“Boys don’t cry do they?” A reflexive thematic analysis of education professionals’ perspectives regarding secondary school males identified as SEMH who have been permanently excluded.

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Abstract

A young person who is identified as having SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) needs as per the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Code of Practice (2015) is 3.8 times more likely to be permanently excluded than pupils with no identified SEND need (Timpson, 2019). The Department of Education (2023) permanent exclusion data identifies males as more likely to be permanently excluded year on year, particularly within their secondary education, indicating a need to explore the link between SEMH, males and permanent exclusion, particularly as research suggests that males may not seek support due to socially constructed gender norms of masculinity.

The aims of this research were to explore the perceptions of educational professionals with regard to the barriers and protective factors concerning the inclusion of males identified as having SEMH needs, who have been permanently excluded and reintegrated into mainstream secondary settings.

Five participants from a range of professions within the SEMH, permanent exclusion and reintegration context were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Two overarching themes were created: ‘Power inequality and rejection supports permanent exclusion and prevents successful reintegration’ and ‘The system needs support.’ Five main themes were also produced including, power and policies perpetuate conformity, rejection undermines belonging, bravado: Boys don’t talk they fight, the importance of multi-agency collaboration and adult upskilling.

Each theme is discussed in relation to exploring the perceived barriers and supportive factors related to the inclusion, permanent exclusion and reintegration of males who are identified as SEMH, with consideration to the next steps and the implications for the Government, schools and educational psychology services. The positionality of the researcher is described including epistemological assumptions, with reflection regarding the study's limitations and strengths, as well as suggestions for future research.

Dedication

Firstly, I would like to thank the participants for their time, participation and openness in sharing their views with me. I could not have completed my research without you and will be forever grateful.

I would like to thank my supervisor Victoria Lewis. Victoria, your support, understanding, challenge and guidance have been integral to my research and I could not have gotten through this without you.

To my cohort for all of their support, humour, guidance and containment. We have been through so many challenges but we got there! I feel privileged to have experienced it with such a wonderful group of people.

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Dad, you have been with me every step of the way and I know you are looking down on me with a sense of love and pride. I miss you.

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Researcher Positionality and Motivation

As part of ethical practice and ensuring my research is trustworthy and transparent, it is important to disclose my contextual characteristics, experiences and positioning so the reader can view this alongside reflexivity and decision-making, as the researcher is an active participant in interpretation and choice-making (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017).

I identify as a 45-year-old, middle-class white woman. I came from a working-class background and attended a state comprehensive school in the 1990s. I have deeply negative memories and emotions about my secondary school experience, due to peer relationships and feeling like an outsider, as I did not 'fit in' with peer expectations. With the support of my family, I worked hard and progressed to sixth-form college and university; unfortunately, the memories of my secondary experience have never left me.

I have previously been a primary school teacher and SENCo and have always strived to make sure no one is left to feel like they don't belong. It is with this core value that I wished to pursue research for permanently excluded pupils, as I wished to facilitate the raising of their context in a bid for the education system to see beyond the behaviour to the pupil in front of them, who has a voice. Having had personal experience of the mental health system and working with permanently excluded boys as part of my role as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) (supporting others to view behaviour as communication and context) I felt this area was incredibly important to pursue, particularly as there has been various government proposals and recommendations for the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Reintegration was included in my research interest as I like to hold hope as a core value and wanted to explore the concept of permanent exclusion from the perspective of optimism and a positive future. I hold the facilitation of pupil voices at the core of my professional values and feel the socio-political system needs to listen to what our young people are saying about their mental health, schooling and lived experiences.

1.2 Conceptualisation of Terms

1.2.1 Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)

The term SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) was first used in the Children and Families Act (2015) and the accompanying SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education (DfE) & Department of Health (DoH), 2015), having replaced the previous behavioural, emotional, social difficulties (BESD) description used within the 2001 SEND Code of Practice (SEND CoP) (Department for Education and Skills, 2001), suggesting a greater focus on the factors which may underpin behaviour, including the new addition of mental health, rather than a focus on the term 'behaviour' itself (DfE & DoH, 2015).

The SEND Code of Practice defines SEMH as,

> *… a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder (DfE & DoH, 2015, p. 98).*

However, the broadness of the SEMH term and conversely the specificity of the DfE (2015) definition above, may be just as difficult to operationalise as its predecessor (Thomas & Glenny, 2000), with a mix of description and medical diagnosis, potentially leading to pathologizing and labelling. Thomas and Glenny (2000) query the notion of 'need' and who it really serves; a need of the child or the need for conformity within the school system. Moreover, once a young person is assigned the label of SEMH (by adults), they are viewed with negative connotations, with power transferred to the adults in the system, aboard a route to removal from the school itself (Thomas & Glenny, 2000). As the label of SEMH was assigned to the pupil by adults, it could be

argued that the power was already residing with the adults before this, as the adult is in the power position to categorise the pupil in the first place. However, Sheffield and Morgan (2017) take an opposing view in that SEMH may contribute to an understanding of the underlying factors impacting a young person thus providing a signpost for supportive intervention.

1.2.2 Definitions of Mental Health

The definition of mental health is a cause for debate amongst practitioners and academics alike (Odenbring, 2019) but it is important to consider terminology surrounding mental health, to gain a view of the varying perspectives and suggested positionalities, which may be argued are qualitatively different due to their operational purposes.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as,

> *… a state of wellbeing that enables people to cope better with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well and contribute to their community, (WHO, 2022, para.1).*

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DSM 5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) states,

> *A mental disorder is a syndrome characterised by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological or developmental processes underlying mental functioning…" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.20)*

It is interesting to note the differences between the two definitions in terms of the WHO's (2022) focus on wellbeing and a person's potential, with the DSM 5 focusing on a more medicalised model of perceived deficit with the use of the words 'disturbance' and 'dysfunction'. However, the DSM 5 is a manual used by medical professionals for diagnosing mental health conditions, in a bid to treat the patient, so it may be argued that its purpose has a different medical model lens (Costello & Maughan, 2015). That being said, the use of the words disturbance and dysfunction are inherently more negative in their connotations.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2022) states that globally, 1 in 7 10-19-year-olds experience a mental health need, with depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders being named as the leading cause of illness and disability for this age group, aligning with the SEMH areas described in the SEND CoP (2015), with suicide cited as the 4th leading cause of death of 15-29-year-olds.

The WHO goes further to state that if the mental health of adolescents is not addressed, it can go on to impact their physical and mental health in adulthood, decreasing their life opportunities significantly, mirroring mental health and wellbeing research findings (Collishaw et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2017). However, care should be taken when analysing research findings concerning mental health as methodologies, operationalised definitions and foci can vary considerably, for example, when multiple diagnoses are included under the term 'mental health', potentially skewing perceptions when studies are compared or collated (Costello & Maughan, 2015; Ford et al., 2017).

1.2.3 SEMH terms used within this research

There are various terms used within the scope of SEMH in government policy, research and public information, for example, wellbeing, mental wellbeing, psychological distress and mental health being but a few, with the terms often being used interchangeably. This study will use the terms adopted by the literature discussed, for example, mental health, with an understanding that it sits beneath the description of SEMH as a whole, as per the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015).

1.2.4 Permanent Exclusion and Suspensions

The term 'exclusion' was introduced in the 1986 Education Act for the first time alongside the discontinuation of corporal punishment (the physical punishment of pupils, for example, using the cane). It described the power of the Headteacher (with governing body ratification) to exclude pupils from the school setting under 3 categories: fixed, indefinite or permanent, meaning the pupil was not allowed on the school site according to the given category. However, the Education Act 1993 took away the option for an 'indefinite'

exclusion due to the uncertainty and room for abuse that it incurred (Harris et al., 2000), setting the parameter of 15 days fixed-term exclusion (FTE) as a maximum for any one term, with 45 days FTE per academic year. Permanent exclusion remained the same whereby the pupil was taken off the roll of the school and could not return.

In September 2022, the Government issued behaviour guidance entitled, 'Behaviour in schools' (DfE, 2022) which highlighted the need for schools to create an ethos of good behaviour, via a behaviour policy, the upskilling of staff to create leaders in behaviour and culture, engaging parents, clear sanctions and intervention, indicating the push to maintain 'good behaviour' in schools. However, these foci are not new concepts and appear to be a reiteration of themes recurring in governmental behaviour policy and guidance. Further advice was added in the form of the 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' (DfE, 2023c) document, which specifically discusses the statutory obligations of schools around suspensions (the new terminology for FTE) and permanent exclusion. Within this document, permanent exclusion continues to be described as,

> *… when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend a school (unless the pupil is reinstated). The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:*
>
> *• in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and*
>
> *• where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school (DfE, 2023c, p.13)*

and a suspension (previously FTE (The Education Act, 1993)) as,

> *where a pupil is temporarily removed from the school, is an essential behaviour management tool that should be set out within a school's behaviour policy* (DfE, 2023c, p.12).

Forty-five days continued to be the limit for suspensions, as well as the stipulation that permanent exclusion should only be used as the last resort, as in previous guidance. However, the promotion of exclusion as an 'essential part of a school's behaviour management toolkit' is a new phrase that appears at various points within the document. It may be argued that this reasserts the notion of exclusion (or indeed suspension) as a disciplinary tool or behaviour intervention in itself (Valdebenito et al., 2018), which seems to contrast with the point that exclusion should be the very last resort for a pupil and places behaviour management firmly 'within the child', rather than as a reflection of the school environment or other mitigating circumstances. However, schools are advised to take into account 'contributing factors' (DfE, 2023, p.12) further into the document. Moreover, although it advocates for 'high standards of behaviour' it does not define what these are operationally, other than pupils should be able to learn in a safe, calm and supportive environment, free from disruption and with 'regard for authority', 'self-discipline', 'respect', 'standards of behaviour', 'completion of tasks' and 'pupil conduct' (DfE, 2023c, p.9), appearing to further promote a within-child, behaviourist approach to behaviour.

1.2.5 Permanent Exclusion and Suspension Terms Used in this Research

This research will use the term permanent exclusion abbreviated to PX. However, some researchers may use the term 'exclusion' as an overarching description for both suspensions (previously FTE) and PX. If this is the case and explicitly known, it will be described, so the reader understands which type of exclusion the research discussed is pertaining to.

Secondary schools in England are understood to be educational establishments for pupils typically aged 11 to 16 years old (18 years old if it includes post-16 provision) (DfE, 2023) and this is the definition used within this research.

1.3 SEMH Background and Socio-Political Contexts

Mental health has been a focus of government policy (O'Reilly et al., 2018), from 'Future in Mind' (DoH, 2015) outlining the National Health Service (NHS) goals for young people's mental health, with consultation sought

regarding ‘Transforming Young People’s Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper’, following on as next steps from the ‘Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools’ guidance document (DfE, 2018).

1.3.1 Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2018) was issued in November 2018 and sought to guide schools in terms of their mental health approaches. As with the new term SEMH in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015), the document strived to support the reader in understanding that behaviour can be the result of a number of underlying factors, one being mental health. The guidance promoted a whole-school approach to encourage resilience alongside curriculum content as well as developing partnerships with agencies and parents (DfE, 2018).

1.3.2 Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper

Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper (DfE & DoH and Social Care, 2018) outlines the Government’s response to the preceding consultation around the Green Paper, as well as the next steps regarding mental health, stating that £1.4 billion has been spent on mental health services for children and young people as, “Children and young people’s mental health is a priority area for the Government,” (DfE & DoH and Social Care, 2018, p.3). The paper describes the need for joined-up approaches with agencies, with a focus on Mental Health Support Teams via the Clinical Commissioning Group and Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health training, funded by the Department for Education. Schools and colleges are to assign mental health first aid staff and health education will be included in the curriculum from 2020 with £300 million assigned to implement the strategies. However, this is not proposed to happen immediately, with a phased approach and piloting planned in the first instance (DfE & DoH and Social Care, 2018).

The Government’s Mental Health Green Paper has come under scrutiny however, with the Education and Health and Social Care Committees of the House of Commons (2018), citing numerous failings within the

recommendations. Their key criticisms were the lack of ambition and focus on prevention within the paper, the narrow scope of the recommendations and the lack of understanding of the factors contributing to mental health difficulties, with concern that the timescales will leave the majority of children with no improvements. Furthermore, The Green Paper gives little actual detail as to the content or logistics needed for the Designated Senior Leader Mental Health training (House of Commons Education and Health and Social Care Committees, 2018) while stating all state schools should have this in place by 2025. Concern was also raised as to the disjoin between the Government's separate policies, for example, SEND, which echoes the findings from The Timpson Review, a review of school exclusion practices and the groups of young people most likely to be excluded, commissioned by the Government, (Timpson, 2019). Finally, they criticised the nature of the current examination-focused education system and the pressures on young people due to this, which was not addressed in the Transforming Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper (DfE & DoH and Social Care, 2018) at all.

1.3.3 Gender and Mental Health

Gender can be a social and/or cultural concept, which is not defined by innate biological sex but rather by social constructions of attributes, for example, being masculine is seen as stereotypically being strong and tough as illustrated in the phrase 'manning up', (Courtenay, 2000; Fleming et al., 2014). This study has chosen to focus on males, from both a mental health and permanent exclusion perspective. Firstly, permanent exclusion highlights that males, year on year, have the highest rate of permanent exclusions (as opposed to females) (DfE, 2023a). Secondly, within mental health help-seeking studies, males are largely described as masking their needs, aligning with stereotypes of masculinity in terms of not wanting to seem less masculine by talking about their emotions. With the above in mind, males will be focussed upon within mental health and also permanent exclusion literature. The following section will discuss concepts of masculinity and mental health in further detail.

1.3.4 Concepts of Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity describes a dominant societal discourse concerning a perceived 'ideal' of being a strong (in the physical and emotional sense) man, which can serve to uphold stereotyping and subdue other gender identities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Johansson et al.,(2007) explored perceptions of mental health with a focus on binary concepts of male and female for two age groups (13 and 16 years old). Both boys and girls felt that boys can mask their feelings, due to social norms of maleness and masculinity i.e. seeming tough, although age was a more significant factor in understanding the concept of mental health itself. Interestingly, the older boys felt that it was other boys who couldn't talk about their feelings rather than themselves, suggesting it is social perceptions of masculinity in others, rather than their own views.

When analysing the views of school professionals in Sweden, Odenbring (2019), found that boys who experienced anxiety preferred to keep this to themselves and thus did not seek support or help from the school staff. School professionals attributed this to the fact that the boys were adhering to masculine norms, particularly in terms of not talking about their feelings or seeking support. However, this is an attribution placed upon boys rather than the boys themselves, which may be seen as a form of stereotyping and upholding the hegemonic masculine norm as perceived in Sweden.

Within the United Kingdom, Kendal et al. (2013) explored help-seeking for boys aged 11-16 years old. The data suggests that boys wanted to maintain their self-image in a bid to attract relationships, whether that was romantically or for friendship, and thus would not seek help when needed due to fear it would negatively affect how others saw them, aligning with the professionals' views in Odenbring's (2019) research.

However, the notion of hegemonic masculinity may be viewed as simplistic and does not account for more layered notions of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Normative views of masculinity may encompass more feminine concepts, for example, sensitivity, whilst non-normative masculinity can disregard the concept of masculinity completely, viewing

sincerity and integrity to their values as key (Randell et al., 2016). The most important aspect for boys who subscribe to normative masculinity concepts in Randell et al.'s (2016) research, was aligning with their peer group norm. It may be argued that aligning with a peer group that appears to value masculine tropes is part of wanting to belong, particularly in societies which have historically promoted masculinity as controlled, tough and strong, perpetuated with the rise of media and advertising (Rice et al., 2021).

1.4 Exclusion Background and Socio-Political Contexts

1.4.1 National Permanent Exclusion Data

Table 1.1

National Exclusion Data for Primary and Secondary Settings 2015 to 2022 (DfE, 2023a).

Year	Permanent Exclusion Primary Schools	Permanent Exclusion Secondary Schools
2015/2016	1,147	5,446
2016/2017	1,253	6,384
2017/2018	1,210	6,612
2018/2019	1,067	6,753
2019/2020*	739	4,269
2020/2021*	392	3,492
2021/2022	758	5,658

Note. 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 were impacted by COVID-19 and national lockdowns, with schools shutting to all but SEND/ vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers for fixed periods of time, although permanent exclusions were still allowed during this time.

The data in Table 1.1 indicates that permanent exclusions across both primary and secondary settings have been increasing year on year since 2015, with the exception of the data skew during 2019-2021 due to COVID-19 and national lockdowns. (During the lockdown periods, schools remained open to pupils with education, health and care plans, vulnerable pupils as identified by the school, as well as the children of key workers. Other pupils remained at home for online schooling). The latest data for the academic year 2021/2022 is below pre-COVID-19 figures, however, the data for spring term 2022/2023 indicates that numbers are continuing to rise in both primary and secondary settings, with primaries seeing a 64% increase in permanent exclusions and secondaries a 37% increase compared to the previous spring term from the year prior. The fact that numbers are continuing to rise post COVID-19, suggests that there is still a need for governmental concern and action with regards to reducing these numbers.

1.4.2 National Policy and Socio-Political Factors Concerning Behaviour and Exclusion

Permanent exclusion can have a detrimental longer-term impact on young people, particularly around potential criminality (Arnez & Condry, 2021) and lower economic adulthood outcomes (Madia et al., 2022) as well as mental health trajectories (Ford et al., 2018a; Tejerina-Arreal et al., 2020), which may in part, underpin the national concern regarding the increasing numbers of exclusions across England (Cole et al., 2019; Jull, 2008; Power & Taylor, 2020).

It may be argued that an influencing factor contributing to an increase in permanent exclusion, lies within the political context which informs policy and practice in schools, particularly in terms of expectations and notions of achievement. A political ethos promoting a regime of discipline, testing culture and conformity within mainstream settings, particularly with regard to published league tables and attainment results expectations (Bryant & Swords, 2018; Power & Taylor, 2020) may be considered a catalyst to schools utilising permanent exclusion as a disciplinary measure.

The current concern is not a new phenomenon. In 1989, teachers held growing concerns regarding behaviour in school and The Elton Report (1989) was the product of an official inquiry into these concerns, led by Lord Elton, via visits to schools to gauge teacher views. In the Elton Report (1989), low-level disruptive behaviour was cited by teachers as the most frequent behavioural concern as well as the most 'wearing', aligning with the current data on the most frequent reason for permanent exclusions (DfE, 2023a). Furthermore, it was posited that teachers' confidence in managing behaviour was a determinant of the classroom atmosphere, with a lack of confidence creating a more negative environment. Mutual respect and positive relationships were highlighted as requisites for effective behaviour management, with more punitive regimes resulting in "worse rather than better standards of behaviour," (Elton, 1989, p. 99, para. 47).

1.4.3 An Overview of Political Ideologies and Policy

It is important to understand the political landscape when reflecting upon exclusion statistics as it helps to frame the socio-political view of behaviour in terms of policy and guidance provided to schools.

The Labour Party were in power from 1997 to 2010 and appeared to focus on the importance of emotional and social aspects of learning, pastoral systems and the well-being of the child via Every Child Matters (DES, 2003); a government initiative designed to promote joined up working to support young people aged 0-19 years old in achieving their potential academically and within their well-being, following the tragic death of Victoria Climbie and safeguarding failures (DES, 2003).

The Steer Report (DfES, 2009), a review of school behaviour conducted via a working party of thirteen education professionals, highlighted the importance of pastoral systems, behaviour support workers and the development of pupils' emotional literacy skills, but did not include a focus on children with special educational needs, which it may be argued, left a significant and vulnerable group out of the recommendations. The subsequent review of The Steer Report in 2009, took a positive view on the

improvements schools had taken in their approaches to behaviour management (DfES, 2009).

It may be argued that from the new coalition (The Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats) in 2010-2015 to the current Conservative Government (2015 onwards), there has been a continued focus on standards of behaviour (Cole et al., 2019), with a more medicalised view of both behaviour and mental health. The Personal, Social, Health, Emotional (PSHE) curriculum although in place, was not compulsory for pupils and a more punitive view of punishment is said to be reflected in Conservative Government policy and narrative to schools, compared to the pre-Conservative times of the 1990s and early 2000s (Cole et al., 2019; McCluskey et al., 2019). This appears to be in opposition to the findings of The Elton Report (1989) which made a point of describing the ineffectiveness of punitive measures for positive behaviour in schools.

Whilst there are numerous government policies, reviews and initiatives concerning behaviour, they are often viewed in isolation, particularly in conjunction with special educational needs or mental health, with little thought as to how they interact or impact each other (Cole et al., 2019; Done & Knowler, 2020; Timpson, 2019), a serious flaw as highlighted by The Timpson Review (Timpson, 2019). However, it should be noted that both the 'Behaviour in Schools' (DfE, 2022) and 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' (DfE, 2023) both explicitly include mental health and SEND in relation to their impact upon behaviour.

1.4.4 The Timpson Review of School Exclusion

The current exclusion statistics appear to highlight a failure of the English education system for excluded young people (Parsons, 2005; Pirrie et al., 2011; Power & Taylor, 2020). In response to widespread concern around the rates of exclusion for pupils in England, The Timpson Review (2019) was commissioned by the Government to investigate the possible underlying factors which may be contributing to exclusion. The subsequent recommendations (thirty in total) for systematic improvement to exclusion

rates included ambitious leadership, better-equipped schools, the right incentives for inclusive practice and safeguarding to ensure that all children are included. Indeed, the importance of services working together, via a collaborative approach, is embedded within the report and this places the focus not only on schools but also on wider systems, holding all agencies accountable (Cole et al., 2019; Parsons & Howlett, 1996). However, as services and Local Authorities (LAs) may be under increasing pressure due to funding deficits (Bryant & Swords, 2018; Gray et al., 2022) and a traded market becomes more commonplace (Cole et al., 2019), there may be regional factors that impact upon the implementation of The Timpson Review (2019) recommendations due to LA-specific contexts and budget pressures.

A research report, commissioned by the Department for Education in 2022, around high needs budgets in Local Authorities, describes an average deficit of £3.4 million in special educational needs funding for many LAs, indicating significant budget pressures for SEND provision. However, the Government is reported to have recognised this and invested around £2.5 billion into high needs funding for Local Authorities over the past three academic years.

1.4.4.1 Testing and Accountability Governmental Pressures

Whilst the Government describes the budget increase for SEND within LAs to support SEND provision and systems, it may be argued that conversely, government accountability measures, including the OFSTED inspection framework, are at odds with inclusive policy and practice which aims to meet the needs of all pupils (Ball, 2018; Done & Knowler, 2020; Thompson et al., 2021). Greany & Higham (2018) found that 49% of respondents within academies felt that OFSTED and published league tables were responsible for reducing inclusive practices for pupils (with 35% disagreeing) and 51% of respondents felt that both OFSTED and league tables had a negative effect on their teaching, suggesting that the current accountability system including testing culture, league tables and OFSTED is reducing inclusivity of schools, particularly within academies, which may in turn lead to punitive measures like exclusion. However, as previously described in the academisation section, Timpson (2019) states that thus far, academisation does not seem

to have a differing impact on exclusion, when comparing data to LA-maintained schools.

Ball (2018) argues that educational behaviour policy is in reality, ineffective and underpinned by the pressure of league tables and testing culture. Done and Knowler (2020) agree and highlight a dissonance for school staff between their understanding of pedagogy and the pressure of obtaining results in conjunction with scrutiny of evidence, a disconnect highlighted in a number of research papers (Ball, 2018; Cole et al., 2019; McCluskey et al., 2019). Cole et al. (2019) posit that school policy should be restorative rather than punitive and sanction-led, which appears to be in contrast to the nature of national policy currently.

1.4.5 Academisation

Academisation began with the Labour Government, in the 2000s. Failing schools, as described via OFSTED inspections, were turned into academies with the freedom to set their own salaries and budgets, adapt their curriculum and set their own school days and holidays, without their LA intervening (Long, 2015). This was continued by the coalition in 2010 and the following Conservative Government (2015), who initially gave outstanding schools (as deemed by OFSTED) the option of becoming a ‘converter school’ (converting to an academy with central government funding) and subsequently inadequate schools transferring to academies under the sponsorship of a converter academy in a bid to raise school standards (Gunter & McGinity, 2014; Male, 2022). 80% of all secondary schools across England now have academy status (DfE, 2023b).

Part of the lure of academisation may be the fact that schools are no longer under the control of LAs apart from where there are LA statutory duties. Whilst this may be seen as a positive for schools as they can make their own decisions, for example, budgets and term dates without LA bureaucracy, LAs are finding it harder to maintain their statutory duties within academies or indeed challenge ineffective or questionable practice (McShane, 2020).

Ball (2018) argues that academisation has led to a fragmentation of the English education system and with it a decrease in standards, particularly as it appears to be increasingly difficult for LAs to challenge schools, for example, if they appear to have zero-tolerance policies for behaviour (Cole et al., 2019). Cole et al. (2019) also discuss the fact that Scotland has no academy policy and minimal exclusions but they do not go as far as offering an empirical link between academies and exclusion. The Timpson Review (2019) found that there was no increase in permanent exclusion numbers following a school's academisation thus far. However, as the academisation rollout was initially focused on the conversion of 'outstanding' or well-performing schools in 2010/2011, with schools deemed as 'inadequate' by OFSTED being ordered to convert in 2016, the data for exclusionary practice may not necessarily be representative for full academy impact, at the time of the commencement of The Timpson Review in 2016 due to the changing nature of the schools converting. Furthermore, as Timpson (2019) describes, there is the nature of 'off-rolling' and undisclosed illegal exclusions, which makes the true picture of exclusion difficult to ascertain or describe.

1.4.6 Unofficial Exclusion

With Education Acts explaining the legal responsibilities surrounding exclusions and exclusion numbers counted both nationally and within LAs for each school, there appears to be an incentive for schools to collude in more 'hidden' exclusionary practices which are not officially accounted for but remove a pupil from their educational setting. The Timpson Review (2019) states that there is currently little incentive for a school to keep a pupil within their setting if their behaviour meets the school's behaviour policy criteria for exclusion, giving the example of performance tables as a school pressure. Whilst there is pressure on schools in terms of performance data (Ball, 2018; Done & Knowler, 2020), there is also pressure both nationally and locally to reduce official exclusion numbers (Power & Taylor, 2020). These pressures can lead to more covert practices to remove pupils from an educational setting, for example, 'off-rolling' where children are sent home for part of the

school day unofficially or a managed move to another setting when this is not in the best interests of the child (OFSTED, 2019).

McShane (2020) interviewed three educational members of staff to ascertain their views on hidden forms of exclusion, which may include 'off-rolling' in terms of parents feeling coerced into home-educating their child. All interviewees expressed sadness and anger at the practice and pointed to the pressures of the educational system as exacerbating this, illustrating the dissonance school staff may experience in terms of their own feelings around hidden exclusion and school practice in reality. Indeed, staff are often reluctant to talk about informal exclusion practices due to their hidden, unlawful nature, and so, the evidence tends to be anecdotal, making the reality of it hard to determine (Done & Knowler, 2020; McShane, 2020).

There has been an ongoing increase in children being electively home-educated (McShane, 2020), with an 8.4% increase overall from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023 and academies (as the prior educational setting) constituting 47% of the total (DfE, 2024). Whilst this may be solely down to parental choice, the increase year on year has raised concern surrounding the nature of the context around parental decision-making and potential coercion by schools as a way to remove a child without formally excluding them.

It may then be argued, that the hidden nature of unofficial exclusion practice makes quantifying the true nature of PX an almost impossible task, thus bringing the validity of such statistics into question (Hatton, 2013; Power & Taylor, 2020; Timpson, 2019). The Timpson Review (2019) outlined a significant concern as to the current legislation regarding exclusion and the lack of safeguarding around illegal exclusion and hidden practices.

1.4.7 Alternative Provision/ Pupil Referral Units

Alternative provision (AP) is described by the DfE (2023) as,

> *education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education…These placements are typically for children*

unable to attend a mainstream or special school (DfE, 2023b, section 6).

This also includes Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), alternative provision academies or free schools which are state-funded (DfE, 2023b). However, LAs may pay private alternative provision settings as part of a young person's educational provision (DfE, 2023b). The term Alternative Provision (AP) will be used within this research to mean the above definition and encompass the varying types of provision described. If an author uses a specific term, for example, PRU, this will be used under the understanding it sits within Alternative Provision as a whole.

Research suggests that AP fosters poorer educational outcomes for pupils as it is not a true educational setting (McShane, 2020). The Timpson Review (2019) outlines the variation in teaching standards within AP settings with only 7% of permanently excluded pupils achieving good GCSE passes at mainstream secondary and 4.5% in AP. One-third of pupils at APs also go on to NEET (not in employment, education or training) (Timpson, 2019). Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) argue that the lack of specialised teachers may be a factor, due to the logistics of the setting compared to a mainstream secondary school and its specialist subject teachers.

AP may be perceived as a therapeutic offering for vulnerable pupils; however, a more behaviourist approach is documented by Thomson & Pennacchia, (2016) which may resonate with the behaviour policy they left at mainstream secondary school. Despite the data concerning alternative provision, Cole et al. (2019) found that both the Northern and Southern LAs within their research wanted to increase the number of APs.

1.4.8 The Impact of Exclusion on Life Chances and Wellbeing

There is widespread consensus that the impact of exclusion has serious, detrimental and long-lasting consequences concerning mental health, academic and employment outcomes (Carlile, 2011b; Doward, 2017; Ford et al., 2018b; Hallam & Castle, 2001; McCluskey et al., 2019; Pirrie et al., 2011). Permanently excluded pupils can face socio-economic pressure both

as a pre-curser to exclusion and also as a long-term factor (McCluskey et al.,2019), whilst David Lammy MP highlighted the relationship between attending a PRU and entering the criminal justice system (Weale, 2017). Moreover, Ford et al., (2018b) found both boys and girls aged 16 who were excluded (no discrimination between FTE and PX), had poorer mental health than non-excluded peers, suggesting a bi-directionality between psychological distress and exclusion as pupils with poorer mental health from primary school were also more likely to be excluded. However, Ford et al.'s (2018b) analysis used a pre-existing data set, which collated both qualitative and quantitative data to ascertain psychopathology via child psychologists, so the reporting of psychological distress may be viewed as assigned rather than self-reported by the participants themselves.

1.4.8.1 SEMH and Permanent Exclusion

A young person who is identified as having SEMH needs, as per the SEND Code of Practice (DfE &DoH, 2015), is 3.8 times more likely to be permanently excluded than pupils with no SEN need (Timpson, 2019). Furthermore, Jull (2008) argues that SEMH is the only SEND area of need which renders the pupil vulnerable to exclusion by the nature of the identification for which they are requiring support for in the first place.

The link between SEMH and exclusion may be more difficult to unpick however, as Ford et al.'s (2018) study found that there is a bidirectionality between exclusion and mental health, with difficulties in mental health leading to permanent exclusion and permanent exclusion leading to difficulties in mental health. Ford et al.'s (2018) study found that young people experienced significant distress when excluded (both suspensions and permanent exclusions pooled together), as presented in their baseline and 3-year follow-up data. Parker et al. (2019) concur, finding children with mental health difficulties are more likely to be excluded, as are children with difficulties that have not been recognised, when compared to children without a mental health difficulty, suggesting that school staff need to understand how behaviours may be communicating an underlying difficulty so support can be put in place irrespective of a diagnosis.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks

Three theoretical frameworks will be discussed in relation to SEMH males who have been permanently excluded to underpin the literature reviewed and provide a framework for the research itself. Two theories of motivation will be outlined, namely Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in terms of both the supporting adults and young people themselves, with regard to unmet needs within their school systems.

Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) Bioecological Systems Model describes the dynamic interactions between a young person and their surrounding systems, which will be used to underpin understanding concerning male pupils who have SEMH needs and have been permanently excluded as well as the impact of their supporting environments.

The three theoretical models were chosen as I felt they provided psychological underpinnings concerning the basic needs of pupils, particularly for those who have been permanently excluded. The narrative literature review discusses the importance of belonging and agency for wellbeing as well as motivation (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). Furthermore, the importance of wider systems and their role in supporting the inclusion of permanently excluded pupils who are identified as having SEMH needs is crucial to consider, for example, how belonging is fostered within a whole-school approach (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022).

1.5.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is a theory which seeks to illustrate the physiological and psychological requirements for self-actualisation and thus is a theory of motivation.

Figure 1.1

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs.

Taken from McLeod, Simply Psychology (2024).

The hierarchy appears as a pyramid (see Figure 1.1) with the first element being physiological needs. This includes all of the things a person needs to survive, for example, food, water, sleep and clothing. Without these needs being met, there will be little motivation for self-actualisation for the person it is concerning (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). An example of this may be a child or young person (CYP) who comes into school without having breakfast or adequate sleep.

The next sections are concerned with psychological needs, including safety and security, love and belonging and self-esteem. Popoola & Sivers (2023)

describe these sections as a CYP's need for safety, for example, feeling psychologically safe in their school environment and having a safe place to go to, feeling that they belong rather than outsiders (Popoola & Sivers, 2021), which increases wellbeing, thus supporting their journey to self-actualisation or achieving their potential (Maslow, 1943).

