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Citation

Brennan, Jennifer (2023). A small-scale qualitative study to explore Scottish mainstream teachers' engagement with identifying Additional Support Needs. Student dissertation for The Open University module E822 Masters multi-disciplinary dissertation: education, childhood and youth.

URL

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SSI: Title

A small-scale qualitative study to explore Scottish mainstream teachers' engagement with identifying Additional Support Needs.

Abstract

This small-scale research uses Bourdieu's habitus and four forms of capital to explore the intersection of class, gender and race on Scottish mainstream teachers' perceptions of identifying Additional Support Needs (ASN), specifically focussing on dyslexia. Teacher perceptions were explored through narrative interviews as these facilitate the sharing of each participant's unique experiences, beliefs and views while simultaneously ensuring that the teachers who participated could direct and shape the research. The findings suggest that teachers recognise the gendered experiences of learners. However, they were potentially less aware of the impact of class and race when identifying an ASN or engaging with the dyslexia identification process. However, further research would be required to determine if these findings are applicable more widely across Scotland.

Chapter 1- Introduction

The Scottish Government frames education as the conduit to a fairer, more socially just and equal society. Literacy is constructed as the pathway to success across all areas of learning and as an essential life skill (Scottish Government, 2008). Curriculum for Excellence is designed to reflect these aims and to develop the four capacities in learners to create this fairer, more inclusive and socially just society. The four capacities create; successful learners, effective communicators, responsible citizens and confident individuals (Education Scotland, 2022).

However, Riddell (2009) argues there is a divergence between the Government's aim and the educational experience of learners with ASN. The key theme of this research is therefore to explore if literacy, assessment and inclusive practice are a conduit or a barrier to social justice and equity within education. Dyslexia is a barrier to learning literacy and a possible source of inequality in education. Dyslexia

Scotland (n.d.) suggest that 10% of the population is dyslexic and therefore this can be extrapolated to suggest that 10% of learners should also be dyslexic. Barbiero *et al.* (2012) argues that dyslexic learners are statistically at greater risk of academic underachievement and are statistically more likely to leave education at the earliest opportunity as opposed to progressing to further or higher education.

An aspect of my role is to oversee the dyslexia identification process within mainstream schools. I work in tandem with mainstream class teachers to gather evidence to support dyslexia identifications. Requests to assess a learner for dyslexia are generally prompted by their class teacher or received from a concerned parent. When I started this research, I was based within two mainstream primary schools located in one of the nine Scottish local authority areas categorised as a Scottish Attainment Challenge Authority (Scottish Government, 2016). This label reflects the entrenched levels of deprivation and low educational attainment within those areas. My own experience suggests that within these settings, dyslexia identifications were lower than would be statistically expected. Professional dialogue with colleagues suggested families in their settings experienced inter-generational literacy difficulties. The teachers in my schools were fully committed to social justice for their learners. However, I pondered possible reasons why they were not referring more learners to be assessed via the dyslexia identification process.

Inspired by Riddell and Weedon (2017) I recognised within my practice I had been influenced by the intersection of social class and gender when assessing learners for dyslexia. When working with two learners, one boy and one girl, I identified the girl with dyslexia but suggested the boy be referred to a partner agency for an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) identification. Riddell and Weedon argue that class, race and gender can influence teachers to identify dyslexia for middle-class learners. Yet, literacy difficulties in learners from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to be explained as a result of their different 'other' social and cultural practices (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). My research therefore relates to exploring if the social constructs of class, gender and race influence Scottish mainstream teachers' engagement with the dyslexia identification process. Each of these

categories are created by powerful groups in society and are therefore neither fixed nor naturally occurring (The Open University, 2021a). I have chosen to use the term 'Black' and 'white' when discussing race to attempt to recognise and invert the traditional unequal power positions of these groups (Appiah, 2020). This approach reflects the usage of these terms by authors within my literacy review whose work has shaped my ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods.

This research reflects the themes of social justice and inequality in education via exploring teachers' experiences which may inform their perceptions of learners who experience literacy difficulties. Thus, this research can direct our focus to the unrecognised powerful structures and assumptions that influence teacher practice and pedagogies. These in turn inform learners' scope to deploy their agency and concurrently shape learners' experiences of social justice and equity with education (The Open University, 2021b).

However, this research will be a small-scale investigation into teachers' engagement with identifying ASN in Scotland with a specific focus on dyslexia. It is unlikely to therefore identify widespread pedagogical, assessment or policy changes. However, the narrative interview approach can provide space for teachers to reflect on their practice. They can potentially identify changes to their pedagogy which can encourage greater social justice, inclusion and equity for learners.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

My epistemology, ontology and methodology for this research have been influenced by the academic literature I have read both across this and previous modules (Clark, 2022). As a result of the literature review, I recognise that I am working within an interpretivist paradigm while also including aspects of a critical theory approach as I have a desire to both understand and change practice. This review of literature inspired my application of Bourdieu's four forms of capital and habitus as a conceptual framework (Skeggs, 1997). Furthermore, by reviewing the literature I was inspired to develop my previous interest in the impact of class, race and gender on life chances. This chapter will also detail the evolution of my research as a result of the literature review. Inspired by Skeggs (1997), Crenshaw (1991) and Riddell and Weedon (2017) I have developed the following two research questions.

To what extent does the intersectionality of class, gender and race inform teachers' engagement with the dyslexia identification process?

To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and four forms of capital support understanding of how this occurs?

Background

While planning this research I recognised that I identified with the interpretivist paradigm. The critical theory approach inspires the problematising of every-day activities that can mask inequality within society (McLaren, 2007). Furthermore, critical theory aims to understand and change society. As school reflects society, a critical theory approach can be applied to education to identify inequalities. This identifies a tension as the Scottish Government construct education as a conduit to social justice (Riddell, 2009).

Narrative interviews encourage each participant to share their unique experience. This supports researchers to gain an insight into their practice while simultaneously providing space for the participant to reflect on their practice (McCormack, 2004). Therefore, I identified that a narrative interview would be an appropriate tool to

support the inclusion of authentic participant voice and to gain an understanding of the experiences of my participants (McCormack, 2004 and Soler, 2012). In order to suggest changes to policy or practice requires an understanding of the experiences of those who work within those parameters set by the policies and practices of their settings (Mercer, 2007 and Costley *et al.*, 2010). However, given the small-scale and specific nature of my study it is unlikely that this research will create widespread change. It may however, provide space for my participants and myself to reflect on and amend our own practice as well as informing my doctorate research.

While undertaking previous study I developed a keen interest in social justice and the impact of social class and gender on the ability to exercise agency within the structures of society. McLaren (2007) argued that a critical theory approach provides a framework to problematise the taken-for-granted, everyday practices that structure society. McLaren, highlights that these practices benefit some groups while simultaneously concealing the marginalisation of others. A critical theory approach therefore encourages identifying the unequal power of different groups within society (Foucault, 1994). Riddell (2009) argues that Scottish education is constructed as a conduit to social justice. As there are subordinated groups in society, there are similarly marginalised or subordinated groups within education. I therefore aim to apply critical theory to education with the intention of identifying if all learners have equal access to the dyslexia identification process or if this is a site of marginalisation and subordination.

Freire: Literacy as a conduit to empowerment

Freire (1972) argued via a critical pedagogy paradigm, that literacy was a route to empowerment for the impoverished Brazilian agricultural workers he studied. At the start of this research, my settings were in one of the nine local authority areas classified as Scottish Attainment Challenge Authorities due to socio-economic deprivation and consistent under-performance in national exams (Scottish Government, 2016). Therefore, Freire's work appeared pertinent. He proposed that literacy can provide the tools to challenge the status quo and bring about a more

equal society. This argument that literacy is the conduit to equity, embedded my interest in studying dyslexia as a literacy-based learning difference and the impact of the identification process on a learners' attainment.

