

A narrative study of adults who were bullied by a sibling in childhood

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Abstract

Background: It is argued that sibling relationships are often overlooked in favour of parent-child relationships. Sibling interactions have the potential to be emotionally intimate and complex, and experiences can influence later psychological development. Research exploring the significance of sibling relationships is developing, with the majority of studies focussing on the protective nature of this relationship. There has been limited curiosity into the expression of adults' stories of being bullied by a sibling in childhood. By exploring people's stories, this study aims to consider what it means to be bullied by a sibling – that is, it will explore the broad question of “how do adults describe and make sense of their childhood sibling bullying experiences?”

Method: A qualitative research paradigm was chosen for this study. The method of narrative inquiry was employed, using the Narrative Orientated Inquiry approach. Interviews were completed with seven adults who perceived themselves to have been bullied by a sibling in childhood.

Results: Adults' experiences were understood within the context of content and form. The content of people's stories were considered alongside the way in which they told their story, facilitating an understanding of what and how they integrated their experiences into the construction of their narrative identities. Adults described their perceptions of sibling bullying and the barriers to defining experience, as well as the impact on their later, sibling relationships. The results also indicated that emotional expression associated with the event varied for every narrator, as they moved towards integration of experience.

Discussion: The findings are discussed within existing theoretical models of sibling bullying and subject and identity positioning theory. The clinical implications are framed within psychoanalytic theory and in relation to the perceived acceptability of sibling bullying.

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1. Introduction

1.01 Thesis Overview

This thesis analyses the narrative accounts of seven adults who perceived themselves to be bullied by a sibling in childhood. The aims were to consider empirically what it means to be bullied by a sibling – how and what do adults describe as their experience and how and what do they chose to integrate into their identities in order to make sense of their experience? This thesis maintains that being bullied by a sibling in childhood could represent a disruption in experience and identity, but is a situation that is legitimized within society. As a result, many adults may have not had their stories heard or validated within research or in a clinical setting. This study is curious about how adults have come to understand their experience and the consequent impact on the nature of the sibling relationship as a result.

Research interest into the general nature and significance of sibling relationships is developing, and there is an emerging literature related specifically to the topic of sibling bullying. Some studies have examined the associations between sibling bullying in childhood and psychological adjustment outcomes in adolescence (e.g. Duncan, 1999) and others have investigated the relationship between self-labelling as a victim of sibling abuse and later, psychological symptoms (e.g. Mackey, Fromuth & Kelly, 2010). Qualitative research has also begun to explore the concept of sibling violence and studies have been curious about how adults internalise their experiences (Meyers, 2014).

Hence, it is argued that sibling relationships, not only parent-child relationships, can have an influence on future interpersonal relations and identity formation processes (Moser, Jones, Zaorski, Mirsalimi & Luchner, 2005). Siblings provide opportunities

for social exchange and cognitive and emotional development, therefore sibling dynamics should be considered within the assessment conceptualisation of patient difficulties, specifically in relation to interpersonal templates and patterns of relating (Moser et al., 2005).

1.02 Chapter Overview

To introduce the aims of the study, this chapter presents the relevant research in regards to the nature of sibling relationships. Varying theoretical models of sibling relationship development will be examined and critiqued. The concept and definition of sibling bullying will also be discussed, including a rationale for the choices that have been made in regards to this for the current study. Existing literature pertaining to the subject of childhood sibling bullying and later psychological adjustment will then be summarised and critiqued.

1.03 The Sibling Relationship

The nature of sibling relationships, in all their complex forms of love and hate, still remains more of a mystery than the passions and developmental vicissitudes of parent-child relationships

(Sharpe & Rosenblatt, 1994, p.491)

Siblings are often those with whom one most closely shares genetic, family, social class, and historical background (White, 2001). It is a categorical relationship that is often based on shared biological and affective ties with parents (Punch, 2008). The sibling relationship tends to be perceived as an enduring relationship (Allan, 1979) due to this genetic inheritance and common history, providing siblings with a sense of connectedness (Edwards, Hadfield, Lucey & Mauthner, 2006) and permanency (Elgar & Head, 1999). Recent statistics indicate that around 90% of the population has a sibling (Milevsky, 2011), therefore it can be seen as often one of the most prominent relationships in some societies. Although sibling relationships share common attributes with all interpersonal relationships, it is argued that they also have certain, unique characteristics (Cicirelli, 1995). Within a sibling relationship children may experience a myriad of acceptance, support, aggression and invalidation; all of which are likely to be tied to feelings of self-worth and adequacy (Stocker, 1994).

The sibling bond is unlike any other because it is lifelong and non-elective – their shared history serves as a basis for continued reciprocity even as adult responsibilities and choices separate them (McHale, Kim & Whiteman, 2006). The relationship has been conceptualised by some as one that is fluid and renegotiable (Cantor, 1979; Parsons, 1943; Rossi & Rossi, 1990), emotionally intense (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1983, 1998) and an interpersonal ‘training ground’ for adult life (Gass, Jenkins & Dunn, 2007; Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). In a Scottish based study, Punch (2008) interviewed 90 children about the nature of their sibling relationships. Children reported that their relationships could be intimate, playful and loving, but also very tense and conflictual at times (Punch, 2008). This fluctuation could be due to the unique dimensions of the sibling relationship; it is argued that the relationship is one in which the boundaries of social interaction can be pushed to the limit, rage and irritation need not be suppressed and politeness and toleration can be neglected (Punch, 2008; Dunn, 1984). Punch’s (2008) research also highlighted that siblings share knowledge, time and space – that is, siblings know how the other behaves and what will affect them, and they often spend large amounts of time together in a relatively small space. Indeed, siblings share family activities and rituals as well as family stresses, achievements and tragedies (McHale et al., 2006).

The importance of the sibling relationship has frequently been overlooked, as the parent-infant relationship has dominated Western psychological research and investigation. However, in the past decade there has been a shift in Western focus from the mother-child dyad towards the role of the family context in shaping children’s developmental outcomes (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Lamb, 1978). The significance and complexity of mutual influences within the family are being recognised (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1976), and this has led to a growing body

of evidence suggesting that siblings play a unique role in a young person's development (East, 2009; McHale et al., 2006). It is argued that along with parents, siblings form critical reference points in the development of identity and attachment in early childhood (Hetherington, 1994). In his study with 85 second grade students (average age 7 years 11 months), Stocker (2006) found that children's perceptions of their sibling relationships corresponded to their perceived indices of emotional functioning. As such, those who rated their sibling relationships as high in warmth also reported feeling less lonely and did not exhibit behavioural and/or conduct problems. Additionally, another US based study (Rook & East, 1992) focussed on 6th grade children whom they classified as "isolated and aggressive", and found that supportive sibling relationships correlated with better adjustment, such as feeling less anxiety symptoms.

Studies completed in non-Western cultures have criticised the often dominant view that mother-child attachments are solely responsible for later, developed working models of social relationships. The counter-argument incorporates a socioecological model of attachment and identity development; that is, children's sense of self and regulatory abilities are shaped by the multiple influences and social exchanges that they engage in within their culture and ecosystems (Tronick, Morelli & Winn, 1987). For example, in their observations of toddlers and infants (aged 5 months to 3 years) from the Efe Foragers Community of Zaire, Tronick and Morelli (1992) found that these children spent half their time in social contact with individuals who were not their mothers. These individuals included siblings and other children in the community. As such, the ability for these infants and toddlers to self-regulate and their developing sense of self are likely to be linked to the presence of others

(Tronick & Morelli, 1992), offering evidence for a more holistic and less hierarchical outlook on child development.

1.04 Theoretical Models of Sibling Relationship Development

There has been increasing recognition that the sibling relationship is a diverse a complex connection (Edwards et al., 2006) and its' developmental trajectory can be subject to various internal and external influences. Past research has focussed on the influence of child characteristics (e.g. birth order, sibling spacing, family size and gender) (Brim, 1958; Harris, 1964; Zajonc & Markus, 1975), however there has been considerable inconsistency within these findings (Abramovitch, Corter & Lando, 1979; Teti, Gibbs & Bond, 1989). It is also argued that this research does not acknowledge the role of the family context and other, interpersonal factors that shape sibling relationships. Indeed, the emergence of family systems theory (e.g. Minuchin, 1974) has triggered researchers to explore various influences on sibling relationship development, such as social learning theories (Bandura, 1977; Patterson, 1986), ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and attachment security (Teti & Ablard, 1989; Volling, 2001). Each of these theories will be discussed below, beginning with research related to the influence of child characteristics and family constellations and moving through to family systems and psychoanalytic perspectives.

Child Characteristics. Various studies of sibling relationship development have focused on the interactions of birth order, gender and age gap in response to assessing the quality of sibling relationships (e.g. Ernst & Angst, 1983; Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970). It is suggested that these 'family constellation' factors affect children's personalities and intelligence, and thus their relationships with one another (Dunn, 2007).

Studies exploring the effects of birth order generally posit that children's experiences with siblings will differ depending on whether they are the older or younger sibling (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). In their study of child and adolescent perceptions of their sibling relationships, Buhrmester and Furman (1990) found that sibling relationships became more egalitarian and less asymmetrical with age. Across the age ranges studied (8 to 14 years), the extent of nurturance and dominance perceived to be directed toward younger siblings decreased, by way of ratings on the Sibling Relationships Questionnaire (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). However, this research acknowledges that their findings are extremely speculative and do not take into account other, influencing factors on the sibling relationship, such as family context and processes.

Other research involving a 30 minute videotaping of sibling pair interactions (Vandell, Minnett & Santrock, 1987) found an increase between ages 4 and 8 in the extent to which younger siblings exercised power over their older siblings. In the same study, Vandell and colleagues (1987) noted an increase with age in which older siblings played cooperatively with younger siblings, however Buhrmester and Furman (1987) found no differences amongst their 7-12 year olds in regards to self-report ratings of companionship with siblings. Additionally, another hypothesis is that siblings who are close in age are likely to have more contact, and therefore in some cases, more conflict because of similar interests, abilities, skills and the need to share family property (Felson & Russo, 1988; Newman, 1996). As such, Hoffman and Edwards (2004) state that sibling pairs with substantial age differences may have less conflict, due to the relationships having a clearer power structure.

Studies investigating the relationship between child gender and sibling relationship quality recognise that same-sex pairs get along better throughout early childhood

than different-sex pairs (Dunn, 1983). In their observations and through maternal and child interviews over a seven year period with 39 sibling dyads, Dunn, Slomkowski and Beardsall (1994) noted that during middle childhood boys in particular become less likely to describe intimacy and warmth in their sibling relationships.

Additionally, sibling literature indicates that younger sisters with older brothers are most at risk to experiencing sibling violence (Graham-Bermann & Culter, 1992).

It is clear that there are limitations to these correlational studies, not least because cause and effect relationships cannot be ascertained. Processes within sibling relationship development can only be inferred via the outcome measures used in these studies. Moreover, the studies investigating the role of child characteristics in sibling relationship development are out dated and do not consider the wider, socio-cultural factors that can influence how siblings negotiate their relationships with one another.

Social Learning Theory. Social learning theories (Bandura, 1977) propose an alternative perspective on the importance of the sibling relationship in child development. Social learning theories argue that we observe and imitate those individuals with whom we have intimate and frequent contact, and with those who possess social power (Bandura, 1973). It is argued that for children, the older sibling in particular is a prominent model since they are perceived to have high status and daily contact is common (Akers, 1994, 2000; Bandura, 1977). Indeed, some studies suggest that sibling influences are stronger than parental modelling (Brook, Whiteman, Gordon & Brook, 1990) as the reactions from the sibling are used to develop implicit rules about behavioural rewards and punishments. Thus, it is hypothesised that the sibling relationship has the potential to foster both positive and negative psychological adjustment and social development patterns.

Patterson's observational work (1984; 1986) on the sibling relationships of children with conduct disorders has been a key contributor to this field of research. His coercive process model (1986) suggests that the sibling context serves as a training ground where children learn how to interact with a social partner (Solmeyer, McHale & Croter, 2014). It is argued that if sibling exchanges are predominantly hostile, then negative interaction patterns are reinforced and the victim child may develop a generalised coercive interpersonal style. This could include poor self-regulation skills and an inability to communicate and solve problems calmly and effectively (Solmeyer et al., 2014). As such, it is further maintained that this sibling interactional style has future developmental implications, as it has the potential to carry over into other social contexts. Criss and Shaw (2005) found in their study with 208 adolescent boys that sibling conflict was related to later, school based antisocial behaviour problems, after controlling for mother child relationship quality.

Within the context of Patterson's theory, the sibling bond may also protect against delinquent behaviours. Following the concept of imitation and reinforcement, siblings can reinforce adaptive social skills such as social competence and empathy (Buist, 2010; Howe, Aquan-Assee, Bukowski, Lehoux & Rinaldi, 2001). Through their behavioural interactions, siblings can develop protective skills in perspective taking, negotiation and problem solving (Brown, Donelan-McCall & Dunn, 1996) which then extend beyond this relationship and can link to later social competence and development of adolescent peer relations (Stormshak, Bellanti, Bierman & the Conduct Problems Prevention Group, 1996; Updegraff, McHale & Crouter, 2002). Furthermore, social learning theory argues that parental interactions can have a mediating effect on the development of the sibling relationship (Bandura, 1973; Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1990). That is, siblings may adopt the attitudes and

model the techniques of conflict resolution that they witness in spousal relationships, particularly those actions that are reinforced (Klagsbrun, 1992). Furman and Giberson (1995) found that parental assertion of power was related to a higher frequency of conflict between siblings, and Steinmetz (1977) found similarities between the strategies used by spouses, parents and siblings to resolve conflicts. In the case of sibling violence, social learning theory argues that children are engaging in behaviour patterns they have witnessed and repeatedly experienced in their immediate families (Patterson, Dishion & Bank, 1984; Wiehe, 1997).

Whilst social learning theories offer a somewhat less individualist explanation for the development of negative and positive sibling relationships, observational learning may not be the only process underlying this development (Whiteman, McHale & Soli, 2011). It is recommended that research also needs to examine moderators such as relationship style, status and power of social and observational learning in order to measure processes directly, as opposed to inferring (Whiteman, Becerra & Killoren, 2009).

Family and Ecological Systems Perspectives. Sibling relationships do not occur in isolation. A family systems approach locates the sibling relationship in their wider social context, directing attention towards the interdependence between the marital, parental and sibling subsystems in regards to sibling relationship development (Minuchin, 1985). From this perspective families are seen as hierarchically organised and reciprocally influential, such that the nature and pattern of one subsystem has the potential to affect and permeate another subsystem in the family (Bowlby, 1973; Shulman & Collins, 1995). As such, this would follow for example, that the parental subsystem can affect the sibling subsystem, and vice versa.

Researchers have investigated this interplay between sibling relationship quality and family functioning; for example, Brody and colleagues (1992) found that low harmony, low cohesion and high conflict in the family were significantly related to later levels of child-reported sibling conflict (Dunn, 2007). One meta-analysis that included eight studies on marital-sibling relationship associations revealed that sibling relationships were more positive in divorced as compared with always-married families (Kunz, 2001). Considering this, it is possible that within a marital conflict situation some siblings may compensate for family negativity in their parents' marriage and form protective, close sibling relationships (Jenkins, 1992; Milevsky & Levitt, 2005).

Family systems influences on sibling relationships have also been explored in regards to differential parental treatment of siblings. Developmental studies have shown that children from a surprisingly early age monitor and respond to the interactions between their siblings and parents (Dunn & Munn, 1985). Children may attend to the ways in which their parents emotionally interact with them and their sibling, noticing any differential treatment and internalising this experience (Kowal & Kramer, 1997). Indeed, Shanahan, McHale, Crouter and Osgood (2008) found in their longitudinal study of adolescent sibling pairs, that children whose parent-child relationships decreased in warmth relative to those of their siblings, reported increases in depressive symptoms and decreases in sibling warmth.

A family systems approach highlights the dynamic nature of families, such that they can also be subject to external influences. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory acknowledges that there are multiple levels of contextual influences on sibling relationship development. The complex interplay between the siblings' parental and home environment, neighbourhood and school environments, gender,

age and cultural expectations will all have an impact on how sibling relationships may be understood and develop. Indeed, some studies have noted an association between lower socioeconomic status and more negative sibling relationships (Conger, Conger & Elder, 1994; Dunn et al., 1994) and others have highlighted the role of cultural values in shaping sibling dynamics (McHale, Updegraff, Shanahan, Crouter & Killoren, 2005; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005). The cultural norms that prescribe sibling behaviour and a family's macrosystem, or broader, social context, will describe, cross culturally, how siblings are normatively bound to one another (Stephens, 1963).

Attachment perspectives. Traditionally, attachment research has suggested that the parent-child relationship is of primary importance when examining the protective nature of relationships and their effects on child adjustment (Bowlby, 1982). It is argued that the nature of the relationship with a primary attachment figure, most often the mother, becomes the basis for an internal working model of relationships (Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton, 1985) – that is, how individuals begin to understand, predict and regulate their interpersonal relationships more generally. From an attachment theory perspective, infants promote proximity to their caregivers by their behaviours (e.g. crying, clinging). Caregivers can act as a secure base from which children explore the world around them, but return to in stressful situations for comfort and a sense of security (Whiteman et al., 2011). The quality of an attachment relationship depends on the sensitivity and responsiveness of the caregiver, which corresponds to the child's perceived sense of security. For example, children who experience a secure attachment relationship, such that they feel emotionally validated, potentially develop internal working models of themselves as worthy of love and support. Alternatively, children who experience more insecure attachment

relationships characterised by unpredictability or unresponsiveness could develop a sense of feeling unworthy of nurturance and support (Teti & Ablard, 1989).

These facets of attachment theory have been extended within the literature and applied to the process of sibling relationship development. It is hypothesised that parent-child attachment security is associated with, and is to some extent mirrored in the sibling attachment relationship. Put simply, the qualitative aspects of the child-parent relationship could have an influence on the way the sibling relationship develops and is organised (Brody & Stoneman, 1986). In their study with 53 mothers and their young children, Teti and Ablard (1989) examined this relationship.

Accordingly, they found that two siblings who were both securely attached to their mother were more likely to form a positive relationship together, than were dyads in which both siblings were insecurely attached to their mother (Whiteman et al., 2011).

Moreover, in mother's absence, secure older siblings were more likely to respond to their younger siblings' distress than less secure older siblings (Teti & Ablard, 1989).

Others have also begun to investigate this concept with some longitudinal research across infancy and early childhood, and suggest that infants who are insecurely attached to their mothers show higher rates of sibling conflict and hostility in the preschool years (Volling, 2001; Volling & Belsky, 1992).

In childhood, attachment bonds between siblings may resemble and complement parent-child bonds, but they may also compensate for parental inadequacies in cases of stress or deprivation (Whiteman et al., 2011). Consistent with attachment theories (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1973), but extended to the sibling relationship, research has challenged the dominant explanation of birth order and gender effects and explored the effect that siblings themselves can have on one another's development (Gass et al., 2007). Research has begun to explore questions such as can one child

provide a “secure base” for another? Can a sibling be missed when absent and used as a source of comfort and security? (Dunn, 1983; Gass et al., 2007). Perhaps siblings, like parents, also have the potential to provide security and comfort to children when they are experiencing stress (Gass et al., 2007). Correlational studies have noted that the quality of relationship that develops between siblings has been associated with both internalising and externalising symptomology in children (McElwain & Volling, 2005; Pike, Coldwell & Dunn, 2005). Earlier research by Sandler (1980) also found that young children who had an older sibling showed fewer adjustment problems associated with experiencing recent life events than those children without an older sibling (Gass et al., 2007).

Moreover, in her ground breaking Cambridge studies, Dunn and colleagues (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Dunn, Brown & Beardsall, 1991) examined the nature of sibling relationships within their families. They followed first and second borns, prior to and after the birth of a sibling, observing them at home during infancy and childhood.

The longitudinal observations not only highlighted the salience of siblings’ relationships with the shared parents, but also the potential protective nature of the sibling relationship (Dunn & McGuire, 1994) For example, Dunn and Kendrick (1982) observed some second born children (14-16 months) attempting to comfort their older siblings when they appeared upset. Other studies have demonstrated similar protective findings; Stewart (1983) found that when siblings were placed in the Strange Situation (mothers exited a room, leaving both children with a stranger) more than half of all older siblings actively cared for their younger siblings when they showed distress upon separation. Moreover, these attempts to comfort were both accepted by their younger siblings and effective in reducing distress (Gass et al., 2007). As such, it is argued that many of the processes which bond a child to their

parent are also active in creating the bond between siblings (Rowe, 2007), therefore similar to the parent-child relationship, the sibling relationship has the potential to be responsible for creating feelings of validation and containment in another.

Limitations to research. As children develop, they are exposed to a vast network of individual relationships. Consequently, literature has endeavoured to investigate how these different members of a child's social network can have an influence on their psychological development. The theoretical models detailed above offer some psychological insight into the nature of sibling relationships, however it is important to recognise the limitations to this research.

The sibling relationship is one that is dynamic and complex and inevitably there will be various factors influencing such a relationship, therefore correlational studies will always be speculative. Due to the sibling relationship continually being in flux, outcome data may also only be representative of that current time point (Richmond, Stocker & Rienks, 2005). There also a number of methodological issues inherent in sibling relationship studies. For example, sibling relationship quality studies have relied on self-report data from either the sibling's mother or the older sibling and it is argued that attention to both members of the dyad is necessary to more accurately assess the factors that might influence perceived sibling relationship quality (McHale, Updegraff & Whiteman 2012).

Demographic changes in rates of cohabitation, marriage, divorce and multiple births have resulted in substantial diversity in the family contexts in which siblings' relationships are embedded (McHale et al., 2012), therefore future research needs align itself with these changes and take a more ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The majority of sibling research has involved Western, middle class sibling dyads, thus little is known about sibling relationships from non-

Western and varying socioeconomic groups (Howe & Recchia, 2014). Further research needs to also involve siblings from single parent families and different religious backgrounds in order to consider the similarities and differences across groups.

Although each perspective reviewed in this thesis serves to elucidate the key dimensions of the sibling relationship, it is suggested that a more integrated approach is taken within the literature. Future studies should be designed so as to illuminate how insights from the various perspectives complement one another, since the processes that affect sibling relationship dynamics, as with other close relationships, operate at a variety of levels (Whiteman et al., 2011).

1.05 Sibling Influences

“the sibling bond is a connection between the selves, at both the intimate and public levels, of two siblings: it is a fitting together of two people’s identities. The bond is sometimes warm and positive but it may also be negative”

Bank and Khan (1982, p.15)

Psychological theory and research has documented that siblings are important and can influence each other in various ways (see section 1.04 and Brody, 2004 for a review). Indeed, siblings’ extensive contact during childhood and adolescence provides ample opportunity for them to shape one another’s behaviour, socioemotional development and adjustment (McHale et al., 2012). Positive sibling relationships in childhood have been found to stimulate healthy emotion regulation skills (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008) and have been associated with enhanced cognitive, emotional and social abilities in childhood and adolescence (Dunn, 1983). For example, observational studies of sibling interactions have found that through their conflicts, teasing and pretend play siblings can develop skills in perspective taking, emotional understanding and compromise (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992; Howe,

Rinaldi, Jennings & Petrakos, 2002). Additionally, preschool siblings who engage in fantasy play appear better able to demonstrate theory of mind competencies, such as predicting a story character's false belief, than pre-schoolers with no siblings (Pernoff, Ruffman & Leekam, 1994). Howe, Petrakos, Rinaldi, and LeFebvre (2005) also observed that siblings who engaged in pretend play made more references to one another's thoughts and feelings and were able to participate in shared meaning construction. Thus, it would appear that sibling relationships are natural contexts for learning about the world of emotion (Kramer, 2014).

Despite the potential positive outcomes of healthy sibling relationships, the sibling bond is not necessarily always accompanied by positive emotions. Illuminated by Bank and Khan's (1982) quote above, the familiarity and intimacy of siblings naturally creates a relationship that is simultaneously warm and conflictual. It is therefore argued that siblings have the potential to promote adaptive or maladaptive development (East, 2009). For example, destructive or negative sibling relations have been associated with detrimental outcomes such as deviancy in adolescence, substance use and internalising problems such as anxiety or depression (Bank, Burraston & Snyder, 2004; Stocker, Burwell & Briggs, 2002). In their study of 80 girls and 56 boys in middle childhood (age 10-12), Stocker and colleagues (2002) found that sibling conflict (characterised as excessive arguing and deliberate acts of harm) at Time 1 predicted increases in children's self-reported feelings of anxiety and depressed mood and parental reports of delinquent behaviour, two years later. Similarly, Natsuaki, Ge, Reiss, and Neiderhiser (2009) found in their study of 390 sibling pairs that sibling aggression remained significant in predicting subsequent externalising symptoms (e.g. criminal damage, substance misuse, conduct problems) even after controlling for punitive parenting. Indeed, if children are unable to utilise

sibling conflict opportunities in a benign way for adaptive functioning, they may get entrenched in negative cycles of coercive behaviours (Patterson, 1984) that do not facilitate emotional regulation or emotional understanding (Stocker et al., 2002).

Negative sibling interactions and identity formation. The psychology of siblings and their importance for psychic development has been explored most recently in psychoanalytic literature, arguing the importance of sibling relationships in the development of children's internal life (Edwards et al., 2006). Pursuing psychoanalytic concepts such as object relations (Klein, 1952a) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982), it is argued that in addition to parents, siblings are also amongst an infants' primary objects (Hindle & Sherwin-White, 2014). That is, siblings are a major part of a child's early life experiences and this relationship can be internalised. Infant/child observation research illustrates that the child's sensory perceptions of siblings can occur almost as early and with as much frequency as those of the maternal object (Agger, 1988; Dunn, 1984), therefore we miss their richness if we see siblings as "second editions" (Colonna & Newman, 1983) of the parent triad.

Consequently, it is argued that difficult feelings about siblings are as important as the role of parents in children's identity formation and emotional development (Coles, 2003). From a Kleinian, object-relations view of identity formation, the self is not unitary, but instead can be thought of as a series of selves, made up of other people and relationships that are taken in (introjected) and identified with during childhood (Edwards et al., 2006). Accordingly, a sibling can become an internal object – that is, a mental and emotional image of the sibling is taken in and can influence how that individual experiences the world and their developing sense of self. Moreover, Bowlby (1969) has also acknowledged the significance of siblings, viewing siblings

as potential subsidiary attachment figures who often contribute to the development of personality and self-esteem.

Consistent with psychoanalytic theory, it is postulated that if early experiences of the sibling relationship are interpreted as threatening, unsafe and contradictory, these feelings can be internalised and identified with into adolescence and adulthood, potentially causing disruption to the separation-individuation process and personality development (Volkan & Ast, 2014). Volkan and Ast (2014) have most recently pursued this psychoanalytic avenue, suggesting that the mental representations of childhood siblings are influential object representations or identifications in adult patients' internal worlds. They have examined the evidence in their own and others' clinical case studies and maintain that adults' intrapsychic childhood sibling representations can play a role in psychopathology. Intrapsychic experiences with such representations, contaminated with unconscious fantasies and affects, can be key elements in the formation or maintenance of symptoms or personality traits (Volkan & Ast, 2014). Indeed, it is argued that if there is conflict within the identification and separation process from the sibling's representation, due to unresolved conflict or aggression, this may result in problematic object relations and contribute to consequent psychopathology. In addition, Ast Volkan and Ast (2014) give examples of cases (see Kennedy, 1985b) that have demonstrated the influence of childhood sibling experiences in the evolution of defences, adaptations and personality traits.

If siblings have the potential to buffer against negative effects of harmful environments (Jenkins, 1992), it is likely that they also have the ability to be destructive in such situations. Other theorists have since argued that rivalry between siblings can have a major influence on personality development (Adler, 1959;

Winnicott, 1977) and the idea that siblings generally play an important part in children's development of sensitivity and understanding of the self and others has also been advocated within the literature (Dunn, 1983; Coles, 2003; Kramer, 2014).

1.06 Sibling Bullying

Among negative sibling behaviours, sibling bullying has been noted to be one of the most frequent (Duncan, 1999; Wolke & Samara, 2004). However, defining sibling bullying is one of the most problematic areas of the research, as studies do not always provide theoretical justification for their chosen definition. Some studies will not provide a guide in regards to what they have included or excluded in their definition; for example, studies that define sibling bullying as related to only physical aggression may not outline what they believe to be inclusive of this. Consequently, this can lead to huge variation across studies in regards to the reported frequency of sibling bullying. This issue and other problems related to defining the concept of sibling bullying will be outlined below, beginning with a critique of the term bullying itself.

Bullying as a concept. School based bullying research has been on-going since the 1970's, with Professor Dan Olweus instigating the process of exploring, defining and tackling bullying behaviour in schools. As the concept has begun to dominate the literature, the awareness and complexity of the problem has increased, with the media becoming an active participant in the promotion of the subject. Yet despite fervent research, we are only at the beginning of understanding this phenomenon (Rigby, 2002) and there are many contested issues that surround the subject. What is bullying behaviour and are we able to produce a definition that genuinely reflects individuals' real lived experiences? What are the normative

attitudes towards bullying and it is possible that individuals may not perceive themselves as being bullied? Moreover, can we take different perspectives on bullying in regards to context – that is, are we able to think about bullying experiences outside the context of school?

Defining bullying. A review of the literature indicates there is a shared consensus in regards to the factors that constitute the definition of bullying. Sesar, Barisic, Pandza and Dodaj (2012) suggest that bullying is an act that is intended to harm, takes place repeatedly and there must be a perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. Owleus (1999b) reinforces this with his definition – “a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself” (p. 10). Thus, common throughout these definitions is the assumption that bullying involves a “systematic abuse of power” (Rigby, 2002, p.74) and there is also the supposition that bullying is an act that happens repeatedly and is long-lasting in duration. Bullying as a concept has also been broken down into various sub categories according to the manner in which the bullying is delivered; for example physical, verbal or emotional bullying (Rigby, 2002).

Although there may be some underlying agreement when considering the proposed definition of bullying, there are also huge discrepancies in the way researchers perceive and utilise the term. Definitions are context-bound (Rigby, 2002), thus to offer a universal definition of bullying would be to imply homogeneity to an experience that is particularly subjective and various. That is, whether an individual perceives themselves to have been bullied is dependent on their subjective experience and meaning they construct about the event. Instead it is argued that the term bullying is not static, nor should it be viewed as a yes/no dichotomy, but it will be based on the

individual's interpretation of, and how they position themselves in relation to their experience. As a consequence, this implies that not all bullying experiences may be interpreted as severe and the same experience can be interpreted differently by individuals. It is possible that some may regard acts of teasing or games as provoking and upsetting, whereas others will view these experiences as mild and less concerning.

Sibling bullying as a concept. Sibling bullying is often an unrecognised type of family violence (Gelles & Pedrick, 1990), as parents and others often minimise the frequency and severity of negative behaviours among siblings. Indeed, there appears to be a cultural acceptance of sibling bullying as a benign and normative experience of childhood (Finklehor, Turner & Ormrod, 2006) as society labels the violent behaviours that occur between siblings as sibling rivalry. Labelling such behaviours as sibling rivalry denotes the experience as being a developmental phase and short term in nature and ignores the potential long term, percolating psychological difficulties that can develop as a result. A study by Skinner and Kowalski (2013) found that bullying of one's sibling was not only accepted, but expected. Moreover, the same act seems to have a wholly different meaning if it occurs between siblings, when compared to adults. Hardy, Beers, Burgess and Taylor (2010) argue that when an adult hits another adult it would readily be labelled as assault and treated as a crime. However, when one sibling hits another, it is often described as scuffles or quarrels. It is so common that few people regard it as deviant behaviour and within families it is often ignored (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). In fact, the DSM-5 criteria for oppositional defiant disorder specify that children who display symptoms (e.g. anger or vindictiveness) only with siblings should not receive a diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Dirks, Persram, Recchia & Howe, 2015).

Despite the societal resistance, researchers have contested the dominant position of normative sibling bullying and attempted to define, explore and quantify the concept. Prevalence rates, methods of bullying and potential long term consequences of childhood sibling bullying have only more recently been investigated (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). For example, Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner and Hamby (2005) found in their investigation that almost 30% of children in the age group of 2 to 17 years had been physically assaulted by a sibling. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found in their interviews with parents that 82% of children had engaged in some form of violence against a sibling. Additionally, in their national study of 2,114 children, Wolke and Skew (2011) found that sibling bullying was self-reported by more than half of the children (54%). Those who were bullied by a sibling also had higher reported scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), indicating that those bullied by a sibling may be associated with an increased risk of depression or anxiety (Wolke & Skew, 2011).

Defining sibling bullying. Sibling bullying has been defined by Adams and Kelley (1992) as “any motoric and/or verbal episode involving one or both of the siblings that includes hitting, pushing, kicking, spitting, biting, throwing objects, struggling over toys, name-calling, or hostile arguing” (p. 709). Like traditional forms of bullying, sibling bullying can involve an act of aggression that is often repeated over time, from a child who is or perceived to be stronger (Yabko, Hokoda, & Ulloa, 2008). Monks et al (2009) also highlight that sibling bullying includes destructive conflict, which is typified by high emotional intensity, coercive resolution or surrender by one child to the demands of the other (Emery, 1992). Destructive conflict includes disagreement, dispute and argument and may involve physical contact such as fighting (Monks et al., 2009).

Physical violence among siblings has been the primary focus of past research, however emotional or psychological bullying is also included in the conceptualisation of sibling bullying. The literature refers to emotional bullying as ‘relational bullying’ and this is defined as the deliberate social exclusion of children, such as ignoring, excluding from games or meaningful situations, spreading gossip or humiliation (Wolke, Woods, Stanford & Schulz, 2001). Due to the social acceptability of sibling conflict, the term sibling bullying is not always used within the literature, albeit it is clear they are referring to bullying as defined above. Thus, the terms ‘sibling abuse’, ‘sibling victimization’ and ‘sibling aggression’ are used interchangeably within the literature to describe sibling bullying.

Consistent with the argument made in the previous section (*defining bullying*) that definitions are context bound, this thesis further argues that moving towards a definition of sibling bullying will be both subjective and deeply rooted within the nuances of culture and language. How an individual understands and represents their sibling bullying experience will be interwoven with the wider, societal dominant discourses and shared public meanings relating to sibling relationships.

Consequently, going forward this thesis proposes not to offer a fixed and overarching definition of sibling bullying, but intends to explore how individuals perceive their own experiences. It is argued that we need to consider the positioning of the individual in relation to their experience and also how their experience fits into the broader, social and historical context that surrounds them.

Summary. The previous sections have offered insight into the various theoretical models pertaining to the nature of sibling relationship development, highlighting the fact that understanding sibling dynamics requires simultaneous attention to multiple dimensions of the relationship (McHale et al., 2012). The

frequency and amount of interactions, the durability of the relationship, existence of ascribed roles, accessibility and degree of common experiences means that sibling relationships form a unique and important context in which children develop social and emotional skills (Cicirelli, 1982). Indeed, observational research has demonstrated that siblings have the potential to harness one another's growth in emotional understanding and emotional regulation. However, psychoanalytic literature has explored the psychic impact of conflictual and invalidating sibling relationships, strengthening the argument that psychological theory must look beyond the parent-infant relationship when considering identity formation processes and subsequent personality development.

The definition of sibling bullying is something that has been contested and reworked by various researchers within this emerging field. Perceived acceptability of sibling aggression and bullying is likely to have contributed to the definition debate. It is argued that people's experiences will be context bound, thus providing a definition that reflects each individuals' experience could be problematic.

1.07 Childhood Sibling Bullying Experiences and Later Psychological Adjustment

The English language and society in general tends to glorify sibling ties, with the metaphors of "brotherhood" and "sisterhood" indicating friendship and cooperation (Klagsbrun, 1992). Of course, some level of conflict between siblings is normative (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992), however prolonged conflict, severe physical aggression and continued hostile and caustic interactions between siblings is not normative and can have a detrimental impact on children and adolescents psychological health and wellbeing (Stocker et al., 2002). In their study

with adolescent boys, Bank, Burraston and Snyder (2004) found that features of sibling relationships can significantly predict future individual well-being, even after the role of parents has been controlled. As discussed in previous sections, sibling interactions may be both a risk and a protective factor for the development and maintenance of emotional and/or behavioural problems (Dirks et al., 2015). As such, research posits that the sibling context is important when considering the influences on negative, psychological adjustment.

Areas of the literature have examined the theoretical underpinnings of sibling bullying (e.g. McHale et al., 2012), focussed on the links between sibling bullying and peer relationships/school bullying (e.g. Wolke & Samara, 2004) and explored differences in gender and the role of personality and temperament (e.g. Menesini, Camodeca & Nocentini, 2010). A previous review by Wolke and Skew (2012) attempted to organise the cross sectional literature investigating sibling bullying and associated mental health symptoms, however the review assessed both sibling and peer bullying, rather than the impact of sibling bullying alone. It yielded four predominantly cross sectional studies (one study offered a longitudinal design).

A meta-analysis was also conducted by Buist, Dekovic and Prinzie (2012), which investigated studies related to sibling relationship quality and the development of internalising and externalising problems in childhood and/or adolescence. To be included in the review, studies had to assess one or more aspects of sibling relationship quality (warmth, conflict and/or differential parenting) and measure one or more aspects of internalising or externalising problems (Buist, Dekovic & Prinzie, 2012). Thirty four studies were included, which provided information on eighty five sibling relationship variables and their association with internalising and externalising symptoms/behaviour (Buist et al., 2012). Comparing the importance of

the different aspects of sibling relationship quality, the results established significant effect sizes for associations between sibling conflict and reported externalising and internalising symptoms in childhood and adolescence ($r = .28, p < .001, r = .27, p < .001$) (Buist et al., 2012). The results also found small, significant effect sizes for the association between sibling warmth and internalising and externalising symptoms ($r = -.12, p < .01; r = -.14, p < .001$).

The results from this meta-analysis (Buist et al., 2012) provide encouragement that the sibling context is important when considering the psychological and behavioural development of children and adolescents. However the authors note that they had expected a stronger effect of sibling conflict on externalising than internalising symptoms. A possible reason for why the effect sizes were lower than expected could be because the term sibling conflict is very broad and could encompass many criteria. That is, how sibling conflict was measured would have inevitably varied from study to study and had an impact on the reported results.

Considering this, it would appear necessary to investigate these associations more closely by breaking down the term sibling conflict. Some studies operationalise the term sibling conflict to include property disputes, but not physical or emotional aggression (e.g. Campione-Barr, Greer & Kruse, 2013) and other studies do not offer any details whatsoever (e.g. Solmeyer et al., 2014). Moreover, research has shown that there may be a difference in regards to the type and topic of sibling conflict and its consequences (Dirks et al., 2015). Thus, it is not possible to ascertain which domains of sibling conflict may lead to internalising or externalising symptoms.

Consequently, it is argued that sibling bullying can be seen as a facet of the wider umbrella of sibling conflict, therefore a review of the current literature specifically

related to sibling bullying is necessary to ascertain potential associations.

Additionally, longitudinal studies, rather than cross sectional, should be reviewed in order to try and disentangle whether sibling bullying uniquely contributes to the development of long term emotional and behavioural problems.

The literature search. A review of the quantitative literature was conducted in order to gain a sense of what was already known about the relationship between sibling bullying and adult functioning. The search terms (see terms listed in Appendix A) yielded 56 quantitative published papers. Another three studies were identified through hand searching, bringing the total to 59 papers. A total of 2 quantitative papers were screened in for review, following the inclusion/exclusion criteria (see Table 1 for characteristics of reviewed literature).

Broadly, the majority of sibling bullying research has been quantitative in nature. Indeed, there has been limited curiosity into the adult narratives of those who have been bullied by a sibling, therefore a qualitative review was also included in this study. A search across several databases (search terms listed in Appendix A) produced 13 qualitative papers. Following the inclusion/exclusion criteria, two papers were screened in for review (see Table 2 for characteristics of reviewed literature).

The findings of the studies from both reviews were explored in relation to the factors of good quantitative and qualitative research, as specified in the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme for quantitative and qualitative research (CASP, Public Health Resource, 2013).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Due to the interchangeable nature of the phrases ‘sibling bullying’, ‘sibling victimization’, ‘sibling aggression’ and ‘sibling

abuse', studies that used any of these terms were included. However, studies that included sexual abuse or sibling incest were excluded from this review (e.g. Turner, Finklehor & Ormrod, 2010). Studies that addressed sibling bullying in conjunction with other traumas such as parental violence or parental mental health were excluded from the review. To reflect the aims of this thesis, only articles that presented longitudinal data were included in the quantitative review. That is, studies that included more than one wave of data (studies that presented only one wave were excluded, as they are essentially cross-sectional in nature, e.g. Tucker, Finklehor, Turner & Shattuck, 2013).

Studies were included if they addressed sibling bullying (or any of the terms referenced above) solely (not in conjunction with peer bullying, for example) and specified that the experience occurred during childhood and/or adolescence (between ages 0-18). It was compulsory for studies to either refer to how they were defining sibling bullying or give details of their outcome measure(s), including examples of questions asked, to ensure the sibling bullying/sibling victimisation construct was being investigated, rather than sibling conflict. For example, those studies that only utilised a five item sibling conflict measure were excluded from the review (e.g. Stocker et al., 2002; Solmeyer et al., 2014; Whiteman, Solmeyer and McHale, 2015). Due to the limited amount of research in this area, studies were included if participants were followed up either in adolescence or young adulthood/adulthood (study by Garcia, Shaw, Winslow & Yaggi, 2000 excluded for this reason).

This review was interested in bully victims, therefore studies that did not specify this were excluded. Studies that collapsed the categories of bully victims and perpetrators into one group were also excluded (e.g. Duncan, 1999). In line with the aims of the current review, papers were included if participants discussed perceived

psychological impact of their experience, or if one or more mental health outcome measures were utilised to investigate subsequent impact. Finally, twin studies and non-biological (e.g. half or step) sibling studies were excluded from the review.

Previous literature suggests that the sibling relationship between twins may be distinct from singletons (Pulkkinen, Vaalamo, Hietala, Kaprio, & Rose, 2003). The study by Natsuaki et al. (2009) was excluded for this reason, as their sample amalgamated siblings who were twins, full siblings, half siblings and step siblings.