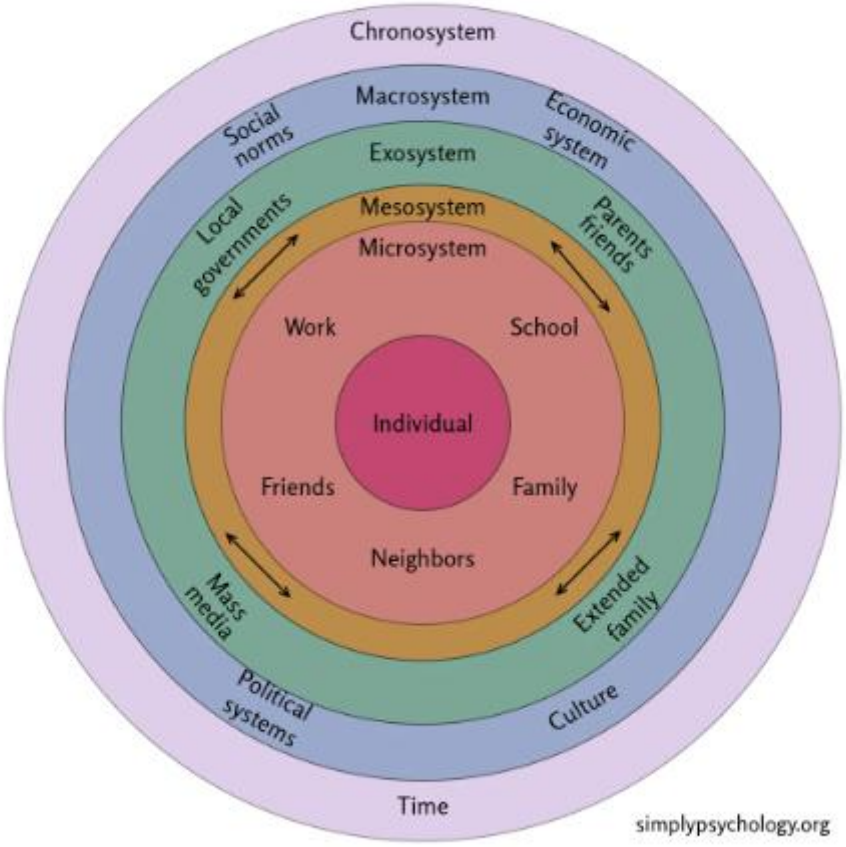
Critiques of Maslow's (1943) theory argue that it was created with a Western cultural lens of individuality and therefore its generalisability to other cultures should be treated with caution (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003; Hofstede, 1984). Furthermore, the title hierarchy implies that one section must be achieved before another, but it does not account for varied or dual directionality between sections, for example, a sense of safety and belonging being developed together. Moreover, there is no definitive boundary between one section and another, for example, where does safety end and belonging begin? That being said, it is argued that Maslow's (1984) theory is highly applicable to English school settings, as is the focus of this research; its application to school contexts will be discussed below.

1.5.2 Bioecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1974) aimed to conceptualise the interacting and influencing systems surrounding a CYP with regard to their development, in the first iteration of his ecological systems theory (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

A visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1974) Ecological Systems Theory



Taken from Guy-Evans, Simply Psychology (2024)

Bronfenbrenner (1974) described four key systems which interact and influence CYP in terms of their development, with the inner systems closer to the CYP wielding the most significant influence.

The first system is the microsystem. This describes the immediate interactions a CYP experiences in their lives, for example, parents/carers, teachers (schools), and peers. Relationships in the microsystem are bi-

directional in that they influence each other and the CYP is not only the recipient of this interaction.

The mesosystem illustrates the interactive nature of the microsystem and how they can also influence each other, for example, teacher-parent relationships.

The exosystem describes the wider social and environmental systems surrounding a CYP, for example, the social system of their parents/carers, and local government policies like SEND structures. These systems may not have contact with the CYP directly, but they still hold a significant influence on their lives.

The macrosystem is the cultural, political and ideological influences on a CYP development, for example, social norms of masculinity or school statutory policy based upon political ideologies.

The chronosystem was added in 1994, via Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) re-evaluation of the initial ecological systems theory (renamed the Bioecological Systems Theory) and represents the passing of time, for example, key transition points in a CYP's education.

Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) reconceptualised the ecology model to include more of a focus on biological processes, using the term 'proximal processes' to describe the interplay between inherent biological potentials and psychological functioning, within the interacting systems over time; renaming the theory, 'Bioecological Systems Theory' to represent this. An illustration of this could be a teacher's support and guidance which fosters a sense of safety and belonging in the CYP, over time.

Critics of Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) Bioecological Systems Theory and the previous Ecological System Theory describe how it does not have a scientific basis and the actual impact of the interactions upon a CYP have not been empirically explored (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Moreover, the potential lack of clarity in the processes of the theory has led to various inaccurate uses of the theory in published papers.

Tudge et al. (2016) conducted a systematic literature review to ascertain the use of Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) Bioecological Systems Theory and from twenty papers identified, only two were seen to use the theory with fidelity.

There has also been discourse around the dated nature of the Bioecological Systems Theory, particularly in terms of the advances in technology and the creation of social media and online learning platforms. To account for this, Navarro & Tudge, (2023) argue that the microsystem should be split into two sections to explicitly illustrate in-person interactions and virtual interaction, in a bid to reflect the change in the ways CYP communicate.

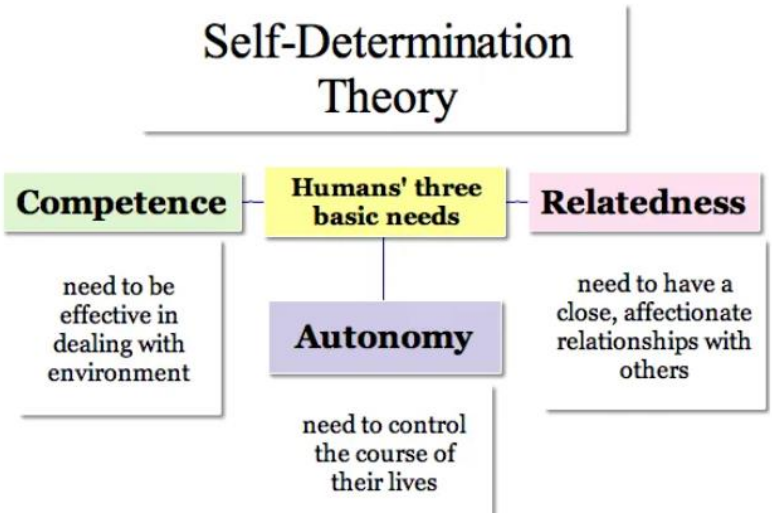
1.5.3 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2008) is a theory which focuses on the underpinnings of human motivation, akin to Maslow (1943), and seeks to illustrate the mechanisms which support an individual's sense of control over their own life.

Ryan and Deci (2008) argue that motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, that is externally produced, for example, gaining rewards, or via internal alignment with our values and motivations. They make the distinction between controlled and autonomous motivation. Controlled motivation describes an individual's experiences of control via rules, rewards, sanctions or indeed a sense of fear, shame or guilt around a behaviour (or inaction) (Jungert et al., 2016). Autonomous motivation is concerned with an individual's internal motivation due to their own values and sense of self; their behaviours emanate from their core values and they are the creators of this (Jungert et al., 2016).

Figure 1.3

A visual representation of Self-Determination Theory



Taken from Ackerman, Positive Psychology (2018)

Ryan & Deci (2000) suggest that human motivation is underpinned by three facets, namely, competency (feeling mastery and the sense you can accomplish the task), autonomy (the sense of having control over your life and decision-making) and relatedness (feeling belonging and connectedness to others). If the three elements of self-determination are in place, then a person may feel they are intrinsically motivated to achieve their goals, in that the motivation comes from within (is autonomously motivated). Without these, a person may experience controlled motivation, with external factors prescribing their actions and sense of self.

However, there has been criticism regarding Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in terms of Western bias and the individualistic nature of the origin of motivation compared to more collectivist cultures, which value community and motivation for the wider society (Cross & Gore, 2011).

1.5.4 Psychological Theory Links to SEMH and Permanent Exclusion

Maslow (1943) and Deci and Ryan (2015) theories aim to illustrate the impacting factors related to a person's motivation, with Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), describing the interacting systems which influence a person's development. Due to the sense of overlap between the three theories in terms of belonging, relatedness, feelings of safety and the systems which can support or hinder these factors, the key themes concerning all three theories are discussed as part of supportive or hindering approaches for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion or have been permanently excluded.

1.5.4.1 Relationships, Connectedness, Belonging and the Systems which Shape These

Weare & Nind (2011) reviewed 52 systematic literature reviews and meta-syntheses for interventions supporting mental health in school. Small to moderate effects were found for the interventions; the most effective interventions consisted of early identification, consistency, multi-model and whole-school approaches, embedding skills within the curriculum (rather than in isolation), actively teaching skills to pupils, creating a whole-school ethos, teacher training, liaison and educating parents, community involvement, multi-agency work and fidelity of implementation. The interventions themselves taught social problem-solving, social awareness and emotional literacy, with skills reinforced in the classroom. The students found that didactic behaviour strategies were not effective, preferring more interactional approaches.

Weare & Nind (2011) suggest that outside specialists could initiate the intervention in question, but it is more effective if teachers take over and continue. Similarly, Obsuth et al. (2017) conducted a randomised control trial for a short-term social communication intervention aimed at young people who were at risk of exclusion aged between 12 and 15 years old, delivered by an outside agency. Findings showed that the intervention had a null or negative impact upon completion after once-weekly group and individual sessions for 12 weeks. Obsuth et al. (2017) argue that an intervention

delivered by outside agencies may be viewed by pupils as ‘external’ to their school, reducing the applicability of the intervention and creating a potential silo effect. This appears to support the importance of pupil-teacher relationships not only in day-to-day school life but also for intervention facilitation. As pupils see staff on a daily basis, there are by nature, more opportunities for developing relationships than sessions delivered wholly by outside adults.

Relational approaches may also be a vehicle for a young person’s sense of belonging with the school community, with the terms ‘connectedness’, ‘relatedness’, ‘engagement’ and ‘community’ also being used interchangeably to describe school belonging, with the young person feeling safe within themselves (in terms of their sense of identity) and in others through the relationships they develop (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). This suggests that belonging is a crucial psychological need within this educational context (Maslow, 1943).

Equally, The Education Endowment Foundation (2021) published a report on improving school behaviour with four recommendations outlined, the first being ‘To know and understand your pupils and their influences’, indicating that relational approaches are supportive of improved behaviour. The report also highlights that pupils should be taught to self-reflect on their behaviours, simple strategies are impactful, for example, breakfast clubs and parental engagement, schools should invest in a whole school ethos for positive behaviour and consistency is the key in all approaches, aligning with current research themes describing supportive school approaches to positive behaviour management. Indeed, developing an inclusive school ethos appears in a number of studies exploring reductions in exclusions (Hallam & Castle, 2001; B. Harris et al., 2006; Hatton, 2013) as well as government guidance (DfE, 2018).

1.5.4.2 The Views of Parents/Carers and School Staff

Within this research, the term parents will encompass parents and carers, unless otherwise stated.

The Timpson Review (2019) gained children's and parents' views regarding the key factors underpinning exclusion. Children viewed fairness and consistency as key in teaching approaches with a third stating they felt teachers were not good at managing behaviour. Parents viewed a lack of support as a fundamental element underpinning permanent exclusion with 83% of parents who had an excluded child, feeling that the school did not work with them to explore alternatives to the permanent exclusion.

Miller et al. (2002) examined the views of parents and pupils within an inner-city secondary school, concerning difficult classroom behaviour and found that fairness in teachers' actions, adverse family circumstances and differentiation of classroom demands were key factors impacting upon a pupil's behaviour. Family circumstances correlated with previous findings whereby teachers felt parenting was the main factor regarding a pupil's behaviour, putting the locus of control outside of the school setting and relinquishing school environmental impact (Miller, 1996).

Orsati & Causton-Theoharis (2013) analysed teacher perceptions regarding pupil behaviour in America, finding that pupils were discussed as 'deviant' and grouped using the pronoun 'they'. Teachers felt the reasons for the behaviour lay within the pupil and their family context, mirroring Miller's (1996) findings. The notion of control was also a theme within their study in terms of teachers wanting control of the classroom. It may be argued that the sense of control a teacher needs, reflects the confidence or lack of confidence they have in their classroom practice.

1.5.4.3 Teachers' Feelings of Self-Efficacy with Regards to Managing Pupil Behaviour

Self-efficacy is the control a person feels they have over their behaviour and environment (Bandura, 1977) and links to theories of motivation (Maslow (1943) and Deci and Ryan (2015). Studies indicate that the more a teacher feels an emotional strain when working with a pupil with challenging behaviour, the lower self-efficacy they feel they have, resulting in more punitive measures being taken in their classroom management (Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Munn & Lloyd, 2005a).

Both Parsons (2005) and Thomson & Pennechia (2016) argue that teachers can pathologise pupil's behaviour and place it within-child, for example, they are 'troubled', linking to Miller's (1996, 2002) findings, which serves to legitimise more punitive measures, for example, sanctions. Hatton (2013) concurs and seeks to explain this as a reaction to the teacher feeling unconfident in their ability to manage the classroom behaviour.

Head et al. (2007) argue that teacher empathy and understanding are crucial for preventing exclusion but Almog & Shechtman (2007) state that teachers need to believe in this ability themselves, which may be difficult for them to see if they don't feel they have self-efficacy in their practice. Thus, teachers may feel a lack of confidence in their practice and in turn, use more punitive measures as a reaction, which can negatively affect classroom behaviour, perpetuating the cycle. Teacher self-efficacy levels may also reduce their acceptance of managed-moved pupils (who have moved schools due to behaviour but have not been excluded) in their class due to their self-confidence in behaviour strategies (Harris et al.,2006) further increasing the risk of permanent exclusion for the pupil.

When speaking to secondary school pupils about the issue of exclusion, McCluskey (2008) found that they did not think it was an effective solution to behaviour, citing the need for more consistency in the application of the behaviour policy, as well as valuing teachers who were fair, listened and had a sense of humour. However, Maag (2012) argues that exclusion is in fact used as a front-line strategy for behaviour management and is often given unfairly, illustrating a disconnect between the value of consistency and classroom practice.

Despite the argued link between teacher self-efficacy and behaviour management approaches, there is little empirical evidence as to the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their approach to behaviour management (Gibbs & Powell, 2011).

1.5.4.4 Pupil Voice and Sense of Autonomy

When considering pupil views and sense of autonomy within their education, there appears to be a lack of drive to collect pupils' voices in school settings.

Sellman (2009) argues that pupil voice for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is gained less, which may be due to teachers' sense of confidence in supporting pupils identified as SEMH as described in Section 1.5.4.3. Moreover, teachers felt they lacked the skills to support mental health and their primary role was to educate, fostering a lack of openness about mental health, which in turn creates a barrier to young people seeking adult support (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Similarly, a pressured workload was suggested as a contributing factor to teachers overlooking symptoms of depression, indicating that teachers need support to support students, for example, via training (O'Reilly et al., 2018; Reicher & Matischek-Jauk, 2019).

Dimitrellou & Male (2020) analysed the views of thirteen SEMH pupils in Years 7-10 and found that pupils felt teachers paid attention to challenging behaviour but not when they were displaying 'good' behaviour, suggesting that 'challenging' behaviour was a means to gaining interactions. Pupils also explained that the behaviour management strategies in place did not teach them about good behaviour or how to improve, being more punitive in nature, indicating that they wanted to make progress in their behaviour but this was not supported. Labelling was also a concern as pupils felt that teachers discriminated against them due to the negative labels attributed to them. Moreover, group work with role models was seen positively by the SEMH participants, suggesting a supportive role for collaborative peer group working for pupils with SEMH needs in secondary settings (Head et al., 2003). This however, may be the opposite experience for pupils who have SEMH needs as they can face increasing social isolation due to the nature of the need itself (Barker et al., 2010; Sealy et al., 2021; Thomas & Glenny, 2000).

Similarly, Cefai & Cooper (2010) analysed themes across eight qualitative studies focusing on the views of secondary students who had SEMH needs in Maltese educational settings and found pupils felt they had poor relationships with their teachers (they felt ignored and not listened to which then became a barrier to seeking help, aligning with Sellman's (2009) findings). Punitive and rigid approaches made problems worse for the pupils

and they felt a sense of injustice and oppression with no voice in their educational system, fostering feelings of helplessness to change things. They voiced that they were bored and frustrated with their learning, particularly as it was not linked to real-life purposes, for example, practical activities, or hands-on learning (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). Crucially, they felt excluded from the classroom as they did not feel like teachers understood their learning preferences or needs, thus they were negatively labelled which in turn can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The studies above highlight the importance of pupil/teacher relationships as well as a pupil's sense of identity and autonomy within their education.

1.5.4.5 Whole-School Supportive Approaches

Within secondary schools in the UK, pupils work with a variety of teachers throughout the school day, meaning a consistent whole-school approach is integral to the fostering of relational approaches, emotional literacy and facilitating pupil agency, aligning with Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994).

Weare (2000) posits that whole-school approaches can be difficult to implement due to external pressures and time, for example, league tables and the push for academic progress, which appears to be a common theme in the literature reviewed. However, whole-school strategies should incorporate positive pupil/teacher relationships, opportunities for peer teamwork, parental engagement, multi-agency work and remaining committed to the approaches, reflecting similar study findings (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Sellman, 2009). Furthermore, El Zaatari & Maalouf (2022) posit that school belonging is an ethos developed through a positive school climate, effective learning environments, teacher/student relationships, feelings of safety, and relationships with peers and parents, indicating applicability for both Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) and Maslow's (1943) theories for developing belonging.

1.5.4.6 General Intervention and Preventative Strategies to Support Pupils at Risk of Exclusion

Key themes regarding intervention for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion are described as multi-agency working, early identification, and reflexivity of

the school environment and curriculum (Hatton, 2013; Jull, 2008; McCluskey et al., 2019).

McCluskey et al., (2019) discuss the fact that Scotland has significantly reduced its permanent exclusions. When analysing the national approach, Scottish policy promotes early intervention, multi-agency work, respect, and a focus on the building of relationships. This correlates with the findings from The Timpson Review (2019) concerning English schools and views of pupils in terms of the importance of relationships and respect (Burton, 2006; Hatton, 2013; Head et al., 2003; Jull, 2008; McCluskey et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2011) as well as teachers fostering a democratic ethos in their classroom (Almog & Shechtman, 2007).

2 Systematic Literature Review

2.1 Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Definition

A systematic literature review aims to appraise and collate existing research, based upon a research question and a defined set of criteria, in a bid to understand what is currently known about a topic, how this is known and the integrity of the findings based upon the research design and theoretical underpinnings (Gough, Thomas & Oliver, 2012; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Systematic reviews were borne out of the desire to rigorously understand what is known about a quantifiable topic, for example, the impact of interventions, whilst interrogating the implementation of design and potential gaps in knowledge (Gough et al., 2012). Whilst they began within quantitative research circles, they have expanded to support the researcher in understanding what is known in qualitative research or mixed methods, via the identification, appraisal and synthesis of findings into key themes, concepts and discourse, as well as identifying current knowledge gaps for possible future research (Gough et al., 2012; Gough, 2007; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Moreover, qualitative syntheses align with interpretivist paradigms focusing on experiences rather than a linear, casual effect of more realist approaches (Booth et al., 2018, Noblit & Hare, 1999).

2.2 Rationale

This systematic literature review seeks to provide an insight into the current literature pertaining to exclusion and the reintegration of pupils within the secondary context, from the perspective of key stakeholders for males who are identified as having an SEMH need. The previous introductory review suggests that research into exclusion and SEMH needs is scarce, so I have taken the decision to leave out the theme of SEMH within my search criteria. This is to gain a more rounded understanding of the literature around exclusion and reintegration from stakeholder perspectives, to ascertain what is currently known about exclusion and reintegration from stakeholder perspectives, how it is known and where potential knowledge gaps may lie. I have also decided to focus on qualitative research as this allows the reader to access the lived experiences of the participants (Major, 2010), which is something I hope to explore in my own research.

Based on my rationale, my SLR question will be:

What do we know from qualitative studies that have explored experiences of permanent exclusion and reintegration for secondary-age pupils?

2.3 Review Procedure

To support the decision-making around which review method to utilise, I used the RETREAT framework (Booth et al., 2018) which suggests a seven-point framework to aid the selection of an approach pertinent to the review purpose. The framework discusses the importance of considering the research question, epistemology, timescale, resources, expertise, audience/purpose and type of data. Based upon the key points raised in the RETREAT framework, I chose to undertake a thematic synthesis based upon the research question, the interpretive nature of my research and the purpose of the review. I considered using meta-ethnography, however, I felt that a thematic synthesis would allow me to stay closer to the original studies and their contexts, without further researcher interpretation in terms of third-order constructs as per meta-ethnography's framework; particularly as

criticisms concerning qualitative SLRs posit that the nature of synthesising context-bound data can de-contextualise the very qualitative nature of the lived experiences within each study (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005).

Thematic synthesis follows an approach akin to thematic analysis in that the appraised studies are coded at the text level in a bid to develop descriptive themes which are further analysed to produce overarching themes across the studies (Booth et al., 2018; Thomas & Harden, 2008). Whilst the generation of themes requires an element of researcher interpretation, the themes remain aligned with the content of the initial studies and thus, support the nature of contextual qualitative data (Thomas & Harden, 2018).

2.4 Search Strategy

In May 2022 I undertook an initial scope of literature via two electronic databases: PsycINFO and Web of Science using my inclusion and exclusion criterion (see Table 2.1). The inclusion/exclusion criteria was included to support the systematic nature of the literature search and ensure the papers screened adhered to the specificity of the research question.

Table 2.1

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic literature review

	Inclusion	**Exclusion**
Language	English	Not written in English
Sample	Any adults who have had experience with a pupil/pupils who have been permanently excluded in secondary school or pupils themselves.	Age phases outside of the secondary school phase. Studies without a clearly defined sample.
Focus of Study	Qualitative studies that explore the experiences of permanent exclusion for secondary-age pupils.	Studies that focus on fixed-term exclusion. Studies that focus on alternative provision only without mainstream. Studies that have a specific attribution focus, for example, speech and language needs or a specific population. Data and Analysis is unspecified or incoherent.
Study Design	Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods. Mixed-method studies. Secondary sources. Studies that don't clearly specify a study design.
Type of Publication	Published in a peer-reviewed journal to establish credibility.	Non-peer reviewed journals Grey Literature, for example, unpublished theses
Location	UK	Any country outside of the UK

Date	From 2010	Studies pre-2010 due to the length of time from current research and the change to a new Conservative Government in 2010.

2.5 Rationale of Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

2.5.1 Language

As the research question relates to the UK education system, the studies needed to be conducted within England and thus written in the English language.

2.5.2 Sample

As I wanted a wider understanding of differing stakeholders' perceptions of exclusion and reintegration I included any persons within the exclusion and reintegration system, excluding settings outside of the secondary sector.

2.5.3 The Focus of the Study

As my research question is specific to secondary-age pupils, any studies that had unclear sample characteristics were excluded. Furthermore, the included studies should be of a qualitative nature due to the purpose of my review and the importance of perceptions and experiences within the review.

2.5.4 Design

Any studies with unclear methodologies were excluded, as were studies that contained other reported specific attributions to the participant sample, for example, co-occurring special educational needs outside of the SEMH category (as defined by the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015)), which may impact upon the findings in addition to exclusion experiences. In addition, only qualitative studies were included as perceptions and experiences are a focus within my research question.

2.5.5 Date

Studies were included from 2010 onwards to allow for the potential of a wider range of research whilst retaining a sense of relevance in terms of age and the current Conservative Party political context, which as discussed in the literature review, wields a legal and socio-political context for the education sector to operate within.

2.5.6 Type of Publication

Articles which appeared in peer-reviewed journals were included as I felt this would ensure a standard of research rigour as they have been reviewed by peers within that field of research.

2.5.7 Grey Literature

A decision was made to exclude grey literature (unpublished research, for example, unpublished dissertations) as I wanted to explore research that had been peer-reviewed in published journals due to the nature of rigour found within the peer-review process as described above.

2.6 Search Terms

Table 2.2 details the search terms used for the SLR. The terms were based on the key elements of the research question. Synonyms were used for key terms in an attempt to capture relevant studies with alternative phrasing as were wild card symbols for alternative endings.

Table 2.2

The key terms used for the search strategy within databases for my SLR

PsycINFO	(“secondary school” OR “high school” OR school*) AND View* OR experience* OR perception* OR opinion* OR attitude* AND (Pupil* OR teacher* OR staff OR male* OR female* OR professional* OR adult*) AND (“permanent exclusion” OR excluded) OR suspen* AND Reintegrat*
Web of Science	“secondary school” OR “high school” OR school* AND View* OR experience* OR perception* OR opinion* OR attitude* AND Pupil* OR teacher* OR staff OR male* OR female* OR professional* OR adult* AND “permanent exclusion” OR excluded AND Reintegrat* “secondary school” OR “high school” OR school*

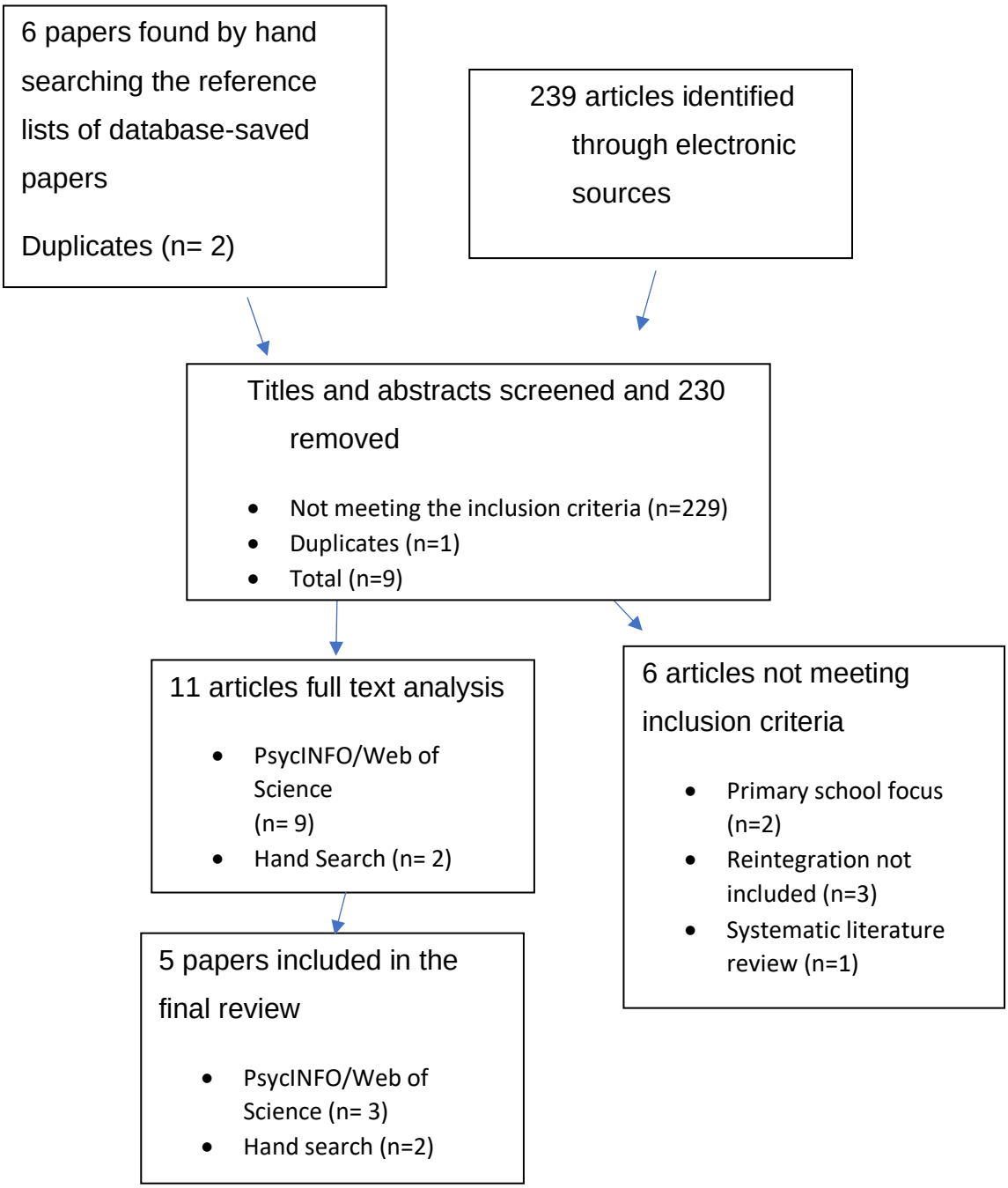
	AND View* OR experience* OR perception* OR opinion* OR attitude* AND Pupil* OR teacher* OR staff OR male* OR female* OR professional* OR adult* AND “permanent exclusion” OR excluded

2.6.1 Search Outcomes

239 initial studies found in an initial search during May 2022 were screened via titles and abstracts. 230 were rejected based upon the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2.1) including a duplicate, with 9 papers saved for full eligibility appraisal. I conducted a hand-search of the references from the papers selected for a full-read appraisal, with 2 further papers found after duplicates were removed. See Figure 2.1 for a visual illustration of the systematic search strategy.

Figure 2.1

A flow chart to illustrate the systematic search strategy results and eligibility decision-making



Adapted from Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Atman as part of the PRISMA Group (2009)

From the search strategy, five papers were included in the final review which met the inclusion criteria:

Table 2.3

Final Studies Included in the SLR

Author	**Date**	**Title**
Embeita	(2019)	Reintegration to secondary education following school exclusion: An exploration of the relationship between home and school from the perspective of parents.
Lawrence	(2011)	What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project.
Carlile	(2011)	Docile bodies or contested space? Working under the shadow of permanent exclusion.
Pillay, Dunbar-Krige & Mostert	(2013)	Learner's with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties experiences of reintegration into mainstream education.
Levison & Thompson	(2016)	'I don't need pink hair here.' Should we be seeking to 'reintegrate' youngsters without challenging mainstream school cultures?

Note. For full details of each study included in the appraisal please see Appendix 1

2.7 Appraisal of selected papers

Gough (2007) states that the papers identified in a systematic literature review should be appraised to analyse their relevance and pertinence to the review question, which supports the view that a systematic literature review should mirror the rigour of scientific approaches, setting it apart from a typical

non-systematic literature review. Thomas and Harden (2008) argue that the appraisal of qualitative literature is harder to conduct due to the nature of the contextual lived experiences and the risk of reducing this rich data. However, it is important to hold the research to scrutiny to ensure the findings of the review are robust and hold integrity.

2.7.1 CASP Appraisal

To support the appraisal of the papers found, I used the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (2018) questionnaire which is a 10-item questionnaire divided into three sections. Table 2.4 outlines the three areas of focus when using the CASP appraisal checklist. Each CASP question asks the appraiser for an answer in relation to the question using, 'yes', 'can't tell or 'no'. To support my appraisal of the studies for this systematic review, I assigned numbers to the answer options, with the maximum total for a study being 20. To ascertain a final appraisal judgement, I then divided the total of 20 between 3 categories, namely low quality (CASP total score 0-7), medium quality (CASP total score 8 -14) and high quality (CASP total score15-20). Both low and medium quality have a range of 7 in terms of their quality threshold scores whilst high quality has a range of 6. This was deemed appropriate as a higher score is signalling a paper which is of the higher quality and so the CASP score range of 6 (15-20), reflects the standards expected from a high quality paper. See Table 2.5 for the designations and Appendix 1 for the outcomes of the appraisal.

Table 2.4

The CASP areas of appraisal for qualitative research

CASP Section
Are the results of the study valid?
What are the results?
Will the results help locally?

Table 2.5

The numbers assigned to the CASP answer options and quality appraisal score thresholds

CASP Answer Choice	**Number Assigned**	**Quality Appraisal Scores Threshold (out of 20)**
Yes	*2*	*Low quality = 0-7*
Can't tell or limitations	*1*	*Medium quality = 8-14*
No	*0*	*High quality = 15-20*

Table 2.6

Table to show the given numerical scores from the CASP checklist for each reviewed study

CASP Section	Study and CASP Assigned Numerical Total				
	Embeita (2019)	Lawrence (2011)	Carlile (2011)	Pillay et al. (2013)	Levison and Thompson (2016)
Section A	11/12	11/12	6/12	11/12	9/12
Section B	4/6	4/6	1/6	4/6	4/6
Section C	2/2	2/2	0/2	2/2	2/2
Total	17/20	17/20	6/20	17/20	15/20
Quality Rating	High	High	Low	High	High

Note. Section A: Are the results valid? 3 questions

Section B: What are the results? 3 questions

Section C: Will the results help locally? 1 question

Answer numerical key- Yes 2, Can't Tell 1, No 0

Low quality= 0-7, Medium quality= 8-14, High Quality= 15-20

Embita (2019), Lawrence (2011) and Pillay et al. (2013) all scored highly in Section A of the CASP checklist which appraises the rationale, methodology (including research design) and researcher relationship to participants (see Table 2.6). All three studies demonstrated a clear aim, methodology and appropriate strategy for collecting data. There was some mention of the relationship between the researcher and the participants in terms of bias for all 3 studies but this was not a robust description so a '1' was given for this element of section A for all three studies. Levison and Thompson (2016) did not give a clear description of their analysis methods and did not describe consideration of their relationship with their

participants which brought their Section A score down slightly. Although Carlile (2011) does discuss their aims and rationale for their methodology, there is no clear description as to how they collected their data or what their raw data is. Carlile's (2011) opinion appears to be woven into their observations, which makes their understanding of bias difficult to ascertain, which is particularly important considering the study is of an ethnographic nature and the data was obtained as part of their own job role. Due to the interwoven nature of Carlile's (2011) findings, the validity of their research was given a 6 out of a possible 12 score for Section A.