If, as Freire (1972) argued literacy is a route to empowerment then learners with dyslexia within my settings may be doubly disadvantaged due to their literacy-based learning difference and the poverty of their socio-economic background. Dyslexia Scotland (n.d.) suggest one in every ten learners will have dyslexia which equates to approximately three in every classroom. However, I was aware that within my settings, statistics were approximately one dyslexic learner per class. Therefore, I began to develop an interest in researching the disparity between my settings and statistical expectations.

The Scottish Government (2020), recognise the importance of an early identification of dyslexia. Therefore, inspired by government policy and Freire (1972), the initial focus of my research was at which stage or year group would a learner be referred to complete the dyslexia identification process. My aim was to improve both teacher engagement with the process and outcomes for learners. Inspired by Bishop *et al.* (2009) I reflected on the challenges experienced by Māori learners in an educational environment that did not reflect their cultural background. Furthermore, they argued students' voice was lacking in authenticity as elders of their community spoke on their behalf. This inspired the use of narrative interviews in this research to support my participants to authentically use their voice and share their experiences (McCormack, 2004 and Mercer, 2007). I pondered if Freire's argument that improved literacy skills lead to empowerment could effectively explain the marginalised position of Māori learners and the learners in my settings.

A critical theory approach would suggest that Māori learners' marginalisation was the result of their different cultural background and the tension this created with a western influenced educational system. Inspired by Bunnis and Kelly (2010)

I recognised that this work contributed to my developing ontology as it illustrated the different realities of students and their elders. My epistemology was also evolving as Bishop *et al.* (2009) highlighted the diverse understandings within the education system. The Māori learners' and their Elders had different articulations of education. My methodology therefore began to develop within the interpretivist paradigm to a desire to understand each participant's experience and that a narrative interview was an appropriate method to capture these.

Freire (1972) addressed class inequality in his work. However, educational inequality as the result of different gendered experiences of men and women was not considered. Therefore, his work did not support me to fully understand the ongoing, entrenched nature of inequality that I observed within my settings and within my practice. This awareness and the government's recognition of the ingrained nature of under achievement within my previous settings was the stimulus for my literature review concerning dyslexia and inclusive practice.

Literature review

Inspired by the above literature I progressed to identifying specific articles to develop an understanding of contemporary research and theories concerning dyslexia and inclusive practice. This would inform my ontology, epistemology, methodology and shape my research. I was aware that due to the volume of research on inclusive practice and dyslexia that search results could be unmanageable. To address this, I carefully considered my search criteria. Inspired by Cunningham (2018) I used a Boolean search as suggested by The Open University (2021b) with the search parameters of 'teacher perceptions' and 'inclusive practice' with the date range 2015-2022. This returned approximately 17,500 articles which was excessive. Therefore, I amended the search criteria to 'teacher perceptions' and 'dyslexia' which reduced the number of articles identified but remained excessive. I narrowed the search terms to 'dyslexia identification' and 'teacher perceptions' with a one-year date range.

This resulted again in more articles than could be consistently reviewed. I was also concerned that a one-year date range would insufficiently provide depth and breadth.

At this stage I decided to identify research journals I had previously found useful. However, this was also a frustrating and time-consuming process as each journal had to be searched individually. To identify literature that was meaningful and of a manageable volume, I returned to Cunningham (2018) and identified 20 potential articles. This directed me to Gibbs and Elliot (2015) who argued that a dyslexia identification was not useful to teachers. However, teachers cited in the article did discuss that they found dyslexia identifications useful to identify beneficial pedagogies. This highlights, as discussed by Cohen *et al.* (2018) that ethical researchers should ensure that their findings reflect the participants' views and are not shaped to match the researchers' own previously held beliefs or interests.

This however also identified that I held a previously unrecognised assumption. I had assumed that a dyslexia identification was intrinsically beneficial to both learners and teachers. Furthermore, I assumed this view was universally held by all in the field of education. Gibbs and Elliot (2015) therefore posed a considerable challenge to my thinking and brought me to reflect if all teachers value a dyslexia identification or not. This influenced the amendment of my research question from the earlier focus on the identification process to 'Is an identification of dyslexia useful or meaningful to your learners and to you as a class teacher?' Cunningham (2018) also inspired the focus on teacher perceptions of dyslexia which supports my decision to recruit teaching colleagues as participants for the narrative interviews.

My research identified interesting literature however, few reflected my exact interests. My tutor suggested re-visiting the work of Edgerton and Roberts (2014) which re-acquainted me with the work of Bourdieu (1977). He suggested that the entrenched nature of inequality was the result of habitus and the four forms of capital.

Bourdieu: Habitus and cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital.

Habitus is the area where cultural reproduction occurs and where power is created and maintained (Bourdieu, 1977). Edgerton and Roberts (2014) argue the behaviours and expectations of families are passed from one generation to another via their habitus. The practices and behaviours shared in a middle-class family that form their habitus are argued to be more effective at engaging with the middle-class field of education (Reay, 1998 and Picower, 2009). This sharing of practices is not explicit but rather woven through the family's daily interactions. The disconnect between the field of education with its middle-class bias and the different habitus experienced by working-class learners may contribute to working-class learners' ongoing inequality within education (Cooper and Dunne, 1998, English and Bolton, 2016, and Yang, 2014).

The four forms of capital are cultural, economic, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1977). Middle-class families may deploy their cultural and economic capital for example on trips to museums or theatres. Their social capital can include access to influential people. Middle-class families may use their social capital, their network of friends or colleagues, to identify tutors to improve their children's educational attainment. Their economic capital can fund these opportunities. These options may be limited or unavailable to families from working-class backgrounds (Reay, 1998). Discussions with peers highlighted that Bourdieu explains that symbolic value is attributed to cultural, social or economic capital when they are considered valuable (The Open University, 2023). Symbolic capital is therefore not consistently applied across all social groups.

The class-based view of which experiences or behaviours are valuable may be seen within education when viewed as a field valuing white, middle-class behaviours (Cooper and Dunne, 1998). Certain behaviours will be valued, expected and accepted whereas others are considered less appropriate. For example, accessing the 'Western Cannon' by reading classical literature may be considered more valuable than reading comics (The Open University, 2021c). Therefore, middle-class

families are deploying their cultural, economic and social capital to enhance their children's education. This occurs by engaging in activities that are considered advantageous and that will transfer skills into the classroom such as reading classical literature as mentioned above. Concurrently middle-class families implicitly impart the skills required to maintain positive relationships with teachers and educational professionals. They are sharing practices which support success in education by reflecting teachers' middle-class bias (Picower, 2009). This maintains the middle-class' more powerful position within society and perpetuates the marginalised position of others. It is the result of the hegemonic groups to decide which behaviours, attributes and experiences are valuable within society. This therefore maintains different groups unequal social positions.

However, the theories of Bourdieu are not without criticism such as social mobility or contemporary society's lack of identification with traditional class groupings (Yang, 2014). Despite these criticisms, his theory provides a conceptual framework that recognises social factors can influence learners' experience of education. This framework reflects a critical theory approach as suggested by McLaren (2007). It directs attention to the hidden power within society that creates divisions and inequality. Therefore, highlighting that a learner's lack of success within education may be more complex than a simple individual failing or flaw (The Open University, 2021b). Bourdieu's theory is therefore considered a useful and appropriate conceptual framework to support this research and to identify hidden inequality within education.

The discussion above suggested my conceptual framework and influenced the research question 'Can Bourdieu's habitus and four forms of capital explain teachers' engagement with selecting learners to participate in the dyslexia identification process?'

Class, gender and race: intersectionality and inequality

Skeggs (1997) highlighted the interaction of the individual and the social spheres in her work where she argued that Bourdieu's four forms of capital and habitus could explain the ingrained nature of inequality that I was seeing within my schools. Her work referred to working-class women and the ways that their subordinated position within society was maintained and perpetuated both by their gender and their social class. Finch (1993, cited in Skeggs, 1997) argues that the term working-class was created by the middle-class to form a separate 'other' group. The middle-class created a division between them and those they viewed as different or deviant. This labelling she argues was a moral judgement with the middle-class constructed as respectable and the working-class as a worrying 'other' group to be observed or monitored. The arguments appeared to reflect the experiences of the learners in my settings.

