the next couple of months I just need to do it. So we've GIVEN them an alternative so we're actually in attendance, and they're GAINING something for THEM, so that's another way to counter that.
		School is important	we have posters in school as well with <u>the relevance of attendance</u> in fact we regularly communicate, last year we also had an assembly to raise the profile, so it is communication, so they see it is important, um, yeah. Well obviously it's important, we've got to get them to realise that qualifications <u>are important</u> and they <u>will </u>shape their future .
	School as not worth it.	Attending is not worthwhile.	and it ALL just <u>builds </u>up to one big thing, and you're just like oh, why I am I even here? Okay. So you weren't getting sent out of lessons there, they were putting you there [in isolation] straight away? Uh-huh and I was like nah can't be arsed with this and just left there. cause my mum managed to fight, fight me to go back, and I was like, 'I don't even want to go back' so I just got myself kicked out
		School is irrelevant	but I just don't think that what we LEARN in school is important AT ALL I just think it's SO irrelevant. It's like I'm not going to go, when I'm working in a salon or whatever, they're not going to ask

			me to compare two poems and all that stuff, it's just SO irrelevant to what you actually need to do outside of school. Yeah, yeah. I've dropped all my, like, GCSE <u>choices,</u> like the three subjects you pick because they were just SO irrelevant to me, like I didn't see the point in me doing ANY of them, like I didn't want to do ANYTHING.
	School as a site of learning	Learning	I should have learnt, and I should have listened more Cause I used to LOVE school Yeah? Yeah like learning all the stuff, Well I'm planning to do some more revising at home, and I'm actually enjoying like, I've gotten that passion back to learn, and I enjoy it, and I enjoy doing work. I sort of settled down a bit more, and my academic abilities started to grow, I had a few friends, erm What do you mean by academic abilities started to grow? Yeah I started to actually, I wasn't very smart when I was younger, earlier in education, and I just couldn't really engage. But then I'd started learning to do that and I sort of began to understand.
			we have an expectation that we're a <u>school,</u> and we're about learning, you know … across the board type of delivery, and it just doesn't work. Especially when I think young people are becoming more and more demanding to be <u>entertained</u>, as opposed to <u>educated.</u>

Subjugation and manipulation			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: A place of control Discourse: Subjugation and manipulation	School as authoritarian	Control	Like I don't like being told "oh you can't go down there" You can't do this, can't do that. It's just, I just don't like it. It's about like, you HAVE to do this, you, like, when they tell you you HAVE to, I don't like that. They tell me off for my clothes and stuff Yeah? But, I think you should be able to wear what clothes you want. Okay. What time would be a good time for you do you reckon? Like, at least like, half ten or something. Okay, have you ever said that to anyone? They just wouldn't let me. They'd never let me. And then, what would help you to calm down then? I listen to music Okay that's a good idea. But the teachers don't even let me do that. No? No. That's what makes me even more angry. When I was in Isolation they made me sit outside of Miss T's office all day.

				Did you know what would happen next? That would go to school Y Yeah How did you feel about that? Dunno, not my choice is it?
			Being restricted	And like, because I go to college every week, being there, and comparing it to school, it's just so much like a prison here. Yeah in school it's all scheduled and stuff, I just don't like it. Are there times when maybe, you have a bit more freedom? When I'm out of school And it just all organised and stuff and all the little things just ADD UP Tell me about lunch time? It's just, I'm like, I don't like being <u>restricted</u> to stuff. Okay So like, I've always hated being <u>restricted</u> to doing stuff, like I can't do, It's just TOO many like… rules and everything, and uniform and everything and not going to the toilet and just like little things, like speaking English.
			Rigidity	The OTHER thing that is really interesting, we have a number of students who <u>don't access school</u>, BECAUSE of mainstream teachers' approach. Really? The shouting. And the rigidity of following the rules, and not being able to give them that flexibility or that minute or that take up time. You WILL come with me, you WILL follow this or we're going to <u>escalate</u> it significantly, you know they will have seventy homework detentions on their log because of the rigidity of some mainstream staff. Not ALL of them, there's lot of very GOOD staff out there, but it's that <u>rigidity,</u> and then the escalation, the shouting, and that, they hate that. Um, but for SOME the rules don't fit them, and the rules need to change. But I don't know how they'd do it, because otherwise others would take the mick. And the things that had triggered him was that the teachers, again, with that rigid approach
			School is compulsory	What about when you arrive in school? Registration. You have to go to registration and it's horrible. I don't like it. I don't like, like HAVING, like you HAVE to come into school, because you won't get fines. I DON'T LIKE that I HATE that. It's a lot of stress on my mind and stuff. That's another reason. I just wake up and like [sigh] I have to go … to school. Mmm But I don't want to
			School doesn't listen.	Like I said, no one likes what I say. Sorry? No-one likes what I say. They can't deal with the truth. They get all mad at me for it. They should listen, instead of, they should listen to student's point of view instead of shouting at them and sending them straight to Isolation

			Do you say that to them? About what you think? Yes but they don't listen. They DID say in mainstream I COULD walk out, but the teachers weren't fully aware of my problems, because they can't listen about every student, and if I was to walk out it might draw attention to me, I could've got shouted at. Did the school help you? They weren't very good at it […] I always told the school my opinion but they just didn't like the way I put it.
		Rules are necessary	I think for some, schools… secondary schools have to have rules, otherwise they wouldn't work R mmm I would set groundnrules and part of it was, you miss a lesson, you catch up, not my job, you come crying to me if you have a test and you haven't got the work, you miss a lesson it's your job to catch up. You miss homework, if you've got a reason and you come and tell me the reason before the lesson we'll give you and extension, you turn up IN the lesson and you just haven't done it, you get punished. Your choice. And it worked, because they knew the ground rules from the beginning. I had some pupils who would actually refuse to go to other lessons, but come to mine. Um, so I think that fairness and … ground rules actually helped, a lot.
	Lacking autonomy	Being driven by external targets	Obviously we ARE driven by having to get this, so I, look, if you look in my diary next to every basically, let me look, on every day I'll check my SIMS and I'll write the attendance … today, 94.91 and I feel sick when I see that. Because I know it's got to be over 95. […] So that, I knew I hadn't met my target. MY target. It's not really my target is it? R No? A It's the school's target but I FEEL that ownership. so there's this one lad who's feeling poorly, but because his attendance is bad, I couldn't send him home. I don't want to send him home. He's going to affect it, you know what I mean? […] they CAN go home, obviously, we DO send them home, but you sort of hold back a little bit before you do, make sure they really are genuinely ill before you do send them. Sometimes you've got situations where schools have been told they have to meet XYZ criteria therefore they need to edit their levels. And for me it's just, because it's one of the things I have to report back on, in the school, […] self-evaluation, you know I've obviously got to show that I've put things into place that are going to support people and get them into school. Um, I think that we've got so many hurdles to jump through,
		Schools are limited in what they can do to support CYP.	but they're big places, they can only make reasonable adjustments … there's only so much we can do in key stage 4, there's only so much we can do in key stage 3 Um, that should have been tackled when he was 7, 8 years old. You know, with that time span, once that idea's in their mind, there's not much you can do. But the stuff we do, a lot of schools can't do can they? and so then what schools can do, because obviously non attendance wouldn't normally warrant a permanent exclusion

		Not being in control	It ANNOYS me seeing things on the news that criticise, um… education … because ultimately it's not our fault what the government brings in, we've got to do what the government says.
			It was something the parents didn't really feel she was ready […] do you know what I mean? So it's, it is a catch 22.
			If you're going to have an inspection, that would be, well this was something that we were being measured on. Um, but it's out of our control.
			that's a big question, um, schools to have the autonomy maybe to be able to offer the bespoke timetables
			So, schools are having to get rid of the elements that are making education really enjoyable for pupils
	Schools as responsible for YP outcomes.	'doing to'	if schools were more willing to acknowledge there was a problem earlier, then MAYBE it would've been dealt with
			We've only got 150 ish odd places, un so quite often they're pushed back to the schools to do a bit more.
			if they've maybe got used to the fact that they don't <u>have</u> to go to school all the time, um, you've got to start to try and change the mindset
			So, if that, hopefully then, will drive them a bit more […] you know hopefully that will make a difference.
			So we're trying to do different things. Different techniques, yes. It's all about encouraging them
			Took a YEAR to get him in
			It took us the whole year to get him in, and he's in year 11 now, doing very well.
			So he's one of the ones, and some of them, again, you put them in quite quickly and it works, some of them it takes a long long time
			Sometimes it's really effective and sometimes it takes… time, for them to come round to that way of thinking.
			we've got to get them to realise that qualifications <u>are</u> <u>important</u>

Judicial			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: A place of judgement Discourse: Judicial	School as a judicial authority	Judgement	I just think about what it must've been like back there in my mainstream school, the people I have here, […] they don't judge me. So what does success mean to you?

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			Proving everyone wrong. They say, they say that you need school… you do, but you can achieve anything if you believe in it. Mmm. Yep. So who are you hoping to prove wrong then? All of them. All of who though? All of the teachers at school B. It was just because, like, year nine year ten, I didn't want to come to school because like, I used to just get in trouble for misbehaving, like I knew it was my fault like but I just didn't like coming to school because of that. So then I wouldn't. Oh right I see. Okay. That's why they wouldn't let you learn there then, because of your mates? Probably. I think so. Okay. Do YOU think you would misbehave with them? No.
		Good vs bad.	Um, well me [friend 1] and [friend 2] are known as the bad girls or whatever, Yeah, yeah. You said that you thought that you and the other two that go to college were known as the "bad girls"? Mmm Who do you think thinks about you that way? Everyone in school [laughs] Even teachers? Yeah Really? Yeah you know like every year has it… like, the bad boys and the bad girls. Like, we're known as the bad girls. Anything you can do from your side to make sure that happens? Keep good innit Okay, so, let's go back to… early days, school R can you remember it at all? I don't remember … er … year 1 I was probably, probably good in year 1. Yeah? Year 2 probably alright, year 3 yeah, most up to year 4 and 5. So when you say good, tell me about that? I was alright, I was alright. I was a good kid to be honest. Right, what's isolation? Like, when you've been… bad. You think it would have made a difference if your social worker and your teachers from here had been able to go to that meeting? YES, cause they would have said like, they would have said "he should be allowed to come back, cause… he's improved".