There were mixed details regarding Section B of the CASP checklist which relates to the ethics, clarity and rigour of the results section. Pillay et al. (2013) described their data analysis methods in detail, considering data over time, independent coder analysis and triangulation of findings. Levinson and Thompson (2018) and Embeita (2019) both considered the ethical implications of their research with Levinson and Thompson (2016) discussing the power relationship between themselves and their participants (in turn designing their data collection methods to account for this). The remaining three studies did not address ethical considerations in their studies so a score of 1 was given as this was not described, but this does not mean it was not ethical, we cannot tell.

In summary, 4 of the appraised studies were deemed as 'high quality' via the collation of the numerical scores given to each CASP section as described above, namely, Embeita (2019), Pillay et al, (2013), Lawrence (2011) and Levinson and Thompson (2016). Finally, Carlile was deemed as 'low quality' due to their CASP scoring. This was due to the ethnographic nature of their study, which impacted upon their CASP scores in terms of clear results and the highly subjective nature of the researcher and participants, due to the ethnographic approach.

As Carlile's (2011) study was of an ethnographic nature and concerned with a specific Local Authority and its processes from their own role perspective, it is felt that the findings can only be viewed from this perspective, particularly as the nature of their data collection, and the distinction between data and viewpoint is not clear. However, the decision was taken to include Carlile (2011) in this systematic literature review, despite the low CASP scoring, as the scoring is mainly due to the nature of the methodology rather than the findings themselves, which are pertinent to the

nature of permanent exclusion within its specific context. Therefore, Carlile (2011) is included in the synthesis, with the caveat that this is an ethnographic study, which is highly subjective due to the fact the researcher has utilised their own embedded experience to reflect on the processes within the specific council.

2.8 Synthesis of Findings

2.8.1 Thematic Synthesis

Thematic synthesis was used to analyse and synthesise the data from each study as described by Thomas & Harden (2008). Thematic synthesis was chosen as the preferred method of analysis as it allows the reviewer to develop themes from initial coding without the requirement to go into further developing interpretations, for example, as with meta-ethnographic methods which can be lengthy and reviewer intensive in its requirements (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). Dixon, Woods et.al (2005) argue that thematic synthesis does not explicitly describe the procedure of analysis (which can be problematic as the key purpose of a systematic review is that it adheres to researcher rigour and explicitness, unlike a typical literature review) or take the findings beyond a simple collation of coding into themes, unlike meta-ethnography for example. However, to account for this, the procedure I have undertaken will be described at each stage. As the purpose of this systematic literature review is to shine a light on the current context of research into permanent exclusion and reintegration for secondary pupils, the use of theme generation based upon coding of the findings (Thomas & Harden, 2008) within each study is appropriate and the need for higher order interpretations does not feel necessary for the scope of this SLR, due to its purpose with regards to understanding what the literature can tell us in relation to the SLR question as well as to inform my research rationale.

2.8.2 Steps

In line with Thomas and Harden's (2008) view that discerning qualitative findings within qualitative data can be troublesome due to the nature of the richness of qualitative reporting, I read through all of the studies when extracting findings to

make sure I had captured the necessary data, rather than just focusing on the findings sections.

Step 1

Thomas and Harden (2008) describe the first step as line-by-line coding of the data. I initially thought I would use a qualitative software program like NVivo (QSR International, 2017) to organise my data but after beginning to use it, I felt that hand coding was preferable to me, as I could write, layout and move around codes in a more 'hands-on' manner, which is felt supported me in gaining familiarity with my data more successfully than doing this via software.

Although Thomas and Harden (2008) describe how they put aside their SLR question when first coding, I decided to keep my question in focus when coding as I only wanted relevant data which supports the exploration of the main SLR question. Once I had hand-coded the data inductively, I then re-read the papers to make sure the codes were representative of the findings of each study. I felt that this was particularly important as this is a qualitative data synthesis and thus the findings were not always explicitly apparent in each study due to the nature of qualitative reporting. I analysed the codes, used existing codes and changed some initial coding during this process. I used Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corporation, 2023) to list the codes and text extracts to support the organisation of codes into themes (see Appendix 2 for an example of the spreadsheet). Thomas and Harden (2008) describe this as the key translation of studies into each other, echoing the similar meta-ethnography stage (Noblit and Hare, 1999).

Step 2

Step two involves looking at the initial codes created from the data with the aim of deriving descriptive themes which represent shared meaning between the collated codes. I reviewed the codes within the Excel spreadsheet, assigned and recoded them if needed grouped them into similar semantic themes. See Table 2.7 for examples of the descriptive themes and data examples. This was an iterative process which involved reviewing, recoding and regrouping as needed.

Thomas and Harden (2008) include Step 3 in which the reviewer takes the initial descriptive themes and takes them further into a latent theme, which relies on the

reviewer's interpretations taking them beyond the collation of descriptive meaning. I made the decision to stop at Step 2, as I wanted to stay close to the original data descriptions, particularly as the purpose of my SLR is to ascertain what is already known about key perceptions regarding permanent exclusion and reintegration. I felt that the collation of codes into descriptive themes would enable me to gain a view as to what is currently known, within the scope of this SLR, and where potential gaps may be to inform my own research and research question. Therefore, the theme discussion below is a result of both Step 1 and Step 2 of the thematic synthesis with respect to the review question focus.

2.8.3 Themes

The thematic synthesis produced five main themes. The table below (Table 2.7) lists the themes found) as well as the number of papers contributing to the theme.

Table 2.7

Table to show the main themes and subthemes found during the thematic synthesis of the five papers included in the SLR.

Theme	Number of papers contributing to the theme	Text extract example
Flexible approach to reintegration	4	"…*some young people require a much quicker or much longer and gradual; approach*," (Pillay et al., 2013).
Trusting Relationships	4	"*It was evident that where relationships with teachers and support workers was promotive, this contributed to a stabilising effect not only through promotive feedback but also in establishing a feeling of having a safe environment when they felt anxious or angry*," (Lawrence, 2011).
Open communication with parents, pupils and staff	4	"*A major systemic factor contributing to effective reintegration was reported to be clear channels of regular communication between parents, the PRU and the mainstream provision."* (Pillay et al., 2013).
Perceptions of the pupil	4	"*Many felt they were identified by school as troublemakers at a certain stage, after which it*

		was not possible to change perceptions," (Levinson & Thompson, 2016). "*It was reported that decisions are made based upon "seemingly negative" reports of the child from the excluding school and other agencies, without consideration of the PRU staff who work with the children on a daily basis,*" (Pillay et al., 2013).
Parents and homelife factors	5	"*Learners reported absence of effective communication in the family and apathetic parental response as risk experiences*," (Lawrence, 2011). "*Invariably the triggers for deteriorating behaviour in school were events at home. 'It all changed after my dad died*…," (Levinson & Thompson, 2016).

2.9 Theme Discussion

2.9.1 A Flexible Approach to Reintegration

The theme 'A flexible approach to reintegration' encompasses ideas of school staff being adaptable in their reintegration planning and approaches in response to the individual needs of the pupil. In Levinson & Thompson's (2016) study, teaching staff discuss the need for flexibility when considering the timing for reintegration from a permanent exclusion, identifying a 'window of opportunity' for the pupil to reintegrate, particularly as they feel in Key Stage 4, the timing may define whether the young person stays at the PRU or reintegrates back to a mainstream setting. Lawrence (2011) concurs, reporting that reintegration was the most successful when it was timely and it took into account the individual's needs. Conversely, they argue that the lack of a timely approach is a barrier to successful reintegration. Likewise, Pillay et al., (2013) deem a lack of flexibility as a barrier to reintegration, with the flexibility of a phased return an impactful strategy.

Both Pillay et al., (2013) and Levinson & Thompson (2016) highlight the need for flexibility in the school system, in terms of rules, understanding individual needs, teacher expectations and relationships.

2.9.2 Trusting Relationships

Four out of the five studies discuss the importance of having trusting relationships whether at a PRU or during the reintegration process (Carlile, 2011b; Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013). This is described in each study as either a learning mentor (Carlile, 2011b; Lawrence, 2011), pastoral support (Levinson & Thompson, 2016) or trusted adult (Pillay et al., 2013). Pillay et al. (2013) describe this as not only specialist workers but also in terms of teacher relationships,

> *Promotive relationships with teachers and support workers provided emotional support and increased the learners' sense of attachment… Learners indicated that free access to a significant adult was a source of resilience during the reintegration process. '[If] I have problems I can go straight to the teachers', said one learner*, (Pillay et al., 2013, pp.319-320).

Three of the 4 studies included in this theme discuss more negative aspects of building adult support for pupils who are reintegrating. Carlile (2011) reports that pastoral plans in a secondary school setting are a 'paper exercise', (p. 305) whilst Pillay et al. (2013) report that an over-reliance on a trusted adult can have a converse effect on the young person's resilience as they may become over-reliant on them. Levinson & Thompson (2016) discuss the systemic barriers of pastoral support in a secondary setting, citing time as a barrier to emotional support, leading to a lack of curiosity in presenting behaviours from secondary staff.

2.9.3 Open Communication with Parents, Pupils and Staff

Four out of the five studies found open communication with parents and carers to be of importance to participants in terms of permanent exclusion and reintegration. Lawrence (2011) found that regular contact with parents was a positive factor towards successful reintegration alongside being clear and honest. In addition, Levison and Thompson (2016) found that reporting positive outcomes to parents was

impactful as parents commented that it was the first time they had heard positive aspects of their child's school experiences.

Collaboration appeared to be important to the participants in Levison and Thompson's (2016), Lawrence's (2011) and Pillay et al.'s (2013) studies. Lawrence (2011) found a positive impact upon reintegration when parents were supportive of their child and shared responsibility for the implementation of the reintegration, whilst Pillay et al., (2013) and Levinson and Thompson (2016) both described the importance of a collaborative and integrated approach to the reintegration; good communications between home and school with pre-planned reintegration meetings were reported as being particularly impactful before the actual reintegration itself (Pillay et al., 23013).

Comparatively, although clear, honest and collaborative communication can be a positive factor in successful reintegration, it can also act as a barrier when the communication has failed and there is a lack of honesty between the PRU, school staff and parents (Lawrence, 2011; Pillay et al., 2013). This can manifest as Indeed, a lack of open, collaborative communication can cause a polarising effect between the PRU staff and receiving school staff, which Lawrence (2011) calls 'them and us' (p. 222) standpoints, causing tension, although this may not be overt.

2.9.4 Perceptions of the Pupil

'Perceptions of the pupil by school staff' was found in 4 of the 5 studies included in the SLR. When discussing perceptions of the reintegrating pupil, all of the four studies viewed the staff perceptions as within-child. This negative perception appeared to impact fair access panel decisions in terms of a pupil having low attendance or not having high test results (thus it was perceived that this would negatively impact the secondary school data prompting Headteacher protests) (Carlile, 2011) through to teacher attitudes in the classroom (Lawrence, 2011; Pillay et al., 2013). Lawrence (2011) found that staff from the excluding school were negatively labelling the student in subsequent reports and this was negatively impacting upon decision-making. Similarly, teachers were expecting the reintegrating pupils to be disruptive based upon the fact that they were labelled as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) (Pillay et al., 2013). This in turn meant the pupils felt misunderstood and that they were already labelled negatively in

their new school setting before they had started (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013). Moreover, SEMH needs in themselves may be a barrier to reintegration as pupils' needs were deemed too significant for mainstream secondary schools (Lawrence, 2011).

2.9.5 Parents and Homelife Factors

The impact of parents or home life factors on the exclusion and reintegration process was discussed in all 5 studies included in this SLR. Embita (2019) and Lawrence (2011) found that parental feelings of validation or lack of power in the reintegration process were discussed by participants, with Embita (2019) finding a gender difference between male and female parents; female parents sought validation for their own views on their child's behaviours whilst they felt they were not taken seriously in meetings (compared to the male participant).

Levinson and Thompson (2016) found that school staff thought parental involvement was important for successful reintegration. However, parental involvement was particularly important prior to this, when parents stood up for their children, helping to prevent the permanent exclusion from becoming final (in the governor's meeting for example) (Levinson & Thompson, 2016).

Although parental involvement can be a protective factor in permanent exclusion and reintegration, it can also act as a risk factor, particularly if there are low parental expectations for the pupil or the parents are apathetic to their child resulting in a lack of parent/child communication (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013).

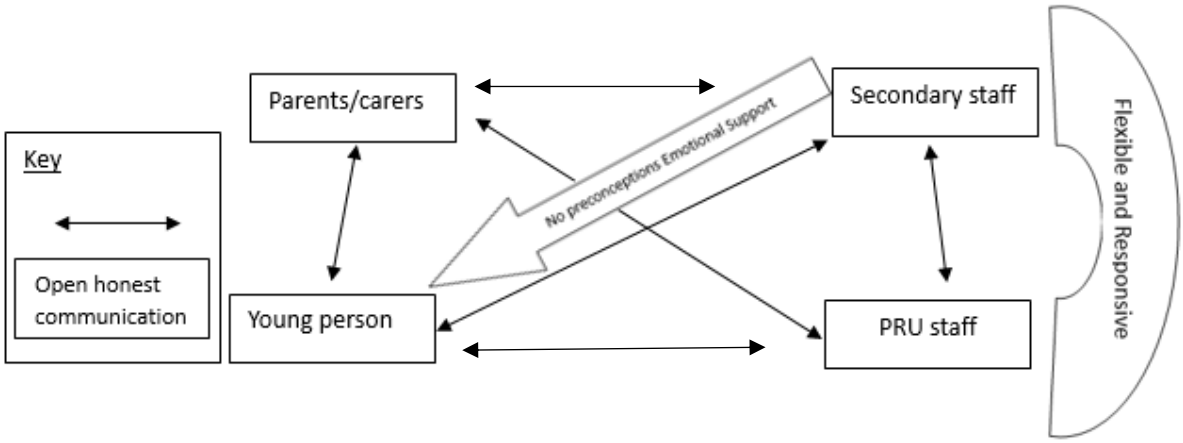
Levison and Thompson (2016) found that pupils cited home events as triggers for their behaviour, "It all changed after my dad died. Not immediately. It was sometime later that I reacted. I started kicking off. Dyeing my hair. I skived lessons. I got moved classes. I became naughty, abusive. I made teachers cry.", (p. 36).

2.10 Thematic Synthesis Summary

To represent the themes described above, I have created a diagram to illustrate the interacting factors impacting upon permanent exclusion and reintegration as found in the studies described.

Figure 2.2

A diagram to show the interacting themes found in the SLR developed by the researcher



Note. The arrows describe the direction of communication.

The SLR identified five themes across the studies which focused on post-permanent exclusion (pupils attending a PRU or equivalent) and/or reintegration. The studies identified that communication was at the heart of the exclusion and reintegration process in terms of it being collaborative, open and honest with all school staff, the young person and parents. Parental engagement was cited as being important for successful reintegration, particularly when parents were supportive of their child. However, power within these meetings should be considered as some female parents reported that they felt unheard in post-exclusion meetings unlike the male parental participant in this small-scale study (Embeita, 2019). The notion of open communication also extended to parents and their children as family relationships and 'apathetic' parents are cited as being a risk factor to successful reintegration as well as home factors or events, for example, bereavement (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013). However, young people felt that secondary school staff did not enquire about underlying reasons for behaviour and in turn, felt they were labelled prior to, during and after reintegration.

School staff were reported to have a preconceived perception of young people who had been permanently excluded and as a result, viewed them through this lens upon reintegration. This is important to consider in terms of a self-fulfilling prophecy and how the teachers' perceptions may have modified their behaviours towards the pupils.

Successful reintegration approaches included trusted adults who supported the young people whilst in the PRU and also during reintegration. This could be done via a learning mentor, teacher or member of the pastoral team (Carlile, 2011b; Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013). A barrier to this appears to be time or an inflexible school system, particularly concerning a teacher's view that classroom rules should be adhered to without consideration of reasonable adjustments for the reintegrating pupil. Pupils commented that they appreciated the way they could talk to PRU staff or walk out of a lesson as a self-help strategy (Levinson & Thompson, 2016). The importance of PRU staff bridging the reintegration process was discussed in Lawrence's (2011) study so strategies could be shared for example.

Flexibility was also found to be important for reintegration with regards to the timing of the reintegration and also the implementation, for example, a graduated attendance plan for the new secondary school (Pillay et al., 2013) The opportune time is described as the 'window of opportunity', (Levinson & Thompson, 2016, p.31), with concern voiced around Key Stage 4 pupils and the fact that they may stay in the PRU rather than reintegrate due to the approaching examinations and ending of their secondary schooling (Levinson & Thompson, 2016). Levinson and Thompson (2016) do discuss staff concerns regarding the regression of pupil behaviours the longer they stay at the PRU however.

SEMH was discussed as a barrier to reintegration with Lawrence (2011) highlighting that some SEMH needs were 'too great' for this. There is no clarification as to what this means and thus what the next steps for these pupils would be or indeed who felt the needs were too great. It may be that the notion of 'SEMH needs being too great for reintegration' feeds into the theme of staff attributing negative perceptions to pupils but this is not explicitly described and appears to be left for the reader to infer.

Interestingly, although parents, pupils, teaching staff and a behaviour outreach teacher were the participants of the included studies, there were no participants of wider supporting agencies, for example, educational psychologists (EPs), LA representatives or indeed SENCos (as key members of staff who may oversee pupils identified as SEMH). SEMH itself was only mentioned, albeit briefly in one study (Lawrence, 2011) with BESD being used in a further paper (Pillay et al., 2013). There was no discussion as to the operationalisation of these terms in either paper.

2.10.1 Limitations

There are several limitations to the SLR which should be noted. Firstly, as I created the inclusion and exclusion criteria as a solo researcher, there is potential for researcher bias as I had an idea of what I would like my thesis topic area to be before the SLR. This may have influenced my decision-making in the initial creation and scoping. It is hoped that explicitly describing my research question, inclusion and exclusion data as well as the process of appraisal balances this and illustrates my review process.

Secondly, I decided to exclude grey literature from the SLR as I wished for peer-reviewed papers, with the understanding that they have undergone the scrutiny of peer review. Although this may have advantages regarding validity and rigour, excluding grey literature may have rejected rich research which could have added to the understanding of permanent exclusion and reintegration.

In addition, the SLR only included papers from the United Kingdom, which again may have excluded other findings from other countries which may have been relevant to the British education system or secondary settings. It is hoped that only including studies from the United Kingdom illustrated the lack of research available concerning SEMH, permanent exclusion and reintegration.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, it can be hard to find explicit findings in the papers as the transcribed data can often be interwoven with the discussion, making it hard to discern data from the researcher's view. This may mean that my understanding of the data could be the researcher's opinion and so this could have been included without intention. Moreover, synthesising qualitative papers may reduce the rich data of each study and therefore it is argued that an SLR for qualitative findings is reductionist in itself.

2.11 Conclusion and Rationale for the current research thesis

To summarise, the above SLR papers focused upon school staff, pupils and parents (with one behaviour outreach worker) and their views on permanent exclusion and reintegration, with a focus on the latter, for secondary-age pupils. There was no mention of SEMH in three of the papers chosen and only a brief comment in two of the papers without further explanation or exploration. With the current promotion of mental health in schools and the concerns that unrecognised mental health needs can in turn cause negative life chances as the young person grows older particularly when combined with permanent exclusion (as discussed in the literature review), I feel that SEMH, permanent exclusion and reintegration is an under-researched area that would benefit from further exploration. Furthermore, the studies found focused on parents, pupils and teachers but the wider professionals involved in the exclusion and reintegration process, for example, educational psychologists, do not seem to have been included.

With consideration of the findings of the SLR and information gained from the literature review, my research question will be:

What are the views of key professionals concerning the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-aged males who are identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)?

Aims

- To gain insight into the perceptions of key professionals with regard to the contributing factors underpinning the permanent exclusion of males who are identified as having SEMH within a secondary setting.
- To explore the perceived barriers and protective factors for successful inclusion and reintegration for males who are identified as SEMH and attend a secondary setting, by key professionals within the educational sector.
- To consider what future provision may be supportive for the inclusion of males who are identified as SEMH permanently excluded.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction to chapter

My research aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of educational stakeholders with regard to secondary-age males who are identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs as defined by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015), who have been excluded and reintegrated back into their secondary setting, in a hope to inform current knowledge bases around that is working for the inclusion of this population within a specific LA and what the barriers may be.

This chapter outlines differing paradigms, ontologies and epistemologies which may guide the assumptions and psychological underpinnings of research, the rationale behind my choice of these in regard to my research aims and personal positioning, as well as the limitations of these. It provides a description of the data collection methods utilised, including participant recruitment, ethical considerations and a description of the data analysis procedure undertaken with a reflection upon the limitations within this.

3.2 Research philosophies and assumptions

3.2.1 World Views in Research

Research philosophies, namely, ontology and epistemology, allow the researcher to explicitly position themselves in terms of their view of the world and beliefs, which in turn, provides an understanding of how they have approached their research, the methods undertaken and the lens they have used to analyse and present the data collected (Carter & Little, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2014; Willig, 2001) including the assumptions made (Cohen et al., 2018). Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that research philosophies are like “oxygen,” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 156), underpinning the researcher’s motivations, in turn acting as a guide and framework for the research as a whole. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2018) state that the philosophical position of the researcher, “…profoundly affects how one will go about uncovering knowledge of social behaviour.” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 5). However, a clear definition and understanding of research philosophies are not always apparent,

with continuing debate over the advantages of one paradigm versus another, depending on the research purpose (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). With this in mind, it becomes paramount that the researcher reflects and declares their research philosophy based upon both their worldview as well as the research aims, making clear their positionality and research lens within a context of alternative standpoints and thus interpretations (Cohen et al., 2018; Mertens, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Willig, 2001).

3.2.2 Paradigms

As this research focuses on participant perceptions, within the world of social sciences, it is important to consider how social reality is viewed from a philosophical perspective. It is considered that the conceptualisation of social reality is a continuum from a realist, normative standpoint through to a relativist, interpretivist view. A realist perspective views reality as an external truth that can be examined through experimentation and hypothesising in a deductive manner whilst a relativist perspective describes social reality as subjective to an individual's perception, emanating within them rather than externally distinct (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Mertens, 2014). As my research is focused upon perceptions, I feel an interpretivist approach is the most suitable positioning as it is, "concerned for the individual," (Cohen et al., 2018, p.17), rather than an objective, external reality that is devoid of subjective meaning as realism proposes.

3.2.3 Philosophical Positioning of this Research

Ontology refers to the philosophical assumptions made as to the nature of reality; the understanding of existence in terms of what we think can exist (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Willig, 2001), whilst epistemology describes the philosophical assumptions surrounding the nature of knowledge in terms of *how* can we know what we know (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Relativism views reality as a social construction which is mutually constructed through interactions and transactions (Mertens, 2014). As reality is socially constructed, there may be multiple interpretations of this which is subject to flux due to the transactional nature of social interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2014; Willig, 2001). On the opposing side of the spectrum is realism, which posits

that reality is something which can be defined and is tangibly observable (Mertens, 2014; Willig, 2001).

When I first began to plan my current research, I initially felt that I would align with a constructionist philosophy, whereby the nature of knowledge is socially constructed between myself and the people I interact with, due to the interactional nature of knowledge construction within my trainee educational psychologist practice. However, upon deeper reflection and whilst collating my literature review and research plan, I felt this did not represent my philosophical underpinnings adequately, particularly when reading about the statutory elements of exclusion and the socio-political context of SEMH, structures which are part of school policy, impacting upon young people and their experiences. Although I felt that knowledge is, in part, a social perception, aligning with a relativist view, there is also the tangible aspect of governmental structures, procedures and mechanisms based upon legislation and socio-political contexts, which for me, are also key elements to understanding knowledge building around exclusion, reintegration and SEMH. Whilst I hold the view that the nature of reality is perceived through social interactions and this may change over time with multiple social transactions, in my view, this does not account for wider socio-political mechanisms and structures impacting upon a person's life, which in turn may affect their perceptions of 'reality'. This for me, is particularly pertinent as the nature of exclusion and SEMH is held within both social and political contexts, which serve to both define and create parameters around both conceptualisations and aligns with realism, but perceptions of this may vary according to social interactions and events. Whilst reflecting upon this, I sought a middle ground, whereby there is an external reality in terms of the socio-political context but this is mediated by social interaction and thus the concept of an external, tangible, objective reality is only, 'probable' and inherently 'imperfect', (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109), which aligns with critical realism.

With this in mind, I felt that critical realism was the most appropriate standpoint for my research; there is not an objective reality exclusive of interpretation but there is an independent reality outside of the researcher which exists and is mediated by human perceptions; there are, "conceptual truths," (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 169). Consequently, the philosophical assumptions underpinning my research lie within critical realism.

3.2.4 Summary

In summary, my research utilises a critical realist perspective, which acknowledges the imperfect notion of an external reality which is mediated by the social nature of human interaction; permanent exclusion and SEMH are viewed as socio-political, structural mechanisms which influence the perceptions of those involved in terms of their understanding of events and their own experiences within an interactional social environment.

The next section will discuss my research design, ethical considerations and chosen method of analysis.

3.3 The Nature of Methodology in Research

Methodology may be described as the explicit procedure of research, how the researcher has approached the execution of inquiry into their research question. However, as the section above has described, the methodology goes far deeper than an overt structure, encompassing the researcher's rationale, values, theoretical assumptions and approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Consequently, the design described within the methodology should reflect and anchor these views, providing a coherent structure for the data gathering pertinent to the research question; in the case of this research, a design which aligns with a qualitative approach to understanding the perceptions and experiences of the participants recruited (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Langdridge, 2004).

3.3.1 Qualitative or Quantitative?

Quantitative research is largely utilised by researchers who wish to use quantifiable data in a bid to measure aspects of their research foci pertinent to their research question, in accordance with a hypothetico-deductive stance. In contrast, qualitative approaches seek to explore the experiences of participants in order to make sense of their mean-making without prior predictions (Langdridge, 2004; Willig, 2001). It should be noted however, that although qualitative and quantitative methods differ in their theoretical standpoints and procedures, they don't have to be in opposition to each other, for example in mixed method designs (Banister, 1994), where questionnaire data (for example Likert scales) may be utilised alongside interview

data as an example; indeed it may be argued that creating a simplistic, distinct dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methods dismisses the nuances within each method itself and shared values such as rigour (Marecek et al., 1998; Yardley, 2000).

A qualitative research paradigm was chosen for this research project as it was seen to be the most suited in terms of its approach and theoretical assumptions; I am seeking to explore the perceptions of my participants and so, data which is rich in experience and mean-making is important to me, as is an inductive approach whereby I am interpreting the experiences of my participants without pre-existing theory frameworks or notions of prediction. This aligns with what Kidder & Fine (1987) describe as 'Big Q', as it is a purely qualitative approach and focuses on the researcher interpreting the experience-rich data. Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that researcher interpretation should not be shied away from in qualitative research, unlike more quantitative methods which value scientific neutrality, rather the researcher should fully acknowledge their theoretical positioning and use reflexivity to continually reflect on how they are influencing the research and in turn the presentation of the analysis. The importance of reflexivity in my research will be discussed further within this chapter.

3.3.2 Qualitative Methods

There are various methods within the qualitative paradigm, but the most pertinent to my research question are Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Grounded Theory, Thematic Analysis and Discourse Analysis.

Grounded Theory is concerned with the emergence of theory pertaining to social processes from open-ended data, which is developed in concert with the data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Willig, 2001). As my research does not aim to create theories grounded in the data but rather explore the experiences of my participants through patterns in data, Grounded Theory was discounted as a suitable method.

Discourse analysis focuses on language and how participants negotiate interactions and meanings from this (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Willig, 2001). This method was quickly discounted from my potential research design as I did not want to focus on

the nuances of their language and interactions but rather on their subjective experiences and shared patterns of meaning.

I was particularly drawn to both Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Thematic Analysis (TA) as both approaches focus on the experience of the participants and the patterns of meaning within this, which aligns with my research question and philosophical assumptions.

IPA involves the exploration of the lived experiences of participants whilst acknowledging that the researcher holds their own world views and there is an interaction between the participants and researcher due to this (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Langdridge, 2004; Willig, 2001). Thematic Analysis also explores patterns of meaning via themes within data but this is conducted over the entire data set in a bid to explore shared meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2020) argue that thematic analysis is a flexible approach and can be underpinned by a variety of philosophical assumptions and paradigms as long as they are made explicit and cohesive. The fact that meaning is drawn specifically via the whole dataset rather than individualistically is particularly important for the confidentiality of my participants, as they are drawn from an LA with specific roles and I feel that individual analysis may betray their identity due to this, without having to perform significant redactions which may in turn compromise the analysis. When taking into account my research philosophical assumptions (from a critical realist perspective) and the fact that I would like to actively explore shared meaning across my participants, thematic analysis was chosen as the preferred analysis process for my research.

3.3.3 Thematic Analysis

Whilst thematic analysis (TA) is the chosen analytical process for my research, there are decisions to make within this, as TA is a term given to a family of approaches, of which there is great divergence (Braun & Clarke, 2016, 2022). All approaches use the terms code (units of meaning within the data pertinent to the research question which are labelled and have two levels- semantic (explicit meaning from the data) and latent (implicit meaning), of which most parties agree (Braun & Clarke, 2016)). Conversely, themes (a pattern of shared meaning via collated codes which have a ‘central organising concept’ as defined by Braun & Clarke (2022, p.77) do not hold a

single consensus for meaning and thus, the researcher should make their approach explicit and clear due to the lack of homogeneity (Braun & Clarke, 2016, 2021a).

The key approaches considered are coding reliability, codebook and reflexive TA. Coding reliability is an approach which looks for objective coding via multiple coders, utilising a more structured approach to codes, with themes (developed early on in the analysis), which in turn informs the creation of a codebook style coding template (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022). Whilst coding reliability appears to lie in a more positivist paradigm of reducing bias and objectivity, codebook TA does value the reflexivity of the researcher, whilst employing the use of a structured coding framework which is applied to data, creating more descriptive summary themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022).

Reflexive TA (RTA) is a process which places the researcher in an active role, engaging, interpreting and decision-making within the analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2020) argue that the reduction of bias in RTA is nonsensical as the researcher is indeed constructing and interpreting the data and this is something to understand via reflexivity (continued reflection of the researcher's positionality, decision-making and assumptions). However, I feel that reflection regarding confirmation bias is still crucial as a reflexive researcher.
Within RTA, codes are developed across the data set in an open, inductive approach, with the development of themes occurring as part of the iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022; Byrne, 2022). RTA was chosen as the preferred choice for my research question as I wish to take an exploratory approach, inductively working with my data without the confine of predefined codes or early theme creation. The reflexivity of this approach aligns with my epistemological position in terms of the understanding that there is a reality externally (social contexts) impacting upon both myself and my participants but this can only be understood imperfectly via our experiences, assumptions and mean-making. Being explicit and reflective in my own positionality, emotions, assumptions and decision-making is incredibly important to me both in my research and in my professional role, so being able to acknowledge this and indeed use this as a tool in my analytical approach resonates with my values.

3.3.4 Trustworthiness

Whilst RTA is my chosen approach, the potential limitations regarding this should be highlighted and mitigated to contribute towards the trustworthiness and integrity of my research. As RTA is a qualitative approach, a more scientific quality assurance stance would not be appropriate (Yardley, 2017), particularly as researcher bias cannot be, nor should be eradicated but forms part of the analysis procedure and should be acknowledged and addressed throughout the process via reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022).

Yardley (2017) proposes four ways in which qualitative research can demonstrate trustworthiness and rigour: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance.

3.3.4.1 Sensitivity to Context

Sensitivity to context concerns the researcher's awareness of the contexts influencing the participants as well as the researcher, with consideration given to how these contribute to meanings. Yardley (2017) explains that this can be achieved through the researcher's engagement with the research area, skills in the processes used and detailed analysis. To demonstrate sensitivity to context, I will show engagement in the areas of permanent exclusion, SEMH and reintegration following permanent exclusion, via my literature review and subsequent systematic literature review, which narrows the focus to the key elements of my research.

3.3.4.2 Transparency and Coherence

Transparency describes the need for a clear understanding of how the researcher has obtained their findings from the data. As described above, I will ensure there is a clear audit trail from decision-making, use my reflexive research journal for each step of the process and make sure the findings I present are linked to the data collected with explicit textual examples. I will also show my findings to my supervisor and fellow colleagues to make sure my rationale and processes are clear and there is coherence in my interpretations and the data collected.

3.3.4.3 Impact and Importance

The research should be of importance and practically add to current practice or knowledge base. Research around perspectives concerning permanent exclusion, SEMH and reintegration is lacking, as illustrated within the literature review and systematic literature review so it is hoped that the current study will add to a limited knowledge base, in terms of the practice within a Northern Local Authority region.

3.3.4.4 Commitment and Rigour

To demonstrate commitment and rigour, I ensured I immersed myself in current literature within my research question topics, research methods and chosen analysis. I adhered to all protocols concerning data collection and made sure that the methods utilised were clear and aligned with the method described in my research methodology.

For reflexivity regarding Yardley's (2017) four areas of research quality assurance, please see the Limitations Section 5.7.1.

3.3.5 Summary

This section details the rationale underpinning the decision to use RTA as the approach to analyse my data. It explored and discounted other relevant methods and highlighted potential limitations within RTA. The importance of trustworthiness, rigour and validity was highlighted, with a framework provided to discuss the measures taken to ensure that trustworthiness, rigour and validity are central to my study.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Introduction

The following section will describe my sampling and recruitment strategy, the rationale for my participant criteria, ethics in research, data collection and analysis approaches taken to gain the views of key professionals regarding the permanent exclusion of males identified as SEMH within a secondary setting.

