



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

DEdCPsy students' (2013-2016 cohort)

Titles and Thesis Abstracts

Name: Robert Begon

Title: Reconstructing the Dominant Discourse of an Empathy Deficit in Autism: Adopting a Foucauldian Perspective to ‘Insider’ Accounts

Draft Abstract

It is often assumed that those on the autistic spectrum lack are emotionally detached, completely lacking the skills in recognising and responding to emotions required to sustain ‘normal’ social and human interaction. In other words, it is assumed that they have an *empathy deficit*. This is an assumption based on the diagnostic and pseudo-medical discourses that have dominated the field of autism and are necessarily based on an etic (‘outsider’) perspective. I argue that this kind of understanding not only serves an injustice to autistic individuals and the emotional insights of which they are capable, but moreover engenders wholly negative and pessimistic terms in which to speak of them. In recent years, however, there has been considerable agentic resistance from within the autistic community and an ever-growing body of literature attempting to understand autism from an emic (‘insider’) perspective. This may be described as the “emergent counter-narrative” of autism (Broderick and Ne’eman, 2008). Using focus groups with young people (aged 11-17) diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum, and analysing this data using a critical Foucauldian-inflected discourse analysis, I seek to build upon this. I argue firstly that - through their active participation in the focus groups, and the subsequent opportunity to critique my analysis - the participants involved are offered a level of empowerment and emancipation that allows them to demonstrate a myriad of emotional insights. I argue further that the talk of the participants builds upon a wider narrative that helps us to deconstruct (and reconstruct) the notion of the empathy deficit, and the wider discourses in which it is bound. While there is evidence of participants drawing upon traditional discourses of deficit and ‘lack’ (and adopting the according subject positions that have been forged for them), there is also evidence of participants beginning to defy the restrictions enforced by the discursive locations, and beginning to draw upon more alternative and subversive discourses. By no means do I attempt to refute or replace medical models of autism but, rather, suggest that our understandings may benefit from the counter-cultural critique offered by insider accounts and, further, that this can make available new ways of talking of, and ultimately thinking about, those diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. There is a strong emphasis upon the need for us (as professionals and non-ASC individuals generally) to acknowledge our own empathy deficit and reflect upon the ways in which we can adjust our own communication to meet the social reality of ASC individuals. More latterly, the emphasis shifts towards

the wider implications for professional practice and the implications this may have for autistic role identity and subjective experience.

Methodology: Critical Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Supervisor: Tom Billington

Name: Calista J Chan

Title: A cross-cultural study: Parental experiences of the inclusion of their child with Special Educational Need in preschools.

Draft Abstract

Inclusive education has been increasingly incorporated into educational systems throughout the world. While the practice of inclusion has had opportunities to be sharpened over several years in England, the notion and implementation of inclusion in Singapore is still relatively new, particularly in the early years. This cross-cultural research draws upon the two contexts to elucidate parental attitudes and experiences of the inclusion of their child with SEN in preschools. The study adopts a mixed methods approach to examine the findings of parental perspectives on the inclusion of their child with SEN in England and Singapore, in order to identify key supporting factors and practices that may be of value to either region.

In the first part of the study, 15 parents from each context completed the Parent Attitudes to Inclusion (PATI) questionnaire. This constituted the quantitative data, which was analysed using descriptive statistics. British parents responded with relatively more positive scores on the attitude scale as compared to Singaporean parents, consistently across all dimensions of the scale. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three parents in each context, purposefully selected based on their responses on the PATI questionnaire. The interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Common themes that emerged as supporting factors that parents valued include communication between home, school and external services, financial support and the attitudes of others, although the lived experiences were varied. The quantitative and qualitative findings are corroborated and elaborated on in the discussion section. The potential implications and future directions for research are considered.