As discussed above, learners in working-class families may be exposed to different expectations and behaviours than their middle-class peers. These different cultural norms may hinder working-class families' ability to successfully navigate the middle-class arena of education. This also highlights a key theme of this module, that of the interaction of the individual and the social spheres. I now recognise that seeing them as distinct and different arenas is not useful as the individual inhabits and influences the social while concurrently the social sphere influences the choices or agency of the individual (The Open University, 2021d). My earlier research question asked at which stage individual learners would be referred for a dyslexia identification. Therefore, I was focused on the individual and neglecting collective, social areas of inequality or injustice. This inspired me to amend my research question to 'Can the interaction of class, gender and race inform teachers' engagement with identifying dyslexia?'

After revisiting Skeggs (1997) my research interests progressed to the interaction of the social constructs of gender and social class and how these can overlap to create specific experiences of marginalisation.

Crenshaw (1991) uses the term intersectionality to describe this process. She introduced race to my research when she argues that Black women in the USA will have different life chances and opportunities to white women. Thus, highlighting the inequality that arises from the layering of these social constructs and women's different social positioning.

Their experiences of inequality are not the result of a biological difference. They result from the more powerful group's ability to ascribe labels such as gender, class or race and perpetuate subordination or exclusion via these socially constructed labels (Appiah, 2020). Therefore, to consider race or gender individually would be insufficiently nuanced to capture the reality of the inequality experienced by these different groups. These writers influenced my ontology, by recognising there is no single truth to uncover but rather reality is personal and variable. This in turn shaped my epistemology and methodology as I recognised that there are various and diverse understandings of reality and my desire was to understand my participants' unique experiences. However, aspects of critical theory also inform my methodology as I look to understand and change (Bunnis and Kelly, 2010). This solidified my decision to undertake narrative interviews as an appropriate method to apply my ontology, epistemology and methodology.

The impact of race

Riddell and Weedon (2017) identified that boys in Scotland do not have a homogenous experience of being identified with an ASN. They concentrate on the specific experience of Scottish learners within the Scottish education system which reflects the focus of my research. They argue that working-class boys with ASN are experiencing marginalisation within education and are underperforming in examinations.

For example, they argued that white working-class boys were more likely to be ascribed the stigmatising label of ADHD while white middle-class boys were more likely to be given the socially acceptable label of dyslexia.

Furthermore, they argue that the dyslexic label directs additional resources to those with that identification. The ADHD label continues to be viewed as a term for boys with social, emotional and behavioural issues. This may be suggested to reflect the arguments proposed by Finch (1993 cited in Skeggs, 1997) when she suggests that the middle-class historically created the term working-class to differentiate and distance themselves from this other, deviant group. This also illustrates the continuing ability of the middle-class to maintain their more powerful social position and direct scarce resources to maintain their privilege. Therefore, they argue all learners do not receive an equitable education. This also reflects the experiences of the Māori community who had different experiences within education (*Bishop et al.*, 2009).

Riddell and Weedon (2017) discuss mainly white, working-class boys and contrast their experiences to that of a middle-class family who were able to utilise their cultural, social and economic capital to ensure support for their son. Therefore, they incorporate race, social class and gender. However, their study extrapolates their six case studies to suggest that Scottish education as a whole prioritises the voice of professionals over the voice or views of parents. Furthermore, the Riddell and Weedon study could be argued to be limited in terms of gender as it reflected the experience of five boys and one girl. This does not however detract from the meaningfulness and validity of findings within a small-scale study, rather it suggests exercising caution over generalising results. It is prudent to consider that findings of my small-scale research will be specific to the settings of my participants.

Riddell and Weedon (2017) inspire the small and specific nature of my research. Their work along with Skeggs (1997) and Crenshaw (1991) directed the inclusion of race, gender and class to my research question. They also informed my developing interpretivist paradigm with the recognition of different truths, and unique interpretations of lived reality (Bunnis and Kelly, 2010). Furthermore, Crenshaw inspired the inclusion of the term intersectionality to highlight that people are marginalised by the interaction of class, race and gender.

Collectively these articles inspired the question 'To what extent does the intersectionality of gender, class and ethnicity inform teachers engagement with identifying dyslexia?'

Skeggs (1997) with her focus on Bourdieu's four forms of capital and habitus to explain the entrenched nature of inequality inspired the second question which evolved to 'To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and four forms of capital support an understanding of how this occurs?'

Research Questions

As a result of this literature review the title and research questions have evolved considerably. The initial focus was on individual equity. This has progressed to the impact of the social constructions of class, gender and race on equity in education along with a consideration of the power of some groups to subordinate others.

The title has evolved into:

A small-scale qualitative study to explore Scottish mainstream teachers' engagement with identifying ASN.

This has informed the following two research questions:

To what extent does the intersection of class, gender and race inform teacher' engagement with identifying dyslexia?

To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and four forms of capital support understanding of how this occurs?

Chapter 3 Research Design

Background

My ontological position inspired by the module readings and the literature review above inspired this research. I subscribe to the interpretivist paradigm as I believe that there are various truths which can change rather than one singular, absolute truth (Bunnis and Kelly, 2010). As such, my epistemology influenced by interpretivism is that knowledge reflects different peoples' understandings or experiences. Influenced by critical theory however I also recognise that knowledge can be created through social interactions and is affected by power relations. Therefore, knowledge can change as a result of successful challenges. My methodology reflects the interpretivist paradigm as my focus is on understanding my participants unique lived experiences and that we will not uncover the truth but rather gain an insight into the meanings my participants ascribe to aspects of their lives (Soler, 2013). However, my methodology is also influenced by critical theory approaches as my aim is to understand the participants experiences in order to identify any changes that could improve educational outcomes for learners (McLaren, 2007). However, as noted in the above chapter I recognise the limitations of this small-scale study and anticipate any change would be limited to my practice and that of my participants'.

The literature review in the previous chapter inspired this small-scale investigation with the aim of answering via a narrative interview the following two research questions;

'To what extent does the intersection of social class, gender and/or ethnicity inform teachers' engagement with the identification of dyslexia?' and

'To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and the four forms of capital support understanding of how this may occur?'

Positionality

I was initially influenced by Cunningham (2018) to undertake this research into teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, Mooney and Duffy (2014) sourced their participants from an existing friend group which inspired me to approach my group of teacher friends. I therefore can be considered an insider researcher because I am a teacher completing research with colleagues. However, I may concurrently be viewed as an outsider researcher as my participants are based within alternative settings to myself (Costley *et al.*, 2010).

As an insider researcher Costley *et al.* (2010) suggest that I share an awareness of my participants' professional setting, practice, pedagogies, policies and ASN assessment processes. As an insider researcher accessing an existing friend group, credibility and trust have already been established. This should support a less inhibited, more open discussion during the narrative interview (OpenLearn, 2022).

The initial recruitment of participants was fairly straightforward. However, one participant withdrew from the study due to a difficult pregnancy. As a result, I approached more potential participants from a wider group of colleagues with whom I had developed a friendship. However, a further colleague after agreeing to participate felt her role meant that she was an inappropriate candidate. Another candidate withdrew due to family illness. I did consider recruiting further replacement participants. However, given the tight timescales of this research I reflected that I would not be able to build a similar level of trust and credibility which may have affected their response to the research.

My participants are drawn from a range of settings, different from my own which suggests I am also an outsider researcher. Hamdan (2009) argues this dual positionality can identify cultural practices that may be overlooked by a researcher working within a single position. She argues this can be a challenging position for a researcher. However, this uncovering of unacknowledged cultural practices is an aim of my research and illustrates the appropriateness of this approach.