	School an arbiter of justice	Fair vs unfair	Just telling me to get OUT and stuff, for no reason.
			Um… I think teachers should be fair. On everyone as well
			it's just like, again, like the little things but they it all just adds up in the end, and like they're not fair.
			I was just like well why doesn't she have to do it then? Like, it's not fair.
			Is there anything else at all you'd like to say before I go? Just that they should be fair. And less sexist as well Yeah? Well not sexist, it's like … sportist I guess
			Yes. And I was like hold on a minute. If ANY other person asked to go to the toilet you'd let them go straight away
			90% of all the time I've SPENT in school I've been bullied or punished for stuff I HAVEN'T done. R So you say 90%, I suppose the 10% that was better is V This school, literally. Yeah everything else I've either been punished for things that I HAVEN'T done, or, I've been bullied. So THIS school I don't get bullied and I don't get blamed for stuff that I HAVEN'T done I'll hold my hand up and say you know, I've done it, but apart from here I couldn't even BREATHE without 'oh you've done this now go home'.
			It happened ALL the time, 90% of the time, okay maybe 50% of the time I would do something, but then the other 50 someone ELSE would do it and I'd get the blame for it.
			No they just say, if, if, if I let you, everyone else is gonna want to do it. And that's fair enough. Right okay. So you think that's fair enough? Because if I do it, everyone else is gonna want to do it.
			they send me straight to Isolation and they didn't even ask why.
			And if somebody's struck down with an illness for a fortnight because they've got glandular fever or whatever, then that's not fair either because they WOULD have been in school but they were ill, and they were genuinely ill
			I definitely feel uncomfortable about the certification and 100% because I don't think it IS fair. Um, so it is something that's in my mind, don't know what to do about it yet, but it is something.
			Um, so I think that fairness and … ground rules actually helped, a lot.

IDENTITY			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching Construction: A site of public identify	A place to fit into.	Belonging	Because we stand our ground. We're not scared to say anything… I mean because [this school] is a bit different to [other school] the people wise. Is it?

Discourse: Identity			Yeah like so… [other school] is like more naughtier kids and [this school] is like more farmer kids and better behaved. Okay People would say that me, [friend 1] and [friend 2] belong in [other school]. Who says that? Just, no, like, that's just how it <u>is</u>. Like we fit we fir in more with [other school] people than people in our school to be honest Why don't you want to go to School B? Because I don't like it and it's too far away from home. How do you know you don't like it? Because I know some of the people that go there and they're proper snobs. Why do you think they're snobs? Because they all are. They come from [place] and I just don't like [School B] School's not for everybody. Do you feel school's not for you then? Looks like it don't it? I can't get on with any of the teachers.
		Individuality	A I think it's stupid. I don't see the point, like they tell you to be your own <u>person</u> and everything, but then then they tell you to wear <u>everything</u> the same, it's like, how are you meant to <u>be</u> your own person… but… dress the same as everyone else?
		Social conformity	And I think this child didn't maybe like the conformity of having to be there at nine o clock, having to leave at half past three, you know, would like that flexibility. <u>College</u> would have given her that we've got one pupil, who always wears lots of jewellery […], um, her attendance <u>has</u> been bad, um, and she gets a lot of people in school saying [high pitched voice] "why are you rarararara" and it's really <u>hard</u>. And I will speak to her and I know people are looking at me thinking "Why isn't [name] referring to the fact that she isn't wearing the right school uniform, she's wearing tight jeans, she's too much jewellery. in nice schools you see kids who are individual and who can be individual, in edgy schools they more… conform, and they wanna be <u>normal.</u> So every, you could SEE, <u>everybody's</u> trying to conform, everybody's trying to just blend in, and not get noticed. It's interesting.
		Differential treatment	And HOW they used to treat me [girl 1, 2 and 3] is <u>exactly</u> how they treat <u>us</u> now, and like you can just TELL like… it's hard to explain <u>how</u> they treat you but they like, if you saw the teacher talking to us, and then talking to another group of people you could tell Well, sometimes, well it depends what kind of mood I'm in, sometimes I'm like, you know, it's just like mmm, yeah, but if I'm in a bad mood it just <u>annoy</u>s me, it's just like stop <u>treating</u> me like this. No, yeah I see. It's not like that in college then? No. There I'm just like a normal person. Just like, how my mum would treat me. Because none of the teachers knew. And [name] that's the student, that one person knew. And it felt good cause nobody treated me differently. Okay I see Cause I hate it when people treat me differently

			there used to be two girls in the year above me, well they've left now obviously, and… the way they used to… you'd KNOW , you can SEE when teachers are treating people differently.
	School reflects its pupils	Demographics	And I don't know whether it's got ANYTHING to do with demographics or, whatever, I don't know, but I've sat in a lot of school receptions and you get a feel for it
	School as a place where you become known.	Being known (negative)	So then they were all like questioning me and I didn't like that cause then that… just made me like… not want to be here, because they knew about everything that was going on, it was embarrassing for me […] so that just made me like, not want to be here at all. Everyone just knew everything about everyone as well so [unclear] and then, because when my mum got ill, everyone knew about it and it was really embarrassing. So that's when it, like, started going down. It was such a small school like everyone knew each other, so. Can you remember what happened around that time that made you feel that way? Some people just like, the older ones used to say things about it cause my mum was really [unclear] as well […] so they used to say things and that used to, like, have an effect on me as well. They just kept asking 'are things at home okay, everything alright?' I don't want any of that, I don't want any drama from home to be in school. Okay. And you wanted to talk to Miss W? Yeah I like Miss W, I like, I don't mind talking to Miss W […] But… the other teachers… they just want to know if you get what I mean. They'd text my mum. And then they like, question you, and then if it's not a good enough reason they question you even MORE about it, and it's just like … [sigh] leave me alone. Is there anything else about this school that helps you actually come? Um, people don't just… like… um… people don't just ask loads of questions. People who don't ask questions, the only question they ask, which is when you first come here, is 'what did you do today' (laughter) it's like, fine, cause they just ask everyone. Whenever I told the teachers something the kids would find out. Really Yeah. SO… I didn't tell them anything. No matter what. Bugger you [name]. {…} And then when I went back the whole school knew. Like literally I'd get people who I didn't even know come up to me and asking me if I was okay, WHY did I do it. I was like 'I don't even know you – GO AWAY'. It REALLY done my NUT in. Yeah I'm sure. That doesn't happen here then? No. People only know about your life if they ask. cause there were actions to help me with my anxiety at my mainstream school, but, er, everybody knew
		Being known (positive)	I just think "it used to be worse" and I will have these blips, and I will have more of them, but I am in a place where I'm safe, people know my situation Um, I just think about what it must've been like back there in my mainstream school, the people I have here, like great teachers who actually know my situation and know lots about it

				Well I don't think the school really <u>knew</u> the situation cause my mum she used to phone in and say I was ill. So I don't think they were really sure what was going on.
				Yeah. But they've let us. Because they KNOW… we find it quite stressful with the <u>whole</u> year because we don't really like them. Yeah? So, that's good, like, that they let us do that
				But like the teachers that <u>know us</u> they will actually come over and <u>talk</u> to us and we don't mind that obviously because we <u>want</u> them to know, like, what we think.
				Like maths this morning I didn't have it and they were constantly saying my name and then they were wondering why I was getting so mad Yeah. Have you told them? Yeah they do KNOW
			School investigate	and I kept to myself a lot. But, they said that I was still just a little bit shy and that I'll overcome it in a short amount of time, so it still wasn't investigated.
				Um, but when I started year seven, that was very overwhelming and very difficult. Yet again, nothing was investigated because they thought "Oh it's starting a new school, everybody goes through that" but it didn't ease it just got worse.
				And by that time they realised that I actually had some mental health issues not just I was a little bit shy. So they started to investigate that for a while people here realised that I actually have, like, bad anxiety […] unlike mainstream.
				he didn't go mad at all he just said you shouldn't, just you shouldn't be doing this. And he said "WHY d'you do it?" and I was like "just kept annoying me". So yeah.
			Being understood / misunderstood	Yeah, so they kind of try to understand us a bit <u>more</u> now than what they <u>used</u> to. […] But then, like the others, they think that we just do it for attention.
				Um, I've got friends here who have similar feelings to mine that I can sort of talk to about, and they understand. Um, and I have so many people that can understand my situation and they also know when I need to take a step back.
			Knowledge	And I understand pupils' need for privacy and they need to have their confidentiality respected, but, if there's something going on with a young person, every teacher needs to know about it
				What I got frustrated about was that I didn't have time to get to know my pupils, and in my thinking, when I was in school I LOVED certain teachers and the KNEW about my life, they KNEW who my family were, even though they hadn't met them, or hadn't met all of them, they knew about my life, and I realised after a year or two that I didn't know that about my pupils. SO I actually stopped and for the first two weeks of every new year I would sit down and I would make sure I got to know my pupils
				we were on her case basically, but we weren't aware of the … history.
				that we were too, um, intense on the scrutiny, but, you know, until you know what's wrong, we can't really help

RELATIONAL			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Superordinate construction: Schools should care for and support CYP Discourse: relational	Schools is a hostile place	Being kicked out, excluded	Well cause of my boyfriend. He, he didn't, he got kicked out of school so HE doesn't have ANY GCSEs or anything now. In school, you'd get sent out, get sent to the headmistress I only spent about a month in year eight. Cause then I got kicked out So I was just getting more and more angry and I'm just keeping it inside until one day I'd just pop and then I'd get kicked out. school B till year 8, got kicked out Okay Then went school Y Okay Then tried school G Yeah? Got kicked out of that Okay. Then… Then… then I went to school P Yeah. And then… then here? Yeah. And before I went to school Y I got kicked out of here too. I just didn't listen. Kept getting kicked out of lessons. Kept going to isolation I remember getting kicked out of maths, I would've, I would've been able to be back in school B, but after, they wouldn't let me back in. And then I had a meeting with them, and they just told me "no, he's not allowed to go back". Just telling me to get OUT and stuff I don't really know cause they kicked me out of the lessons. I'm just up here all day. And it's horrible.
		Aggression	Well, so, what's different? For you now, than what things were like then? Not bitchy teachers. Yeah? Yeah. So what's a bitchy teacher? That doesn't shut up. Keeps having a go at you, and if you get angry, and they don't like it and call the senior and tell you to get you removed, and it's like [sigh] what the hell like, [sigh] well annoying, that's what, that's what happens in school for me. What did he do that worked well? Not shouting. That's what schools need like, more teachers that don't shout and be more chilled out when they're teaching And the headmaster came in and he didn't know what was up with me so he shouted at me for not having a supervisor, and that really knocked me It weren't, It, the teachers were really just like, they SHOUT at you and stuff. It's horrible. I don't remember a lot.