Table 1. Characteristics of quantitative reviewed literature

Author	Design and Location	Sample	Outcome Measures	Main Findings
Bowes, Wolke, Joinson, Lereya and Lewis, 2014	Prospective study, United Kingdom	Birth Cohort, N=2002	<i>Sibling Bullying</i> assessed at 12 yrs- Standard sibling bullying questionnaire (unspecified) adapted from Olweus Bullying Questionnaire. <i>Mental health symptoms</i> self-report completed at 18 yrs old – the Clinical Interview Schedule-Revised, binary variable measure of depression, anxiety and self-harm.	Sibling bullying at 12 years predicted depression symptoms and self-harming behaviour at 18 years. No association found for anxiety.
Dunn, Slomkowski, Beardsall and Rende, 1994	Longitudinal Study, United Kingdom	Cambridge Sibling Study Cohort, N = 78 children, Males = 38, Females = 40, Mean age gap between siblings = 26mths, Social Class, majority of families registered as professional/managerial.	Time 1: Younger Sibling (YS) 3 yrs, Older Sibling (OS) 5-6 yrs. <i>Sibling Relationship</i> assessed by Maternal Interview Observation. Time 2: YS 8 yrs, OS 10-11 yrs. <i>Sibling Relationship</i> assessed by Maternal Interview and Child Interview. Time 3: YS 10 yrs, OS: 12-13 yrs. <i>Sibling Relationship</i> assessed by Maternal Interview and Child Interview. Child Adjustment measured by Maternal Report.	One significant correlation between observed negative behaviour of the older sibling to younger sibling in childhood, and the younger siblings' externalising behaviour in adolescence, as assessed by mother on the Child Behaviour Checklist. Some significant correlations between the siblings' reports of relations at Time 2 and children's internalising and externalising scores at Time 3.

Table 2. Characteristics of qualitative reviewed literature

Author	Location	Sample	Methodology	Main Findings
Meyers, 2014	United States	Adults retrospective accounts, N= 19, Women= 16, Men= 3, Age Range= 25-65 years, Median Sibling Age Difference= 2 years, Ethnicity, N= 17 Caucasian	Semi-structured interviews. Phenomenological and grounded theory analyses.	Feelings of loneliness and isolation endured into adulthood, consequences of the abusive sibling relationship were intensified by the lack of parental responsiveness, participants felt their experiences had a significant effect on their self-esteem and the memories resonated throughout childhood.
McDonald and Martinez, 2015	United States	Adults retrospective accounts, N= 20 (16 women, 4 Men), Age Range= 18-60 years, Mean age sibling bullying began= 5 years, Ethnicity, N= 16 Caucasian	Online survey that included a range of closed and open ended question prompts regarding sibling violence. Participants further asked to provide a narrative of one instance of abuse. Thematic analysis.	The most common parental response was to acknowledge the sibling abuse, but to not react/poor methods of intervention. Sibling abuse was seen as falling into categories such as natural/normative, not serious or the victim's fault.

Review of the quantitative literature. This review aims to explore the longitudinal literature related to childhood sibling bullying experiences and associations with later, psychological functioning. Two studies were identified for review, as other studies were cross sectional, retrospective and/or were interested in exploring sibling relationship quality. The studies did vary in regards to sample size, demographics, research design and in the way they defined and measured sibling bullying/victimisation. Nonetheless, both studies appeared to share a similar research question and aim for investigation – is there evidence for associations between being victimised by a sibling in childhood and development of later internalizing and/or externalizing behaviour in adolescence? Each study attempted to tackle this question from a different angle, adopting either a longitudinal or prospective research design. The following sub sections will discuss the strengths and limitations of the two studies, whilst highlighting the similarities and differences between them.

Research design and consequent populations. Both studies employed a longitudinal design to their research. Longitudinal research is a broad term and can be defined as research in which data are collected for two or more distinct periods, the subjects analysed are comparable from one period to the next and the analysis involves some comparison of data between or among periods (Ruspini, 2000). Within longitudinal research there is a subgroup known as prospective research; the above criteria still applies, however the distinguishing feature of a prospective study is that participants are selected prior to any outcomes of interest being measured. As such, participants enrol for a study and baseline data is collected before any of the subjects develop the outcome of interest (LaMorte, 2014). For example, Bowes et al. (2014) investigated whether the risk factor of child reported sibling bullying at 12 years old was prospectively associated with mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety and

self-harm) at 18 years old. In contrast, the longitudinal study (Dunn et al., 1994) measured sibling interaction over two different time points and correlated these scores with a child adjustment outcome measure in an attempt to ascertain more causation. Both Bowes et al. (2014) and Dunn et al. (1994) utilised a cohort sample within their studies. A cohort is a group of people who share a common characteristic or experience within a defined period; for example, Bowes et al. (2014) obtained their data from a UK, community based, birth cohort from Avon, whereby all children were born during a specific period of time (April 1991-December 1992). Dunn et al.'s (1994) participants were children originally from the Cambridge Sibling Study (Dunn & Munn, 1985, 1987). Thus, baseline information about participants can be potentially collected from birth, allowing for potential confounders to be controlled for if necessary. In their study, Bowes et al. (2014) were able to control for individual characteristics such as peer victimisation and depressive mood in childhood, as well as family characteristics such as mother's marital status, social class and maternal depression. However, they were not able to obtain all confounder variable data from birth; the earliest reports of children's internalising and externalising problems are from age 7 and maternal reports on a range of family factors were obtained when the child was 8 years old. On the other hand, Bowes et al. (2014) did gain maternal reports of children's exposure to stressful life events between 5 and 7 years, and they also assessed for domestic violence in four waves (child age 8 months, 1 year 9 months, 2 years 9 months and 3 years 11 months).

Nonetheless, the validity of the conclusion that being the victim of sibling bullying at age 12 years is strongly associated with depression and self-harm at 18 years old (Bowes et al., 2014) needs to be considered with caution. The authors were unable to

control for confounders from birth until age 18, thus it is possible that other factors may have contributed to the manifestation of depression and self-harm in adulthood.

Outcome measures and respondents. When thinking about data collection, a study must ensure that the measures and methods best represent the goals of the research and, in particular, answer the research question (Robson, 2002). In terms of study validity, it is important that authors discuss the theoretical framework(s) underpinning their questions (Greenhalgh, 1997); questions that are arbitrary or outcome measures that have not been objectively validated undermine the study's internal validity and overall reliability. Across both studies, a measure of sibling bullying/victimisation was taken or self-reported, as well as various measures of psychopathology/psychiatric outcomes.

In regards to the measures of sibling victimisation, Bowes et al. (2014) employed both an adapted sibling bullying questionnaire and offered a concrete definition of sibling bullying that participants could refer to. In contrast, Dunn et al. (1994) measured sibling bullying via observational methods in the participants' homes. When the younger sibling was 3 years old and the older was 5-6 years, two one hour observations of sibling interactions were carried out. The interactions were coded as either positive or negative and the study provided detailed examples of what was coded as a positive behaviour (e.g. gives/shows; touches affectionately, comforts; cooperative action; pretend play, etc.) and negative behaviour (e.g. negatively touches (hits, etc.); prohibits; takes object away; restrains; refuses/ignores; hostile comment, etc). It was for this reason that this study was included in the review, as the 'negative' behaviour criterion corresponded with the operational definitions of sibling bullying provided by the literature (Whipple & Finton, 1995; Adams & Kelley, 1992; Monks et

al., 2009). The authors also detailed their assessment processes for measuring reliability of the observational items.

The methodological issue of how and from whom studies gather their information from is important to consider when assessing the robustness of a study. Bowes et al. (2014) relied on self-report information and Dunn et al. (1994) chose to assess mothers' perceptions of their children's behaviour problems in young adolescence. It could be argued that having other individuals report on their perceptions of mental health outcomes could have been advantageous, however there could also be disagreement between informants in terms of how problems are conceptualised. There appears to be no 'gold standard' of informant method, except that studies should be transparent in regards to the strengths and limitations of their data collection methods.

Interpretation of results. Interpreting a study's data and statistical results should always be done critically; in particular, studies may inflate and/or under-emphasise their statistics in order to draw conclusions consistent with their hypotheses. Bowes et al. (2014) presented odds ratio calculations for associations between childhood sibling bullying and anxiety, depression and self-harm at age 18. An odds ratio is essentially a measure of effect size and plays an important role in logistic regression, quantitatively describing the strength of an association (Field, 2009). In their reporting, Bowes et al. (2014) note their adjusted, significant odds ratios found, however these were not particularly high, albeit self-harm ratios were higher (sibling bullying predicting depression symptoms, OR 1.85, confidence intervals, 1.11-3.09 and sibling bullying predicting self-harm, 2.26, confidence intervals 1.40-3.66). Although 95% confidence intervals were reported, the range was extremely wide, indicating greater levels of variance within the data. Nonetheless, the population attributable fractions suggested that 13% of depression and 19.3% of self-

harm at age 18 could be explained by being the victim of sibling bullying if these were causal relationships (Bowes et al., 2014).

However, Bowes et al. (2014) lost more than half their participants at follow up (6928 versus 2002), therefore it is possible that the findings could be partially explained by attrition. The authors also offer broad conclusions from their unadjusted odds ratios, highlighting that children who are frequently bullied (several times a week) by a sibling in childhood are twice as likely to have depression, self-harm and anxiety as compared to children who are not bullied.

Dunn et al. (1994) conducted Pearson correlations to test between childhood sibling bullying/victimisation and later, psychological adjustment. The study was honest in its reporting, noting only one significant correlation between observed negative behaviour of the older sibling to younger sibling in childhood, and the younger siblings' externalising behaviour in adolescence, as assessed by mother on the Child Behaviour Checklist ($r = .39, p < .05$).

Generalisability of findings. Due to their differing methods, expectations, theoretical angles and sample sizes, it was to be expected that both studies would vary in their outcomes found. As a result, it may be difficult to draw any specific conclusions from across the studies. It should also be noted that due to issues such as attrition and potential confounders, it is not possible to conclude a cause and effect relationship between childhood sibling bullying and subsequent mental health symptoms.

The studies in this review reported either low associations or no associations between sibling bullying and psychological maladjustment. It is possible that when participants are provided with a definition of sibling bullying, or an outcome measure that operationalises it, this may actually reduce the number of people who attribute

themselves or others to the criteria. Formal definitions are bound by language and it may not be possible to capture the emotional and cognitive context of the sibling relationship through language. Thus, presenting individuals with a definition of sibling bullying or rating behaviour according to certain criteria may discount experiences that would have otherwise been readily labelled as sibling bullying. Moreover, outcome measures themselves do not take the context of the behaviours into account; that is, hitting a sibling can have a number of different meanings depending on the context (Mackey, Fromuth & Kelly, 2010). This idea of context bound experiences is, perhaps, something in general that quantitative research misses. Furthermore, thinking in particular about Bowes et al.'s study (2014), language might have a large part to play in how individuals report sibling victimisation experiences. The term sibling rivalry may be more culturally acceptable and better understood as a concept, allowing people to attribute their experiences utilising this language, rather than 'sibling bullying'.

Study generalisability for both was also hindered by the fact that participants were from predominantly White, middle class, Western families. The majority of participants were also from two-parent families and the age between siblings was less than three years. With increased complexity in family structures and diversified ethnic and cultural backgrounds in contemporary society, it is necessary to conduct studies with samples comprising other racial and cultural groups and family structures with heterogeneous socioeconomic characteristics (Natsuaki et al., 2009).

Summary. The primary aim of both studies was to investigate whether childhood sibling bullying experiences could be associated with the development of later psychological problems in adolescence and/or adulthood. Other quantitative studies have provided cross sectional results, however these two studies tried to

demonstrate more long term associations, whilst also controlling for confounders such as peer victimisation, maternal mood and socio-economic factors. Due to small sample sizes and differences in operationalising sibling bullying, it was difficult to ascertain any firm associations. Perhaps examining societal perceptions of sibling bullying and how these effect a person's labelling of experience is an alternative way forward for research.

Review of the qualitative literature. The qualitative review sought to explore the nature of the existing literature pertaining to the personal experiences of those who were bullied by a sibling in childhood. Only two studies were identified for review, as the other studies diverged from the concept of lived experience and/or sibling bullying (a large number of studies addressed the topic of sibling sexual abuse/incest).

Defining sibling bullying. The issue of defining sibling bullying is one of the most contentious within the literature (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998). Meyers (2014) notes having initial concerns about identifying subjects for her study due to sibling abuse being a phenomenon that has little societal recognition. Both studies investigated adults' retrospective accounts of childhood sibling abuse and utilised self-reported or self-identified experiences as the working definition for their studies. However, Meyers (2014) utilised the extant literature to bolster the study's definition of sibling abuse, whilst also applying a general criterion of "enduring ongoing physical or emotional acts from a sibling during childhood or adolescence", to determine inclusion. McDonald and Martinez (2015) posit the opposite argument; they did not want to impose a definition of sibling abuse that may not conform to people's experiences, neither did they want to limit people's conceptualisations through their own researcher biases. Nonetheless, both studies advocated for the idea that subjective interpretation of sibling abuse would be an epistemologically congruent way to define

the concept, allowing room for both discovery and an emergent definition of the phenomenon (Meyers, 2014).

Both studies interchangeably utilise the terms ‘sibling abuse’ ‘sibling violence’ and ‘sibling aggression’ to refer to their phenomena of investigation. McDonald and Martinez (2015) accentuate the importance of employing the term sibling abuse rather than sibling bullying, as they argue that the term sibling bullying is still perceived as something that is normal and inevitable. Additionally, Meyers (2014) does not utilise the term sibling bullying, yet the criteria listed to define sibling abuse also correspond with the operational definitions of sibling bullying (e.g. where the abusive sibling gains a sense of control and minimises the other sibling’s self-esteem (Whipple & Finton, 1995), active expressions of rejection, verbal denigration). Moreover, individuals were included in McDonald and Martinez’s (2015) study if they had experienced either physical or emotional abuse from a sibling that was long lasting in duration, rather than an isolated event. Again, these criteria could also apply to the concept of sibling bullying.

Aims of the research and consequent design. One of the most salient points to think about in research is why something was looked at (Greenhalgh, 1997). Both studies provide a comprehensive context and rationale for their research. In particular, both studies argue that sibling violence/abuse is the most common form of family violence, yet the problem continues to go unrecognised within the academic literature. They maintain that the cultural acceptability of sibling bullying and the variations in definition contribute to the topic being overlooked and under identified. Both studies also highlight that there is a lack of literature exploring the personal experiences of those who have been abused by a sibling. Meyers (2014) argues for the significance of gaining the perspectives of the survivors, as a way of clarifying and broadening the

existing quantitative research that dominates the field. Indeed, both studies emphasise the importance of exploring the possible psychological and interpersonal effects that may develop as a result of sibling victimization.

Nevertheless, this broad aim of exploring the personal accounts of those victimized by a sibling was implemented in different ways by both studies. For example, McDonald and Martinez (2015) were interested in adults' perceptions of others' responses to the disclosure of their experiences. The authors hoped that by analysing participants' stories of other adults' responses to their sibling abuse experiences, this would in turn illuminate a link between people's reactions and how victims then perceive and attribute reasons to their experiences. The study also sought to investigate the effects of perceived support or acknowledgement of the problem from others, and whether this had implications for survivors' later psychological development.

On the other hand, Meyers' (2014) study endeavoured to explore from a broader, psychosocial perspective how people made sense of and internalised their experiences of sibling victimisation. In particular, Meyers' (2014) study was interested in the role that the family environment (e.g. parent-child dynamics, child neglect and parent modelling) played in the evolution and perpetuation of sibling victimization. As such, through the exploration of participants' sibling abuse narratives, Meyers (2014) highlighted the most commonly discussed familial factors alongside phenomenological descriptions of experience.

Although both qualitative in their inception, the studies employed different research designs to address their aims. McDonald and Martinez (2015) obtained their material via an online survey whereby participants were prompted to retrospectively reflect on their experiences with sibling abuse. The authors were transparent in regards to what type of open and closed questions they asked participants, and what they prompted

participants to elaborate on. Meyers (2014) employed semi-structured interviews with each participant and provides the reader with a copy of her detailed interview guide. Nevertheless, neither study provides a firm rationale for their research design; for example, it is not clear as to why McDonald and Martinez (2015) opted for an online survey approach. Indeed, these decisions are linked to epistemology, a concept that neither study discusses. Moreover, to demonstrate methodological rigour it is necessary for a study to be clear about their decisions for data collection. In their defence, McDonald and Martinez (2015) do acknowledge modelling their current study on a previous study by Rowntree (2007), however they still do not provide research design justification.

Finally, both studies employed a retrospective design and indeed, evidence suggests that many children do not label their experiences of sibling violence as abusive until adulthood (Hardy, 2001; Hardy, Beers & Burgess, 2010). Thus, a retrospective design could be argued as appropriate for the proposed research topic. However, retrospective studies are not without their limitations, specifically in regards to study validity and reliability. For example, autobiographical memory can be flawed due to mood states at the time of retrospective recall (McFarland & Buehler, 1998). It is possible that individuals who have experienced adverse life events, such as sibling victimisation, may also be experiencing some anxiety or depression, and this psychopathology could be associated with less reliable and valid recall (Hardt & Rutter, 2004).

Data analysis. In order to produce valid and reliable qualitative research, steps must be taken to demonstrate the clarity and rigour of analysis (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). For example, details of which analytic process was adopted and why is key to assessing the quality of a research study. In some ways, both studies provide some transparency of their processes and thinking at various stages.

McDonald and Martinez (2015) utilise a thematic analysis, whereas Meyers (2014) explains a phenomenological and grounded theory approach. Essentially, they both create a series of themes or concepts for discussion. Meyers (2014) discusses her use of notes and memos to assist with clustering the data, and also notes the implications of grounded theory in the revising process of the interview schedule. On the other hand, McDonald and Martinez (2015) are honest about their application of Rowntree's (2007) coding categories to their data and offer justification for their combination of deductive and inductive methods.

However, Meyers (2014) does not acknowledge her perspective within the research and how this inevitably influenced the interview processes. McDonald and Martinez (2015) do not refer to any audit trail processes and although Meyers (2014) does discuss data synthesis, she does not offer examples of this. In fact, both studies hint at how analytical concepts were derived and applied, but do not provide any evidence of the context in which categories were created. Both studies do not discuss the means through which they have truly explored the diversity of perspectives that qualitative material provides. In order to demonstrate rigour, methods such as grounded theory must be embedded in a broader understanding of the rationale and assumptions behind the qualitative research (Barbour, 2001).

Generalisability of findings. Both studies provide a valuable extension to the quantitative approach to the topic of childhood sibling victimisation. Meyers' (2014) study offers insight into the experiences of 19 adults who were identified as victims of sibling abuse (physical and emotional), and the contributing childhood family dynamic factors. Two key findings are highlighted within the study; the first is that participants reported the consequences of the abusive sibling relationship were intensified by the lack of parental responsiveness. Secondly, participants felt their experiences had a

significant effect on their self-esteem and the memories resonated throughout childhood (Meyers, 2014).

The generalisability of Meyer's (2014) findings are limited, however. Apart from two participants, all were from a Caucasian background. A disproportionate number of black ethnic and minority groups are involved with the child protection system and/or experience parent-child violence, which are factors likely to be inherent in sibling abuse contexts (Meyers, 2014). Thus, it is possible that there is a higher proportion of sibling abuse within these cultures that needs to be investigated. Moreover, Meyers (2014) acknowledges that her study population needed a greater variation of class, gender and employment status.

McDonald and Martinez's (2015) recruited 20 participants who self-identified as victims of physical and emotional sibling abuse. The findings indicated that people felt their experiences were acknowledged by their parents, however very little was perceived to have been done to protect them from their siblings. Moreover, participants felt their parents continually minimized and normalised the abuse. As such, many reported the experiences lasting for many years. However, the authors coded participants' responses based on thematic categories adopted from another study by Rowntree (2007), which had explored the narratives of 19 female survivors of sibling sexual abuse. It is thought that a limitation of McDonald and Martinez's study is the unequivocal transferability of coding categories from one study to another, despite the wholly different populations. Indeed, inherent in this methodological decision is the idea that physical and emotional sibling abuse is conceptually the same as sibling sexual abuse – something that other researchers argue ferociously against (McLaurin, 2005; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998).

McDonald and Martinez's (2015) study generalisability is also hindered by their lack of cultural and socio-economic sample diversity. Sixteen out of twenty participants were White, middle class and the majority were also women. Additionally, something that was not applicable to Meyers' (2014) study is that participants were only included if they had also reported their abuse to an adult during childhood. Consequently, the study's sample is skewed, as it will have lost the perspectives of those who had not reported their experiences in childhood.

Summary. The primary aim of both studies was to consider the personal narratives of those who reported as being victimised by a sibling in childhood. Both studies were interested in exploring how people made sense of their experiences, from the point of view of how did they understand the implications of, and other peoples' reactions to, their experiences in childhood and into adulthood. Furthermore, both studies advocate for the concept of sibling victimisation to be promoted in the family violence literature as an issue that needs more attention. Specifically, the studies argue that childhood sibling abuse needs to be differentiated from sibling rivalry, as the consequences have the potential to be comprehensive and long-lasting.

1.08 The Current Study

Taken together, the review of the literature highlights some of the strengths from previous research, whilst emphasising the limitations and how future research could address these. The review has illustrated how the literature exploring childhood sibling bullying as a distinct construct is sparse and individuals' varying use of language to describe their experience has an impact on research findings.

Indeed, there has been limited curiosity into the adult narratives of those bullied by a sibling in childhood. There has been even less investigation into adults' perceptions of the possible long lasting effects of their experience. The study by Meyers (2014) takes

a progressive step towards examining these issues. It prioritises adults' stories of childhood sibling bullying and was particularly interested in the nature of the family environment that engendered hostile sibling relationships (Meyers, 2014). The current study endeavours to contribute to the proposed gap within the literature and, like Meyers (2014), bring forth the stories of those who have experienced childhood sibling bullying. Similar to Meyers (2014), the current study is interested in how people internalise their experiences and the potential effects of this experience on their adult lives.

However this study intends to extend the research by Meyers and others, considering empirically what it means to be bullied by a sibling. In hearing people's stories, this study will aim to answer the broad, primary question of "how do adults describe and make sense of their childhood sibling bullying experiences?" This question will be considered along two, broad threads – how and what do adults *describe* as their experience and consequently, how and what do they chose to integrate into their identities in order to *make sense* of their experience?

Considering this, together with the literature, there are three main research questions guiding the current study – firstly, how do people perceive and define their experiences of being bullied by a sibling? This connects with the issue of context bound definitions and further with the epistemological positioning of this study, as it endeavours to examine the various ways that people organise and position themselves in relation to their experience, and integrate it into their identity.

This study is interested in how people have developed their understanding of their experience throughout childhood and into adulthood, therefore the second and third questions relate to what impact, if any, do adults perceive their experiences to have had on their later, sibling relationships? What impact, if any, do they perceive their

experiences to have had on their consequent narrative identity development? Once again, by considering not only *what* adults reflect on, but *how*, this may in turn indicate how the individual feels about, and has made sense of, the impact of their experience overall.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings will not only offer some insight into the lived experiences of those who have been bullied by a sibling, but also begin to encourage conversation about this neglected topic.

2. Method

2.01 Chapter Overview

This chapter will provide detail in regards to the rationale for a qualitative approach, the chosen methodology and type of analysis, within the context of my epistemological stance. Factors relevant to the research procedure will also be discussed, such as ethical implications, participant recruitment and data collection. Furthermore, researcher reflexivity will be continually referred to as I make explicit the assumptions behind how I chose to analyse people's stories of being bullied by a sibling in childhood.

2.02 Research Paradigm

Rationale for a qualitative methodology. As a general rule, qualitative research provides an approach to studying the ways in which individuals negotiate their experiences, whilst quantitative methods seek to understand the relationship between prescribed concepts (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Quantitative research can be useful in regards to testing a specific hypothesis and obtaining an objective and statistically testable outcome. However qualitative methods create an arena for exploration of personal experience, offering space and time for curiosity and expression of individual stories. Consequently, a qualitative methodology was identified as the most epistemologically congruent way to explore people's experiences of being bullied by a sibling. As such, choosing between a qualitative or quantitative research paradigm should not be concerned with which methodology provides a *better* route to knowledge, but which paradigm is most consistent with, and will illuminate, the researcher's epistemological position.

Qualitative research can take many forms and a common misapprehension is that there are no fundamental philosophical differences between different qualitative methods (Harper, 2012). In fact, there are various ontological and epistemological positions available within qualitative research (Willig, 2012), leading to considerable variation within the paradigm. For example, how researchers approach and reflect on issues of power, subjectivity, co-construction, culture and social processes within their interpretations will be contingent upon their position. Indeed, it is important to draw attention to qualitative methodology's complex relationship with knowledge and highlight the researcher's evolving position within it (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008).

Epistemology. Epistemology refers to the particular philosophical framework that a piece of research ascribes to. As such, epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge or “the study of the nature of knowledge and the methods for obtaining it” (Burr, 2003, p.202). It refers to how knowledge is defined, setting boundaries around knowledge (Honderich, 1995), determining a perspective upon what it is possible to ‘know’ and thus what counts as knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The kind of assumptions researchers make about the relationship between their research material and the world are known as epistemological assumptions (Harper, 2012).

A researcher's epistemological position will often correspond to their ethical and political philosophies, therefore it is important to reflect and locate oneself both politically and theoretically within a study. This can be a difficult task however, as the basic assumptions we make about the world are often unacknowledged and implicit (Willig, 2012). Willig (2012) provides a useful reflective framework as a guide for thinking about one's assumptions; she recommends that prior to embarking on the journey of research, we must ask ourselves:

- 1) What kind of knowledge do I aim to create?
- 2) What are the assumptions that I make about the (material, social and psychological) world(s)?
- 3) How do I conceptualise the role of the researcher in the research process? What is the relationship between myself and the knowledge that I generate?

In the following sections I aim to answer each of Willig's questions to make clear how I negotiated my epistemological position through a reflexive process. Reflective memos were produced between myself and my supervisor (see Appendix B) in order to remain transparent as my epistemological position evolved. By explaining my position, the reader will become aware of how my epistemology guides the research paradigm – that is how I plan and conduct the interviews, how I attend to and transcribe the stories and how I analyse and interpret the re-telling.

Epistemological Pluralism.

“And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres”

(Wittgenstein, 1953)

As I attempted Willig's reflective questions (see Appendix C) and tried to map my answers onto a theoretical framework, I realised that it was not possible to position myself within one epistemological position. Appendix C shows how the answers to my questions indicate that my assumptions about knowledge are varied and overlapping.

Although I believe that we live in a socio-cultural reality, such that people's stories about sibling bullying will be situated within and shaped by their cultural, social and gendered contexts, I also hold the view that people actively participate in the creation of their inner worlds and can offer us a version of their reality *as it feels to them*. As

clearly stated in the aims of this research study, I am interested in how people make sense of their experiences – a concept that encompasses both experiential or phenomenological assumptions *and* co-constructive, social constructionist assumptions. In other words, it appeared that my assumptions about knowledge are pluralistic, rather than monistic.

The idea of epistemological pluralism (Packer, 2011) is one that is being increasingly discussed within the field of qualitative research. Given the variety of techniques and epistemological origins within the field, it is argued that in order to be authentic, transparent and reflexive in our research, we must acknowledge the breadth and depth of our assumptions about ‘the world’. Epistemological pluralism advocates that our repertoire of approaches and assumptions about knowledge and reality overlap. This means that we do not abandon objectivity in favour of relativism (Packer, 2011) or vice versa, but we try and integrate and accept that there may be a ‘family of approaches’ (Glaser, 1992) from which we draw. Indeed, researchers need to emancipate themselves from this ‘epistemic phallacy’ (Willig, 2015, in press; Packer, 2011) of realism/relativism dualism and engage with a more uncertain, yet at the same time more transparent and holistic view of qualitative research.

Consequently, I refer to Wittgenstein’s (1953/2009) analogy of multiple and overlapping fibres that give strength to a particular thread. I propose that there are epistemological fibres that run through and extend across the broader approaches (threads) to knowledge. To demonstrate and reflect on my thinking more visually, I adapted Willig’s Three Types of Knowledge diagram (2012) specifically in relation to a narrative inquiry methodology. Appendix D is an example of the diagram that was created, within the context of a conference poster. It proposes that although narrative methods are predicated on the dominant thread of social constructionism, there are

many fibres that overlap onto the other types of knowledge that are essential to the concept of ‘meaning making’ in narrative research.

Summary of the fibres. The fibres summarised in this section can be thought of as the main aspects of epistemological thought that inform the current study. Indeed, Lock and Strong (2010) uphold that there is no one school of social constructionism; although there are some expansive tenets that hold it together, it is also a ‘broad church’ (Lock & Strong, 2010). It is argued that one can trace back from contemporary social constructionism and find threads from other sources that are informing the contemporary view (Lock & Strong, 2010). As the diagram shows, (Appendix D) social constructionism is viewed as a rainbow of approaches, and this study is informed by fibres from phenomenology and the hermeneutic tradition.

One fibre that is important to the epistemological and ontological direction of this research study is Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics (1984; 1985; 1987; 1992). Ricoeur saw language as a creative and resource-rich medium that people use to metaphorically narrate and synthesize their experience (Lock & Strong, 2010). Through the mediating of tensions and detours of their various stories, people attempt to create a coherence of meaning about themselves. These ideas correspond to a concept known as narrative intelligence; a notion that has been most frequently attributed to Ricoeur’s (1987/1991) work, as he emphasises the idea that people will try and construct a singular story about themselves. These ideas of narrative intelligence align with the aims of this study as I am interested in the various ways people describe, reflect on and position themselves when speaking about, and making coherent, their experience of being bullied by a sibling in childhood.

Ricoeur asserts that we narrate understandings about ourselves in interaction with others, and using a variety of linguistic resources refracted through the historically derived meanings of others (Lock & Strong, 2010). Thus, this encompasses ethical concerns, such that we must recognise that whilst meaning making is subjective, it is also shaped and filtered by our socio-cultural resources. This concept of how we use our narrative resources to narrate the past in the present is also of strong interest to this retrospective study.

The ideas of Emmanuel Levinas (1985; 1998) are another fibre that runs through the thread of social constructionism, and his work also overlaps in itself with hermeneutics and phenomenological approaches. Levinas asserts that we can use language to understand experiences in a variety of ways, provided we acknowledge that our particular default understanding is not the only one possible (Lock & Strong, 2010). Indeed, in the face of the other, we must remember that there are infinite possibilities to meaning and, if unaware, our language can bind us to particular perceptions of others and experiences (Lock & Strong, 2010). Levinas' ideas correspond to the research study's ethical philosophy, particularly that meaning is a joint construction, and within the intersubjective experience between story teller and story collector (researcher) there is a double hermeneutic process. As a consequence, throughout the remainder of this study I will refer to myself in the first person.

Finally, the phenomenological fibre that runs through this research study can be most adequately placed within the work of Alfred Schutz (1962; 1964; 1966; 1972).

Schutz's phenomenological perspective emphasises the primary object of sociology is not institutions, social classes or structures of power – albeit these are still regarded as important – but it is human beings (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2008). The conscious, subjective meaning making experience of the individual is prioritised. This assumption

thread is also inherent in the current study, as it is interested in people's experiences, as it feels to them.

Schutz also posits that a person's everyday actions call on a 'stock of knowledge' that has been constituted by previous experiences and actions (Lock & Strong, 2010).

However, people are continually reformulating knowledge as they are in active involvement with the world. As Schutz puts it, our background knowledge is taken for granted, but only until "further notice" (Schutz, 1962, p.74; Berger & Luckmann, 1996/1991, p. 58). Schutz's phenomenological focus on becoming, rather than being, is an underlying focus of this study. It is proposed that identity formation is a continuous process and I am interested in how individuals interact with their becoming, in process with me, reflecting and integrating their reconstructed past and the imagined future.

2.03 Qualitative Framework

This section will examine the rationale for the qualitative framework of narrative inquiry and consider this method of analysis against other methods.

Choice of method. Epistemological pluralism corresponds with the philosophy of narrative inquiry (Frosh, 2009); narrative inquiry does have its roots in a social constructionist perspective, but it does also entail a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive view that incorporates both a rich description of the socio-cultural (discursive) environment and the participatory and creative inner world of lived experience (Hiles & Čermák, 2008).

Thematically driven or category-centred methodologies could have been considered for this research study, such as Thematic Analysis or Grounded Theory. However, inherent in both methodologies is the concept of fragmenting and coding research

material to create themes about phenomenon. It is argued that these methods of analysis do not prioritise and indeed lose the voice of the individual (Packer, 2011) as they try and streamline consciousness through pooling stories. Indeed, a common critique of more traditional qualitative interview methods is that most of the talk is not narrative, but question-and-answer exchanges, arguments and other forms of disclosure (Riessman, 1993; Mishler, 1986a), which does not allow the individual to recapitulate and produce a story with agency and imagination. Additionally, thematic methods prioritise story content and disregard form – *what* is being said is prioritised over the *how* it is being told. In line with epistemology, this study is interested in how individuals organise and interpret a sequence of events to render them meaningful; thus, methodology that solely focuses on the content of narratives and fragmentation of data would not be advantageous.

Additionally, a Discourse Analysis approach misses the focus on the active constructing process that individuals engage in when telling their story (Emerson & Frosh, 2004). Narrative inquiry considers the content, form and context of narratives (Halliday, 1973), while keeping the text whole and unfragmented. The ways stories are told are as important as their content, and the approach acknowledges that stories change with time, context and audience (Frosh, 2009). To this end, narrative inquiry has been chosen to guide the method of analysis.

Narrative Inquiry. The focus of narrative inquiry is multi-faceted, which reflects the complex and intricate nature of people's lives and the contexts and cultures they are involved in. That is, narrative analysis' focus is on the "lived experience of individuals, the importance of multiple perspectives, the existence of context-bound, constructed social realities and the impact of the researcher on the research process" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p.223). It examines the teller's story and analyses how it is

put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity (Riessman, 1993). Thus, the approach not only prioritises the stories that people tell, but also considers *which* stories people tell, *how* people tell their stories and to *whom* these stories are being told.

There several aspects of narrative inquiry that are aligned with the research study's aims. Consistent with epistemology, the method emphasises McAdams' (1993) theory of narrative identity, which is the idea that people create identity through constructing stories about their lives. People make sense of their life experiences by narrating them, because stories and storytelling are central to our self-definition and identity construction (Ricoeur, 1987; McAdams, 1993; Crossley, 2000). Moreover, inherent in our story telling is the attempt to reconcile our struggles with who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and bodies with who we were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, the work place, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and culture at large (McAdams, 2008). The method recognises that it is particularly at times of incoherence and breaches in one's sense of identity that stories are a useful aide to sense making (Bruner, 1987; Riessman, 1993; Emerson & Frosh, 2004). Indeed, McAdams' theory of narrative identity (1993) recognises the participatory approach to identity; that is, we choose what matters to us, participating in the construction of our own identities (Hiles, Čermák & Chrz, 2009).

These tenets of narrative inquiry are central to the rationale of the current study. It is argued that the experience of being bullied by a sibling in childhood represents a rupture within life experience that may require justification and trigger a need to renegotiate one's construction of their social world and ultimately, their narrative identity. I am interested in how people perceive, reflect on and attempt to integrate

their experiences of sibling bullying into their narrative identities, through the re-telling.

By bringing forth these stories it is hoped that an opportunity for “forging links between the exceptional and the ordinary” (Bruner, 1990, p.47) are created inasmuch that the dominant, societal position of sibling rivalry is challenged, and people’s repressed stories of sibling bullying can be incorporated into our cultural and societal understanding of the sibling relationship. If it is possible to ‘give voice’ or to encourage those experiences that are not frequently talked about, this may also provide a setting through which alternative or counter-narratives may become apparent.

A narrative approach also supports the view that the research interview is a place whereby identities are being performed to an audience. As such, the implications of the context in which a story is narrated is incorporated into the analysis and interpretation. This discernibly relates to the idea that the interview process is interactive and stories are co-constructed; both participant and researcher are being reflexive and interpretive, with meaning arising out of a process of interaction between people (Riessman, 1993). Narratives are not just the stories of tellers, they are jointly produced by tellers and listeners whose “social and cultural matrices” are marked by gender, age, race, class and professional status (Langellier, 1989, p.260).

Consequently, it was necessary within the research study for the researcher to be transparent about her socio-cultural status and to continually reflect on her relationship towards the research topic of childhood sibling bullying, and how this position will affect the interpretation and analysis of the interviews.

2.04 Participants

An opportunity sampling technique was used alongside broad inclusion criteria, in the hope that I would attract as many participants as possible. In regards to sample size

numbers, Charmaz (2012, p. 12) argues that the question “how many qualitative interviews are enough?” cannot be answered. The question is in fact problematic, as it presupposes that experts can specify a concrete number of interviews and that they would agree on the same concrete number. Instead, Charmaz (2012) advises that epistemology is considered in regards to what matters most within the research paradigm. Ultimately, most of what the researcher wants to learn will not become apparent until data analysis and interpretation, therefore it is argued that “no magical number” (Becker, 2012) of interviews can be recommended.

Inclusion criteria. Participants for the study were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Participants must be 18 years or over.
- Participants must have an associated birth-sibling with whom they can identify (for the purposes of this study, the word sibling is defined as children who share the same mother and father).
- Participants must have experienced sibling bullying (as defined by them) in childhood or adolescence (which is defined as between the ages of 0-18 years old).
- Participants must be willing to talk about their childhood experiences of sibling bullying during the interview and willing to have this interview taped.
- Participants must be willing to participate in more than one interview, if necessary.

Exclusion criteria. The study excluded individuals who are currently experiencing severe mental health difficulties, defined operationally as accessing secondary mental health services. This was due to the ethical risks that may be associated with discussing difficult and potentially traumatic events. It was also

necessary that the participant could speak the same language as the researcher (in this case, English). The use of a translator may be considered to alter the validity of the results.

Recruitment. After gaining approval from the University of Essex Faculty Ethics Committee Participants were recruited from the University of Essex Colchester campus via the Essex University's Research and Enterprise Office research webpage. This means that the study was advertised openly to those who have access to this webpage (all students and staff at the University). An email was also sent advertising the study to those who have requested to 'opt in' for research studies to be sent to them directly. Posters were distributed around the University campus in every department, the library, the Student's Union and the Campus Shop to further advertise the study.

Individuals were given the option to contact myself via email or telephone. Once an individual made contact with the researcher, their interest or queries were responded to within 24 hours. The researcher sent each individual a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix E) to read over, which explained further the aims and rationale of the study and eligibility. If the individual was still interested in participating after reading this then there were two options. The first involved meeting face to face to go over the necessary paperwork and answer any other questions, and then arranging another appointment time to carry out the interview. Alternatively, individuals could meet face to face to complete paperwork and ask questions and then commence the interview that same day if they felt comfortable. Meetings and interviews were arranged for the most suitable times for both the participant and the researcher. All meetings and interviews were held in the research rooms in the Health

and Huma Sciences Department at the University. These rooms were located on the basement floor of the department in a quiet corridor, free of interruption.

In addition to the interviews, demographic data was collected to obtain additional contextual information (see Appendix F). A total of seven adults were recruited for this study.

2.05 Representation of experience

We not have direct access to another's experience, we deal with ambiguous representations of it (Riessman, 1993). As Riessman (1993) argues, it would be erroneous to think we can give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret. In this section I will discuss the experience of conducting a narrative interview and the processes involved in transcribing and analysing a narrative interview, with the aim that this will provide some transparency in regards to how interpretations were constructed.

Narrative interviews.

“Telling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions with narratives if they are given some room to speak”

(Mishler, 1986a, p.69)

Mishler's quote emphasises the importance of being able to create a space for the interviewee in the interview context so that they feel able to speak openly and reflectively about their experiences. Within my narrative interviews I tried to strive for this, avoiding an interrogation or inquisition type approach. I classified my interviews as 'unstructured interviews' and created an interview guide that asked broad questions in the hope that participants would feel able to narrate their experience freely, without interruptions. Nonetheless, the questions I asked and the way I listened to and interpreted the answers undoubtedly helped to shape the nature of the knowledge

produced (Mason, 2002). It is simply not possible to conduct a structure-free interview because the agendas and assumptions of both interviewer and interviewee will inevitably impose frameworks for meaningful interaction (Mason, 2002).

As a result of not conducting any formal qualitative interviews prior to this research study I attended a two-day workshop, *The Art of Qualitative Interviewing*, to provide me with a starting point to thinking about the processes that are involved.

Additionally, I treated my first participant as a pilot interview. The pilot helped me to notice the interactional dynamics involved in the encounter (Crossley, 2000), such as how I introduced the topic of sibling bullying, what I did and didn't assume about the participant and how my questions were being responded to both visually and verbally. The feedback I received from the participant assisted me going forward – she noted that the interview room encouraged her to feel comfortable and at ease – there was a window to look out of and the size of the room allowed for intimacy, but did not feel cramped. She also commented that my interview approach helped her to feel relaxed during our conversation and she felt listened to during her re-telling. Additional to her feedback, post interview I was also able to reflect on the interview dynamics, such as how the power dynamic was unconsciously being negotiated between myself and the participant as we spoke.

As my interviews progressed, I could hear myself becoming more relaxed as I became familiar with the interactional 'dance' that myself and the participant would engage in. Of course, negotiating silences and pauses, hesitations in speech and cues indicative of moving on to the next question differed for each participant, but I became more comfortable with tolerating these moments within the interview. Moreover, although allowing the interviewees to take the lead in the interview is recommended, I had to balance this with actively manoeuvring the conversation to allow me to address the

study aims. As Mason (2002, p.225) asserts, “how we ask questions, what we assume is possible from asking questions and from listening to answers, and what kind of knowledge we hear answers to be, are all ways in which we pursue, express and satisfy our theoretical orientations in our research.”

The interviews were approximately 90 minutes in length and an unstructured interview guide was created and used (see Appendix G). The interview guide was informed by the topic-focussed narrative interview style proposed by McAdams (1993). This meant that participants were invited to broadly share their story about their life growing up, encouraging them to begin wherever they felt appropriate. This approach is also encouraged by Mason (2002) in her recommendations of how to begin a narrative interview. The assumption is that if the interview dialogue can be grounded in relevant contexts, such as family life growing up, then ‘experience-centred narratives’ can be elicited (Squire, 2008). Experience-centred narratives include stories about specific events but also broader material relevant to the narrator's life and sense of identity (Squire, 2008).

The interview guide was influenced by identity theory literature (McAdams, 1993; 1996), sibling relationship research (e.g. Rowe, 2007) and some attachment perspectives (Bowlby, 1969). The guide was not prescriptive and I found that most of the topics of interest were answered spontaneously by participants. I used a combination of open-ended questioning and probes when it felt necessary to elicit more detail from a participants’ narrative.

Transcribing experience. Each interview was audio taped and transcribed. It is important to remember that transcribing is incomplete, partial and selective, and is an interpretative practice (Riessman, 1993). Therefore decisions about what to

transcribe, how to transcribe and how to display the text will be theoretically and epistemologically driven. The same narrative could be transcribed in multiple ways and reflect various ontological positions and as such, can only ever be a representation of spoken language.

It was essential to this study that stories were transcribed in their entirety. This meant that all conversational characters such as silences, pauses, laughter, false starts, emphases and other discourse markers (such as “you know”, “ummm”) were included in the transcription. The researcher’s voice was also preserved within the transcription.