3.4.2 Local Context

Participants were recruited from a City in the North of England. As described in the literature review, the city was a former mining town and experiences high levels of deprivation as described by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (Ministry of Health, Local Government and Communities, 2019).

The focus Local Authority has historically experienced an extremely high increase in permanent exclusions (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

The number of exclusions per year for state-funded secondaries in the focus Local Authority

Academic Year (September to July)	**Number of permanent exclusions**	**Percentage increase or decrease**
2017/2018	37	-
2018/2019	87	+135%
2019/2020	43	-51%
2020/2021	22	-49%
2021/2022	42	+91%

Certainly, the number of permanent exclusions is significantly lower in 2020/2021 than numbers pre-COVID 19 and only time will tell if this is due to Local Authority actions to address the number of permanent exclusions or the skew of and impact of COVID-19.

Within the LA, a central team oversees the permanent exclusion process, from challenging schools during the initial declaration to managing the In-year Fair Access Protocol Panel (IFAP) whereby school Headteachers meet and agree to take permanently excluded students on their roll. The team also consists of parental advocacy workers who support both parents and young people during a pending permanent exclusion.

There are 20 state-funded secondary schools in the city, of which 17 are Academies (a mix of converter or sponsored) and 3 free schools.

3.4.3 Sampling Strategy and Participants

When considering the inclusion criteria for my participants, the most important aspect was that they were education professionals (worked within the secondary education system within the LA) and their experience of working male pupils who were identified as SEMH and had been permanently excluded and reintegrated back to a mainstream secondary setting. I chose to focus on key professionals rather than young people themselves, as I feel it is important to explore their views as they are in a privileged power position to be able to facilitate change within the permanent exclusion system. I decided to focus on key professionals who have varying roles within the permanent exclusion and reintegration system rather than one homogenous group, for example, Headteachers, as I wished for a variation of perspectives from differing vantage points of the exclusion system. I felt that this was particularly useful as I was going to use RTA and hoped it would be insightful to gain an understanding of shared meanings across a more vocationally diverse group. Also, as stated in the research rationale, there is limited research into SEMH and permanent exclusion, particularly concerning key professional stakeholders.

Further inclusion criteria are detailed below.

- To have experience with males who are identified as SEMH and have been permanently excluded from a secondary educational setting. Males are chosen as a key focus due to the fact they are still the group who are more likely to be permanently excluded and there is a potential barrier to help-seeking for SEMH needs, as described in the literature review in Section 1.
- Be a professional who works within the secondary school setting for the above pupils.
- To have experience of pupil reintegration back into secondary school mainstream.

A purposive sampling strategy was utilised as I actively sought participants in specific roles: secondary special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos), Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) workers who supported secondary schools, Alternative Provision SENCos, educational psychologists (EPs) and members of the

LA inclusion team, in a bid to gain perspectives from a range of professionals who work with permanently excluded males who are identified as having SEMH needs and their reintegration. I felt that a CAMHS worker may provide experiences of SEMH and exclusion/reintegration with regards to mental health, and a SENCo and EP may have been involved with a pupil pre and post permanent exclusion both in mainstream and in alternative provision. Finally, a member of the central LA team would have oversight of permanent exclusion and reintegration for males identified as SEMH as a whole for secondary settings across the city.

In all, five participants were recruited from the same Local Authority. As this is a small number it is crucial that anonymity is upheld, particularly as they have specific roles within the secondary education sector so some identifying details have been removed. See Table 3.2 for details of the five participants and their pseudonym names used within the research.

Table 3.2

Participants' characteristics and pseudonyms given to protect anonymity

Pseudonym Name	Role	Information
Sarah	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Practitioner (CAMHS)	Sarah works within a locality in the city, supporting secondary schools.
Jenny	A manager within the inclusion team within the Local Authority	n/a
Fiona	Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) in a secondary academy	The Academy is part of a multi-academy trust
Abbie	Educational Psychologist (EP) who leads SEMH in her team	n/a
Rachel	SENCo within a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	The Pupil Referral Unit caters for pupils of primary and secondary ages

Note. Some details have been redacted to preserve anonymity. This does not affect the context of the research.

3.4.4 Recruitment

As I am a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) working within the LA, I was able to use existing contacts within the EP service to make initial queries with potential participants to gauge their interest via email. This was communicated via the 'Information Sheet' in Appendix 3. One participant asked me to contact them to explain further, so a Microsoft Teams (Microsoft Corporation, 2023) meeting was organised whereby I was able to explain my research rationale, aims and what to expect, answer questions and clarify anything further. The other four participants all expressed interest in participating and so I was able to email a consent form (see Appendix 4) with a further invitation to contact me if they had any further questions. All five participants emailed consent for participation and a date was arranged to virtually meet via Microsoft Teams as this was the easiest method of contact for each participant at that time.

It is important to state that I had a working relationship with three of the five participants, and this was a great consideration in terms of ethics and potential participant bias or pressure to participate. The steps to mitigate against this are described in detail in the ethics section of this research.

Figure 3.1

Recruitment flow chart

3.4.5 Sample Size

There are differing views as to the optimum number of participants within qualitative research, particularly within TA (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Fugard & Potts, 2015, 2016). However, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that sample size is not a predefined number in a positivist sense but is concerned with the richness of the data and what they term 'information power'; recruiting participants who will provide information-rich data (Mertens, 2014).

I was hoping for further interest during recruitment, for example, other SENCos, but due to the timing of recruitment being at the end of the academic term (July 2022) and the busyness of schools at this time, recruitment stayed at five participants.

I was happy with this number however as I felt the participants provided a span of perspectives due to their differing roles. To ensure a data-rich interaction with my participants, I needed to create an interview schedule which explored key areas pertinent to my research question, with room for further questioning or clarifying.

3.4.6 Data Collection

Interviewing was my chosen method of data collection. Banister et al. (1994) posit that interviewing can capture complexities and nuances within data, unlike other methods, for example, a questionnaire. It was felt that an interview could elicit participants' views regarding the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary males who are identified as SEMH, providing depth and information richness suitable for RTA analysis.

Consideration was given as to whether a focus group approach would be suitable for the data collection. A focus group would entail all of the participants gathering together with the researcher as a facilitator and moderator in the focus group discussion (Robson & McCartan, 2016). I felt that this may not produce the depth and richness of data that I hoped for, with regard to each individual's experience, and there may be a sense of power dynamics within the group as it is not homogenous. With this in mind, I decided to conduct individual interviews so I could gain the 'information power' as described by Braun and Clarke (2022), i.e. the

richness and complexity of data to support my research question and aid the data analysis approach of RTA, particularly as I had only five participants.

There are choices to make within an interview approach, for example, whether the interview schedule will be structured (consistent wording, questions and no deviation from the schedule), semi-structured (consistent questions with scope to deviate depending on the participants' responses) or unstructured (minimum structure, for example when a person is describing their life story) (Brinkmann, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

3.4.7 Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured approach was used within the interview schedule (see Appendix 5), with a 'tree and branch' format (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). It was felt that a structured interview would be too restrictive and may narrow and reduce the richness of the data, while an unstructured interview may risk the omission of key exploration points pertinent to the research question. The tree and branch approach to semi-structured interviews utilises the research question as the focus for each main question in the interview schedule, thus providing a central 'trunk' with main questions as branches. Within this, follow-up questions may be asked to elicit further information or probes to delve deeper into a response. It was felt that this was a balance between addressing the main areas of the research question and maintaining flexibility to follow the participants' responses.

The 'tree and branch' design encompassed deconstructing my research question and literature review, to create the main body of questions. Kelly (2010) suggests that when beginning the interview, it is important to ask questions which help to build rapport and ascertain a 'common ground' (Kelly, 2010, p. 13) whilst offering a more relaxed start. As I had a working relationship with three out of the five participants, establishing rapport with them was instantaneous. However, it was integral to outline the distinction between myself as a trainee EP and myself as a researcher, due to this pre-existing relationship. It may be argued that although I explicitly detailed my role and purpose as a separate entity, the participants, acknowledging this, would subconsciously forget and revert to the existing relationship we have which is described in the limitations section in Chapter 4. This could be viewed as advantageous, as rapport and openness were established quickly, although, this

could lead to a degree of openness and sharing of views that they wouldn't have necessarily shared with an outside researcher. To counter this, I veered towards a more consistently structured semi-structured interview, as per the tree and branch approach, with key core questions and the scope for probing and following up, within my interview schedule for all participants, to try to encourage a sense of equity, whilst acknowledging reflexively my existing relationships with the three participants. Kelly (2010) advises that there should be clear descriptions of relationships with the participants and reflexivity can support understanding of how this shapes the interactions and subsequent data collected, which is something I reflected upon as part of my reflexivity journal in terms of responses and how our relationship may have facilitated or indeed hindered data collection in any way.

3.4.8 Interview Location and Procedure

The interviews were held via Microsoft Teams (Microsoft Corporation, 2023) as this was the most convenient means of meeting for each participant, with cameras on. For confidentiality, I was alone at home and confirmed this with the participants to reassure them.

The interviews were opened with rapport building, for example, thanking them for taking the time to meet me. Information regarding the research rationale, the right to withdraw at any time as well as confidentiality and anonymity were discussed to ensure I had informed consent from the participant, as per the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates, 2021; The British Psychological Society, 2021). I reassured the participants that if they felt an emotional reaction to any of the questions, they could stop the interview at any time, and I talked through the debrief sheet I had sent them, which detailed the websites and phone numbers for support agencies should they need them (see Appendix 6 for the debrief sheet). I again asked each participant if they were happy to continue.

The interviews were recorded via an electronic recording device that was password-protected. I asked each participant if they consented to the recording, giving details of the use of the recording device, and each participant consented.

The main questions were asked, as per the interview schedule, but there was flexibility to follow up or probe depending on the participants' responses (Kelly, 2010).

Once the participant had finished their last response, I explained that I would stop the recording; each interview lasted approximately one hour.

I checked if the participant was ok after the interview and explained the debrief sheet which includes support groups should they feel that they need to discuss anything that has led to an emotional reaction or feeling. Each participant explained that they were fine and indicated that they understood the information contained on the debrief sheet. I once again explained the confidentiality of their data and ensured anonymity as well as their right to withdraw prior to data transcription. Please see Appendix 14 for a reflexive excerpt from my research journal regarding the interview process.

3.4.9 Ethics

The research is underpinned by The British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct as well as the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates, 2021; The British Psychological Society, 2021) and was approved by The Ethics Committee of the University of Nottingham in July 2022, following an amendment from a previous proposal (see Appendix 7). Ethical practice should begin throughout the entire research process in a bid to cause no harm and adhere to trustworthy research practice (Banister et al., 1994; Mertens, 2014). See below for details of each key component of my ethical considerations and practice as per The British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct as well as the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates, 2021; The British Psychological Society, 2021).

3.4.9.1 Informed Consent

Prior to the interview session, I sent the participants an information sheet (see Appendix 3) to gain their interest in participating in the study. I also offered to speak to them if they had any further questions or queries; this was taken up by one participant who wanted further information about what the research entailed and so a Microsoft Teams meeting was arranged and held for this. Before the interview itself, I gave information verbally to all participants from the information sheet and asked if they had any questions. Verbal consent was again obtained to continue and use a recording device to capture their data.

I explained the nature of confidentiality and data protection in that their data would be securely held via password-protected folders on my computer with all Dictaphone recording data (used to record the audio of the interview) downloaded to my computer straight after the interview and then deleted from the Dictaphone recording device once this was completed. All identifying markers, for example, their name or specific information that would identify them would be deleted and not included in the research itself. I reiterated their right to withdraw at any time up until the date given and assured them that there would be no negative repercussions because of this. If they chose to withdraw, I explained that all data would be permanently destroyed leaving no trace.

All participants electronically signed the consent forms and verbally agreed they were happy to continue.

I offered to share my research with the participants upon completion and asked them to contact me if this was something that they wished. Up until the point of writing, no participant has requested this.

3.4.9.2 Confidentiality

During the interview, I was alone at home and reassured the participants of this prior to recording. Each participant also stated that they were alone in their own setting and were happy to commence. The voice recording device was password-protected and the data was transferred to password-protected storage on my computer, with the voice recording deleted from the Dictaphone itself.

Pseudonyms are used for names which bear no resemblance to the actual forenames of the participants. The data was anonymised, including other identifiable information, for example, place names, other people or specific roles/information which would identify the participant.

Full transcripts will not be included in the research to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants, however, sections will be included as part of the findings section, to support the trustworthiness of my data and analysis.

3.4.9.3 Debriefing

Research should cause no harm (Banister et al., 1994; Oates, 2021; The British Psychological Society, 2021) and the emotional wellbeing of participants is of utmost importance. Rapport was built prior to the interview with non-interview topics being discussed in a relaxed way, for example, the weather and thanked them for taking the time to speak to me that day.

I checked that participants felt ok after the recording had stopped and explained the debrief sheet including the support resources outlined, particularly as they were, at that point, alone (see Appendix 6). I asked if they had someone to talk to if they felt this was needed and all participants confirmed this. I also highlighted the support channels as per the debrief sheet, for example, The Samaritans, as well as the fact they could contact me at any time if they needed to talk or had any questions about the research, following our time together. No participant contacted me after the interview.

If there were any safeguarding concerns during the interview, LA and the University of Nottingham safeguarding procedures would have been implemented (of which I was fully informed due to LA training in safeguarding and University procedures outlined in the course handbook) and the participant would have been notified at the time. However, this was not necessary.

3.4.9.4 Right to Withdraw

The right to withdraw was explained via the information sheet and verbally prior to data collection. Participants could withdraw up until the date given on the information sheet, at which point the data would be transcribed. I explained that there would be no negative associations to the participant withdrawing and that all data would be permanently destroyed if they did indeed withdraw. No participant withdrew.

3.4.9.5 Power

Due to the nature of interviewing, there is an inevitable power differential between the researcher and the interviewee as the researcher holds the questions and facilitates the discussion (Kelly, 2010). As I work for the LA as a TEP, I have a working relationship with three of the five participants, which could lead to an increase of power for my part, as the participants request our service. To try to

account for this, I tried to ensure that there was a clear distinction between my role as a researcher and my role as a TEP. Furthermore, I assured the participants that they did not have to answer anything they didn't want to and they could stop or withdraw from the study at any time up until the given date. I also held the interviews using Microsoft Teams so the participants were comfortable in their own environments, particularly as some of the participants chose to virtually meet me in their own homes. It is still important to keep in mind that there is a power imbalance between the researcher and participants, not only during the interview process but also in the active interpretations of the researcher during the analysis and this should be recognised and viewed with reflexivity (Banister et al., 1994).

3.4.10 Reflexivity

Nowell et al. (2017) posit that the researcher is the analytical tool within thematic analysis, as they are the active decision-maker during analysis and theme construction (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). With this in mind, consideration as to how the researcher makes those decisions and what assumptions they are based upon is integral to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Yardley, 2017). Reflexivity is the process of making the unseen explicit in terms of the whole research process, not just the analysis; from the topic rationale, epistemology and sampling, to the analysis and presentation of findings (Banister et al., 1994; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Braun and Clarke (2022) sought to revise their TA processes from the (2006) conception of TA to include 'reflexivity' in a bid to highlight the key facet of researcher reflection and its integral role within TA; indeed, Braun & Clarke (2019) suggest that reflexivity is the key aspect that sets their approach apart from other TA approaches and makes the assumed notion of reflexivity more explicit. That being said, reflexivity is something that is promoted in all aspects of qualitative research and an integral part of research transparency and trustworthiness (Banister et al., 1994) so indeed, it appears they are making the inexplicit assumption of researcher reflexivity explicit.

To explore and reflect upon my researcher assumptions, positionality, emotions, quandaries and decision-making, I have kept a research journal from the beginning of my initial research ideas through to the finishing of the written account. This has

been a personal record of all of my reflections and questions, personal interrogations and rationales for decision points in my research journey. Extracts from my research journal are typed up and included in the Appendices, to give the reader insight into the internal thought processes of the researcher.

3.4.11 Transcription

During data transcription, I chose to transcribe all wording, without alteration as I wanted to obtain the participants' own experiences and views without editing. The only deletions I made were repeated words and I did not transcribe non-word utterances, for example, erm as I felt these utterances would not add to the meanings developed in terms of RTA. I also chose to transcribe my own questioning and contributions so I could see the context of the participants' answers and view the data with reflexivity.

3.5 Reflexive Thematic Analysis Procedures

Braun and Clarke (2022) describe six phases within RTA, which should be viewed as iterative rather than a step-by-step order.

3.5.1 Phase One: Familiarisation of Transcription Data within Reflexive Thematic Analysis

To gain an initial immersion in the data, Braun and Clarke (2022) recommend reading and re-reading the data multiple times to gain familiarisation, begin to take notes and gather thoughts about the data- actively engaging with it. Firstly, I listened to the recordings of each interview, making notes on my initial thoughts and responses. I felt that listening to the participants' interviews all the way through, just making notes, supported me in becoming more immersed in the data in my initial familiarisation. I then transcribed the interviews as described in section 3.4.11 which further supported my immersion. Having printed my transcriptions out, I then read each interview transcription alongside the audio, to firstly check my transcriptions were accurate and also to continue the immersive process of familiarisation. I then re-read the paper transcriptions without audio, initially in the correct order and then in a differing order as recommended, to fully familiarise myself with each interview (Braun and Clarke, 2022). During the next reading, I drew a graphic of the different

points within the interview as my note-taking process, in a bid to visually represent the main views of the participant, particularly in terms of the relevance to my research question (see Appendix 8 for an example).

3.5.2 Phase Two: Coding within Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Within thematic analysis, codes are defined as single meanings or concepts within the data and are given code labels. Code labels can be semantic (literal meaning) or latent (implicit interpretation), move from one to the other or be both semantic and latent in terms of the raw data associated with it (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Byrne (2022) describes codes as being defined and redefined via increasing familiarity with the data, being developed as part of the researcher's analysis rather than 'emerging' or being 'discovered' (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

Braun and Clarke (2020) advise against line-by-line coding and suggest coding only the information which is relevant to the research question. This is in opposition to coding practices within other forms of analysis, for example, Grounded Theory, which utilises line-by-line coding in a bid to understand participants' perspectives and protect against confirmation bias (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). I felt that this was a preferred way of approaching coding as it allowed me to see the data in context, rather than as small line-by-line segments, which I feel aided my understanding and grasp of the data as a whole during the familiarisation process.

I initially began coding each interview transcript by hand via the paper transcriptions, having copied the interview transcripts into a Microsoft Word (Microsoft Corporation, 2023) document for printing and writing initial code ideas in a column. I found this did not suit my preferred way of working, as I like to use technology and I did not like the multiple paper pages I needed to use. Due to this, I decided to use Nvivo software to code each interview and ultimately cluster my codes as I found this easy to use and liked the way I could flexibly interact with my data.

Coding began inductively, assigning codes to the data in each interview against information I felt was important to my research question, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2022). This, as explained, was initially conducted using paper copies, whereby I would code sentences or segments of text according to their pertinence to my research question. I then uploaded my Word documents to Nvivo, copied my

paper coding over to the electronic version and continued to use Nvivo to code the remaining data, refine the codes and review as an iterative process over time.

It is important to consider if coding can ever be truly inductive however, as I have already reviewed the literature and so carry this with me as a researcher. Thus, although this research is fundamentally inductive, it cannot be purely so due to this.

Initially, my coding was semantic in nature, as I would stay very close to the verbatim transcription, but I feel that latent coding increased with repeated reading and reviewing of the data, reviewing my existing codes, reflexively questioning and as my confidence in the process increased (see Appendix 9 for a screenshot of Nvivo and my initial codes).

Please see Appendix 15 for a reflexive box, describing my thoughts and feelings regarding initial data analysis.

Through the use of Nvivo, I re-read my data in its entirety with codes assigned and also clicked on each code to access the interview data linked to the code, to check for consistency and appropriateness multiple times, changing, collapsing and renaming codes throughout this process. I used Microsoft Excel to note my code changes to initially keep track of major amendments (see Appendix 10 for a screenshot). When I felt the process of refining had decreased and major amendments had ceased, I felt it was time to move on to developing initial themes. However, it is important to understand that coding is never 'finished, and initial theme ideas were already tentatively jotted down, as part of the iterative, reflexive process of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022), so these are not step-by-step stages.

3.5.3 3. Phase Three: Initial Themes and Phase Four: Developing and Revising Themes

I initially printed out each code, cut it out and began clustering shared meanings to look for themes. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) describe themes as shared meanings between the codes; a 'central organising theme' which clusters the codes together. However, again I did not like the paper approach and turned to Nvivo, where I used the Project Map facility to electronically cluster codes with shared meanings. This was advantageous as I could click on the code and see the associated data extract, thereby checking each code cluster for internal consistency and participant spread. I have placed Steps three and four together as I moved

backwards and forwards between these steps- refining, developing, deleting and creating themes as I arranged and rearranged my codes. Braun and Clarke (2022) name these early codes as ‘candidate codes’ as they are not yet fully defined and refined. It is also at this point that I began to look for patterns not only between codes but also between candidate themes, making notes and jotting down my thoughts as part of the process (see Appendix 11 for an example of code clustering via Nvivo and note-making). Again, being able to access the data and manipulate the codes on the screen within Nvivo was supportive of this stage.

It was at this point that I re-read the dataset as a whole and looked at the graphic notes I had made to check that my candidate themes represented the data. A thematic map was drawn for each iteration of the candidate theme drafting (see Appendix 12).

See Appendix 16 for a reflexive box taken from my research journal describing my thoughts, feelings and decision-making within this step of the process.

3.5.4 Phase Five: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

I re-read each set of data within each theme to check for consistency of meaning, central organising concepts and participant spread. Braun and Clarke (2022) state that allotting frequency to the codes is not necessary and it is about importance to the research question, indeed it may be said that including frequency data moves way from interpretation to ‘positivism creep’ as defined by Braun and Clarke (2022). However, as the process is RTA, it is also important that the themes represent more than one view for it to be representative of the data as a whole, so this was checked within Nvivo and the project map.

I also wanted to check that the theme names were not topic summaries as Braun and Clarke (2002) suggest can happen, but interpretive shared meanings between the codes. This part of the process took a substantial amount of time, with code re-clustering and revision included.

A final topic map was constructed (included in the Analysis section below) and a mini abstract was written for each code to describe the central organising concept, along with a selection of data extracts which represent the theme. (See Appendix 13 for a representative table of each theme and interview extract).

3.5.5 Phase Six: Writing the Written Report

When writing the RTA report, it must be clear and cohesive, with interpretation and explanation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The written report in the following section, presents the results of the analysis: overarching themes, themes and subthemes. Each theme will be discussed, outlining the shared meanings within it, using data extracts to illustrate the narrative.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has described my positionality as a researcher, epistemological assumptions which are within the critical realist philosophy and research design which includes information on the sample, participants and the rationale behind the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The following section will detail the analysis results and discussion, linking the results to wider literature.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter will present the results from the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) in relation to my research question and aims:

What are the views of key professionals concerning the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-aged males who are identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)?

Aims

- To gain insight into the perceptions of key professionals with regard to the contributing factors underpinning the permanent exclusion of males who are identified as having SEMH within a secondary setting.
- To explore the perceived barriers and protective factors for successful inclusion and reintegration for males who are identified as SEMH and attend a secondary setting, by key professionals within the educational sector.
- To consider what future provision may be supportive for the inclusion of males who are identified as SEMH permanently excluded.

4.2 Overview

Five participants were interviewed, all female key professionals who had experience in working with males who were identified as SEMH, had been permanently excluded from secondary school and reintegrated in a Northern City within the UK, with high deprivation and historically high permanent exclusions in secondary settings (see Table 4.1 for participant pseudonym information from Chapter 3). It is important to note that the participants were all female, particularly as the focus is concerning males. Reflection and critique concerning this is included in Section 5 as part of the discussion and implications.

The participants were interviewed via a semi-structured interview and RTA was used to analyse the data. See Chapter 3 for details of the full methodology.

Table 4.1

Participant pseudonyms and key characteristics

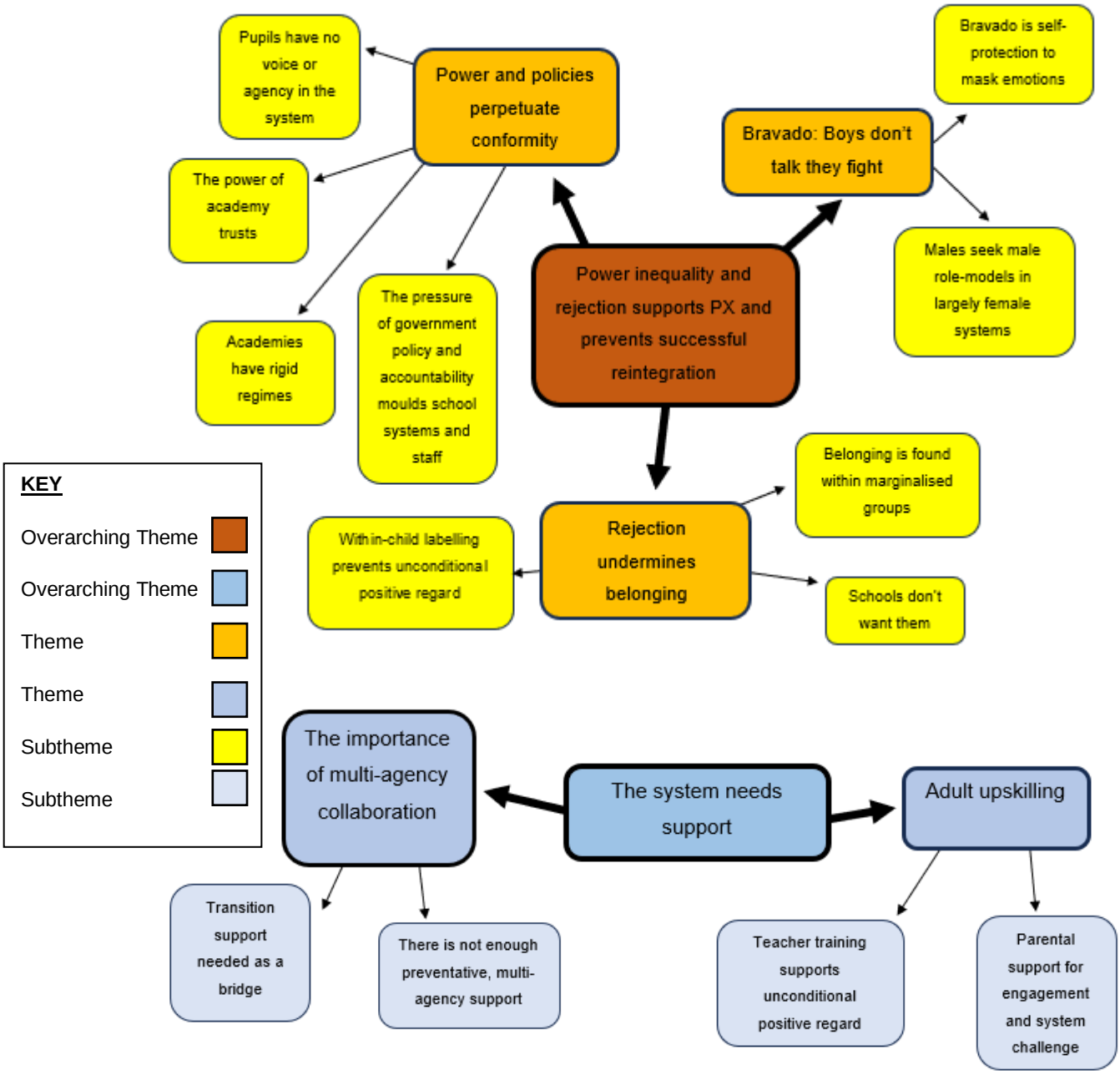
Pseudonym Name	***Role***	***Information***
Participant 1 Sarah	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Practitioner (CAMHS)	Sarah works within a locality in the city, supporting secondary schools.
Participant 2 Jenny	Works within the central team that oversees exclusions in the Local Authority	n/a
Participant 3 Fiona	Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) in a secondary academy	The academy is part of a multi-academy trust
Participant 4 Abbie	Educational Psychologist (EP) who leads SEMH in her team	n/a
Participant 5 Rachel	SENCo within a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	The Pupil Referral Unit is Local Authority maintained and caters for pupils of primary and secondary ages

4.3 Thematic Map

The outcomes of my RTA are visually represented below, consisting of two overarching themes and five main themes, with thirteen subthemes.

Figure 4.1

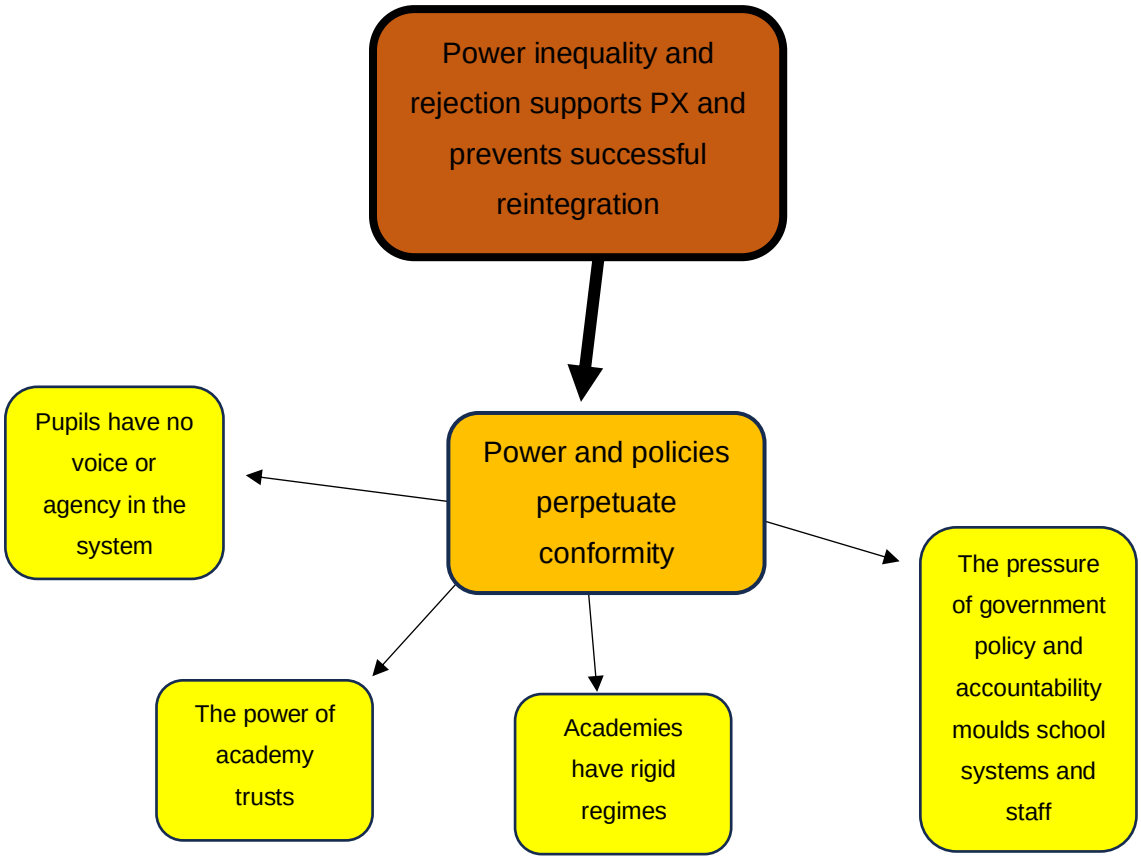
Thematic map to visually represent the results of the RTA



4.4 Overarching Theme One: Power Inequality and Rejection Supports PX and Prevents Successful Reintegration

Overarching theme one represents the participants' view that a male's sense of identity is influenced when their feelings of power and belonging are reduced; they gravitate towards stereotypes of masculinity in the form of bravado and using physical actions as an act of communication rather than talking. Participants feel that permanently excluded SEMH boys need to feel belonging but experience rejection from the permanently excluding system, which is rigid in nature, and pressurised from political agendas. As a result, they seek a shared identity elsewhere in the form of other marginalised peer influences like gang culture.

4.4.1 Theme One: Power and Policies Perpetuate Conformity



Theme One consisted of views pertaining to the conformist nature of educational systems; namely the rigid nature of secondary schools, particularly regarding the application of behaviour policies and the pressures schools experience due to

governmental scrutiny of standards, which contribute to a lack of flexibility and pupils 'not fitting' the expectations set or a 'one size fits all' approach led by governmental standards and policy.

This theme has four subthemes:

- Pupils have no voice or agency in the system
- The power of academy trusts
- Academies have rigid regimes
- The pressure of government policy and accountability moulds school systems and staff

4.4.1.1 Subtheme One: Pupils Have No Voice or Agency in the System

The data within this subtheme discusses the fact that pupils have no choice in the permanent exclusion process or indeed their education as a whole. Participants talk about the fact that pupil views are often not collected by schools which can inadvertently imply the school's positioning around the importance of pupil voice and agency.

Fiona (academy SENCO): … *so that then I suppose the local authority can then decide what will be best to do with this this child and then depending on what year they're in, they might be allocated to another school through IFAP or they might just get allocated just from the local authority.*

When discussing reintegration Sarah (CAMHS) comments:

> *I think it's about finding the right school and have everybody's voice choosing that not choices made for them.*

This echoes the view that there should be agency in the pupil's education, particularly in terms of the permanent exclusion process and reintegration, suggesting that currently, the pupil is a passive vessel, waiting for decisions to be made for them- significant decisions which pave the route for reintegration for example.