Methodology: Mixed methods – Descriptive statistics and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Supervisor: Penny Fogg

Name: Laura J Ducksbury

Title: Action is the enemy of thought: An auto ethnographic study detailing the design and application of reflective practice using psychodynamic techniques to increase self-awareness within the role of Trainee Educational Psychologist

Draft Abstract

This piece of research has two primary aims, firstly to increase my own self-awareness with a view to better inform my practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (Wachtel, 2009). In order to achieve this the second aim of this research is to develop of a method of reflective practice that utilises techniques taken from the psychodynamic paradigm such as, dream analysis (Freud, 1900), free association (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) and listening with the third ear (Reik, 1948). This research is an auto-ethnographic study and has been designed using Moustakes Heuristic Enquiry (Moustakes, 1990) using each of the six phases, initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis as a framework for the research to be experienced and explained. This research is firmly embedded in a psychodynamic paradigm and also aligns itself with a pragmatic paradigm as the emphasis is on creating a feasible method of reflective practice which practitioners may wish to engage with to increase their self-awareness as practicing Educational Psychologists. The outcomes of this research are presented using the final stage of the heuristic enquiry design, creative synthesis (Moustakes, 1990). This section firstly discusses some of the key findings I learnt about myself through the application of this process and secondly discusses the psychodynamic reflective process as a method of increasing self- awareness. Throughout the four month research process ideas and concepts 'illuminated' themselves to me, these 'illuminations' were with 'explicated' to create the themes (Moustakes, 1990). The final section of this research discusses possible improvement to this research, unanswered questions that have arisen and further expansions for the use of psychodynamic reflective practice.

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Methodology: Auto Ethnography

Supervisor: Sahaja Davis

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Name: Carol Hatton

Title: Transition to School: Exploring narratives of a child described as having additional needs and the adults who support her

Draft Abstract:

Whilst children encounter many transitions over their life, it is suggested that starting school is one of the most challenging early years experiences (Hirst et al., 2011; Turnbull, 2006), especially for children described as having additional needs, for whom early support is prioritised nationally (DfE, 2014). Indeed, within the UK, transition to school is specifically highlighted as a priority for future research (DfE, 2014).

Adopting a social constructionist perspective and a narrative approach that seeks to prioritise voice, empower individuals and embrace subjective experience, this research explored individual narratives around transition - addressing a gap within current literature. Within this I sought a broader, systemic and relational understanding of transition (Dockett & Perry, 2008) by exploring different perspectives; that of the child and also of the adults who support them.

Participants included one child described as having additional needs, alongside her mother and teacher. Co-constructed narratives were facilitated for each during two

semi-structured interviews conducted before and after starting school. Participants used journals to support accounts and further adaptations facilitated the child's voice (including classroom 'Tours' and *Talking Mats*[™] resource).

The research employed Narrative Orientated Inquiry (Hiles & Čermák, 2008) as its methodology, analysing narratives using six interpretive perspectives, including: the way narratives were told; holistic and categorical analyses of content and form; and also, critical analysis of wider issues, e.g. positionality, context and power. Rich, multi-layered interpretations were explored within and across participants' narratives.

Possible implications are presented relating to further research, alongside implications for the educational psychology profession and my own practice. The value of a narrative approach is suggested – in particular, a reflective narrative space when supporting transition.