Analysing experience. Within the field of narrative research there is considerable variation in regards to how to approach and analyse narrative material. In the review of the literature, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) found “almost no comprehensive models systematically mapping the variety of existing methods of reading narratives.” (p.6). As such, there is no one particular, recommended method of narrative analysis, but a spectrum of choices that will be related and reflected in the researcher’s disciplinary background and epistemology. Indeed, a position that has been maintained throughout this research study is that the researcher must claim some ownership and control over the method of analysis, and the stories and findings that are consequently produced (Smyth & Murray, 2000).

As a process, I examined several models of narrative analysis in psychology, thoroughly referring to Riessman’s (1993) handbook and to the numerous studies that she references (Ginsburg, 1989a, 1989b; Bell, 1988; Labov, 1972; Gee, 1991; Radley & Taylor, 2003). I also attended a narrative analysis workshop at the British Psychological Society’s Qualitative Methods in Psychology Conference. Ultimately, I identified Hiles, Cermák and Chrz’s (2009) method of Narrative Orientated Inquiry

(NOI) as being most closely aligned with my research question, design and interview strategy.

NOI is explicitly pluralistic and therefore has emerged from the integration of three key sources (Hiles et al., 2009). These are Herman and Vervaeck's (2001) literary distinction between bounded and unbounded motifs, Lieblich et al.'s (1998) four perspectives towards narrative analysis and Emerson and Frosh's (2004) critical narrative analysis approach. Nonetheless, Hiles et al. (2009) stress that it is not necessary to utilise all the proposed techniques, but that the researcher should consider the underlying assumptions of each source and establish a methodology that is clearly aligned with the study's aims and research paradigm.

However, Hiles et al. (2009) assert that what is crucial to the methodology is the beginning steps of the analysis. This involves separating what is referred to as the *sjuzet* and *fabula* (or unbounded and bounded parts of speech). The *fabula* is the content of a story; the basic outline of the events in the story as they occur or occurred. The *fabula* is bounded because changes in it will change the story being told. The *sjuzet* is the form of the narrative; that is, the *way* in which a story is being told. The *sjuzet* is unbounded because changes will affect emphasis and the performance of the story, but not the basic story itself. Hiles et al. (2009) claim that this first step in the analysis provides the groundwork for any further analyses. The separation between *sjuzet* and *fabula* allows for focus upon both the story that is being told, as well as the way in which it is being told (Hiles, 2007). Indeed, consistent with epistemological pluralism, there may be several valuable ways of knowing, therefore an analysis that holistically examines meaning-making may lead to more integrated findings about an individual and their social experience. This method is not only in contrast to other approaches of narrative analysis that recommend tidying up the narrative, but it also

differs from other qualitative methods in that it does justice to the story as a whole, as well as the elements that make it up (Hiles et al., 2009).

As such, below is an outline of the steps, taken from Hiles et al. (2009), which were followed for analysis in the current study. All stories were analysed in their entirety and the researcher's voice remained and text was never fragmented. These steps were completed for each participant.

- 1) Persistent engagement with raw transcript through repeated readings. This may also involve returning to the audio recording to clarify details.
- 2) Creation of the working transcript. This is the raw transcript, but text is arranged down the page with a wide margin to the right where notes and annotations are made.
- 3) The text in the working transcript is then broken down into segments and numbered. A segment is defined as being a self-contained episode or "move" in telling the story (Hiles et al., 2009). This task is done so annotations and notes can be made more clearly in relation to specific moments, reflections and uses of language.
- 4) Identification of *sjuzet* and *fabula* (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001) and dividing the working transcript into these two motifs (see Appendix H). This is done by underlining the *sjuzet* and not the *fabula*. *Sjuzet* can be single words, phrases and sometimes entire segments that are concerned with emphasis, reflection, asides, interruptions, remarks and various expressions representing the sequence/causality/significance of events being related in the story (Hiles et al., 2009). *Fabula* relates to the basic outline of events in a story. When read out loud, ignoring the *sjuzet*, *fabula* should read as a coherent, but rather flat or dull story (Hiles et al., 2009). Importantly, when a word or phrase functions as

both *sjuzet* and *fabula* it is highlighted, as recommended by Hiles et al. (2009) (see Appendix H as an example).

- 5) Categorical-Content perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998) which focuses on *fabula*. This involves the analysis of *fabula* or story content related to the research question(s) (Hiles et al., 2009). In this particular study, the research questions related to three broad ideas; perceiving and defining sibling bullying, the impact of experience on the sibling relationship and perceived impact of experience on identity development. *Fabula* words and phrases were highlighted down the right hand side of the margins to begin the process of identifying major content categories related to the above topics (see Appendix I for example). Through repeated readings, these categories were then organised for each participant (see Appendix J for working example).
- 6) Categorical-Form perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998) which focuses on the analysis of the *sjuzet* used by the individual throughout the whole working transcript. In the current study, all *sjuzet* were identified via the processes in Step 4 and then, through repeated readings, I closely explored the narrators' linguistic features that they chose to use. Such features might include adverbs, mental verbs, denotations of time and place, past/present/future forms of verbs, passive and active verbs, intensifiers, disruptions of chronological and causal progression and repetitions (Lieblich et al., 1998). Continuous notes were made during this part of the analysis and these fed directly into Step 7 of the analysis (see Appendix K as example)
- 7) Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). The results from Step 6 are incorporated and analysed within Step 7 in order to explore how people actively position themselves in relation to their narrative. The main question within this

part of the analysis is – what sort of narrative account of their experience is the narrator constructing? This part of the analysis is interested in the functionality of narrative – how do people construct, choose and emphasise what matters to them in their re-telling and how does this help configure their sense of identity?

Accordingly, it is suggested that by looking at the subtleties of narrative discourse, in particular the *sjuzet*, we can explore how individuals actively and creatively participate in their meaning making and ultimately, the construction of their identities. Additionally, Hiles (2007) argues that identity is the product of at least two processes that are inter-related – subject positioning and identity positioning – that is, we are positioned by those around us by our socio-cultural realities *and* we can position ourselves in relation to these socio-cultural practices. As a result, this methodology is interested not only in how narrators endorse and/or acknowledge the subject positions offered to them, but how they celebrate, resist and contest these and construct their own identity positions (Hiles, 2007). Specifically, the analysis will also focus on how people attempt to condense and unite their stories of sibling bullying, resolve ambiguity and negotiate different identities within this process. Informed by the work of McAdams (1993), Hiles (2007) and Emerson and Frosh (2004), issues of race, gender, class, culture and power between narrator and listener will be interwoven into the analysis.

2.06 Methodological rigour

Within a quantitative paradigm, rigour is maintained if a study is repeatable and the researcher's description of 'reality' mirrors what is physically there (Burr, 2003).

However within this qualitative research study the idea that there can be *a* truth or objective reality is not permissible. Plummer (2000) argues that the search for *the* truth is untenable, but the search for truths and meanings is necessary and possible. Thus,

the extent to which a narrative study successfully grounds its interpretations in the narrative material that produces them can be a way of assessing rigour (Willig, 2008; Polkinghorn, 2007). As a result, I have decided to use verbatim quotes from the narrative transcripts in order to contextualise my interpretations and conclusions. In this section I outline some of the other ways that this narrative study has tried to achieve methodological rigour. It is hoped that by outlining my assumptions not only within the methodology used, but in relation to the paradigmatic decisions and reflexivity processes, rigour can be demonstrated for every step of the research process.

Transparency. Maintaining transparency within narrative research is of utmost importance. With this in mind, I felt it was necessary to clearly outline some of the more specific questions that I was trying to pursue in my analysis (see Appendix L). This is something Hiles and Cermák (2008) do not offer, but I was epistemologically guided by Ricoeur's concept of narrative intelligence and McAdams' theory of identity. Appendix L demonstrates how I formulated my questions for analysis (e.g. how does the participant speak about the contradictions and paradoxes in their lives? How does the teller resist and contest the identities or positions that they might have been given by others?) Additionally, prior to embarking on the full analysis of narrator stories, I completed a pilot analysis of one interview to familiarise myself with the NOI technique. A pilot analysis was also completed for the same interview by my supervisor simultaneously, and the results were compared. Appendix M is an example of the memo that was produced from my supervisor with feedback, which consequently informed the rest of my analysis going forward.

Retrospective Accounts. Inherent to the method of narrative inquiry is the idea that sense making is a retrospective process. Thus, the research context of adults' recall of

being bullied by a sibling in childhood is suited to the underlying assumptions of narrative research. Narratives always constitute a reconstruction of past events in a dynamic and an ever-evolving process (Bruner, 1991; Williams, 1984) and this is something that is made explicit within the research paradigm and thus not seen to undermine the validity of the research.

Researcher Reflexivity.

“The story collector (researcher) is a mushroom picker: he or she listens selectively, remembers fragmentarily, re-counts in a way that suits his or her purpose.”

(Czarniawska, 2004, p.45)

Researcher position. As previously detailed (section 2.06) and as the above quote echoes, I recognise that my experiences, prejudices and cultural assumptions will influence the interpretation of the stories that I hear. Consequently, I completed a reflective log during each stage of the research process and produced reflective memos after each interview to help me recognise and reflect on my role within the interpretive process. Furthermore, I also documented my emotional states after each interview and considered these alongside my analysis, again to contribute to transparency in the construction of interpretation.

Researcher background. I am a 31 year old female of Indian British origin and have one sibling who is 18 months younger than myself. I would argue that my childhood was sculpted by multiple influences and various contexts as we travelled the world, living in different countries during my upbringing. Our Indian heritage was embedded in this process, which meant that family relationships, particularly with siblings, but also with extended family, were exceptionally important. During my childhood and adolescence, the majority of my spare time was spent with my brother and older and younger cousins.

My previous role as a Trainee Family Therapist encouraged me to think about family relationships, both my own and those of others. I realised that the interactions and positive/negative networks that could be formed within families was limitless. In particular, I was drawn to the sibling interactions that were occurring within families. I became curious about the nature of different sibling constellations – were they protective or destructive? What was the history behind these siblings and their interactions? How did each sibling make sense of this attachment relationship and did they see their relationship as significant or not?

Undeniably, my interest in siblings has also stemmed from personal experience. My brother and I have what I would label a ‘protective’ relationship and have provided each other with encouragement, stability and unconditional love throughout growing up. As I began to think about our relationship more deeply, I wondered whether the strength of our relationship was built upon the foundations of a sometimes difficult upbringing. We provided one another with support throughout transitions and conflicts in childhood and adolescence, perhaps when others were not able to. Consequently, it is possible that we both learnt how to relate to others and think about the world somewhat through our interactions with one another.

Taking these thoughts further, I began to wonder what it would have been like if our relationship had been more detrimental. My professional experience coupled with my personal experience triggered me to consider the concept labelled as sibling bullying. What if someone was treated so destructively and belligerently by their own family member, in particular, their sibling? How would this manifest itself and what would it mean to someone to experience this level of rejection? If an attachment relationship is deemed as persecutory, what would this mean in regards to development of identity and emotional regulation?

The idea that family relationships are reciprocal and influential is of course shaped by my culture, parental beliefs and societal norms. Furthermore, what I constitute as “normal” family relationships or accepted behaviour within families will not be the same as what others believe. I had to try and maintain a non-judgmental stance throughout my interviews as participants were undoubtedly curious about what I might have thought about their experiences. Indeed, being a Trainee Clinical Psychologist would have had an influence on how participants presented themselves and their stories to myself. It is possible that some may have positioned me as an expert and in a position of power, leading them to feel more or less comfortable disclosing their difficult experiences.

2.07 Ethical Considerations

Obtaining ethical permission to conduct the research. Ethical approval was sought and gained from the University Faculty Ethics Committee prior to recruitment and interviewing (see Appendix N).

Informed Consent. Prior to meeting the researcher, individuals were e-mailed the Participant Information Sheet to read over (see Appendix E). This outlines the aims and rationale for the study, the interview format, reasons for tape recording, details of anonymity and the risks and benefits of their participation. Once this information had been read, individuals then met face to face with the researcher to ask any questions about the study. Individuals were informed of the possibility of the results of the study being published, but that their details would be kept anonymous and they would be non-identifiable. In agreement with the British Psychological Society guidelines (BPS, 2001, p.11) individuals were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time or decline answering any question asked. If

requested, participants could be provided with a copy of their interview transcript and summary of the study's results. Only once the above had been discussed with each individual, the Consent Form (see Appendix O) was read and completed.

Anonymity and data storage. To preserve anonymity, participants will be assigned pseudonyms. Audio files and transcripts will be stored on my personal laptop under password protection. Copies of these files will only be shared with supervisors and will also be password protected during this time. All files will be completely destroyed after their use.

Risk of harm. The critical principal of ethical research is that it should be reflected upon and carried out with respect to the participants' psychological wellbeing, health, values and dignity (British Psychological Society, 2001). The avoidance of harm is essential to any research conducted and requires careful monitoring of the participants' emotional stance, attitude and engagement during the research process (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Considering the above in conjunction with the fact that the focus of this study revolves around the process of identity construction, involving the re-telling of personal and relational aspects of experience, precautions need to be put in place to protect from, and manage any, residual emotional distress. As such, a debriefing via a post-interview discussion was used to assess for negative affect and explore options for follow up care if necessary. Every participant was provided with the contact details of the University counselling service and other local sources of support, so a range of services were offered to participants (see Appendix P). A University support services summary was also distributed to each participant (see Appendix Q). Participants were notified at the beginning of the interview that any disclosure regarding harm to themselves or others will be taken seriously and would result in the researcher

contacting relevant agencies. To avoid any misunderstandings, participants were made aware that the interviews were not designed to represent therapy or counselling in any way.

2.08 Chapter Summary

This study is framed by epistemological pluralism, which respects the philosophy of narrative inquiry. Specifically, this study is interested in how people construct their experiences of being bullied by a sibling in childhood, as it felt to them, framed by the social, cultural and linguistic resources available to them. Engagement with myself, the researcher, in regards to how narrators re-tell their story and incorporate their experiences into a coherent identity, is also an epistemological and analytic priority. The next section will introduce the reader to the narrators who took part in the study and will explore the results of the Narrative Orientated Inquiry.

3. Results

3.01 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides the results from the broad research question, “how do adults describe and make sense of their childhood sibling bullying experiences?” The results respond specifically to the study’s two, main threads of investigating experience – how and what do adults *describe* as their experience and how and what do they *make sense of* and integrate into their narrative identities? Consequently, the results from the three main research questions are also summarised – how do people perceive and define their experience of being bullied by a sibling? What impact, if any, do narrators perceive their experiences to have had on the nature of their sibling relationships and identity development? The results are based on 10.5 hours of interview material, obtained from 5 women and 2 men. The audio material was transcribed and analysed using Narrative Orientated Inquiry (Hiles & Cermák, 2008) as detailed in the previous chapter.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief summary of each narrator. The summaries help locate each narrators’ story within their wider situation, offering contextual information in regards to their social, cultural and historical backgrounds. Some narrator fabula and sjuzet were included to illuminate the summaries and accentuate individual experience.

The second section summarises the analyses of narrator fabula and therefore the main findings of the categorical-content analysis (for details of this process see *analysing experience* p. 68) Three main story categories were identified and narrator’s individual fabula are utilised to exemplify these.

The third section encapsulates the form and critical narrative analysis, specifically examining how *sjuzet* allows narrators to position themselves with respect to their chosen *fabula* or stories (for details of this process see *analysing experience* pp. 68-69). This part of the analysis has been summarised for each individual, so as to not reduce these positions to a set of themes nor lose the voice of the narrator.

The final section reflects on the co-constructive processes involved in creating narrators' identity stories and, ultimately, the findings from the analysis.

3.02 Narrative Introductions

The narrative introductions are summaries of each participant's interview, incorporating some demographic information and the researcher's reflections where appropriate. The summaries are intended to be factual and they include some *fabula* and *sjuzet* in order to provide some context for the reader and ultimately, to help guide the understanding of the interpretations made of the later 'identity stories'. As detailed in methodology (see p.68), *sjuzet* is underlined and *fabula* is not, and when *fabula* and *sjuzet* overlap, the word or phrase was highlighted in yellow to identify the overlap.

Ashley. Ashley is 22 years old and describes herself as White British. Her parents are married, however she no longer lives with them or her sibling, but lives in a shared house with her friends.

Ashley has one brother who is five years older than her. Her story begins in childhood as she describes being bullied by her brother from approximately age 6 to 10 years old, although it was difficult for her to pin point a specific moment when she thought the bullying began. Ashley explains that the bullying was, "just sort of happening". Her brother would bully her physically by "throwing stuff at her" and also verbally. Ashley

gave examples of her brother calling her “fat” and “fatso” and she thought this had an effect on her long term body image development.

Ashley explained that her parents rarely intervened between her and her brother, however she noticed that she was more likely to get a reaction if she screamed very loud. This action would usually end up with her brother being blamed for the incident, which she enjoyed, as it meant that she had won the situation and her brother had been located as the problem, not her.

Ashley seemed to enjoy the experience of telling her story (“I feel like I keep getting my head back into it and it’s been really cool. I liked it, it’s been a lot easier than I thought”). She noted that she struggled to give me specific examples of her experience, yet at the same time she had a feeling that growing up with her brother was “really unpleasant”.

Ashley and her brother currently have a positive relationship and she identifies him as a source of support, especially in regards to family issues (“if it’s anything to do with family then I definitely could (*seek support from him*). I don’t like talking about it with anyone else.” Nevertheless, she notes that sometimes she can “still see shadows of him” and is attuned to recognising the bullying parts of his personality.

Lisa. Lisa is 24 years old and describes herself as White Other. She was born in Germany. Her parents divorced when she was 6 years old and her mother re-married, but this relationship also broke down after 2 years. Lisa has two siblings; her brother is 11 months older than her and her sister is 2 years younger. Lisa now lives in England on her own.

Lisa was bullied by her brother and sister both physically and psychologically, however she asserts that “most of the bullying, that I would call bullying, was more on

the psychological side, than the physical side". Lisa explains that she would be continually told to "shut up" and that "I don't matter and I don't have an opinion", which led to her to feel worthless and unconfident. Examples of physical violence included her sister breaking a garden table over her head and suffering a mild concussion and being "beat up" by her brother. Lisa reports that she was bullied from age 8 to 16.

Lisa's sibling bullying story is framed within the context of other, negative childhood experiences. When she was 8 years old, Lisa found her father collapsed on the bedroom floor as he had unexpectedly died of a heart attack. Her mother also suffered from severe depression for many years, which meant that Lisa and her siblings were not always fed or washed and their living conditions were extremely unsanitary. There were points during their childhood that social services were involved, however they were never removed from the home. Lisa's mother could also be violent on occasions. Upon describing her childhood, Lisa reports, "Yeah, to be honest I think my childhood had a lot of factors going into it. There is not like one thing you can do or say "that was what went wrong"."

Lisa's current relationship with her siblings is mixed. She is not in contact with her brother, however her sister lives in the same town and they meet once or twice a week for lunch. Lisa has intermittent contact with her mother.

Andrew. Andrew is 45 years old and describes himself as White British. He was born in England and has lived in the country ever since. His parents divorced when he was 9 years old and he has one sister who is two years older than him. Andrew is married with two children.

Andrew reports being bullied by his older sister between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. He describes his experience as, “it was all psychological rather than physical. But, but, it, it (..) it felt systematic as a child. It felt like it was, you know, uhhh, you know something that happened almost every day.” Andrew gave examples of his sisters’ bullying behaviour (“my sister was quite clever, and was doing it very subtly”), for example she would encourage other children to make fun of him, ridicule him in the school playground and at other children’s’ houses and generally twist situations at home so that Andrew would unfairly be blamed. Upon describing how it felt, Andrew explains, “it kind of made me feel (..) small. And insignificant I suppose. Yeah. And ummm, and powerless.”

Andrew notes that his parents were not “completely engaged in it all”, as they were not particularly happy in their marriage. Consequently, he thought his mother was “not as engaged as she might have been” and therefore wasn’t aware of what was happening between him and his sister. Andrew refers to his parents’ divorce as the time when his relationship gradually began to improve with his sister; indeed, their relationship has changed to the extent that now, in adulthood, Andrew feels guilty for labelling his sister as a bully (“it’s kind of odd because we get along really well now. To such an extent that I feel (..) almost guilty (..) that I’m, I’m kind of branding my sister as bullying, in a way”). Andrew explains that his sister has since apologised for her behaviour in childhood and, in fact, he is now the person that she will confide in.

Andrew appeared happy to speak about his experiences and was thoughtful as he ended his re-telling, “it’s just sort of a thing that happened. You know, everything just feeds into who you are, but um. Yeah, it's not, it's not (..) yeah, I don't think it brings, I don't think of it as traumatic memories anymore”.

Amy. Amy is 23 years old and describes herself as White Other. She was born in Germany and moved to England when she was 18. Her parents have been married for 30 years and still live in Germany.

Amy's opening statement is, "I am the middle child. So I have a brother who is two years older and a sister who is six years younger." She then explains that the family's "external circumstances were the perfect ingredient for a very good childhood." She describes the outside environment that she grew up in as "idyllic and very picturesque". However she swiftly acknowledges that there is another side to her story, "now obviously I'm hinting at the fact that internally it wasn't (a great childhood)".

Amy explains that her father was a violent man and her mother would not intervene; in fact, her mother would also often spank her and her brother ("she once broke a wooden spoon on me"). Amy reports that her brother would psychologically bully her, "he would mercilessly pick on me in terms of pointing out how chubby I was" and "try and antagonise people against me". She also endured physical bullying (e.g. punching in the face), however Amy explains; "the remarkable thing was that he didn't need it (*the violence*). He was so skilled by, in, in, torturing people just with words". Amy reports being bullied from age 8 to 14.

Amy explains that from ages 3-10 years old, she had an "identity crisis" due to her brother "basically brain washing me to wanting to be a boy". She explains that he had the power to influence her with his words, and he told her that she should be a boy instead of a girl ("I completely adored him...and you just look to someone and just believe what they say"). As a result, at age 5 Amy started to refuse to wear dresses, she cut her hair short and wore boys' clothes. Amy notes that although this experience "still showers me with shame", she does not define what her brother did at this point as bullying. Nonetheless, she asserts that it "was a really serious thing for her

identity". Amy has recently "come out as gay" and explains, "obviously I have wondered about how, how, if it had any impact on me being gay".

Amy accessed therapy to help her think about her situation ("it took me a year of therapy to sort it all out and get over it"). Amy currently has a supportive and positive relationship with her brother and they are in frequent contact, despite him living in Germany ("now he's one of my closest friends and very trusted").

Sally. Sally is 20 years old and describes herself as Black British. Prior to attending University, she lived with her mum and two sisters, however she now shares a flat with friends. Her parents divorced approximately 8 years ago.

Sally describes her sisters as "teaming up against her" because they were closer in age and she was "a bit further down". Her sisters are 6 and 4 years older than her. She remembers being bullied by her sisters from age 7, but notes that this is *her* earliest memory, and her family have recounted earlier events to her. Sally describes the bullying as both "physical and mental", and she gives examples of being called names, her sisters excluding her when on family day trips, spitting in her hair and hitting her in the arm with a slipper.

Sally uses the word "friction" to describe how it felt to be in her family, both as a child and currently. She explains that the bullying hasn't stopped and her sisters continue to try and bully her in adulthood ("they still sort of do this stuff to me now"). Sally gave an example of one of the most recent incidents, about six months ago, explaining that her middle sister started shouting at her, calling her names and tried to physically fight with her. Sally reports not ever speaking to anyone about her sisters' bullying when she was younger, and she still doesn't talk about it currently to her friends or family.

Sally is currently in regular, but distant, contact with her mum and sisters. She explains that she will speak to her sisters when she needs something, otherwise she prefers to live separately from them.

Sharon. Sharon is 24 years old and describes herself as Asian Other – she is half Italian and half Sri Lankan. Her parents divorced approximately 10 years ago and she does not have contact with father, but is in regular contact with her mother.

Sharon has a sister who is three years older than her and a brother who is seven years younger. Sharon begins her story by describing her family as “very dysfunctional”, already giving the impression that her experience needs to be understood within the wider context of her family circumstance and culture. She narrated that her family had very little money and her father was physically abusing her mother before she was born and throughout her childhood. She also described her mother as “a terrible mother, for a long time” and her mother would beat her at times. Indeed, Sharon offers an explanation for her sisters’ bullying – “no children were loved in that family. We were all fighting for love.”

Sharon reports being bullied by her sister from the age of 5 until 13 years old. She explains, “my sister was more violent than my mum, she would beat me because of her rage. My mum was more frustrated, but my sister would just really (..) uncontrollable violence”. She describes the bullying as physical, “my sister would actually, um, grab my hair and bash my head on the wall”. She also endured “mental bullying. Like, she would often humiliate” and Sharon notes that her sister would do small, subtle things like “wipe her feet on my bag, cheekily push me over or just break my things”. However, the episode that “hurt her the most” was when her sister “carved

the word 'die' with scissors into her favourite literature book". Sharon explains that, "I think it still hurts me if I think about it now".

Sharon reports that her parents "never knew about what exactly was happening". She notes that they knew her sister would shout at her and call her names, but "I don't think they knew about the violence". Sharon explains, "also, with my father being like that, any violence wouldn't seem so serious". Although she feels her relationship with her sister currently is fine, she will support her, Sharon doesn't feel able to tell her sister more private, vulnerable things about herself ("even simple things, I can't, it just feels like I'm giving her a present").

Sharon appeared willing to speak about her experience and was reflective and somewhat contented about it – "talking about it I think you feel something every single time, it just feels okay. It feels nice."

Mark. Mark is 41 years old and describes himself as White British. He is married and has two young children. His parents divorced when he was 13; his mother has passed away and his father is still alive. Mark has one brother who is four years older than him.

Mark opens his story with, "I can't remember much of time before my brother would physically assault me". He reports being bullied every day and "if it wasn't physical it would be verbal". Mark gives examples of being hit and beaten by his brother whilst watching TV, when sharing a bedroom and generally in situations when he would least expect it – "I grew up covered in bruises. And it was just, what it was". Mark's parents condoned the bullying so he found it difficult to speak to anyone else about what was happening to him ("it was condoned by my parents. My father had a brother who was

four years older than him. So it was seen as what brothers do). Mark reports being bullied from age 5 to 15 years.

Mark speaks about his brothers' bullying having a negative impact on his self-confidence when younger, but he has tried to turn his experience into a positive one. He attributes his current skills and abilities to his experience of being bullied by his brother in childhood – "I used that skill I learnt to keep out of trouble and read situations and that has helped me in later life". Speaking in a slightly self-deprecating way, Mark notes, "I don't think it comes from being clever, it comes from being experienced in that". Indeed, although Mark speaks confidently and openly about his experience, at the end of the interview he remarks that he knows the "little scared boy comes out now and then, when I am under pressure".

Mark is currently in sporadic contact with his brother. They sometimes speak on the telephone, and may meet face to face every few years.

3.03 Categorical-Content Analysis

This section summarises the findings of the categorical-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998), in correspondence with step 5 in the NOI methodology (see p.68 for details). Examining the fabula only, or the content of narrator's stories, facilitates the first part of the analysis towards answering the question of "*what* do adults describe and *what* do they make sense of in regards to their childhood sibling bullying experiences?" The categorical content analysis gave me an initial, broad understanding of what people were describing as their experience and it is summarised across participants. The analysis was predicated on the study's specific research questions, as recommended in the NOI methodology (Lieblich et al., 1998 and Hiles, Cermák &

Chrz, 2009) (see pp. 68-69 and example in Appendix J). As a result, the findings are summarised into three main story categories connected with the research questions.

Inevitably, there were poignant moments within the re-telling whereby narrators' fabula and sjuzet overlapped; that is, a word/phrase functioned as both sjuzet and fabula. This was sometimes the case when narrators spoke in metaphor or with exaggeration. In these cases, as detailed previously in methodology, the word or phrase was highlighted in yellow to identify the overlap.

Defining sibling bullying – “it wasn't so easy to define”. At some point during their re-telling, every participant made reference to the difficulties inherent in labelling and defining the term “sibling bullying”; despite some feeling certain about the validity of their experience. A common theme across all sibling bullying fabula was that there was not only a parental expectation, but also a societal expectation that siblings would fight and dislike one another. As a consequence, individuals felt their experiences could not be validated as painful and/or legitimate during childhood. As Sharon explains,

Interviewer: And so do you know, do you know when you first sort of realised, that this isn't good? This is bullying?

Sharon: Oh from the beginning. At first it hurts. Nothing that hurts can be right.

Interviewer: And I just wanted to ask you about this word, sibling bullying, and the idea of sibling bullying, and do you think that we talk about it in society?

Sharon: I don't think so, I think it's because sibling bullying always becomes sibling rivalry, it's useful, it's healthy, it's boys, or it's just girls, they're jealous.

You don't see it around. Even with movies, or tv series, you don't see much. Maybe you see a bit of verbal bullying, they're smoking, playing around, it's just in a very funny way. It doesn't look as if the person is being humiliated or hurting in any way.

I think because of that, people who are being bullied, they feel they're exaggerating. It's nothing. It's I shouldn't be like this.

Interviewer: So it makes your experience not feel

Sharon: Yeah, it undermines it. So, you never feel like you're suffering until someone tells you, that's not really how it's supposed to be.

Amy also had a similar view to Sharon,

Amy: I think it's often disguised as that's just how siblings are. I think that's in many not just cultures, but many levels of society, it's, "well you know, always been a bit rough".

Furthermore, for Lisa, she felt constrained by the cultural discourses available to her, as there was actually no word in her native language that summarised her experience,

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on sibling bullying? In the sense that, is it something that people talk about, and is it something we need to talk about or is it

Lisa: What I find annoying is that in German, there isn't an equivalent. You have "hanzer" which more means being made fun of. It's the name calling, pointing at people.

Whereas with bullying I think of something more extreme. Physical conflict, or almost psychological warfare. The concept connected to the direct translation

of the word, to me, it doesn't seem strong enough to cover everything. I think the word bullying has been starting to carry over into German.

At times, Andrew also struggled to label his experience as bullying, due to the emotional or psychological nature of his sister's behaviours. Nonetheless, he explains that he had an underlying sense of injustice within his relationship with his sister,

Interviewer: I guess what I'm picking up from you is that there is a fundamental thing that felt different between you and your sister that would make you think, yeah that was bullying.

Andrew: I had a sense that this wasn't a relationship that other siblings had. I think I would characterise it as bullying. It was all psychological, but there was a pattern to it.

The theme within the fabula of narrators' stories was that there were various constraints and barriers towards defining their experience as something harmful, which involved suffering. As a result of the non-acknowledgement, some narrators explained that they began to experience their circumstances as normal,

Mark: It was my life. I didn't see it as being anything but. My parents condoned it, so I thought this is what it is.

For Lisa and Sally, it wasn't until later on in adulthood, looking back,

Interviewer: Does the sort of impact, does that come in psychological? Or does it happen at the time and you don't really know?

Lisa: I think you don't realise it at the time, at the beginning. And they don't realise it. Because it's what you do. It's almost like having an in-joke. That turns out later on isn't funny.

Interviewer: So, how do people know if they've been bullied?

Sally: At the time some people know if it's extreme cases, but I think a lot of people don't know. It takes a while later, when you look back on it.

Sally reinforces the idea of sibling bullying being not so easy to define. Contrastingly, Ashley's fabula explains that she believes her experience was normal and she feels she can rationalise it,

Interviewer: So thinking now as an adult (..) do you think, "oh yeah" (..)

Ashley: That it was normal? I do think it's quite normal. I just think it was a really big age gap. And that was a pretty bad idea.

I do think it's normal because I can justify it.

In summary, narrators appeared to be suggesting that they could not look to their wider, social and cultural networks to validate their experience. For the most part, in their view, sibling bullying was, and still is, a nuanced concept that is undermined and overlooked within families and within society.

The nature of the sibling relationship – “it just makes me feel attached to her no matter what”. Another major content category within narrators' fabula relates to the nature of the sibling relationship; despite the ridicule experienced and the sometimes indescribable feelings of hatred, it appeared that for most, the capability and intensity of the sibling bond was impenetrable. Indeed, for Sharon and Andrew, when speaking about this idea, their sjuzet and fabula overlap,

Interviewer: What do you think, how was it?

Sharon: Being born with her, having been with her since birth, it just makes me feel attached to her no matter what.

I feel like I hate her, because she was beating me. But I would still suffer if she suffers.

She's my sister. I can't change it.

Moreover, Sharon spoke about unrequited love within the sibling relationship. She reflects on how she feels compelled, sometimes unwillingly, to love her sister despite the love not being reciprocated,

Sharon: You're forced to live with them, help them, care about them, you feel affectionate, even though you feel like you wish you wouldn't 'cuz you know you suffer when you help someone who doesn't love you much, or doesn't seem like.

For Andrew, his relationship with his sister is now a positive one, despite the continual bullying for 5 years. He notes that the turning point for him was at his parents' divorce, when he realised that him and his sister needed one another.

Interviewer: **Do you have a sense of what's changed? To make you guys become close, starting out as maybe the opposite of that?**

Andrew: There is a moment where you're old enough to be aware that life is complicated. But you can't process it. And you can't articulate it. You look for solidarity somewhere.

Blood is thicker than water, it's that thing. Shared experience is valuable in terms of giving you a shared language.

Ashley also speaks about wanting to feel connected to her brother, even throughout her bullying experience. She explains that she had this confusing desire to be involved with him,

Interviewer: Okay. Well I guess what I'm hearing from you is that there is, quite a want for you to, you kinda wanted to be near him?

Ashley: You would be told to go away, yet you still wanted to be near him.

(when him and his friends would swear at me) I thought that's mean. But then I would still follow.

Indeed, Lisa speaks about the juxtaposition she found herself in with her siblings,

Lisa: With my sister, she would be bossy and she would hit me if I did something that she thought was wrong. But then we would sit there and talk about things, I would comfort her.

Once and while my brother would call me into his room to tell me about this new cool thing that he has, even if I have no idea what it is.

And then at dinner he would sit there and make fun of me.

There also appeared to be a theme of compassion and understanding for the other sibling throughout most adults' fabula. Narrators were able, now in adulthood, to remove any blame they once felt towards their sibling as they reflected on the family circumstances that had prevailed. As Mark notes,

Mark: I don't hold an umbrage because he grew up where it was condoned. If he's not told not to do it, then that becomes the thing he's gonna do when he feels frustrated or bad

There is some blame, but it is the circumstances in that.

Sally also referred to her family situation ("my mum and dad were having a few problems") and Amy's narration sums up this idea,

Amy: He (*brother*) said that he was a child and that he transmitted, or he just passed on, what he experienced from our parents. He picked the next weaker thing. And projected all his anger and onto me.

As such, narrators viewed themselves and their siblings as products of their upbringing and framed the bullying as a response to the wider, difficult family circumstances.

Sharon eloquently explains her story,

Sharon: With my sister I feel like we both are a product of the same situation.

We had the same parents, same situations.

You can't really blame anyone in the end, if you know where they come from.

And I do more than anyone. We both came from there, we both know what

happened, how it feels. And I can't blame her for being angry, or for feeling

like she couldn't handle it anymore, that she wanted to destroy everything, it's

just bad luck that I was in the way when she was feeling like that.

Ashley also makes reference to the fact that she and her brother are products of their upbringing,

Ashley: Now I find he's (*brother*) another version of me. We're both a product. I feel he's the male version now.

Overall, it would seem that through their fabula, narrators are making explicit the intensity, uniqueness and resilient nature of the sibling relationship; making reference to the significance of sharing space, time and contexts with someone else growing up. Narrators appear to have been able to reflect on their family situation growing up, as a way of understanding their childhood sibling bullying experience.

Impact of experience –“I made myself invisible to protect myself”. The third content category relates to the impact that narrators perceived their childhood experiences to have on their identity development. Some narrators gave examples within their fabula of how they tried to avoid certain situations with their sibling in childhood as a way of protecting themselves from further arguments and ridicule. Sharon speaks about trying to make herself invisible, by becoming very quiet and trying not to cause any problems,

Interviewer: Yeah. This was the strategy that you used, you adopted?

Sharon: Yeah. The best compliment I got from my mum was “she’s so quiet, I don’t even know she’s in the house”

Interviewer: Um and it was like copi---a way of managing growing up?

Sharon: Yeah, I became independent.

That was how I was coping at the time.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was just going to say. Sounds like

Sharon: Because I was invisible. I made myself invisible to protect myself.

Sharon explains that as a child, “I closed myself, to protect myself”, and therefore she did not feel able to share herself with anyone. However, as a consequence of her strategy, Sharon reports that in adulthood, “I had a mess coming out of it because I was used to keeping everything inside”. Eventually, she had to do her “own journey of learning to lean on others” and Sharon went to counselling, but notes, “it was hard in counselling to bring anything out”.

Mark also referred to using avoidance strategies to protect himself in childhood. He explains that, as a result of hiding from his brother, the impact was that he also avoided situations at school because he was afraid of what might happen,

Mark: I was afraid of being hurt, I'd avoid things. During play I wasn't as involved as I should have been, I was worried about getting hurt.

For some narrators, their ways of dealing with stressful situations have been maintained into adulthood, as they reflected on the impact of their childhood situations and their identity development. Mark spoke about over-compensating in response to his brother's bullying – he would try and create situations to please his brother in order to avoid fighting. Consequently, Mark describes that this part of his personality is still evident in adulthood

Mark: I will still go out of my way to help people if I saw them struggling and that is still there. Because I do that now all the time, but it's always been in me.

Lisa acknowledges that when she was younger, she would try and avoid situations at home in the hope that she wouldn't get beaten or become involved in an argument. Consequently, in adulthood, if she finds herself with individuals that make her feel uncomfortable, she will have a similar reaction to when she was a child,

Lisa: If I'm in a situation that I don't like, I leave

Interviewer: And if someone was to be, be mean to you, or do something to you, that made you feel uncomfortable, would your reaction be the same?

Lisa: It depends. Either I leave, or I withdraw.

So, I have avoidance in my personality.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Lisa: I think it might have started when I was younger, trying to avoid the situations.

Amy and Sally also reflected on their strategies. Sally explains that she regularly avoids those who upset her, as opposed to confronting them, which is also what she would do when her sisters bullied her.

Interviewer: I think you said, it can get a bit annoying. Umm, and was there any way, now thinking about, that you think I dealt with it like this, by, I don't know, doing certain things, or?

Sally: I kept myself to myself. I would sit with myself.

I would rather remove myself from the situation than argue.

Interviewer: So I suppose if now you were to experience something really stressful. Umm, how would you deal with it, do you think?

Sally: I would be angry for an hour. Then I'll separate myself. I won't talk to that person for a while.

Interviewer: Yeah. And is that similar or different to what you used to do when you were younger?

Sally: The same. If someone annoys me, I can go months without talking to them. I try and separate myself anyway, so I'm away from them.

Interviewer: Yeah. And if you need to kind of have a moment to get rid of stress

Sally: I sleep. If I'm stressed out I have a nap. I have a nap and then wake up and you never remember the things they did.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you think that, maybe way of coping with stress comes from when you were young and you have kind of carried that on or?

Sally: Never thought of it like that. Probably.

Amy spoke about becoming prematurely independent and relying only on herself as a response,

Interviewer: And I was just interested in when you said about, the way that you coped with it by, kind of, I guess putting in all your energy into school and sports and aiming to do really really well, which you then did. Do you think you still use those strategies now when you're under stress or? Do you notice that maybe the younger part of you, those coping mechanisms come through, or is it completely different now?

Amy: What I learnt at a young age was A) look after myself and to be independent and do the things you need to be doing. It's useful, it's a skill that a lot of people lack, and I've got a lot of it. It's helpful when you are faced with a challenge, it's this desire to survive.

I think that's still driven from this place of, I need to, I need to be better than people. I need to make sure I'm doing everything right.

As the fabula demonstrates, some explicitly spoke about the association between their childhood and adulthood strategies, yet Andrew had a more nuanced view of his identity development,

Interviewer: I wondered how much you thought, the relationship has kind of moulded you I guess?

Andrew: I don't know how much. It's impossible to say, I don't know how much I would say this is why I am, who I am now.

I do tend to be the person who hangs back.

To what extent that's just how I am and to what extent that is about, putting on a brave face because somebody's said something terrible and I'm trying NOT to respond. And it's therefore learnt in childhood or whatever I don't know.

Lastly, Ashley spoke about how she has a sense that she is a very competitive person and she does not enjoy being in situations where she feels challenged and less powerful.

Ashley: I am really competitive. When I find something that makes me feel a bit more in control of something, I like it. When someone threatens it, I don't like it.

Although she does not make an explicit link between her experience of being bullied by her brother and her identity, she does consider this when it is suggested to her,

Interviewer: Okay. And again, there may be a link, or maybe there is no link, do you think maybe from having to push all the time when you were younger, or (..)

Ashley: Yeah maybe. Might be. Maybe.

In summary, narrators spoke about the impact of their sibling bullying experiences in regards to the strategies they adopted in order to protect themselves in childhood. Some of these involved not opening up to others, hiding away from all types of situations, hanging back, becoming self-regulating and/or not standing up for oneself. Consequently, narrators spoke about these strategies still being present within their

personalities as an adult, reflecting on links between the impact of their experience and their adult identity development and the nuances within this process.

Summary. This section summarises the findings from the categorical-content analysis, which involved examining the fabula of narrators' re-telling in an attempt to ascertain what they perceived their experiences to be like. Three main story categories connected with the study's research questions were identified through the analysis and each participant was discussed in relation to these. It is argued that these categories are an essential part of the narrative analysis, as they offer detail in regards to what narrators refer to and describe as their experiences, as it feels to them. Moreover, the analysis of fabula provides the frame for the next steps of the analysis – how the teller positions themselves towards the told and the nuances and choices made in the telling can only be analysed once the main fabula have been established.

3.04 Identity Stories

This next section corresponds to steps 6 and 7 in the NOI methodology (see p. 69) and to the second, main thread within the research – how do adults *make sense* of their sibling bullying experiences? The categorical-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) directly feeds into the critical narrative analysis (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Hiles, 2007) in order to examine the *how* of people's re-telling. That is, how do narrators position themselves and others in their re-telling, what particular choices do they make and how do they reflect on and synthesize their experiences as they narrate? How do they attempt to resolve the tensions between story concord and discord and ultimately, move towards creating personal meaning for themselves? It is through the analysis of the subtleties of narrative discourse – namely the *sjuzet* – that these questions can be

answered and we can examine how adults integrate experience and actively construct their narrative identities through re-telling.

Following this, the use of metaphor and imagery, moments of reflection and emotional expression, disruptions in syntax and the use of more formal linguistic features were analysed. These are aspects of sjuzet that may offer insight into the subject and identity positions that narrators are attempting to endorse, contest, celebrate and integrate into their narrative identities. As such, the identity stories are summarised below for each narrator and are organised in a way that highlights the main facets of Hiles' (2007) subject and identity positioning theory and McAdams' (1993) identity theory as discussed in the previous chapter.