Abbie (EP) shares the same view:

Its lack of communication, lack of clear, it's done to them you know. An inclusion panel, for example, we have a box on the referral saying does the child know about this request what are their views? The majority of the time it's blank.

Lack of pupil voice is also discussed in terms of school staff not listening to pupils as part of the school day; pupils are trying to make themselves heard but they feel like no one is truly, actively listening.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *He's explained his feelings of mainstream, "no one listens to me. I used to get angry and they never listen to me."*

Abbie (EP)*: So I don't think it's about collecting their views I think it's about the fact that the process doesn't care about what children have to say.*

This suggests that any collection of pupil voice is somewhat tokenistic as there is no value held to it in the first place.

The lack of agency in mainstream secondary schools is compared to alternative provision, with the view that:

Fiona (academy SENCo): *I think they've got more choice.*

> *I think that they feel more in control about what they can do, and I think that they respond better to the adults because the adults are, you know, they've got that when they're in school, right here for an hour, then here, then here, then here, then here, and you're constantly being told what to do it like it just, well, it's just very timetabled isn't it. Whereas when you go to somewhere like (XXX AP assessment place). You can go and speak to your learning manager if you need to. You don't have to wait till break and lunchtimes, or whatever. And yeah, you've got more of a choice, and there's more incentive.*

4.4.1.2 Subtheme Two: The Power of Academy Trusts

Participants discuss the nature of academy trusts and the fact that they wield significant power in terms of handing out consequences and sanctioning permanent exclusions, with young people and families experiencing little to no power within this process.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager)*: And I also think when we're looking at big academy chains and you know they are quite a monster to battle with and definitely after families.*

Sarah (CAMHS): *I find it very scary, it's almost like we wouldn't, there's only judges that can put someone on a mental health act or that can put somebody in prison, yet we have teachers and governors who can make such a, such a huge stage in a child's life.*

The comparison of adult sanctions and the fairness or implied equity in this is compared to the power adults have over young people's lives, with the notion that this does not have the same equity or scrutiny as the judicial system.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): I *think they could do a lot more with the process in terms of you know, when you've got large academy chains and a governing body resides over that, the decision to uphold the Headteacher's decision. Why? Why can't it be a totally different governing body, one that's not attached to that school, 'cause that school's governing body sometimes don't understand their powers?...but when you're engulfed in a big academy chain, some of those governing bodies just think they're there to ratify the Head's decision, and that's really disappointing.*

Interestingly, Jenny discusses the governing body that is used to ratify the decisions made by the school but shares her concerns that this is the school's own governing body, suggesting they may not be as impartial as needed, due to the fact they are embedded in the academy trust's culture and so may be viewing decision-making through that particular lens, adding to the power differential between the school, young person and family.

The spread of the culture and ethos of an academy trust is a concern for Abbie, as she worries about the reach they have in terms of multiple schools and large numbers of children if this culture is more punitive in nature and negatively impacts upon their mental health and wellbeing.

Abbie (EP): *Yeah I think academisation has been a huge problem and it will continue to be a huge problem because the Government has decided that academisation is the perfect thing to do. You see it in the indoctrination of the staff. I think for me, that is the most dangerous and worrying aspect of the, of academisation. Is the, this is the way we do it and you have to do it this way, which, don't get me wrong, I'm sure happened before, you know, then the schools would have their own individual ways of doing things, but I think the problem is, that now it's not one school, now it's for example, two schools that are, or three schools in a Local Authority. Three secondary schools in a Local Authority is a huge percentage of the children of that area being taught, being managed, being subjected to the same system and if that system had the problems we have been talking about in terms of you know, not seeing children, seeing children as grades machines shall we say, then that's a huge proportion of children that are made to inhabit a system that is not conducive to their mental health and their wellbeing.*

Fiona discusses the lack of power she feels when trying to make adjustments for a pupil, suggesting that staff also feel powerless at times in terms of academy hierarchy. It is interesting that she uses the phrase, 'I got in trouble', a phrase it may be argued a young person may say when they have contravened a school rule.

Fiona (academy SENCo): …*so I had to go and even write it on one-page profiles- remove from random name generator. Well then I got into trouble for doing that because our Director of SEND doesn't believe that we should be removing students from it. She's saying that we need to coach them more and build their confidence up…*

Participants also describe the changing nature of LA control over schools, with the onset of academisation, in terms of the lack of value the participants think schools hold towards the LA, particularly concerning permanent exclusions.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *Academy trusts have zero respect for local authorities and zero respect for services cause they're their own beast, so they don't have to have…*

…My behaviour policy says that I could probably exclude for that. And you know prior to that when the local authority had a lot more say in their schools they couldn't. They had to go through a lot more quality assurance to ever consider that, and they had to evidence that they'd done a lot more support and offered a lot more to that young person, so I do think they feel they don't have to take the advice from the local authority.

Abbie (EP): *And then that's so hard to change because as soon as a school becomes an academy, the Local Authority has zero power to influence what happens in that school. So I think that's the biggest thing that Academies are changing the way schools work on a wider level because there's more of them and also they mean that the Local Authority has very little impact on what can actually happen in those schools, for those individual children.*

Rachel acknowledges the reduced powers of the LA but feels that the LA needs to rise to its responsibilities and challenge schools to hold them to account more. She implies that the LA have become accustomed to their 'new' role and as a result, are lacking the gumption to strive to hold schools to account if they are not demonstrating inclusive practices.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *They are the Local Authority and they need to be talking a bit more of an upper ground and saying well actually this is not ok, you may be an academy but actually you need to be supporting these pupils because they are on your roll. I don't feel that the academies are rising to it enough (…) I mean the Local Authority having the authority. They've not, they've been a bit dismissive, oh well, do you know what I mean, they are not fighting for it, they are not supporting…*

There is also a feeling that schools know how to play the LA to gain something they want, suggesting power imbalance and hidden agendas at the expense of the young person by using permanent exclusion as a bargaining tool.

Abbie (EP): *And another thing that frustrates me a lot, is when actually and this happens quite often, the schools will call a permanent exclusion on a child and then take it away, when the Local Authority says, hang on a minute, why don't we do this, why don't we do that. They are willing to put the child in an AP for 12 weeks if you take away the exclusion and the school does that. So that is also extremely frustrating because, well the schools are doing it so they get* free provision basically.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *…I feel like schools will say, look, unless you give us a placement at (XXX PRU) we're gonna permanently exclude so then (XXX PRU) are kind of held to account. Well, the Local Authority don't want a permanent exclusion so (XXX PRU) have to rise to that. I think schools are doing that more and more. If you don't provide something we will permanently exclude. The LA don't want exclusions so they give, you know, places to (XXXPRU) obviously, you know, schools are calling their bluff basically.*

4.4.1.3 Subtheme Three: Academies Have Rigid Regimes

Participants described the secondary system as rigid in its policies, with little regard for the individual circumstances of the pupils. The data suggests that the participants view the policies as draconian in nature, with little flexibility.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *Sorry, just to say Academy chains as well. Absolute bonkers. Sanction heavy behaviour policies where the academies feel the right to permanently exclude school children for setting off a fire alarm or doing something ridiculous…they do have really, really rigid sanction-led policies, and then literally look down a list. I can permanently exclude for that. My behaviour policy says that I could probably exclude for that.*

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *I feel that in the education system, it is very much, well, this has happened and it's breached our policies we've got written down here and we've not taken into account anybody, we've not taken into account what is going on in the background, whether it was an accident, it's just very much black and white- that needs to be an exclusion and these policies are written and in place as a back-up so they can just go well that's just the way it is and they don't look at the bigger picture.*

The participants appeared to focus on permanent exclusion as the ultimate consequence for breaking the rules and Jenny implies that schools view the behaviours in a punitive manner, using a behaviour policy like a checklist, with Rachel acknowledging that secondary settings do not seem to see past the behaviour to see what is underpinning it or asking why.

The use of policies in the secondary academy settings seemed to be attributed to a need for schools to ensure pupils conformed to the expected norms, although what these may be was not discussed.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *When they're in the reflection room and you're trying to get them to conform to us a little bit more…*

Sarah (CAMHS) comments that she feels agency advice is sought as a tool to 'manipulate' young people into conforming, which implies an implicit agenda to secondary schools seeking pupil support and the question of who the support is really for.

Sarah (CAMHS): *…At risk of permanent exclusion so they're starting to have the suspensions and things like that and they want us to step in and offer advice from a mental health perspective, emotional perspective of how this child can be manipulated to follow the system better so that they aren't excluded…*

As all of the secondary schools in the LA are academies (or 3 free schools) the participants are referring to academies when they use the term school. There appears to be a sense that academies are somehow stricter as entities. Rachel

feels that they are run more like businesses which intimates that this is in opposition to a child-centred educational setting.

Rachel (PRU SENCo)*: I think, I think they're much more rigid in terms of all their paperwork and stipulations and it's very black and white in terms of, if a child does this then this happens and they cannot be in our school… very very regimented from what I've seen, what I've experienced in some of those schools but I think they are run more like a business as well. They have their systems that they are very very rigid in…*

4.4.1.4 Subtheme Four: The Pressure of Government Policy and Accountability Moulds School Systems and Staff

Participants commented on the fact that government policy and the culture of scrutiny and accountability, for example, OFSTED and the publishing of league tables put pressure on schools to push academic outcomes at the detriment of other key skills for young people, for example, citizenship or wellbeing.

Abbie (EP): *Cause another part of this is again league tables cause if I'm a Headteacher, it doesn't matter how much I love children or how much I care about them becoming good adults, if I am being hammered by the Government telling me my school is not good enough because the children don't get good enough grades in English and I have my governors pushing at my back, like, it is very easy for me to change my mind about my principles.*

Abbie's comments suggest that the pressures from socio-political scrutiny change the values or priorities for Headteachers and as a result, this moves the school system to an expectation that gravitates towards a norm (which is undefined but implicitly linked to academic achievement and meeting specified targets).

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *Ofsted expectations on schools as well, so that's that, fuels the Academy chains being ridiculous really…*

…put less targets on schools in terms of academic outcomes. Whilst we always want those standards for young people, we want it through teaching

and learning, not through, you know, beating them over the head with a bat, we really do, so I think the Government needs to understand.

Equally, Jenny explains that she doesn't mean we shouldn't hold expectations for males but they should be based upon a sense of pedagogy and not as a dictated measure without purpose.

There is a sense in the data that participants appreciate the pressures felt by school staff and are not implying that actions are taken with malice or intent but as a reaction to the demands of an unflinching socio-political regime.

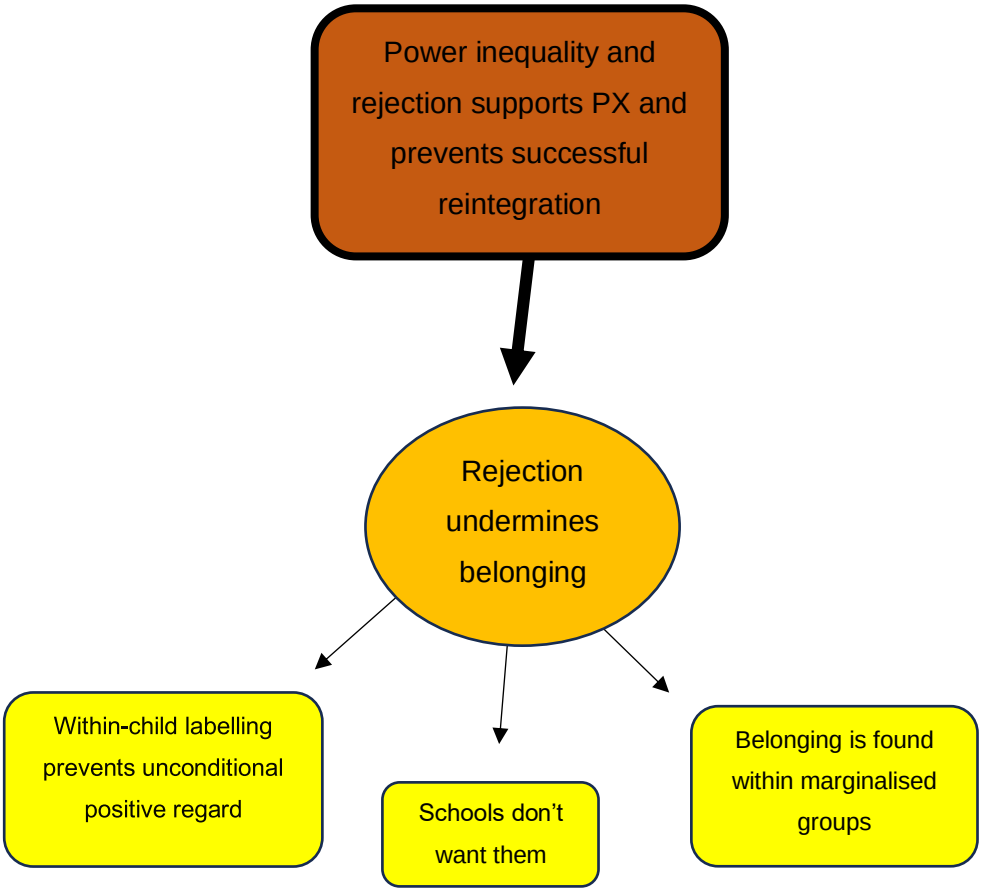
Abbie (EP): *These are people who go into this job, nobody wants to be a teacher in the sense of, they put in very long hours, the pay is not that good, like if you are in teaching, 90% of people I bet who go into teaching go into teaching because they love children and they want to do a good job. I don't, I think again, people come with a good, with good principles, but they get twisted by the systems that they are made to inhabit. So yeah, I think, I think the problem is the way the system is shaping the adults who are the ones that have the power, how it's shaping their views of the children that they have under their care and what they are willing to do to fit within that system.*

Sarah (CAMHS): Not being a teacher, I'm guessing pressure within from the teachers'

standards I presume?

It is interesting to observe in this theme as a whole, that pressure is cascaded from policy and measures at the socio-political level, through to school staff and ultimately onto the pupils, who can be ultimately ejected from the system if they do not conform to what is expected.

4.4.2 Theme Two: Rejection Undermines Belonging



Theme Two is concerned with participants' views concerning the feelings of rejection which pupils who have been permanently excluded can experience. Rejection is described in different ways, for example, by permanent exclusion itself and through a school not wanting to reintegrate a young person into their setting after they have been permanently excluded. Thus, participants describe how belonging is sought from a peer group with a shared identity, often other marginalised young males, which participants feel are not necessarily positive influences, whether they are peers in a PRU or community gangs.

This theme has three subthemes:

- Schools don't want them
- Within-child labelling prevents unconditional positive regard
- Belonging is found within marginalised groups

4.4.2.1 Subtheme One: Schools Don't Want Them

Participants voiced that they felt once a young person had been permanently excluded, schools forgot about them and absolved from all responsibility for them, suggesting rejection.

Abbie (EP): *But then the consequences for the child are the same because it doesn't matter if they have had a permanent exclusion or not, they have been in an AP for 12 weeks, and no other school really wants them either. So it's just a cycle of throwing the sack basically and the child is the sack. They go from one place to another, to another, to another, until, until and this is the thing, someone is willing to work with them. But the problem is, more and more, it is hard to find a place that is willing because it's easier not to.*

Abbie uses the metaphor of a sack being passed around as no one wants to take it, with the sack being the permanently excluded male. The fact that the young person is passed around so often indicates that they would feel like they don't belong as the system is indicating that nobody wants them.

Moreover, participants comment that they do not have experience (or little) of reintegration, implying that this does not really happen for males who have been permanently excluded, because schools are not willing to take them on roll.

Researcher: *Have you got any example of reintegration for males at all?*

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *No. No. Not in my experience anyway, not in my experience.*

Researcher: *That's really sad*

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *Yeah but I think when they reach the PRU stage you know they don't reintegrate back. Which is sad yep.*

Abbie (EP): *…I can tell you one, this is how pathetic it is, I have one example of a successful reintegration following the permanent exclusion that I've worked with out of you know three or four years in this job.*

…there is just not clear mechanisms for reintegration because again I think it goes back to the fact that schools don't want it…then they will go to IFAP and it is the opposite of a cattle market nobody bids for the cow you know

nobody bids for the child it's basically a contest of who has the best excuse not to get this child. So that's not gonna lead to very successful reintegration is it? And I'm not saying it never works it has for some children but I think it has worked in spite of the system not because of the system….

Sarah (CAMHS) discusses the fact that a young person may have additional needs which may also be compounded by a lack of feeling wanted by the settings he is in, as he is seen to move from one school to another.

I worked with a young boy actually who was in a specialist unit he eventually got an EHCP but he did three before he got his EHCP for alternative provision, bounced from one to the next and again I was feeling there was social emotional but a neurodevelopmental disorder that was never diagnosed and all they saw was a boy who was unregulated but hey I would be unregulated if there were three secondary schools over four years…

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager) feels that schools should demonstrate that the young person is part of their community in terms of reintegration as this is not always the case.

It's being understanding and understanding that if they're permanently excluded they're not going to be a straightforward pupil, they're actually going to need additional support, and recognising them as yours…

Rachel agrees and feels there should be more accountability for schools to take permanently excluded pupils.

Here is what we have but at the moment it's battles trying to push back and say no. Mainstreams need to be accountable…

The data indicates that the participants feel the current system is not conducive to reintegration for males, with schools opting out of taking a permanently excluded pupil on their roll, further suggesting rejection. Abbie implies that it is the qualities of

the young person that have contributed to reintegration, rather than the system at hand.

4.4.2.2 Subtheme Two: Within-Child Labelling Prevents Unconditional Positive Regard

Subtheme two discusses teacher preconceptions for males identified as SEMH who have been excluded and how their preconceptions can paint a picture of the young person without getting to know them, suggesting a type of prejudice towards the pupil.

Sarah (CAMHS)*: Yeah there's always a 'what have you done' almost like you've got a criminal record when you come back into school yeah but I'm sure with some males to males there would be some sense of kudos I got permanently excluded so look at me but then I think I think for most people they're viewed as the naughty kids... It's like he's been reframed in almost mythical language.*

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager) views the preconceptions as a sense of fear towards the pupil due to the descriptions of his behaviour. However, she notes that it is the school's responsibility to be accountable for the pupil and they need reminding of this. The fact that Jenny has commented that they 'gulp' suggests that she feels that schools don't necessarily feel equipped to support SEMH pupils.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *…that said, you know, when they come with significant assaults and significantly high risk, some do gulp and you have to remind them why they're there and what they need to do with those young people?*

Fiona (academy SENCo): *Teenage boys, get quite tall and big don't they and I think they can be quite intimidating and I think that they are portrayed as just being naughty and can't be bothered and don't want to learn rather than actually, they're struggling with things and they need support.*

Fiona highlights that teachers view SEMH pupils as ‘naughty boys’ and attribute their presenting behaviours to this negative label, rather than seeing the whole context of the young person’s lived experiences.

Both Abbie and Rachel talk about how the label of SEMH supports a negative pathway for a young person and the negative associations attributed to this stick with them through their educational experiences.

Abbie (EP): *It means trouble. In the sense that those, those children that are identified as having social emotional and mental health needs most likely will have a very difficult journey in education. And that is not because of who they are, that is because of how they've been identified.*

Abbie continues to discuss the fact that the label of SEMH doesn’t have any kind of tangible meaning but its connotations are hard-hitting for the young person.

Abbie (EP): *…and I think that's what I meant with it doesn't mean anything SEMH. It means trouble. It means trouble for the children and young people because it doesn't lead to a positive educational journey because they are seen as bombs that's the easiest metaphor I can think of.*

Abbie’s metaphor suggests that staff are waiting for the young person to ‘blow’ which is interpreted as negative for the young person, with a sense of self-fulfilling prophecy attached to the word ‘trouble’ and teacher perceptions.

4.4.2.3 Subtheme Three: Belonging is Found Within Marginalised Groups

The data clustered within this subtheme discusses how young people seek peer relationships with other marginalised young people, sharing an identity which participants view with more negative connotations, for example, community anti-social groups.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *… kids like to fit. They, like to fit in they like that they’re part of something, that they’re part of their family, part of the*

group, part of whatever whether they find that the community, whether they'd find that with anti-social peers, whatever it may be, they like to fit. And in an AP they fit because they've all been excluded, so they have that in common. They have a commonality before they start. Nobody is better than anybody else. They all fit into that group.

Jenny appears to be suggesting that there is a sense of shared identity and camaraderie within AP due to shared experiences, which they didn't necessarily experience in mainstream education.

Rachel seems to suggest that the shared sense of AP identity is not a positive association however due to potential tensions within the cohort and the emotional literacy skills of the pupils.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *They can't develop positive relationships. There's always like this with each other, they're always bubbling, there's always been issues… when you've not got those positive role models and those other pupils who are able to self-regulate, putting them all together, it's, it just doesn't work.*

Abbie discusses a boy who did not have peer role models or a sense of community due to the fact he was not in education, however, he sought connections within his local community which became a negatively perceived social experience.

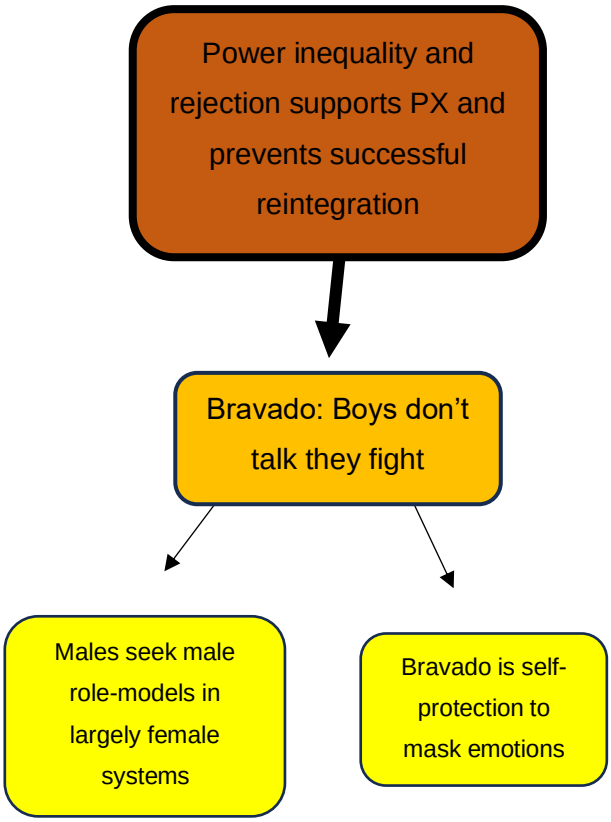
Abbie (EP): *…then spent two years in his house not really engaging in learning because there wasn't an educational offer for him to engage with and he's now making the wrong type of friends and going in the community and getting himself in trouble to the point where he injured himself and had to have surgery…*

Sarah agrees and talks about a young man she was supporting:

Sarah (CAMHS): *…he was getting himself into trouble on the streets because he was hanging out with the wrong people and saying the wrong thing...*

The experiences participants have had with young males indicate that they are seeking a sense of belonging and if they don't feel that in school from peers or staff, then they are seeking it elsewhere, even if it is of a negatively perceived nature.

4.4.3 Theme Three: Bravado: Boys Don't Talk They Fight



Theme Three discusses the participants' views on male conceptualisations of masculinity or the social norm of being 'male' and the barrier this can be to support seeking. They discuss the need for more male role models in secondary educational settings as largely female staff can act as a barrier to help-seeking and talking.

This theme has two subthemes:

- Bravado is self-protection to mask emotions
- Males seek male role models in largely female systems

4.4.3.1 Subtheme One: Bravado is Self-Protection to Mask Emotions

Participants discussed the nature of 'bravado' as a way for young people to create a protective wall towards a system that in most respects doesn't care and rejects them. They wear bravado as a mask to hide their feelings and align with societal gender norms for masculinity.

Sarah (CAMHS): *it's the ones who end up staying in the school when they're excluded and often their behaviour then worsens because that's almost like, this is who I am you know, it's worked for me, I don't care you know, doesn't really matter, well at least I don't have to go to school anymore and it's almost like that kind of, we don't care about you now I don't care about me and once they're kind of, especially young males, I find, the ones who have got that kind of bravado in their head, there's no shifting, no breaking that wall back down again.*

Fiona (academy SENCo): *So actually then the child's going, "well, I'm not coming to this school, I'm just going to get permanently excluded from this school as well."*

Fiona's comments allude to the fact that the pupil is indicating that they don't care but it is suggesting this is said as a defence, due to them feeling like no one cares about them.

Sarah and Abbie both indicate that young people use bravado as an emotional shield to hide their true emotions, as males are socially conditioned to be 'strong'.

Sarah (CAMHS): *You think that they would go insular and they go quiet on themselves but I find with the boys that they then put on a front… I find that most with the males they then create this bravado. They create this alter ego almost, "I'm fine yeah, I don't need you I'm going to push you away," which ultimately we know is damaging, more damaging for their social mental health.*

Researcher: I just wondered what factors do you think contributes to males who identified as SEMH being permanently excluded?

Abbie (EP)*: that's an interesting question because it's overwhelmingly boys. I think if I'm honest with you I think it has to do with what a boy and a man are supposed to be. I think our societal lens of how we see like how males present as distressed or stressed it's very different from the way girls are socialised to manage this distress or stress, we see that right, we see that from toddlers, so I think that's probably why boys are disproportionately more excluded than girls it's because they've been socialised to present their distress and that could be anger, that could be sadness, that could be frustration, that could be a variety of emotions. They've been socialised to present that in a way that is not necessarily quiet… so girls are more socialised to, well if you are stuck it is ok to cry, it's ok to feel sad and mope in a corner, that's the way girls are socialised…. Boys, it's very cliché but boys don't cry do they? And these messages, even if they are not taught explicitly, they are in our culture, they are in our media, they are in our movies, they are in our toys, they are in our cartoon characters, they are everywhere so boys are more socialised to be strong, to stand up for themselves, to you know, to fight if they need to and that's what they do.*

Abbie's comment indicates that society's gender norms dictate how perceived masculinity manifests negative emotions, in terms of internalising feelings and demonstrating them in more physical ways.

Jenny feels that boys use bravado as protection when they reintegrate or attend a new setting as a way to deal with potential rejection.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager)*: And of course to start over again in mainstream school they have to up their bravado by 10-15% don't they, so you know, 'I've got to make my way in a new school', so they probably find that quite intimidating.*

Rachel agrees and discusses the creation of a persona, implying that this is again a protective shield to boost their social status with peers.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *With peers in mainstream it gives them that kind of persona of being you know the bad boy and they're quite intimidated by them and it gives them a bit of street credit in a sense.*

4.4.3.2 Subtheme Two: Males Seek Male Role Models in Largely Female Systems

Subtheme Two discusses the fact that males appear to want male role models in school and respond positively to male support. However, Fiona describes secondary settings as being largely female staff, particularly in inclusion teams, which she feels may perpetuate their reluctance to seek support. The importance of mentors is highlighted.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *…or maybe because I suppose within inclusion, we've only got, it's all women. We've got one male learning manager, we've got no male TAs, and I think that they probably might find that quite difficult. Maybe if we had more males working in inclusion then they might feel more that they could, they could talk to them.*

Fiona continues to discuss the fact that she has had experience with a male who voiced that he wanted a male role model to talk to.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *Yeah, and you know as well I've actually had a student come to me and say because his behaviour was just spiralling, and when I sat down and just said what is happening? Why is, why are you doing this? And he said, I just want a male role model 'cause he hasn't got a dad at home and actually, he's not comfortable talking to me or (XXX) (both female). He wants a male who he can go and talk to so that's where I asked one of the members of SLT to mentor him and that's going really well.*

Sarah also discusses how she recommends peer mentors as a key provision for young people so they can make connections in a bid to encourage talking.

Sarah (CAMHS): *The overriding bit of advice I give when I get asked is mentors. Give these children someone they can attach to someone that can understand them.*

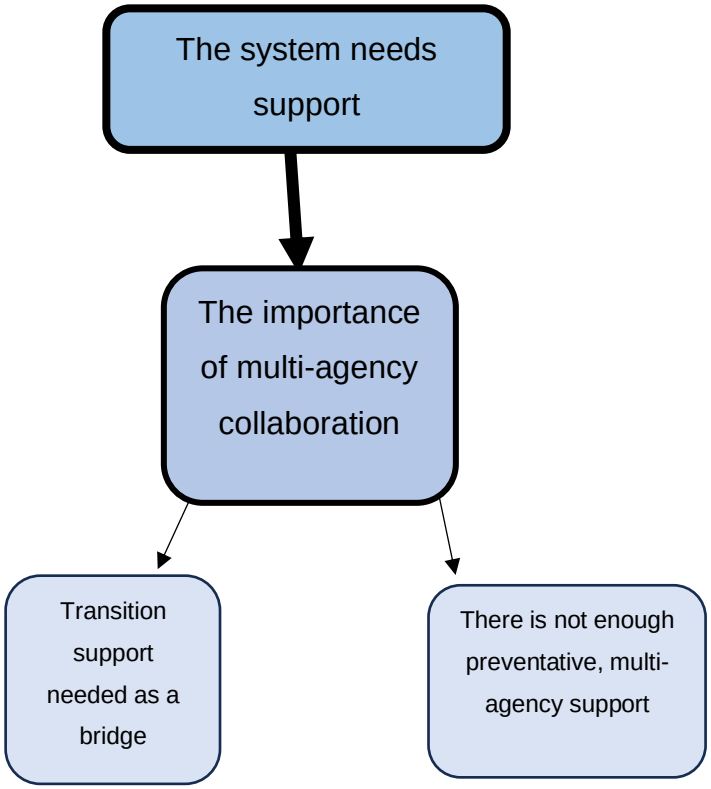
Rachel (PRU SENCo) discusses the need for positive role models which can be staff members or peers.

I think it could even, because you've got your positive role models… think they need a key worker. A key worker in school, something so simple as a key worker, but schools often say we don't do 1:1 but it needs to be that contact in school to be available when they come in first thing in the morning, at the end of the morning, at the end of dinner and the end of the day. And just kind of checking in, if things are ok.

4.5 Overarching Theme Two: The System Needs Support

The overarching theme is concerned with the system supporting the males who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of PX. Teachers are discussed in terms of requiring support and training to feel they are able to support SEMH males, show curiosity and maintain a humanistic lens, exploring what is behind behaviours. In addition, parents are described as significant supports for young people when they are engaged. However, parents' own skills and competencies may present barriers to their systemic engagement and ability to challenge the system when needed.

4.5.1 Theme One: The Importance of Multi-Agency Collaboration



Participants discuss the benefits of multi-agency approaches, including parents, school staff and agencies, particularly concerning timely support- early preventative work and ongoing support post-reintegration. Participants feel that multi-agency working taps into differing knowledge bases and supports staff in the exploration of a pupil's context with regard to what may be underpinning behaviours. Participants also commented that AP outreach supports teachers in mainstream settings, particularly during reintegration and is a supportive factor for pupils.

In this theme there are two subthemes:

- Transition support needed as a bridge
- There is not enough preventative graduated, multi-agency support

4.5.1.1 Subtheme One: Transition Support Needed as a Bridge

In subtheme one, participants discuss the differing environmental contexts between other settings, for example, AP or primary school and mainstream secondary settings with the suggestion that this concerns nurture vs rigidity. The disparity between the settings, particularly AP and mainstream is discussed, mainly in terms of how hard it is for a young person to transition between the two due to the differing expectations. Liaison between settings and transition planning is described as supportive for permanently excluded pupils, whether it is AP to a new secondary school or pre-emptive in terms of Year 6 in primary school to their Year 7 secondary setting.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *… they've got three days where they're not getting into trouble, they're loving it, and they're engaged and enjoy it, they're enjoying the work and they haven't got to wear uniform. They can have their mobile phones out and they've got probably a little bit more independence and then they come to us and it's for them- right back to rules now…*

…I think you know it's not just our school I think they find it with all schools. They go there, back to mainstream then they'll end up getting excluded, because things are so different and it's hard for them they go to alternative provision cause they're not coping anyway, and then you think that you are

kind of helping them out a little bit but actually it's probably making things a little bit worse because it's so different for them isn't it?

Fiona describes the differences between AP and mainstream, with the logistics of a larger mainstream setting being a barrier to the implementation of successful strategies from the AP. She also alludes to the fact that although APs may be suggested to support pupils, they can have the reverse effect due to the differing nature of the environments.

Sarah also discusses the fact that the mainstream system does not change or adapt for pupils and so when they transition back to mainstream schools, they are in a way, set up to fail.

Sarah (CAMHS): *…he had time in an alternative provision which he responded to brilliantly but then that ended and he went back in (to secondary) and then got excluded. For me, it was like okay have identified that he does so much better with just those couple of days doing something practical and I find it really hard because schools' hands are tied…*

Sarah implies she is conscious of the nature of the secondary systems and that staff are also stuck within this when trying to replicate positive strategies from AP.

Participants also comment on the nature of the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 in terms of the difference between primary and secondary school structures and provisions.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *…they coast at primary. You know, I'm in a fluffy school. I can coast, we can manage by sitting the child outside the Head's office. We can manage by overpopulating them with adults. Whatever you know, bonkers stuff they do. And then that hasn't happened for the last two years, and sometimes the teachers get this rush in year six and Oh my goodness, this child actually won't manage in secondary school.*

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *In primary…they're quite nurturing typically and they know the kids more cause they come in every day and they can pick up on things and you can tune into things better. Whereas at secondary, it's just an*

expectation that right you just get on now...but I guess, the way secondary schools structure their lessons, they all merge for different subjects, behaviours are very different in certain subjects because of the class teacher's expectations and then in another class it's very different.