During their interviews, two participants did reflect on and reconsider their own practices and views. The benefits therefore associated with being an outsider researcher may also address the challenges associated with my concurrent insider positioning.

This is a small-scale study which is unlikely to generate widespread change of policy, practices, pedagogy or assessment. My aim initially was to add to the existing body of knowledge concerning dyslexia and potentially highlight areas of policy, practice, pedagogy or assessment that could be worthy of further study or alteration. This could involve highlighting practices that marginalise groups. However, I now anticipate that any changes to practice would be limited to myself or my participants. Furthermore, any changes to my participants' practice may be restricted to that which they recognise themselves. Mercer (2007) argues that as an insider researcher it can be problematic to suggest changes to improve a colleague's practice.

Narrative Interview

Cohen *et al.* (2010) argue that a narrative interview is an appropriate research tool for qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm as it captures each participant's specific and unique views and experiences. Mooney and Duffy (2014) utilised narrative interviews to empower their participants to select which aspects of their experiences to share. This study involved two participants that were previously known to one of the researchers. Their approach together with Cunningham (2018) and Mooney and Duffy (2104) informed my decision to approach an existing friend group to recruit participants for my own research. Furthermore, along with Bishop *et al.* (2009) it contributed to the decision that narrative interviews were an appropriate method to uncover the specific and unique experiences of mainstream teachers when identifying dyslexia.

The narrative interview however is not without criticism. It may be argued that the term narrative implies a fiction, a story rather than recalling a true depiction of events

(The Open University, 2022b). However, as stated above my ontology is that there is more than one truth and this can change.

My epistemology is that individuals' have their own interpretations of their experiences and my methodology concerns understanding this to suggest change (Bunnis and Kelly, 2010). Narrative interviews are therefore a suitable tool to answer the research questions as previously stated.

De Fina (2009) argues that narrative interviews are not a naturally occurring or flowing conversation where power is authentically shared but rather, they reflect the interests of the researcher. To counter this criticism, a narrative interview with one wide question was chosen so that participants could potentially shape the research. This was chosen rather than a semi-structured interview where participants' stories are directed by the list of pre-prepared questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

I posed the question 'As you know, I am interested in whether children's gender, ethnicity or class affects our thinking when we consider putting them forward for a dyslexia assessment. Can you tell me about any recent occasion when you referred a child for dyslexia assessment, have you any reflections on whether we put forward more boys or more girls, or children from other social groups?' (Appendix 1)

The selection of one wide question and the clear stating of my position was to ensure all participants were aware of the focus of this research. Furthermore, as argued by Roulston (2010) no research can be objective but rather is always subjective due to the views, beliefs and life experiences of the researchers involved. Therefore, to be transparent and ethical as suggested by Cohen *et al.* (2018) the decision was taken to make my interests explicit.

However, this narrative interview approach with one wide question was not effective with all participants. Three talked at length about the topic of the research.

However, one benefitted from some prompts and another participant wanted to discuss the application of the online dyslexia screener which was not within the scope of this research.

I was concerned as a novice researcher that I could struggle to ensure my participants remained focused on the question (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). However, I was keen that my participants were given scope to discuss their specific experiences. On reflection when undertaking research in the future I will consider preparing further questions or a list of prompts to encourage a focus on the research questions.

Ethical considerations

Macfarlane (2009) argues that to be a virtuous or ethical researcher requires reflection at each stage of the research. This includes planning and undertaking the research. Ethical considerations continue after publishing (OpenLearn, 2022). While planning and undertaking this research I regularly revisited the framework for ethical research provided by Seedhouse (1998, cited in The Open University, 2022c). This reflects the BERA (2018) guidelines and supported ethical, transparent decision making.

To ensure an ethical approach was applied with this research, as suggested by Macfarlane (2009) I distributed participant information letters containing the interview question, research questions and consent forms some weeks in advance (Appendix 2 and 3). This ensured that everyone had time to review the scope of this research and the level of involvement required. I also highlighted their right to withdraw. This was an effective ethical approach as three of my participants exercised their right to withdraw. The first participant withdrew due to pregnancy. My second participant withdrew after reflecting on the research questions. The third participant withdrew due to serious family illness. To protect my participants' anonymity, they were asked to create their own pseudonym.

Furthermore, to ensure ethical considerations informed each part of this research, I completed and reflected on the Ethical Appraisal Form (Appendix 4). Hamden (2009) argues that reflexivity in qualitative research is essential. This revisiting of ethics provided an opportunity for reflexivity.

Reeves (2007) argued that adults may not fully understand the scope of the research and to ensure authentic informed consent requires revisiting consent with participants before, during and after research. She argues that consent is not a 'stand-alone' signing of a form. To achieve this, I verified with my participants during and after the narrative interview that they were still happy to continue, reminded them of their right to withdraw, offered them a copy of the transcribed interview and asked them to amend as required. Prior to compiling this report, I contacted all of the participants to ascertain if they remained willing to continue to provide their consent. As noted above, three participants withdrew shortly before the start of the narrative interviews. However, all other participants have agreed to continue to support this research.

I consider that by transcribing each narrative accurately I fairly reported each individual's own story. Initially I fully transcribed each interview as Adams (2022, cited in The Open University, 2022c) argued this is a useful approach to gain a full understanding of each narrative and support later analysis of the data. However due to the time constraints of this small-scale study, as suggested by Cohen *et al.*, (2018) I was able to identify sections of one narrative that did not support answering my research questions. I decided to omit this section from the transcription. Cohen *et al.*, argue there is a subjective aspect to this approach as I am selecting what to include or exclude. However, I would argue it was an ethical and acceptable decision as the content did not answer my research questions. To ensure my participants can authentically shape each stage of the research, I provided copies of their transcripts, recommendations and final report and offered to amend these to ensure that I had accurately reported their narratives.

I anticipated that none of the narratives shared would cause distress to my participants. However, I sourced the details of the counselling service offered by their employers in case any of the participants felt this would be beneficial (Mooney and Duffy, 2014). I am transparent about not providing any monetary incentive. However, I did offer hospitality such as coffee and cakes which I do not consider to be an incentive but rather an expected social practice (OpenLearn, 2022 and Macfarlane, 2009).

An ethical approach to research includes considering ethics at each stage of the research process including after publication (Macfarlane, 2009). As my participants are friends and colleagues, we meet regularly to share our teaching experiences and I anticipate this will continue. Therefore, I expect that after submitting this document we will continue to meet and discuss this topic.

Maintaining confidentiality was an important consideration for this research as teaching colleagues shared their personal, private narratives. As such the confidential management of data was of upmost importance. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislates for the secure management of data (ICO, undated). To adhere to both GDPR and ethical considerations a data handling plan as suggested by Clarke (2022) was created and strictly followed (Appendix 5).

Reflections

This methodology was not without issues. For example, I experienced challenges as an inexperienced researcher encouraging participants to relate their experiences and views to my research questions. While most of my participants did discuss the interview question, one participant decided to share her views on a different aspect of the dyslexia identification process.

This research has been very small in scale with five participants completing narrative interviews after three colleagues withdrew. It has also been specific to each participant's own setting.

However, it has supported the collection of data which addresses the central research questions of 'To what extent does the interaction of social class, gender and race inform teachers' engagement with the identification of dyslexia?' and 'To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and the four forms of capital support understanding of how this may occur?' I would therefore argue that my methodology has been effective for this research.

Chapter 4 Data presentation and analysis

The previous chapter focussed on my research design inspired by my oncology, epistemology and methodology. This informed the selection of a narrative interview approach to answer the following two research questions.

‘To what extent does the intersectionality of gender, class and race inform teachers’ engagement with identifying dyslexia?’ and

‘To what extent can Bourdieu’s conceptual framework of habitus and four forms of capital support an understanding of how this occurs?’

This chapter will focus on analysing the knowledge generated during the narrative interviews. One broad interview question, noted below was posed to my participants to encourage them to share their unique experiences (Appendix 1). By selecting the experiences or views that they felt were important this facilitated a more balanced power dynamic between researcher and participant (Costley *et al.*, 2010).