Ashley

Subject vs Identity Positioning. Ashley's fabula highlights her uncertainty in regards to understanding her experience of being bullied by her brother, yet close examination of her sjuzet illuminates how she fluctuates within her uncertainty. For example, when asked about her earliest memory of sibling bullying Ashley asserts her position, "This is what I thought", which is then followed by her first expression of emotion – "you just feel like rejected". Indeed, as her narrative progresses Ashley momentarily identifies with, and indicates that, her experience was difficult, "cuz it was really unpleasant sometimes" and "there were things that I just didn't like".

However, there are other moments within her re-telling when Ashley takes the perhaps more subject, responsibility position of "I was annoyingly younger" and explains that she "just liked being annoying", providing justification for her brothers' behaviour. It is possible that Ashley has been positioned in this way from childhood in order to provide an understanding of her brothers' behaviour. She continually moves back into

the responsibility position – “because I would just make a big scene” and “I would definitely try and aggravate”. Nonetheless, Ashley’s initial comments are followed by laughter, which may indicate that her comments are incongruent with how she truly feels.

Concord, discord and integration. Ashley’s sjuzet reinforces the idea that she is struggling to wholly identify with the event that she is describing. This is apparent within the first ten minutes of her re-telling as she battles with my question of “what she could remember about her experience?” Ashley answers in sjuzet, “Ummm. I was thinking about it. I was trying to think, like. I was trying to think about it, but (...)”¹ ummm, I just remember (...) (*and then drifts off*)”. Ashley is trying to persuade me of her authenticity by emphasising that she has been thinking hard about her experience, however she is unable to connect with any examples at this stage.

It is difficult for Ashley to put into words what happened to her and begin to integrate her experience – “I can’t really think exactly what he would be doing”, “I wanna say like (...) just like (....) I can’t think.” However, her sjuzet provides an image of her experience – “I just picture like, me in the living room (..) ummm, and then I would just scream “STOP (.) IT!!! (..)” – this is the first time within the re-telling that it is possible to notice the emotional intensity for Ashley. Her words “and then I would just scream STOP (.) IT!!! (..)” indicate a flashback experience as she appears to be transported back to the moment.

Disruptions in syntax, such as long pauses, hesitation and digressions can also represent discord and tension within an individuals’ story and be indicative of attempts

¹ Pauses are denoted with brackets and a ‘.’ The number of ‘.’ within the bracket indicates how long a pause lasts for. For example (.) indicates a pause of one second, (..) indicates a pause of two seconds, and so on.

to avoid discussing a difficult experience (Lieblich et al., 1998), preventing story integration. Throughout her re-telling Ashley pauses frequently and uses many deintensifiers such as “like” or “ummm”. It is possible that these offer her some distance in the moment, helping her to manage the mix of emotions that she may be experiencing. For example, in an attempt to articulate a felt experience, Ashley still uses a deintensifier, “you just feel *like* rejected”. Additionally, when speaking about whether her experience was normal, Ashley employs various deintensifiers and also loses her train of thought at one point, “ummm (...) yes, I guess I do think it’s quite normal. Ummm (.....) just, especially with having (...) ummm (...) I can’t really think of what I was gonna say anymore”.

Overall, Ashley’s sjuzet demonstrates how she appears to be struggling with the tension inherent in her understanding and defining of her experience of being bullied by her brother. Ashley questions her experience out loud, as if inviting me to answer for her and validate her identity story – “But um (...) like I really started to doubt it. Like whether, like whether it was actually legit”. She also notes that other people aren’t able to validate her experience (“I didn’t even tell my house mate, it felt almost a bit like a taboo”) and she continues to fluctuate between minimising her experience and repeatedly trying to engage me in validation – “it just doesn’t seem as serious really”, “it’s just always there, isn’t it?” As such, it is difficult for Ashley to acknowledge that her identity story could be more nuanced; however, she does engage in reflective conversations towards the latter part of the interview which may indicate that integration is possible and emergent.

Lisa

Identity vs subject positioning. Lisa's fabula makes reference to her family circumstances as the predominant reason for her bullying experiences and her creative sjuzet reinforces this; "you know, if you have like, young dogs that you don't train and they just (...) make up their own hierarchy and resolve things by fighting with each other", "we were neglected, so it was more that everyone was having difficulty controlling themselves because there was no discipline at the top. And it just ended up that my brother came out top, my sister second and I am last." Her latter sjuzet also indicates how she has positioned herself; indeed, she continues to refer to herself as being "at the bottom of the pile" throughout her story.

Lisa endorses the identities that she has been given by others – "I am definitely among the followers. I don't really take charge (...) and she (*sister*) does. Although she's the younger one". Her last comment hints that there may be some tension for Lisa in endorsing the more submissive position, but as her following, hesitant sjuzet indicates, she is unable to express this tension – "and, ummm (...) my--my sister (...) kind of (...) grew up a bit faster than me". Her disrupted speech may signify that there is something unresolved about this experience and how she has been positioned. When speaking about her bullying experiences she explains, "I would just defend myself, rather than just attack (...) which is probably why I ended up at the bottom of the pile".

Lisa continues to refer to herself through the childhood identities that she has been given (e.g. "it has been told to me that I have always been a bit different from other kids"). She also appears to have endorsed the submissive subject position with her sister – "when we are together she's (...) still has, more of the leading role" – replicating the pattern from childhood. Moreover, Lisa appears to find herself in this

position socially – “when I was in school I did have a lot of people who were mean to me in various different ways.”

Concord, discord and integration. Lisa tells her story in a largely coherent way – there are minimal disruptions in speech – however she uses practical phrases and describes her experiences in a detached and inexpressive way. For example, when discussing her bullied experiences, she frequently uses the word “strange” (e.g. “which is kind of strange”, “it felt strange to me”), or continues to describe her experiences within an animal metaphor, “I mean even if you have like, animals, they are the same. They do that between themselves as well, like play fight”. It may be these *sjuzet* phrases allow Lisa to distance herself from the emotions connected with her experience, as she is still in the process of story integration. Her closing *sjuzet* summarises her current, pragmatic position – “Oh, I posted at one point something on Facebook, something along the lines of “good things keep happening, bad things keep happening, life continues””.

Nonetheless, Lisa does reflect on the impact of her childhood and there is evidence of her negotiating her narrative identity (“So I think that kind of, still comes (..) from my, background, that was kind of just the way of interacting”). There are also moments within her re-telling when she tries to take an identity position and differentiate herself from her family – “I think within the family I am the least aggressive, so it might be that the others see it differently. But. Yeah, I don’t usually attack people outside my family, I don’t usually attack people within my family either”. Through de-identification, Lisa is positioning herself as different from her family and beginning to negotiate her narrative identity.

Andrew

Subject vs identity positioning. Throughout his re-telling Andrew occupies various positions as he endorses and contests some of the subject positions from childhood. At the beginning of his re-telling he asserts the position of being a child whose “glass is usually half empty” and labels himself as “an instinctive hanger back”, as he speaks about what may have contributed to his sisters’ bullying. He takes the responsibility position – “I always had this really short temper...I could just be made to explode in this quite entertaining fashion (*laughs*) uhhh, you know, with very little provocation” – it is possible that this is a subject voice that Andrew has endorsed from his childhood, as his latter comment positions him as someone who was overly sensitive to ridicule. He continues to take the responsibility position in relation to his sisters’ bullying as he explains, “uhhh I suppose it's kind of, not liking change, and um, um, (*sigh*) being extremely impatient. So (...) and (.) also, I'm not, I'm kind of not very articulate”.

Additionally, Andrew immediately positions himself as someone who is different from others (“I always felt slightly outside, anyway, and would have done anyway because you know, that's how I am”), yet he also appears to be aware of his positioning as a result of his sister’s bullying – “I tend to kind of, take on a kind of lower status role I suppose in, in a lot of situations because it's just easier”. Indeed, Andrew speaks about subscribing to this position for most of his life (“I mean, it’s kind of, it’s, it’s become habitual”) and offers examples of how he has integrated this position into his identity. For example, in his relationships Andrew notes that he will drift towards those who are more boisterous and out-going, maintaining his lower status position, “I kind of, uhhh, I’m likely to gravitate towards someone who is an alpha male a bit”. He also speaks about adopting a ‘one down’ position in the workplace; in fact, Andrew was bullied by a colleague at work and he explained how this position did not feel unfamiliar – “it was kind of a familiar feeling, but it was certainly a kind of, you, you

knew what was going to happen every day. You, uh, you were kind of waiting for it. And you felt, um, you know, that, that, feeling of being undermined and being uh, (...) seen as insignificant. Uh, uh”.

Nonetheless, Andrew’s changed relationship with his sister seems to have offered him an opportunity to contest this “lower status” position – “and then, you know, the older (...) I think yeah, I suppose yeah, the older we got, the, the more that reversed. I think, I almost have (...) slightly higher status in a way, um, (...) I don’t know if that’s, that’s true or not, but I’m kind of, maybe not higher status, I’m kind of the, I’m the naughty rebellious one now”. Andrew announces his new identity position within his re-telling, however this is not without hesitation, which may indicate that there is still some uncertainty for Andrew about adopting and integrating this “rebellious” position into his narrative identity.

Concord, discord and integration. Throughout his re-telling, Andrew discusses and reflects on the tension he feels in regards to his understanding his identity. As his fabula also demonstrated, Andrew battles with the nuances of identity development as he asks himself whether his early sibling bullying experiences contributed to his adult identity development. Close examination of his sjuzet illustrates that Andrew is trying to move towards a position of integration and acknowledge the concept of identity fluidity – “Yeah (*breath in*) Yeah. Yeah, so I don't know, I don't know (...) yeah (...) I don't know how much I would sort of (...) I mean it's probably impossible to say, I don't know how much I would kind of say (...) this is why I am, who I am now. Um, (...) but, yeah (...) Yeah....I'm not convinced you can talk about yourself as having this, this, one personality, you know, because you're changing all the time (...) You know, uh, yeah”.

There are frequent hesitations, pauses and disruptions in syntax as Andrew reflects on, and negotiates with, the ambiguity inherent in making sense of his narrative identity. Throughout his re-telling, Andrew also took big, deep breathes prior to disclosing more emotional, and perhaps painful, information. For example, when asked about his bullying experiences Andrew replies, “it started to set a pattern and it just kind of happened (*breath in*) a lot I suppose and (...) uhhh”. Upon describing himself, he continues to hesitate – “I’m, I’m not quite a true introvert but I’m sort of (...) uh a mix I think, but I’m a lot less (*breath in*) forthcoming (...) initially. In, in, you know unfamiliar company and stuff, so, so, um (...) uhhh (*breath in*)”. In particular, the latter *sjuzet* example is perhaps indicative of how Andrew is still in the process of integrating both his subject and chosen identity positions. Andrew uses metaphor to highlight the discrepancy, “It’s like the cliché of the swan, looks serene above the surface and underneath its frantically paddling away”.

Amy

Subject vs identity positioning. Amy positions her family’s culture, religion and circumstances as contributing to her brother’s bullying. Protestant religion was “completely omnipresent and very dominating” and from Amy’s perspective, as supported by her *fabula*, this led to an angry and tense atmosphere at home. Her *sjuzet* reinforces this as she positions her brother’s bullying as “it’s, it’s just a really convenient way of acting out your (...) ummm (...) whatever emotions you have.”

Amy positions her brother as someone who was “completely aware that he was hurting me” and describes him as “clearly evil and it was just, it was just really unnecessary” Amy is able to consider, reflect and maintain multiple perspectives throughout her re-telling and, ultimately, celebrate who she has become. Her reflective

sjuzet powerfully positions her as someone who has endured suffering, but has liberated herself from feelings of anger and resentment, moving away from a perhaps more victim subject position from childhood – “I don’t wish to negate that, that people have hurt me. Ummm, and that’s something I can’t explain away or something. But I think it helps when you feel secure in who you are”. Amy appears able to endorse her confident, secure identity position. She appears to have been able to re-frame her experience into something emancipatory, supporting again her position of relinquishing herself from a victim position – “I think it is a positive story...it’s possible to turn it into something good”.

Concord, discord and integration. Amy is able to acknowledge her anger towards her brother (“he was downright evil sometimes”) and her suffering (“when I now look back, is really not a pleasant thing) and move towards story unity – “so, so, while I don’t, I don’t condone what he did or I’m not, I don’t thank him, I’m still like okay, yeah, let’s just move on.” However there are moments when her sjuzet indicates that she might be finding it difficult to put into words how she felt about her brother – “but he was, he was a horrible brother, he was, he was ummmm (...) I mean (...) (*sigh*) (..) you know, like, umm (...)”. Additionally, Amy infrequently labels her emotions, but uses her favourite sjuzet expression instead, “the relationship takes (.) a very unpleasant turn for me”, “it’s quite (.) unpleasant ummm (..)”, “getting punched in the face (.) that was unpleasant”.

Nonetheless, Amy is able to reflect on the tension inherent in her positioning as she explains that feelings can still be revived when she speaks about her experiences, “I’m not completely invincible”. One of her final sjuzet comments summarises her current position – “I think, it’s possible to grow through it and to get stronger (...) But, you know, I wouldn’t mind if there were other ways to get stronger and to let me grow.”

Sally

Subject vs identity positioning. Throughout her re-telling, Sally occupies various positions of helplessness and indifference, whilst also engaging in brief moments of reflection and curiosity in relation to her experience. Within the first few minutes of her story, Sally's sjuzet subtly indicates her attempt to assert her position when describing why she was bullied – "but I was like (...)". However she cannot finish her agential sentence and instead moves to a more subject position, "everyone thought I was on my dad's side anyway". Sally then seems to generally position herself throughout her re-telling as someone who is not to blame, but is the victim of the situation around her. Specifically, Sally positions her dad as the reason for the bullying – "I just think it was because my dad favoured me. And they were just jealous".

Sally also predominantly positions herself as someone who seems unaffected by her bullying experience. Frequent sjuzet expressions are, "I didn't really care" and "kind of, whatever", as she demonstrates a sense of apathy that is reinforced through her fabula, also. Indeed, when asked to reflect on her sibling bullying experience as an adult, Sally uses expressions such as "not something I bother about" and "just don't look into it a lot". However, close examination of her sjuzet demonstrates how she fluctuates within this, as she experiments with different positions during her re-telling. For example, Sally reflects, "I don't guess I'm angry", "I don't know. I guess I thought it was always unfair, but it was like (...) nothing's gonna change anyway, so yeah." In these examples Sally is hinting at taking up a different, more active position in relation to her experience of being bullied, however her sjuzet indicates how tentative and uncertain she is about this.

Concord, discord and integration. It is difficult for Sally to offer details of her experience, particularly emotional details. For example, when speaking about how the bullying made her feel, Sally rarely labels her emotions, but offers *sjuzet* to convey her feelings instead – “and I was just like “ohhh””, “I was just like, “aarrghhh””. These moments of emotional expression were also often instantly accompanied by *deintensifiers* such as Sally sighing or laughing, or followed by disruptions in syntax; particularly silence or “ummm”. Additionally, there were moments when I attempted to offer an emotional label for her experience, but these were not acknowledged and met with *sjuzet* silence. It is possible that Sally is still in the process of story integration, and so uses her *sjuzet* to communicate her feelings of anger and frustration instead of explicitly verbalising.

Sally’s *sjuzet* also indicates that there is tension inherent in her predominant, apathetic position. For example, Sally’s comment “I don’t think I really cared. I was just like, pff whatever” is instantly followed by, “it was lonely at times, but I was just like (*sigh*)”. A key *sjuzet* also contradicts Sally’s apparent indifference as she subtly acknowledges that she wants her sisters as a source of support – “ummm, I think some stuff I could do on my own, but it’s like (...) I just want you to do it.”

Sharon

Subject vs identity positioning. Throughout her narrative Sharon asserts her thoughts and opinions coherently and is able to reflect on her past and connect it with her present feelings and actions.

Sharon’s story is very much one of survival – she positions herself as a survivor of something tragic – “I made myself invisible to protect myself”, “this was my tactic, to survive in this family”. She is not always able to find the exact words to articulate her

thoughts, but her sjuzet delivers the message for her – “but I think ummm, the bullying that’s, that’s actually just something that gave me, just ummm, hang in there until you know the change will come sometime.” Her hesitations and use of de-intensifiers may indicate that she is still trying to negotiate some ambivalence within her situation, as she continues to hold the resilient position, but perhaps alongside some residual feelings of anger or upset.

Sharon chooses to reflect on her culture, class and gender, integrating these into her story. She speaks about the identity tension inherent in complying with the expectations from her culture – “our culture is very (..) ummm, a good girl is someone who is very quiet and doesn’t ask for anything. Aaaaand I, I was just like that (.) Not because I wanted to. But as a way of surviving”. Sharon refers to these cultural expectations as providing a catalyst for her sister’s bullying. Her sister did not conform to the family rules and so ridiculed Sharon for adhering. Moreover, Sharon positions the family culture as exacerbating undermining the bullying problem; “they always had this kind of philosophy that uhhh, we are suffering”, “so to tell them I would feel really guilty because I am giving them more problems on top”, “you never really feel like you’re suffering”.

Concord, discord and integration. Although the content of Sharon’s fabula indicate her compassionate position, there are periods of tension in her story as Sharon battles with making sense of what her sister did to her; “I’m not sure what is normal for my sister”, “you know, after 7, 8 years you should start realising”. Live, within the process of her re-telling, Sharon seems to be trying to resolve these tensions through sjuzet– “but I guess it made her feel better?”, “we just made different choices”, “I feel like (.) she’s everything(.) I could be if you know”. By the end she is trying to integrate her experience to create a more coherent story for herself – “it’s all about luck” – Sharon

repeats this phrase throughout, attributing the reasons for her sisters' bullying to external, 'out-of-her-control' circumstances. Choosing to position her experience this way is vital for her sense-making, as it has allowed her to remove any internal blame and reconstruct her experience in a way that helps her to accept and integrate it into her narrative identity.

Again, Sharon's *sjuzet* offers subtle hints that some of her comments may be incongruent with how she truly feels. Her more emotionally laden asides are always followed up with laughter; in fact, she opens and closes her story with laughter, which may indicate that it is still very difficult to acknowledge and tolerate some of the more uncomfortable feelings associated with her experiences. For example, when referring to the literature book episode she cannot finish her sentence and laughs instead – “you know family where you already feel that you're not loved and you're not wanted and someone writes die then you just (*laughs*).” Sharon also appears to “get lost” when she speaks about “bringing out her feelings” – “it wouldn't come out (.) And (..) ummm (.) how did it change? I think it just, sorry I'm starting to get lost (*laughs*) umm (..)”. It is possible that, in those moments, Sharon is recognising the emotional intensity connected with her past experience and the laughter and pauses may offer her some respite.

Mark

Subject vs Identity positioning. Throughout his re-telling, Mark spoke with passion, reflexivity and understanding. His *sjuzet* demonstrates the flexibility in his positioning of himself and others within his story. For example, Mark begins by providing a powerful image of his childhood self, positioned as the victim, hiding away from his brother– “I used to zip up my Parker coat and just sit in the corner, pull my arms

inside”. This position is emphasised through his positioning of others – “it was alright to be an asshole in my family”. However, as Mark tells his story he is able to strongly contest the victim, subject position and re-position himself as someone who has liberated himself through perseverance – “I was like, "what are you doing? What ARE you, you, doing? Are you going to be this victim in life or are you actually going to just (..) be you?” Consequently, Mark’s *sjuzet* demonstrates that he is proud of his new position (“I took a stand.” “I’ve stepped away from that little boy who was afraid of his own bloody shadow”).

Following on, Mark makes explicit through his *sjuzet* the idea that he has had to negotiate different, often conflicting, parts of himself in a journey to establish his identity – “it’s the fight of life to try and become (.) the man at the end”. He uses metaphor to illustrate how he has been able to make meaning from his experience; “because that is what, it shapes the block of, you know, the block of rock that becomes whatever it does at the end. Horrible gargoyle or you know, whatever it is at the end, this block of rock gets turned into you by your life”.

Concord, discord and integration. Throughout his re-telling Mark uses a minimal number of de-intensifiers and there is little disruption in syntax. His *sjuzet* supports his original *fabula* in regards to identity formation, as he is able to successfully reflect on the tension between his various positions – “inside I know I’m that little boy still inside. I KNOW I’ve still got that little boy, I know that”. Mark is also negotiating the concord and discord of his stories in regards to his current relationship with his brother. For example, “he was horrible when he was younger. Horrible now actually”, which is followed by, “I’m proud of him as my brother in some ways and in other ways not so”. Mark is, once again, able to hold this tension. However, he also makes clear with his *sjuzet* that he is striving towards a version of himself that is different to

his brother – “I look at him and I think, I’m not like, I’m nothing like you”, “I’ve hopefully, I’m a (.) better person, if you can say that?” It appears that Mark has been able to integrate his experiences into his narrative identity and reach a resolution that makes sense to him – “he is my brother and I will love him always. But (.) we are different people”.

Summary. This section provides an identity story for each narrator, which focusses on the *how* of their re-telling, or the way in which the story was being told, via analysis of the *sjuzet*. This section of the analysis looks at how people go beyond plots and event details of their personal stories and move towards reflection, metaphor and imagery in order to facilitate meaning making (McAdams & McLean, 2013). That is, the narrator draws a *semantic* conclusion about the self, from the episodic information that the story conveys (McAdams & McLean, 2013), participating in their identity construction. All narrators were at different stages in this process of meaning making and utilised various *sjuzet* to demonstrate this. Indeed, Schutz’ (1962) phenomenological focus on identity formation being in continual flux is emphasised within this analysis and results.

3.05 Co-Construction of Stories

The primary aim of analysing narrators’ stories was to provide insight into what and how adults describe and understand their experiences of being bullied by a sibling, *as it feels to them*. Indeed, the analysis prioritised providing understanding in regards to narrators’ versions of reality. However, it would be misrepresentative to not acknowledge that my subjectivity formed an integral part of the analytic process. Langdridge (2007) notes that “we always have a view from somewhere” in regards to our research topic.

Specifically, I considered how my moral and ethical position on sibling bullying was influencing the stories that were being co-constructed. The process of telling one's story has a moral dimension to it as there are always choices involved in the re-telling (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Thus, through my positioning, I wondered what stories I was encouraging and discouraging? Conducting this research with an aim of encouraging the voices of those who, in my view, appear to be marginalised, I am holding the inherent position that sibling bullying is something that should not be tolerated and needs to be spoken about. Therefore, it is likely that my ethical and moral stance had an impact on all stages of the research process from recruitment and design, to analysis and interpretation.

It is important to consider the nature of dialogic relationships when we are thinking about the effects of telling for a narrator (Foucault, 1988; Frank, 2005; Leonard & Ellen, 2008). Consequently, it was necessary for me to be aware of the power I held when conducting this research to 'help' the other (Fine, 2003). I wondered how the adults felt in the interview experience with me, whereby I was perceived to be in the more powerful position. Considering the context of their lives, being bullied by a sibling and frequently being in a less powerful, one down position, it is likely that this power difference was apparent in our interactions and had an influence on what was re-told and how narrators positioned themselves and others in relation to their experience.

Indeed, Goffman (1959) explains that we have various, different social selves and that we try to convey impressions to others that are in our interests to portray (Punch, 2008). Thus, during a performance an individual "accentuates certain matters and conceals others" (Goffman, 1959, p.74). Therefore it is vital to keep in mind throughout an analysis, "how do we receive narratives or how are we able to evaluate

the work of ‘voice’? (Leonard & Ellen, 2008, p. 16). We must remember that people’s stories do not reveal the forces that shape it (Leonard & Ellen, 2008), therefore as researchers we must continually be aware of the various contexts that are influencing and guiding a person’s re-telling.

3.06 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the results from the Narrative Orientated Inquiry. The results provide comprehensive detail of content and form in relation to the broad research question, “how do adults describe and make sense of their childhood sibling bullying experiences?” The impact of the co-construction of stories is also discussed in regards to how experience is represented and these ideas will be examined in more detail in the Discussion Chapter.

4. Discussion and Review

This chapter will review and develop the findings from the Narrative Orientated Inquiry in the context of the research aims (see pp. 46-47) and existing literature outlined in Chapter 1. Specifically, the results are discussed in relation to perceiving and defining sibling bullying, the impact of experience on the nature of sibling relationships and development of narrative identity. This chapter will also consider the applicability of the findings in regards to clinical practice and future research, whilst reviewing the strengths and limitations of the research design.

4.01 Overview of findings

In answering the broad question of “how do adults describe and make sense of their childhood sibling bullying experiences?” I was very aware of the various levels of exploration and interpretation that were available; unlike many qualitative frameworks, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2013). Thus, in order to stay true to the endeavour of this study, which was to examine how adults make sense of being bullied by a sibling, I was conscious of trying not to over simplify assumptions and over-categorize experience. I attempted to concentrate on context, positioning and co-construction, and it is from within these three aspects that the findings are framed and discussed.

In describing and making sense, adults re-told their experiences of being bullied by a sibling in childhood. The analysis focussed on the ways in which adults negotiated, constructed and integrated their narratives about their experience in relation to others and with their available social and cultural narratives (Hunter, 2010). I deliberately did not provide a definition of sibling bullying so as to explore how narrators perceived and defined their experiences within their subjective experience and contextual nuances. They offered both content and form as narrators gave details of their

experience and positioned themselves in relation to it. Narrators conveyed what it was like to live through a disruption in their lives, that is, the “qualia”, or felt, subjective awareness, of their experience (Herman, 2007). However, as discussed throughout this thesis, the aim of this study was to investigate both narrators’ process of meaning construction and the meanings themselves.

Narrators discussed the problems inherent in the perceived acceptability of sibling bullying and the social and cultural barriers they faced when trying to validate and/or describe their experiences to others. Moreover, narrators spoke about the impact of this invalidation on themselves; some felt they might have been overdramatising and as a result, began to re-interpret their situation as normal and something that was expected of siblings. Indeed, Kettrey and Emery (2006) explored perceptions of violence within sibling relationships, using a sample of 200 University Psychology students. Participants were asked to rate how many times they had both perpetrated and experienced sibling violence, and they were asked to then rate their experiences as either “conflict”, “rivalry”, “aggression”, “violence” and/or “abuse”. Findings indicated that those who reported the occurrence of severe violence in their sibling relationships, as compared to those who reported very little violence, had significantly higher ratings of the term “rivalry” in response to their experiences (Kettrey & Emery, 2006). Thus, participants utilised terminology in such a way that it did not label their experiences as a form of violence (Kettrey & Emery, 2006), despite reporting perpetrating or experiencing physical violence towards or from their sibling. Kettrey and Emery (2006) argue that currently, society does not recognise sibling violence as a form of violence, therefore a person may deny or ignore the reality of their experience as a result.

Some narrators in the current study were able to reflect on how their sibling bullying experience had been positioned as normal by their family culture and wider society, and they could now, in adulthood, contest this and begin the process of validation for themselves through their re-telling. Others had difficulty identifying with their experience; when it came to emotionally labelling or describing how the experience of being bullied by their sibling truly felt, some people's speech became staggered or disrupted and there were increases in various linguistic features such as laughter, sighs and long pauses. It is possible that these features provided a defence against emotional pain as narrators were trying to seek relief from what they were visualising or remembering (Meyers, 2015).

Narrators also spoke about the nature of their adult sibling relationships, now that the sibling bullying had ceased. Sibship is not static, but an ambivalent, fluctuating relationship (Allan, 1996) and echoing the literature, adults spoke about experiencing their sibling relationships as an amalgamation of feelings of love, anger, hurt and compassion. They referred to the unique dimensions of the sibling relationship – their shared history, the permanence of the sibling bond and their obligation of living together (Punch, 2008) – as reasons why they felt continually attached to, and compassionate towards, their previously aggressive or manipulative brother or sister. Of course, some narrators did not acknowledge this concept as fervently as others and positioned themselves as separate and different from their siblings instead.

Additionally, narrators situated their experiences within specific contexts (Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach and Lieblich, 2008). Some chose to contextualise their siblings' bullying behaviour within their difficult family circumstances, positioning their brother and/or sister as a product of their situation who projected their uncomfortable feelings onto them as a way of emotional discharge. Over time, ways of discussing and

positioning the sibling bullying seemed to change for some of the narrators, perhaps as they moved towards story integration. As such, my epistemological position and methodology encouraged me to go beyond the search for the one “grand narrative” (Grbich, 1999, p.57) as I kept in mind a narrators’ ability to continually shift the connections they forge between past, present and future (Freeman, 1998).

Some narrators reflected on the impact that their experience of feeling invalidated by their sibling had on their sense of self-worth and esteem growing up as a child. Many reported hanging back, feeling nervous or a general sense of insecurity about themselves. In particular, narrators spoke about trying to protect themselves by avoiding all situations, assuming the lower status position in relationships and generally trying to make themselves invisible either by hiding away or not having a voice in family or social situations. More often than not, these feelings were also compounded by insecure parent-child attachment relationships, family violence and/or other problems within the person’s environment. Consequently, some adults spoke about how their ways of dealing with stressful situations had been maintained and that they noticed these parts of their personality from when they were younger.

As a result, narrators reflected on their current adult identities and the potential influencers on who they had become and who they were becoming. Some were able to negotiate the complexities of their identities and acknowledge that there was tension between their subject positions that originated from their childhood bullying experiences and their chosen, adult identity positions. However others were not able to acknowledge this, but their *sjuzet*, or the *way* they told their story provided this insight (via metaphor, repetitions, intensifiers and disruptions). The *sjuzet* subtly conveyed how some narrators were trying to resolve the ambiguity within their identity and

striving produce evaluative and elaborate narratives in an attempt to move towards a more integrated narrative identity story.

4.02 Discussion of the main findings in relation to the existing literature

The results of the two main threads of this study – how and what do adults describe as their experience and how do they make sense of and integrate this into their developing identities – will be discussed in relation to the current literature. This section will be organised around the three main research questions that have been referred to throughout this study.

Perceiving and defining sibling bullying. Qualifying the concept of sibling bullying is an issue of contention within the literature and the results of this study reinforce the complexity embedded in perceiving and defining oneself as being bullied by a sibling. Every narrator made reference to the complications involved in naming and defining their experience as bullying. Some acknowledged that they had absorbed the dominant social and cultural discourses that had been placed on their experiences by others (Hunter, 2010), which had characterised their experience as expected and normal, sibling rivalry. This meant they felt unable to fully acknowledge their associated suffering, and therefore felt isolated in their circumstances. Kettrey and Emery (2006) explain that feelings of isolation may stem from language which invalidates the sibling bullying experience, thus contributing to peoples' doubt about the legitimacy of their experience. Indeed, in relation to overcoming and integrating distressing experiences, Herman (2001) argues that the mindset of the culture surrounding the person is significant. That is, the public acknowledgement of the distressing event – the community response – is an important factor in facilitating sense making and integration.

The results of the current study illustrate that there was a feeling of dissonance for some narrators between how they felt about their experience and how they had to think about it, which ultimately led them to position their experiences as normal, in an attempt to reduce inherent tension. This phenomenon is supported within cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) theory; if an individual experiences two competing attitudes or experiences – in this case, the belief that family members love each other and the experience of being bullied by a sibling – tension arises (Hardy et al., 2010). Thus, it is argued that the easiest way to reduce this tension is to change attitude, thereby conceptualising sibling bullying as normal.

The tension between Ashley's *fabula* and *sjuzet* exemplifies this issue of unresolved dissonance in regards to defining her experience – her *fabula* offers a story of normalization and she contests her experience being labelled as sibling bullying because she can “justify it”. Yet contrastingly, her *sjuzet* illuminates her uncertainty. There are also moments when Ashley's *sjuzet* contests the normalization discourse and tries persuade me of the authenticity of her experience – she wants me to know that her experience was not a positive one and she felt rejected. Indeed, through her participation in the study she is actively labelling her childhood experience as sibling bullying, however her *sjuzet* illustrates how she feels unable to fully identify with this story and there is tension, or dissonance. Ashley explains that she feels doubtful about her experience and it may be that the perceived acceptability of sibling bullying is preventing her from engaging with, validating and integrating her experience as “legit”.

Ashley's *sjuzet* highlights the issue of dominant, societal discourses rendering sibling bullying as unacknowledged and unspeakable, as she describes it as “a taboo”. Other narrators made reference to this idea in their re-telling and some also noted that

psychological or emotional sibling bullying felt complicated to define and recognise, due its' subtlety. Despite having an underlying sense that their sibling relationships were different from others around them, their experience was not perceived as non-normative. Indeed, early qualitative research by Wieche (1990) argues that society recognises that sex between siblings is unequivocally unacceptable; however because physical and emotional abuse do not have a clear definition distinct from sibling rivalry, this can neutralise the intensity and increase the perceived acceptability of such experiences (Meyers, 2015). As such, Mackey, Fromuth and Kelly (2010) found that when individuals retrospectively identified their childhood experiences as 'sibling rivalry', as opposed to 'sibling abuse', this was associated with higher levels of self-report ratings of anxiety and depression. Moreover, only 16% of respondents self-labelled themselves as victims of sibling abuse, despite the scores on the Conflict Tactics Scales indicating that approximately 83% of participants reported receiving severe emotional abuse from a sibling in childhood (Mackey et al., 2010).

It is argued that viewing sibling bullying as a taboo subject effects how adults legitimize and consequently perceive and integrate their experiences. In the current study, this may have contributed to how narrators chose to position both themselves and others in relation to their experience. For example, Ashley, Lisa and Andrew endorse the responsibility and/or victim position, normalizing their siblings' behaviour in a way that positions themselves as a reason for their siblings' actions. In these moments of the re-telling, it is argued that these might be subject positions that narrators were placed in as a child (Hiles, 2007) as a result of the long-term parental and societal normalizing discourses that surrounded them.

Additionally, it is argued that as a result of any type of victimization, two core aspects of self-concept – mastery and self-esteem – could be affected (Turner, Finklehor &

Ormrod, 2010). Mastery is related to the idea of personal agency – that is, the extent to which one perceives causality in relation to life events (Turner & Roszell, 1994). As such, Turner, Finklehor and Ormrod (2010) argue that childhood victimization is more likely to be perceived by children as explicitly reflecting negative self-qualities and personal incompetence. In the case of childhood sibling bullying, being invalidated by a sibling may lead to negative self-evaluations and a perceived sense of inferiority as a result of the consistent and continual abuse of power. Consequently, some narrators in this study may have internalised and maintained their positions from childhood and therefore were more likely to perceive and position themselves as responsible for the event.

Moreover, how sibling bullying is perceived and defined by someone will vary within culture and context. For example, Rapoza, Cook, Zaveri and Malley-Morrison (2010) studied ethnic perspectives of sibling abuse across six different groups found within the United States (Hispanic, Asian Pacific, South Asian, Native Americans, African Americans and European Americans). The results found that a general pattern for all ethnic groups, except for the Asian Pacific Americans, was to list forms of physical aggression as examples of extreme abuse (Rapoza et al, 2010). Asian Pacific Americans equated physical aggression (e.g. beating and hitting) with mild abuse. However, in regards to psychological aggression (e.g. teasing, yelling, verbal aggression, harsh words) Asian Pacific individuals perceived these behaviours as examples of extreme abuse, whereas other groups characterised these as more mild forms of abuse. It is suggested that how sibling interactions are perceived by the person and/or family may depend on whether the act represents a violation of inter-cultural norms and values (Rapoza et al., 2010). Furthermore, Segal (1999) notes that in Indian cultures, traditional norms and patriarchal structures often condone family

and violence. As such, sibling bullying or victimization may not be perceived by the family as an issue to recognise. Segal (1999) argues that the traditional perspective of brothers serving as protectors for their sisters can often reinforce and justify sibling aggression.

The nature of the sibling relationship. In contrast to friendships, sibling relations during childhood are involuntary (Recchia, Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2013). This means that conflict may pose fewer risks for siblings than friends because there is no danger in ending the relationship altogether (Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Dunn (1984) explains that there is a “devastating lack of inhibition” (Dunn, 1984, p.11) with siblings in regards to emotional expression and as Punch (2008) found in her interviews with children, “you can do nasty things to your brothers and sisters without reason” (Punch, 2008, p. 336). As such, some of the research demonstrates that the nature of the sibling relationship is one that is unique, dynamic and can be set apart from other interpersonal relationships.

Narrators’ *fabula* and *sjuzet* from the current study support these ideas as narrators spoke passionately about the pervasiveness of the sibling relationship. *Fabula* offered a basic awareness of the significance of the sibling relationship, however narrators’ *sjuzet* offered a more reflective and compelling understanding of how adults perceived this relationship as a result of the sibling bullying. In particular, narrators discussed how experiences and judgements of harm are embedded in the context of their distinct relationship histories (Dunn, 1993). That is, narrators spoke about the significance of sharing the same space and family circumstances or being “products of the same situation”. It is possible that the interpersonal context – one’s shared history and motivations with a person – can mitigate the effects of the sibling bullying experience and perhaps even facilitate a sense of compassion and understanding for the bully

from the bullied sibling. Indeed, the results from this study support the argument that the sibling relationship is extremely dynamic in regards to their feelings and interactions with one another (Lucey, 2010). Furthermore, some narrators could identify their siblings as a source of support in adulthood, once the bullying had ceased. Ashley explained that her brother was the only person she felt comfortable talking to about family issues; reinforcing the idea that shared family histories can be binding.

As such, at some point during their re-telling all narrators perceived their bullying experience to be connected to, and a consequence of, their wider, cultural and familial contexts that they shared with their sibling. For example, Amy, Sharon and Lisa particularly emphasized the lack of discipline within their homes, parental discord, neglect and parental violence as contributing to their siblings' behaviour. Moreover, positioning their siblings' behaviour in this way, as a response to the circumstances surrounding them, may allow them to bypass not only internal blame, but sibling blame, aiding acceptance and integration of experience. As Herman (2001, p.103) notes, after a distressing or traumatic event, people must "construct a system of meaning that justifies it" in an attempt to assimilate their experience.

Narrators' positioning and understanding of their experiences in this way is supported by the literature; Hoffman and Edwards (2004) offer their integrated theoretical model of sibling violence as a perspective for understanding sibling victimization. Inherent in their model is the assumption that childhood sibling bullying or victimization is a result of negative interactions within multiple contexts, such as the environment the child is located in, parental interactions, the family's social position and wider attitudes towards sibling violence. As such, one of the theories the model draws upon is social learning theory, which explains that behaviour is learned predominantly

through imitation and reinforcement (Bandura, 1969). In the context of sibling bullying, Hoffman and Edwards (2004) maintain that experiencing and witnessing verbal conflict, violence and abuse by parents is likely to have considerable influence on negative sibling behaviour. Indeed, as Lisa, Amy and Sharon explain, their parents' use of physical aggression as communication and punishment offered a model to their sibling of how to behave towards them.

Moreover, narrators spoke about their parents experiencing high levels of stress during their childhood and feeling unhappy in their relationships. Andrew and Amy note that their parents were either unengaged or overwhelmed in their childhoods and Sharon and Lisa explain that family circumstances meant their needs were ignored or neglected. Again from social learning perspective, Hoffman and Edwards (2004) maintain that parental dissatisfaction and high stress can inadvertently decrease the quality of the parent-child relationship, which reduces feelings of positive affect and emotional closeness between them. As a result, siblings may become violent or conflictual with one another due to their emotional needs not being met.

Nonetheless, social learning theories do not consider the social context of the sibling relationship nor the influences from the wider, macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that siblings are situated in. Consequently, Hoffman and Edwards' model also emphasises the importance of considering the family's social position as a moderator for sibling violence and conflict. Narrators Sharon and Lisa chose to reflect on their family's income and poverty within their re-telling, as they incorporated this into their understanding of their experience. It is argued that poverty can make it more difficult to parent well due to the increased strain and stress on family relationships (Rutter, 1999), which may in turn lead to issues that have already been discussed in regards to precipitators for sibling bullying. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1979)

also explains that a person's macrosystem, that is societal embedded belief systems, customs and life-styles, will have direct effect on a person's interpersonal relations, social roles and developmental processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). As such, societal beliefs and values in regards to sibling relationships, as previously discussed, will have an impact on how sibling bullying manifests itself and is responded to.

Additionally, narrators' also positioned their sibling bullying experiences more dynamically. In particular, Mark and Amy positioned their siblings' behaviour to be emotionally driven; that is, their sibling was seen to be projecting or transmitting their negative feelings onto them, as a result of the turmoil and conflict that was occurring within the family. A study by Recchia, Wainryb and Pasupathi (2013) supports this idea; they examined children's and adolescents' narrative accounts of harm against friends and younger siblings and found that children described their harmful actions against siblings as driven by anger or a lack of control (Recchia et al., 2013). As such, the Kleinian (1952a) concept of projection can be considered in relation to the nature of sibling relationships. Siblings may project, or give out, their more difficult feelings onto one another in an attempt to manage them. In the case of sibling bullying, the bullied sibling becomes the recipient of the bully's projections, which may be feelings of anger, envy and/or aggression. Furthermore, closely related to projection is Sigmund Freud's concept of displacement, which involves shifting an aggressive or anxiety provoking emotion onto another person in an attempt to avoid it (Strachey & Gay, 1995). Thus, displacement of hostility and hate upon the sibling can be a defence mechanism that is implemented by the bully sibling in order to get rid of their hostile feelings that are difficult to control (Agger, 1988).

As narrators explain, these hostile and aggressive feelings from the sibling need to be understood within the context in which they are produced. Indeed, Bank and Khan

maintain that sibling aggression is “internal, having to do with a forbidden satisfaction or the fulfilment of a deeper emotional need” (1982, p. 197). The latter part of this quote is particularly relevant, as Sharon and Lisa both make reference to their neglectful and emotionally unavailable parents as a reason for their siblings’ bullying behaviour (“no children were loved in that family. We were all fighting for love” *Sharon*).

In addition to the idea of projection, the concept of projective identification (Klein, 1952a) could also be considered in relation to narrators’ positioning of themselves in their re-telling of their experiences. Projective identification is when one persons’ projections or feelings about themselves are taken in and, by consequence, fully identified with by the other person. That is, the recipient of the projections, in this case the bullied sibling, may completely endorse the qualities and characteristics that the other sibling passes onto them. This means that the sibling may be unconsciously manoeuvred into not only enacting these projections (Edwards et al., 2006), but *positioning* themselves in accordance with these projected feelings, states and characteristics. This process is exemplified in narrators’ *sjuzet* descriptions of their subject positions; for example, Andrew’s sense of inferiority and powerlessness and Sally’s apathy and sense of injustice may be a result of their siblings’ un-tolerable subject positions that they have endorsed instead.