Rachel continues to discuss the fact that the nature of change in a secondary school, for example, multiple rooms and teachers, can be difficult for pupils, particularly if they are struggling to regulate anyway. It is interesting that Jenny comments that primary provision can be 'bonkers', implying that there is some responsibility on primary settings to set pupils up for the secondary context in a more preparatory way.

Fiona (academy SENCo) discusses the need for more joined-up working between the AP and receiving school

… but yeah, definitely it's just more communicating between the APs and schools I think…

As Rachel (PRU SENCo) comments…

and then you've got the problem of AP, you've got your problems of AP and oh let's give 3 days a week on a 12-week placement ok and then what? Well, they just come back to you (…).

This suggests a sudden reintegration is not supportive for the young person, with the implication that without planning, the young person is simply entering a system that is not changed or adapted for them, placing all the emphasis on the young person rather than changing the receiving system itself.

4.5.1.1 Subtheme Two: There is Not Enough Preventative Graduated, Multi-Agency Support

This subtheme focuses on the need for more collaboration and joined up working with agencies, particularly in a preventative manner.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *So I think that we need a lot more consultation with professionals that do work with those pupils, and I think they also need a lot more consultation with those pupils and families as well.*

Sarah (CAMHS): *… where so much earlier on they could be saying to us (CAMHS), they've come into Y7 and they're just not settled enough, can we just maybe get some more information off you, what's been the background? Can we do a bit of information sharing, gathering. What advice would you give us at this stage and it's, we definitely feel as a service we get missed from that point.*

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *We do a triage process…Then we send those back with recommendations and services to support, such as our outreach service, EPs, etc.*

Fiona feels that secondary schools would benefit from closer working relationships with APs, particularly around reintegration, whilst Rachel agrees and feels linking up with secondary schools should be put in place more regularly.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *But yeah, definitely it's just more communicating between the APs and schools I think.*

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *I feel like before they get admitted to (PRU) I'd be best off doing an observation in class and seeing this for myself and trying to unpick it, rather than putting a kid in a very different setting.*

It's terrible because there's no crossover, there's no transition back. There's no work with the AP and the mainstream and it's similar with us as well, there's no work with me and the mainstream.

Abbie recalls one time that she experienced a positive reintegration which was fostered by joined-up agency working.

Abbie (EP): *And it was a boy who had been permanently excluded from their primary school they had an educational healthcare plan and they went to one of our*

special schools, special provisions for a couple of years, and then the child said, "want to go back to my local mainstream school," and he was listened to, and the specialist the special school he was attending worked really hard with the child's local mainstream school to reassure them, support them in understanding this child etc. etc., to give this boy a chance of accessing the local mainstream school…

Participants discuss the supportive nature of coming together as a multi-agency team to consult and share information to support young people. This was discussed as timely preventative work and also as support for reintegration.

Sarah (CAMHS): *…and then pulling on advice from different professionals and talking…*

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *so I think that we need a lot more consultation with professionals that do work with those pupils, and I think they also need a lot more consultation with those pupils and families as well.*

4.5.2 Theme Two: Adult Upskilling

This theme discusses the need for support for both teachers and parents so they feel competent to support SEMH males who have been permanently excluded. Participants felt that teachers would benefit from training to support their skills of curiosity and understanding that behaviour is communication, parents required support to engage as well as navigate and challenge the educational system.

4.5.2.1 Subtheme One: Teacher Training Supports Unconditional Positive Regard

Both Rachel and Jenny reflect on the fact they feel teachers can display a sense of disengagement with SEMH PX males.

Rachel (PRU SENCo): *but I feel that staff need to have higher aspirations (redacted for anonymity). Staff haven't got high aspirations, staff have been there forever and it's like yeah well they're not bothered so there's no aspiration,*

there's no aspiration like in school it's we'll give them what they want for a quiet life…

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager) agrees:

…then if you've not got the staff that are kind of willing to build relationships or raise their aspirations for children then that doesn't work either.

Participants feel that adults should hold the young person in high regard and separate their behaviour from the person as they are children and make mistakes, as that is a human thing to do, but this means teachers need training as they may not feel skilled enough to support SEMH pupils who are at risk or have been permanently excluded.

Sarah (CAMHS): *And it's amazing to see that kind of it's when you know, that's okay, you can chuck that chair at me Okay but we're gonna talk it through and understand why*.

Sarah explains how staff in alternative provision look beyond the behaviour, showing curiosity as to what the young person was trying to communicate. She mentions 'talking it through' which suggests an element of coaching the young person through their feelings in a restorative-type manner.

Abbie discusses the fact that relational approaches support pupil/teacher interactions which is advantageous for the teacher as this can reduce instances of negative behaviour in the classroom.

Abbie (EP): *If the child and young person likes their teacher, they are less likely to be a pain in the ass. If you don't like your teacher, you are most likely to shout out, punch somebody, throw a table or whatever it is, so for me, that is the biggest supportive factor- Relationships……and there is a level of compassion I think like the most powerful thing I ever learned about in psychology for me was the concept of unconditional positive regard. For me, that's what should be the bedrock of education.*

Unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957) is described by Abbie as a core value that adults within the education system should hold for a pupil; they are judgement-free and see the human being in front of them (not the behaviour), understanding that the young person is doing the best they can in their given circumstances. Jenny describes the power of a school culture which holds the pupil in high regard, quoting a young man she was supporting and the difference she saw in his new school post-reintegration:

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *And he's a really high tariff kid and he's definitely got some significant behaviours, however there he was, surviving, doing really well at XXX and we spoke to him and …He out of his own words said, "the school don't hate me. They really like me so I'm trying my best," you know so kids know whether a school wants them or not.*

Jenny is highlighting the fact that she feels pupils know if they belong, whether it is explicitly or implicitly communicated. It also mirrors Abbie's comment in terms of pupils wanting to try when they know it is appreciated, making a link between motivation and belonging.

Participants discussed the need for school staff to show curiosity about pupil behaviours, implying empathy is needed in understanding what may be happening for the pupil. She comments about the danger of making assumptions without further exploration or consideration.

Sarah (CAMHS)*: …he needed an open thought about what was going on, an inquisitive mind, curiosity about what was going on. He had a dad who went to prison and that was the line that everybody took that's going on so this is why he's like that without being curious to what else might be going on…*

Empathy is also highlighted by Fiona.

Fiona (academy SENCo)*: …communicating more so obviously I know about a lot of their lives and what they have to put up with at home and things like that, and so I'm more, suppose I'm I've got a lot more sympathy for them and I think oh bless them, do you know what, they've come in, come in and chucked their bag down…I think not all teachers know that we don't all know the background …but I think if more teachers did know what they've*

been through, and they knew the information that I know, I think they would be, they would be able to cope better and relate to them more.

Fiona is alluding to the fact that if teachers knew the systems and factors impacting upon a pupil then they may take a different approach to behaviour management. Although this is a relational approach, it lies juxtaposed to unconditional positive regard as the pupil's background should not need to be known for the adult to take a more relational perspective.

Participants discuss the fact that they feel teachers and parents need support and training to develop their skills in supporting young people. This may be around developing trauma-informed, relational skills, supporting relationships and learning, engaging with young people in the classroom or parental literacy skills support to foster their engagement and informed understanding of the system, particularly concerning the permanent exclusion process.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *And definitely really high-quality SENCO and inclusion staff are absolutely key for these young people and I really think there's very few schools that have that, so that's really important.*

Fiona also comments that staff need training to acquire the skills to support young people who may be experiencing SEMH difficulties,

Fiona (academy SENCo): *Those students I think find it particularly difficult because they don't know who they can go to talk to because I don't think, again, I don't think we've got we've had enough training as staff.*

Jenny shares that the LA are commencing borough-wide trauma-informed training, suggesting this is something that is needed for staff to inform their practice.

4.5.2.2 Subtheme Two: Parental Support for Engagement and System Challenge

Parents are also discussed by the participants in terms of the benefit of support and upskilling so they can positively engage with their children as well as the system. Sarah comments that literacy skills may be a barrier to parents engaging with the permanent exclusion system.

Sarah (CAMHS): *Sometimes in the families that we're working with, the parents might not even read or write. If they do, they might not have comprehension to understand some of the process.*

Fiona comments that schools should support parents in developing their literacy skills as a way to welcome them into the school community.

Fiona (academy SENCo): *So I think it's about getting, you know, getting the parents in schools used to be like an integral part of the community. Some schools I've worked in they've offered courses for parents, for numeracy and literacy so that they can help the child with homework and things. But I don't think that I never see that done,*

…especially in (XXX school), I don't know if what other schools in (XXX LA) but I think that you know they're missing a trick there. I think that's what they need to do to get parents on board and all work together.

Sarah comments that parents may not have experienced positive parenting skills themselves and as a result, this passes down to their children, implying that they would benefit from support in this area.

Sarah (CAMHS): they've not had that upbringing that they then apply to their children to know how to interact and how to be with their children and… there does seem to be a pattern of parents who don't give that care and attention to the child.

The positive aspect of having parental advocacy workers who support parents (and young people) through the permanent exclusion process, is discussed by Jenny and Fiona.

Jenny (LA Exclusion Team Manager): *I think in XXX they're very lucky they have a parental advocate to support them right through the entire process…*

…the parental advocate just advocates for parents so it is just an advocate role and it is, you know, fantastic role and actually since that rolls put in place

and I haven't got an exact statistic for you but I think we are at about 98% of parents attend (the permanent exclusion governor meeting).

4.6 Summary of Chapter

Through reflexive thematic analysis, two overarching themes were described, ‘Power inequality and rejection supports PX and prevents successful reintegration,’ and ‘The system needs support’. Five themes were described, ‘Power and policies perpetuate conformity, Rejection undermines belonging, Bravado: Boys don’t talk they fight, The importance of multi-agency collaboration, Adult support and upskilling’ with thirteen subthemes.

Participants discussed the fact that they feel academy trusts wield a disproportionate amount of power compared to young people with the reduced powers of the LA acting as a barrier to challenging academy trust accountability. Secondary school policies and systems were felt to be rigid and conformist which participants felt contributed to pupils being removed from the system if they did not fit into this, ultimately being permanently excluded as a result. Participants viewed the current government standards and scrutiny measures, for example, OFSTED, as contributing to the pressures schools face, which in turn, can change the way staff view their role and the ethos of the schools themselves, creating a more conformist culture.

The difference between settings was described as a barrier for young people particularly in terms of key transitions or reintegration from PX, with a particular emphasis on AP and mainstream contexts. Primary and secondary school transition was also found to be problematic for pupils, with a nurture (primary) vs rigid (secondary) system being implied.

The permanent exclusion of SEMH males was thought to contribute to a lack of belonging, particularly if schools did not want to take them on roll via reintegration and teachers held preconceptions pertaining to the connotations attributed to the label of SEMH. Parental disengagement was discussed as a contributory factor towards a lack of belonging. This was described as disengagement from the school systems, for example, reintegration meetings, which in turn may compound the

feeling of rejection for the young person, as they may feel this is due to them not being important enough for their parents to advocate for them. Similarly, they may take the view that their parents aren't bothered about school so why should they? Furthermore, participants held the view that young people may seek a sense of shared identity and camaraderie via more seemingly negative peer influences, for example, anti-social groups.

Boys were described as creating a sense of bravado as a way of masking their feelings, partly as a way to self-protect themselves from rejection and also as a way to communicate their emotions, based upon societal masculine norms, for example, boys don't cry. A lack of male staffing was thought to contribute to the barrier of males seeking support for their emotions and mental health and the notion of male mentors was described as a supportive factor for male pupils.

Relational approaches were described as supportive and the theme of unconditional positive regard was developed to describe participants' views that teachers needed to see the human being in front of them and not the behaviour itself, via curiosity and an exploration of the underlying factors contributing to the young person's presentation.

The upskilling of both parents and staff was discussed with teachers being described as requiring support to be able to effectively support others and parents partaking in literacy skills learning in schools, both to enhance their understanding and engagement in the permanent exclusion process and also as a way for them to work with the school and feel themselves a sense of belonging within the school community.

The next chapter will elaborate upon the findings presented and link this to wider literature. Considerations for the next steps and further research will be outlined as well as the limitations of this study and researcher reflections.

5 Chapter 4 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

A qualitative study was undertaken to explore the perceptions of five key educational professionals who have experiences with permanent exclusion and reintegration for males who are identified as SEMH within a secondary setting, via semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis.

The research sought to answer the following question and aims:

What are the views of key professionals concerning the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-aged males who are identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)?

Aims

- To gain insight into the perceptions of key professionals with regard to the contributing factors underpinning the permanent exclusion of males who are identified as having SEMH within a secondary setting.
- To explore the perceived barriers and protective factors for successful inclusion and reintegration for males who are identified as SEMH and attend a secondary setting, by key professionals within the educational sector.
- To consider what future provision may be supportive for the inclusion of males who are identified as SEMH permanently excluded.

The following section will consider the themes in relation to the aims above as well as the research question.

5.2 Aim 1:

To gain insight into the perceptions of key professionals with regard to the contributing factors underpinning the permanent exclusion of males who are identified as having SEMH within a secondary setting.

5.2.1 Theme: Power and Policies Perpetuate Conformity

(This includes subthemes: The power of academy trusts, the pressure of government policy and accountability moulds school systems and staff, academies have rigid regimes).

The theme of power and policies perpetuate conformity, describes the participants' concerns regarding the rigidity of secondary school systems, particularly concerning 'one size fits all' behaviour policies, which are described as an inflexible list of punishable behaviours which can be assigned to pupils irrespective of the context or individual circumstances, ultimately leading to permanent exclusion. The use of such behaviour systems may be described as punitive and lacking a humanistic lens, which may ultimately exacerbate behaviours, unlike a more restorative, flexible approach to incidents (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; McCluskey et al., 2019). A key theme of the SLR (please see Chapter 1) was the need for flexibility when reintegrating pupils after a permanent exclusion (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013), which is in opposition to the participants' perspectives on current secondary school practice.

Participants viewed the rigidity of secondary practices as a sense of conformity, with pupils being required to align to the norm of expectations. It may be argued that the norm is the expectation set by government, for example, the notion of 'good behaviour standards' within the 'Behaviour in Schools' (DfE, 2022) and 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' (DfE, 2023c) guidance, pointing to a focus on the importance of standards of behaviour, with the use of exclusion as a tool in a school's behaviour management toolkit, aligning with Cole et al.'s (2019) view that there has been a focus on behaviour standards since the coalition Government came into power in 2010, continuing with the Conservative Party from 2015 onwards, with exclusion often used as a behaviour management tool (Maag, 2012).

When reflecting on the reasons behind the rigidity of school systems, participants described the pressures from government policy, including OFSTED and other accountability measures like league tables. It appears that the pressures described by participants may be moulding school policy and expectations (Ball, 2018), with a drive for blanket-policy conformity, which in turn can reduce the inclusion of those who may find it difficult to align to this norm (Greany & Higham, 2018). Indeed, The Timpson Review (2019) states that the culture of league tables disincentivises schools to keep pupils who may find it difficult to align with the expected norm, particularly if they do not contribute to a school's attainment measures, negatively

affecting teaching practices and inclusion (Greany & Higham, 2018). Consequently, participants felt that the pressured system schools are currently working within can ultimately change staff values, as they themselves conform to the system expectations. This presents a dissonance between the values and pedagogical practice school staff hold and the pressure to adhere to a conformist system, with little flexibility (Ball, 2018; Cole et al., 2019; Done & Knowler, 2020; McCluskey et al., 2019). In fact, the House of Commons Education and Health and Social Care Committees (2018) outlined a similar argument in the Government's Green Paper on Young People's Mental Health, arguing it did not address the underlying pressure of a testing culture upon young people (and indirectly the teachers who must work within this), making the current culture of testing, conformity and accountability within the English education system 'the elephant in the room' when discussing support for young people's mental health.

However, participants felt that staff did not use exclusionary practices with premeditated intent, i.e. deliberately partaking in punitive practices as their usual approach, rather the educational system they were in fostered this due to pressure for conformity via school policy and accountability measures like OFSTED. This highlights the fact that teachers within academies knew the accountability measures were changing their pedagogical practice to a more punitive approach, which in turn may be linked to a perceived lack of autonomy in their teaching role due to pressures of conformity (Done & Knowler (2020), Greany & Higham, 2018).

Participants described the power held by academy chains, with policy (described as rigid and inflexible) impacting a number of pupils as there are usually multiple schools within a multi-academy trust. This appears to be linked to the rescinded duties of LAs in terms of holding academies to account with regard to their decision-making, particularly in terms of the application of their behaviour policies, meaning academies hold more power to self-govern and make their own decisions, without accountability or justification to a local government team. Whilst this may be a positive for schools as they can set their own agendas and governance, it makes LA oversight harder to pursue and as a result, challenge non-inclusive practices (Ball, 2018; Cole et al., 2019; McShane, 2020). Ball (2018) argues that this is the fragmentation of the education system. With the pressures of performance via league tables and OFSTED, as discussed, seeming to shape policy within multi-

academy trusts, the lack of outside perspective or challenge suggests that the power in the system is wielded by the academy trust in conjunction with socio-political agendas.

As power was ascribed to multi-academy trusts, young people were described as having no power in the system at all. Participants described the fact that young people were 'done to' and were perceived as passive in the schooling and permanent exclusion system, indicating a lack of agency in their educational experiences. Participants described how they felt pupil views were not taken into account by schools or the system at large, which may include others, for example, LAs, adding to the suggestion that pupils were treated passively, having no voice within their school experiences or when in the permanent exclusion system itself. Being listened to is a recurring theme throughout the literature reviewed (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; McCluskey et al., 2019; Sellman, 2009), with pupils describing their need to be actively listened to, with their views acted upon (Sellman, 2009). Having autonomy within the system is a fundamental part of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000), with a lack of autonomy linked to reduced intrinsic motivation. It may be argued that if pupils feel they have little autonomy in the system, then their motivations within it are reduced, increasing disengagement.

The reasoning behind the lack of pupil voice may be in part due to teacher confidence in gaining the views of pupils, particularly for those pupils who are identified as SEMH (Sellman, 2009). The fact that teachers may gain the views of SEMH pupils less is concerning, as this appears to compound the issue of pupils being seen as passive in the adult-led systems of schooling and permanent exclusion, resulting in a reduced sense of autonomy as well as a barrier to help-seeking for this group of young people (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; O'Reilly et al., 2018).

5.3 Aim 2:

To explore the perceived barriers and protective factors for successful inclusion and reintegration for males who are identified as SEMH and attend a secondary setting, by key professionals within the educational sector.

5.3.1 Theme: Rejection Undermines Belonging

(This includes the subthemes: Schools don't want them, belonging is found within marginalised peer groups, and within-child labelling prevents unconditional positive regard).

A sense of belonging is a key component for psychological wellbeing and motivation (Maslow, 1943) presenting as a consistent theme within the literature for SEMH pupils, and permanent exclusion. The participants described the lack of power pupils have in the educational system but also a lack of belonging through various factors.

Schools were described as being able to choose whether to take a pupil for reintegration after a permanent exclusion or alternative provision place, with a subtheme describing the fact that schools pass on pupils, indicating they don't want them, aligning with the power attributed to academies by participants. One participant highlighted the fact that young people know if they are wanted and the reluctance for schools to take the pupils on roll or continue to educate them appears to be a form of rejection, reducing their sense of belonging. A key theme in the literature reviewed and also within the SLR is the need for pupils to feel that they have trusting relationships and feel they can talk to someone (Carlile, 2011a; Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013) with Pillay et al. (2013) suggesting that positive relationships can increase the pupil's sense of attachment to the educational setting.

However, participants within this study felt that there was a sense of teacher apathy towards pupils, with low expectations and motivation to build relationships, in both AP and mainstream, which may be due, in part, to negative teacher perceptions and the labelling of the young person, particularly with regards to reintegration.

Four out of the five studies included in the SLR found that teachers ascribed negative attributions to pupils prior to reintegration after a permanent exclusion, which in turn affected decision-making (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013) whilst Orsati & Causton-Theoharis (2013) found teachers 'othered' pupils with behaviour difficulties, using 'they' to group them as one entity.

The term SEMH was viewed with less favourable connotations by some participants, with one citing it as 'trouble' and another as a term for 'naughty', suggesting there is

a within-child pathologizing of the pupil (Parsons, 2005; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016), which can manifest if teachers feel disempowered to support them. The use of within-child labelling may serve to justify punitive approaches, legitimising the rigidity of the system and the need for standardised conformity- the young person is the ‘problem’ and thus can be ‘managed’ or as one participant commented, ‘passed on like a sack’. The question as to who the SEMH label serves is discussed within Thomas and Glenny's (2000) paper, where they propose that the labelling of young people with behavioural difficulties is actually serving the need of the school as it seeks conformity, rather than viewing the young person holistically, understanding the impacting factors surrounding them.

It is interesting to note that within the literature reviewed, SEMH is generally discussed with a behavioural lens, despite the word behaviour being taken away from the name itself by the Department for Education (2015). Indeed, whilst the participants viewed the term SEMH as about mental wellbeing generally, most of the participants discussed behaviour when giving their views. It appears that despite the ‘new’ term SEMH and the drive from the Government regarding mental health, there is still a connotation that SEMH is concerning more negatively viewed presenting behaviours.

The need to feel belonging may manifest as young people aligning with peer groups with who they feel a shared sense of identity and camaraderie, as identified in the subtheme ‘Belonging is found within marginalised peer groups’. It may be that they do not feel a sense of belonging within the school system and so they are seeking this with their peer group, as both Maslow (1943) and Ryan and Deci (2000) describe the need for belonging and connectedness for human motivation.

Participants described how males may project ‘bravado’ and seek this in others, as a way to self-protect from the rejection they are facing within the educational system itself, aligning with masculine social norms and the need for group identity alignment (Randell et al., 2016; Rice et al., 2021).

As described, the themes of ‘Power and policies perpetuate conformity’ and ‘Rejection undermines belonging’ align with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

It may be argued that the males who are identified as SEMH and have been permanently excluded are not experiencing a sense of autonomy (feeling like they have choice in their world), competency in navigating their education or relatedness (a sense of belonging and connection with others) which in turn decreases their motivation and engagement with their schooling as they are experiencing controlled motivation via pressure from the system to conform, rather than intrinsic autonomous motivation via a sense of autonomy (Ryan &Deci, 2000).

It is important to note that there were no themes regarding explicit protective factors for the inclusion and reintegration of males identified as SEMH and who have been permanently excluded, rather, participants commented on what was needed (i.e. inferring it was currently lacking). This suggests that good practice for reintegration and indeed inclusion is not embedded in the working experiences of the participants, indicating that this is still an area to be improved and built upon. Furthermore, this appears to link to the fact that four out of the five participants found it difficult to recall successful reintegrations for permanently excluded males within their own working roles.

5.4 Aim 3:

To consider what future provision may be supportive for the inclusion of males who are identified as SEMH permanently excluded.

5.4.1 Theme: Bravado: Boys Don't Talk They Fight

(This includes the subthemes Bravado is self-protection to mask emotions, males seek male role models in largely female systems).

Interestingly, the all-female participants attributed 'bravado', a type of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) to the males with SEMH needs who have been permanently excluded. Participants described the need for boys to display a sense of bravado as a form of self-protection to mask their true feelings, particularly if they feel others around them don't care. Participants felt this was used both during the permanent exclusion process and also during reintegration with both adults and peers. The use of bravado may serve to push adults away due to a lack

of trust as well as to self-protect, resulting in the masking of their feelings. The boys may be aligning with groups who partake in social gender norms, with a particular focus on the concept of 'masculinity', seeming to denote strength and 'toughness' in contrast to appearing 'weak' (Johansson et al., 2007; Odenbring, 2019; Randell et al., 2016). Indeed, a participant commented on the fact that society promotes a gendered norm of boys being strong, using the phrase, "Boys don't cry do they?" to illustrate the point. However, as the participants in this research are all female, it is important to consider that there may be an element of stereotyping gender norms, as the participants are viewing the males through a societal gender norm lens, particularly in terms of homogenous masculinity. Certainly, the term 'bravado' appears to align with the stereotypical concept of what it is to be 'masculine' (Johansson et al., 2007; Odenbring, 2019; Randell et al., 2016).

The notion of gender was also discussed in terms of help-seeking for boys and having someone to talk to. One participant felt that pastoral teams are largely female and that this may act as a barrier to males seeking support or wanting to talk. With this in mind, it may be that males face double barriers to SEMH help-seeking due to a sense of masking their feelings to foster a masculine sense of identity and also due to a lack of commonality with a female member of staff.

Participants discussed the use of mentors as support for males; a male who can guide them and with whom they can build a trusting relationship. Trusting relationships was a key theme within the SLR, with four out of the five studies reviewed suggesting that trusted relationships supported reintegration. The studies indicated this could be via a mentor, pastoral support or a trusted adult (Carlile, 2011a; Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Pillay et al., 2013). The key shared characteristic of a trusted adult within the literature, however their role is described, appears to be listening to the pupil without negative preconceptions (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; McCluskey et al., 2019; Pillay et al., 2013).

The characteristics of a trusted adult, as described above, link to the notion of 'unconditional positive regard', which describes the need for adults to view the pupil in a humanistic way, without judgement (Rogers, 1957). Participants felt that adults

within the pupil's educational context needed to see behind the behaviours and take a more holistic view of the young person and their lived experiences.

This suggests that whole school relational approaches should be utilised to support an inclusive ethos for all pupils (Weare & Nind, 2011), which the 'Behaviour and Mental Health' (DfE, 2018) document and Timpson Report (Timpson, 2019) promote, in terms of creating an ethos of understanding, advising staff to explore the underpinning and contributing factors to behaviours, including mental health. This aligns with the Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) regarding the importance of supporting systems on a young person's emotional development, namely whole school staff support systems. However, the 'Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff' (DfE, 2022) document appears to reduce this aspect of developing inclusive ethos with the promotion of 'standards of behaviour' and behaviour policy; aligning with a sense of conformity and highlighting The Timpson Review's (Timpson, 2019) suggestion that national government policies work in isolation rather than systemically.

5.5 Overarching Theme: The system needs support

5.5.1 Theme: The Importance of Multi-Agency Collaboration

(This includes the subthemes: Transition support needed as a bridge and there is not enough preventative graduated, multi-agency support).

The need for unconditional positive regard and actively listening to pupils, embedding relational approaches as a school ethos, requires a sense of flexibility in adult approaches and also school systems and policies, valuing the individual and their circumstances, which contrasts with the rigidness of secondary systems as described by participants within the theme of 'Power and policies perpetuate conformity.' Participants felt that AP and primary settings offered a nurturing environment, with pupils feeling a sense of agency in choice-making, being listened to and supported when needed. However, the participants felt that this created a jarring of environments, as the pupils would either move to a secondary setting in Year 7, after experiencing high levels of support in primary, or transition from AP to

their secondary setting, whereby the secondary system remained the same. One participant felt that this was setting the young person up to fail in a sense, as a secondary setting could not mirror an AP environment. This appears to allude to the inflexible nature of the secondary environment and conformity which may in turn reduce inclusion, (Ball, 2018; Cole et al., 2019; Done & Knowler, 2020; McCluskey et al., 2019). Therefore, transition planning and support from current settings appear to be key in aligning provision between contexts, so the young person has their needs met, via the environment rather than a within-child pressure.

Furthermore, participants described the importance of multi-agency collaboration and early preventative intervention prior to PX, which is a recurrent theme in the literature describing positive approaches to supporting pupils, particularly those who are at risk or have been permanently excluded and have SEMH needs (Hatton, 2013; McCluskey et al., 2019; Timpson, 2019; Weare & Nind, 2011). Multi-agency working supports Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) Bioecological Systems Theory as it implies the importance of those within the microsystem working collaboratively (thus interacting within the mesosystem) to support the development of the pupil. Whole school ethos promoting multi-agency collaboration, including parents/carers, is described as a supportive strategy for pupils who have SEMH needs (Weare, 2000); however, it can be argued that this is good practice for all pupils.

5.5.2 Theme: Adult upskilling

(This theme includes the subthemes: Teacher training supports unconditional positive regard practices, Parental support for engagement and system challenge).

Participants felt that both teachers and parents needed support in order to be able to support their child/pupil, whether that is through teachers developing their understanding of relational approaches or parents receiving support via advocacy or the development of their literacy skills. Supporting teachers may in turn increase their sense of self-efficacy, which as described, can impact upon the type of approaches they utilise when managing their classroom and interacting with pupils (Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Munn & Lloyd, 2005b). Support for teachers may also positively impact their views of the young person, reducing the need for labelling and pathologizing and consequently punitive approaches (Parsons, 2005; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Indeed, a lack of teacher confidence in being able to support a

young person, particularly in terms of their mental health, may reduce the pupil's openness to talk about mental health and as a result, create a barrier to young people seeking support (O'Reilly et al., 2018). It is also important to understand the barriers that staff may face even when they may be feeling competent in their skills, for example, conforming to the system (as previously described in the first theme) or feeling pressured by time constraints, which can mean staff overlook implicit signs a young person may be finding things difficult (O'Reilly et al., 2018; Reicher & Matischek-Jauk, 2019).

The findings within the overarching theme of 'The system needs support' align with the Bioecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) in relation to the need for the interacting systems to collaborate and communicate, both with each other and the young person themselves.

A systemic reflection on school policies and ethos, via whole-school inclusive reflexivity and action planning, may help to support schools which will subsequently support staff, for example, utilising systemic analysis frameworks like forcefield analysis (Lewin, 1951) or appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012). School staff do not work in a vacuum as discussed within the findings of this study and so attention to whole school practice is suggested as a supportive step to inclusivity (Weare & Nind, 2011).

5.6 Summary

The findings from this research suggest that the participants view current secondary academy regimes as conformist, which in turn, can lead to system pressures, perpetuating an ethos of rigidity in policy and practice and mirrors the findings of the SLR in Chapter 1 (see Figure 2.2). This sense of rigidity and system pressure may impact young males who are identified as SEMH, as their needs are potentially unmet, which can lead to permanent exclusion from the rigid system, particularly if school staff feel unskilled or unsupported in their management of the young person's needs and the young person feels demotivated due to lack of belonging and autonomy. In turn, the young male may feel rejected from their educational setting, increasing feelings of social isolation, which may, further impact their emotional wellbeing and disconnectedness. The attribution of 'bravado', described as a barrier

to sharing emotions in the form of self-protection, may further contribute to a sense of isolation and need to seek group belonging elsewhere.

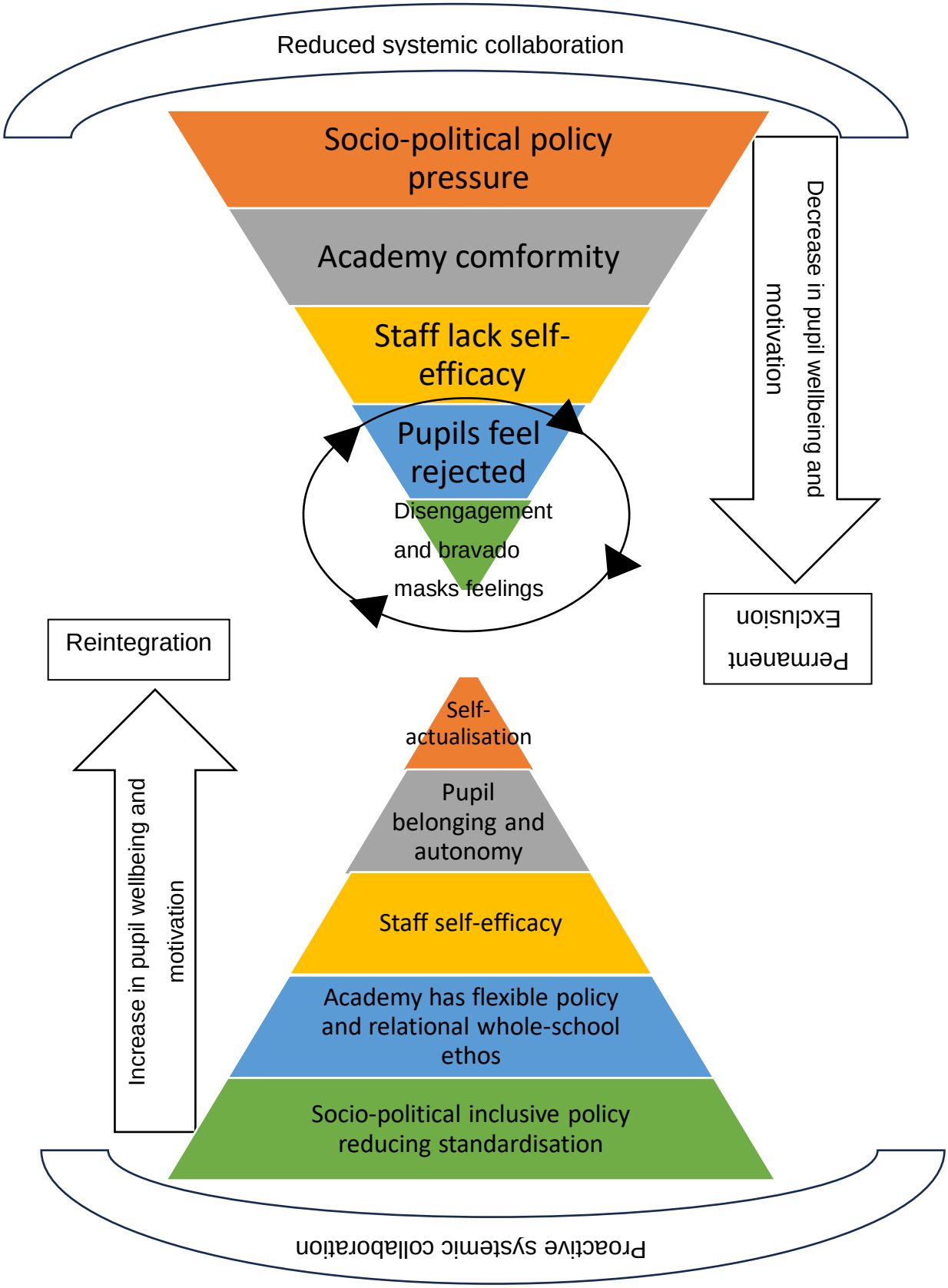
The findings support the psychological theories and models which underpin this research, namely The Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The interaction within the young person's bioecological systems including government policy, school structures, parents and teachers or indeed lack of collaboration as participants expressed, may reduce the young person's sense of belonging or feeling of being supported. Furthermore, the rigid systems of secondary policy and practice may increase a feeling of loss of control or voice, reducing self-determination and motivation, all of which can impact upon a person's wellbeing. This alignment supports Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1945), with respect to the pull of wanting to belong, as well as the notion of alignment of gender norms, namely masculine 'bravado' within peer group contexts.