Furthermore, this also ensured that the participants could shape the research and knowledge generated. The interview question posed is as follows.

‘As you know, I am interested in whether children's gender, ethnicity or class affects our thinking when we consider putting them forward for a dyslexia assessment. Can you tell me about any recent occasion when you referred a child for dyslexia assessment, have you any reflections on whether we put forward more boys or more girls, or children from other social groups? (Appendix 1).

This interview question explicitly shared my interests and suggests themes for analysis. For clarity these are, Bourdieu’s four forms of capital and habitus, as well as the intersection of class, gender and race.

This decision to make my interests explicit within the above question was informed by Cohen *et al.*, (2018) who argue that all research is subjective as researchers make decisions about what to study, what questions to ask and what data to analyse and conversely which data to exclude. Similarly, participants select which experiences to share and which to omit. Thus, rendering all qualitative research subjective and partial. It therefore follows that analysis and any findings will similarly be subjective rather than an objective representation of facts. Therefore, all data generated through research is partial and subjective (The Open University, 2022c). As a small-scale study the findings may be specific to the settings of my participants rather than applying generally across Scotland. However, it provides a snap shot of the reality of teachers' engagement with selecting learners for the dyslexia identification process within their settings (Holligan *et al.*, 2011)

Thematic analysis

Cohen *et al.* (2018) suggest selecting a method to analyse the research data that best fits the purpose of the research. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of my participants. Given the small-scale nature of this study it is unlikely to identify changes to practice and policy nationally but the narrative interview may support my participants to identify aspects of their practice worthy of adaptation or change. As themes are suggested in my research questions, Bourdieu's four forms of capital plus habitus along with the intersectionality of class, gender and race I have chosen to analyse my data via a thematic approach.

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) suggest thematic analysis is a flexible approach that can be applied to qualitative research. Due to the flexibility of thematic analysis, it can be applied to a range of ontological, epistemological and methodological positions including my interpretivist approach. Furthermore, they argue thematic analysis can focus attention on the 'everyday' 'taken-for-granted' experiences that perpetuate the hegemony and contribute to the ongoing marginalisation of less powerful groups within society. This therefore reflects the critical theory approach that informs this research (McLaren, 2007).

I aim to explore teachers' everyday practices and if their decisions are influenced by a learners' gender, ethnicity and social class. Therefore, thematic analysis is an appropriate tool to analyse the data generated in narrative interviews.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose 6 steps for thematic analysis. This approach was followed when analysing the five narrative interview transcripts. Moody and Duffy (2014) argue that researchers should immerse themselves in the data, by coding and revisiting the data regularly as this encourages themes to appear. Cohen *et al.* (2018) however suggest that all research is subjective and partial as researchers will be informed by their pre-existing interests, experiences and values. This informs their analysis as researchers may subconsciously look to identify themes that reflect their interests. Thus, they argue themes do not appear but rather are actively identified by the researcher. Therefore, I took the decision to make my interests explicit within the research and interview questions and will analyse the data via these previously identified themes. OpenLearn (2022) and Macfarlane (2009) argue that ethics should be considered at each stage of the research and regularly revisited. The explicit stating of my interests was to ensure transparency which I would argue is an ethical consideration.

However, while I argue thematic analysis is a pertinent analytical framework for my study, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) suggest that thematic analysis is a widely used term without a universally agreed definition. Furthermore, a range of techniques are used to identify themes in qualitative research (McCormack, 2004). This results in claims that thematic analysis can be ambiguous and findings are lacking in rigor and trustworthiness (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). To address this, I have; made my themes explicit, been reflexive, frequently revisited the data, coded the data, and considered the subjective nature of analysis. Furthermore, I have reverted to the participants to ensure transcriptions, analysis, findings and recommendations accurately reflect their experiences. Thus, ensuring a rigorous and robust process of data analysis.

I would argue therefore that, despite criticisms, thematic analysis remains an appropriate framework to analyse this qualitative data. By accurately transcribing my participants' data and ensuring my thematic analysis accurately reflects all of my participants' narratives whether they mirror my own interests or not, I would argue that the data has internal validity. External validity is provided by sharing the transcriptions, findings and recommendations with my participants (Guest *et al.*, 2012). However, I was unable to access data from my previous employer that would provide a further level of external validity.

Validity and reliability are important considerations within all research. Validity can be conflated with repeatable results (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Within qualitative data this may not always be achievable as it can reflect a specific experience at a specific time (Roulston, 2010). However, this does not detract from the value of qualitative data but rather highlights the complexity of lived experiences (Costley *et al.*, 2010). Other approaches to analysis were considered however they were deemed less appropriate to this study where themes were clearly identified within the research questions. Furthermore, theories such as intersectionality could be examined and evaluated via a thematic analysis approach to identify if they do indeed contribute to an explanation of entrenched inequality (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

Analysis

Race

Analysis of the data shows that my participants did not recognise race as relevant to their settings. This is possibly unsurprising as the population of the local authority areas where my participants settings are located are classified as approximately 99% white (East Ayrshire Council, n.d, and South Ayrshire Council, n.d). This is higher than the Scottish national figure of 95.4% (Audit Scotland, 2022).

"I work in a very ehm non-mixed-race school so that's difficult [to consider as a factor]" *Stephen*

Stephen was the only candidate to mention race explicitly and without a prompt. After prompting Lynne did remark on race.

“...if em we look at ethnicity and race a huge part of that could be parental support for education.” *Lynne*

However, Lynne did not expand on this comment nor chose to revisit race within her narrative. Thus, suggesting that race was not a factor she considered relevant in her setting or her practice, nor was it a topic that she was interested in discussing.

This finding that race was considered irrelevant by my participants due to the lack of diversity in their schools is not a finding I would suggest is transferable to other areas of Scotland. For example, Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland and data suggests a more diverse population with approximately 88% identifying as white. This is below the Scottish national average detailed above of 95.4%. (Audit Scotland, 2022). Teachers in other areas of Scotland may therefore have a different experience of racial diversity within their classrooms and may possibly feel it is worthy of further consideration than did my participants. Bell (2021) suggests that white teachers do not consider race a factor in their practice as they believe society has progressed to a level that discrimination based on race no longer occurs. Appiah (2022) however would argue that white teachers do not recognise ‘whiteness’ as a racial identity. They consider race to be a marker applicable to the ‘other’ groups in society.

Gender

Gender was discussed at length by most of my participants with four of the five participants sharing their thoughts on the impact of gender. Three of my participants shared that they referred more boys than girls for the dyslexia identification process. Conversely, one shared that she referred more girls than boys. Adele and Emily shared their explanations for this which referred explicitly to their different gendered expectations of learners.

“The boys tend to enjoy the maths more so their maths tends to be a lot better” and continued “girls are more articulate and talkative ...” *Adele*

“..... girls like to write stories and they’re more creative and boys just like to play girls like to write and...., I assume they’re just boys. They don’t like writing.” *Emily*

Both Adele and Emily were explicit that they had different gendered expectations of their learners and they both expected boys to have less interest in literacy. This reflects the finding of Moss and Washbrook (2016) who suggest that irrespective of class, boys generally have lower attainment in literacy than girls. Both participants focussed on identifying a deficit between the individual girl or boy when compared to their peers (The Open University, 2021c). Conversely, Stephen and Caitlyn suggested that class, gender or race had no bearing on their decision to refer learners for a dyslexia assessment.

“No nothing would stop anyone getting assessed or more in favour [of being selected for the dyslexia identification process]. Nah I don’t think there is any bias.” *Caitlyn*

“I don’t see these things [class, gender and race]” *Stephen*

However, Stephen revisited this comment later in the narrative interview and shared that on reflection he referred more boys than girls and that he found this worrying. Reeves (2007) argues that the power of narrative interviews is that participants can identify areas of their own practice or pedagogy that may benefit from further reflection. This occurs organically within the narrative interview and is not identified by the researcher. Mercer (2007) suggested that as an insider researcher it can be challenging to highlight areas of a colleagues practice that may benefit from change. However, through this narrative interview Stephen did uncover an area of his practice on which to reflect.