Lastly, although narrators emphasised the significance of the sibling relationship and the sense of connectedness that they felt, analysis of *sjuzet* indicated how some narrators also positioned themselves as being different from their sibling. For Lisa this was more subtle, whereas for Mark his *sjuzet* communicated clearly that he felt he was different to his brother. Despite the shared knowledge, time and space, these narrators differentiated themselves from their siblings in regards to their identities. Benjamin

(1995) explains that the recognition of sameness may at times be painful to acknowledge; particularly in the case of sibling bullying, narrators saw undesirable characteristics in their sibling that they did not want to identify in themselves. As such, one way of managing this experience is to position oneself as different or to de-identify with the sibling (Schacter, 1982) in order to ease the feelings of tension and anger that may arise from identification.

Impact of experience on narrative identity. Narrative identity refers to an individual's internalised, evolving and integrative story of the self (McAdams, 2008). People begin to construct stories about themselves in adolescence and young adulthood and continue to work on these stories across the life course (Birren, Kenyon, Ruth, Shroots & Svendsen, 1996; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1985). It is through these stories that people reflect and integrate the reconstructed past and the anticipated future, providing them with some sense of unity and purpose, facilitating narrative identity development (McAdams, 1985; 2003). Indeed, sense making is always retrospective and reconstructed, as meanings of life events are not fixed or constant, but evolve, influenced by subsequent life events (Riessman, 2000). Furthermore, people participate in the construction of their own identities using their narrative intelligence (Ricoeur, 1987; Hiles, 2007). That is, ontologically it is argued that people can take an active approach to their identity. Whilst what people choose to include in their narrative identity and how it is constructed will be influenced by their socio-cultural resources, how people position themselves in relation to their socio-cultural resources is also essential to understanding identity construction (Hiles, 2007). Neimeyer (1995, p.231) maintains that "in some sense each of us is the 'author' of our experience"; such that the *way* in which people tell their story, the *way* in which they position themselves and others and the *way* people choose what matters to them in

their re-telling is evidence of narrative intelligence at work. As a consequence, people are actively engaging in their own meaning-making by relating successive parts of their lives to a whole (Hiles, 2007).

Bruner (1990) argues that stories are the natural mode through which human beings make sense of their lives through time. Moreover, stories can restore a sense of order following a disruption (Murray, 2003). Indeed, how do adults reflect on and try to integrate their stories of being bullied by a sibling into their narrative identity has been a key question guiding this current study. It is maintained that being bullied by a sibling is a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern (Bruner, 1990), therefore can be experienced by a person as a disruption or rupture in their narrative identity, which needs to be integrated.

Analysis of narrator *sjuzet* in particular provides some access to understanding how adults are attempting to make sense of their experiences and integrate them into their narrative identity. For example, Sally and Sharon fluctuate in their understanding of how they feel about their experience of being bullied by their sibling. For Sally, her dominant, *fabula* story of apathy or not caring is contradicted by her *sjuzet*, which subtly illustrates her more active position. Within her re-telling Sally is battling with the tension between her childhood, apathetic position and her more agential adult, identity position as she attempts to find meaning in her experience. It is possible that, in that particular moment of re-telling, Sally was negotiating her narrative identity, trying to reposition herself and others in her network of relationships (Mishler, 1999b).

For Sharon there is a concord and discord of stories as she tries to make sense of her sister's bullying. Her *fabula* demonstrates compassion and understanding, however her *sjuzet* offers a more nuanced representation as she fluctuates between compassion and

exasperation with her sister's behaviour. There is also a very subtle portrayal of anger from her sjuzet ("after 7, 8 years you should start realising"), however this is quickly overridden by the majority of her sjuzet that offers empathy and is emancipatory. A similar pattern exists for Amy as she finds it difficult to express her more negative thoughts and feelings in regards to how "horrible" her brother was to her. It could be that this is too painful, as indicated by the tension in her sjuzet in the form of long pauses and sighs.

These tensions for narrators could be indicative of how these adults are attempting to restore order in the aftermath of a disruption, gain control of their present lives and find meaning in their experience to incorporate into their narrative identities (Frank, 2010; Lieblich, McAdams & Josselson, 2004). In particular for Lisa, considering the context in which she grew up, coupled with her experiences of sibling bullying, it is possible that she has not yet developed an associated narrative incorporating all those experiences (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). In order to seek some relief from her early, difficult experiences, it may be that Lisa has needed to compartmentalise her experiences, which means her memory has stored the experiences as isolated fragments (Nemiah, 1998; Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1991). Consequently, she is not able to remember them as a story, but speaks about her experiences in a pragmatic and metaphorical way, without emotion. Indeed, Herman (2001) explains that an individual may remember everything about their upsetting experience in detail, but with no emotion.

Nevertheless, some narrators were able to retain and embrace the tension inherent in trying to understand their experiences of being bullied by a sibling. Mark's fabula hints that he has moved towards acceptance of his experience, nonetheless his sjuzet shows me how he has had to wrestle with his narrative identity as a result. There is

evidence of loss and confusion of identity (“what ARE you, you, doing? Are you going to be this victim in life or are you actually going to just (..) be you?”) and then there are small and significant ways in which his identity is retained and finally integrated (“this block of rock gets turned into you by your life”). Additionally, Andrew’s *sjuzet* is a wonderful example of how he has begun to understand that his sense of self and the range of roles available to him is never static, as he continues to tie together past, present and future (McAdams, 1985).

Various principles of psychotherapy emphasize the importance of processing distressing memories in order to aid story integration and identity reconstruction (Herman, 2001; Puvimanasinghe, Denson, Augoustinos & Somasundaram, 2014). It is possible, that after an event occurs, the memories can be suppressed for a long time, both at an individual level and societally (Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014). Thus, people may not develop the language to form stories about their experiences (Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014). Often distressing experiences are not remembered purely as a story or as a history of events, but as images, sounds or affective states, which may be more easily described in metaphor than with the linguistic resources available. These ideas are supported with the results of the current study. It appeared that narrators’ phenomenological experience went beyond that of which could be expressed with words, as demonstrated by the frequent breaking of speech, long pauses, deep breaths, use of de-intensifiers and metaphor.

It is postulated that emotional distress associated with difficult experiences interferes with memory, preventing the integration of associated memories (Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014; Van der Kolk, 2004; Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). This is particularly illustrated in Ashley’s re-telling; when asked to describe her experience of being bullied by her sibling, she is unable to describe coherently, with language, the felt

reality of her experience. She very much tries to recount her experience, but she cannot place the memories with words, so instead her *sjuzet* plays a crucial role in her re-telling, offering sensations and images. Similarly for Sally, when pressed about her experience, she is unable to offer particular emotional labels for her experience and many of my questions were met with silences. These silences and blank spaces within re-telling may indicate that there are suppressed or untold stories that are not yet ready to be revived and integrated into Sally's narrative identity (Ghorashi, 2008; Sorsoli, 2010). Indeed, if sharing her experiences also means that these will reflect negatively upon her self-identity and self-worth, the tendency may be to avoid or repress these stories even further (Tankink & Richters, 2007).

Attending to co-construction. Although the agency of the teller is central to composing stories, so are the actions of others as the researcher creates and recreates voices over and over again during the research process (Riessman, 1993). It would be disingenuous to assert that what is represented by the results of this study is the 'truth' of the narrators' experience or illustrates the reality of their experience of being bullied by a sibling. It is argued that these results are in fact my understanding of narrators' experience, based on co-construction between listener and narrator, however influenced by my biases, aims and positioning. In her paper regarding the ethical attitude in narrative research, Josselson (2007) argues that every aspect of the work is touched by the ethics of the research relationship; therefore, the researcher must be transparent about the circumstances under which knowledge is created. This is further supported by Riessman (2000) as she maintains that the representations and boundaries we choose within our analysis are strongly influenced by our evolving theories, disciplinary preferences and research questions (Riessman, 2000). Consequently, I hope that throughout this thesis I have accomplished a level of

transparency in regards to my subjective interpretations of the narrators' experiences that I have endeavoured to represent. Indeed, this study offers a version of narrators' reality as it feels to them *and* as it has been experienced by me.

4.03 Methodological Considerations

Design strengths. A key strength of this study is its explicit and detailed epistemological positioning and the thorough consideration given to the importance and implications of epistemology for the rest of the study. Willig's (2012) three questions initiated this process, which led me to a position of epistemological pluralism (see pp. 46-47). The priorities of this study were to gain an understanding of how adults make sense of their experiences of being bullied by a sibling; perhaps unlike some other qualitative studies, this study argues that this needs to be considered from a more holistic epistemological frame. Thus, assumptions about knowledge were informed by a rainbow of approaches; specifically, this study argues that multiple and overlapping fibres such as phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches to knowledge give strength to the particular thread of social constructionism. As such, it has been maintained throughout this study that both the socio-cultural environment and the participatory and creative inner world of narrators should be incorporated when attempting to analyse lived experience (Hiles & Cermák, 2008).

This pluralistic approach to knowledge consequently informed the way adult narratives were transcribed and analysed. The chosen method of Narrative Orientated Inquiry is a strength of the study as it privileges epistemological pluralism, and therefore allows for a comprehensive analysis. In particular, it prioritizes the analysis of both content and form as a way of considering how experience is understood and experienced. That is, the emphasis on Herman and Vervaeck's (2001) *fabula* and *sjuzet* to guide the interpretation of experience is fundamental in allowing researchers

to consider how people take a participatory approach to their lives. Although methodologies such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Discourse Analysis consider the fact that we live in a discursive environment that positions us as subjects, these methods have a less developed way of describing how people engage in their own process of autobiographical reasoning (McAdams, 2008). People seek to derive meanings from particular experiences in life (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) as an attempt of personal integration. They do this through the active construction of their stories – the positioning of themselves and others – and by the linguistic features they chose to use. Furthermore, a method of analysis that is attuned to positioning also inevitably offers the opportunity to reflectively integrate one's own position into the analysis (Ruppel & Mey, 2015).

Another strength of this study is considered within the criticisms of previous research in relation to siblings. Literature investigating the nature of sibling relationships (McHale et al., 2012), studies examining sibling bullying experiences and associations with later, psychological development (Bowes et al., 2014; Dunn, Slomkowski, et al., 1994) and the qualitative studies on sibling bullying (Meyers, 2014; McDonald & Martinez, 2015) have all noted that the lack of an ethnically diverse sample is a significant limitation to their studies. It is positive that the current study was able to gain perspectives from narrators who originated from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, albeit these perspectives will of course not represent racial norms. Indeed, differential experiences and different cultural values affect judgements concerning sibling violence and bullying in both society and family (Rapoza et al., 2010).

Design limitations. The current study deliberately chose to not provide a definition of sibling bullying. Although this is still considered a strength of the study,

it is necessary to also recognise the limitations to this decision. Perhaps if a precise and concise definition was provided, more people would have participated in the study or identified themselves as being bullied by a sibling. As previous research has demonstrated (Kettrey & Emery, 2006), the socio-cultural dominant discourse related to sibling bullying often renders the issue as invisible or an act that is both accepted and expected. Thus, by not providing a definition it is possible that people may have had difficulties qualifying their experience. Additionally, it could be argued that choosing to label people's experience as sibling bullying continues to normalize the experience through language, whereas sibling violence may have been more appropriate. However, Foucault warns that we must be alert to how our explanations and diagnoses could lead to further subjugation (Gergen & Gergen, 2003) and by defining and labelling people's experiences for them, I would have been reinforcing my perceptions and position on subjective experience.

The current study is limited by its small sample size and the fact that only two males took part. However, the aim of the study was not to be representative of all adults who had experienced childhood sibling bullying and provide an authentic truth.

Additionally, this study did not utilise the technique of respondent validation to validate the results. However, due to the epistemological assumption that the results produced within this thesis have been interpreted by the researcher (Josselson, 2007), this technique did not seem consistent with the research paradigm. Indeed, Barbour (2001) argues that respondent validation does not, in itself, confer rigour; it can strengthen the rigour of qualitative research only if it is embedded in a broad understanding of the research design and analysis (Barbour, 2001).

The retrospective nature of the current study could be seen as a limitation, due to the fact that people's perceptions and recollection of experiences will have inevitably

changed over time. However, retrospective recall is integral to the method of narrative analysis, since its primary focus is related to how events are reconstructed and interpreted after an event. The methodology privileges sense-making, which is a retrospective process; as people access and make sense of events and experiences in their pasts, they begin to relate them to their current selves, changing their meanings as they go (Mishler, 1999b). Moreover, part of the sense making process involves telling different versions of stories to different audiences, and therefore this unravelling process is considered extremely important within the method of narrative analysis.

Methodological rigour. This qualitative study has attempted to demonstrate rigour in various ways (see also section 2.06). Indeed, by providing verbatim quotes of both narrator and listener, I have been able to provide contextual detail and persuasiveness for my interpretations and conclusions. This study has also attended to both the content and form of narrator's stories, which has allowed for not only a detailed analysis, but also a more holistic examination of mean-making. To increase this study's reliability I have also systematically outlined the steps involved in the transcribing, analysing and interpreting processes, whilst offering a critical lens upon these. Additionally, reflexive memos between myself and supervisor have been key to achieving methodological rigour, as they have offered transparency in regards to decision making. These memos have also highlighted some of the complexities that exist within qualitative research; for example, the implications of inter-subjectivity have been discussed and this is a key consideration within the findings and conclusions of the study.

4.04 Clinical Implications

It is hoped that the current study has highlighted the significance of the sibling relationship in regards to attachment processes, psychological development and identity formation. As supported by the literature, the results of this study demonstrate that the sibling relationship can be significant to how our identities and sense of self are formed (Davies, 2014). Psychological theory has tended to focus inter-generationally on the role of others, particularly parents, in shaping who we are and who we can become, however it is argued that it is the lateral nature of sibling relationships that makes them so important for shaping the self (Davies, 2014).

Consequently, it is argued that the nature of sibling relationships should be considered and included within clinical, psychological assessment and formulation. Although systemic family therapies advocate for the inclusion of all members of a person's family to be considered within the formulation of a presenting clinical issue, it is unlikely that the sibling relationship will be explored in regards to possible feelings of invalidation and violence. Therefore it is argued that clinical assessment must be broadened to include questions about the phenomenological experience of the sibling relationship, in order to ascertain how this relationship was perceived and understood by the person. Sibling relationships are where many people directly learn some of the basics about who they are – or who they dare not to be – as people (Moser et al., 2005). Unravelling this relationship with someone may lead to a more comprehensive formulation of their psychological difficulties related to identity formation. Moreover, labelling oneself as being bullied by a sibling may be associated with feelings of shame as a result of evaluating oneself as inferior. Thus, it is important that professionals consider and be mindful of such processes that may be prevalent for

someone who has been bullied by a sibling and consider this in their approach to assessment.

Additionally, some of the literature applied to the results of this study originate from research on post traumatic responses and reactions (Herman, 2001). Whilst the findings from this study do not go as far as to argue that being bullied by a sibling could lead to symptoms akin to post trauma, it has been important to consider this literature in regards to the processes of assimilation and integration in the disruption of one's narrative identity. As Herman (1992) maintains, it is important that formulation captures the protean sequelae of prolonged, repeated distress in order to aid sense making and validation for that person.

The findings also advocate for the concept of sibling transference to be considered within the therapeutic process. This idea is supported by Coles (2003), who maintains that there is a relationship between a harsh superego and past experience of sibling cruelty. Coles (2003) asserts that within his clinical work he has experienced the nature of the sibling transference, whereby a cruel sibling has been internalised. A sibling transference can play a crucial part in understanding unconscious conflicts, therefore exploring and engaging with it may allow for movement within a therapy that was previously feeling stuck (Coles, 2003). Once again, this idea of sibling transference suggests that parent-child dynamics are not the only influence on psychic development.

It is hoped that as a result of this study, conversations about sibling bullying can be initiated not only clinically, but also within the wider community. This study has highlighted some of the ways in which people talk about sibling bullying and the attitudes towards it, which affect the legitimization of bullying in families (Kettrey &

Emery, 2006). As such, in order for a new discourse to emerge, the existing discourse must be identified and challenged (Kettrey & Emery, 2006). Raising awareness of this topic is a first and important step in this endeavour and it is suggested that awareness and prevention programmes within mental health settings and/or school settings could be of benefit in continuing to challenge the perceived acceptability of sibling bullying. By offering parents and professionals an opportunity to consider the implications of sibling bullying within their settings, this could in turn allow for early detection and intervention of a potential sibling bullying issue.

4.05 Future Research

The current study has been successful in the aim of extending Meyers' (2014) study and considering empirically what it means to be bullied by a sibling. That is, the primary focus of this study was to explore how people reflect on and synthesize multiple events in their lives, negotiate tension in their stories and construct a coherent configuration of experience as it makes sense to them (Ricoeur, 1987/1991).

Considering the emerging literature and interest in the nature of sibling relationships, future research would benefit from further in-depth qualitative research in regards to the perceived impact that negative sibling interactions can have. Furthermore, the normalization of sibling bullying or victimization is another research area in itself that warrants further exploration and de-constructing.

Future research could extend the current study in a variety of ways, most particularly with a larger sample that provides a more diverse selection of narrators in relation to gender, class and racial background. It is recognised that age, gender and culture impact upon children's sibling experiences in various ways and although not the focus of the current study, further research in regards to the interaction of these factors could

be advantageous. Nonetheless, this study did recruit adults from varying racial backgrounds, however in relation to the sample size, this is still relatively small. Perceptions of sibling bullying and issues related to definition within various racial groups is also an issue for further research.

This study focussed on the stories told by those who were bullied by a sibling in childhood and as such, the perceptions of the bullies has been missed. This is a significant avenue for future research; quantitatively there has been some exploration of bullies' perceptions (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013), which yielded some thought-provoking results. For example, 72% of respondents reported being both a bully and victim of sibling bullying (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). This could indicate that further research could be done to examine the stories of bullies and those bullied, to gain a sense of whether there is an overlap of experience or if negative perceptions differ between the different groups.

4.06 Personal Reflections

By completing this thesis, I feel I have succeeded in providing various perspectives – the multiple realities – of an experience that is not often spoken about. I feel I have been able to offer versions of reality for seven adults who perceived themselves to have been bullied by their sibling(s) in childhood and, as such, I have been able to contribute to a broadening of understanding of a neglected research topic.

Nevertheless, this task was not without its challenges, particularly in regards to decision making within epistemology, the narrative interviews, process of analysis and discussing the findings in relation to literature. In order to help me with these processes, I kept a reflective log of my thoughts and feelings throughout.

I initially struggled with the various options available to me within narrative analysis methodology and, looking back, I can see that I did not understand this two-way process that exists between epistemology and methodology choice. Consequently, I went on my journey of establishing my assumptions about knowledge, and it was my epistemological positioning that I continually referred back to when presented with conflicts, barriers and confusion within the processes of this study. Grounding myself in epistemology facilitated difficult decision making.

However, something that I have felt and noted throughout my experience is that there is both a feeling, and an emergent understanding of uncertainty inherent in the qualitative research process. I realised that methodology guidance and language can only get you so far; when emerged in the live and nuanced lived experiences of people, my interpretations extended beyond those detailed by authors and words could not always portray what felt necessary. I had to learn to tolerate this tension and uncertainty as I attempted to represent experience informed by both the literature and my biases, assumptions and intuition. A methodological example of this was when I was attempting to separate fabula and sjuzet – although following a procedure, this process felt subjective and was guided by *my* understanding of what these concepts represented. Additionally, I felt clumsy when trying to separately analyse fabula and sjuzet, as it did not go as ‘smoothly’ as conveyed in the literature. It felt inevitable that fabula and sjuzet would overlap and that they needed to be analysed alongside one another. During these moments it was particularly important that I continued to refer back to my original material, the raw transcripts, in order to contextualise my interpretations and manage the tensions in the process.

There were also times during the interviews and analysis that I felt strong emotional reactions in response narrators’ stories. I made notes of the emotions that I was feeling

in order to be aware of them during analysis and interpretation, as I often left the interviews with feelings of sadness or anger. Again, this experience led me to realise that part of a researcher's role is to hold the inherent uncertainty for the participant, as they realise the expansive journey of the qualitative interview. Indeed, there were details that I found difficult to listen to and there were moments within the interviews when I felt my words failed me. I felt the tension of having to negotiate my role as researcher, but also having the identity of a trainee clinical psychologist.

My assumptions about families, bullying, siblings and emotional expression strongly came to the fore during the interviews, considerably more than I had anticipated. I was particularly aware of my prejudices related to family structuring and family violence and I was forced to sit with the feelings associated with these. Again, I had to keep note of these strong reactions. I also had to be aware of how my feelings were likely guiding my reactions to experience and my consequent, probing questions.

4.07 Conclusions

According to Winfrey (1993, p.66), "whether a tease turns out to be humorous or demeaning depends in part on how the target reacts". This study attempted to explore adults' subjective experiences of being bullied by a sibling in childhood – how and what did adults perceive and describe as their experiences and particularly, how did they make sense of their experience through processes of integration into their narrative identity? The current study emphasised what Sartre (1943) explains as, 'the potential to invent ourselves'; and narrators' fabula and sjuzet were analysed to ascertain how adults positioned themselves and others in relation to their chosen stories of sibling bullying.

The results firstly highlighted the nuances involved in defining and legitimizing sibling bullying experiences and as a result, provides scope for further research in this area. Secondly, perhaps different from the previous, quantitative studies, the nature of the sibling relationship was considered from the perspective of the narrators, with specific interest in how they positioned and integrated this relationship in adulthood, as a result of the bullying. Finally, the results offered evidence for Ricoeur's (1987) narrative intelligence; such that people were able create, compromise, celebrate and configure who they were as they actively participated in the construction of their narrative identities through their re-telling (Hiles, 2007). Inevitably, these stories were filtered by my biases and assumptions and it is argued that what is represented by this study is a version of narrators' reality as felt by them, and experienced by myself.

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Appendix A

Literature Review Search Terms

CINAHL Plus with Full Text, E-Journals, MEDLINE with Full Text, PsycARTICLES

Search run: January 23rd 2016

All years

Quantitative Search

1	Sibling bullying OR sibling aggression OR sibling victimization OR sibling abuse	957
2	Psychological impact OR psychological adjustment	30, 605
3	#1 AND #2	7
4	Internalising problems OR anxiety and depression	183, 539
5	#1 AND #4	29
6	Externalizing problems	10, 791
7	#1 AND #6	20

Qualitative Search

	Search term	Results
	Searched on	
1	Phenomen* OR narrative OR experience OR “lived experience” OR hermeneutics	3,032,419
2	sibling bullying OR sibling victimization OR sibling abuse OR sibling aggression	957
3	#1 AND #2	209
4	Limiters: Methodology: qualitative study	13

Appendix B

Epistemology memo: August 2nd 2015

Hi Peter,

I have spent a lot of time reading Lock and Strong's book, trying to get an adequate view on their rainbow of approaches! I am still in the process of reading the Wittgenstein chapter, however these are my thoughts so far. I have also managed to read the Introduction of Packer's book (I found part of it online, but couldn't read anymore after the Intro so will get the book from the Library on Tuesday).

- 1) It is becoming clearer and clearer to me that my thesis straddles various epistemological positions. I think adding and expanding Willig's diagram is still the best way forward with the poster. Upon reading the beginnings of Packer, this paragraph jumped out at me and, I feel, sums up what we are thinking about for the poster/paper: (pg.13)

To some degree qualitative research has succeeded in adopting a different attitude, one which Habermas calls (rather misleadingly) a "practical" interest: an interest in understanding other people. This is certainly an admirable goal, but one of the points I will make in this book is that too often this understanding has been based on the reduction of others to the status of objects for objective observation. Studying humans as objects – albeit complex and sophisticated objects – is not the same as studying humans as beings who live in particular cultural and historical forms of life, and who are made and make themselves as specific kinds of subjects. What we need is a human science that is able to grasp this "constitution." Such a science would not abandon objectivity in favor of relativism, either epistemological or cultural. Rather, it would adopt a moral and epistemological pluralism, resting on what has been called a "plural realism" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 262).

Am I right in thinking that we are also advocating for this idea of epistemological pluralism?

- 2) In regards to the unpacking of social constructionism and Willig's diagram and adding our 'threads', I feel that phenomenology is relevant (e.g. Alfred

Schutz), hermeneutics (e.g. Paul Ricoeur) and Wittgenstein. It appears, from what I have read, that these three approaches to meaning making and language overlap with one another. They all seem to prioritise the relational aspects of meaning making and the creative and intersubjective use of language.

- 3) In particular I think the work of Ricoeur is important as I think he describes the ontological position of narrative work. If you get a chance to read the Ricoeur section in Lock and Strong it explains it better than I can at the moment I think! (Chapter 4). Would be useful to discuss this further with you on Tuesday?
- 4) Thanks so much for the nudge towards Levinas. Really relevant and am I right in thinking that he is accentuating the idea that meaning is co-constructed? And to deny this, or to not open ourselves to this ‘otherness’ is unethical and we risk narrow-mindedness and reductionist ways of meaning making?
- 5) In terms of the poster I think I have some ideas going forward with the unpacking of Willig’s diagram... However on another note, I now feel quite confused in regards to the chosen method of my data analysis! I know this is for another conversation, but as a result of thinking about this rainbow of epistemological positions and approaches to social constructionism, I am now wondering which method of analysis best ‘fits’ with my position(s)? If I am advocating for epistemological pluralism, what does that mean for the chosen methodology?! I still think a narrative inquiry is the way forward, however I am now questioning whether Bell’s method is consistent with the above? I’m not sure, maybe it is still fine, but perhaps we can make a note to speak about this on Tuesday or a separate supervision.
- 6) Following on, I think in regards to the above questions, it is useful for me to go back to what are the aims of my study? If my aims are narrative-based, giving ‘voice’ to people’s stories and being curious about how people recount stories about themselves and make meaning from them, then this needs to guide my analysis?

See you Tuesday! Zara

Appendix B

9th and 21st July 2015

Epistemology poster

Dear Zara

A few thoughts / clarifications since the supervision meeting:

1. The four section poster you have suggested looks good;
2. In section 3 we provisionally develop Willig's Figure 1.1 in her 2012 chapter in several ways:
 - a. Each of the primary categories (i.e. realist, phenomenological, social con) refers, for us, to a **range / rainbow** of different approaches (this is also acknowledged in Willig's text, e.g. she uses subtitles of *varieties* of e.g. realist knowledge, but the Figure uses dichotomies);
 - b. These ranges or varieties **overlap** one with another (also partially acknowledged in Willig's text e.g. moderate social constructionist approaches are regarded as having an affinity with critical realism (p. 12)) in ways not shown in the Figure;
 - c. We use **social constructionism** as an example of the above range and overlap, specifically in relation to your research, picking out or unpacking the elements of social constructionism that pertain to your research questions and methods and analysis, and of course some of these may cross-reference / overlap to / with the other major approaches (e.g. possibly certain aspects of phenomenology);
 - d. To do this we use both Lock and Strong's edited book, and Burr's book, linking these works on **range** within social constructionism with your specific study;
 - e. We also add something to Willig's model of variety by arguing that the overlapping threads of each epistemological approach can be regarded as showing '**family resemblances**' in Wittgenstein's sense (see also my previous ramblings, on Wittgenstein);
 - f. We also add something to Willig's model by arguing that a particular study (such as yours) may find itself using **several specific** and identifiable threads, perhaps mainly from one overall category (e.g. social constructionism) but also with shared (I mean shared!!) threads from a different overall category (e.g. phenomenology);
3. I mentioned Emmanuel Levinas in the context of your wanting to ensure that **ethics** is included in the epistemological thinking. His work is briefly discussed by Lock and Strong (pages 79-80), helpfully outlining his very particular contribution to ethics, and his approach to deep appreciation / evocation of others and otherness, and to language. His work is also relevant to

the emphasis in our paper on overlapping of epistemological approaches, I think, in that he (Levinas) regarded himself as a phenomenologist, being faithful to the spirit of Husserl, yet his work is included by Lock and Strong in their chapter on hermeneutics / meaning / language;

4. I guess another aspect of epistemology that is relevant to your study, and is perhaps not given emphasis by Willig, is feminist epistemology, which has focused on ‘situated knowing’, and on the role of values in epistemology, and which is surely linked to ‘social constructionism’, and provides several major and relevant threads:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-epistemology/>

5. In the ‘journey’ in section 4, linking to each of the three points you’ve mentioned (double hermeneutic; the uses of language in all its forms; ethics) I wonder if the idea of **consent** might be one of the threads and ways forward. Packer (Packer, 2011) critiques the conduit model of language in qualitative analysis, the idea that meaning has fixed reference points, or names, which become themes or categories, as if ontologically fixed, rather than constructed between people. In her work on informed consent Onora O’Neill (Manson & O’Neill, 2007) also discusses the conduit model of language, as applied to informed consent. She argues that conveyance and transfer of, and access to, ‘information’, are metaphors we often use, as if knowledge is non-negotiable, or non-situated to individual person’s positions and situations. These points cross-reference to late Wittgenstein, which emphasises situated and contextual use of language (see previous ramble).

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- Packer, Martin. (2011). *The Science of Qualitative Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix C

WILLIG'S QUESTIONS

① What kind of knowledge do I aim to create?

↙
continually
changing

↘ multiple realities

→ No truth

→ Identity as
stories

INTERSUBJECTIVE

② What are the assumptions that I make about the (material, social and psychological) world(s)?

↳ people participate in their reality construction

↳ Multiple selves, continually changing
as a result of socio-cultural environment
and experiences of the person

↳ multiple threads to define knowledge.

→ people's experiences are a felt reality

③ How do I conceptualize the role of the researcher in the research process? What is the relationship between myself and the knowledge I generate?

~~Water~~ * Co-construction - active in construction of
stories and the research

* stories will be filtered by researchers' assumptions/values/beliefs.

Appendix D

Negotiating an Epistemological Position within Narrative Inquiry Research: The story so far from a Trainee Clinical Psychologist

XXXXX XXXXXX and XXXX XXXXX
University of Essex

Summary of topic: Childhood Sibling Bullying

Sibling attachment is a key psychological process that is often overlooked, with research focusing on the mother-child dyad.

How individuals come to understand and manage their sibling relationships forms an important milestone within child development. Rowe (2007) in her extensive work and observations of sibling relationships argued that siblings play a key role in the development of a person's sense of self. Sibling interaction patterns often act as a 'blue print' for future relationships (Dank, Dumston and Snyder, 2004).

The concept of sibling bullying is one that has also been under researched, particularly in a qualitative fashion. To date, there are no qualitative studies exploring adults' retrospective accounts of their childhood sibling bullying experiences.

As a result, this study aims to 'give voice' to these adult narratives. The researcher is curious about how individuals attribute meaning to their experiences and reconstruct the events in conjunction with the researcher. How do people view their experience in relation to their psychological development – e.g. feelings of self-efficacy, managing subsequent relationships?

What is Epistemology?

Epistemology is related to the particular philosophical framework that a research project subscribes to. Whatever the philosophical framework, there will be corresponding epistemological and ontological assumptions that guide the research paradigm (e.g. the research title, questions and methodology).

Epistemology refers to how knowledge is defined – it is concerned with how something can be known and how something exists.

Epistemology sets boundaries around knowledge and establishes its scope (Honderich, 1992), therefore defining what is accepted as knowledge in a core research activity (Truex and Ilgge, 2009).

How do we Negotiate?

Witig (2008; 2012) has provided some useful questions to 'consider' as a starting point to negotiating one's epistemological position within research:

- What kind of knowledge do I aim to create?
- What are the assumptions that I make about the (present, social and psychological) world(s)?
- How do I conceptualise the role of the researcher in the research process? What is the relationship between myself and the knowledge that I generate?

There are a range of possible answers to these questions that will predicate the kinds of assumptions researchers will make about the relationship between their data and the world.

Types of Knowledge

Witig (2012) offers a way of organising the types of knowledge researcher's aim to create. She groups knowledge into three broad approaches, Realist, Phenomenological and Social Constructionist.

However, Witig (2012) also explains that each major epistemological approach is part of a "family of approaches".

Perhaps it is this family of approaches that needs highlighting and expanding? Family of approaches is close to Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance, a concept discussed by Packer (2014) and see our quotation.

Epistemological Pluralism

Witig's Three Types of Knowledge diagram (2012) has been expanded by us.

Packer (2014) argues we must assume a new ontology for qualitative research, through epistemological pluralism.

We propose that, as researchers, we need to be more clear about our repertoire of approaches and how our assumptions about knowledge and reality overlap.

We attempt to demonstrate this in our expanded version of Witig's (2012) diagram. In bold are the epistemological strands most relevant to the current study.

References

Dank, L., Dumston, D. and Snyder, J. (2004). Sibling conflict and ineffective parenting as predictors of adolescent boys' antisocial behavior and peer difficulties: Additive and Interactional Effects. In C. Menesini, M. Camodeca & A. Nocentini (Eds.) *Bullying among siblings: the role of personality and relational variables*. British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 28, 621-639.

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Truex, T. and Ilgge, J. (2009). Framing research questions and writing philosophically. In J. Ilgge, D. Monette and S. Grace (eds), *Writing Qualitative Research on Practice*, 19-25.

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"And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres"
Wittgenstein, 1953



Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet

A NARRATIVE STUDY OF ADULTS' RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNTS OF CHILDHOOD SIBLING BULLYING EXPERIENCES

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you to take part. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

The information sheet tells you about the purpose of this study and what will happen if you decide to take part. The Consent Form gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study.

Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information on anything. Take the time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Study Aims and Interview Format

This study aims to explore people's experiences of sibling bullying in childhood. This will be done through an open interview where there will be several exploratory questions asked. These questions will invite the participant to tell their story; asking about when the bullying first happened and how the experience has impacted on their adult life. There will be 8 adult participants taking part who have also experienced sibling bullying in childhood.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will take place here at the University. The time of the interviews will be arranged to suit your individual circumstances and I will endeavour to be as flexible as possible. For the purposes of transcription, each interview will be audio-taped (for more information about this, please refer to the consent form).

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study and to compensate you for your time and effort all participants will receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

Benefits and Risks of Taking Part

It is hoped that the study may aid understanding in regards to the themes and issues related to childhood sibling bullying. It is hoped that by starting conversations with individuals who have experienced sibling bullying, this will trigger wider discussions about the topic. This could then help other individuals and professionals working in child/adult education and mental health services to address this issue more thoroughly.

I would also like to bring to your attention the fact that the interview may bring back difficult memories from your childhood that you may wish to discuss with a trained therapist. On the contact sheet enclosed you will find details of confidential support lines. The University also has counselling service based on the campus site.

Confidentiality

All information will be treated as confidential. Legal and ethical practise guidelines will be followed and all information about you will be handled in confidence. For more details please

refer to the Consent Form. If the information outlined here has interested you and you are considering participating, please read the Consent Form before making a final decision.

Appendix F

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:

DATE:

CURRENT AGE:

GENDER:

ETHNICITY:

AGE AT WHICH YOU WERE BULLIED:

AGE OF SIBLING AT THE TIME OF BULLYING:

GENDER OF SIBLING AT TIME OF BULLYING:

HOW MANY SIBLINGS DO YOU HAVE? WHERE DO YOU APPEAR IN THE BIRTH ORDER?

Appendix G

Interview Guide

- 1) INTRODUCTIONS
 - Confidentiality/tape recording permission
 - Format of interview
- 2) FAMILY CONTEXT
 - Can you tell me about your family? (When you were growing up)
 - Who was important to you in the family when growing up?
- 3) BULLYING BY A SIBLING IN CHILDHOOD
 - Can you describe to me your experience of being bullied by your sibling in childhood? (clarify physical or mental bullying, duration/frequency, context)
- 4) RESPONSE AND PERCEPTIONS
 - How did you understand what was happening to you?
 - Did you speak to others in the family about what happened to you? What were their reactions?
- 5) MANAGING
 - How did you deal with what happened to you (when you were younger)?
 - What did it mean to you to be bullied by your sibling?
- 6) IMPACT (ADULTHOOD IDENTITY)
 - How do you think your experiences of childhood sibling bullying have affected you?
 - a) RELATIONSHIPS – FAMILY, FRIENDS, ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS?
 - b) HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF – HOW HAS IT SHAPED YOU AS A PERSON?
- 7) RESOLUTION
 - Have your thoughts about your experience changed throughout the years?
 - How is your relationship with your sibling now?
- 8) INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE
 - Is this your first time talking about your experience? Was it easy or difficult to talk about?
 - How did it feel to discuss your experience knowing that our society that does not often speak about this particular issue?
 - How was the experience of being interviewed?

Appendix H – Example of dividing the transcript into fabula and sjuzet

Sharon

Interviewer: Could I ask you a bit about family first? I was wondering if you could describe your family for me?

1. *(laughter)* Well originally my family is, umm,
2. my family comes from Sri Lanka, and I was born in Italy and (..)
3. I'm the middle one of three children so I have an older sister, she's three years older than me, and a younger brother, he's seven years younger.
4. And (..) my parents got divorced about (..) ten years ago? I think it's actually even more, but anyway.
5. So right now it's my mum, my brother and me and then my sister got married so she um lives separately.
6. And (.) It's a very very dysfunctional family (laughter).
7. Right now it's quite good, uhh, but when my father was around it was really, really bad. And (..) umm, because he was,
8. well first of all they got married because they had to (..) she was pregnant so yeah. Annd so they were already not in love (laughter).
9. On top of that my father was very, very misogynistic annd very violent and just impossible to live with. Uh, my mum stupidly thought oh we'll stay with him for the children, like mum's do (laughter).
10. And then she realised that was stupid um and she decided to get a divorce finally so (..) we are all doing better now.
11. I used to be in contact with my father for a while, but then (.) it was just not, umm, it was really a pain (laugh) to have him around.
12. And he, didn't care much anymore.
13. So no one in my family is in contact with my father right now.
14. Except for my mum I think.
15. Aannndd, my sister got married when she was 18. So very young. She got married more for getting away from the family than anything (.)
16. And, so it was me and my brother for a long time.
17. Me and my brother have a very close relationship (..) and, with my sister we are a bit (.) separated I would say. We never really (..) got close to her (..) And I think that was due to the amount of bullying *(laughter)*. Yeah. And the more she would do that the more we would be, you know, keeping us just the two of us.
18. And when she left, it just felt like (.) uhhhh, there was no older sister cuz we always did everything on our own and when we needed her she just left so. So we were just on our own again.
19. So, with my sister the relationship is always (..) ummm. (laughter) Yeah.
20. We look after each other. I look after her. And my brother does. Because she's our sister. The thing is, we don't get much back. Cuz of her personality (laughter).
21. Soo, she was born in sri lanka. Annd my father left right after she was born, so she didn't really see my father much.

22. She was with my mum. And mum was just 16 when she had her and she was a terrible mother for a very long time (*laugh*) so you can imagine a little child with this mum, it was not good for her.
23. And then finally my dad came and then uhh, for her it was like (..) uhh, a dream coming true. This freedom away from mum, but then (.) of course my father wasn't a good person so it was even worse.
24. And (.) I was born (*laughter*). Yeah. As soon as she went to Italy I was born.
25. So I think that meant she didn't have all the affection she wanted and needed. So (..) that affected a lot of the bullying.
26. And our culture is very (..) ummm, especially with girls, a good girl is someone who is very quiet and you know, modest and doesn't ask for anything. Aaannd, I, I was just like that (.) Not because I wanted to.
27. Because ummm (..)
28. no children were loved in that family at the time (*laughter*) so we were all fighting for love.
29. So knowing that I would just, you know, conform and try to be exactly what they wanted me to be and it was successful. If you don't say anything, of course they have no reason to tell you off or (*laugh*), if you don't do anything then can't do anything to you. So that was my, my tactic, to survive in this family.
30. My sister was different. She can't do that. She's' very, she doesn't like anyone giving her orders, or telling her what to do, and she wants to be herself so at the time already she was like that and of course they would tell her off a lot more. So she would always feel like, they like you more that's why they tell me off and they don't tell you off.
31. And I would tell her no, actually, I didn't do anything. You did I didn't (..) But it wouldn't work.
32. So (..) for a very long it just went on like that, so,
33. she used to beat me up a lot.
34. And, usually, my mum noticed the jealousy. So she thought, "ahhh if, when she does something, if I tell off both of them, without being biased maybe she will stop doing that". But it made it worse (*laughter*). Because I would get told off by her. And beat up by her. And then I would get beaten up by my sister. So it doubled. And, yeah (small laugh). It was just terrible
35. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was**
36. Any questions?
37. **Interviewer: A lot of dynamics going on. Yeah. So, what you said, is just very interesting. It sounds like from the beginning you've got very, kind of detailed story. Umm**
38. I think my life just got better and better. It started very bad and got nice, so I'm doing really well now. Just so you know and you're not worried. (*laughter*)
39. **Interviewer: Ahh, that's great to hear.**
40. No, I'm doing really well now.
41. **Interviewer: And really able to talk about it seems**
42. Yeah. Yeah.

43. **Interviewer: So I was just wondering, when you said about umm, you would get beaten up by mum and from sister. Umm, what kind of is your definition I suppose of being beaten up. What would happen?**
44. My sister was more violent than my mum because she was younger, she would just (.) umm, she would beat me because of her rage. My mum was more frustrated, but my sister would just really (..) uncontrollable violence (*laughs*).
45. So, my mum would be like pushing or just you know, umm (..) what's it called, a slap.
46. My sister would actually um, grab my hair and bash my head on the wall. And yeah, or one day she beat me up with a dictionary (..) Yeah. In front of my cousins who were terrified (*laughter*) and went home. They were both younger, yeah.
47. She didn't even care if there were other people. But she cared if my parents were there, because they would tell her off. But yeah, well, if my parents were around she would just cheekily like push me over, you know, yeah. Or (..) she would also do small things like, wipe her feet on my bag, before going to sleep (*laughs*). You know, yeah, that kind of stuff. Or just you know, break my things,
48. oh there was one episode, really really bad, it wasn't violent, but it's the one that hurt me the most at the time.
49. And, it happened that she had these magazines that she really really liked and we didn't have many things for ourselves, so I understand. Ummm, I ruined the magazine, like I ripped something, I don't remember exactly, and (..) and she got really, really angry.
50. So she, she was beating me up and shouting doing all these things. So, my parents heard all the noise. So they called her and they said what are you doing, what's going on? And she explained. And then, they were not really impressed because it's just a magazine (*laughs*), but then they told me off anyway, but you could tell they were just being condescending. And she could tell that too so she was not really happy (.) Soo, she went up to our room again and my parents said it's best if you stay here, because she's really angry (*laughter*). Just hang around a bit, yeah. So, I had to stay to stay there.
51. And then I went uhhh to the room, she wasn't there (.) And I only had, I really love reading, and (.) you know, in that situation reading was the thing that would give me the freedom, you know, to just imagine, to be somewhere else. And I had this one book, it was the only book I had, it was my literature book for school and it had many stories. They were always half stories (*laughter*), because they were just that type of reading so, I would never know how it finishes. But, anyway. I knew it by heart because I would just read it all the time.
52. Annnndd, I just picked it up to read it and umm, she just, she had like, carved with scissors the words die on the book.
53. **And then I cried.**
54. And then she beat me up because she said I was crying because I was uh a snitch (*laughter*). But I was really, really hurt by this.