This research argues that increasing pupil autonomy and sense of belonging through collaborative, flexible and person-centred systems, with adult support for both parents and teachers, may help to punctuate this cycle, reduce PX and increase reintegration, alongside the Government's reduction of school-pressured accountability systems and more rigid behavioural policies.

Below is a researcher-designed model to illustrate the findings of the research in relation to factors which hinder or support male pupils with SEMH needs who have been permanently excluded and seek reintegration.

Figure 5.1

Researcher-designed model to illustrate findings based upon Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation



Note. The model illustrates the systemic factors which can perpetuate permanent exclusion and support reintegration, either hindering or promoting wellbeing and motivation (illustrated by the opposing triangles), in line with the research questions and aims. Although the triangles form a hierarchy as in Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, it should be noted that the interactions are bidirectional and should be viewed in the same way as the mesosystem within Bronefenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) Bioecological Systems Theory.

5.7 Reflexive reflections of research limitations

In line with the focus on reflexivity and in particular RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022), it is important for me to reflect upon my research not only through the active processes of research design and analysis but also upon completion, particularly in terms of the strengths and limitations of the research itself, as well as my own positionality. This section will discuss the limitations of my research in relation to the research design, analysis and my own positionality. Ethics will be discussed reflexively as will the quality and trustworthiness of my approaches and conclusions.

5.7.1 Sampling and Interviewing

Although there is no definitive benchmark for the number of participants required for RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I had hoped for more than five participants, to ensure a breadth of views and data. However, due to the fact my data collection was nearing the end of the school term, I found recruitment more difficult due to the nature of the busy time in schools. Equally, I had hoped to gain a breadth of participant characteristics, for example, differing genders and a spread of ages, but again this was not possible. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that my participants were all female, particularly when the research explores the notion of homogenous masculinity, as the data is from an all-female perspective. In addition, all participants were between the approximate ages of 20 and 50 and were of European ethnicity, presenting as a more homogeneous group. This will have implications for the data, particularly in terms of the lens the participants use to form their views on males, with SEMH needs who have been permanently excluded. Consequently, it could be argued that their views are from a similar socio-cultural characteristic and therefore less representative.

Although a study may have a small sample size, it is the richness of data which is described as important (Braun & Clarke, 2022) as is the selection of participants who may provide this (Mertens, 2014). I feel that the experience of each participant within the male SEMH permanent exclusion context may counterbalance the smaller sample size, as well as the careful consideration of the questions in the semi-structured interview with regards to trying to facilitate the gathering of data-rich responses.

It should also be acknowledged that the participants were all part of a specific Local Authority and so their views can only pertain to that particular context. Due to this, I was highly aware of trying to maintain confidentiality and redact any potentially identifying characteristics whilst trying to maintain credibility and context for the reader. This research did not aim to convey generalisability for its findings, particularly as it is concerned with a small sample size, redacted participant characteristics, one specific Local Authority and qualitative analysis.

The fact that I knew three of the five participants through pre-existing work roles is also a limitation as there is potential for bias in both my approach and maintaining researcher boundaries, as well as participant bias around the potential of giving answers they feel I want to hear. To try and account for this, I made sure I stuck to the semi-structured questionnaire as closely as I could, without it turning into a fully structured schedule (see Section 3.4.7 and 3.4.8 for details of the questionnaire and process). I feel upon reflection, that I adhered to my semi-structured questionnaire quite rigidly due to my awareness of bias, and also nervousness in interviewing in itself. That being said, I feel like this supported my worry with regard to bias, as the questions remained consistent, with the additions of why or other qualifiers to elicit more information.

I feel that my existing relationship with three of the participants supported the building of rapport and helped to ease any nervousness on both sides. However, this may lead to the participant being very open, more so than with an unknown researcher, meaning ethically, I needed to reflect on whether any of the information given may have a detrimental or harmful effect on the participants. I tried to mitigate this by including excerpts in my analysis section and sections of the transcribed

data in my appendices rather than the full transcript; any identifying features are redacted.

A further potential limitation is the fact that the interviews were held via Microsoft Teams an online video platform, rather than in person. This meant that more nuanced body language to aid interview dynamics was lost. To account for this, I tried to focus on the rapport element of the interview dynamic, animating my face and voice, as both my and the participant's cameras were switched on. Again, I feel that my existing relationships supported this for three of the participants and provided ease for me as an interviewer for the remaining two interviews.

5.7.1.1 RTA Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis, I feel was an appropriate design choice, when considering other methodologies and analyses (see Section 3.3.2 for details of other methods which were discounted). RTA allowed me to look at data across a group of participants and create themes based upon my research question, looking for commonalities in views. However, RTA does not allow for the nuances of individualised accounts or outliers which may provide alternative views, which for me is a limitation, particularly if the participants have differing roles within the educational context of males with SEMH needs, PX and reintegration. Individualised accounts may have shone a light on differing perspectives or worldviews. However, I feel that RTA was the most appropriate analysis method for my research question and upon reflection would not have changed this.

As a researcher, I have used thematic analysis prior to this research but it was in the past and so I feel like a beginner researcher, particularly in RTA. However, the step-by-step guidance provided by Braun and Clarke (2022), meant I felt more at ease in the RTA process, particularly as they provide real-life examples of each step. Furthermore, I ensured that I shared my analysis with my supervisor at each step as well as with colleagues to gain their views on my RTA process, including my theme creations. I had a researcher's fear that I was reducing my data and in turn treating my participants in a reductionist way, particularly during the initial coding and theme creation. However, this became a little more comfortable upon further iterations of my analysis and supervisor/peer conversations. To account for this feeling, I needed to make sure that my overarching themes, themes and subthemes were worded

appropriately and encapsulated the meanings of the data groups they represented. The use of Nvivo enabled me to switch easily between themes, codes and the data behind these, which also supported me in trustworthiness as the audit trail is visible.

5.7.1.2 Sensitivity to Context

To account for sensitivity to context (Yardley, 2017), I explored current and historic governmental policy around the areas of permanent exclusion and SEMH so I could develop my understanding of the structures and processes impacting upon my participants socio-politically. Via reflexivity, I noted my thoughts, feelings, assumptions, decision-making and positionality in my research journal, so I was aware and actively acknowledged these whilst conducting my data collection and performing the analysis. Furthermore, I created an audit trail to document my decision-making within the analysis so I could reflect on my interpretations, how they represented the experiences of my participants and the development of the analysis over time.

5.7.1.3 Transparency and Coherence

RTA has come under fire for the nature of its flexible approach, with some arguing that the nature of this flexibility can mean the process is unclear and inconsistent, leading to concerns regarding trustworthiness and rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Byrne, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). As previously described, I also kept a research journal. As a person who journals in their personal life, I found this both crucial to track my research and also as containment for my own feelings. The journal, alongside Nvivo, my paper documents and note-taking means that I have an audit trail of the analysis rationale which is important for transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2017). As well as the auditable aspects of my research and reflexivity of my position as a researcher, I have also made my epistemological position clear which anchors my research in terms of my positionality, assumptions and approaches to research design which Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019) argue, places the research in a clear theoretical framework, thus providing a rationale to the TA approach and findings.

5.7.1.4 Impact and Importance

Whilst the findings cannot be generalisable due to the nature of the small sample size and qualitative methodology, it is hoped that there will be scope for reflection and further thinking for pupils who are identified as SEMH, have been permanently excluded (or are at risk of) and will be part of reintegration processes. Current government review and policy regarding permanent exclusion, suspension and mental health as indicated by guidance and investment (DfE, 2016, 2017, 2018a; DfE & Department of Health and Social Care, 2018; Timpson, 2019) indicates this is still an area for concern and further work is needed to support pupils within these areas.

5.7.1.5 Commitment and Rigour

During analysis, I kept a record of the incremental steps taken in my decision-making and sought both peer and supervisor reflections on my processes. To capture my research journey, thoughts, reflections and decision-making, I kept a research journal as described. I demonstrated commitment through the planning, reflection and multiple iterations of my analysis and research writing, receiving feedback and adapting my research drafts over time.

5.8 Implications for Educational Systems and Practices

The following section will discuss the implications for school settings as well as educational psychology based upon the findings of the research. The next steps will be considered alongside future research suggestions and the contribution the study makes to the current literature base.

5.8.1 Secondary School Settings

There are a number of implications schools can consider when offering support for males with identified SEMH needs who have been permanently excluded. Firstly, developing a whole school ethos around pupil wellbeing (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022), developing pupil autonomy (Cefai & Cooper, 2010) and interacting with pupils in relational ways. The rigidity of policy could be reduced with an inclusive, relational ethos in place. However, this would need to be supported by staff training and upskilling (O'Reilly et al., 2018; Reicher & Matischek-Jauk, 2019) to ensure they feel

empowered in their daily interactions and practices. In addition, the ethos would need to be embedded in all strata of staff in the school from leadership down, to ensure consistency and staff feelings of psychological safety in utilising approaches.

Schools could foster closer collaboration with all agencies to ensure timely multi-agency working is part of their practice, particularly in terms of engaging with parents and carers (Hatton, 2013; Jull, 2008; McCluskey et al., 2019; Timpson, 2019). Due to the nature of secondary schools and older students, it may be that schools find it harder to engage with parents, and so, they will need to consider ways to overcome this potential barrier, as well as consider the literacy skills of the parents and how this may impact their informed engagement in processes, particularly in terms of the PX process itself.

Increasing pupils' sense of autonomy, alongside belonging and feelings of competency in their education may increase their sense of motivation as described in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), thus increasing their engagement in their schooling. Autonomy may be facilitated by the embedding of pupil voice, with pupils seeing the tangible changes, for example, via a School Council. The views of individual pupils may be supported by person-centred processes for example, SEND reviews, but there would need to be care that this was not completed in a tokenistic way but the pupils knew their voice was listened to. However, this would not just be a process-driven practice but should be part of the relational whole school ethos as previously described.

Daily relational approaches also relate to the need for a key member of staff who can build relationships with pupils and provide mentorship, support and pastoral care (Carlile, 2011; Lawrence, 2011). A subtheme of this research describes the need for more male role models/mentors in secondary schools, which is something schools may reflect on, particularly for males with SEMH needs who are at risk or have been permanently excluded. However, it is important to reflect that this aligns with a social binary gender norm, and so, this may inadvertently marginalise others who do not identify with binary social norm structures.

5.8.2 Educational Psychologists

There are a number of implications for EPs. EPs have the skills to work with a school and its stakeholders in both a systemic and individualised way, whether that is with

pupils or staff. This means that we can support the whole school system in reflecting upon their practice and making positive change, for example, utilising systemic change frameworks. This may also entail systemic support in recognising when a pupil may be experiencing challenges which are impacting upon their mental health, in a bid to view the pupil with curiosity, seeing behind the behaviour to the communication. Early identification will be key in being able to offer timely support via a graduated approach to provision.

EPs may also help a pupil who has been permanently excluded from their secondary setting in the transitions they will experience. EPs could offer support whilst they are in the AP, as well as during the transition to a new secondary setting, attending multi-agency meetings and consulting with key stakeholders. EPs are in a position to support the receiving school in viewing the pupil with unconditional positive regard; viewing the pupil as separate to their presenting behaviours and understanding that this is communication, in a bid to further understand their underlying needs, rather than entwining the young person's behaviours as part of their identity and 'who they are'; leading to preconceptions and within-child attributions. Supporting the school to view the pupil with unconditional positive regard could be conducted using consultation skills, as well as advocating for the pupil via their views. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs could be utilised to support schools in understanding the needs of a young person, for example, if they had breakfast and slept the previous night or have adequate clothing.

The use of EP consultation skills and solution-focused approaches would be essential to supporting all adults around a pupil, so they are encouraged to explore, empathise and understand the pupil, promoting connectedness, and belonging (Maslow (1943) and Deci & Ryan (2015)) as well as supportive provision.

5.8.3 Government Implications

There are also government implications to consider, particularly in terms of school policy and accountability measures. Whilst the Government has issued policies around both mental health and behaviour, there appears to be a dissonance with the pressurised nature of assessments, league tables and OFSTED measures (House of Commons Education and Health and Social Care Committees. & Education and Health and Social Care Committees, 2018). The research suggests that this puts

pressure on school systems and staff, which may inform more rigid policy-making. Therefore, there needs to be a wider view of what is happening across our secondary school system in a joined-up manner combining mental health, behaviour and standards agendas, rather than having them potentially working in silos, as indicated by The Timpson Review (2019). Indeed, the suggestions made above from this research align with the recommendations from The Timpson Review (2019), which promotes reflection in terms of what the implications and impact of the report have been since its publication, particularly as PX numbers are described as rising.

5.9 Future Research Propositions

This research has contributed to the literature concerning males identified as SEMH who have been permanently excluded, from the perspectives of educational professionals. As described in the literature review and experienced during the SLR literature search, literature concerning males with SEMH needs who have been permanently excluded and reintegrated is few, particularly when looking at the impact of SEMH on PX and vice versa. The findings align with the literature discussed in the review and SLR, namely, pupils who are permanently excluded may experience feelings of rejection which they try to cover with 'bravado' type presentations in line with societal masculine norms, indicating an impact upon their mental wellbeing, thus SEMH needs can contribute to being permanently excluded and consequently, permanent exclusion can contribute to SEMH needs (Ford et al., 2018).

Future research could look at males identified as SEMH who have been permanently excluded and reintegrated to ascertain their views concerning what supported them or created barriers. This could also be explored more longitudinally to look at outcomes for reintegrated males with SEMH needs in terms of wellbeing, economic income and life trajectories specifically.

Future research could also consider the impact of national policy on mental health, wellbeing and the relationship with permanent exclusion, to create a national picture of what is working and what is not as well as how they interact and complement each other or indeed work in isolation. A review of the implementation of the Timpson (2019) report could also be included here. It is hoped that this could then further

inform educational policy to consider whether current agendas are in fact contributing to positive educational outcomes for all.

5.10 Conclusion

This research sought to explore the perceptions of educational professionals concerning males who are identified as having SEMH needs and have been permanently excluded as well as reintegration. The findings support the literature which describes a relationship between mental health, and permanent exclusion as SEMH needs may precede PX and PX may affect SEMH outcomes (Ford et al., 2019). This was viewed through the lens of rejection, not only rejection from a school in terms of PX but also if reintegration does not happen, which the participants felt it generally did not. The underpinnings of this were described as rigid secondary academy systems, which were highly standardised, in part due to government accountability measures and policy. Participants felt this in turn put pressure on schools, staff and ultimately pupils who were rejected from the school itself.

The importance of the interacting systems was described by participants, aligning with Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), particularly, in terms of the importance of multi-agency working which participants felt was lacking, as well as support and training for both teachers and parents to support self-efficacy and engagement. Indeed, this may mitigate against the feelings of rejection participants feel the boys experience in current systems, by increasing teacher unconditional positive regard and parental empowerment in the system itself.

This sense of rejection was a main theme for boys who have been permanently excluded, as schools appeared to ‘not want them’ in relation to reintegration and thus the feelings of rejection were compounded. Belonging also aligns with both Maslow (1934) and Ryan and Deci (2000) in terms of the need to belong to feel connectedness and thus achieve intentions and motivations. Pupils were described as seeking belonging from other peer groups in the community, those who participants felt shared the same sense of ‘bravado’ in line with a social norm view of masculinity. This was described as not wanting to talk about emotions and partaking in anti-social activities as self-protection; illustrated by a participant’s quote, “Boys don’t cry do they?”

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Appendix 1

Systematic Literature Review Appraisal Table

This review appraisal table details the five studies included in the SLR as well as the accompanying CASP score. The CASP is a 10-item questionnaire which supports the appraisal of qualitative research. Each CASP question asks the appraiser for an answer in relation to the question using, 'yes', 'can't tell or 'no'. The studies had a mix of male and female respondents, either staff, parents or students.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">CASP Appraisal Questions</th><th>Key to CASP numerical data:</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A Are the results valid?
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?</td>
<td>Section B What are the results?
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

Section C Will the results help locally?

10. How valuable is the research?</td>
<td>
<table>
<tr><th>CASP Answer Choice</th><th>Number Assigned</th></tr>
<tr><td>Yes</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Can't tell or limitations</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>No</td><td>0</td></tr>
</table>
<u>Thresholds for Quality Assurance</u>

Low Quality= 0-7
Medium Quality= 8-14
High Quality= 15-20
</td>
</tr>
</table>

Title, Author, Date	Key Question/Research Aims	Sample	Setting	Methodology	Key Findings	Appraisal Information CASP (2018)
Reintegration to secondary education following school exclusion: An exploration of the relationship between home and school from the perspective of parents. Embeita (2019)	To explore the relationship between home and school during reintegration after exclusion from a secondary setting from parents' perspectives.	Purposive sampling 3 parents White British Age: From late 30s to late 40s. Their child had experienced exclusion and reintegration within the previous year (Children Girls n=1 Boys n=2).	Mainstream secondary	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis 3 semi-structured interviews, transcribed by an outside agency.	The parents saw exclusion and reintegration as part of a whole process. There were 3 emergent themes- parent child relationship, parent school relationship, experience of time. The male participant placed the focus on his child for the exclusion and reintegration success, whilst the female participants placed this upon the previous and	17/20

					current school. It was suggested that urgency was needed when an exclusion happened as the exclusion impacts upon life chances.	
What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. Lawrence (2011)	To explore the views of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and mainstream education staff with regards to what makes reintegration successful for excluded secondary pupils.	11 PRU staff members, 6 mainstream staff members, a member of the Behavioural Outreach Service	Pupil Referral Unit and secondary setting	Semi-structured focus groups and Thematic Analysis.	Child Factors- that the young person wanted to return to mainstream schooling. Parental Factors- when parents had shared responsibility for their child's views, they were supportive of their child and engaged with common goals. Systemic Factors- when reintegration was timely, there were clear and regular	16/20

					communication channels and for mainstream to have an inclusive ethos. Barriers to reintegration were absence of the above as well as, the child having ongoing social, emotional or mental health difficulties or lack of peer relationships in the mainstream setting. Systemic barriers were when a school is not inclusive, they hold intimidating reintegration meetings and holding negative perceptions about the child through labelling.	
Docile bodies or contested	This paper aims to examine the	ethnographic study of the	Local Authority	Ethnographic Study with a	The attitude, behaviour,	6/20

space? Working under the shadow of permanent exclusion. Carlile (2011)	experiences of pupils and professionals who are affected by actual or threatened permanent exclusion	people and systems involved in school inclusion, exclusion, prevention, and reintegration Local Authority, based in a large urban multicultural area in England.		narrative analysis of the researcher's field notes drawing upon Foucault (1977).	mental state and intention of the young person becomes an extension of themselves which can be 'controlled' by authoritarian system. This is described as a 'contested space' in which the pathologising of the young person is created to compensate for multi-agency factions.	
Learner's with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education.	The aim of the study was to analyse and describe the reintegration experiences of learners with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (BESD), followed by a resilience-based reintegration	Purposive sampling of 13 learners with BESD, aged between 11 and 14 years old who have been reintegrated back to mainstream schooling from a pupil referral	Secondary School Pupil Referral Unit	A phenomenological enquiry consisting of incomplete sentences, life essays and unstructured interviews. Existing documentation regarding the pupil's support	3 experiences were found: emotions, relationships and reintegration practices. Pride and optimism were promotive factors for the young people whilst anxiety, anger	17/20

Pillay, Dunbar-Krige & Mostert (2013)	programme to aid policy makers and practitioners with the reintegration into mainstream education of learners with BESD.	unit or learning support unit in the last 12 months. Boys n=10 Girls n=3 Parents of the 13 participants, 7 mainstream teachers were asked to fill in questionnaires. Interviews with 3 staff from the PRU and school.		and exclusion were also analysed.	and loneliness were risk factors. There were 3 significant relationship categories: parents, peers and adults in the educational setting. Collaboration was a promotive factor with family strain indicated as a risk factor. Peers could provide attachment to the school and academic support but also have an impeding effect if there were tensions or unconstructive relationships. Promotive adult relationships increased the learner's sense of attachment in	

					the school whilst unconstructive relationships made the young people feel rejected. Gradual reintegration and good communication were promotive factors whilst untimely reintegration, disparity in the PRU and mainstream environments as well as in their ethos were risk factors.	
'I don't need pink hair here.' Should we be seeking to 'reintegrate' youngsters without challenging	The research explored the views of students and staff about reasons for being in alternative education settings, the difference in culture between such	10 young people aged 11 to 16 years old who attend a PRU, mix of male and female (numbers not presented).	Pupil Referral Unit	Semi-structured interviews. Staff were interviewed individually.	Teachers' perspectives- Timing was important in terms of when the pupil was ready to reintegrate. Gradual	15/20

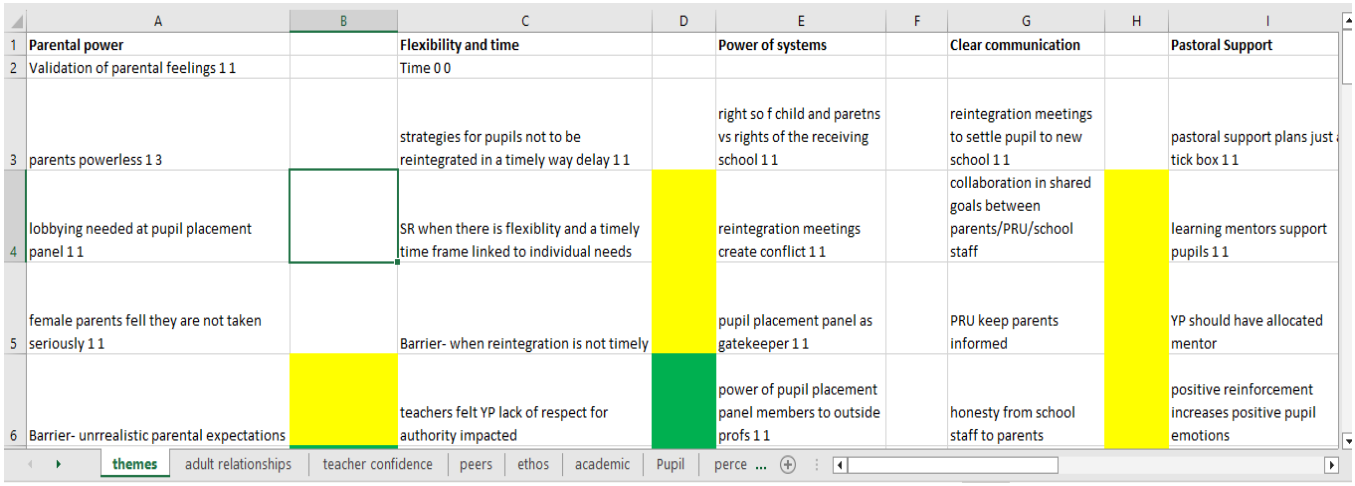
mainstream school cultures? Levison & Thompson (2016)	contexts and those provided by mainstream schools, and feelings about reintegration.	5 PRU staff members consisting of teachers and support staff.		Pupils were interviewed in pairs. Data was collected over 2 years. Ethnographic framework adopted.	reintegration with sensitivity and flexibility. It is important for parents to be actively involved and for pupils to be motivated to reintegrate. Pupil perspectives- transition was a key point of difficulty as well as home life, school moves which could cause isolation and bullying. Academic difficulties and the feeling that they were labelled as 'troublemakers' in their new school were barriers. Primary school was seen as more positive. The PRU made them feel valued,	

					they could walk out of class to calm down, there were smaller classes and gentler teaching styles. There was trust and it felt like a mini-family.	

Appendix 2

Spreadsheet containing themes from the Systematic Literature Review

The codes from the SLR analysis were placed into Microsoft Excel. From this, they were grouped, allowing for the development of themes. The colours related to the originating studies so I had a pathway to the original paper.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	**Parental power**		**Flexibility and time**		**Power of systems**		**Clear communication**		**Pastoral Support**
2	Validation of parental feelings 1 1		Time 0 0						
3	parents powerless 1 3		strategies for pupils not to be reintegrated in a timely way delay 1 1		right so f child and paretns vs rights of the receiving school 1 1		reintegration meetings to settle pupil to new school 1 1		pastoral support plans just tick box 1 1
4	lobbying needed at pupil placement panel 1 1		SR when there is flexiblity and a timely time frame linked to individual needs		reintegration meetings create conflict 1 1		collaboration in shared goals between parents/PRU/school staff		learning mentors support pupils 1 1
5	female parents fell they are not taken seriously 1 1		Barrier- when reintegration is not timely		pupil placement panel as gatekeeper 1 1		PRU keep parents informed		YP should have allocated mentor
6	Barrier- unrrealistic parental expectations		teachers felt YP lack of respect for authority impacted		power of pupil placement panel members to outside profs 1 1		honesty from school staff to parents		positive reinforcement increases positive pupil emotions

themes | adult relationships | teacher confidence | peers | ethos | academic | Pupil | perce ...

Appendix 3

Information Letter sent prior to recruitment

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology

Interview Participant

Title of Project

An exploration into the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-age males who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs (based on the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).

Ethics Approval Number: S1446

Researcher: Emma Hateley emma.hateley@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Victoria Lewis victoria.lewis@nottingham.ac.uk

My name is Emma Hateley, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham. I am currently on placement with XXX Educational Psychology Service. As part of my training, I am conducting research to explore the systems around male pupils who are identified as having social, emotional, mental health needs (as defined by the SEN Code of Practice, 2015), have been permanently excluded and experiences of reintegration back into a mainstream secondary setting. The research has been approved by the Nottingham University Ethics Committee.

I am writing to you to invite you to take part.

Research Aims

My research aims to explore the views of the professionals within the system around male pupils who are identified as having SEMH needs, have been permanently excluded and reintegrated back to secondary school. It is hoped that themes regarding the positioning of those within this context and the factors that support or hinder inclusion will be drawn out to provide insight for future practices.

I hope that the findings will be useful in supporting educational settings to reflect upon the systems which support or hinder young people who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs, as well as inform the ways Educational Psychologists work with educational settings to promote the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional or mental health needs.

I would like to recruit participants who

- Have experience in working with male pupils who are identified as SEMH, have been permanently excluded and reintegrated back to a secondary setting.

The interviews will take the form of a semi-structured interview and will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. Teams will not be used to record the interview. This will be done through a password-protected audio recording device.

The researcher will be in a private, quiet room to allow for full confidentiality.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. All information will be stored securely and will only be used for research purposes. Participant names will be anonymised and any identifiable information shared within the audio recordings will not be included when reporting the results. Once transcribed the audio recordings will be deleted.

The only breach of the confidentiality rule would be if a safeguarding issue was raised during the interview. If this were to happen, Local Authority protocols would be followed.

Disclaimer

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent at any point before or during the study, up until the point that the interview has been transcribed, which will not be earlier than 30th July 2022. If you to withdraw from the study, please use the contact details at the top of this letter. If you choose to withdraw no reason needs to be given and there will be no negative consequences following this.

If you would like me to present a summary of the findings of my study, please let me know and we can arrange this upon completion.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at

emma.hateley@nottingham.ac.uk

If you would like to take part in this study, please complete the consent form attached with this letter and email it to the above email address. After which we can arrange a convenient time to talk.

Thank you for your time in considering my request,

Emma Hateley

Trainee Educational Psychologist

The University of Nottingham

Appendix 4

Participant Consent form

School of Psychology

Interview Participant Consent Form

Title of Project

An exploration into the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-age males who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs (based on the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).

Ethics Approval Number: S1446

Researcher: Emma Hateley

Supervisor: Dr Victoria Lewis

Contact Details *emma.hateley@nottingham.ac.uk*

victoria.lewis@nottimgham.ac.uk

Please answer these questions:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered so you fully understand (if applicable)? YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? YES/NO (at any time and without giving a reason)

- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- I agree to my responses being recorded on paper and digitally. YES/NO
- I understand that I don't have to answer or share anything I don't want to. YES/NO
- Do you agree to take part in the study?
  YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the participant and they have agreed that s/he wants to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date:

Appendix 5

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Upon meeting the participant, I will introduce myself, check their consent and remind them of their right to withdraw or stop the interview.

- *"Hi, thank you for meeting me today and agreeing to take part in my research."*

- *"My research aims to explore the views of professionals who have experience of working with pupils who are identified as SEMH and the exclusion process including reintegration. It is hoped that themes regarding the underpinnings of permanent exclusion and the factors that support or hinder inclusion will be drawn out to provide insight for future practices."*

- *"It also aims to add to the literature base around exclusion and SEMH, particularly as there is a government focus on SEMH and wellbeing and continuing concern regarding the number of male pupils in secondary school who are being permanently excluded. "*

- *"I know you have read and electronically signed the consent form. I would just like to check you are still happy to continue? Are you still happy for me to record this interview on a password protected audio recording device?"*

- *"You can stop this interview at any time or withdraw from this study up until the date of July 30th 2022 when I will have transcribed your interview. If you choose to withdraw before this date, I will ensure that all data is deleted and any notes made as part of my analysis will be shredded and destroyed. You do not need to give a reason for withdrawal and there will be no negative consequences for this. "*

- *"If at any point you feel anxious or worried during the interview, please let me know and we will immediately stop the recording."*

- *"There are a number of support lines that you can access if you feel you require this at any time and they are available on the debrief sheet you have been sent. Have you read the debrief sheet? Do you have someone you can contact if you feel you need to talk about this interview? You can contact me using the details provided for debrief or to ask any questions after this interview."*

- *"Are you happy to start?"*

  The recording will start

Questions for the semi-structured interview.

1)

Rationale	Question/ Prompts
To understand their perception of SEMH	What does the term social, emotional and mental health mean to you? *Can you give me an example?* *In what way…*
Their perceptions of exclusion	Can you tell me what permanent exclusion means to you? How do you feel about the concept of permanent exclusion?
Ascertaining their experience of pupils who have had SEMH needs, been at risk of permanent exclusion and then permanently excluded.	Can you tell me about your involvement or experience with pupils who have been at risk of permanent exclusion and then permanently excluded and are identified as SEMH? *Can you tell me a little more about…* *What do you mean by…* *Is there a difference in…* *Is that similar to..* *Can you give me an example?* *In what way…*
The factors that may contribute to a permanent exclusion	What factors do you feel contribute to males identified as having SEMH needs being permanently excluded? What about school factors? What about home or community factors? *Why may this be?* *Can you give me an example?*

	In what way? *Do you mean?* *Tell me more…*
The supportive factors that may be in place before a permanent exclusion	In your experience, what are the supportive factors that can be or should be put in place for to males who are identified as SEMH and at risk of permanent exclusion? Why do you think this/ these don't always have an effect? Can you give me an example? Do you mean? In what way do you/ does it..?
The processes of permanent exclusion and reintegration	Can you tell me what you know about the process of permanent exclusion and reintegration here at XX Local Authority? Do you have any involvement in this process? If so, what? If not, do you think you should? Can you tell me how you feel about this process and how it is implemented here at xxx Local Authority? *Can you give me an example?* *In what way?* *Do you mean?* *Tell me more…*
The supportive elements of the permanent exclusion and reintegration process	Can you tell me about your experiences of reintegration? What do you find supportive? What do you feel hinders this? What would you define as a successful reintegration?

	Have you had experiences of this in your role? What do you think enabled this success? If not, why do you think this is? *In what way?* *Can you give me an example?* *Do you mean?*
Their perceptions of pupils' views	How do you think males with SEMH view the exclusion and reintegration experience? How do you think males with SEMH are viewed when they have been permanently excluded? What do you think may be important to them during and after this process? How do you feel pupil views are collected and used pre, during and post exclusion? *Can you give me an example?* *Is there a difference between…?*
Thinking of the future	What do you feel could improve the educational experiences of males who are identified as having SEMH needs and have been permanently excluded? If you could describe the ideal environment for a male with SEMH when reintegrating back to mainstream what might that look like? What do you feel are the constraints to this being reality? What could be implemented/ proposed for future planning to support a positive reintegration? *Why do you think…* *Can you give me an example..* *How might that make a difference?*

- *"Is there anything else you would like to add?"*

- *“Is there anything you would like to clarify?”*

  I will now stop the recording.