His participation with this research has a dual benefit as it has supported this research while simultaneously providing Stephen with the opportunity to reflect on his practice. Similarly, Lynne reflected on, and recognised the need to develop a specific area of her practice. This will not be detailed here in order to protect my participant.

In contrast, Caitlyn remained confident that class, gender and race had no impact on decisions within her setting to refer learners for a dyslexia identification. A narrative interview was selected as the research method as it supports power sharing (Soler, 2012 and McCormack, 2004). Caitlyn utilised this by choosing to share her thoughts on the use of the online dyslexia screener rather than discuss the interview question. This is a topic on which she is passionate and is the story she wanted to share. However, when continuing this research in my doctorate level study I will prepare supplementary questions to encourage my future participants to focus on the interview questions.

Emily also shared that she had attended training on the different gendered characteristics that may present in boys and girls with autism spectrum disorder. She therefore felt she was actively directing her attention towards under achieving girls in general and this may have influenced her decisions to refer more girls than boys for dyslexia identifications.

Class

Three of the five participants identified their schools as middle class although Stephen and Lynne suggested they have a more diverse demographic.

“So, I would say it’s probably say it’s, ehm, it’s mixed but probably, ehm, I don’t like these terms ... It is definitely mixed...people move here for the nice country side and, eh one or more than one are working...” *Stephen*

“...lots of kids ... stay in council accommodation and children who live in [redacted as could identify my participant and her setting] and down by the railway station in those lovely houses” *Lynne*

“...they all come from very similar backgrounds we are quite a, maybe, middle-class school. Most of the kids are kinda the same” *Adele*

However, there was some discomfort about using the term class. When specifically discussing the class background of their settings, all of my participants used more pauses and their body language also suggested an uneasiness. This was displayed via an increase in movement or shuffling in their seats during this section of their narrative interview. This visual clue suggested a possible level of awkwardness around the term class and its application (Marvasti and Freie, 2017). For example, Adele in the statement above was hesitant about the use of middle-class and preceded it with “maybe”. While Stephen clearly stated “I don’t like these terms”. Lynne explicitly linked the class of her learners via their housing situation. She equated those living in rented accommodation as working-class and those in privately developed housing estates as middle-class. Caitlyn preferred to use the term “white collar families” rather than referring directly to social class groupings. However, Emily was the only participant who confidently stated that her setting was middle-class.

From my own local knowledge of my participants settings, I expected Stephen, Lynne and Emily to classify their settings as middle-class. However, I expected Adele to share that her learners were from a working-class rather than a middle-class background. I later re-visited this with her and Adele shared that as her parents are all in paid employment and not claiming government benefits, she would classify them as middle-class. Adele’s setting is in an area highlighted by the Scottish Government for additional funding due to its persistent low levels of attainment and as an area of social deprivation (Scottish Government, 2016). I therefore suggest this setting could be considered a working-class community.

This debate highlights some of the ambiguity of class within contemporary society. The Scottish Government (2016) refer to deprived communities rather than working-class communities when discussing the attainment gap. This term is used by the Scottish Government to explain the different educational attainment between the most affluent and most deprived communities (Scottish Government, 2020). This use of language highlights a deprivation of resources or a lack of economic capital. This is important as how a problem is defined influences the solutions provided (The Open University, 2021b). For example, if dyslexia is viewed as an individual deficit, interventions focus on addressing that child's difficulties with literacy. If dyslexia is viewed as a social problem that results from inappropriate pedagogies then the solution will focus on improving teaching practice (The Open University, 2021b). Similarly, if communities are characterised as having an economic deficit, a socially just solution to this could be diverting funding from the more affluent communities to those experiencing deprivation. This is the action that the Scottish Government have deployed via Pupil Equity Funding (Scottish Government, 2018). However, the attainment gap remains (Scottish Government, 2020).

The conflating of social class with economic capital was also reflected by my participants. Stephen, Adele and Lynne all equated their learners' social class to their economic situation either via their parents' employment or housing situation. For example, Stephen discussed in the statement above that his middle-class parents were families where one or more parent works. Adele argued that as her learners' parents were employed, they were middle-class. Lynne linked those families living in council houses as working-class and those living in private housing estates as middle-class.

Stopforth *et al.* (2021) argue that social class can impact on educational opportunities and attainment. Therefore, class can be a barrier or conduit to education. McLaren (2007) highlights that critical theory looks to illuminate the hidden power imbalances in society that shape inequalities.

Yet, my participants felt uncomfortable discussing this social categorisation and there was a lack of clarity around how to apply these terms. One participant was reluctant to consider that the social constructs of class, gender or race can have any impact on a learner's educational experience or attainment. Therefore, applying a critical theory approach can highlight the potential inequalities that result from social class, may be obscured within teaching practice.

Moss and Washbrook (2016) argued that all boys regardless of their class are less literate than their female peers. Yet, Stopforth *et al.* (2021, p.310) state that "There is, ..., substantial evidence of persistent social class inequalities in school... outcomes". This suggests that boys of all classes may have lower literacy skills than girls. However, middle-class boys are able to transcend this barrier and achieve more qualifications than their male, working-class peers. This is important as the Scottish government equate education with social justice and qualifications control access to paid employment or future education opportunities (Riddell *et al.*, 2013, Riddell and Weedon, 2017).

Parents: Habitus and the site of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital.

All of my participants spoke about parents, their involvement in their children's education and their input to ASN identifications.

"... some parents ... are desperate for a label and some desperately against the label." *Adele*

"we've got parents who actively seek the label because they want an answer to something that they don't like and you've got parents that put up barriers..." *Stephen*

"I think it's more white-collar workers that would ask to see the dyslexia screeners put in place" *Caitlyn*

Stephen and Adele shared a similar experience of parents who actively request an ASN identification and others who are firmly opposed to their child being ascribed any form of label. In my experience of working in a similar setting to Adele, some parents did not want a dyslexia label as they were concerned about their child being 'singled out' or removed from their mainstream class and sent to a learning base. This may reflect the dilemma of difference as suggested by Minow (1990). This debates whether identifying a difference is beneficial or detrimental, whether individuals are stigmatised as a result of their difference or experience greater inclusion. Skeggs (1997) however would argue that the working class are subject to greater supervision and intervention from the structures of society such as education. Therefore, the parents may have developed a reluctance to engage with the dyslexia identification process as they consider this another form of surveillance.

However, Adele also noted that some parents are keener for the label as they actively seek extra support to help their child overcome their barriers to learning and achieve their potential. Adele later notes that she can feel overwhelmed by the volume of emails and phone calls from parents with requests she categorises as inappropriate. This suggests a tension between the field of school and the working-class families' habitus. The working-class parents that are looking for the dyslexia identification recognise the benefit of education on social mobility and improved life chances for their children. Yet, their social or cultural practices are not successfully transferred to the field of education to gain the support they desire for their children (Reay, 1998).

Stephen's comments could reflect the mixed-class background of his learners with potentially a class-based difference explaining the conflicting approaches to a dyslexia identification. However, as a novice researcher I did not feel comfortable posing further questions to delve deeper into his experience. On reflection I recognise that it may have been beneficial to this research to probe his comment and identify which families were looking for an identification and which were not. This may have provided clarity around if there was indeed a class-based difference to parental engagement within his setting.

Findings

For clarity of analysis, I discussed the social constructs of class, gender and race separately. This suggested that race was not considered a factor within my participants settings as they identified their learners as white. Most of my participants recognised the gendered experience of their learners as an aspect of the dyslexia identification process. Three of my five participants advised they referred more boys than girls and they were open that this was due to their different gendered expectations of literacy skills.