			Yeah, so they kind of try to understand us a bit <u>more</u> now than what they <u>used</u> to. Cause so it DID used to be just shout shout shout and getting us in trouble all the time
			He didn't shout like the others. Even if, even if you were naughty, he would just talk to you like, calmly. And not shout at you. That's the good thing about it.
			They can't deal with the truth. They get all mad at me for it.
			Yeah, but, fair enough [unclear] basically you should, it's sometimes the students, but… it's mostly the teachers as well. Cause, they shout at the students. And most of the students shout back at them.
			What did you like about it? The teachers were nice. In the same way again? As the teachers you liked before? […] Oh he was like, he was one of them teachers that don't shout at all. And they literally talk to you in a calm manner, not wasting time and shouting.
			sometimes, there's ALWAYS certain members of staff aren't there and you just think 'for God's sake', you know, give them a break.
		Disliking	Like yesterday, they probably don't like, they probably hate me. You think so? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
			All of the teachers at school B. Cause when you're naughty they don't they don't… they think that you're not going to do good. And that you're a waste of time, waste of space. Really? Most of them think that, yeah. How do you know they think that? Well it's just obvious. Have they said that to you? No, but if they don't like you, they obviously think it.
			Most of them fucking hate me. I know they do.
			like the people who LIKE sports like always like praised and loved and stuff than the ones that don't like sports, they don't get anything like said to them.
			She is sports teacher, she HATES me [friend 1] and [friend 2], she HATES us and it must be because we don't do sports. […]we KNOW that she's doing that because they like sports, they go to sports, and we don't. So, do you mean she's showing favouritism? Yeah. So it's like that with her, you think, because she's the sports teacher. It is different though with other teachers? I don't know it's like… the same people with most teachers, if you get what I mean?
			So how do you feel when you're being shouted at? I feel like the person has something wrong with me The person thinks there's something wrong with you? Or YOU feel there's something wrong with you? I feel like when they shout at me, I feel that they have something wrong with me
	School's role is to care and support.	Caring	They acted like they didn't even care and it's like, really, you're supposed to HELP people not make them feel like shit.
			It didn't feel like they actually cared, they just wanted me to attend

			I've <u>known</u> them, for ages, but that's just school. So are they mates? No But the people in [activity 2] are more like mates? Yeah I've known them for like, my life. They, like <u>care</u> about me and stuff like that. So is this the adults? Yes How do you know that they care about you? I just notice things. I just tell them everything, and they like, yeah. Like they'd lock me in a room they wouldn't talk to me didn't ask how I was feeling So this is more of a nurturing unit and the others are more behaviour, um, I think basically deep down they're all nurture really, it's just that nurture displays itself in different ways.
		Helping	What do you mean by crutches? I just had loads of support from like teachers and other people. What did you find so supportive? I don't know, they were just hanging around with me and speaking to me So who was in that meeting? The headmistress. Of school B I don't know who else was in the meeting because I wasn't allowed in. And teachers from…which school? You mean like who would help me? Ah from here. From here. So you would have liked it YES If they could have gone to that meeting? Yes I would've. That's it. And I'm going to say fuck you school you did fuck all for me. They very much like, they didn't really help me with my anxiety, they were just like, just ignore it and come into school. and people here realised that I actually have, like, bad anxiety, and they actually took actions to help resolve that and help me with it, unlike mainstream. Yeah I was going to primary school full time. I didn't really have any support because they just thought I'd grow, I'd grow into it But then, but year 6 I had grown a lot stronger. I had a lot of, you know, I had a lot of support […] I had a lot of stable, you know, crutches, and I had a really big group of friends, and I socialised a lot more. But, um, you do have that luxury to find out what the issues are and try to find someone who can help them with that issue. at the same time we have to also, um, support them through the emotional things that they <u>are</u> going through. And what do you feel the role of the school is then, in dealing with this problem? […] And parents can say "right you need to go to school". Um, what was I going to say? About how you What we do to help. you know, until you know what's wrong, we can't really help. So there's this, you know we're have different things. So in their day you've got different things you can offer them, to maybe

			help them with their self worth, their self esteem to a certain extent. and I know people are looking at me thinking "Why isn't [name] referring to the fact that she isn't wearing the right school uniform, she's wearing tight jeans, she's too much jewellery, and <u>I</u> know that that's a discussion that doesn't need to be <u>done</u>, and it's not going to <u>help</u>. we don't really have the staff either to do it, but that would have been a way to help know I've obviously got to show that I've put things into place that are going to support people and get them into school If they say they want to do something and then when they actually have that activity they don't turn up for it- Yeah Um, it's very difficult to fight their corner then, to keep that provision going. That we just don't have enough money, resources, from the county to be able to support our … youngsters, to support our future.
	Schools must be appropriate to pupil needs.	Meeting needs	they didn't really cater to my issues when we do shared placements with schools, one or the other starts to break down, and the one that starts to break down, sometimes can be the one that isn't suitable. Well, no, it always IS the one that isn't suitable but I think maybe school wasn't the place where she needed to be maybe the perception of school being the problem … but it wasn't really the problem, it was the … LOCATION. She should have been taken out and gone, maybe straight away.
	Schools as self interested	Schools need pupils to look good.	Why do you think that they've got uniform then? To make themselves look good, to make the school look good. That's why they want it. Just so that THEY look good all the time. Cause like, when the police came here before, they said to them "can you not come in your uniform next time" cause they didn't want it to look like a bad thing on the school. But from the school's point of view I was just like a, my worth was in my grades. It didn't feel like they actually cared, they just wanted me to attend so it'd make THEM look good. I think the head of the year at the time wasn't very nice about it, she basically told my mum to force me to go into school cause I need to do well, they didn't really cater to my issues, they very much like, they didn't really help me with my anxiety, they were just like, just ignore it and come into school It's just … they need me in for like … I don't even know they're not forcing me to put all this pressure on myself and do really really well for them to look good.
		Staff follow an agenda	it's very difficult to remember when they return to class, who's missed, what work they need, because you're moving on, you've got your agenda and it's VERY hard to accommodate that because his attendance is bad, I couldn't send him home. I don't want to send him home. He's going to affect it, you know what I mean? Oh the one hand he's not feeling very well, so we're trying to put him, he's in the [unit] to get some tlc, gargling saltwater, you know? So, so it's really hard. On the one hand

			I'm dealing with those poor little children that don't feel very well, but they can't go home … or they CAN go him, obviously, we DO send them home, but you sort of hold back a little bit before you do
	Schools staff as relationship – builders	Relationships	And that we're very <u>nurturing</u>, and we do a lot of restorative practice as well. Oh really? Umm, it's all about relationships. You know, and we do, we get, we don't have any consequences cause they have taxis, we don't have detentions or anything like that, we can stop them from going places, but a lot of kids, if you take off, take things away from them, they don't really care, because they haven't got much anyway, um… so it's all about relationships. we use different members of staff in different ways in order to get them to, you know, we quite often, we, you know, because it's about relationships you know, if they've, upset somebody And one person can't get them to see a point of view we'll use somebody else we're really creative, honestly, we just get out there and see them, you know, I tend to find, if you send a member of staff out who they've got a good relationship with, we tend to get, you know, even to go and get them, come on into centre, you know it's better than a taxi because they find it harder to say no. So, yeah. the fact that somebody's NOTICED that you're ill tomorrow, or when you're back in school, is very valuable. And, you know, somebody'll ask you, how are you? Are you okay? That relationship can make them feel important, maybe feel more positive towards the school. It's, it's taken a <u>while</u> to try and get some of them to realise that when I say I care, I really do actually <u>care</u>. And it's not because I'm getting paid at the end of the month.
	A place to develop social connections	Social interaction	setting that expectation that we're different to school, a lot of the issues that you associate around busy corridors, changeover times, social times, you're not there, we will be with you, you're coming in. the social interaction between peers you know in the corridors, um, the interactions with others here wasn't big enough or challenging enough for him, and the social times weren't enough to stimulate him and give him what he wanted to get them back into the swing of it so, cause that can be very very difficult, for an individual, because you miss out, say you've had a long time, maybe a week off, friendship groups have changed, people you sit with in class, you don't know what work you're doing, that in itself can in itself cause issues to an individual.
		Friendship	Of course. Um, so when I was younger when I was in preschool I didn't socialise like at all, I didn't have any friends. my parents thought it would be worse for me because I had no other friends. I, if I WAS home schooled I wouldn't have that social network. What did you think about that? I kind of agreed with them, I thought like, being home-schooled was the easy way out for me, even though long term it probably wouldn't help cause I didn't have any friendship groups. Right okay, so what's next here, 'made friends that weren't good for me', what's that about?

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			Well I I've got no friends, well I've got like, two good friends in this school, but like NO CLOSE friends.
			When I first came here nobody would talk to me but I think that's just because nobody knew me, so they don't know what I was like.
			Mhm
			But when people started talking to me it went good

Entertainment			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 3)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 2)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construct: School is not enjoyable Discourse: Entertainment	School an unenjoyable	Boredom	It's boring. Yeah? Yeah, literally. So, boring is an issue for you then? Yeah. What does boring mean to you then? Just like when the teachers talk, it's just like, just shut up like no one cares about, genuinely. they give me some lessons but I just walked out of it cause I <u>really</u> couldn't be arsed. Okay. Why couldn't you be arsed? Just boring. It has to be a fun lesson. Okay. What's fun for you? What do you enjoy? Just doing, just… well to be fair, I don't have a clue. Okay Just has to be not boring. Okay. So what was your attendance like at school G? Not good, it was just boring. Most of them I just don't do my work. Okay. Most, but not all? Some you do the work, sometimes? It's just so boring.
		Entertainment	I LOVED it, and I got my A [laughter]. But if you'd told me that I HAD to study Geography because Media Studies wasn't on the timetable, I would not have been happy. So, schools are having to get rid of the elements that are making education really enjoyable for pupils … across the board type of delivery, and it just doesn't work. Especially when I think young people are becoming more and more demanding to be <u>entertained</u>, as opposed to <u>educated</u>. Um, I'm feeling that education's being more, if you can win them over and get them to learn without realising they're learning, that's they way you're gonna get through. I think as well [pause] school needs to provide positive experiences for the pupils so they do engage, and so they DO feel positive about going to lessons
		Pressure	Um, I think it was just, er, pressure to do well, um, the other people around me, just the sheer size and the amount of people in place, um, the […] um and the pressure of doing homework when at home I just wasn't in the mood

			Safeguarding
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction of school (Superordinate) (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Construction: Schools have a duty of care. Discourse: Safeguarding	Schools as responsible for wellbeing	Safety	I think basically, with the whole confidentiality thing, in our lessons I think we're letting our pupils down by keeping things so confidential. You know, the same with drugs and alcohol […] if I don't know that so-and-so's got a friend who takes drugs, how can I keep that person safe? But of course we were like a safety net, so if it wasn't going to work, we were going to pick him up and try to figure it out. You know weekly safe and well visits to make sure that we've seen the child, make sure that we've done all we can with regards to safeguarding.