55. So I think it still hurts me if I think about it. Even though it has been many years. I, you know, even more than the beating up and everything. You know family where you already feel that you're not loved and you're not wanted and someone writes die then you just (*laughs*).
56. **Interviewer: Yeah, it's quite an obvious statement.**
57. Yeah. It's the worst you can do. You can beat me up, but you know, don't tell me that. But I guess, it made her feel better? (*laughs*)
58. **Interviewer: Yeah.**
59. Yeah.
60. **Interviewer: And I guess to come from your own sister**
61. I think she had a really, really, huge issue on controlling her anger. Just feelings. And (...) she was really (..)
62. one thing that even my parents, everyone hated was that she was plainly fake. With us, she would be very evil and everything. And then if someone came, she would change completely, you know. And we would just have to, umm, pretend that she's like that.
63. So for example (*laughter*), I have this problem when I sleep, they're still not sure if it's sleep achnea or if it is something else, I have problems with breathing. My throat makes noises, it's not like, snoring, it's more (...) yeah, I don't know how to say, it's like I'm choking.
64. And (...) ummmm, my sister used to sleep with me in the same room. Usually when I make that noise, she would just like punch me in the stomach or do something like that to wake me up.
65. But then after she got her boyfriend, she would speak to him at night on the phone, and I was just coughing (*laughter*) and trying to breathe and I heard her crying saying, "my sister is ill, she can't breathe at night, and it makes me so sad" (*laughter*).
66. And I was just thinking, "just leave me out please". (*sigh, laughter*)
67. Yeah, she used to do that a lot.
68. **Interviewer: So almost have these two person, sort of faces about things.**
69. Yeah, yeah. She just really wanted someone to accept her you know, and just (...)
70. it's like, she wanted to be herself, but she didn't really know what herself was. She wanted to live with someone, but then she couldn't control all the negative (.) sides, so she would just (...) it was such a mess (*laughs*).
71. And she used to lie a lot. In a way that (..) even if you see her, uum, I don't know, she (..) she ummm,
72. there have been episodes where she stole something, not from me, but from other people
73. from me it's not stealing, it's taking (*laughing*).
74. But (.) uhh when there's all the proof that she did it and everything, she would still say no I didn't, you're just saying this cuz you all want to blame me.
75. Yeah. And she had this thing and so, she wouldn't really have friends, ummm, the only friends she had were the people who didn't know how she was and then sometimes they would find out and then leave her.
76. So (..) when I went on with my life, ummm, after she got married (..)

77. ummm, I grew up and we were not allowed to go around with friends or you know visit people
78. but then when I was around 16, umm, after my dad left and everything, my mum said uhh okay, if I can trust your friends then you can go.
79. And I really, really thought about it. I planned everything, like I brought one friend first and then we did homework so my mum could see, yeah, you know, just planned everything. And then in the end my mum, a year after (*laughs*), she gave me permission for the first time to, go out with my friends. And then she trusted me because she saw that I wasn't doing anything bad, so she just let me go without asking and do anything I wanted.
80. My sister saw that as because she likes you, so she didn't let me do that because she doesn't like me. But actually, she used to do bad things when she went out with her friends and my mum wouldn't trust her. And my mum tells her that, but she doesn't believe it. She just complains that I am having things because I am lucky.
81. So (..) if she would see me be on Facebook and I write that I went to the cinema or something like that, then she would send me a looong message on Facebook (..) we all have set thoughts about why she couldn't go out with her friends and how lucky I am and now she got married she can't do that anymore, even though she can actually, but she doesn't (*laughs*).
82. And, she has a very nice husband. Nice, he's not really nice actually but he's permissive, so she could do those things, uhh, her husband is another chapter. And we all thought he was good and he's not so they might divorce soon.
83. **Interviewer: Yeah, so, she's sort of, I'm just thinking about the bullying, it's almost like it was physical and mental? Psychological, whatever you want to call it.**
84. Yeah, yeah.
85. **Interviewer: Ummm, and would you say any other type? I mean**
86. Umm (..)
87. **Interviewer: Verbal, I suppose comes into.**
88. Yeah, mental. Like, she would often humiliate. Ummm (..) I can't think of any examples now (..)
89. For example, oh yeah, yeah I can (*laughs*)
90. you know my tactic when someone tells me off I don't say anything? I just shut up and just, umm, she wouldn't like if I am doing something where she is telling me off, so first of all she would shout and stand up and say you have to look at me in the face, so I would just look at her. But then, she would come up with, your expression is not right, or you know, you look like this, or you look like that, and she would take me to the mirror and say, look at yourself, look how stupid you look. That sort of stuff. (..) And I'm not sure how it would make her feel better, but I guess it did if she kept doing it (*laughs*).
91. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It was her only way to kind of**
92. something, yeah.
93. **Interviewer: Right, yeah. Humiliation like you said. Yeah. And kind of, this idea of making you feel like there is kind of something wrong with you?**

94. Yeah, I think she just felt, just because of my parents not telling me off, maybe she felt uhh, umm, that ummm, I was a better person, so she wanted to put me down and just feel like (..) actually, I am better. Or I am as good as her. Even though, the only basis for that was my parents not telling me off (*laughs*). It was nothing else. Or like people saying "oh she's so quiet", which is not necessarily a quality, but for them it was.
95. Quiet means no problems. So.
96. **Interviewer: Yeah. So in your culture,**
97. Yeah.
98. **Interviewer: Yeah. This was strategy that you used you adopted?**
99. Yeah. The best compliment I got from my mum was "she's so quiet, I don't even know if she's, she's in the house (*laughter*).
100. **Interviewer: Yeah**
101. So yeah, I don't see why my sister would be jealous of that really. (*laughs*)
102. **Interviewer: Yeah, we all have our own perspectives.**
103. But, yeah.
104. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was quite tough for you, in lots of areas it sounds like.**
105. Yeah.
106. **Interviewer: Um and it was like copi---a way of managing growing up?**
107. Yeah, I think I just became very independent.
108. Umm, that's another thing. She would have this tendency of wanting to lean on others. So growing up, when she (...)
109. umm, she was a bit more mature (*laughing*), she became more mature after having her child, but before that, it took a long time (*laughs*). But she was a bit more mature at some points.
110. And so she started learning on me, umm, she used to do that already, if she had a problem she would vent out on me (..) and so I would be useful in those cases. And, she started doing that a lot more growing up, but she always needed someone to lean on.
111. While, I had the opposite reaction to our situation. I thought, no one wants me, and I'm not needed, I just help myself. I just look out for myself. And, it worked when I was child. And at some point I needed people (*laughs*).
112. So I had to do my own journey of you know, learning to lean on others. But (..) ummm, that was (.) how I was coping at the time. Just thinking it was just, you know. And also my brother was a huge, huge, kind of
113. **Interviewer: Yeah, I was just going to say. Sounds like**
114. Because, ummm, I was kind of invisible. I made myself invisible to protect myself.
115. But also (..) ummm, I was not uhh, sorry, I was not planned let's say.
116. And also I was born in very umm (..) sad circumstances (*laughs*).
Because my father wanted a boy. And then, my mum thought we don't have money, so we should use, you know those injections, you know those kind of contraceptions?

117. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah**
118. My father didn't understand how those worked. So, my mum got pregnant. But, he thought, oh but you were using contraception, so. Yeah.
119. So, he never believed I was (.) his daughter.
120. So when my mum was pregnant with me, he used to beat her up a lot. And I know of, they told me uhh, she was like, thrown down the stairs with her tummy big like this. She just didn't care, kicked her in the tummy, that sort of stuff.
121. And my mum has the theory that maybe, uhh, because when I was born I would never cry, never whine, never ask for anything. She thought I think it was because it was I was really depressed and maybe you were born a bit like that.
122. And, I think it's a true story (laughs). I think I kind of, closed myself, to protect myself but I think something was already there a bit.
123. And, my sister loved to tell me uhh, how I was not my father's daughter. *(laughter)* Because, my dad ummm, it was weird, ummm, I think maybe he felt more appreciated by me because I really wanted his love. So he sort of, uhhh, he used to compliment me a bit more, and you know, try and encourage me a bit more. So, I think my sister saw that and was really, yeah, trying to come in the way.
124. **Interviewer: So he was nice to you?**
125. Yeah, I had very huge issues with school. I think I had a learning problem, but you know, in that kind of family no one really had time to care (laughs).
126. So I learnt to read very early, compared to the other ones, but I couldn't count, and I was really bad at writing, and for a very long time. So, and the teachers hated me.
127. It was a weird school. Uhh, normally a teacher when they see a child like that they would, they would try to understand what's wrong, it was not like that. They used to send me out of the class room, saying that I am slowing down the other students and I would just be outside or they would even tell other people not to be friends with me otherwise I will influence them I suppose, contagious.
128. Yeah. So, I changed school after a while, and they told my mum I was retarded. Using that word (laughs). My mum went home crying. She beat me up because she told me, "you humiliated me, uhh, I didn't know what to do, I'm never going to your school interviews again."
129. **Interviewer: Right.**
130. And she never did. Until I got my diploma, she never did.
131. And the day after, my teachers, uhh they took me up to the classroom they said ohh see what you did, your mum went home crying, why, why you so evil. Why you doing this to your parents. I don't know what was wrong with those teachers (laughter)
132. **Interviewer: Yeah, not very good teachers.**
133. They should not teach. You know, you could think they were racist, but actually my cousin was in the class as me (.) and she was treated differently.

- So I'm not sure what was really the issue. Maybe they were just, not racist, but you know like poor people, because I was quite poor, and you could tell (laughter).
134. Yeah, they used to tell me off a lot for not having the right pants, or you know, having a missing button or something from the uniform. Anyway, my sister was really good in school (..) And (..) she was really good and my parents were really proud of her being so smart and then all my uncles would have huge families, uhhh, they would tell their own children, you have to be like her, see how good she is in school.
135. But I'm not sure she never, why she never (..) she never, counted that as being, you know, something to be happy about. So she always thought okay she's the favourite, even though she had all these nice things that people recognise.
136. Yeah (..) I was only good in the house, for doing nothing (laughter). So yeah, it's not like I had much. But (..) yeaah (..)
137. **Interviewer: And so, would, did your brother get treated in a different way?**
138. I would say so. Because I was around. And I love my brother (laughs).
139. So, oh yeah sorry I kind of lost my thought. But what I was saying is that when he was born (..) uhhh, I just had something that loved me (.) regardless of anything. I would just be nice to him and he would love me because I'm nice. And it was the first time ever I think I had something like that at the time.
140. Sooo, I was just all over my brother, since when he was born. And my mum was not a good mother at the time, so even with a child that's small she used to beat him a bit and you know, not very look after him much, so I used to put him to sleep, you know, and just cuddle him, that sort of stuff.
141. We just grew up really, really close (laughs) and (..) for that reason when my sister, you know, when she would be angry, I would be the first one to be in the way. And if my brother was with her I would be there to protect him, you know I'm just saying oh poor him, he's just a child you know.
142. And also my brother was a huge snitch, so (laughter) my sister, if she, she used to swear a lot, at him. So he would know it was a bad word, he wouldn't know what it means but he knows. So he would tell my mum and dad.
143. He got beaten up too a bit, but not much. Cuz I was in the way.
144. And also my sister was a teenager by then, she was going out and she was a bit more focused on other things than my brother (.)
145. **Interviewer: You kind of took the middle space as it were, between them? To kind of (..) protect him.**
146. (...)
147. Mmmmm he, he has a better relationship now with her, but for a long time it's like not even a bad one she, he didn't really have a relationship with her (..) and I think he always resented her for leaving so early
148. but ummm now that she's got the child and everything we all see a side of her that, you know, we always thought it was there, but we didn't know (laughter) for sure. So I think he got a bit closer.

149. Annd, she's doing better, but while we have the chance to go on without our father she left in a moment where it was still a big mess in the family and it's like she's still in the past somehow.
150. She still has many issues she still can't be friends with my mum even though my mum made (.) a change from like this to this completely. And she still can't see her as the person she is now, not what she was in the past.
151. So she, even though we are all trying to be more friendly towards her, it's like she's still isolated which is a bit sad, but (makes a tut noise) (..) she can't bully anyone anyway (laughter)
152. AND, she knows how she was, ummm when, more than that she says "oh our mum was like this" but I think what she means is oh so I know how I was. Or I hope.
153. And she said she will not treat her child in the same way. And (..) I think that's a huge huge step.
154. Cuz I was worried, to be honest (laughter). But I think she's much better now. Yeah.
155. (..) Still ummm, she just can't ummm (..) she can't recognise, umm,
156. I was in counselling for some time ummm (..) sorry, my mouth is dry. And, sorry what was I saying?
157. Oh yeah, I was in counselling so you know my sister came up with counselling and I knew I had still some issues that really made me angry about the past.
158. Soo, the best way to fix that would you know, receive an apology. So I tried. Uhhh, I said, you know you did these things to me and that, but she always say "don't remember, I don't know what you're talking about, I don't remember" and then she would cry and say you all think I'm evil and I'm just the bad guy. So that didn't work out. So I had to work on it on my own (...)
159. I like to think that she does remember, that she realises. That's why she cries. And (..) yeah.
160. (...)
161. **Interviewer: If it's alright if we just go back to the younger times. And when this was happening, particularly like your sister, bullying you. And I know you mentioned that your parents kind of knew. Did they know, do you think they knew to the extent that you described to me?**
162. No. Cuz she would always do it um, when they were not around.
163. They knew uhh that she was ummm, saying evil things with words. Cuz they would always hear her shouting but I don't think they knew about the violence.
164. And my mum said to me one day she said, "I'm really sorry because I know uhh I wasn't looking after you as much as your sister and your brother and also I know that I left you a bit in the (..) in the middle of all the rage of the whole family (laughs).
165. And I think she meant particularly my sister. But she never knew about, you know, what exactly was happening.
166. also because they used to find it quite funny, so yeah (laughing).
167. Like you know, sisterly rivalry I think they call it. Yeah.

168. Also you know with my father being like that, any violence wouldn't seem so serious (..) especially for my dad (*laughing*).
169. **Interviewer: So even if, let's say they didn't know at all that she was beating you. You didn't ever want to tell, or you never thought you could tell them? Did you tell anyone?**
170. No. I think, well I used to tell my best friend cousin. So we used to hate her together (*laughter*). Cuz she used to hate her too. And also she was the witness at the dictionary beating.
171. Yeah. I think she still remembers it.
172. But uhh, I never told my parents and that was because they always, you know with the situation, they always had this kind of philosophy that uhhh we are suffering, we are making loads of sacrifices so you should not ask for anything and you should try to do things better you know. So anything that would make things worse would be uhh an attack, to your parents and you should feel guilty about it.
173. So that was the kind of thing so to tell them I would feel really guilty because I'm giving them more problems on top of what they already have.
174. So even asking them for a present, it would be like I'm asking them (.) to give me blood or (*laughter*) yeah.
175. It was that kind of atmosphere so I wouldn't have any ummm, well help, not for sure because they could only tell her as they can, just say, don't do that,
176. but telling my cousin was a lot more helpful because she would keep doing it but I would have someone to vent out to and feel better, instead of having everything(..) on my own and just (.)
177. when my brother grew up, I tried not to be biased, you know (*laughter*) but it was a bit hard (.)
178. so, I think I contributed to his not having too much of a relationship with her. Uhhh, just complaining about she did this, she did that, and but (.) when he grew up anyway he knew what the situation was, that he was judging for himself (..) But yeah, I had him to impart, although I always tried not to (*laughter*).
179. **Interviewer: And so do you know, do you know when you first sort of realised, that this isn't good? This is bullying.**
180. Oh from the beginning (..)
181. Uhh because (..) at first obviously cuz it hurts (*laughter*) nothing that hurts can't be right.
182. And also, I think ummm, I knew more about what is normal compared to the, my other siblings, because I was reading books since a very early age (.) so even though we were not allowed to see other friends or (.) hang out with Italian people because my father had this obsession that we would become Italian and Westernised, so yeah, we were not allowed to.
183. Uhhh but through books, when I was six I already knew how babies were born, for example. And I knew stuff that my parents wouldn't even imagine. So I think that (.) books really helped me (*laughter*).

184. And like, really really really grateful for that literature book that I had at the beginning and all the other books I had after. And, I think my whole knowledge of what is normal, what's not, is just from, from hours in books.
185. **Interviewer: You got a different perspective by reading?**
186. Yeah (..) I'm not sure what is normal for my sister, if she ever realised (.)
187. Ummm she might have been confused about my parents, but I'm not sure what about her behaviour, she thought it was okay or because seeing my dad like that, it could be, that she thought maybe ummm, maybe it's just fine.
188. But, ohh I don't know (...) I don't know because she kept doing it for such a long time (laughter).
189. (*sigh*) so you know, after 7, 8 years you should start realising. You learn things in school anyway.
190. Yeah (..) But, that didn't happen so I'm not sure. I think she just had this issue with her anger really (..) and it was, uncontrollable.
191. (...)
192. **Interviewer: The example you said about, when she wrote in your book, when she said die. Ummm. How do you think that experience has, from that moment on, were things different, or?**
193. Ummm, it made things worse (laughter).
194. I was already suicidal at the time (..)
195. Ummm. It was really bad you know, I wasn't wanted so I was a very depressed child. Even though if I said depressed no one would have understood because no one read books apart from me (laughter) Sooo, yeah.
196. So that made things worse. But then umm when I went to middle school, there was a really nice teacher.
197. And things started to change from that, but until 11 years old I was still very, very suicidal.
198. And then my brother obviously was a reason I had to go on every time, cuz I always felt that he needed me. And then, around 11 I was a bit worried because I thought he's growing up (*laughter*), he won't need me anymore so, and I was a bit upset about that, and I think maybe that's also why this teacher umm, managed to (.) ummm, touch me let's say, to make me wake up a bit, because I needed something, something else to focus
199. and I just felt like she appreciated my writing, and she saw I had, I was really still really bad at school, but she thought I had some skills. So, I tell her "oh I want to do to good so that she can be proud of me", and then I started studying and then I became better and better and then I'm a _____.
200. **Interviewer: So would you call that a turning point in your life?**
201. Yeah definitely. That's that's THE turning point (laughter). Yeah.
202. It was the first time anyone ever had expectations from me, or thought something I did was really nice.
203. She also tried to get in touch with my mum but my mum refused to (*laughter*) to have any interviews. The only time she came after that time was ummm, I finished my high school. I got the highest score in the classroom and in my ummm subject module. And so I told her that and then she came to brag

- about it (*laughter*), but my teachers were not happy because they thought oh why did you not, never show every time we called you? So she actually got scolding. (*laughter*).
204. Which I was happy about. But yeah.
205. Teachers really, not only that one, because after that one, I learnt to ask for help and you know, lean on others. Soo, I always asked for help from teachers if I didn't have books cuz I couldn't afford them, sometimes they would buy them for me. Or if I didn't understand anything I wouldn't be scared of asking cuz I felt stupid, I didn't know anything, I would just ask them. And just have that one moment where I feel stupid (*laughter*), and then feel brilliant after because I know it.
206. Soo, that helped me a lot. And I was lucky, I had REALLY good teachers afterwards and yeah, I started with bad teachers and then I got the best ones (*laughter*).
207. My sister and my brother apparently they both had umm not very good teachers. My sister had quite racist ones, or at least she says they were racist.
208. And, my brother (..) he's got one that he doesn't really respect much cuz they teach how to make chains and bracelets, he's done arts, he wants to learn how to draw, so he's quite disappointed in his teachers.
209. But yeah. Sorry, I always go into topics that have nothing to do (*laughter*).
210. **Interviewer: No, no, it's great. It's very good.**
211. And you have to bring me back.
212. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about, this turning point and then moving through adolescence and into an adult. And I guess the events that happened when you were younger, specifically with your sister, I guess if we think about having to lean on others, making relationships with others when growing up. Do you see similarities**
213. Do you mean, did I get anything positive out of it, or?
214. **Interviewer: So both, yeah (laughter). Basically, to keep it open, what do you think, how is it?**
215. It definitely improved my levels of patience. And (..) I think, ummm, because she's my sister, they say that blood doesn't make you family, but sometimes I guess it does. (*laughter*)
216. 'cuz just being born with her, having been with her since birth it just makes me feel attached to her no matter what.
217. So, even though I feel like I hate her because uhhh, at the time I was hating her because she was beating me and everything (..) ummm, I would still suffer if she suffers.
218. And, I think it teaches me to be more compassionate.
219. And also I always have this thought, it's not just because of her, but also because of my mum. I will always have this ummm philosophy that everyone can change, so (..)
220. I think I have this hard bit of waiting and you know, support people until they manage to change and that's also why I want to be a therapist (*laughter*).

221. But it doesn't always go that way, because with my father it didn't work, some people just don't change. But my mum changed so much, and she actually changed much more than what I expected.
222. And you know, when you're an adult it's hard to change, it's not the same as when you are a teenager.
223. And, my sister I know she has ummm, I feel like she has wasted potential (laughs). She's so good at arts. She's so clever you know, she was in the best in school. And she's just very (..), she's very practical, she has many many nice things (..) But her personality just covers everything. And I know that that's not her whole personality, or I like to think that it's not.
224. And so I just feel I want to wait until she changes and see what she becomes. And I think, she's changed already a bit. So, I'm just, just looking forward (laughter)
225. But I think ummm, the bullying that's that's actually just something that gave me just umm, hang in there until you know the change will come sometime.
226. And (..) not everyone agrees with me (laughter).
227. Many friends say oh you're being too nice. Or you're just wasting your time, you should think about yourself, who cares about the others. But then my experience is that when they do change, they also remember that you've been there the whole time. And if you want to show unconditional love (.) the best way is to show it when, you know, when they are being there worst. And right now I think my sister, even though she knows everything she did, she knows I didn't like it obviously (laughter). And she knows that I'm not uhhh, every time something happens to me, I'm not going to her because I don't feel like opening up to her, she knows all these things, but she also knows every time she has a problem she can just call me. And I would be happy to help her.
228. And (.) I feel proud about that (laughter).
229. Ummm, it's just because ummm she's just my sister. I can't change it.
230. And I dunno why I can, well actually I do, ummm, I can live without my dad because ummm, I don't care whether we have the same brother or not, if he doesn't love me then why do I go after him.
231. But with my sister I feel like we both are a product of the same situation. We just made different choices.
232. And I feel like (.) she's everything (.) I could be if you know I just made those choices. We just (..) we had the same parents, same situations, you know. With my mum scolding me, I could have acted like her, and just (..) bang out my rage that I had and decide to ummm, respond, talk back. And I made the choice of being quiet instead. But she's everything I could be. So it's just looking after another me (laughs). If that makes sense.
233. Ummm, same for my brother. He's just someone whom I, you know more different choices. And (..) it's just, you can't really blame anyone in the end, if you know where they come from. And I do more than anyone (laughs).
234. We both came from there, we both know what happened, how it feels. And I can't blame her for being angry, or for feeling like she couldn't handle it anymore, that she wanted to destroy everything, it's just (..) bad luck that I was

in the way when she was feeling like that. And I guess it's good luck for my brother that I was in the way when she was feeling like that. I was just not lucky enough to have someone else to look after me. So it was just all bad luck. For, for all of us (laughter).

235. **Interviewer: And it sounds like you have really changed your luck around and**
236. Yeah, you make your life. When you're a child you can't though. That's sad (..) Children don't have any (..) They say, oh children are so lucky cuz they're so free, it's not true. They depend on others. So, it's all about luck.
237. **Interviewer: And so when do you think you decided that you wanted to maybe do things differently? So maybe, to kind of try and make your own luck?**
238. I think with that teacher. It just started with my other teachers from elementary school because they gave some resumes to the, yeah. They told her I'm such a bad student, I never do my homework, I'm stupid, I couldn't do maths which was true, I still couldn't count properly. And (.) so many bad things. So she wasn't expecting much from me. But she was keeping an eye like, you know, a teacher is supposed to do. So we wrote essays and because I liked to write uh read, I became also very good at writing at this time. In Italian. Unfortunately not as good in English.
239. But anyway, she was really impressed.
240. She said, I don't know what happens here, because they tell me these things about you but then uhhh I see this. I don't know where it's coming from. And then she asked me to talk about myself and tell her a bit, what I like, what I want to do and she just gave me attention.
241. She was also very strict, it wasn't all honey it was, ummm if I didn't do my homework she would keep me in class and make me do my homework. But she wouldn't just let me do it, she would sit down with me and explain to me how to do it and then make me do it.
242. So, she would give me punishment but she would do the punishment with me.
243. And I think that meant a lot to me cuz no one ever did that for me and it just made me feel like I could do things (laughter).
244. And I even learnt, I got better in Maths, uhh that really, I still struggle, but somehow I managed to do enough to pass.
245. And every little thing just meant a big achievement and I just realised I'm not so stupid, I'm not umm, I'm not (..)
246. I'm sorry I don't know the word for that, but being nothing (laughs).
247. Uhhh, so it just, it just gives me hope.
248. So I just thought, and also, knowing about my childhood and knowing how hard it is to be a child, so I want to be, grow up and be uhh counsellor or psychotherapist and help children who need it.
249. Although I know that not many parents could do (laughter). So I mean if that kind of family they won't think oh I'm beating my child, I will bring him to therapy, no. But it's something.

250. At least for the ones who grow up and need some counselling (*laughter*). I can definitely help those. So, I felt like I just wanted to give back what I got because it was so precious, so I think that was a huge, huge turning point.
251. **Interviewer: Was it difficult at first where you hadn't always known one way, with your sister and your mother, was it difficult at first to accept that there was another way, like a positive. Was it difficult to trust that?**
252. Yes. It's like this, ummm (..) for many years when I was in counselling I couldn't afford it, there was no place to go, so you know, so to cope with things I would keep everything inside and I had these really high defences. So it was really hard in counselling to bring out anything.
253. And (..) ummm, sorry I got lost. (laughter).
254. Oh yeah I remember now. Ummm, I had all this anger and stuff that had happened from the past, and sadness. But then, no, no place to put it onto because it was everything in the past and I can't go back to the past and do things differently, or tell people what they did, if I told my mum now, you did these things, I would make her suffer and also she had already apologised to me, so I wasn't feeling much anger towards her, although I still had you know, some feelings of I wish she was different. And, it's just misplaced anger and it's really frustrating, because you don't have anywhere, nowhere to put it.
255. So, with my sister, I tried as I said, you know, to say you did these things and it really hurt me. But she would just say "oh I don't remember". Ummm, "you just, everyone just says I'm evil and do evil things". And then she would start crying and I would end up consoling her.
256. And I would be okay with consoling but also I would think, I wanted to be consoled (laughter).
257. So yeah, it didn't work out in the right way, but (.) ummm, it's like this. Every time she's in need, I forget about what she did because she's my sister and I feel like, I feel sorry for her and empathetic and so right now, because she's in the middle of this divorce and everything, I can forget everything, what she did, because now I feel I just want her to be happy.
258. But then the moment when things go back to normal, I know that I will feel like when she talks to me about normal things, like "oh how did you do today?" or things like that, I wouldn't feel like replying because I would feel like "why do you want to know" (laughter).
259. I still have that. I just can't get over it. Because I think if she were to recognise what she did and say "I'm really sorry and you know it was like this and that, and I really do feel bad about doing these things and I wish I had done differently" that would change a lot. But I didn't have that yet. So, I think until I get it, it will be like this (laughs). Friends when she needs me and then I won't care when she doesn't I just
260. **Interviewer: So do you know where that anger goes or has gone or?**
261. It just stays there, I can't really put it anywhere, and it only comes up when she talks to me. So, when she talks about problems, as I say, it's fine because I'm so focussed on what's happening and all, but if she wants to know

- things about me I feel like almost (.) attacked. Uhh why do you want to know about me? I don't want to tell you anything. We don't have this kind of relationship (laughs).
262. I feel like she's assuming things. Even though maybe she, she's probably not thinking all this stuff but I am. So, I still don't feel like telling her anything uhh, I think I only told her I have exams, maybe. Just because I told her I had exams so I won't be able to talk to you these days.
263. Even simple things, I can't, it's just, it feels like I'm giving her a present. I don't know (.) how to describe it. It's just, something she doesn't deserve. Yet. (laughter).
264. So I'm still waiting. Yeah. I think, personally, I think, it feels silly to be honest, because it feels like ummm, that's something other people would say "it's not silly because you suffered so much", that's what the counsellor says, you know it was terrible.
265. But I think when you grow up in that kind of situation you learn to, undermine everything that happens. So you think, okay, she bashed my head in the wall, but uhh, you know people have it worse (laughter). You always feel like that, so when you feel bad about it, you feel guilty and stupid like ummm (..) like someone, someone who is spoiled just complaining about things, you know. So when I feel like that towards my sister I also feel like I'm being stupid and spoilt why am I being like this, I should be mature and grown up (laughter). And just leave everything behind, because I'm superior, but I can't.
266. **Interviewer: So, it sounds like what you're saying is actually you still DO have that kind of some feelings, and actually sometimes you try and kind of say oh I shouldn't feel like that or I feel bad for that.**
267. Yeah, I can't even say I'm trying, because I'm not (laughter).
268. I mean I have these, but I act on more on "she doesn't deserve it". Except when she needs my help, but all the other times and she doesn't need it and it's just normal days, then I feel like I don't need to have a relationship with her. So I don't really act on the mature side. Be mature, responsible.
269. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about other relationships with people. You said about that teacher at the beginning and then maybe meeting people, friends and relationships with boyfriend/girlfriend along the way. Do you think what happened with you and your sister means that it has been more difficult to have these sort of trusting relationships?**
270. Ummm, I think it's been easier (.) because I needed people, I needed people to listen to me, and because she was making it hard, it was easier for me to open up to other people who weren't part of the family or you know, no one that she knows that can tell her (laughs).
271. All secret. And also people would say, "oh my god" "yeah she's a terrible person" and that would make me feel really good (laughter)
272. **Interviewer: Ahhh, okay, so it was a useful thing to do**
273. Yes because someone recognises that this, it is a bad situation, but in my family it's sort of normal.

274. Ummm (..) yeah. And also, uhh I think I always have this, ummm, kind of, unconscious uhh hope. For my sister to change.
275. And, there was some bullying in high school, she wasn't a violent bullying she was more of a verbal bully (*laughs*), so she was one of those sassy girls who was like "oh your dress is so ugly", that kind of stuff.
276. So, she used to ummm, I knew where she was coming from. I knew she had a really bad family situation, and was a bit similar to mine, minus the violence, but she also had you know father and her father, stepfather, didn't love her.
277. This guy even used to buy his own water and tell her not to touch it because it's HIS water, I mean (*laughs*), yeah, it was really bad.
278. But anyway, she had this situation. And then I thought if she's like this in school I feel like, you know, like I said with my sister, we're just making different choices. And, she has all the reasons to act like that, and she's just making a different choice than me.
279. So I felt close to her somehow.
280. But she didn't know my situation. I knew because I was eavesdropping (*laughter*). I do that all the time.
281. Ummm, so I was nice to her. She had difficulties studying, so I used to help her. And, I knew that uhh, she used to talk bad about me when I wasn't around. But I didn't care because I just felt like she deserved my help, just because of the situation she had.
282. And also, I always had like, I'm being nice to her, and so one day she will recognise that I'm being nice and we can be friends. And then people were saying oh, see, she said these things about you and you shouldn't help her anymore, and all these things and (..) she knew that I knew that and I was still helping her (*laughs*).
283. So at some point, she just became a really good friend of mine. And we actually came to this country together, we've been friends for many years now. Yeah.
284. And, SHE CHANGED! and I wish my sister would change too. (*laughs*).
285. But I think what pushed me to, to help her and keep hold of her, was just that desire that I had that people would change and my sister would change and also I think helping others in a similar situation, it feels like helping myself when I was a child.
286. And my sister. Cuz that's something I can't do anymore. I still have memories and I wish I could protect myself (..) but I can't, it's a memory (*laughs*).
287. I can't do it. But when I have people in the same situation I feel like I'm helping in my old self. So, kind of feels like healing.
288. **Interviewer: Yeah, makes sense. So you said about when you were younger, there was a lot of stress, your strategy was to keep it inside and be the kind of diligent person.**
289. Yeah. I would swear loud in my mind (*laughter*).

290. **Interviewer: Yes, yeah. You would keep it all in, don't let it out. And now, as you're an adult, do you think, do you still use the same coping strategy or?**
291. Uhh, I had a bit of a mess coming out of it because I was so used to keeping everything inside, that I became kind of numb, I think I realised that around when I was umm 17, 18 (.)
292. umm whether I was happy or sad I couldn't feel it, it was just all, you know, like there was a massive wall that wouldn't let me feel anything, just to you know, be protected. It was soo efficient, that I couldn't even break it down myself.
293. I knew there was an issue and I couldn't do anything about it and while I was at home, I still couldn't because I was always ummm, I still had that of not giving more problems, so I wouldn't tell my mum or you know I would just try to you know keep going and (..)
294. and then, I decided I need to start counselling because this is the problem and I thought coming here was the perfect moment because no family are around me, it's just me, I can look after myself.
295. And I think it's the first time I did something for myself, finally (*laughs*) after years of just closing myself somewhere. So it was REALLY hard.
296. Ummm (.) I still have the habit of laughing when I talk about sad things. But it was actually a lot worse at the time, it's a bit better now (*laugh*) but I still laugh.
297. But it was a lot better at the time. I couldn't cry at all even though I felt sad, it just doesn't, it wouldn't come out (.) And (..) ummm (.) how did it change? I think it just, sorry I'm starting to get lost (laughs) (..) umm,
298. **Interviewer: Whatever comes to your mind is fine**
299. Yeah. Well in counselling I would just talk and talk you know and, but I think the counsellor could tell that I was very separated from what I was saying. I wasn't really feeling, I was just re-telling, re-counting things.
300. So (.) she told me and you know I tried to think, I tried to feel things when they came to me and not hide them away. And I knew there was going to be a big mess, and it was.
301. It was very (..) counterproductive let's say for University and you know all the things I had to do, but it was really good for me for the healing, so I would, umm,
302. I was so depressed as I've never been, since when I was six or seven probably (*laughing*) and, it was a very critical situation, but I had this, because I knew it was necessary (.) you know, I would just let it come out, work on it,
303. and and then I met my boyfriend, I actually didn't even want to be with him at first because I thought, I am in this situation now, I don't want someone else to be involved.
304. And then, he didn't mind so (.) and I'm really grateful now that he didn't mind (laughing). Cuz it helped me I thought. I mean, I'm sure I would have managed to do it even on my own, but it would have taken a lot longer, whilst with him it took me a lot less because I realised that umm, after my teacher,

- she's the only who ummm gave me attention unconditionally, you know, his own time and everything, so it felt like having that kind of (.) caring figure there that I missed since my middle school times. So that helped a lot.
305. But (.) ummm, I had umm, while I was still in counselling, uhhh I just started to talk about these things to everyone (*laughing*). Yeah, that happens unfortunately. Because you're just trying to keep everything inside, and then all of a sudden you open the door, the box, and everything comes out.
306. But, I don't even know you! (*laughing*) and I would realise it only after I said it "oh my god why am I telling this to this person" Maybe she was just be talking about the day and I would be like "yeah I remember a day like this which this happened"
307. I don't know. So I had to control myself, and learn to ummm (.) not to close my (.) emotions anymore, but you know just deal with them (.)
308. And I do, I um, I open up now more easily to people. And (.) my boyfriend first of all, I still can't open up to my family, just because (.) I think we all, all my siblings, we all feel like we would make big problems and we don't want to make anyone worried you know in the family really. But with friends, and with my boyfriend, I am always very open. Annd (.) it's just so (.) easily now (*laughs*). I am not in counselling anymore because yeah, I've done it.
309. And, yeah. I think (.) my sister has always been used to saying everything that comes to her mind right away. Which is what gave her issues with my parents. And she would say exactly what it is comes to her mind. There is no filter. Any way, any sort. And no limit.
310. So ummm now that she's married, we don't argue with her anymore, we don't have reasons, but she still argues a lot with her husband. And these arguments, I tell you (*laughs*), they can go on for five or six hours and I'm not kidding. And it's just her talking and she doesn't like it if you don't respond. So you have to stay there and listen to, like she used to do with me, look at her, don't do anything, just listen to her, nod. (*laughs*). Just follow, say sorry, about 20, 30 times.
311. Sooo, she still has that, she doesn't have any filter and it's still like that. And I'm not sure if she realises it or not. Because every time you try to tell her something, she always feels attacked. "Oh you all tell me I'm evil and I'm the bad one." But no, we are just telling you because, you know, it's a problem (*laughs*) for her.
312. I feel like she could be so happy. But it's so wasted, all the time she has the beautiful baby and the life she has. She just can't appreciate it. She always judges everything she has based on what other people have. So ummm (.)
313. she wanted to study psychology or therapy so she actually didn't finish school at first because instead of going to school she used to go around with her boyfriend and friends. And so my mum said you're not going to school anymore. So she left school and then (.) she decided to work to do like an online course. You still do exams in the school but study online (.) and she decided to do psychology. All of a sudden (*laughter*). It is not even subtle you know!

314. Cuz she always wanted to do Art, she's really good at Arts. Very talented. And also very good at languages. So those two were the two things that she was mostly interested in. But, she decided because she heard that I did very well in my high school and everyone was proud of me, she decided I'm going to do psychology (laughter).
315. And I went to University and now she says I'm going to go to University. And she sends messages saying "ahh now I have the baby I can't do it, you're so lucky, uhh (..) I wish I could do it. But you know, because of our parents I couldn't".
316. She always blames this on my parents (..) ahhh, that also annoys me. It's true that we didn't have good family, but you know, we make our choices. There were many instances where she could have chosen differently and she didn't so she can't really blame other people now. And, she still could do all the things she wants, but she doesn't do them. And then when I do them, she complains, "oh you're so lucky, I can't do them". (laughs).
317. Yeah. It's not easy to live with her.
318. **Interviewer: You've answered all of my questions and I didn't even realise, which is great. (laughs)**
319. What mark do I get?
320. **Interviewer: Haha, yeah. I was just going to check if there was anything we haven't covered. Um I guess the last thing then was more about how you found this experience and the interview itself?**
321. Interesting (laughs). Do you mean how I felt or
322. **Interviewer: Both I guess. How it felt for you to talk about all these things? And I know it's not the first time you've talked about it.**
323. Yeah, talking about it I think you feel something every single time, it just feels okay. It feels nice.
324. And (.) I don't go home and curl up and cry so don't worry. (laughter).
325. It actually makes me feel good, because I feel like I've let out some more of, you know, of the stuff and that's nice.
326. And I think it's interesting because I've learnt uhh about interviews in sociology, but I've never done one, so this was interesting (laugh). And I would like to use them for my dissertation. Partly. Part of my masters. So, so this was really really useful for me.
327. **Interviewer: Are there any comments about the interview**
328. I was worried I wasn't answering the questions properly, but you always told me when I was going off.
329. **Interviewer: Yeah. And I just wanted to ask you about this word, sibling bullying, and the idea of sibling bullying, and do you think that we talk about it in society?**
330. I don't think so, I think it's because sibling bullying always becomes "ahh it becomes sibling rivalry, you know, it's useful, it's healthy, it's boys, or it's just girls, they're jealous.
331. It's always you know under the carpet. But all things about families I think they are, you know, violence inside the family is, the breaking family is,

- and even though, you know, most bad things happen in the families, most people don't really talk about it.
332. Maybe it's just too intrusive to research about it, I don't know, but it's just not. You don't see it around. Even with movies, or tv series, you don't see much. I mean (.) maybe you see a bit of verbal bullying, they're smoking, playing around, it's just in a very funny way. It doesn't look as if the person is being humiliated or hurting in any way.
333. So (..) and I think also because of that, people who are being bullied, they feel like they're just exaggerating. It's nothing. It's just, you know, I shouldn't be like this. Yeah.
334. **Interviewer: So it makes your experience not feel**
335. Yeah, it undermines it. So, you, you never feel like you're suffering until someone tells you, you know that's that's not really (.) how it's supposed to be (*laugh*).
336. You're suffering, you should do something about it. And you're like, but he's my brother, it's just you know, he's like that. Yeah. It's family (*laughs*).
337. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, so it sounds like society, media, everybody, tries to normalise bullying.**
338. Yeah, rather than that, they don't see any issue with it.
339. It's an issue only if it's a stranger because it seems like the stranger does it without any reason. Because they don't know you, they don't have any right to judge you so if I stranger does it it's really bad.
340. If the same is done with a family member, it's somehow justified because they love you (*laughs*). Yeah, it's all covered by love. Expected love. Yeah.
341. So, even though (.) you can't choose your family members, you get what you get, so I think it's more common in families.
342. You can't go anywhere. At school at least you can avoid the bullying (*laughs*).
343. Or you know, in your work place. You can just avoid it.
344. But at home you, you're forced to live with them, help them, live with them, care about them (*sigh*) and (.) sometimes like me you can't even help it, you feel affectionate, like affection towards them anyway, even though you feel like you wish you wouldn't cuz you know you suffer when you help someone who doesn't love you much, or doesn't seem like they love you much.
345. So (..) yeah. I'm glad you're researching in families (*laughing*).

Appendix I – Example of analysis of fabula for categorical-content

Sharon

Interviewer: Could I ask you a bit about family first? I was wondering if you could describe your family for me?

1. *(laughter)* Well originally my family is, umm,
2. my family comes from Sri Lanka, and I was born in Italy and (..)
3. I'm the middle one of three children so I have an older sister, she's three years older than me, and a younger brother, he's seven years younger.
4. And (..) my parents got divorced about (..) ten years ago? I think it's actually even more, but anyway.
5. So right now it's my mum, my brother and me and then my sister got married so she um lives separately.
6. And (.) It's a very very dysfunctional family (laughter).
7. Right now it's quite good, uhh, but when my father was around it was really, really bad. And (..) umm, because he was,
8. well first of all they got married because they had to (..) she was pregnant so yeah. Annd so they were already not in love (laughter).
9. On top of that my father was very, very misogynistic annd very violent and just impossible to live with. Uh, my mum stupidly thought oh we'll stay with him for the children, like mum's do (laughter).
10. And then she realised that was stupid um and she decided to get a divorce finally so (..) we are all doing better now.
11. I used to be in contact with my father for a while, but then (.) it was just not, umm, it was really a pain (laugh) to have him around.
12. And he, didn't care much anymore.
13. So no one in my family is in contact with my father right now.
14. Except for my mum I think.
15. Aannndd, my sister got married when she was 18. So very young. She got married more for getting away from the family than anything (.)
16. And, so it was me and my brother for a long time.
17. Me and my brother have a very close relationship (..) and, with my sister we are a bit (.) separated I would say. We never really (..) got close to her (..) And I think that was due to the amount of bullying *(laughter)*. Yeah. And the more she would do that the more we would be, you know, keeping us just the two of us.
18. And when she left, it just felt like (.) uhhhh, there was no older sister cuz we always did everything on our own and when we needed her she just left so. So we were just on our own again.
19. So, with my sister the relationship is always (..) ummm. (laughter) Yeah.
20. We look after each other. I look after her. And my brother does. Because she's our sister. The thing is, we don't get much back. Cuz of her personality (laughter).
21. Soo, she was born in sri lanka. Annd my father left right after she was born, so she didn't really see my father much.