Most of my participants shared a discomfort when discussing class. Two participants clearly identified the social class of their settings. Emily stated her school was middle class and Lynne advised her setting had learners from both working and middle-class backgrounds. All of my participants however showed possible signs of being uncomfortable via their body language and the increased use of pauses. Picower (2009) argues that teachers unconsciously marginalise learners from the working-class. Therefore, to gain equity within education she argues teachers should be encouraged to consider their own possible bias. Yet my participants were reluctant to consider class a social structure that could impact on learners' experiences of education.

The discomfort shown by my participants suggests that when undertaking research for my doctorate it may be beneficial to create or share a framework to support future participants to identify the social class groupings within their settings. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a move away from using the term class towards a more neo-liberal focus on identity (Riddell *et al.*, 2011). However, this research has suggested that social class remains an influential structure that can be unacknowledged within teaching practice. It is therefore worthy of further study.

I have argued that middle-class boys out perform their working-class male peers in national exams which suggests that a gendered based lens to consider inequality in education is insufficient.

It is not all boys who are not reaching their potential but rather as Riddell and Weedon, (2017) argue it is white, working-class boys who are marginalised due to the intersectionality of their race, gender and class. Therefore, when considering inequality in education it is insufficient to consider these social constructs in isolation. While my participants did not consider race a factor in their daily practice it is worthy of note that these findings may be specific to our area of Scotland. Therefore, there may be unrecognised inequality within my participants settings where whiteness is overlooked as a racial identity. The experience of girls may also be worthy of further study as three of my participants shared that they referred more boys than girls.

The use of Bourdieu's four forms of capital and habitus suggested class could be an ongoing barrier to education. Adele's narrative suggested that working-class families' attempts to engage with their children's education may not be effective due to challenges converting their economic, cultural or social capital to symbolic capital. The different habitus of middle and working-class families could also contribute an understanding of tensions between the expectations of the school and the parents. Stephen and Lynne spoke of the mixed class background of their settings and further questioning during their narrative interviews may have supported a deeper understanding of the impact of class on their parents' engagement with education. This was a small-scale and specific study and the generalisation of any findings would not be appropriate. However, it does signpost potential further research for my doctoral studies.

Overall, this research did contribute to partially answering the research questions previously stated as the majority of my participants recognised the impact of gender when selecting learners to be considered for the dyslexia identification process. Race and class were more challenging concepts for my participants. The use of a narrative interview was generally effective. It facilitated an understanding of the specific experiences of four of my five participants which was identified as an aim of my methodology. However, it was not effective with all of my participants as one veered into discussions that were out with the scope of this research.

Chapter 5- Conclusions and Implications

As suggested by Bassett (2022) there are two points to consider when concluding this research. Firstly, how the findings from this research support an understanding of Scottish teachers' engagement with identifying ASN in mainstream schools. Secondly, the implications of the findings from this research and the possibility that these can inform my doctoral studies.

Teachers' engagement with class, gender and race

Throughout the narrative interviews my participants displayed signs that suggested they were uncomfortable with the term class. Two participants specifically stated they disliked the term and preferred not to use it. One participant correlated being in paid employment as an indicator of middle-class membership and those in the working-class as receiving state benefits. Other participants however linked middle-class membership more closely to outward signs of wealth such as homes in desirable, affluent locations. Therefore, there was a lack of clarity and consistency regarding the application of the terms middle or working-class within this research. This ambiguity could contribute to obscuring educational inequality based on social class membership.

None of my participants recognised race as being pertinent to their practice as their settings are not racially diverse. They did not recognise whiteness as a racial identity so therefore argued it had no bearing on their decisions to refer learners for a dyslexia identification. On reflection, I recognise that within my practice I was also not recognising whiteness as a racial identity. Bell (2021) argues that this occurs due to subconsciously constructing white as the benchmark and other racial identities as different. This reflects the arguments of Finch (1993, cited in Skeggs, 1997) that the construction of groups is to differentiate between the more powerful 'us' and the less powerful 'them'. This unawareness of all racial identities and discomfort with class may obscure and perpetuate educational inequality.

Four of my five participants did recognise the impact of gender on their practice with three of the five recognising they referred more boys than girls for dyslexia identifications. As they did not identify with race nor was there a consistent approach to social class they did not consider the specific ways these factors could intersect to cause specific experiences of inequality. However, when taking an intersectional approach, I have argued that all racial identities, can intersect with class and gender to create inequality within education. This is not to suggest diminishing the inequalities Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners experience within an education system that is argued by Bishop *et al.*, (2009) to reflect white European ideals, but rather to suggest recognising how all learners' intersectional identities can influence their experience of education.

Narrative Interviews

My ontology, epistemology and methodology supported the use of narrative interviews. As a novice researcher I had concerns that during the narrative interview my participants would not focus on the themes identified within my research questions. To address this, I shared the questions in advance and made my interests explicit. With my tutor's support I undertook an early interview to ensure the narrative interview approach would be a useful and appropriate method. During this interview the participant talked confidently about the topics and themes of this study. I decided that a supplementary list of prompts or questions for future interviews were not required.

As my interview question had been shared in advance, I expected all of my participants to shape their narratives via the themes and topics explicitly stated within the question. Two further participants also talked at length and focused mainly on the research questions. However, two spoke briefly and of these two participants, one chose to discuss an area of the dyslexia identification process that was not within the scope of the research. In future I would create a list of possible prompts to attempt to gently re-direct my participants.

I may also give consideration to a semi-structured interview. I will also share a criterion to aide identifying class membership. The narrative interviews did however provide space and time for two participants to reflect on their practice and identify change which was an aim of this research.

My initial participants were recruited through an existing professional friend group who met at university. We therefore have a similar length of teaching service. In future research I will recruit participants with a wider range of experiences. My participants were 80% female and 20% male. They were also all from a white Scottish background. I will aim to recruit a wider, more diverse group of participants for future research.

It was challenging to fully triangulate my data. It may have been beneficial to identify the race, gender and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations indicators of those learners within my participants' settings who had a dyslexia identification. This may support identifying if statistically gender, race and class impacted on the dyslexia identifications granted by schools. It was problematic to gather this data from local authority sources as during the course of this research I changed roles and employers. However, I incorporated actions such as sharing transcripts and this report with my participants to ensure validity.

My research focus was exploring teacher perceptions. My participants shared their mixed and varied perceptions of parents, who were characterised as both overly and insufficiently involved in their child's education. This I argued could suggest a possible tension between the working-class families' habitus and the middle-class field of education. However, as a novice researcher I failed to fully explore this with my participants. Future research may benefit from investigating this further. I may also consider gaining a more holistic insight into the dyslexia identification process by gathering the views of parents and learners who undertook this process.

Conclusion

This research explored both teacher engagement with the dyslexia identification process and to what extent class, gender and race influenced teachers' practice when selecting learners for assessment. This was undertaken via narrative interviews. The majority of my participants recognised that their practice may be influenced by gender but were less cognisant of the impact of race or social class. Therefore, their awareness or recognition of the potential influence of the intersectionality of these factors was restricted. I argued that one participant was based within a working-class setting and her experiences with parents was explored via Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and four forms of capital. This theory did support an understanding of class-based inequality within education. However, due to my lack of experience as a researcher I failed to appropriately delve further into my other participants narratives. Therefore, their narratives and my subsequent analysis and findings are partial.

This small-scale study has however provided a snap shot of my participants' engagement with the dyslexia identification process and illustrated that the majority of my participants recognised the impact of gender. Race was not acknowledged as an influential factor due to the whiteness of their settings and class was an uncomfortable topic. This suggests that race and class may potentially be overlooked as sites of intersecting inequality within education. However, as a small-scale and specific study, these findings should not be generalised as transferable or more widely applicable.

Future research implications

Due to the factors discussed above, my two research questions were partly, rather than fully answered. Therefore, this suggests areas to include in my ongoing studies at doctoral level. Future research may benefit from a range of participants from local authorities with greater racial diversity. Whiteness however was referred to as if a homogenous race. Further research into the groups that are ascribed this label such as the travelling community may highlight specific intersectional inequalities.