Research Question One: Discursive constructions of the non-attender.

KEY- Note: Colour coding removed from this copy to ensure anonymity.

Black = YP participant 1   Green= YP participant 2   Purple= YP participant 3   Pink= YP participant 4

Blue= YP participant 5   Brown= Staff participant 1   Orange= Staff participant 2   Red= Staff participant 3

For summary of data distribution, see Appendix N

			Health
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: Non-attenders are unwell. Discourse: Health	As unwell	Disorder & pathological behaviours	I understand that I'm probably going to have this anxiety for most of my life, there's no real way to cure it, but there's ways I can deal with it and plan my life, um, so that it isn't controlled by it. Well in year seven, I was very suicidal I was really low. And I was like really close to doing something drastic. Er, my head of year and just other figures of authority around me because they found out that I was like self-harming, they found out that I had suicidal thoughts although the anxiety was lessened I was still VERY low Because I have… anxiety, depression, um, schizophrenia, but not very severe, and I think I have bipolar because I've got all the symptoms. Um, I know I've got anxiety Okay. And I know I've got depression and [redacted] because I was diagnosed with it Okay

			Because it was I was in [name of place] I found out I had it. And then bipolar I THINK I've got that, I THINK, I don't know for DEFINITE cause I've got to get like a doctor's appointment
			So this started in year seven? […] The feeling suicidal? Oh I've always had that.
			So as I progressed through year seven I started to experience more anxiety, and I didn't eat very much, I lost weight very rapidly, my mood was very low […] I completely lost focus, cause I was so in my own head […] I started to see a school counsellor which provided some relief but I'm not sure if it was the RIGHT help for me
			they very much like, they didn't really help me with my anxiety
			I was just missing more and more school, er, I was really depressed, I was really anxious, I wasn't happy. I lost loads of weight I dropped to like seven stone. I started experiences, like suicidal thoughts.
			school phobic is someone who would have genuine panic attacks at the thought of walking into school or he or she would have attacks as they were walking into school […]They would, I dunno, I suppose depend on staff then to help them get through the day
		Illness	So I went to a therapist outside of school and that DID make me a little bit better for a SHORT while, but she just wasn't the right therapist for me. And of course, NOTHING was thought of it, they still just thought I was a bit nervous, they didn't think I had any mental health illness or
			I got into CAMHS. We'd previously tried to do that a couple of months before but I wasn't accepted because I wasn't sick enough
			I was just sort of flat-lining for a while.
			ideas of what they need to do when they DO come back after an extended time off. Being whether they're non attenders purposefully or whether they've been ill.
			then you have the ones that it is out of their control, whether they're ill or not,

Psychological			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: Non-attenders are psychologically problematic Discourse: Psychological	Psychologically Distressed	Having 'issues'	I think that I had a lot of self esteem issues time they realised that I actually had some mental health issues they didn't really cater to my issues, it wasn't specifically about school it was just about everything to do with like my anxiety. So like we spoke about my bereavement issues, maybe problems I have with myself, problems I have with other people, self confidence, and they've helped me let go of a lot of grief. she's very withdrawn, she's physically very withdrawn, um, she's also got her hair over her face so there are obviously some deep seated issues there

			we've got the intense cases where they REALLY find that there's an issue
		Low self-esteem	we, if you've got issues of self esteem and you want to show yourself, like, we've got one pupil, who always wears lots of jewellery because she doesn't think a lot of herself […] um, her attendance <u>has</u> been bad
			they have issues with school or their self esteem and their perception of, of the school, as I said.
			So in their day you've got different things you can offer them, to maybe help them with their self worth, their self esteem to a certain extent.
			some of them it was unhappiness, and I think now in my role I see that a lot of it is to do with self esteem,
			and I think now in my role I see that a lot of it is to do with self esteem,
		Stress	It's a lot of stress on my mind and stuff.
			Because they KNOW… we find it quite stressful
			everything that was going on and then it just stressed me out and I just used to get upset.
			So she's had two weeks off, yeah, and was feeling stressed with school.
			She was feeling very very stressful. She's since dropped one of her choices for […] and I think that's made her feel more positive about school
	YP are emotional	Moody	I'm very moody in the morning.
			It depends. It depends what mood I'm in. Yeah? Yeah. If I'm in an angry mood then […] I'll go mental
			It just affected my mood, like just me, because of this constant sadness
			… I don't really care otherwise but if I'm in a mood I just can't be bothered with them, they do my head in.
			It's just… what like <u>mood</u> I'm in if you get what I mean.
			Well, sometimes, well it depends what kind of mood I'm in, sometimes I'm like, you know, it's just like mmm, yeah, but if I'm in a bad mood it just <u>annoy</u>s me, it's just like stop <u>treating</u> me like this.
		Emotional	I'm really good at hiding my feelings.
			cause like one moment I'll be really happy and everything and then the next moment I'll be kicking off or I'll be down and crying about it. And it's like, and people just think, like… I'm a proper big baby, I CAN be a PROPER big baby
			I have this thing, where if, where if people keep saying my name it REALLY winds me up
			It really winds me up. And then they wonder why I'm always so stressed or so angry.
			It feels like if I plan stuff, I'm ahh it might not work, and I get really anxious about it
			I just get really angry.
			I was ANGRY
			It REALLY done my NUT in.
			That's what makes me even more angry.

			And be in school upset and angry all the time, and I just, I didn't want to be here then. At all, so.

some of them it was unhappiness,

that's, with the very very anxious students who are very worried, cause obviously it'll depend on the reasons for them coming in, if they're very anxious, very worried about interacting with others, then, um, that's what we would do.

that means that they really need that emotional support.

that's, with the very very anxious students who are very worried, cause obviously it'll depend on the reasons for them coming in, if they're very anxious, very worried about interacting with others, then, um, that's what we would do.

you've got some pupils then who just won't let you care if that makes sense, so they will literally PUSH you away so that they don't have to feel like you do care, if that makes sense?

we have to also, um, support them through the emotional things that they are going through. |
| | Impaired psychological functioning | Irrational | he's absolutely lost the plot

get sent to the headmistress, get a row off her and then that just works you up even more then, just gets to the point where like, you just, you kind of lose your head. |
| | | Flawed perception of reality | in school it's THE staff, THE management team, THE pupils, THE parents, you create this persona for this … being that doesn't actually exist, so I THINK what they tend to do is they see SCHOOL as their problem, and even coming over trothrwy'r drws [translation: the doorstep] is really difficult for them, threshold, is hard, because they school as embodying everything that they see as bad,

maybe they're tired. And maybe their perception of reality as well changes I think as a result of that, not based on any research, but I DO FEEL there is a DEFINITE connection, um, correlation, between you know, how much social media they use, or maybe just generally they're, maybe not always non-attenders but students' perceptions of themselves and their peers really

I think she had counselling and things, so that was overcome, but unfortunately, maybe the perception of school being the problem … but it wasn't really the problem, it was the … LOCATION.

it's how they see school as maybe a negative entity. |
| | | Overwhelmed | And I was actually like, confident, and I was happy. Um, but when I started year seven, that was very overwhelming and very difficult

and it was still overwhelming, you know,

I was allowed to leave whenever I wanted to, if it was overwhelming I could leave

. I think I just let it get on top of me when I went into high school. Cause like, everything just gets on top of you. |
| | | Weak / strong | I thought "is it because I'm really weak

But then, but year 6 I had grown a lot stronger. I had a lot of, you know, I had a lot of support

I still have my blips but I have been able to overcome lot |
| | | Professional intervention | I feel that essentially each and every pupil should have a qualified counsellor working with them 24/7. |

Belonging			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: CYP are members of a social system

Discourse: Belonging | Related to others | Normal | There I'm just like a normal person. Just like, how my mum would treat me.

there's a lot of problems at home. But, like, who hasn't? |
| | | Fitting in | People would say that me, [friend 1] and [friend 2] belong in [other school]. Who says that? Just, no, like, that's just how it <u>is</u>. Like we fit in more with [other school] people than people in our school to be honest [laugh]

how they fit in, you know, if somebody's not very academic, they see some of their friends, and maybe in year seven when people are a little bit more equal, academically, they're all starting in the same place… and they see some of their friends will be making advances faster than them. |
| | | Having / not having friends | I don't really have much friends. I've got my boyfriend and like his friends

Well I I've got no friends, well I've got like, two good friends in this school, but like NO CLOSE friends

but the one girl [name] I've been like best friends with her since like year 7, but like recently since before the summer holidays, we've just like <u>drifted</u>

I didn't socialise like at all, I didn't have any friends, the only friends I had, I mean I was a bit of a sheep and they weren't very nice

I was still quite antisocial, um, and you know,[…] I only had one or two friends.

I had a really big group of friends, and I socialised a lot more.

Yeah it was good, I made like, I had good friends and everything and I liked school.

I started to socialise more, I started to have friends, and I had a really big group of friends, and I socialised a lot more.

I'm happy, I have a support group, I have friends to talk to, and I have an amazing family

I've got friends here who have similar feelings to mine that I can sort of talk to about, and they understand

long term it probably wouldn't help cause I didn't have any friendship groups, I never went out after school to meet friends, I just wanted an isolated lifestyle, which I really wanted but which probably wasn't best for me. |
| | Incompatible with school | School's not the right place for me | I just … I've never thought I've been built for school.

School's not for everybody. Do you feel school's not for you then? Looks like it don't it? I just can't get on with any teachers.

I'm a hard person to work with. Yes? Yeah. Has anyone said that to you? I know I am, I know I am. |

			I'm not finding you a hard person to work with. No cause I'm sound right now, but if I was in school, I'd be hard to work with.

Moral			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: CYP are acceptable or unacceptable. Discourse: Moral	Good/bad.	Good/bad	And I'm alright now, but, I'll probably be bad soon again. I was probably, probably good in year 1. Yeah? Year 2 probably alright, year 3 yeah, most up to year 4 and 5. So when you say good, tell me about that? I was alright, I was alright. I was a good kid to be honest. I'm an alright person, and then sometimes I'm not. Anything you can do from your side to make sure that happens? Keep good innit, so they don't shout. If you wanna share it, you can share it. But there's nothing really bad in there is there? There's nothing bad in there at all. If you wanna share it you can share it. If you think it's good. I mean. Even if, even if you were naughty, he would just talk to you like, calmly And any behaviour, bad behaviour. then I got kicked out cause I got REALLY bad. REALLY bad. cause I was doing alright, and that just threw me off and I was evil. they would have said "he should be allowed to come back, cause... he's improved". But just... pointless, genuine because I do still struggle with self confidence and thinking that maybe I might not be good enough, Like, when you've been... bad. But I wasn't even bad, they just had no class [for me].
	Culpable	At fault	My mouth got me into trouble. Well it is my fault, I should have listened more. I was, I was shit. I should have learnt, and I should have listened more. Instead of fucking up. for a bad situation I got myself in. I knew it was my fault like but I just didn't like coming to school because of that.
		Wrong	... I don't like knowing what's wrong with me and like, like people telling me what's wrong with me and stuff. school I thought "is it because I'm really weak, is it like, what's wrong with me?"