Commented [ZR1]: FABULA CATEGORY: NATURE OF THE SIBLING RELATIONSHIP

22. She was with my mum. And mum was just 16 when she had her and she was a terrible mother for a very long time (*laugh*) so you can imagine a little child with this mum, it was not good for her.
23. And then finally my dad came and then uhh, for her it was like (..) uhh, a dream coming true. This freedom away from mum, but then (.) of course my father wasn't a good person so it was even worse.
24. And (.) I was born (*laughter*). Yeah. As soon as she went to italy I was born.
25. So I think that meant she didn't have all the affection she wanted and needed. So (..) that affected a lot of the bullying.
26. And our culture is very (..) ummm, especially with girls, a good girl is someone who is very quiet and you know, modest and doesn't ask for anything. Aaannd, I, I was just like that (.) Not because I wanted to.
27. Because ummm (..)
28. no children were loved in that family at the time (*laughter*) so we were all fighting for love.
29. So knowing that I would just, you know, conform and try to be exactly what they wanted me to be and it was successful. If you don't say anything, of course they have no reason to tell you off or (*laugh*), if you don't do anything then can't do anything to you. So that was my, my tactic, to survive in this family.
30. My sister was different. She can't do that. She's' very, she doesn't like anyone giving her orders, or telling her what to do, and she wants to be herself so at the time already she was like that and of course they would tell her off a lot more. So she would always feel like, they like you more that's why they tell me off and they don't tell you off.
31. And I would tell her no, actually, I didn't do anything. You did I didn't (..) But it wouldn't work.
32. So (..) for a very long it just went on like that, so,
33. she used to beat me up a lot.
34. And, usually, my mum noticed the jealousy. So she thought, "ahhh if, when she does something, if I tell off both of them, without being biased maybe she will stop doing that". But it made it worse (*laughter*). Because I would get told off by her. And beat up by her. And then I would get beaten up by my sister. So it doubled. And, yeah (small laugh). It was just terrible
35. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was**
36. Any questions?
37. **Interviewer: A lot of dynamics going on. Yeah. So, what you said, is just very interesting. It sounds like from the beginning you've got very, kind of detailed story. Umm**
38. I think my life just got better and better. It started very bad and got nice, so I'm doing really well now. Just so you know and you're not worried. (*laughter*)
39. **Interviewer: Ahh, that's great to hear.**
40. No, I'm doing really well now.
41. **Interviewer: And really able to talk about it seems**
42. Yeah. Yeah.

Commented [ZR2]: FABULA: RESPONSE FROM OTHERS

43. **Interviewer: So I was just wondering, when you said about umm, you would get beaten up by mum and from sister. Umm, what kind of is your definition I suppose of being beaten up. What would happen?**
44. My sister was more violent than my mum because she was younger, she would just (.) umm, she would beat me because of her rage. My mum was more frustrated, but my sister would just really (..) uncontrollable violence (*laughs*).
45. So, my mum would be like pushing or just you know, umm (..) what's it called a slap.
46. My sister would actually um, grab my hair and bash my head on the wall. And yeah, or one day she beat me up with a dictionary (..) Yeah. In front of my cousins who were terrified (*laughter*) and went home. They were both younger, yeah.
47. She didn't even care if there were other people. But she cared if my parents were there, because they would tell her off. But yeah, well, if my parents were around she would just cheekily like push me over, you know, yeah. Or (..) she would also do small things like, wipe her feet on my bag, before going to sleep (*laughs*). You know, yeah, that kind of stuff. Or just you know, break my things,
48. oh there was one episode, really really bad, it wasn't violent, but it's the one that hurt me the most at the time.
49. And, it happened that she had these magazines that she really really liked and we didn't have many things for ourselves, so I understand. Ummm, I ruined the magazine, like I ripped something, I don't remember exactly, and (..) and she got really, really angry.
50. So she, she was beating me up and shouting doing all these things. So, my parents heard all the noise. So they called her and they said what are you doing, what's going on? And she explained. And then, they were not really impressed because it's just a magazine (*laughs*), but then they told me off anyway, but you could tell they were just being condescending. And she could tell that too so she was not really happy (.) So, she went up to our room again and my parents said it's best if you stay here, because she's really angry (*laughter*). Just hang around a bit, yeah. So, I had to stay to stay there.
51. And then I went uhhh to the room, she wasn't there (.) And I only had, I really love reading, and (.) you know, in that situation reading was the thing that would give me the freedom, you know, to just imagine, to be somewhere else. And I had this one book, it was the only book I had, it was my literature book for school and it had many stories. They were always half stories (*laughter*), because they were just that type of reading so, I would never know how it finishes. But, anyway. I knew it by heart because I would just read it all the time.
52. Annnndd, I just picked it up to read it and umm, she just, she had like, carved with scissors the words die on the book.
53. And then I cried.
54. And then she beat me up because she said I was crying because I was uh a snitch (*laughter*). But I was really, really hurt by this.

55. So I think it still hurts me if I think about it. Even though it has been many years. I, you know, even more than the beating up and everything. You know family where you already feel that you're not loved and you're not wanted and someone writes die then you just (laughs).
56. **Interviewer: Yeah, it's quite an obvious statement.**
57. Yeah. It's the worst you can do. You can beat me up, but you know, don't tell me that. But I guess, it made her feel better? (laughs)
58. **Interviewer: Yeah.**
59. Yeah.
60. **Interviewer: And I guess to come from your own sister**
61. I think she had a really, really, huge issue on controlling her anger. Just feelings. And (...) she was really (...)
62. one thing that even my parents, everyone hated was that she was plainly fake. With us, she would be very evil and everything. And then if someone came, she would change completely, you know. And we would just have to, umm, pretend that she's like that.
63. So for example (laughter), I have this problem when I sleep, they're still not sure if it's sleep apnea or if it is something else, I have problems with breathing. My throat makes noises, it's not like, snoring, it's more (...) yeah, I don't know how to say, it's like I'm choking.
64. And (...) ummmm, my sister used to sleep with me in the same room. Usually when I make that noise, she would just like punch me in the stomach or do something like that to wake me up.
65. But then after she got her boyfriend, she would speak to him at night on the phone, and I was just coughing (*laughter*) and trying to breathe and I heard her crying saying, "my sister is ill, she can't breathe at night, and it makes me so sad" (*laughter*).
66. And I was just thinking, "just leave me out please". (sigh, laughter)
67. Yeah, she used to do that a lot.
68. **Interviewer: So almost have these two person, sort of faces about things.**
69. Yeah, yeah. She just really wanted someone to accept her you know, and just (...)
70. it's like, she wanted to be herself, but she didn't really know what herself was. She wanted to live with someone, but then she couldn't control all the negative (...) sides, so she would just (...) it was such a mess (laughs).
71. And she used to lie a lot. In a way that (...) even if you see her, uum, I don't know, she (...) she ummm,
72. there have been episodes where she stole something, not from me, but from other people
73. from me it's not stealing, it's taking (laughing).
74. But (...) uhh when there's all the proof that she did it and everything, she would still say no I didn't, you're just saying this cuz you all want to blame me.
75. Yeah. And she had this thing and so, she wouldn't really have friends, ummm, the only friends she had were the people who didn't know how she was and then sometimes they would find out and then leave her.
76. So (...) when I went on with my life, umm, after she got married (...)

77. ummm, I grew up and we were not allowed to go around with friends or you know visit people
78. but then when I was around 16, umm, after my dad left and everything, my mum said uhh okay, if I can trust your friends then you can go.
79. And I really, really thought about it, I planned everything, like I brought one friend first and then we did homework so my mum could see, yeah, you know, just planned everything. And then in the end my mum, a year after (*laughs*), she gave me permission for the first time to, go out with my friends. And then she trusted me because she saw that I wasn't doing anything bad, so she just let me go without asking and do anything I wanted.
80. My sister saw that as because she likes you, so she didn't let me do that because she doesn't like me. But actually, she used to do bad things when she went out with her friends and my mum wouldn't trust her. And my mum tells her that, but she doesn't believe it. She just complains that I am having things because I am lucky.
81. So (..) if she would see me be on Facebook and I write that I went to the cinema or something like that, then she would send me a looong message on Facebook (..) we all have set thoughts about why she couldn't go out with her friends and how lucky I am and now she got married she can't do that anymore, even though she can actually, but she doesn't (*laughs*).
82. And, she has a very nice husband. Nice, he's not really nice actually but he's permissive, so she could do those things, uhh, her husband is another chapter. And we all thought he was good and he's not so they might divorce soon.
83. **Interviewer: Yeah, so, she's sort of, I'm just thinking about the bullying, it's almost like it was physical and mental? Psychological, whatever you want to call it.**
84. Yeah, yeah.
85. **Interviewer: Ummm, and would you say any other type? I mean**
86. Umm (..)
87. **Interviewer: Verbal, I suppose comes into.**
88. Yeah, mental. Like, she would often humiliate. Ummm (..) I can't think of any examples now (..)
89. For example, oh yeah, yeah I can (*laughs*)
90. you know my tactic when someone tells me off I don't say anything? I just shut up and just, ummm, she wouldn't like if I am doing something where she is telling me off, so first of all she would shout and stand up and say you have to look at me in the face, so I would just look at her. But then, she would come up with, your expression is not right, or you know, you look like this, or you look like that, and she would take me to the mirror and say, look at yourself, look how stupid you look. That sort of stuff. (..) And I'm not sure how it would make her feel better, but I guess it did if she kept doing it (*laughs*).
91. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It was her only way to kind of**
92. something, yeah.
93. **Interviewer: Right, yeah. Humiliation like you said. Yeah. And kind of, this idea of making you feel like there is kind of something wrong with you?**

94. Yeah, I think she just felt, just because of my parents not telling me off, maybe she felt uhh, umm, that ummm, I was a better person, so she wanted to put me down and just feel like (...) actually, I am better. Or I am as good as her. Even though, the only basis for that was my parents not telling me off (laughs). It was nothing else. Or like people saying "oh she's so quiet", which is not necessarily a quality, but for them it was.
95. Quiet means no problems. So.
96. **Interviewer: Yeah. So in your culture,**
97. Yeah.
98. **Interviewer: Yeah. This was strategy that you used you adopted?**
99. Yeah. The best compliment I got from my mum was "she's so quiet, I don't even know if she's, she's in the house (laughter).
100. **Interviewer: Yeah**
101. So yeah, I don't see why my sister would be jealous of that really. (laughs)
102. **Interviewer: Yeah, we all have our own perspectives.**
103. But, yeah.
104. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was quite tough for you, in lots of areas it sounds like.**
105. Yeah.
106. **Interviewer: Um and it was like copi---a way of managing growing up?**
107. Yeah, I think I just became very independent
108. Umm, that's another thing. She would have this tendency of wanting to lean on others. So growing up, when she (...)
109. umm, she was a bit more mature (laughing), she became more mature after having her child, but before that, it took a long time (laughs). But she was a bit more mature at some points.
110. And so she started learning on me, umm, she used to do that already, if she had a problem she would vent out on me (...) and so I would be useful in those cases. And, she started doing that a lot more growing up, but she always needed someone to lean on.
111. While, I had the opposite reaction to our situation, I thought, no one wants me, and I'm not needed, I just help myself. I just look out for myself. And, it worked when I was child. And at some point I needed people (laughs).
112. So I had to do my own journey of you know, learning to lean on others. But (...) ummm, that was (...) how I was coping at the time. Just thinking it was just, you know. And also my brother was a huge, huge, kind of
113. **Interviewer: Yeah, I was just going to say. Sounds like**
114. Because, ummm, I was kind of invisible, I made myself invisible to protect myself.
115. But also (...) ummm, I was not uhh, sorry, I was not planned let's say.
116. And also I was born in very umm (...) sad circumstances (laughs). Because my father wanted a boy. And then, my mum thought we don't have money, so we should use, you know those injections, you know those kind of contraceptions?

Commented [ZR3]: FABULA CATEGORY: IMPACT

Commented [ZR4]: FABULA CATEGORY: IMPACT

Commented [ZR5]: FABULA CATEGORY: IMPACT

117. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah**
118. My father didn't understand how those worked. So, my mum got pregnant. But, he thought, oh but you were using contraception, so. Yeah.
119. So, he never believed I was (.) his daughter.
120. So when my mum was pregnant with me, he used to beat her up a lot. And I know of, they told me uhh, she was like, thrown down the stairs with her tummy big like this. She just didn't care, kicked her in the tummy, that sort of stuff.
121. And my mum has the theory that maybe, uhh, because when I was born I would never cry, never whine, never ask for anything. She thought I think it was because it was I was really depressed and maybe you were born a bit like that.
122. And, I think it's a true story (laughs). I think I kind of, closed myself, to protect myself but I think something was already there a bit.
123. And, my sister loved to tell me uhh, how I was not my father's daughter. *(laughter)* Because, my dad ummm, it was weird, ummm, I think maybe he felt more appreciated by me because I really wanted his love. So he sort of, uhhh, he used to compliment me a bit more, and you know, try and encourage me a bit more. So, I think my sister saw that and was really, yeah, trying to come in the way.
124. **Interviewer: So he was nice to you?**
125. Yeah, I had very huge issues with school. I think I had a learning problem, but you know, in that kind of family no one really had time to care (laughs).
126. So I learnt to read very early, compared to the other ones, but I couldn't count, and I was really bad at writing, and for a very long time. So, and the teachers hated me.
127. It was a weird school. Uhh, normally a teacher when they see a child like that they would, they would try to understand what's wrong, it was not like that. They used to send me out of the class room, saying that I am slowing down the other students and I would just be outside or they would even tell other people not to be friends with me otherwise I will influence them I suppose, contagious.
128. Yeah. So, I changed school after a while, and they told my mum I was retarded. Using that word (laughs). My mum went home crying. She beat me up because she told me, "you humiliated me, uhh, I didn't know what to do, I'm never going to your school interviews again."
129. **Interviewer: Right.**
130. And she never did. Until I got my diploma, she never did.
131. And the day after, my teachers, uhh they took me up to the classroom they said ohh see what you did, your mum went home crying, why, why you so evil. Why you doing this to your parents. I don't know what was wrong with those teachers (laughter)
132. **Interviewer: Yeah, not very good teachers.**
133. They should not teach. You know, you could think they were racist, but actually my cousin was in the class as me (.) and she was treated differently.

Commented [ZR6]: FABULA CATEGORY IMPACT

- So I'm not sure what was really the issue. Maybe they were just, not racist, but you know like poor people, because I was quite poor, and you could tell (laughter).
134. Yeah, they used to tell me off a lot for not having the right pants, or you know, having a missing button or something from the uniform. Anyway, my sister was really good in school (..) And (..) she was really good and my parents were really proud of her being so smart and then all my uncles would have huge families, uhhh, they would tell their own children, you have to be like her, see how good she is in school.
135. But I'm not sure she never, why she never (..) she never, counted that as being, you know, something to be happy about. So she always thought okay she's the favourite, even though she had all these nice things that people recognise.
136. Yeah (..) I was only good in the house, for doing nothing (laughter). So yeah, it's not like I had much. But (..) yeaahh (..)
137. **Interviewer: And so, would, did your brother get treated in a different way?**
138. I would say so. Because I was around. And I love my brother (laughs).
139. So, oh yeah sorry I kind of lost my thought. But what I was saying is that when he was born (..) uhhh, I just had something that loved me (.) regardless of anything. I would just be nice to him and he would love me because I'm nice, And it was the first time ever I think I had something like that at the time.
140. Sooo, I was just all over my brother, since when he was born. And my mum was not a good mother at the time, so even with a child that's small she used to beat him a bit and you know, not very look after him much, so I used to put him to sleep, you know, and just cuddle him, that sort of stuff.
141. We just grew up really, really close (laughs) and (..) for that reason when my sister, you know, when she would be angry, I would be the first one to be in the way. And if my brother was with her I would be there to protect him, you know I'm just saying oh poor him, he's just a child you know.
142. And also my brother was a huge snitch, so (laughter) my sister, if she, she used to swear a lot, at him. So he would know it was a bad word, he wouldn't know what it means but he knows. So he would tell my mum and dad.
143. He got beaten up too a bit, but not much. Cuz I was in the way.
144. And also my sister was a teenager by then, she was going out and she was a bit more focused on other things than my brother (.)
145. **Interviewer: You kind of took the middle space as it were, between them? To kind of (..) protect him.**
146. (...)
147. Mmmmm he, he has a better relationship now with her, but for a long time it's like not even a bad one she, he didn't really have a relationship with her (..) and I think he always resented her for leaving so early
148. but ummm now that she's got the child and everything we all see a side of her that, you know, we always thought it was there, but we didn't know (laughter) for sure. So I think he got a bit closer.

149. Annnd, she's doing better, but while we have the chance to go on without our father she left in a moment where it was still a big mess in the family and it's like she's still in the past somehow.
150. She still has many issues she still can't be friends with my mum even though my mum made (.) a change from like this to this completely. And she still can't see her as the person she is now, not what she was in the past.
151. So she, even though we are all trying to be more friendly towards her, it's like she's still isolated which is a bit sad, but (makes a tut noise) (..) she can't bully anyone anyway (laughter)
152. AND, she knows how she was, ummm when, more than that she says "oh our mum was like this" but I think what she means is oh so I know how I was. Or I hope.
153. And she said she will not treat her child in the same way. And (..) I think that's a huge huge step.
154. Cuz I was worried, to be honest (laughter). But I think she's much better now. Yeah.
155. (..) Still ummm, she just can't ummm (..) she can't recognise, umm.
156. I was in counselling for some time ummm (..) sorry, my mouth is dry. And, sorry what was I saying?
157. Oh yeah, I was in counselling so you know my sister came up with counselling and I knew I had still some issues that really made me angry about the past.
158. Soo, the best way to fix that would you know, receive an apology. So I tried. Uhhh, I said, you know you did these things to me and that, but she always say "don't remember, I don't know what you're talking about, I don't remember" and then she would cry and say you all think I'm evil and I'm just the bad guy. So that didn't work out. So I had to work on it on my own (...)
159. I like to think that she does remember, that she realises. That's why she cries. And (..) yeah.
160. (...)
161. **Interviewer: If it's alright if we just go back to the younger times. And when this was happening, particularly like your sister, bullying you. And I know you mentioned that your parents kind of knew. Did they know, do you think they knew to the extent that you described to me?**
162. No. Cuz she would always do it um, when they were not around.
163. They knew uhh that she was ummm, saying evil things with words. Cuz they would always hear her shouting but I don't think they knew about the violence.
164. And my mum said to me one day she said, "I'm really sorry because I know uhh I wasn't looking after you as much as your sister and your brother and also I know that I left you a bit in the (..) in the middle of all the rage of the whole family (laughs).
165. And I think she meant particularly my sister. But she never knew about, you know, what exactly was happening.
166. also because they used to find it quite funny, so yeah (laughing).
167. Like you know, sisterly rivalry I think they call it. Yeah.

Commented [ZR7]: FABULA: LACK OF SUPPORT

168. Also you know with my father being like that, any violence wouldn't seem so serious (..) especially for my dad (*laughing*).
169. **Interviewer: So even if, let's say they didn't know at all that she was beating you. You didn't ever want to tell, or you never thought you could tell them? Did you tell anyone?**
170. No. I think, well I used to tell my best friend cousin. So we used to hate her together (laughter). Cuz she used to hate her too. And also she was the witness at the dictionary beating.
171. Yeah, I think she still remembers it.
172. But uhh, I never told my parents and that was because they always, you know with the situation, they always had this kind of philosophy that uhhh we are suffering, we are making loads of sacrifices so you should not ask for anything and you should try to do things better you know. So anything that would make things worse would be uhh an attack, to your parents and you should feel guilty about it.
173. So that was the kind of thing so to tell them I would feel really guilty because I'm giving them more problems on top of what they already have.
174. So even asking them for a present, it would be like I'm asking them (.) to give me blood or (laughter) yeah.
175. It was that kind of atmosphere so I wouldn't have any ummm, well help, not for sure because they could only tell her as they can, just say, don't do that,
176. but telling my cousin was a lot more helpful because she would keep doing it but I would have someone to vent out to and feel better, instead of having everything(..) on my own and just (.)
177. when my brother grew up, I tried not to be biased, you know (laughter) but it was a bit hard (..)
178. so, I think I contributed to his not having too much of a relationship with her. Uhhh, just complaining about she did this, she did that, and but (.) when he grew up anyway he knew what the situation was, that he was judging for himself (..) But yeah, I had him to impart, although I always tried not to (laughter).
179. **Interviewer: And so do you know, do you know when you first sort of realised, that this isn't good? This is bullying.**
180. Oh from the beginning (..)
181. Uhh because (..) at first obviously cuz it hurts (laughter) nothing that hurts can't be right
182. And also, I think ummm, I knew more about what is normal compared to the, my other siblings, because I was reading books since a very early age (.) so even though we were not allowed to see other friends or (.) hang out with Italian people because my father had this obsession that we would become Italian and Westernised, so yeah, we were not allowed to.
183. Uhhh but through books, when I was six I already knew how babies were born, for example. And I knew stuff that my parents wouldn't even imagine. So I think that (.) books really helped me (laughter).

Commented [ZR8]: FABULA CATERGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

184. And like, really really really grateful for that literature book that I had at the beginning and all the other books I had after. And, I think my whole knowledge of what is normal, what's not, is just from, from hours in books.
185. **Interviewer: You got a different perspective by reading?**
186. Yeah (..) I'm not sure what is normal for my sister, if she ever realised (.)
187. Ummm she might have been confused about my parents, but I'm not sure what about her behaviour, she thought it was okay or because seeing my dad like that, it could be, that she thought maybe ummm, maybe it's just fine.
188. But, ohh I don't know (...) I don't know because she kept doing it for such a long time (laughter).
189. (sigh) so you know, after 7, 8 years you should start realising. You learn things in school anyway.
190. Yeah (...) But, that didn't happen so I'm not sure. I think she just had this issue with her anger really (...) and it was, uncontrollable.
191. (...)
192. **Interviewer: The example you said about, when she wrote in your book, when she said die. Ummm. How do you think that experience has, from that moment on, were things different, or?**
193. Ummm, it made things worse (laughter).
194. I was already suicidal at the time (..)
195. Ummm. It was really bad you know, I wasn't wanted so I was a very depressed child. Even though if I said depressed no one would have understood because no one read books apart from me (laughter) Sooo, yeah.
196. So that made things worse. But then umm when I went to middle school, there was a really nice teacher.
197. And things started to change from that, but until 11 years old I was still very, very suicidal.
198. And then my brother obviously was a reason I had to go on every time, cuz I always felt that he needed me. And then, around 11 I was a bit worried because I thought he's growing up (laughter), he won't need me anymore so, and I was a bit upset about that, and I think maybe that's also why this teacher umm, managed to (.) ummm, touch me let's say, to make me wake up a bit, because I needed something, something else to focus
199. and I just felt like she appreciated my writing, and she saw I had, I was really still really bad at school, but she thought I had some skills. So, I tell her "oh I want to do to good so that she can be proud of me", and then I started studying and then I became better and better and then I'm a _____.
200. **Interviewer: So would you call that a turning point in your life?**
201. Yeah definitely. That's that's THE turning point (laughter). Yeah.
202. It was the first time anyone ever had expectations from me, or thought something I did was really nice.
203. She also tried to get in touch with my mum but my mum refused to (laughter) to have any interviews. The only time she came after that time was ummm, I finished my high school. I got the highest score in the classroom and in my ummm subject module. And so I told her that and then she came to brag

- about it (*laughter*), but my teachers were not happy because they thought oh why did you not, never show every time we called you? So she actually got scolding. (*laughter*).
204. Which I was happy about. But yeah.
205. Teachers really, not only that one, because after that one, I learnt to ask for help and you know, lean on others. Soo, I always asked for help from teachers if I didn't have books cuz I couldn't afford them, sometimes they would buy them for me. Or if I didn't understand anything I wouldn't be scared of asking cuz I felt stupid, I didn't know anything, I would just ask them. And just have that one moment where I feel stupid (*laughter*), and then feel brilliant after because I know it.
206. Soo, that helped me a lot. And I was lucky, I had REALLY good teachers afterwards and yeah, I started with bad teachers and then I got the best ones (*laughter*).
207. My sister and my brother apparently they both had umm not very good teachers. My sister had quite racist ones, or at least she says they were racist.
208. And, my brother (..) he's got one that he doesn't really respect much cuz they teach how to make chains and bracelets, he's dong arts, he wants to learn how to draw, so he's quite disappointed in his teachers.
209. But yeah. Sorry, I always go into topics that have nothing to do (*laughter*).
210. **Interviewer: No, no, it's great. It's very good.**
211. And you have to bring me back.
212. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about, this turning point and then moving through adolescence and into an adult. And I guess the events that happened when you were younger, specifically with your sister, I guess if we think about having to lean on others, making relationships with others when growing up. Do you see similarities**
213. Do you mean, did I get anything positive out of it, or?
214. **Interviewer: So both, yeah (laughter). Basically, to keep it open, what do you think, how is it?**
215. It definitely improved my levels of patience. And (..) I think, ummm, because she's my sister, they say that blood doesn't make you family, but sometimes I guess it does. (*laughter*)
216. cuz just being born with her, having been with her since birth it just makes me feel attached to her no matter what.
217. So, even though I feel like I hate her because uh, at the time I was hating her because she was beating me and everything (..) ummm, I would still suffer if she suffers.
218. And, I think it teaches me to be more compassionate.
219. And also I always have this thought, it's not just because of her, but also because of my mum. I will always have this ummm philosophy that everyone can change, so (..)
220. I think I have this hard bit of waiting and you know, support people until they manage to change and that's also why I want to be a therapist (*laughter*).

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221. But it doesn't always go that way, because with my father it didn't work, some people just don't change. But my mum changed so much, and she actually changed much more than what I expected.
222. And you know, when you're an adult it's hard to change, it's not the same as when you are a teenager.
223. And, my sister I know she has ummm, I feel like she has wasted potential (laughs). She's so good at arts. She's so clever you know, she was in the best in school. And she's just very (..), she's very practical, she has many nice things (..) But her personality just covers everything. And I know that that's not her whole personality, or I like to think that it's not.
224. And so I just feel I want to wait until she changes and see what she becomes. And I think, she's changed already a bit. So, I'm just, just looking forward (laughter)
225. But I think ummm, the bullying that's that's actually just something that gave me just umm, hang in there until you know the change will come sometime.
226. And (..) not everyone agrees with me (laughter).
227. Many friends say oh you're being too nice. Or you're just wasting your time, you should think about yourself, who cares about the others. But then my experience is that when they do change, they also remember that you've been there the whole time. And if you want to show unconditional love (.) the best way is to show it when, you know, when they are being there worst. And right now I think my sister, even though she knows everything she did, she knows I didn't like it obviously (laughter). And she knows that I'm not uhhh, every time something happens to me, I'm not going to her because I don't feel like opening up to her, she knows all these things, but she also knows every time she has a problem she can just call me. And I would be happy to help her.
228. And (.) I feel proud about that (laughter).
229. Ummm, it's just because ummm she's just my sister. I can't change it.
230. And I dunno why I can, well actually I do, ummm, I can live without my dad because ummm, I don't care whether we have the same brother or not, if he doesn't love me then why do I go after him.
231. But with my sister I feel like we both are a product of the same situation. We just made different choices.
232. And I feel like (.) she's everything (.) I could be if you know I just made those choices. We just (..) we had the same parents, same situations, you know. With my mum scolding me, I could have acted like her, and just (..) bang out my rage that I had and decide to ummm, respond, talk back. And I made the choice of being quiet instead. But she's everything I could be. So it's just looking after another me (laughs). If that makes sense.
233. Ummm, same for my brother. He's just someone whom I, you know more different choices. And (..) it's just, you can't really blame anyone in the end, if you know where they come from. And I do more than anyone (laughs).
234. We both came from there, we both know what happened, how it feels. And I can't blame her for being angry, or for feeling like she couldn't handle it anymore, that she wanted to destroy everything, it's just (..) bad luck that I was

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- in the way when she was feeling like that. And I guess it's good luck for my brother that I was in the way when she was feeling like that. I was just not lucky enough to have someone else to look after me. So it was just all bad luck. For, for all of us (laughter).
235. **Interviewer: And it sounds like you have really changed your luck around and**
236. Yeah, you make your life. When you're a child you can't though. That's sad (..) Children don't have any (..) They say, oh children are so lucky cuz they're so free, it's not true. They depend on others. So, it's all about luck.
237. **Interviewer: And so when do you think you decided that you wanted to maybe do things differently? So maybe, to kind of try and make your own luck?**
238. I think with that teacher. It just started with my other teachers from elementary school because they gave some resumes to the, yeah. They told her I'm such a bad student, I never do my homework, I'm stupid, I couldn't do maths which was true, I still couldn't count properly. And (.) so many bad things. So she wasn't expecting much from me. But she was keeping an eye like, you know, a teacher is supposed to do. So we wrote essays and because I liked to write uh read, I became also very good at writing at this time. In Italian. Unfortunately not as good in English.
239. But anyway, she was really impressed.
240. She said, I don't know what happens here, because they tell me these things about you but then uhhh I see this. I don't know where it's coming from. And then she asked me to talk about myself and tell her a bit, what I like, what I want to do and she just gave me attention.
241. She was also very strict, it wasn't all honey it was, ummm if I didn't do my homework she would keep me in class and make me do my homework. But she wouldn't just let me do it, she would sit down with me and explain to me how to do it and then make me do it.
242. So, she would give me punishment but she would do the punishment with me.
243. And I think that meant a lot to me cuz no one ever did that for me and it just made me feel like I could do things (laughter).
244. And I even learnt, I got better in Maths, uhh that really, I still struggle, but somehow I managed to do enough to pass.
245. And every little thing just meant a big achievement and I just realised I'm not so stupid, I'm not umm, I'm not (..)
246. I'm sorry I don't know the word for that, but being nothing (laughs).
247. Uhhh, so it just, it just gives me hope.
248. So I just thought, and also, knowing about my childhood and knowing how hard it is to be a child, so I want to be, grow up and be uhh counsellor or psychotherapist and help children who need it.
249. Although I know that not many parents could do (laughter). So I mean if that kind of family they won't think oh I'm beating my child, I will bring him to therapy, no. But it's something.

250. At least for the ones who grow up and need some counselling (*laughter*). I can definitely help those. So, I felt like I just wanted to give back what I got because it was so precious, so I think that was a huge, huge turning point.
251. **Interviewer: Was it difficult at first where you hadn't always known one way, with your sister and your mother, was it difficult at first to accept that there was another way, like a positive. Was it difficult to trust that?**
252. Yes. It's like this, ummm (...) for many years when I was in counselling I couldn't afford it, there was no place to go, so you know, so to cope with things I would keep everything inside and I had these really high defences. So it was really hard in counselling to bring out anything.
253. And (...) ummm, sorry I got lost. (laughter).
254. Oh yeah I remember now. Ummm, I had all this anger and stuff that had happened from the past, and sadness. But then, no, no place to put it onto because it was everything in the past and I can't go back to the past and do things differently, or tell people what they did, if I told my mum now, you did these things, I would make her suffer and also she had already apologised to me, so I wasn't feeling much anger towards her, although I still had you know, some feelings of I wish she was different. And, it's just misplaced anger and it's really frustrating, because you don't have anywhere, nowhere to put it.
255. So, with my sister, I tried as I said, you know, to say you did these things and it really hurt me. But she would just say "oh I don't remember". Ummm, "you just, everyone just says I'm evil and do evil things". And then she would start crying and I would end up consoling her.
256. And I would be okay with consoling but also I would think, I wanted to be consoled (laughter).
257. So yeah, it didn't work out in the right way, but (...) ummm, it's like this. Every time she's in need, I forget about what she did because she's my sister and I feel like, I feel sorry for her and empathetic and so right now, because she's in the middle of this divorce and everything, I can forget everything, what she did, because now I feel I just want her to be happy.
258. But then the moment when things go back to normal, I know that I will feel like when she talks to me about normal things, like "oh how did you do today?" or things like that, I wouldn't feel like replying because I would feel like "why do you want to know" (laughter).
259. I still have that. I just can't get over it. Because I think if she were to recognise what she did and say "I'm really sorry and you know it was like this and that, and I really do feel bad about doing these things and I wish I had done differently" that would change a lot. But I didn't have that yet. So, I think until I get it, it will be like this (laughs). Friends when she needs me and then I won't care when she doesn't I just
260. **Interviewer: So do you know where that anger goes or has gone or?**
261. It just stays there, I can't really put it anywhere, and it only comes up when she talks to me. So, when she talks about problems, as I say, it's fine because I'm so focussed on what's happening and all, but if she wants to know

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- things about me I feel like almost (.) attacked. Uhh why do you want to know about me? I don't want to tell you anything. We don't have this kind of relationship (laughs).
262. I feel like she's assuming things. Even though maybe she, she's probably not thinking all this stuff but I am. So, I still don't feel like telling her anything uhh, I think I only told her I have exams, maybe. Just because I told her I had exams so I won't be able to talk to you these days.
263. Even simple things, I can't, it's just, it feels like I'm giving her a present. I don't know (.) how to describe it. It's just, something she doesn't deserve. Yet. (laughter).
264. So I'm still waiting. Yeah. I think, personally, I think, it feels silly to be honest, because it feels like ummm, that's something other people would say "it's not silly because you suffered so much", that's what the counsellor says, you know it was terrible.
265. But I think when you grow up in that kind of situation you learn to, undermine everything that happens. So you think, okay, she bashed my head in the wall, but uhh, you know people have it worse (laughter). You always feel like that, so when you feel bad about it, you feel guilty and stupid like ummm (..) like someone, someone who is spoiled just complaining about things, you know. So when I feel like that towards my sister I also feel like I'm being stupid and spoilt why am I being like this, I should be mature and grown up (laughter). And just leave everything behind, because I'm superior, but I can't.
266. **Interviewer: So, it sounds like what you're saying is actually you still DO have that kind of some feelings, and actually sometimes you try and kind of say oh I shouldn't feel like that or I feel bad for that.**
267. Yeah, I can't even say I'm trying, because I'm not (laughter).
268. I mean I have these, but I act on more on "she doesn't deserve it".
Except when she needs my help, but all the other times and she doesn't need it and it's just normal days, then I feel like I don't need to have a relationship with her. So I don't really act on the mature side. Be mature, responsible.
269. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about other relationships with people. You said about that teacher at the beginning and then maybe meeting people, friends and relationships with boyfriend/girlfriend along the way. Do you think what happened with you and your sister means that it has been more difficult to have these sort of trusting relationships?**
270. Ummm, I think it's been easier (.) because I needed people, I needed people to listen to me, and because she was making it hard, it was easier for me to open up to other people who weren't part of the family or you know, no one that she knows that can tell her (laughs).
271. All secret. And also people would say, "oh my god" "yeah she's a terrible person" and that would make me feel really good (laughter)
272. **Interviewer: Ahhh, okay, so it was a useful thing to do**
273. Yes because someone recognises that this, it is a bad situation, but in my family it's sort of normal.

274. Ummm (...) yeah. And also, uhh I think I always have this, ummm, kind of, unconscious uhh hope. For my sister to change.
275. And, there was some bullying in high school, she wasn't a violent bullying she was more of a verbal bully (*laughs*), so she was one of those sassy girls who was like "oh your dress is so ugly", that kind of stuff.
276. So, she used to ummm, I knew where she was coming from. I knew she had a really bad family situation, and was a bit similar to mine, minus the violence, but she also had you know father and her father, stepfather, didn't love her.
277. This guy even used to buy his own water and tell her not to touch it because it's HIS water, I mean (*laughs*), yeah, it was really bad.
278. But anyway, she had this situation. And then I thought if she's like this in school I feel like, you know, like I said with my sister, we're just making different choices. And, she has all the reasons to act like that, and she's just making a different choice than me.
279. So I felt close to her somehow.
280. But she didn't know my situation. I knew because I was eavesdropping (*laughter*). I do that all the time.
281. Ummm, so I was nice to her. She had difficulties studying, so I used to help her. And, I knew that uhh, she used to talk bad about me when I wasn't around. But I didn't care because I just felt like she deserved my help, just because of the situation she had.
282. And also, I always had like, I'm being nice to her, and so one day she will recognise that I'm being nice and we can be friends. And then people were saying oh, see, she said these things about you and you shouldn't help her anymore, and all these things and (...) she knew that I knew that and I was still helping her (*laughs*).
283. So at some point, she just became a really good friend of mine. And we actually came to this country together, we've been friends for many years now. Yeah.
284. And, SHE CHANGED! and I wish my sister would change too. (*laughs*).
285. But I think what pushed me to, to help her and keep hold of her, was just that desire that I had that people would change and my sister would change and also I think helping others in a similar situation, it feels like helping myself when I was a child.
286. And my sister, Cuz that's something I can't do anymore. I still have memories and I wish I could protect myself (.) but I can't, it's a memory (*laughs*).
287. I can't do it. But when I have people in the same situation I feel like I'm helping in my old self. So, kind of feels like healing.
288. **Interviewer: Yeah, makes sense. So you said about when you were younger, there was a lot of stress, your strategy was to keep it inside and be the kind of diligent person.**
289. Yeah. I would swear loud in my mind (*laughter*).

290. **Interviewer: Yes, yeah. You would keep it all in, don't let it out. And now, as you're an adult, do you think, do you still use the same coping strategy or?**
291. Uhh, I had a bit of a mess coming out of it because I was so used to keeping everything inside, that I became kind of numb, I think I realised that around when I was umm 17, 18 (.)
292. umm whether I was happy or sad I couldn't feel it, it was just all, you know, like there was a massive wall that wouldn't let me feel anything, just to you know, be protected. It was soo efficient, that I couldn't even break it down myself.
293. I knew there was an issue and I couldn't do anything about it and while I was at home, I still couldn't because I was always ummm, I still had that of not giving more problems, so I wouldn't tell my mum or you know I would just try to you know keep going and (.)
294. and then, I decided I need to start counselling because this is the problem and I thought coming here was the perfect moment because no family are around me, it's just me, I can look after myself.
295. And I think it's the first time I did something for myself, finally (laughs) after years of just closing myself somewhere. So it was REALLY hard.
296. Ummm (..) I still have the habit of laughing when I talk about sad things. But it was actually a lot worse at the time, it's a bit better now (laugh) but I still laugh.
297. But it was a lot better at the time. I couldn't cry at all even though I felt sad, it just doesn't, it wouldn't come out (.) And (..) ummm (.) how did it change? I think it just, sorry I'm starting to get lost (laughs) (..) umm.
298. **Interviewer: Whatever comes to your mind is fine**
299. Yeah. Well in counselling I would just talk and talk you know and, but I think the counsellor could tell that I was very separated from what I was saying. I wasn't really feeling, I was just re-telling, re-counting things.
300. So (.) she told me and you know I tried to think, I tried to feel things when they came to me and not hide them away. And I knew there was going to a be a big mess, and it was.
301. It was very (..) counterproductive let's say for University and you know all the things I had to do, but it was really good for me for the healing, so I would, umm,
302. I was so depressed as I've never been, since when I was six or seven probably (laughing) and, it was a very critical situation, but I had this, because I knew it was necessary (.) you know, I would just let it come out, work on it,
303. and and then I met my boyfriend, I actually didn't even want to be with him at first because I thought, I am in this situation now, I don't want someone else to be involved.
304. And then, he didn't mind so (.) and I'm really grateful now that he didn't mind (laughing). Cuz it helped me I thought. I mean, I'm sure I would have managed to do it even on my own, but it would have taken a lot longer, whilst with him it took me a lot less because I realised that umm, after my teacher,

Commented [ZR15]: FABULA CATEGORY IMPACT

- she's the only who ummm gave me attention unconditionally, you know, his own time and everything, so it felt like having that kind of (.) caring figure there that I missed since my middle school times. So that helped a lot.
305. But (..) ummm, I had umm, while I was still in counselling, uhhh I just started to talk about these things to everyone (*laughing*). Yeah, that happens unfortunately. Because you're just trying to keep everything inside, and then all of a sudden you open the door, the box, and everything comes out.
306. But, I don't even know you! (laughing) and I would realise it only after I said it "oh my god why am I telling this to this person" Maybe she was just be talking about the day and I would be like "yeah I remember a day like this which this happened"
307. I don't know. So I had to control myself, and learn to ummm (..) not to close my (..) emotions anymore, but you know just deal with them (..)
308. And I do, I um, I open up now more easily to people. And (.) my boyfriend first of all, I still can't open up to my family, just because (.) I think we all, all my siblings, we all feel like we would make big problems and we don't want to make anyone worried you know in the family really. But with friends, and with my boyfriend, I am always very open. Annd (.) it's just so (.) easily now (laughs). I am not in counselling anymore because yeah, I've done it.
309. And, yeah. I think (.) my sister has always been used to saying everything that comes to her mind right away. Which is what gave her issues with my parents. And she would say exactly what it is comes to her mind. There is no filter. Any way, any sort. And no limit.
310. So ummm now that she's married, we don't argue with her anymore, we don't have reasons, but she still argues a lot with her husband. And these arguments, I tell you (*laughs*), they can go on for five or six hours and I'm not kidding. And it's just her talking and she doesn't like it if you don't respond. So you have to stay there and listen to, like she used to do with me, look at her, don't do anything, just listen to her, nod. (*laughs*). Just follow, say sorry, about 20, 30 times.
311. Sooo, she still has that, she doesn't have any filter and it's still like that. And I'm not sure if she realises it or not. Because every time you try to tell her something, she always feels attacked. "Oh you all tell me I'm evil and I'm the bad one." But no, we are just telling you because, you know, it's a problem (*laughs*) for her.
312. I feel like she could be so happy. But it's so wasted, all the time she has the beautiful baby and the life she has. She just can't appreciate it. She always judges everything she has based on what other people have. So ummm (..)
313. she wanted to study psychology or therapy so she actually didn't finish school at first because instead of going to school she used to go around with her boyfriend and friends. And so my mum said you're not going to school anymore. So she left school and then (.) she decided to work to do like an online course. You still do exams in the school but study online (..) and she decided to do psychology. All of a sudden (laughter). It is not even subtle you know!