Methodology: Narrative Oriented Inquiry

Supervisor: Martin Hughes

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Name: Tabitha Holdsworth

Title: Improving outcomes for transgender students

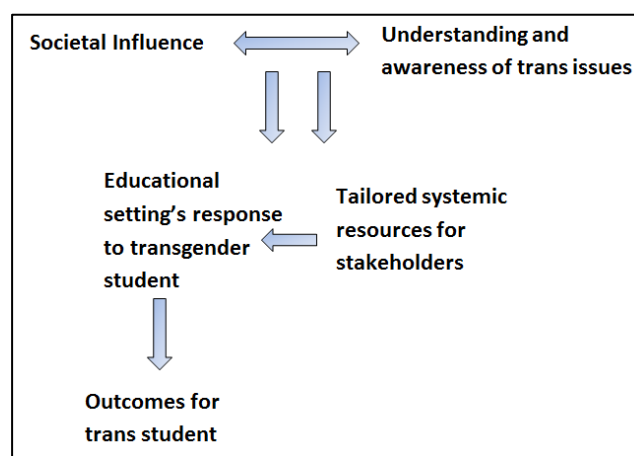
Draft Abstract

There are increasing numbers of children and young people identifying as transgender and so there is a growing need for guidance in this area for educational professionals. The current lack of research and knowledge can lead to negative consequences for the young person (Case et al., 2009). They are more likely to experience bullying (2011 School Climate Survey), become withdrawn, anxious and unsociable (Whittle et al., 2007), more likely to internalise problems, experience low self-esteem and depression (Roberts et al., 2013) and there is an increased risk of suicide (Giordano, 2008). Unsurprisingly, these difficulties impact on their learning and confidence in school and aspirations for the future (2011 School Climate Survey, Hellen, 2009).

This need for guidance in education has been highlighted by many e.g. Kennedy and Hellen (2010), Riley et al. (2013), Soloman, (2012), Grossman and D’Augelli (2007), Haldeman (2000). Therefore, this piece of research looked at what educational professionals can do to improve the outcomes for transgender children and young people.

25 semi-structured interviews were undertaken. The participants were transgender adults and educational professionals that have worked with trans young people. Grounded Theory was used to analyse the data.

From the categories constructed during the analysis, a theory was developed that helped to explain what influences the outcomes of transgender students in educational settings.



Categories formed through analysis.

Specific suggestions as to the type of knowledge educational professionals need, the resources required for stakeholders, and the type of response the setting needs to undertake were also suggested. Guidance was developed using these suggestions to share with the local authority’s schools and educational psychologists.

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Methodology: Grounded Theory

Supervisor: Sahaja Davis

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Name: Rachael Lusby

Title: Making sense of 'challenging' behaviour in the Reception year: A discursive exploration of the way parents and teachers construct young children.

Draft Abstract

The rise of so-called challenging behaviour in primary schools continues to be a topic for discussion amongst educators, politicians and the media. Children are often

quickly categorised as having Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties or as being simply 'naughty' within a framework of available discourses dominated by constructed understanding of the 'bad', 'mad' or 'sad' (MacLeod, 2006). This thesis explores how parents and school staff use language to make sense of and share understanding of children's behaviour that is understood to be 'challenging' or 'problematic' as they begin the journey through education- in Reception Year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

A case study design was followed to provide in-depth, qualitative research; focussing specifically on language used to share understanding of the behaviour of a five-year-old child. The study explored how key adults around the child used language and drew upon various discourses to construct the child and bring meaning to the child's actions. Discourse Analysis was used to analyse the data from a semi-structured interview with two members of school staff, a semi-structured interview with the child's parents, and a joint consultation which aimed to share and challenge understanding, involving myself, the school staff and the parents.

A critical approach was drawn upon through a synthetic use of Discursive Psychology and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. This provided an analytic framework to explore both *how* discursive resources were used to make sense of behaviour, as well as *what* constructs were produced and how they were made available to others (Willig, 2008).

This approach was found to be helpful in understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of shared understanding of 'challenging' behaviour. Emerging discourses of pathology, disciplinary practices and the construction of the 'normal' school child within 'normal' development emphasised the power dynamics present and active within the EYFS education system. Discursive complexities of what it means to be 'good' and how adults position themselves in ensuring such social compliance also became relevant.

In exploring the discursive, interactionist aspects of constructing 'challenging' behaviour in the EYFS, the study provides an in-depth account of how language is negotiated and constructs become to be understood as 'truth' or natural. Parents and school staff were seen to draw upon similar dominant discourses in making sense of the challenging behaviour of the focus child, but understanding was seemingly fragmented and separate constructions of the child evidently developed. The study highlighted the essential value of joint working between home and school within the EYFS through supported consultations, alongside opportunities to challenge dominant discourses and to offer space to develop new meaning.

Methodology: Discourse Analysis

Supervisor: Penny Fogg

Name: Jayne Manning

Title: 'Entering a new dimension': An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the experience of transitioning from school to College for three young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan

Draft Abstract

Transition points within education can present as a time of challenge and opportunity for all young people. The transition from School to College arguably features an important step in the transition to adulthood which can be crucial in enabling young people to develop both personal and work related skills which will support them in their chosen futures. There is a disproportionate amount of young people who have identified Special Educational Needs represented in the NEET (not in education employment or training) statistics highlighting a vulnerability for this group of learners as they make post-16 transitions.