Developmental			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching Construction: YP are in the process of becoming; Discourse: Developmental	On a journey	The future	And what you think made you say to yourself "Okay, I'm going to give it a go"? Erm, I think it was just the passion to like, to have a future I have plans for my future, I plan to go to college, I plan to get a degree, like I think that I have a fairly bright future and I'm looking forward to it for the first time in my life. I don't, I don't really know what I'm doing with my life. I live in the present. I don't think ahead. Okay, So you're coming into school, do the maths coursework, get that done. Anything else that you're planning for yourself? Have a good future. Yeah and I'm going to be leaving school soon anyway. I just like that feeling. Never knowing what's going to happen. It's just like that mindset. You never know what's going to happen. And when it happens, might be good might be bad.
		Purpose	You only get one shot at life, you've got to make the most of it.
		Progressing	but then I started to progress, and I felt more confident. And that led to like then, sort of arguing with teachers, cause I was like arguing with my family, and I felt like when I come to school like the teachers were gonna talk to me like that I'll just, do it back. Yeah I see So, yeah so that then progressed. Yeah, because this entire journey, my mum describes it instead of going through the main road, we're going the scenic route instead Ah, do you like that metaphor? Yeah I like it. Why do you like that metaphor? I just view it as taking an alternative route but that's okay. I'm just proud of myself. Cause looking there and seeing how far I've progressed
		As the product of experience	But if you don't go through the stuff that you went through, you wouldn't be the person that you are today. Are you saying the responsibility is more on the side of the teachers? YES. Cause they're older, and they should have a least bit more maturity than us. They've been through more stuff than us. So they know how to… d'you get what I mean? so I don't know whether that's historic, or whether he generally has had a difficult time and doesn't know how to process it he's had a difficult time […][from what I've learnt since then he's been a lot of the instigator of his difficult time at the moment. So he's, he's being his own worst enemy, at the moment. we have some students here who are clearly, um, going through some major issues at home,

			… I think they're just unfamiliar of the concept of someone actually genuinely <u>caring</u>.
	YP are changeable	Changed	I was alright during the first like year, but during the end of year seven that's when I changed completely. Because loads of stuff went on with my best mate's dad. That's, that's like when she started talking to me, when I started to get upset in school about my mum's boyfriend and stuff. Like she could <u>tell</u> like I wasn't myself. well I'm glad I'm not friends with them any more, but, they're the ones that <u>changed</u> me if you get what I mean. I just was, it just <u>happened.</u> And then I was just with them, most days after school, at weekends, and then that's when it just all <u>changed</u>. I'm just going to focus on myself now for the next few months because this is where things could get changed big time. he should be allowed to come back, cause… he's <u>improved</u>". But just… pointless, genuine.
		Transience	It depends on the day. Something might work today, but it will go out of the window completely tomorrow. I have heard of a pupil who received a letter um, about attendance, and he's turned around and said 'dad says I have to be here, so I'm here, and I'll be coming in tomorrow', incidentally I saw him today, haven't seen him on a Wednesday for weeks, um, but then … is it permanent or is it short lived? Will it be forgotten again next week?
		Growing up	And then it was like year 8 and I started arguing with my family a lot because like, I was growing up.

Sociological			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: Non-attenders are products of their social environment Discourse: Sociological	Non-attenders represent a familial problem.	Family relationships	I think parenting has a very important role to set there as well, or, to play there. You know, if a child is not used to being told 'no, you have to go to school' She doesn't think a lot of herself, she has lots of family issues, um, her attendance <u>has</u> been bad the parents just <u>don't</u> listen to what we say. […] So clearly, they're NOT <u>listening</u>. So if the parents aren't listening, it's difficult to get the pupils then to listen. I don't know how close they are as a family, so that could have an effect. we tried to set up a scenario where, um, somebody could go out with work for him, but dad didn't really want that to happen so that was … you know There's ones where the child isn't feeling to well and the mum can't be bothered to help them back, to push them to come to school cause they really are fine.

			could be seen as a whole family effort then as opposed to this one individual having to go to school.

ALSO with separated families and the parents live away, what happens on the Monday when they don't get back on the Sunday and they're back in school on the Monday. Yeah. It's quite difficult.

It depends on the family attitude towards education, depends on peer group, depends on society in general |
| | Non-attenders represent a societal problem. | Socioeconomic status | generally speaking, the pupils who, who don't attend and don't value education are the ones who have parents who are falling into the poverty category…

I think that's becoming a bit more of the norm now across the board, not just within the most I don't know, the impoverished areas of society.

a lot of kids, if you take off, take things away from them, they don't really care, because they haven't got much anyway, um… so it's all about relationships

Maybe, um… societal things, like holidays, or maybe a poor family may not get these opportunities and they just see these changes happening as they go up the school … that makes them maybe more isolated. |
| | | Impact of social media | One thing I DON'T think helps AT ALL is they can contact each other so easily through social media now, so, um, we had one pupil who had contacted the other pupil to say that they weren't coming in that day, so neither of them would turn up.

A I think a lot of them, if you ask them, um, will be using their computers, their social media etc of an <u>evening</u> and of an early <u>morning</u>, and maybe they're <u>tired.</u> |
| | Non-attenders represent a systemic problem in schools. | School systems & expectations | in some situations, um, the system has let them down to the point where they don't even know how to sit in a lesson for an hour

some schools haven't quite grasped, um, foundation phase in the way it was intended, […] one thing I saw that was becoming increasingly less, I don't know, obvious was, the ability to sit down.

the first couple of weeks with Year 7s would be increasingly, 'you sit down, I come to you' 'yeah but' 'no, you don't answer back, you sit down, I come to you'. So, you'd have to <u>teach</u> them the basics of being in a classroom 'Miss I've finished a page, what do I do now?' 'turn the page' [laughter] you'd have to be a lot more explicit in your instructions, whereas go back a few years and if a pupil finished a page they'd know to turn the next page.

maybe THAT sort of thing would have helped, possibly that difficulty of knowing that when I'm in school this is what I have to do. |

Relational (2)			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: in relation to others.

Discourse: Relational | Affected by others | Influenced by others | I think it was just, yeah, they were just <u>older</u> than me, I was the <u>youngest</u> out of <u>all</u> of them. So I was just really influenced with what they were doing all the time. I just liked them, I thought they were cool so like, you know, just be like them.

On and off, but he's really bad […] that was, that's what affected me the most.

And, yeah I just had loads of, loads of stuff happen because of him.

they used to say things and that used to, like, have an effect on me as well. |

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		Needing support	how have you managed to cope and bring things back together for yourself? Well I've got a new boyfriend now, I've got like, the support I need at home basically then I had nobody to turn to besides my mum. But I had <u>Miss W</u>, and I <u>liked</u> Miss W, like I've liked her all through school. So like, because I had <u>her</u>, that was just enough. I didn't want anything else. And I'd be able to talk to her, cry to her, just anything, just say whatever I wanted to her so I didn't really need anything else. I think she just wanted me to be in a place where I was okay and I was supported. And he's made it so much easier for me, he's almost like a support system but I am in a place where I'm safe, people know my situation, I'm happy, I have a support group, And I think losing my godmother was another reason I got so low cause I didn't have her around to support me I had a lot of, you know, I had a lot of support, […] but I had a lot of stable, you know, crutches, and I had a really big group of friends I didn't really have any support You mean like who would help me?
	Worthy of respect	Respect and self worth	they were just hanging around with me and speaking to me, it just made me feel like <u>I had some worth</u>. And I was actually like, confident, and I was happy. Well the ones I hang round with now they're all boys, it's a group of boys and they actually they <u>respect</u> me. but, you see he was still respectful towards me and I was respectful towards him. Would you say respect is important to you? Yeah and if I get that I'll give it back. But if I don't then [shrug]. Cause they're scared of my boyfriend as well. So they like, they actually do respect me, they do look after me
	Disliking school	Hating / disliking	No. I just hate every BIT about it. Even lunchtime I don't like lunchtime. I've always hated school. Yeah I don't like any… I've NEVER liked any school. All I know is, I don't like school. Just like realising, like… outside of school compared to inside of school, like what, there differences are and then I started realising like… I don't like school. I just didn't want to be here. I hated it. I wanted to leave but some of it's just because… I don't like school, I just don't like it, I have no reason to like it. when I started not liking school, like at the start of year 11 Well obviously I still don't like school but I 've just got to get it done
	Indifferent to school	I don't care	What did you think about that? I don't care. I didn't care You didn't care? No. Literally.

			Don't care about what any other people think about you. That's good. To be honest, I couldn't care less, what people say about me. Genuine. Okay. Have you heard people say that to you? Yeah, it doesn't bother me. That's why I don't wear makeup to school anymore cause I can't be bothered arguing with Miss R about it. No, I just stopped caring about it. I just couldn't be arsed to do anything. HORRIBLE to me, he calls me a slag, a tramp and everything, like, <u>really?</u> REALLY? REALLY (Shouting) …. It doesn't really bother me though to be honest. But… I don't really care otherwise but if I'm in a mood I just can't be bothered with them, they do my head in. I don't really care about school at all. No? Anything about it. I just walked out of it cause I <u>really</u> couldn't be arsed. What did you feel about that? Who cares. Seriously like [sigh].

Academic.			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Construction: Young people are less able Discourse: Academic.	Struggling with schoolwork	Ability	I'm just REALLY bad at remembering, I've got a REALLY bad memory. It's just, I'm REALLY bad at thinking about stuff. No, I just [sigh] I'm really bad at like processing stuff. I'm not good at any lessons. Just, I don't, my memory is so bad. and you know, I wasn't very academic I wasn't very smart when I was younger, earlier in education, and I just couldn't really engage. But then I'd started learning to do that and I sort of began to understand. my confidence grew because I think that I had a lot of self esteem issues with thinking that I'm dumb because I was all in the lower groups but then I started to progress, and I felt more confident.