- *“Do you have any questions?”*
- *“Just to remind you of the contact details of supportive agencies you can contact if needed on your debrief sheet as well as your right to withdraw. “*
- *“Can I just check you are feeling ok after this session?”*
- *“Thank you for your participation in this research.”*
- *“Your interview will be transcribed and analysed with other participants to look for themes. This will all be anonymous.”*
- *“If you would like a copy or summary of my research once completed, please contact me.”*

Appendix 6

Participant Debrief Sheet

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

An exploration into the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-age males who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs (based on the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).

Ethics Approval Number: S1446

Researcher: Emma Hateley

Supervisor: Dr Victoria Lewis

Contact Details emma.hateley@nottingham.ac.uk

victoria.lewis@nottimgham.ac.uk

What happens now?

Thank you for taking part in my study.

I will listen back to the recording we made from the session and type them up onto the password protected computer. I will delete the recording 2 months after the successful completion of the thesis. I will not use your name when typing up the interview and I will not include any specific information that could identify you. This means that no one will be able to identify you outside of your school/Local Authority setting.

I would like to share what you have told me with other researchers to help in understanding how to make schools inclusive for all children. This will be completely anonymous.

I've changed my mind and don't want to take part anymore.

That is not a problem. You can take your information out of the study as long as you let me know. Please contact me and tell me you no longer want to take part. Please tell me as soon as possible, and before *30th July 2022.*

I will then take your information out of the study and delete the recording and all other information you have told me.

After 30th July 2022, I will no longer be able to take your information out of the study.

I feel emotional about something I have talked about. What can I do?

If you feel upset about something we have spoken about, please speak to someone you trust.

If you don't want to talk to someone you know the following support lines may be useful:

https://www.samaritans.org/
https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/helplines-listening-services/

Where can I get more information?

If you have any more questions about the study, please just get in touch with me.

Thank you for taking part.
Emma Hateley

Appendix 7

Chair of Ethics Approval Letter

The University of Nottingham

University Park

Nottingham

NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

6th July 2022

Ref: **S1446 Chair Approval Minor Amendments**

Dear Emma Hateley and Victoria Lewis,

Title of the new project:

An exploration into the permanent exclusion and reintegration of secondary-age males who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs (based on the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).

Applicants: Emma Hateley and Victoria Lewis

Details of the previous study:
Applicant: Emma Hateley
Title: The educational stories told by males who are identified as having a social, emotional or mental health need and have been permanently excluded.
Date of approval: 17/8/21
Reference number (if known):
S1353

As Chair of the Ethics Committee I have considered your request and I am happy to grant approval for the following changes:

List of significant changes in the proposed study. This list should include any changes which could potentially impact on ethical risks of the work e.g. moving from student participants to

vulnerable adults; use of sensitive stimulus materials; changes in remuneration or consent procedures:
1. ….add additional items as necessary

An exploration the permanent exclusion and reintegration to a secondary setting of males who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs (based on the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).
New Research Questions:

- How do the professionals working within the educational system of pupils who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs and have been permanently excluded and reintegrated, position themselves and pupils pre/during and post exclusion?

- What do the professionals working with the educational system of pupils who are identified as having social, emotional or mental health needs view as the supportive or hindering factors to the inclusion of the pupils described above?

Amendments to original proposal:
One pupil narrative interview was obtained as per previous proposal but due to the fact I could not recruit 2 other pupils, I will not be using this interview as I will be changing my methodology and ethically it is felt that it would not be fair to use the obtained interview, as the premise of the consent for this has changed. As I already have the data, requesting consent for the inclusion of it within a new methodology feels coercive and is the reason why all data is now deleted and shredded. New Methodology
I will seek to conduct 6 semi-structured interviews with the adults within the Local Authority's educational and exclusion system:

- Member of the inclusion team- Local Authority
- Principal Educational Psychologist leading social, emotional and mental health within the Local Authority Service
- A CAMHS (Child adolescent mental health service) practitioner
- A member of the senior leadership team from an alternative provision
- A senior leader from a secondary school
- A teacher from a secondary school

The participants above will be recruited through my links within the Local Authority I am currently working within as a trainee educational psychologist. I will send an information sheet (see Appendix 1), consent form (see Appendix 2). A debrief (Appendix 3) will be given after the interview has been completed.
The interviews will be conducted via a Teams online meeting platform and recorded using a password protected audio recording device. There will be no video recorded and the Teams application will not be required to record.
Once the recording has been made, it will be transferred to a password protected laptop for secure storage and deleted from the audio recorder.
Participants will be notified of their right to withdraw at any time up until the data has been transcribed which will be by July 30th 2022.

All GDPR standards as per my initial ethics application still stand.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site.

Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Jackson

Chair, Ethics Committee

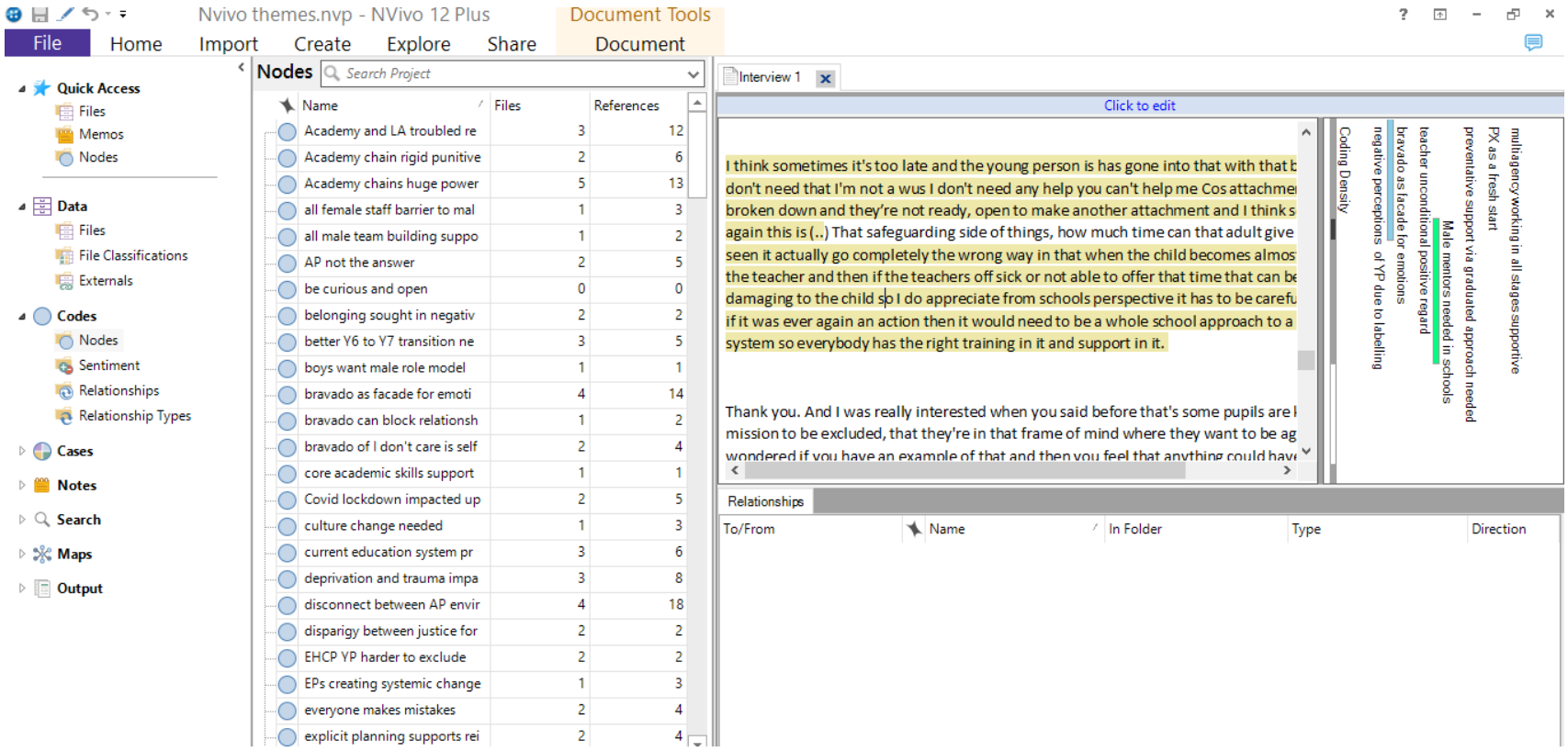
Appendix 8

Graphic note-taking examples for Fiona and Rachel (pseudonyms).


Interview 3
Not coming back
PX
Severe
Can't meet needs
Jepodised SAFETY
SCHOOL PRACTICE
Right thing to do
imbalance
Legislation
School action
more transparency
Guidance
Graduated Approach
FUNDING
sad
SCHOOL GOV MEETING
IMPARTIAL
parent advocate
parent views
LA rep
Question
Why am I here?
following
Reflection Room just doodling
reviews
SENCO
OCD SEMH
friendships
Disorders anxiety
struggling
low mood anger
strict compliance
up to date
Agencies
tailoring to pupils likes
Persistent or one-off
lack of consistency
confusing
OFSTED
PRESSURE
more choice
love it
less rules
smaller hands on activities
AP
RULES
Secondary
Different rules bigger
hard transition
SECONDARY CAN'T MIRROR
REDUCING TIMETABLE
1:1 tuition
flexibility
Doesn't solve problem
miss interventions
BANK of STRATS
more comm
Staff visits
BARRIER
LACK of PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT
PARENTING SKILLS
upskilling
support est by school
Bad experiences of school cycle
Conform
STAFF ALL WOMEN
Need more males
Males
Don't speak to adults
Comm outwards
shouting
punching
Don't seek help
I want male role model
mentor
SPORTS
male led intervention
Wellbeing officer
males don't go
GENDER IDENTITY
environment
plan doesn't happen
PX low reading age
disengaged
REINTEGRATION
Plan collab
flexible
belonging
LA School relationships need funding

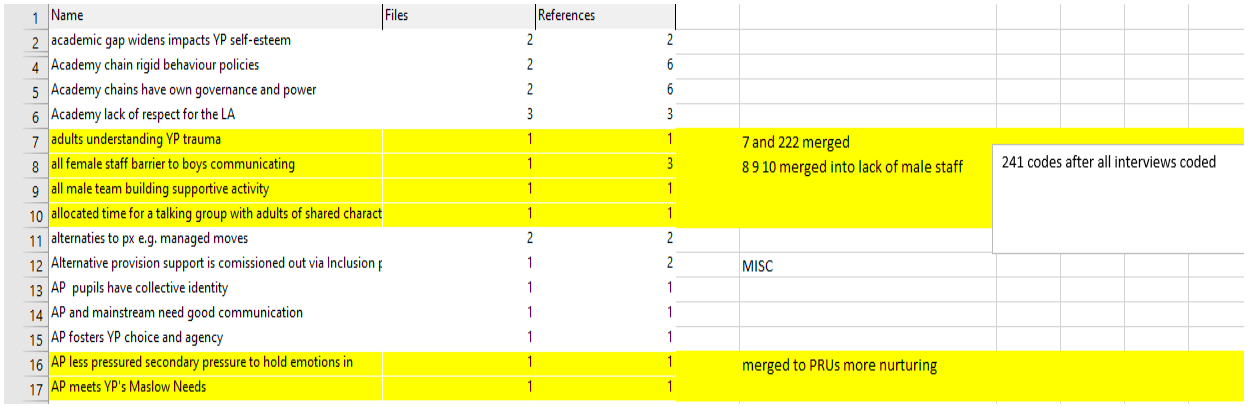
Appendix 9

Screen shot of Nvivo coding screen



Appendix 10

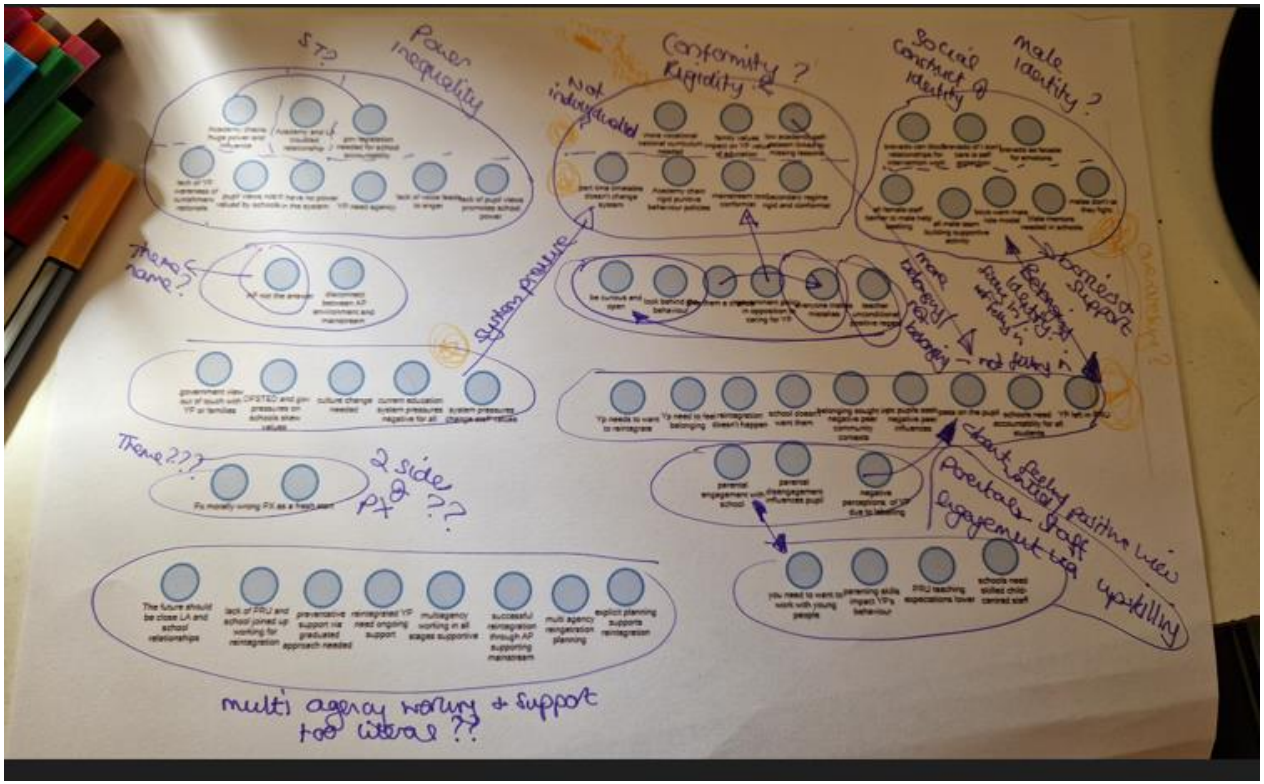
Screen shot of excel spreadsheet tracking code decisions



	Name	Files	References			
2	academic gap widens impacts YP self-esteem	2	2			
4	Academy chain rigid behaviour policies	2	6			
5	Academy chains have own governance and power	2	6			
6	Academy lack of respect for the LA	3	3			
7	adults understanding YP trauma	1	1	7 and 222 merged		
8	all female staff barrier to boys communicating	1	3	8 9 10 merged into lack of male staff	241 codes after all interviews coded	
9	all male team building supportive activity	1	1			
10	allocated time for a talking group with adults of shared charact	1	1			
11	alternaties to px e.g. managed moves	2	2			
12	Alternative provision support is comissioned out via Inclusion p	1	2	MISC		
13	AP pupils have collective identity	1	1			
14	AP and mainstream need good communication	1	1			
15	AP fosters YP choice and agency	1	1			
16	AP less pressured secondary pressure to hold emotions in	1	1	merged to PRUs more nurturing		
17	AP meets YP's Maslow Needs	1	1			

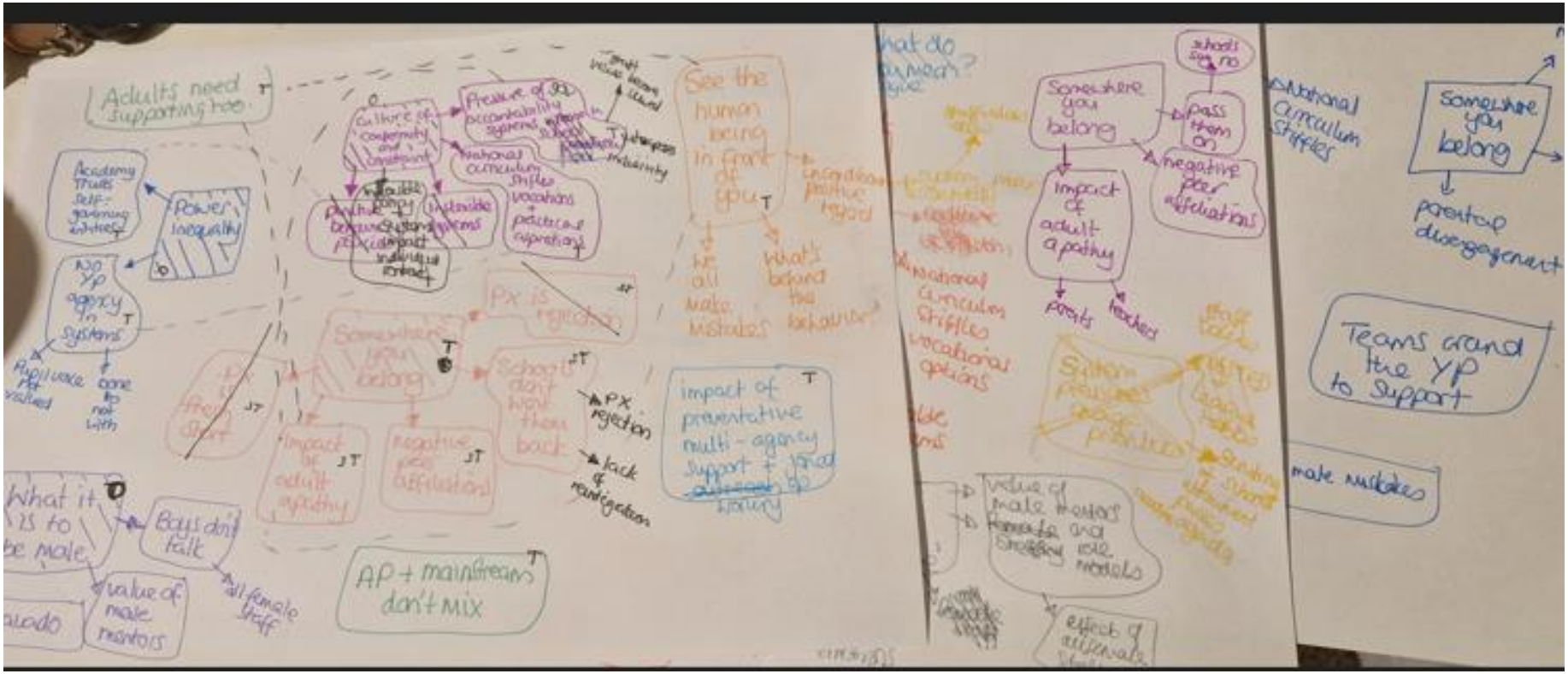
Appendix 11

Coding name drafting example using Nvivo clustering



Appendix 12

Initial thematic map drafts drawn by hand



Appendix 13

Overarching themes, themes and subthemes with final code clusters and data extracts

Overarching Theme	Theme	Subthemes	Text excerpt examples	Clustered and collapsed codes and participant spread
Power inequality and rejection supports PX and prevents successful reintegration	Power and policies perpetuate conformity	Pupils have no voice or agency in the system The power of academy trusts Academies have rigid regimes The pressure of government policy and accountability moulds school systems and staff	Participant 3 When they're in the reflection room and you're trying to get them to conform to us a little bit more… Participant 5 I think, I think they're much more rigid in terms of all their paperwork and stipulations and it's very black and white in terms of, if a child does this then this happens and they cannot be in our school. They cannot join in the way all the other children join in. They cannot sit in lessons, they cannot sit with their legs crossed, fingers on their lips down the corridor, very very regimented from what I've seen, what I've experienced in some of those schools but I think they are run more like a business as well.	Secondary regime rigid and conformist (4) OFSTED and government pressures skew staff values (4) Academy chains have power and influence (5) Young people have no voice in the system (3) Pupil views not valued by the system (5) Young people need agency (5)

			They have their systems that they are very very rigid in… Participant 2 I would. Sorry, just to say Academy chains as well. Absolute bonkers. Sanction heavy behaviour policies where the academies feel the right to permanently exclude school children for setting off a fire alarm, or doing something ridiculous…they do have really, really rigid sanction led policies, and then literally look down a list. I can permanently exclude for that. My behaviour policy says that I could probably exclude for that. Participant 4 Cause another part of this is again league tables cause if I'm a Headteacher, it doesn't matter how much I love children or how much I care about them becoming good adults, if I am being hammered by the government telling me my school is not good enough because the children don't get good enough grades in English and I have my governors pushing at my back, like, it is	

			very easy for me to change my mind about my principles Participant 2 Ofsted expectations on schools as well, so that's that, fuels the Academy chains being ridiculous really put less targets on schools in terms of academic outcomes. Whilst we always want those standards for young people, we want it through teaching and learning, not through, you know, beating them over the head with a bat, we really do, so I think the government needs to understand. Participant 2 And I also think when we're looking at big Academy chains and you know they are quite a monster to battle with and definitely after families. Academy trusts have zero respect for local authorities and zero respect for services cause they're their own beast, so they don't have to have. Participant 4	

			Yeah I think Academisation has been a huge problem and it will continue to be a huge problem because the government has decided that academisation is the perfect thing to do. You see it in in the indoctrination of the staff. I think for me, that is the most dangerous and worrying aspect of the, of academisation. Is the, this is the way we do it and you have to do it this way, which, don't get me wrong, I'm sure happened before, you know, then the schools would have their own individual ways of doing things, but I think the problem is, that now it's not one school, now it's for example, 2 schools that are, or three schools in a Local Authority. 3 secondary schools in a Local Authority is a huge percentage of the children of that area being taught, being managed, being subjected to the same system and if that system had the problems we have been talking about in terms of you know, not seeing children, seeing children as grades machines shall we say, then that's a huge proportion of children that are made to inhabit a system that is not conducive to their mental health and their wellbeing. Participant 4	

			. So I don't think it's about collecting their views I think it's about the fact that the process doesn't care about what children have to say Participant 5 I've not seen any views taken into account. Most often pupils don't have (…) so unless they've been given time by SEN I've rarely seem pupil views being taken into account or there's no evidence of it when they come to us, in the paperwork and that's something we do collect at (XXX) PRU, pupil's voice, convey what the pupils think of being here and what they want but I don't believe pupil views are sought. Participant 1 I find it very scary, it's almost like we wouldn't, there's only judges that can put someone on a mental health act or that can put somebody in prison, yet we have teachers and governors who can make such a, such a huge stage in a child's life.	
Power inequality and rejection supports PX and	Rejection undermines belonging	Within-child labelling prevents	Participant 4 but then the consequences for the child are the same because it doesn't matter if	Pass on the pupil (3)

prevents successful reintegration		unconditional positive regard Belonging if found within marginalised groups Schools don't want them	they have had a permanent exclusion or not, they have been in an AP for 12 weeks, and no other school really wants them either. So it's just a cycle of throwing the sack basically and the child is the sack. They go from one place to another, to another, to another, until, until and this is the thing, someone is willing to work with them. But the problem is, more and more, it is hard to find a place that is willing because it's easier not to. Participant 5 Researcher: Have you got any example of reintegration for males at all? 5: No. No. Not in my experience anyway, not in my experience. Researcher: That's really sad 5: Yeah but I think when they reach the PRU stage you know they don't reintegrate back. Which is sad yep. Participant 1 I worked with a young boy actually who was in a specialist unit he eventually got an EHCP but he did three before he got his EHCP for alternative provision, bounced from one to the next and again I was feeling there was social emotional but a	Negative perceptions of pupil due to labelling (5) Schools don't want them (4) YP left in PRU (1) Young people need belonging (4) PX pupils seek marginalised peer influences (5)

			neurodevelopmental disorder that was never diagnosed and all they saw was a boy who was unregulated but hey I would be unregulated if there were three secondary schools over four years… Participant 2 It's being understanding and understanding that if they're permanently excluded they're not going to be a straightforward pupil, they're actually going to need additional support, and recognising them as yours… Participant 5 Here is what we have but at the moment it's battles trying to push back and say no. Mainstreams need to be accountable… Participant 4 the kids. I can tell you one one, this is how pathetic it is, I have one example of a successful reintegration following the permanent exclusion that I've worked with out of you know three or four years in this job. And it was a boy who have been permanently excluded from their primary school they had an educational healthcare plan and they went to one of	

			our special schools, special provisions for a couple of years, and then the child said, “want to go back to my local mainstream school,” and he was listened to, and the specialist the special school he was attending worked really hard with the child’s local mainstream school to reassure them, support them in understanding this child etc etc, to give this boy a chance of accessing the local mainstream school and the boy went and because the boy really wanted to be there and was very invested in this he was successful, despite the mainstream school trying to find any reason for him not to be successful.	
Power inequality and rejection supports PX and prevents successful reintegration	Bravado: Boys don’t talk they fight	Bravado is self-protection to mask emotions Males seek male role-models in a largely female system	I don’t care you know, doesn’t really matter, well at least I don’t have to go to school anymore and it’s almost like that kind of, we don’t care about you now I don’t care about me and once they’re kind of, especially young males, I find, the ones who have got that kind of bravado in their head, there’s no shifting, no breaking that wall back down again Participant 2	Bravado masks feelings (5) Boys don’t seek support they fight (2) All male staff mentors (3)

			And of course to start over again in mainstream school they have to up their bravado by 10-15% don't they, so you know, 'I've got to make my way in a new school', so they probably find that quite intimidating Participant 5 With peers in mainstream it gives them that kind of persona of being you know the bad boy and they're quite intimidated by them and it gives them a bit of street credit in a sense.	
The system needs support	The importance of multi-agency collaboration	Transition support needed as a bridge There is not enough preventative, multi-agency support	Participant 4 think we over rely on alternative provision. So this local authority seems to believe sending a child for six or 12 weeks to an alternative provision is going to solve all the problems and will support them reintegrating back into mainstream, which based on the evidence of the casework I support I I would say that's not true so I think there is a massive there is a massive issue with AP Participant 5	Preventative support via graduated approach (4) Disconnect between AP and mainstream (3) Difficulty in transition from Year 6 to Year 7 (3) Multi-agency working beneficial (4) Lack of PRU and mainstream joined up working (2)

			Being in a pupil referral unit is detrimental to all pupils' social, emotional mental health. Participant 3 We've worked with XXX. And quite closely in the past, that's an alternative provision where some of our students go three days a week where they'll cope, amazingly because of the small groups and you know the staff student ratio being really small and that support really, they've got a lot more support because there's so fewer students there and then obviously, when they were coming back to us at XXX, they weren't coping at all, cause they're doing three days there 2 days with us; Rules are completely different. Obviously we will try our hardest to mirror what we can but when you've got a school at 1200 students, just, you can't mirror it exactly. They enjoy it, they're enjoying the work and they haven't got to wear uniform. They can have their mobile phones out and they've got probably a little bit more independence and then they come to us	

			and it's for them- right back to rules now back to no nails back to no make or back to full uniform back to big classes and even when you put them in, you know in nurturing environments, they're still not coping because it's completely different. So although the APs do really, really help us and the students do thrive, if it's not full time I find it really, really challenging actually, because you can't mirror that completely in a mainstream setting, so I think that's something that I think the local authority have realised…. They go there, back to mainstream then they'll end up getting excluded, because things are so different and it's hard for them they go to alternative provision cause they're not coping anyway, and then you think that you are kind of helping them out a little bit but actually it's probably making things a little bit worse because it's so different for them isn't it? Participant 2 so I think that we need a lot more consultation with professionals that do work with those pupils, and I think they	

			also need a lot more consultation with those pupils and families as well. I think it's every professional's responsibility to ensure that wrap around services are there Participant 4 he is now after a lot of conversations parents, PRU, the local authority, teachers and with everybody he is now being given tuition he accesses that tuition in one of in his local secondary school Participant 1 great we can make that referral into CAMHS without accessing us from a completely different perspective, where so much earlier on they could be saying to us, they've come into Y7 and they're just not settled enough, can we just maybe get some more information off you, what's been the background? Can we do a bit of information sharing, gathering. What advice would you give us at this stage and its, we definitely feel	

			as a service we get missed from that point Participant 2 We do a triage process if we know that straight away those pupils actually just school needs to do a lot more before we're considering placing children anywhere. Then we send those back with recommendations and services to support, such as our outreach service, EPs, etc. Participant 3 But yeah, definitely it's just more communicating between the AP 's and schools I think. Participant 1 I feel like before they get admitted to (PRU) I'd be best off doing an observation in class and seeing this for myself and trying to unpick it, rather than putting a kid in a very different setting. Participant 2 It's terrible because there's no crossover,	

			there's no transition back. There's no work with the AP and the mainstream and it's similar with us as well, there's no work with me and the mainstream.	
The system needs support	Adult Upskilling	Teacher training supports unconditional positive regard Parental support for engagement and system challenge	Participant 2 And definitely really high-quality SENCO and inclusion staff are absolutely key for these young people and I really think there's very few schools that have that, so that's really important. Participant 1 Sometimes in the families that we're working with, the parents might not even read or write. If they do, they might not have comprehension to understand some of the process, Participant 3 So I think it's about getting, you know, getting the parents in schools used to be like an integral part of the community. Some schools I've worked in they've offered courses for parents, for numeracy and literacy so that they can help the child with homework and things. But I don't think that I never see that done,	Supporting parents to make changes (4) Parental engagement important (4) Parent skills important (3) Schools need skilled staff (4) Give them a chance using curiosity (5)

			Participant 4 If the child and young person likes their teacher, they are less likely to be a pain in the ass. If you don't like your teacher, you are most likely to shout out, punch somebody, throw a table or whatever it is, so for me that is the biggest supportive factor- Relationships. Schools need to like the children they have in their care and they have to support them and they need to care for them and they need to know them and the children need to know that all of those things happen. Participant 1 and have done what I'm saying about getting that formulation, that information from the family and passing that on to the school, it didn't work here, a line was crossed, however we know all this information, we know all this trauma that the child experiencing we know you as a school are now trauma informed,	

Appendix 14

Reflexive box taken from the researcher's research journal, describing reflections regarding the semi-structured interview process

I have just completed my first interview with XXX. It felt less nerve-wracking beginning with XXX as I know her from my TEP work but I still was nervous (about the interview and the technology working!) I think I stayed very close to the research question, more so than I thought I would, because I was hyper-aware of our pre-existing relationship and took on the role of the 'researcher'. I think this is also probably down to my nerves and the fact that it was my first interview and I hope my confidence will increase the more I interview, and I will feel more comfortable with the flexibility that comes with semi-structured interviews. I feel like I could have probed more and this is something I will think about in my next interview. But I do feel that my working relationship with the participant supported initial rapport building and in a way helped to quell my nerves somewhat.

After the interview I was buzzing with excitement as I had data! I felt despite my more structured approach to the interview schedule, hearing her views was fascinating and elements of my literature review were pinging in my head with some of the points raised. I need to make sure I am aware of this however, as I don't want to lead in the next interview in any way, and my analysis looks at themes across participants not individually.

Appendix 15

Reflexive box taken from the researcher's research journal, describing my thoughts and feelings regarding the data collection and initial analysis process

Reflexivity Box (from reflexivity journal)

During my reading of the data, I was aware of the feelings I had when a comment was made that I agreed with. It felt like a 'yes!' moment but then I stopped. Where was my positionality as a researcher and professional who works within the system I am exploring? Are they 2 separate entities or one? I don't feel that I can wholly separate how I view the data from my trainee experience but it will be important to reflect on the assumptions this brings. I have always held the thought that permanent exclusion should not be an option for schools but the data discuses Px as 'fresh starts'. I still find this hard to reconcile; couldn't fresh starts be made without the label of PX?

I am finding the initial reading fascinating but I must admit I feel overwhelmed. There feels like there is so much data. I need to keep in mind that I am approaching this systematically and with the research question at the core of the data I ascertain as meaningful. There is trepidation in terms of researcher choices and subsequent interpretation via coding, as I am a new researcher. But I think this is where the importance of my reflexive journal is key as I can keep reflecting and checking upon not only the process but also my assumptions, emotions and viewpoints and how they may be impacting upon the data analysis.

Appendix 16

Reflexive box taken from the researcher's research journal, describing my thoughts, feelings and decision-making during a part of the thematic development.

Reflexivity Box (from reflexivity journal)

Developing my themes has taken so much longer than I anticipated and I have needed to take a break, move away and return to them to support my thinking, any fogginess and clarity. I have found the process of moving between stages in RTA in an iterative way has been key to this- making sure I am checking, not only the data but also my own positioning and emotions to make sure there is interpretation but this is based upon the data (and to some extent the literature as I know the process can't be purely inductive) and not my unconscious bias (which I think is different to the bias mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2022) as I don't mean interpretation but rather checking my confirmation bias. Switching through the stages to check and reflect has definitely been needed. Drawing and redrawing thematic maps and making notes on the printout clustering of codes from Nvivo has been a good way to keep a track of my thinking systematically. The person who needs to finish things held inside me is trying hard to sit with the uncertainty of qualitative analysis and RTA, particularly knowing that there is never a 'finished product' in a sense. I have to say though, I am enjoying exploring the data so much and developing the themes and links. Thinking of pupils who I have worked with and elements of the data that resonate with them puts the fire in my belly to continue exploring and hopefully suggest ways forward to support these young people.