This research project explores the perceptions of three young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan as they make their transition from mainstream secondary school to FE College. The young people were each interviewed twice about their experiences of planning, preparing and making their transitions, firstly in the summer term during their last year in school and secondly in the autumn having spent a few weeks at College. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA was chosen with the aim of eliciting a rich detailed understanding of the young people's experiences.

The analysis went some way to supporting previous findings that the following may be prominent features of young people's experiences of post-16 transition, namely: the nature of the support they receive in each educational establishment and in preparing for their transition, the role of family and friends and a developing sense of self. Moreover the importance of supporting and encouraging young people to have their say about what is important to them, their hopes and ambitions is strongly presented. Implications for Educational Psychologists supporting schools, FE Colleges and young people in embarking on post-16 transitions are highlighted, including recommendations for future research.

Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Supervisor: Anthony Williams

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Name: Aisha McLean

Title: Exploring the childhood and educational experiences of four 'mixed' young people using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Draft Abstract

This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study aims to explore the experiences and understandings of childhood and education in four young people who identify as 'mixed' black and white heritage. The research draws on the theoretical positions of Critical Race Theory, Feminist Theory and intersectionality.

Participants took part in semi-structured interviews, exploring the research questions a) 'What are 'mixed' children and young people's experiences of race and culture?' and b) 'How do 'mixed' young people interpret their experiences of childhood and education?'.

Analysis led to the proposal of a series of 'higher-order' superordinate themes across participants. For research question A, higher order superordinate themes were, 'The significance of culture/heritage', 'Mixedness as challenging constructions', 'The significance of intersectionality', 'Blackness as problematic', and 'Mixedness as an identity'. For research question B, higher order superordinate themes were, 'Isolation and belonging', 'The significance of interpellation', and 'The power of educational experiences'. The research explores the meaning of each superordinate theme in relation to the experiences and understandings of each participant, drawing on relevant theory to provide further means of reflection.

Finally, the research explores the significance of the findings in relation to the practice and development of Educational Psychology as a profession through the use of research question c) 'How can Educational Psychology Practice develop through these accounts?'.

Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Supervisor: Anthony Williams

Name: Alexandra Redfern

Title: An exploratory evaluation of the impact of a parent-based intervention designed to improve child sleep and of the unique contribution that trainee educational psychologists and educational psychologists can make – A Multiple Case Study

Draft Abstract

Difficulties associated with sleep are of one of the most frequent child behaviour problems reported by parents (Wiggs, 2007). Sleep disturbance and deprivation have been found to have an impact on cognition, mood, attention and behaviour (Vriend et al., 2013; Dahl, 1996; Pilcher and Huffcut, 1996; Fallone et al., 2001, Fallone et al., 2005). Such research suggests that involvement of Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) may be relevant in terms of addressing child sleep issues where the resulting lack of sleep is potentially impacting on the child's social, emotional and academic development.

There is much research to support the effectiveness of behavioural interventions to address child sleep difficulties ((Malow et al., 2013; Moon et al., 2010; Reed et al., 2009; Ramchandi et al, 2000; Milan et al., 1981; Adams and Rickert, 1989; Quine, 1993 and 1997; Kerr and Jowett, 1994). Quine (1997) asserts that research has shown that sleep improves dramatically when parents are taught new management techniques' (pp.13).

The present study was a multiple case study which provided sleep education to parents of three children with sleep difficulties to explore the impact of a EP/TEP led intervention to improve sleep. A mixed-methodological, multi-stage, exploratory design was used to address the research questions.

A sleep education booklet and intervention materials were created and delivered by the researcher (a TEP) during one two-hour session. Various skills from an EP toolbox including knowledge of systemic work, elements of motivational interviewing and solution-focused therapy were used to facilitate change. Parents put into action a collaboratively-created intervention plan over the next six weeks and were supported by weekly telephone calls.