Individuality			
Broader discourse within	Discursive construction	Interpretative repertoires	Data

Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	(STAGE 3)	(STAGE 2)	
Construction: Non attenders are individuals Discourse: Individuality	Each young person needs something different	Individuality	I think it can only be dealt with on a case-by-case situation, I've got some individuals who respond really well to sharp, short commands, "come on, sit down, we're doing this, we're doing that" and they respond really well to that, and then others seem to respond better to "right okay we'll do this, and then after we've done that we'll reward ourselves and do this for a bit and then we'll.." it just depends on the individual every individual I've worked with here, um, needs something different. Um … and they need the time and the patience from staff, but much earlier than they get it from <u>us</u>, if that makes sense? and I think it's more, it's individualised, for example we've got a young man who's come out of school and, he's, he's a great young man… and we've not really had <u>any</u> problems with him. Mhmm But the school really struggled with him […] for SOME the rules don't fit them, GENERALLY those ones, they need a slightly different rule.

Autonomy			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching Construction: Non-attenders are powerless Discourse: Autonomy	Powerless	Being controlled	I wasn't allowed to go back straight away cause I had to see counsellor and go to therapy and stuff I wasn't allowed to socialise with anyone so the people that I'd actually talk to about how I'm feeling and everything, I couldn't see them. I had to, I come in at lunch and I left school at about five ish. I can't go in, like, out of the house But I still have to go to school as well. Dunno, not my choice is it? I would've been able to be back in school B, but after, they wouldn't let me back in. I don't know who else was in the meeting because I wasn't allowed in. I kept having to go to Isolation. Just don't like being told what to do. Are there times when maybe, you have a bit more freedom? When I'm out of school
		Confined	How will you feel once you have actually left? Oh… just FREE. Just the FACT that I won't have to come here ever again…Have that horrible routine every morning. Waking up at seven. It's just going to be a relief really. It's just, I'm like, I don't like being <u>restricted</u> to stuff. Okay

			So like, I've always hated being <u>restricted</u> to doing stuff, like I can't do.

Behavioural			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Overarching construction: Young people are insubordinate Discourse: Behavioural	Non-attenders are making a choice.	Refusal	we've got one pupil who's classed as school phobic, um, we've got others who are maybe classed as reluctant to attend, um… as opposed to … refuse to engage and refuse to, erm, to participate in any conversation … so for me the classification there, is a bit … off. you got pupils who just do not want to engage however much you um, create bespoke timetable for them, um, maybe it's the idea of "I will not go to school", Refuses to give his phone in, um, he'll walk in and he will lie on the sofa and he will not move, he will not engage in a conversation for me that is not school phobic that's someone who has been told he has to come to school and he's not happy about that. Um, there WAS one pupil as well who um, […] um, he wouldn't come to school. he's been … allowed to set the terms, and now that he's not allowed to set the terms, he's reluctant to go to school. one little thing like that could be the trigger to mean that pupils become disengaged and refuse to come to school. I think each of them has a reason for not wanting to be there and your friend not being there is a reason to refuse to go to school. I wouldn't say it's a difficulty, to get out of bed, I just, just generally refuse to get out of bed. I just don't want to get out of bed do I, I'll sleep all day. So the… have you had a chance to explain this to the teachers? No I didn't want to You didn't? No I didn't have anything like, TO explain, just, they kept annoying me. Cause I wouldn't go lessons. And then cause I didn't like, wear the right uniform. Okay.[…] What did you feel about that? Who cares. Seriously like [sigh]. Just makes me not want to come to school. Cause I didn't come to school for two days when I was meant to be in Isolation. I thought, I'll go to school on Wednesday cause they'll forget about it So then they said "okay, we'll put her in Isolation for two days", so I just didn't go to school for those two days. So, we refused to do it, cause we came to school thinking we were going to college not that we were going to do a GCSE exam my mum managed to fight, fight me to go back, and I was like, 'I don't even want to go back' so I just got myself kicked out and I came here. I think it's a case of, um, he has this idea of what he's allowed to, um … decide and what he isn't, so in his mind he's the one who decides whether

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			he comes into school, he's the one who decides what he does when he gets here. if they've maybe got used to the fact that they don't <u>have</u> to go to school all the time, um, you've got to start to try and change the mindset
		Retaliation	Cause, they shout at the students. And most of the students shout back at them. I mean you're not just going to sit there are you? I really need the toilet as well I'm not holding it in, I'm not holding it in till what, eleven, no way. I felt like when I come to school like the teachers were gonna talk to me like that I'll just, do it back. we stand our ground. We're not scared to say anything… But it's probably just cause we're not scared of saying what we want. they know that like, we've got something to say back. here I couldn't even BREATHE without 'oh you've done this now go home'. So that's what happened then, before. Yes and that's why I was so horrible to them. literally he wouldn't talk to me, ignored me and I was like 'don't fucking ignore me, what have I done?' so, yeah.
		Disruption	Because I'd always like kick off. And if I kicked off nobody'd be around. You've written you got kicked out of, how did that happen? Well I kicked off and they sent me home my behaviour as well because I was really rude and I was always getting into fights and stuff, I was horrible to everybody and I was hitting everybody. if you don't have enough staff, enough teachers on duty at lunchtime, of course you're going to have some issues cropping up because pupils are going to get used to not seeing people around and… to keep an eye on them. But I don't know how they'd do it, because otherwise others would take the mick.
		Manipulation	he'll find any issue with, or he'll create an issue with staff … Okay And make it into something much bigger than it really is, then for it to be an excuse not to stay And then he'll manipulate in order to be allowed to go home early every day.

Empowerment			
Broader discourse within which construction is situated. (STAGE 4)	Discursive construction (STAGE 3)	Interpretative repertoires (STAGE 2)	Data
Discursive construction: Non-attender is capable	Young people as capable	I can do it	it won't be the end of the world if something bad DOES happen, because I can do other things to overcome that. They say, they say that you need school… you do, but you can achieve anything if you believe in it.

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Discourse: Empowerpent			it wasn't there to solve all of my problems, I need to solve all of my problems with help, but that was just to take away the edge and balance the chemicals I guess

RQ2 What power relationships are perpetuated by the discourse and what positions are available?

RQ3 What opportunities for action, intervention and change are available within the discourse?

Discursive construction: School is a place where hard work pays off. **Discourse: Economic**
R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships: School was constructed as a place of work, learning and a means of achieving success in the discourse of both young people and staff. This construction values school insofar as it facilitates successful outcomes and achievement of personal goals. *Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:* Young people constructed the school in this way when discussing their hopes and plans for the future. The value of school in preparing for future employment was used to justify both attendance and non-attendance; irrelevance and boredom justified non-attendance, whereas the prospect of gaining qualifications, entry into a profession and ability to 'do well' in life were motivators to attend. Teaching staff constructed the school in this way when explaining the need for pupils to pupils to engage in education and in defence against perceived criticism/undervaluing of education by non-attenders. Teachers also constructed the school in relation to their own professional success and competency. School was frequently constructed as a site of struggle and perseverance against the odds; non-attendance was constructed as occurring *despite* staff's best efforts to provide support in school. *Rights and Duties:* The construction of school as a site of work, learning and success places upon schools the duty to educate young people to a high standard, while young people have the right to an education and for it to facilitate them in reaching their goals. They also however have a duty to take advantage of education for their own benefit and that of society. It is expected that their aspirations are orientated towards work and economic success; progression into employment, especially the professions, is emphasised. *Storyline:* The story told by this construction reflects conflict between desires in the present and for the future; young people expressed a struggle to reconcile their dislike of school with their own hopes and expectations and those of their families. Their decision whether to attend is constructed as contingent on the value of school in supporting them to achieve their life goals; this value was mostly found in relation to academic and professional goals. For teaching staff, the desire to educate and facilitate success for young people is frustrated by the perceived under-valuing of what they offer young people. Defensive narratives emerge, outlining the struggles encountered and efforts made by staff to provide an education for non-attenders.

Power relationships:
There are two power dynamics at play within this construction. Firstly, the school's perceived position as gatekeeper to future success and life chances of young people. In this power relationship, the young person is the party who stands to gain or lose; their future success is dependent on their decision whether or not to attend. While the onus is upon them to act, it is not a position of true agency as the possibility that they may achieve success without attending school is not available within this construction; a successful future is conditional upon their attendance and capitulation to the expectations and desired of the adults around them.

The second power dynamic is the pupil's position as 'consumer' and the school's position as 'service provider'. The concept around the value of school attendance and education more broadly for young people draws from a broader consumerist economic discourse. As those who must voluntarily invest their time and who stand to gain from engagement in the education system, young people hold the power to determine its worth. School staff whose sense of professional competence is invested in the engagement and outcomes of young people are subject to these value judgements.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:
The discourse reflects the social purpose underpinning the current education system, which was to upskill the workforce for the economic benefit of the country in the wake of the industrial revolution (Gillard, 2018). While the child has a right to an education, this is relevant only insofar as they wish to receive it; since education is compulsory, there is no right to choose *not* to receive an education. Ultimately therefore, receiving an education is a social duty, with the concept of success and primary advantages aligned with entering employment, especially one of the professions.

The power dynamics contained within this construction of school suggest the potential for two situations of conflict: young people who feel overwhelmed and manipulated by the pressure and responsibility of planning for their future and school staff whose sense of professional value and competency is under threat. For young people, the available actions are to choose to attend (and succeed) or not to attend (and fail). For staff, the available actions are to defend their professional practice and the value of school attendance, or to capitulate to the negative value judgements implied by the economic references within the construction.

This discourse suggests several opportunities for intervention by EPs. Firstly, an exploration of the young person's immediate needs and how these may be met in ways other than non-attendance will lessen the conflict between their immediate needs and planning for the future. Further, an exploration and reframing of success, failure, and 'the future' may be helpful in opening up more options and reducing pressure on young people, for example by seeing success and failure as a continuous cycle as opposed to end states, and academic achievement as just one of a number of routes into employment. It may also be helpful to explore the value of schooling aside from entering a professional role.

In working with school staff, a consultation approach that acknowledges and respects teachers' professional values, competency and experience and engages with their desire to ensure positive outcomes is likely to be helpful, particularly in exploring possible systemic changes.

Discursive construction: School is a place of judgement.
Discourse: Judicial

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:

The school (and those within it) was seen as an authority and arbiter in determining what is reasonable or unreasonable. Binaries such as good/bad, fair/unfair and right/wrong occurred within this discourse, with school and teaching staff holding the power and responsibility to adjudicate.

The roles of adjudicator and arbiter immediately set the school up in opposition to children and young people, with the potential to damage relationships.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:
This construct was operationalised on two levels. Firstly the young people described being found to be 'bad' or not 'good enough' by the school. This experience was used to explain why attending was such a negative experience for them. Secondly this judgement was constructed as fair or unfair, casting the young people in the role of complainant or victim and the school as failing in their responsibility to adjudicate fairly and according to the 'truth'.

School staff constructed themselves in a judicial role when emphasising their responsibility to be fair. Fairness for staff reflected judgements of pupil merit, with pupils deemed either to deserve penalisation or not. Conflictingly, fairness also related to the need for impartiality and consistency in the application of rules and sanctions.