A criterion to support future participants identify class groupings may also be beneficial and lessen their discomfort. The literature inspiring this research focused on the experience of white working-class boys and the majority of my participants focused on identifying boys with an ASN. Therefore, research into girls' experiences of inequality is also worthy of further study. Consequently, my on-going doctoral studies shall be informed by the findings of this small-scale study. I have offered to share these findings with my central multi-setting team during September's twilight training session.

Postscript - Narrative Critical Reflection

In the early stages of my Masters study, I found relating theoretical positions to practice to be challenging (Appendix 6). However, this improved via engaging with peers and reflecting on my tutor's feedback. I also fully anticipate that my academic writing will evolve as I develop the skills required to work effectively at doctorate level.

My future studies will be informed by the conclusions and findings chapter of this research. This chapter signposts clearly my next steps such as identifying a framework to identify social class and recruiting a wider participant group. I found my dual positionality as an insider and outsider researcher a challenging situation. On reflection I consider that it was the insider researcher role that caused me the most discomfort as I was interviewing colleagues who are also friends. However, I anticipate that this will be resolved in my future studies as I give consideration to a more diverse group of participants. I was also challenged by the work of Gibbs and Elliott (2015) as their views of dyslexia differed greatly from my own.

I was keen to share power with my participants to ensure they had the opportunity to contribute authentically to the research and this influenced the decision to utilise narrative interviews with one wide question. However, this approach was not uniformly successful.

On reflection, I believe this was due to my inexperience as a researcher. In future I will consider ways to support my participants to focus on the interview and research questions while simultaneously facilitating an authentic experience for them.

My draft questions also evolved and developed across this module with my initial focus being on which age or stage would be appropriate for learners to participate in the dyslexia identification process. I recognise that initially I viewed the dyslexia identification process as neutral assessment tools that identify a flaw or deficit in the individual. Furthermore, I did not consider that the social constructs of class, gender and race could influence teachers' decisions when selecting learners to participate in the dyslexia identification process. My thinking has developed from identifying an individual flaw in a learner to recognising the socially constructed factors that impact on equality in education and the selection of learners for an ASN identification. This module has highlighted the powerful discourses within society that simultaneously permeate education. These can contribute to concealing sites of inequality. I reflected on my own thoughts on race and the positioning of whiteness which was an unsettling experience. Yet this research identified that the intersection of these social constructs may lead to subordination, marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream education.

Total Word Count 12119

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Question

As you know, I am interested in whether children's gender, ethnicity or class affects our thinking when we consider putting them forward for a dyslexia assessment. Can you tell me about any recent occasion when you referred a child for dyslexia assessment, have you any reflections on whether we put forward more boys or more girls, or children from other social groups?

Appendix 2

E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual's perspective on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This particular interview is designed to help answer the following questions-

To what extent does the interaction of gender, ethnicity and class inform teachers' engagement with identifying dyslexia?'

To what extent can Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus and the four forms of capital support understanding of how this occurs?

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research question. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 45 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you and others in the setting to be mutually convenient. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If

you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it form part of the final dissertation. Your contribution will be recognised by a pseudonym and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name should be used. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out if your engagement with the dyslexia identification may be influenced by the intersection of a learner's gender, race and social class. The interview question is

'As you know, I am interested in whether children's gender, ethnicity or class affects our thinking when we consider putting them forward for a dyslexia assessment. Can you tell me about any recent occasion when you referred a child for dyslexia assessment, have you any reflections on whether we put forward more boys or more girls, or children from other social groups?

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our professional setting as agreed with the senior leader overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the organizational Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes and recording will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed by December 2023.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at [REDACTED]

Appendix 3

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

(to be completed by all participants)

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by 15/03/2023 to Jennifer Brennan at [REDACTED]

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview?

YES NO

Has someone explained this interview to you?

YES NO

Do you understand what this interview is about?

YES NO

Have you asked all the questions you want?

YES NO

Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?

YES NO

Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part (up to the point where a report is submitted to the university?)

YES NO

Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded?

YES NO

Are you happy with how your data will be stored?

YES NO

Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview?

YES NO

Are you happy to take part?

YES NO

If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** sign your name.

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name and today's date

Your name _____

Date _____

If the person to be interviewed is a child or young person under 18 and you are happy for the child or young person you are responsible for (as their parent, carer or guardian) to participate, please could you also sign and date below.

Print name N/A

Sign _____

Date _____

Return form to



Thank you for your help.

Appendix 4

**E822 Ethical Appraisal Form
Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth**



NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

Section 1: Project details		
a.	Student name	Jennifer Brennan
b.	PI	[REDACTED]
c.	Project title	'A small-scale qualitative study into Scottish mainstream teachers' engagement with identifying ASN'
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Anita Pilgrim
e.	Qualification	Masters in Childhood and Youth
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Inclusive Practice

g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	April 2023
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	April 2023
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	Scotland

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all “no” you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a ‘gatekeeper’ (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?		x
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a ‘police check’ or appropriate level of ‘disclosure’ before carrying out your research? ¹	n/a	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	x	

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure (‘police check’) can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent time (e.g. covert observation of people in nonpublic places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		X
5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		X
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	X	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	X	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?		X
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	X	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		X
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		X

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

Appendix 5

GDPR considerations

Data resource	Type of data	Retention	Data storage location	Comments
Consent forms	Paper	Will be destroyed once dissertation is submitted.	Locked filing cabinet	Locked at all times so secure.
Interview recordings	Electronic	Will be deleted when all transcriptions are approved by participants.	On phone	Phone requires either a password (known to only me) to access or finger print. Always secure.
Interview transcriptions	Electronic	Will be destroyed once dissertation is submitted.	laptop file pen drive One Drive All documents are password protected. Devices are password protected. Documents are password protected.	Stored in multiple secure locations in case of device failure.

Appendix 6 – EMA Reflection Evidence Grid

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on	How did this shape my dissertation
Knowledge and understanding	In EE814 TMA01 tutor feedback stated “You need to be explaining, providing evidence and/or demonstrating how and why theoretical ideas might be applied”	By TMA02 my tutor’s feedback was “Shown strong evidence of an ability to make connections between theory and practice.” The feedback from my tutor on my dissertation draft chapters have also noted that I am continuing to make strong links between theory and practice.
Critical analysis and evaluation	In EE814 I received feedback in TMA02 that I should consider how theory relates to and influences practice, and that at Masters level it is important to move from reproducing others work and ideas but rather develop criticality by imaginatively applying ideas.	I read extensively around my area of interest and created tables to contrast and compare different views presented. I read a guidance document prepared by York University ‘Let’s get critical: Critical writing’. I believe this has been beneficial as in E822 TMA02 my tutor’s feedback was that I had imaginatively and creatively applied theory to my research and linked theory and practice.
Links to professional practice:	I identified that I studied effectively independently, having gained a first for my BSc. I also benefitted from learning with my peers by creating in-person study group. However, the students on this module are more geographically dispersed. I therefore set myself a target to engage at least monthly with the online combined tutor group forum.	I have engaged with the tutor group forum to support others and to ask for support myself. This forum can allow a space to ‘try out’ ideas which has helped me to ‘firm up’ thoughts and ideas for TMAs across the module and my dissertation. This has definitely supported improved marks with two TMAs receiving 93%. For my dissertation I continue to engage mostly with the tutor group forum although I did read the module wide forum posts and occasionally engage.
Structure, communication and presentation:	Initially in EE814 I received tutor comments about weaknesses within the structure of my argument.	I accessed the OU help page “Developing academic English” and referred back to this as required. Also, by reading widely I was able to recognise other authors academic writing styles which supported me to improve the structure of my arguments and the inclusion of academic texts. In later TMAs this creative inclusion of a range of academic sources was noted by tutors as a strength.