The School Behaviours Rating Scale (Gardon, 2009) and the Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire (Owens, 2000) and sleep diaries were used to gather data to measure pre- and post-intervention scores. Analysis of sleep diaries kept by parents throughout the intervention and a post-intervention satisfaction questionnaire also provided data about impact. Thematic analysis of pre- and post-intervention parent interviews was carried out to explore in detail the impact of the intervention and the significance of the role of the EP/TEP in delivering parent-based sleep education. Thematic analysis of the researcher's reflective diary also provided data regarding the role of the EP/TEP in parent-based sleep education.

Analysis is not yet complete although early analysis suggests that the results show some improvement in parent-reported sleep levels and a high level of parent satisfaction. Methodological limitations of these results are discussed and implications for professional practice will also be considered.

Methodology: Mixed Methods

Supervisor: Lorraine Campbell

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Name: Alexandra Smith

Title: A Case Study on the Implementation of a Working Memory Programme in a Primary School

Draft Abstract

Background: Working memory refers to a system that temporarily holds and manipulates information. There is substantial literature on the descriptions of memory but a lack of research on the practical application of memory interventions in schools. COGMED is marketed to schools as an evidence-based intervention which could help individuals who have memory deficits. There have been a number of research studies on COGMED, however there is a lack of research on the implementation of COGMED in schools. The current research study focused on 'real life' use and the implementation of COGMED in a school from the perspectives of teachers', management and pupils'. This research set out to find out about the barriers and facilitators which affect the implementation and outcomes of COGMED in a primary school.

Participants: Five Year 5 pupils and Five Year 6 pupils from one primary school undertook a Working Memory intervention, COGMED, which was implemented by the teachers. Seven of the pupils and 4 members of staff participated in semi-structured interviews.

Methods: A mixed methods design was used with an emphasis upon qualitative data. Ten pupils received COGMED which was implemented by the teachers in their school. The Year 5 pupils received the intervention in the Summer Term 2015 and the Year 6 pupils in the Spring Term 2015. COGMED's in-built monitoring system was used to provide quantitative data on the pupils' progress and engagement with the intervention. Published measures were used to collect data on working memory performance and approaches to learning. Qualitative data were collected through semi – structured interviews which were conducted with the teachers and the pupils.

Analysis/Results: The semi structured interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The results were presented as thematic maps which included the facilitators and barriers of implementing COGMED. The data obtained through COGMED'S monitoring system and other published measures were analysed using descriptive statistics. The quantitative and qualitative data were combined to address the research questions.

Keywords: Working memory, COGMED, intervention, implementation.

Methodology: Mixed Methods

Supervisor: Lorraine Campbell

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Name: Susan J Youngson

Title: Stable Foster Placements – ‘The Unsung Heroes’ Experience of Natural Siblings’ Relationships and Support.

Draft Abstract

Foster placement breakdown has an adverse effect on a looked after child's (LAC) educational outcomes and social and emotional wellbeing. One third of foster families have Natural Siblings (NS) and it has been reported that these placements are significantly more likely to break down than placements with no NS. Problems between foster child and foster parents' own children have been given as the reason for termination in 56 per cent of placements that failed in nine months or less. The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of NS in relation to their relationships with LAC and explore what support that they receive in making and maintaining those relationships. The research focussed on foster families where there had been at least one, successful, long-term placement of over two years.

Six participants between the ages of 18 - 25 were recruited from one Local Authority, three male and three female. They were purposefully selected to a set criterion to enable them to discuss their experiences in relation to the topic of study and choice of methodology. They each took part in a semi-structured interview that was recorded, transcribed and analysed. The data was reduced to emerging themes from which superordinate themes resulted. These themes included, self/family member protection, foster child's difficulties prior to coming into care, a desire for more support from the social worker, age of the foster child, family cohesiveness, parenting ability (open and honest discussions)...

The research findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and psychological theory. The sharing of the findings of this knowledge and understanding of these NS experiences may highlight some elements of positive relationships between LAC and NS. Suggestions that have arisen from these findings may be shared to potentially enhance further positive relationships between LAC and NS so that placement breakdowns are reduced.

Methodology: Thematic analysis (initially IPA)

Supervisor: Martin Hughes