Rights and Duties:
Within this discourse, schools have a right to determine blame, and the duty to make fair and accurate judgements and decisions. Young people have the right to expect impartiality and to be treated without discrimination.

Storyline:
The narrative is of the miscarriage of justice. Non-attendance at school is seen as the consequence of an interruption to the otherwise 'good' trajectory of young people by the unfair and biased judgements and actions taken by school staff. Conflicts between equity and equality are captured within this narrative; particularly by the repertoire of 'fairness'. Fairness is valued by both young people and staff, it is a troubled construct however, frequently at odds with itself as it refers variously to both equity (universal treatment, without bias) and equality (taking account of individual needs and circumstances to provide equal opportunity).

Power relationships:
As the arbiter for justice within this construction, the school holds the power of authority. It is agreed within the discourse that all power and responsibility lies with the school in terms of the administration of justice. Pupils do, at times, however claim 'moral authority'. As young people hold no power to correct injustices, injustice within the school context, their recourse is to claim authority over the 'truth' of the situation, external to the school context. The school is othered as 'wrong' as the young people disengage in protest. Overall, the judicial discourse speaks to the power of socially accepted norms and values, with those choosing to defy or operate outside of those norms judged to be less acceptable.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:

Within a discourse of judgement and blame, the only recourse for young people to maintain a sense of 'right-ness' and protect a positive self-construct is to delegitimise the authority of the

party that is casting judgement: the school. This can be achieved by opting out of the system, resulting in disengagement and non-attendance.

To facilitate change, young people need to be given opportunities to regain the sense that they are positively regarded (Gatongi, 2007). Two-way communication and relationship-building between the school and the young person is important (Roffey, 2010) and may be facilitated by the educational psychologist through person-centred consultation and practices (Sanderson, 2000).

A shared understanding of equity and equality and the situations when each principle may be appropriately applied will facilitate a shared sense of justice within a school. Restorative approaches are likely to be helpful in reducing binary thinking. They will also empower young people to engage with the systems of justice within the school, providing the opportunity to voice their point of view, feel listened to and resolve feelings of injustice and resentment.

Discursive construction: School is a place of public identity.

Discourse: Identity

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:
This construction of school sees it as a place where young people develop a public identity and become 'known'. It is a place where they do or don't belong, do or don't fit in, express who they are and become known by peers and staff. With this construction comes the sense of a struggle between the private and public self, and the creation of both an individual and collective identity.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:

One of the ways in which this construction was used to justify non-attendance was by positioning the school and non-attender as fundamentally incompatible. The school, by nature, was not seen as a place where these young people could belong. The implication here is that the personal and collective identities need to conform. Both the inability to conform and the inability to express individuality were cited as motivations for non-attendance. One staff member described the 'vibe' of a good school as facilitating and supporting the individuality of pupils, while conformity was constructed by several participants as being both a threat to the self and a defence mechanism.

This construction was also used to justify non-attendance as a response to young peoples need either to be known, or to not be known. While in some instances non-attendance was framed as self-protection against public scrutiny, in other instances a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the school was seen to be exacerbating the difficulties.

Rights and Duties:
This discourse of identity constructs the school primarily as a setting within which identities are developed and enacted. The subjects within it are the young people and school staff. Staff are constructed as having the responsibility of getting to know young people, understanding their needs and facilitate the understanding of others. They also have the duty to respect both the individuality and privacy of young people. Young people have the right to freely express who they are but also to maintain their own boundaries between the private and public self.

Storyline:
The narrative is of young people's quest to discover, express and protect their own identity. Staff are constructed as either a help or hindrance to each of these objectives, while the school is the

setting wherein this process plays out. Non-attendance is constructed as the result when one of these processes become frustrated.

Power relationships:
The discourse of individual identity positions the 'individual as sovereign'. The right to express individual identity is wholly supported within this discourse, however it is a right that can only be exercised in a 'safe' public place. The power here is distributed between the young person and the school as an institution. While the 'rights' lie with the individual, whether they choose to exercise these rights depends upon the extent to which they feel safe, accepted, understood and respected at school.
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R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:

In cases where this discourse arises, analysis of the soft systems within the school may be helpful in identifying possible systemic changes to help facilitate the creation of a social and emotionally 'safe' environment for pupils.

Discursive construction: School is a place that should care for and support young people.

Discourse: Relational

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:
This was a pervasive construction that featured strongly in the discourse of both young people and school staff. School and pupils are constructed as being in a relationship that, when functional, should be caring and nurturing. This discursive construct values the school insofar as it meets the relational needs of children and young people.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:
Both adults and young pupils constructed the school in this way. Young people used this discourse when explaining why they did not want to attend; the failure of school staff to fulfil their caring and nurturing obligations was cited as the reason for the absence. School staff constructed the school and their role in this way when detailing the support given to young people. Despite the differing opinions expressed within the data, there is little conflict within the discourse: that the role of adults is to support children and young people and prioritise their needs was never questioned.

Rights and Duties:
Children and young people were passive within this discourse, with teaching staff seen overwhelmingly as the active party within the relationship. Within this construction, school staff have the duty to ensure the emotional wellbeing of young people, to facilitate their success and to provide for their needs. Young people have the right to be nurtured and cared for: their wellbeing in school is seen as the responsibility of staff. The relationship reflects that of a parent and child, where children's needs are typically met unconditionally. Adults who put other priorities before the needs of their pupils are condemned by this discourse, with young people cast in the role of victim.

Storyline:
There are two storylines for this discursive construction, one by the young people and one by the staff. The primary narrative is that of the young people, which portrays rejection and betrayal.

Adults have rejected them and treated them with hostility and aggression. According to this narrative, blame for the non-attendance lies solely with staff. The counter-narrative offered by staff is that of the effort made to ensure pupil needs are met, even 'against the odds', including competing priorities forced upon them due to educational policy (e.g. attendance figures).

Power relationships:
While the events this discourse refers to may suggest that school staff occupy positions of power, the discursive power lies primarily with the young people. In Foucauldian analysis, it is those whose interests are reflected by the discourse and accepted as 'common sense' that hold the power. In this case, it is accepted that school staff should put pupil interests first; while the data refers to aggression towards pupils by staff, within a relational discourse these actions are indefensible. The power implications of this discourse, therefore, are that while school staff wield power in practice, they are charged to wield it in the best interests of young people. Within a relational discourse, pupils hold the power to determine their needs, the extent to which they have been met and whether school staff have fulfilled their care obligations towards them.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:
The strength of this discursive construction suggests both challenges and opportunities. It offers an opportunity insofar as there is little-to-no conflict within the construction that a caring relationship should exist between school staff and their pupils. It suggests an opportunity for establishing common ground between staff and pupils and establishing shared goals and values as a basis for re-building the relationship. Where pupils feel that staff do not care or do not have their best interests at heart, use of this discourse during joint work with school staff and an educational psychologist may assist with re-framing beliefs and co-constructing the change issues.

On the other hand, the disparity between pupil experiences and the discourse may present a challenge. Within this discourse, failure to prioritise pupil wellbeing is not an available action. For a teacher to admit to this behaviour while engaged in this discourse would be to invite immediate condemnation. Where hostility towards pupils is an issue, this discourse may not be helpful in encouraging staff to speak openly about their experiences. Rather, it may be more beneficial to explore the factors that have led to behaviour on the part of teachers that is so at odds with this discourse. Speculatively, possible issues could include difficulties with soft systems within the school or teacher wellbeing. These issues may need to be addressed before staff are ready to engage with a relational discourse.

Discursive Construction: School is a place of control

Discourse: Subjugation.

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:
School is constructed as a controlling entity. This discursive construction draws upon the discourse of autonomy and free will to express how it is lacking in their life at school. Both young people and staff feel constrained and compelled by forces external to themselves.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:
This discourse was drawn upon by both young people and staff to exemplify issues at school that non-attenders find problematic. The desirability of autonomy was expressed both explicitly and implicitly: the compulsory nature of school together with the structure, rules and restrictions were presented by young people as barriers to a positive experience of school life. Staff

employed this discourse in relation to both non-attenders and they themselves. This discourse was used to recognise young people's desire for greater determination, sometimes also offering justification for the system. Staff also related their own experience of being restricted and controlled, expressing frustration at not being able to support young people in the way that is needed.

Rights and Duties:

This discursive construction presupposes the desirability of self-determination and a sense of control. Similarly to the relational discourse, this discourse is used to identify what is lacking or dissatisfactory. There is a conflict within the discourse as the rights and duties do not correspond; while young people are afforded the right to freedom, staff are constructed as having a duty to direct and impose order. The school system and young people are therefore constructed as natural opponents with conflicting interests.

When used in relation to staff experiences, the discourse places them in a place of conflict as they have both the right to professional autonomy but the duty to follow direction. The discourse is one of frustration due to these conflicting positions

Storyline:

The discourse reflects a narrative of natural opposition between young people and adults; while one is bound to control, the other is bound to rebel. This is the natural order of things. Young people unreasonably restricted from pursuing their quest for freedom and autonomy at school respond through not attending. Staff meanwhile are torn between the need and desire to take autonomous action while themselves being controlled and restricted by expectations and restrictions imposed by the wider education system.

Power relationships:

This discourse constructs the struggle between individuals to assert their right to freedom and autonomy independently from the wider system around them. It depicts both the plight of the 'underdog' and the cascading power within a system that imposes order on people at every level.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:

A construction of being stuck and having few options accompanies this discourse. Non-attendance or opting out of the system is the primary action made available. Methods that presuppose agency on the part of the service user, such as solution focused brief therapy or motivational interviewing, may be effective in re-framing this construct. Consultation-based models of service delivery distribute power more evenly within a system and may help to empower service users to bring about change.

Discursive Construction: Non-attenders are psychologically problematic

Discourse: Psychological

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:

This construction locates the reasons for non-attendance within the young person. Repertoires within this construction range from psychological processes thought of as normal – such as emotions, to those considered abnormal, such as having 'issues' or 'impaired perception'. They also include character judgements such as being a 'weak' person. In all cases however, the source of the difficulty lies with the psychological functioning of the young person.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:

This construction posits that young people do not attend schools either because they have psychological needs that are not met in school, that their ability to make reasonable choices is impaired- or both.

Rights and Duties:
Within this discourse, young people have the right to act in a way that reflects their internal state. It is permissible within this discourse for actions to reflect thoughts and emotions, regardless of how reasonable or justifiable these are thought to be. The school does not appear as a significant subject within the discourse; the problem of non-attendance is dislocated from the school setting. As such schools are not depicted as having any particular rights or duties within this discourse.

Storyline:
The story told by this discursive construction is of young people engaged in an internal struggle. While school provides the context for this struggle and causes it to become manifest, the difficulty lies within the young person and must be resolved before progress can be made. The difficulty may be temporary in nature (as in the case of 'moodiness') or more problematic and long-term (e.g. having 'issues').

Power relationships:
This discourse speaks both to the influence of the field of psychology and to our tendency to pathologise that which does not conform to the norm. Neither the young person or the school, as the primary subjects, are in positions of power as the difficulty is constructed as out of their control. However, those with psychological knowledge, such as educational psychologists, would hold a highly influential position within this discourse.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:
Psychological discourse holds perhaps the greatest potential for the involvement of an educational psychologist; as experts in the field, psychologists are afforded authority within this discourse. The opportunities for change suggested by this discourse include individual intervention for the child or young person, including therapeutic approaches such as CBT. Possibilities for change are, however, restricted to the individual by this discourse; educational psychologists looking to enable systemic change may therefore encounter some scepticism or resistance from schools and families who hold this construction of the difficulty.

Non-attenders are in the process of becoming.

Discourse: Developmental

R.Q.2- Positions and power relationships:
The developmental discourse constructs young people at being at a point in time along a developmental trajectory. It presupposes that they were different in the past and that they will be different in the future; they are in a state of transience and change.

Illocutionary force (Harré, 2008) /social significance of the construction:
The developmental discourse was used in two primary ways: to separate past, present and future selves, and to rationalise why young people have developed in a given way. Both uses of this construct emphasise young people's change over time, although the first serves to distance young people's current selves from their past while the second connects the two and absorbs the

past into the present. The developmental discourse also normalises the experiences and behaviour of young people as part of the natural process of adolescence.

Rights and Duties:
The construction of young people as 'becoming' serves to excuse them of the duties that would be expected of fully-grown adults. While this discourse doesn't attribute any specific rights or duties, it acts as a qualifier to either mitigate young people's failures or to magnify their successes. It does however afford them the right to change, to be inconsistent, and to be judged by who they are today as opposed to who they were yesterday.

Storyline:
The narrative of this discourse is one of growth; young people progress in maturity and accountability towards an unknown future state of being. Their development is affected by their experiences; accountability for the way in which young people develop is therefore attributed not only to them but to those around them.

Power relationships:
A developmental discourse empowers young people as it privileges a view that if they fall short, it is not necessarily attributable to them personally, but to their developmental trajectory. Young people are constructed as not having mastered a given skill or ability 'yet'. The construction that young people are 'becoming' is hopeful and suggestive of the potential of youth. Those around young people are also empowered as they are attributed the ability to influence the young person's development.

R.Q.3- Available actions and opportunity for intervention and change:

Fundamental to this discourse is the assumption that change is going to occur, therefore the features of any problem or difficulty will be temporary. Within this discourse, change may occur from many directions; it may be precipitated by the young person themselves, by their contexts or the people around them. This discourse of development encompasses all aspects of the young person, accommodating holistic approaches to intervention. From an educational psychology perspective, engaging in child-centred, holistic, joint-systems work may be beneficial. This construction looks very much towards the future, therefore solution-focussed work may also be well-accommodated within this discourse.

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Discursive constructions of school

Superordinate discursive construction and broader discourse: (analysis stage 3)	Subordinate discursive constructions (if applicable) (analysis stage 3)	Incidence per participant.								Interpretative repertoires (analysis stage 2)
		YP 1	YP 2	YP 3	YP 4	YP 5	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	
Superordinate discursive construction: **A place where hard work should pay off.** Discourse: **Economic** **Participants: 8** **Incidence: 57**	School facilitates a successful future.	4	.	4	.	4	2	.	.	Getting qualified for a job. Training for a career Having a positive future. Being successful
	School as a worksite	.	3	3	.	1	4	5	4	Having to work Struggling with non-attenders Lacking necessary resources
	School as worth it.	2	1	.	.	5	1	3	.	Attending is worthwhile. School is important
	School as not worth it.	1	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	Attending is not worthwhile. School is irrelevant
	School as a site of learning	1	.	2	.	1	2	.	1	Learning
Superordinate discursive construction: **A place of control.** Discourse**:** **Subjugation and manipulation** *(Links with 'Autonomy' discourse – table 2)* **Participants: 8** **Incidence: 50**	School as authoritarian	4	11	1	1	4	.	.	5	control bring restricted rigidity School is compulsory School doesn't listen. Rules are necessary

	Lacking autonomy	.	.	.	.	.	7	5	3	Schools are limited in what they can do to support CYP Not in control being driven by external targets
	Schools are responsible	.	.	.	.	.	3	2	4	'doing to'
Superordinate discursive construction: **A place of judgement.** Discourse: **Judicial** **Participants: 7 Incidence: 23**	School as a place of judgement	5	1	1	3	.	.	.	.	Judgement Good vs bad.
	School as an arbiter of justice	4	.	.	2	4	1	2	.	Fair vs unfair
Superordinate discursive construction: **A place of public identity** Discourse: **Identity** **Participants: 7 Incidence: 37**	School as a place to fit into.	1	.	.	2	6	.	1	2	Belonging Individuality Schools can contain pressure to conform Differential treatment
	School reflects its pupils	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	demographics
	School as a place where you become known	.	.	7	4	9	2	2	.	Being known (negative) Being known (positive) School investigate Being understood / misunderstood Schools need knowledge about pupils
	School is hostile	14	3	1	2	5	.	.	1	Being kicked out, excluded.

Construct	Subconstruct									Keywords
Superordinate discursive construction: **A place that should care for and support.** Discourse: **Relational** **Participants: 8** **Incidence: 71**										Aggression disliking
	Schools should care for and support YP	2	1	5	2	.	5	6	.	caring helping
	Schools must be appropriate to pupil needs.	.	.	1	.	.	.	2	1	Meeting needs
	Schools are self interested	.	1	3	.	1	.	2	.	Schools need pupils to look good. Staff follow an agenda
	Schools staff as relationship – builders	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	4	relationships
	A place to develop social connections	.	.	2	1	1	.	1	3	Social interaction Friendship
Overarching construct: **A place that is unenjoyable** Discourse: **Entertainment** **Pparticipants: 5** **Incidence: 6**	School as unenjoyable	2	1	1	.	.	2	1	.	Boredom Entertainment pressure
Superordinate construct: **A place that has a duty of care** Discourse: **Safeguarding** **Participants: 2** **Incidence: 3**	Schools have a duty of care	.	.	.	.	.	1		2	Safety

Discursive constructions of non-attenders

Superordinate discursive construction and broader discourse:	Subordinate discursive constructions (if applicable)	Incidence per participant.								Interpretative repertoires
		YP 1	YP 2	YP 3	YP 4	YP 5	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are unwell.** Discourse: **Health** **Participants: 4 Incidence: 17**	Non- attenders are unwell.	.	.	10	4	.	1	2	.	Disorder & pathological behaviours Illness
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are psychologically problematic** Discourse: **Psychological** **Participants:8 Incidence: 53**	Non attenders are psychologically distressed	.	1	4	.	2	.	9	.	Having 'issues' Low self-esteem
	Non attenders are emotional	2	1	1	6	4	3	1	2	Stress Moody Emotional
	Impaired psychological functioning.	.	3	6	1	1	1	4	1	Irrational Flawed perception of reality Overwhelmed Weak / strong Professional intervention
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are members of a social system** Discourse: **Belonging** **Participants: 6 Incidence: 20**	Non attenders are defined by relationship to others	1	.	8	1	6	.	1	.	Being normal Fitting in Having / not having friends
	Non attenders are incompatible with school	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	School's not the right place for me

Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are acceptable or unacceptable.** Discourse: **Moral** **Participants: 5** **Incidence: 19**	Non attenders are good or bad	7	2	1	2	.	.	.	.	Good/bad
	Non attenders are culpable	4	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	At fault wrong
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are in the process of becoming.** Discourse: **Developmental** **Participants: 7** **Incidence: 25**	Non attenders are on a journey	4	2	4	.	1	4	.	.	The future Purpose Progressing The product of experience
	Non attenders are changeable	1	.	.	1	5	2	1	.	Change Transience Growing up
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are created by their social environment** Discourse: **Sociological** **Participants: 3** **Incidence: 19**	Non-attenders represent a familial problem.	.	.	.	.	.	5	4	.	Family relationships
	Non-attenders represent a societal problem.	.	.	.	.	.	3	2	1	Socioeconomic status Impact of social media
	Non-attenders represent a systemic problem in schools.	.	.	.	.	.	3	1	.	School systems & expectations
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are constructed in relation to others.** Discourse: **Relational (2)** **Participants: 5** **Incidence: 38**	Non-attenders are affected by others.	1	.	6	1	6	.	.	.	Influenced by others Needing support
	Non-attenders are worthy of respect.	2	.	1	1	2	.	.	.	Respect and self worth
	Non-attenders dislike school.	.	4	.	.	3	.	.	.	Hating / disliking
	Non-attenders are indifferent towards school.	7	1	.	1	2	.	.	.	I don't care
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are insubordinate**	Non-attenders are insubordinate	6	.	.	7	7	13	1	1	Refusal Retaliation Disruption

Discourse / Construction	Description									
Discourse: **Behavioural** Participants: 6 Incidence: 35										Manipulation
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non-attenders are powerless** Discourse: **Autonomy** *(Links with 'Subjugation' discourse – table 1)* Participants: 4 Incidence: 13	Non-attenders are Powerless	5	3	.	4	1	.	.	.	Controlled Confined
Superordinate discursive construction: **Non attenders are individuals** Discourse: **Individuality** Participants: 2 Incidence: 4	Each non-attender needs something different	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	1	individuality
Superordinate discursive construction: **Young people are less able** Discourse: **Academic.** Participants: 2 Incidence: 8	Non-attenders struggle with schoolwork	.	5	3	.	.	.	.	.	ability
Superordinate discursive construction: **Young people are Capable** Discourse: **Empowerment.** Participants: 2 Incidence: 3	Young people as capable	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	I can do it

Yellow = most prominent (7 or 8 participants contributed AND over 20 references)

Green = next most prominent

Grey = minor

Participants : incidence

- **Economic (8:57)**
- **Relational (8:71)**

- **Subjugation (8:50)**
- **Judicial (7:23)**
- **Identity (7:37)**
- **Psychological (8:53)**
- **Developmental (7:25)**

- **Belonging (6:20)**
- **Moral (5:19)**
- **Behavioural (6:35)**
- **Relational 2 (5:38)**
- **Entertainment (5:6)**

- **Health (4:17)**
- **Sociological (3:19)**
- **Autonomy (4:13)**
- **Individuality: (2:4)**
- **Academic: (2:8)**
- **Safeguarding (2:3)**
- **Empowerment (2:3)**