Commented [ZR16]: FABULA CATERGORY: IMPACT

314. Cuz she always wanted to do Art, she's really good at Arts. Very talented. And also very good at languages. So those two were the two things that she was mostly interested in. But, she decided because she heard that I did very well in my high school and everyone was proud of me, she decided I'm going to do psychology (laughter).
315. And I went to University and now she says I'm going to go to University. And she sends messages saying "ahh now I have the baby I can't do it, you're so lucky, uhh (..) I wish I could do it. But you know, because of our parents I couldn't".
316. She always blames this on my parents (..) ahhh, that also annoys me. It's true that we didn't have good family, but you know, we make our choices. There were many instances where she could have chosen differently and she didn't so she can't really blame other people now. And, she still could do all the things she wants, but she doesn't do them. And then when I do them, she complains, "oh you're so lucky, I can't do them". (laughs).
317. Yeah. It's not easy to live with her.
318. **Interviewer: You've answered all of my questions and I didn't even realise, which is great. (laughs)**
319. What mark do I get?
320. **Interviewer: Haha, yeah. I was just going to check if there was anything we haven't covered. Um I guess the last thing then was more about how you found this experience and the interview itself?**
321. Interesting (laughs). Do you mean how I felt or
322. **Interviewer: Both I guess. How it felt for you to talk about all these things? And I know it's not the first time you've talked about it.**
323. Yeah, talking about it I think you feel something every single time, it just feels okay. It feels nice.
324. And (.) I don't go home and curl up and cry so don't worry. (laughter).
325. It actually makes me feel good, because I feel like I've let out some more of, you know, of the stuff and that's nice.
326. And I think it's interesting because I've learnt uhh about interviews in sociology, but I've never done one, so this was interesting (laugh). And I would like to use them for my dissertation. Partly. Part of my masters. So, so this was really really useful for me.
327. **Interviewer: Are there any comments about the interview**
328. I was worried I wasn't answering the questions properly, but you always told me when I was going off.
329. **Interviewer: Yeah. And I just wanted to ask you about this word, sibling bullying, and the idea of sibling bullying, and do you think that we talk about it in society?**
330. I don't think so, I think it's because sibling bullying always becomes "ahh it becomes sibling rivalry, you know, it's useful, it's healthy, it's boys, or it's just girls, they're jealous"
331. It's always you know under the carpet. But all things about families I think they are, you know, violence inside the family is, the breaking family is,

Commented [ZR17]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

and even though, you know, most bad things happen in the families, most people don't really talk about it.

332. **Maybe it's just too intrusive to research about it. I don't know, but it's just not.** You don't see it around. Even with movies, or tv series, you don't see much. **I mean (.)** maybe you see a bit of verbal bullying, they're smoking, playing around, it's just in a very funny way. **It** doesn't look as if the person is being humiliated or hurting in any way.

Commented [ZR18]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

333. So (..) and I think also because of that, people who are being bullied, they feel like they're just exaggerating. It's nothing. It's just, you know, I shouldn't be like this. Yeah.

334. **Interviewer: So it makes your experience not feel**

335. **Yeah, it undermines it. So, you, you never feel like you're suffering until someone tells you.** you know that's that's **not really (.)** how it's supposed to be *(laugh)*.

Commented [ZR19]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

336. **You're suffering, you should do something about it. And you're like but he's my brother, it's just you know, he's like that.** Yeah. It's family *(laughs)*.

Commented [ZR20]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

337. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, so it sounds like society, media, everybody, tries to normalise bullying.**

338. **Yeah, rather than that, they don't see any issue with it.**

Commented [ZR21]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

339. It's an issue only if it's a stranger because it seems like the stranger does it without any reason. Because they don't know you, they don't have any right to judge you so if I stranger does it it's really bad.

340. **If the same is done with a family member, it's somehow justified because they love you** *(laughs)*. **Yeah, it's all covered by love. Expected love. Yeah.**

Commented [ZR22]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

341. **So, even though (.)** you can't choose your family members, **you get what you get**, so I think it's more common in families.

342. **You can't go anywhere. At school at least you can avoid the bullying** *(laughs)*.

343. Or you know, in your work place. **You can just avoid it.**

344. **But at home you, you're forced to live with them, help them, live with them, care about them** *(sigh)* and (.) sometimes like me you can't even help it, you feel affectionate, **like affection towards them anyway, even though you feel like you wish you wouldn't cuz you know you suffer when you help someone who doesn't love you much, or doesn't seem like they love you much.**

Commented [ZR23]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

345. **So (..) yeah. I'm glad you're researching in families** *(laughing)*.

Appendix J – Working example of organisation of categorical content

DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

SALLY:

You know I don't think people consider it like, full on bullying, cuz I wouldn't consider mine full on bullying, you assume bullying is like when people pick on you everyday kind of thing. But (...) I think there's different kind of categories to it.

Commented [ZR24]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

I don't think, anyone talks about family bullying.

Commented [ZR25]: FABULA CATEGORY: DEFINING SIBLING BULLYING

Ummm, not really, I don't think anyone talks about that, really.

Commented [ZR26]: FABULA CATEGORY: SPEAKING ABOUT SIBLING BULLYING

Sometimes I was like, this doesn't happen in other people's houses

Commented [ZR27]: FABULA THEME: NOT NORMAL

Interviewer: Yeah (...) So I guess part of my study is a bit about, the definition of bullying. And so, I wonder whether sometimes when people are bullied, like your example, whether we know its actually happening, like consciously at that time.

Yeah I don't know. I just don't think at the time you think about it like that.

Commented [ZR28]: FABULA CATEGORY: NORMALIZING. NOT REALISING

Interviewer: So, how do people know if they've been bullied?

At the time some people know if it's extreme cases, but I think a lot of people don't know. It takes a while later, when you look back on it.

MARK:

Oh yeah, I think you need a bit of wrist to mill. I mean, I think that's normal, I mean, and you're gonna get that. One of you is gonna be older than the other and go through puberty and at that point life becomes very competitive

But competitiveness is different to bullying. Bullying is that wilful want to cause unpleasant feelings or hurt to another person that you derive pleasure from

AMY:

I think bullying (.) to me has almost this component of intent and awareness ummm AND repetition. Where you are just completely unwilling to, to change your behaviour even though you know, you could feel, when you're told that it's hurting people. Yep.

Commented [ZR29]: Definition of bullying

So I think, I think, bullying your sibling, your younger sibling, is (...) yeah, it's kind of a safe, it's safer than bullying someone, bullying a complete stranger

Commented [ZR30]: Fabula category: normalizing

I think, it, it, it (.) it's often disguised as that's just how siblings are, well you know.

I think that's in many not just cultures, but many levels of society, it's just kind of, "well you know, always been a bit rough"

Appendix K – Example of analysis of sjuzet for form and critical analysis

Sharon

Interviewer: Could I ask you a bit about family first? I was wondering if you could describe your family for me?

1. *(laughter)* Well originally my family is, umm,
2. my family comes from Sri Lanka, and I was born in Italy and (..)
3. I'm the middle one of three children so I have an older sister, she's three years older than me, and a younger brother, he's seven years younger.
4. And (..) my parents got divorced about (..) ten years ago? I think it's actually even more, but anyway.
5. So right now it's my mum, my brother and me and then my sister got married so she um lives separately.
6. And (..) It's a very very dysfunctional family (laughter).
7. Right now it's quite good, uhh, but when my father was around it was really, really bad. And (..) umm, because he was,
8. well first of all they got married because they had to (..) she was pregnant so yeah. Annd so they were already not in love (laughter).
9. On top of that my father was very, very misogynistic annd very violent and just impossible to live with. Uh, my mum stupidly thought oh we'll stay with him for the children, like mum's do (laughter).
10. And then she realised that was stupid um and she decided to get a divorce finally so (..) we are all doing better now.
11. I used to be in contact with my father for a while, but then (..) it was just not, umm, it was really a pain (laugh) to have him around.
12. And he, didn't care much anymore.
13. So no one in my family is in contact with my father right now.
14. Except for my mum I think.
15. Aannndd, my sister got married when she was 18. So very young. She got married more for getting away from the family than anything (..)
16. And, so it was me and my brother for a long time.
17. Me and my brother have a very close relationship (..) and, with my sister we are a bit (..) separated I would say. We never really (..) got close to her (..) And I think that was due to the amount of bullying *(laughter)*. Yeah. And the more she would do that the more we would be, you know, keeping us just the two of us.
18. And when she left, it just felt like (..) uhhhh, there was no older sister cuz we always did everything on our own and when we needed her she just left so. So we were just on our own again.
19. So, with my sister the relationship is always (..) ummm. (laughter) Yeah.
20. We look after each other. I look after her. And my brother does. Because she's our sister. The thing is, we don't get much back. Cuz of her personality (laughter).
21. Soo, she was born in sri lanka. Anndd my father left right after she was born, so she didn't really see my father much.

Commented [ZR31]: Begins the interview with laughter when asked to describe her family. (Laughter is a theme throughout the interview, so it is interesting that it starts and ends the interview)

Commented [ZR32]: Hard to recall this event?

Commented [ZR33]: From the outset she warns me that her family is dysfunctional. She is setting the scene for her story very early. She notes her family, not just her sibling. Trying to persuade me of the authenticity of her story? Almost like a warning. What does the laughter represent? Embarrassment? Shame? Unprocessed feelings?

Commented [ZR34]: Whose voice is this telling the story? We later find out that her mother was pregnant with her. Does she attribute some of what happened to her birth?

Commented [ZR35]: Again laughter – is the laughter covering up her anger? Repetition of “stupid” – more evidence of anger/blame towards parents?

Commented [ZR36]: She seems to be initially attributing her struggles to the story of her violent father. Simplistic version.

Commented [ZR37]: Again she is clearly telling me that it was not a good experience to be in her family. Who's story is this? Resentment that her sister managed to escape?

Commented [ZR38]: Separated – this word lacks emotion, describing the relationship very concretely.

Commented [ZR39]: A protective story between herself and her brother, as a result of something that was difficult.

Commented [ZR40]: Notes that the relationship is still difficult

Commented [ZR41]: Can't quite put into words what her relationship is like with her sister. Again, laughter to represent these feelings?

Commented [ZR42]: Tension in the story – care and frustration? Laughter indicates that maybe the tension has not been completely resolved? Beginnings of the underlying theme of **unconditional love for the hated sibling**.

22. She was with my mum. And mum was just 16 when she had her and she was a terrible mother for a very long time (*laugh*) so you can imagine a little child with this mum, it was not good for her.
23. And then finally my dad came and then uhh, for her it was like (...) uhh, a dream coming true. This freedom away from mum, but then (.) of course my father wasn't a good person so it was even worse.
24. And (.) I was born (*laughter*). Yeah. As soon as she went to Italy I was born.
25. So I think that meant she didn't have all the affection she wanted and needed. So (...) that affected a lot of the bullying.
26. And our culture is very (...) ummm, especially with girls, a good girl is someone who is very quiet and you know, modest and doesn't ask for anything. Aaannd, I, I was just like that (.) Not because I wanted to.
27. Because ummm (...)
28. no children were loved in that family at the time (*laughter*) so we were all fighting for love.
29. So knowing that I would just, you know, conform and try to be exactly what they wanted me to be and it was successful. If you don't say anything, of course they have no reason to tell you off or (*laugh*), if you don't do anything then can't do anything to you. So that was my, my tactic, to survive in this family.
30. My sister was different. She can't do that. She's very, she doesn't like anyone giving her orders, or telling her what to do, and she wants to be herself so at the time already she was like that and of course they would tell her off a lot more. So she would always feel like, they like you more that's why they tell me off and they don't tell you off.
31. And I would tell her no, actually, I didn't do anything. You did I didn't (.) But it wouldn't work.
32. So (...) for a very long it just went on like that, so,
33. she used to beat me up a lot.
34. And, usually, my mum noticed the jealousy. So she thought, "ahhh if, when she does something, if I tell off both of them, without being biased maybe she will stop doing that". But it made it worse (*laughter*). Because I would get told off by her. And beat up by her. And then I would get beaten up by my sister. So it doubled. And, yeah (small laugh). It was just terrible
35. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was**
36. Any questions?
37. **Interviewer: A lot of dynamics going on. Yeah. So, what you said, is just very interesting. It sounds like from the beginning you've got very, kind of detailed story. Umm**
38. I think my life just got better and better. It started very bad and got nice, so I'm doing really well now. Just so you know and you're not worried. (*laughter*)
39. **Interviewer: Ahh, that's great to hear.**
40. No, I'm doing really well now.
41. **Interviewer: And really able to talk about it seems**
42. Yeah. Yeah.

Commented [ZR43]: Indication that this "terrible mother" also affected her?

Commented [ZR44]: Trying to justify her sister's "personality". Providing an explanation

Commented [ZR45]: Attributing blame to herself for her sister's behaviour. Trying to defend her sister?

Commented [ZR46]: Taking the position that there may have been a build up of factors to justify the bullying. Trying to provide an explanation for what happened.

Commented [ZR47]: Reflecting on the impact of culture on her circumstances. How her culture shaped her identity.

Commented [ZR48]: TENSION – discord between expectations from culture and her views on how she wanted to present herself in the family but could not. Could not resist the position she was given.

Commented [ZR49]: Hesitation before telling me something important, something affect laden?

Commented [ZR50]: First expression of some affect in regards to what is was like her family. A significant statement that needs to be diluted by laughter. Speaks very much about everyone in the family, not just herself. Image of fighting for love – bullying – fighting. Hard to acknowledge the hurt that comes with this statement (*laughter*)

Commented [ZR51]: Reflecting on the impact of her culture on her life and identity formation. Surrendering to cultural expectations to survive in the family.

Commented [ZR52]: Story of survival. Her family motto. Sense feelings of desperation. Authenticity of her story.

Commented [ZR53]: DE identification with sibling. Sister was not able to conform to the cultural expectations.

Commented [ZR54]: Continually trying to help her sister survive in this family too.

Commented [ZR55]: A matter of fact statement that follows from the explanation above as to why the bullying might have happened.

Commented [ZR56]: Explanation of how others reacted to what was happening. Reaction led to more violence. Was not dealt with in a protective way.

Commented [ZR57]: Another rare moment of expression of how it felt to experience something so awful.

Commented [ZR58]: After providing her story, she feels the need to reassure me that she is doing okay.

Commented [ZR59]: COMMENTS ABOUT POWER DYNAMIC

Commented [ZR60]: Reiterates this idea that she is not in pain in anymore. That she is no longer suffering.

43. **Interviewer: So I was just wondering, when you said about umm, you would get beaten up by mum and from sister. Umm, what kind of is your definition I suppose of being beaten up. What would happen?**
44. My sister was more violent than my mum because she was younger, she would just (.) umm, she would beat me because of her rage. My mum was more frustrated, but my sister would just really (..) uncontrollable violence (*laughs*).
45. So, my mum would be like pushing or just you know, umm (..) what's it called, a slap.
46. My sister would actually um, grab my hair and bash my head on the wall. And yeah, or one day she beat me up with a dictionary (..) Yeah. In front of my cousins who were terrified (*laughter*) and went home. They were both younger, yeah.
47. She didn't even care if there were other people. But she cared if my parents were there, because they would tell her off. But yeah, well, if my parents were around she would just cheekily like push me over, you know, yeah. Or (..) she would also do small things like, wipe her feet on my bag, before going to sleep (*laughs*). You know, yeah, that kind of stuff. Or just you know, break my things,
48. oh there was one episode, really really bad, it wasn't violent, but it's the one that hurt me the most at the time.
49. And, it happened that she had these magazines that she really really liked and we didn't have many things for ourselves, so I understand. Ummm, I ruined the magazine, like I ripped something, I don't remember exactly, and (..) and she got really, really angry.
50. So she, she was beating me up and shouting doing all these things. So, my parents heard all the noise. So they called her and they said what are you doing, what's going on? And she explained. And then, they were not really impressed because it's just a magazine (*laughs*), but then they told me off anyway, but you could tell they were just being condescending. And she could tell that too so she was not really happy (.) So, she went up to our room again and my parents said it's best if you stay here, because she's really angry (*laughter*). Just hang around a bit, yeah. So, I had to stay to stay there.
51. And then I went uhhh to the room, she wasn't there (.) And I only had, I really love reading, and (.) you know, in that situation reading was the thing that would give me the freedom, you know, to just imagine, to be somewhere else. And I had this one book, it was the only book I had, it was my literature book for school and it had many stories. They were always half stories (*laughter*), because they were just that type of reading so, I would never know how it finishes. But, anyway. I knew it by heart because I would just read it all the time.
52. Anndd, I just picked it up to read it and umm, she just, she had like, carved with scissors the words die on the book.
53. And then I cried.
54. And then she beat me up because she said I was crying because I was uh a snitch (*laughter*). But I was really, really hurt by this.

Commented [ZR61]: Minimiser word

Commented [ZR62]: whose story is this? Sounds like her interpretation of why her sister beat her.

Commented [ZR63]: "Uncontrollable violence" – leaves the listener with an image of something scary. Unspeakable.

Commented [ZR64]: minimiser

Commented [ZR65]: an act that would still be considered violent and painful, but is somehow minimised because of the violence from her sister.

Commented [ZR66]: After a clear explanation of something awful, there is laughter again. She notes the witnesses to her situation then – adds them in to persuade me of the authenticity of her story.

Commented [ZR67]: This is what it felt like to her. There is a sense that it feels even worse because her sister didn't care that other people might judge her.

Commented [ZR68]: Speaks to me as if I should know what it was like. Trying to normalise? "do small things"

Commented [ZR69]: Acknowledgement of affect. Noting her feelings and how the event made her feel. Sense of agency as she notes how she really felt.

Commented [ZR70]: Noting a defence of her sister here prior to telling me the event. Trying to provide an explanation. Can she really understand?

Commented [ZR71]: Hard to recall because it was too painful or because she didn't feel the event was particularly significant?

Commented [ZR72]: Other people's reactions justified that her sister's reaction was not proportionate to what happened. Support for her story. Parents voice, acknowledging that her sister was not safe.

Commented [ZR73]: Some acknowledgement that others also sensed that her sister was unsafe. Finally some protection?

Commented [ZR74]: Explaining how precious this book was to her – trying to persuade me of her story – of the impact that the event had.

Commented [ZR75]: Some hesitation as she is recalling the event. Recognising the emotion attached to her experience?

Commented [ZR76]: Expression of the emotional experience.

Commented [ZR77]: Finally an undefended statement. Persuading me of the authenticity of her story, conviction, of what happened to her. The long term impact of what happened to her is clear – it still hurts me if I think about it. This event has penetrated her sense of identity.

Commented [ZR78]: Sense of agency as she tells me how it really felt.

55. So I think it still hurts me if I think about it. Even though it has been many years. I, you know, even more than the beating up and everything. You know family where you already feel that you're not loved and you're not wanted and someone writes die then you just (laughs).
56. **Interviewer: Yeah, it's quite an obvious statement.**
57. Yeah. It's the worst you can do. You can beat me up, but you know, don't tell me that. But I guess, it made her feel better? (laughs)
58. **Interviewer: Yeah.**
59. Yeah.
60. **Interviewer: And I guess to come from your own sister**
61. I think she had a really, really, huge issue on controlling her anger. Just feelings. And (...) she was really (...)
62. one thing that even my parents, everyone hated was that she was plainly fake. With us, she would be very evil and everything. And then if someone came, she would change completely, you know. And we would just have to, umm, pretend that she's like that.
63. So for example (laughter), I have this problem when I sleep, they're still not sure if it's sleep apnea or if it is something else, I have problems with breathing. My throat makes noises, it's not like, snoring, it's more (...) yeah, I don't know how to say, it's like I'm choking.
64. And (...) ummmm, my sister used to sleep with me in the same room. Usually when I make that noise, she would just like punch me in the stomach or do something like that to wake me up.
65. But then after she got her boyfriend, she would speak to him at night on the phone, and I was just coughing (laughter) and trying to breathe and I heard her crying saying, "my sister is ill, she can't breathe at night, and it makes me so sad" (laughter).
66. And I was just thinking, "just leave me out please". (sigh, laughter)
67. Yeah, she used to do that a lot.
68. **Interviewer: So almost have these two person, sort of faces about things.**
69. Yeah, yeah. She just really wanted someone to accept her you know, and just (...)
70. it's like, she wanted to be herself, but she didn't really know what herself was. She wanted to live with someone, but then she couldn't control all the negative (...) sides, so she would just (...) it was such a mess (laughs).
71. And she used to lie a lot. In a way that (...) even if you see her, uum, I don't know, she (...) she ummm,
72. there have been episodes where she stole something, not from me, but from other people
73. from me it's not stealing, it's taking (laughing).
74. But (...) uhh when there's all the proof that she did it and everything, she would still say no I didn't, you're just saying this cuz you all want to blame me.
75. Yeah. And she had this thing and so, she wouldn't really have friends, ummm, the only friends she had were the people who didn't know how she was and then sometimes they would find out and then leave her.
76. So (...) when I went on with my life, umm, after she got married (...)

Commented [ZR79]: A very sad moment. She cannot even finish how it made her feel, but offers laughter instead. Cannot bear the meaning of the event. Indication that siblings have the potential to offer a different perspective from parents, to be a protective factor. So when the sibling invalidates you, it is unspeakable.

Commented [ZR80]: Reiterating that this event has penetrated her. Psychological bullying is the worst, more than the violence. Making her position clear on this.

Commented [ZR81]: Even after everything, she offers an excuse for her sisters behaviour.

Commented [ZR82]: Identification with the past? She cannot finish her sentence.

Commented [ZR83]: Support for her story from others outside.

Commented [ZR84]: Sense of feeling fed up with what is happening to her when she was young. Acknowledgement that she was tired of her situation. TENSION in story between hurt and laughter. Discord between her words and her laughter.

Commented [ZR85]: Very matter of fact but the tone of voice gives the listener a sense of being fed up and tired of the situation.

Commented [ZR86]: Instantly moves back to try and defend her sister. Continually trying to provide explanations for why the bullying might have happened.

Commented [ZR87]: This sounds like her story? Whose voice is this?

Commented [ZR88]: Hard to put into words, trying to provide an explanation for herself, but it is hard to pin point?

Commented [ZR89]: Acknowledging the helplessness of her situation. Really get the sense that there was no way to escape.

77. ummm, I grew up and we were not allowed to go around with friends or you know visit people
78. but then when I was around 16, umm, after my dad left and everything, my mum said uhh okay, if I can trust your friends then you can go.
79. And I really, really thought about it. I planned everything, like I brought one friend first and then we did homework so my mum could see, yeah, you know, just planned everything. And then in the end my mum, a year after (*laughs*), she gave me permission for the first time to, go out with my friends. And then she trusted me because she saw that I wasn't doing anything bad, so she just let me go without asking and do anything I wanted.
80. My sister saw that as because she likes you, so she didn't let me do that because she doesn't like me. But actually, she used to do bad things when she went out with her friends and my mum wouldn't trust her. And my mum tells her that, but she doesn't believe it. She just complains that I am having things because I am lucky.
81. So (..) if she would see me be on Facebook and I write that I went to the cinema or something like that, then she would send me a looong message on Facebook (..) we all have set thoughts about why she couldn't go out with her friends and how lucky I am and now she got married she can't do that anymore, even though she can actually, but she doesn't (*laughs*).
82. And, she has a very nice husband. Nice, he's not really nice actually but he's permissive, so she could do those things, uhh, her husband is another chapter. And we all thought he was good and he's not so they might divorce soon.
83. **Interviewer: Yeah, so, she's sort of, I'm just thinking about the bullying, it's almost like it was physical and mental? Psychological, whatever you want to call it.**
84. Yeah, yeah.
85. **Interviewer: Ummm, and would you say any other type? I mean**
86. Umm (..)
87. **Interviewer: Verbal, I suppose comes into.**
88. Yeah, mental. Like, she would often humiliate. Ummm (..) I can't think of any examples now (..)
89. For example, oh yeah, yeah I can (*laughs*)
90. you know my tactic when someone tells me off I don't say anything? I just shut up and just, umm, she wouldn't like if I am doing something where she is telling me off, so first of all she would shout and stand up and say you have to look at me in the face, so I would just look at her. But then, she would come up with, your expression is not right, or you know, you look like this, or you look like that, and she would take me to the mirror and say, look at yourself, look how stupid you look. That sort of stuff. (..) And I'm not sure how it would make her feel better, but I guess it did if she kept doing it (*laughs*).
91. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It was her only way to kind of**
92. something, yeah.
93. **Interviewer: Right, yeah. Humiliation like you said. Yeah. And kind of, this idea of making you feel like there is kind of something wrong with you?**

Commented [ZR90]: Sense of agency, explaining how she took control of her life and that is why she had a positive outcome.

Commented [ZR91]: Conviction. Worked hard for her positive outcome and won't let her sister take this away from her.

Commented [ZR92]: After interviewer offers permission to label the bullying, or provide words for the bullying, the participant is able to do the same. She actually is able to use her own words to label her experience.

Commented [ZR93]: Hesitation before she offers examples.

Commented [ZR94]: Trying to justify why her sister would have done something so shaming. Whose perspective is this? Whose voice is this explaining her sister's behaviour? TENSION between two positions – not yet integrated? Unable to comprehend why. Unsure as to WHY her sister would do such things.

Commented [ZR95]: Will she ever be able to understand why?

94. Yeah, I think she just felt, just because of my parents not telling me off, maybe she felt uhh, umm, that ummm, I was a better person, so she wanted to put me down and just feel like (...) actually, I am better. Or I am as good as her. Even though, the only basis for that was my parents not telling me off (laughs). It was nothing else. Or like people saying "oh she's so quiet", which is not necessarily a quality, but for them it was.
95. Quiet means no problems. So.
96. **Interviewer: Yeah. So in your culture,**
97. Yeah.
98. **Interviewer: Yeah. This was strategy that you used you adopted?**
99. Yeah. The best compliment I got from my mum was "she's so quiet, I don't even know if she's, she's in the house (laughter).
100. **Interviewer: Yeah**
101. So yeah, I don't see why my sister would be jealous of that really. (laughs)
102. **Interviewer: Yeah, we all have our own perspectives.**
103. But, yeah.
104. **Interviewer: Yeah. So it was quite tough for you, in lots of areas it sounds like.**
105. Yeah.
106. **Interviewer: Um and it was like copi---a way of managing growing up?**
107. Yeah, I think I just became very independent.
108. Umm, that's another thing. She would have this tendency of wanting to lean on others. So growing up, when she (...)
109. umm, she was a bit more mature (laughing), she became more mature after having her child, but before that, it took a long time (laughs). But she was a bit more mature at some points.
110. And so she started learning on me, umm, she used to do that already, if she had a problem she would vent out on me (..) and so I would be useful in those cases. And, she started doing that a lot more growing up, but she always needed someone to lean on.
111. While, I had the opposite reaction to our situation, I thought, no one wants me, and I'm not needed, I just help myself. I just look out for myself. And, it worked when I was child. And at some point I needed people (laughs).
112. So I had to do my own journey of you know, learning to lean on others. But (..) ummm, that was (.) how I was coping at the time. Just thinking it was just, you know. And also my brother was a huge, huge, kind of
113. **Interviewer: Yeah, I was just going to say. Sounds like**
114. Because, ummm, I was kind of invisible. I made myself invisible to protect myself.
115. But also (..) ummm, I was not uhh, sorry, I was not planned let's say.
116. And also I was born in very umm (..) sad circumstances (laughs).
Because my father wanted a boy. And then, my mum thought we don't have money, so we should use, you know those injections, you know those kind of contraceptions?

Commented [ZR96]: Trying to justify the behaviour but again there is discord in how she is presenting. Doesn't quite believe what she is saying? Hesitations may be indicative of incongruence?

Commented [ZR97]: Not acknowledging that she was a "better person".

Commented [ZR98]: Again, reference to culture and how this provided an avenue for the bullying. Behavioural meaning derived from culture.

Commented [ZR99]: Cultural story. Reflecting on culture and how it had an impact on her experience. Laughter indicative of tension?

Commented [ZR100]: Putting herself down. Doesn't understand why her sister might be jealous of something that she did not enjoy doing or something she doesn't perceive as being a "a good characteristic" something that felt uncomfortable for her.

Commented [ZR101]: Way of coping. Whose voice is this? Did she tell herself this or is this a story from somewhere else?

Commented [ZR102]: Position of feeling useful and needed.

Commented [ZR103]: Story of coping and managing. This is a position she put herself in as a child. Became her position as a result of the circumstances.

Commented [ZR104]: Aware of what she needed to do to survive as an adult.

Commented [ZR105]: What? Normal?

Commented [ZR106]: Clearly aware of what she was doing in order to survive the experience growing up. Sense of agency. Story of survival. The way this is said is with conviction and awareness. Was that always the case?

Commented [ZR107]: Tension and dissonance

117. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah**

118. My father didn't understand how those worked. So, my mum got pregnant. But, he thought, oh but you were using contraception, so. Yeah.

119. So, he never believed I was (.) his daughter.

120. So when my mum was pregnant with me, he used to beat her up a lot. And I know of, they told me uhh, she was like, thrown down the stairs with her tummy big like this. She just didn't care, kicked her in the tummy, that sort of stuff.

121. And my mum has the theory that maybe, uhh, because when I was born I would never cry, never whine, never ask for anything. She thought I think it was because it was I was really depressed and maybe you were born a bit like that.

122. And, I think it's a true story (laughs). I think I kind of, closed myself, to protect myself but I think something was already there a bit.

123. And, my sister loved to tell me uhh, how I was not my father's daughter. *(laughter)* Because, my dad ummm, it was weird, ummm, I think maybe he felt more appreciated by me because I really wanted his love. So he sort of, uhhh, he used to compliment me a bit more, and you know, try and encourage me a bit more. So, I think my sister saw that and was really, yeah, trying to come in the way.

124. **Interviewer: So he was nice to you?**

125. Yeah, I had very huge issues with school. I think I had a learning problem, but you know, in that kind of family no one really had time to care (laughs).

126. So I learnt to read very early, compared to the other ones, but I couldn't count, and I was really bad at writing, and for a very long time. So, and the teachers hated me.

127. It was a weird school. Uhh, normally a teacher when they see a child like that they would, they would try to understand what's wrong, it was not like that. They used to send me out of the class room, saying that I am slowing down the other students and I would just be outside or they would even tell other people not to be friends with me otherwise I will influence them I suppose, contagious.

128. Yeah. So, I changed school after a while, and they told my mum I was retarded. Using that word (laughs). My mum went home crying. She beat me up because she told me, "you humiliated me, uhh, I didn't know what to do, I'm never going to your school interviews again."

129. **Interviewer: Right.**

130. And she never did. Until I got my diploma, she never did.

131. And the day after, my teachers, uhh they took me up to the classroom they said ohh see what you did, your mum went home crying, why, why you so evil. Why you doing this to your parents. I don't know what was wrong with those teachers (laughter)

132. **Interviewer: Yeah, not very good teachers.**

133. They should not teach. You know, you could think they were racist, but actually my cousin was in the class as me (.) and she was treated differently.

Commented [ZR108]: Prelude to the wider story of not being loved in this family.

Commented [ZR109]: Mum's story of what happened before.

Commented [ZR110]: Wider story of the violence that was occurring around her. Before she was born.

Commented [ZR111]: Again the theme of protection in this dangerous family.

Commented [ZR112]: Taking up the story from others – already being positioned as being depressed before being born. Laughing after a story about shameful and tragic experiences.

Commented [ZR113]: Theme of fighting for love.

Commented [ZR114]: "that kind of family" labelling her family without a description – assuming that I know what she means (you know)

Commented [ZR115]: Humiliation and sense of shame as a result of who you are.

Commented [ZR116]: Another story of feeling shamed and incorporating this into her identity?

- So I'm not sure what was really the issue. Maybe they were just, not racist, but you know like poor people, because I was quite poor, and you could tell (laughter).
134. Yeah, they used to tell me off a lot for not having the right pants, or you know, having a missing button or something from the uniform. Anyway, my sister was really good in school (..) And (..) she was really good and my parents were really proud of her being so smart and then all my uncles would have huge families, uhhh, they would tell their own children, you have to be like her, see how good she is in school.
135. But I'm not sure she never, why she never (..) she never, counted that as being, you know, something to be happy about. So she always thought okay she's the favourite, even though she had all these nice things that people recognise.
136. Yeah (..) I was only good in the house, for doing nothing (laughter). So yeah, it's not like I had much. But (..) yeaah (..)
137. **Interviewer: And so, would, did your brother get treated in a different way?**
138. I would say so. Because I was around. And I love my brother (laughs).
139. So, oh yeah sorry I kind of lost my thought. But what I was saying is that when he was born (..) uhhh, I just had something that loved me (..) regardless of anything. I would just be nice to him and he would love me because I'm nice, And it was the first time ever I think I had something like that at the time.
140. Sooo, I was just all over my brother, since when he was born. And my mum was not a good mother at the time, so even with a child that's small she used to beat him a bit and you know, not very look after him much, so I used to put him to sleep, you know, and just cuddle him, that sort of stuff.
141. We just grew up really, really close (*laughs*) and (..) for that reason when my sister, you know, when she would be angry, I would be the first one to be in the way. And if my brother was with her I would be there to protect him, you know I'm just saying oh poor him, he's just a child you know.
142. And also my brother was a huge snitch, so (laughter) my sister, if she, she used to swear a lot, at him. So he would know it was a bad word, he wouldn't know what it means but he knows. So he would tell my mum and dad.
143. He got beaten up too a bit, but not much. Cuz I was in the way.
144. And also my sister was a teenager by then, she was going out and she was a bit more focused on other things than my brother (..)
145. **Interviewer: You kind of took the middle space as it were, between them? To kind of (..) protect him.**
146. (...)
147. Mmmmm he, he has a better relationship now with her, but for a long time it's like not even a bad one she, he didn't really have a relationship with her (..) and I think he always resented her for leaving so early
148. but ummm now that she's got the child and everything we all see a side of her that, you know, we always thought it was there, but we didn't know (*laughter*) for sure. So I think he got a bit closer.

Commented [ZR117]: Again she repeats this idea that she was "good for nothing". And conformed to cultural and family expectations, but this was not something to be proud of. Unable to understand why her sister would envy this.

Commented [ZR118]: Theme of being loved and loving something. Protective factor. TURNING POINT?

Commented [ZR119]: Does the laughter represent guilt in this situation? Feeling guilty that she had such a protective and loving relationship with her brother but not her sister?

Commented [ZR120]: Said with conviction. Persuading me of her authenticity for her love for her brother. Wanting me to know that she was the protector of her brother.

149. Annnd, she's doing better, but while we have the chance to go on without our father she left in a moment where it was still a big mess in the family and it's like she's still in the past somehow.
150. She still has many issues she still can't be friends with my mum even though my mum made (.) a change from like this to this completely. And she still can't see her as the person she is now, not what she was in the past.
151. So she, even though we are all trying to be more friendly towards her, it's like she's still isolated which is a bit sad, but (makes a tut noise) (..) she can't bully anyone anyway (laughter)
152. AND, she knows how she was, ummm when, more than that she says "oh our mum was like this" but I think what she means is oh so I know how I was. Or I hope.
153. And she said she will not treat her child in the same way. And (..) I think that's a huge huge step.
154. Cuz I was worried, to be honest (laughter). But I think she's much better now. Yeah.
155. (..) Still ummm, she just can't ummm (..) she can't recognise, ummm.
156. I was in counselling for some time ummm (..) sorry, my mouth is dry. And, sorry what was I saying?
157. Oh yeah, I was in counselling so you know my sister came up with counselling and I knew I had still some issues that really made me angry about the past.
158. Soo, the best way to fix that would you know, receive an apology. So I tried. Uhhh, I said, you know you did these things to me and that, but she always say "don't remember, I don't know what you're talking about, I don't remember" and then she would cry and say you all think I'm evil and I'm just the bad guy. So that didn't work out. So I had to work on it on my own (...)
159. I like to think that she does remember, that she realises. That's why she cries. And (..) yeah.
160. (...)
161. **Interviewer: If it's alright if we just go back to the younger times. And when this was happening, particularly like your sister, bullying you. And I know you mentioned that your parents kind of knew. Did they know, do you think they knew to the extent that you described to me?**
162. No. Cuz she would always do it um, when they were not around.
163. They knew uhh that she was ummm, saying evil things with words. Cuz they would always hear her shouting but I don't think they knew about the violence.
164. And my mum said to me one day she said, "I'm really sorry because I know uhh I wasn't looking after you as much as your sister and your brother and also I know that I left you a bit in the (..) in the middle of all the rage of the whole family (laughs).
165. And I think she meant particularly my sister. But she never knew about, you know, what exactly was happening.
166. also because they used to find it quite funny, so yeah (laughing).
167. Like you know, sisterly rivalry I think they call it. Yeah.

Commented [ZR121]: Other people in the family have moved on from the past, but sister is still stuck there. Trying to make sense of what is happening for her sister?

Commented [ZR122]: Here sister isn't able to move on and that is holding the family back from being able to accept one another again.

Commented [ZR123]: Laughter represents relief?

Commented [ZR124]: Indicating her wish for her sister to apologise or at least recognise what she did to her. Perhaps this is the last piece that is needed for true integration and acceptance?

Commented [ZR125]: What was happening here? Flashback? Perhaps the emotional intensity stops her for a moment. emotional residue?

Commented [ZR126]: Moving more and more towards a position of assertiveness and conviction. Sense of agency. Acknowledging the anger.

Commented [ZR127]: Is there tension here between wanting an apology from her sister but knowing that she will not get one. Trying to accept this but also angry? A sense that she wants her sister to acknowledge her suffering.

Commented [ZR128]: Other people's reactions, apology from mum. Not quite acknowledging the true extent.

Commented [ZR129]: You know – I know as I have now been privy to her story. I KNOW exactly what was happening.

Commented [ZR130]: Use of humour to dissipate the anger and frustration? Touching on the idea of normalising sibling bullying.

168. Also you know with my father being like that, any violence wouldn't seem so serious (..) especially for my dad (*laughing*).
169. **Interviewer: So even if, let's say they didn't know at all that she was beating you. You didn't ever want to tell, or you never thought you could tell them? Did you tell anyone?**
170. No. I think, well I used to tell my best friend cousin. So we used to hate her together (*laughter*). Cuz she used to hate her too. And also she was the witness at the dictionary beating.
171. Yeah. I think she still remembers it.
172. But uhh, I never told my parents and that was because they always, you know with the situation, they always had this kind of philosophy that uhhh we are suffering, we are making loads of sacrifices so you should not ask for anything and you should try to do things better you know. So anything that would make things worse would be uhh an attack, to your parents and you should feel guilty about it.
173. So that was the kind of thing so to tell them I would feel really guilty because I'm giving them more problems on top of what they already have.
174. So even asking them for a present, it would be like I'm asking them (.) to give me blood or (*laughter*) yeah.
175. It was that kind of atmosphere so I wouldn't have any ummm, well help, not for sure because they could only tell her as they can, just say, don't do that,
176. but telling my cousin was a lot more helpful because she would keep doing it but I would have someone to vent out to and feel better, instead of having everything(..) on my own and just (.)
177. when my brother grew up, I tried not to be biased, you know (*laughter*) but it was a bit hard (..)
178. so, I think I contributed to his not having too much of a relationship with her. Uhhh. just complaining about she did this, she did that, and but (.) when he grew up anyway he knew what the situation was, that he was judging for himself (..) But yeah, I had him to impart, although I always tried not to (*laughter*).
179. **Interviewer: And so do you know, do you know when you first sort of realised, that this isn't good? This is bullying.**
180. Oh from the beginning (..)
181. Uhh because (..) at first obviously cuz it hurts (*laughter*) nothing that hurts can't be right.
182. And also, I think ummm, I knew more about what is normal compared to the, my other siblings, because I was reading books since a very early age (.) so even though we were not allowed to see other friends or (.) hang out with Italian people because my father had this obsession that we would become Italian and Westernised, so yeah, we were not allowed to.
183. Uhhh but through books, when I was six I already knew how babies were born, for example. And I knew stuff that my parents wouldn't even imagine. So I think that (..) books really helped me (*laughter*).

Commented [ZR131]: Reflects on the wider context of what was happening and integrates this into her story of why the bullying was accepted.

Commented [ZR132]: Support from others.

Commented [ZR133]: Persuading me of the authenticity – others remember it too because it was so horrible.

Commented [ZR134]: Being perceived as a burden. How was this demonstrated in the family?

Commented [ZR135]: Another reflection on culture and the impact of this on asking for help and talking about the experience. Feeling like a burden and everyone has problems so yours should be minimised.

Commented [ZR136]: Sense of helplessness. Parents couldn't "save" her. But cousin was someone who wouldn't judge, wouldn't undermine her experience.

Commented [ZR137]: Negotiating the tension in this story – unity by the end as she acknowledges that her brother had his own mind.

Commented [ZR138]: Conviction. Knew from the very beginning that her experience was not right. Authenticity.

Commented [ZR139]: Intellectualising, using books as her frame of reference, as to why she knew her experience was "not right". Not able to acknowledge the affect as much? Able to tell me that her experience was not normal through her other perspectives from reading.

184. And like, really really really grateful for that literature book that I had at the beginning and all the other books I had after. And, I think my whole knowledge of what is normal, what's not, is just from, from hours in books.
185. **Interviewer: You got a different perspective by reading?**
186. Yeah (..) I'm not sure what is normal for my sister, if she ever realised (.)
187. Ummm she might have been confused about my parents, but I'm not sure what about her behaviour, she thought it was okay or because seeing my dad like that, it could be, that she thought maybe ummm, maybe it's just fine.
188. But, ohh I don't know (...) I don't know because she kept doing it for such a long time (laughter).
189. (sigh) so you know, after 7, 8 years you should start realising. You learn things in school anyway.
190. Yeah (...) But, that didn't happen so I'm not sure. I think she just had this issue with her anger really (...) and it was, uncontrollable.
191. (...)
192. **Interviewer: The example you said about, when she wrote in your book, when she said die. Ummm. How do you think that experience has, from that moment on, were things different, or?**
193. Ummm, it made things worse (laughter).
194. I was already suicidal at the time (..)
195. Ummm. It was really bad you know, I wasn't wanted so I was a very depressed child. Even though if I said depressed no one would have understood because no one read books apart from me (laughter) Sooo, yeah.
196. So that made things worse. But then umm when I went to middle school, there was a really nice teacher.
197. And things started to change from that, but until 11 years old I was still very, very suicidal.
198. And then my brother obviously was a reason I had to go on every time, cuz I always felt that he needed me. And then, around 11 I was a bit worried because I thought he's growing up (laughter), he won't need me anymore so, and I was a bit upset about that, and I think maybe that's also why this teacher umm, managed to (.) ummm, touch me let's say, to make me wake up a bit, because I needed something, something else to focus
199. and I just felt like she appreciated my writing, and she saw I had, I was really still really bad at school, but she thought I had some skills. So, I tell her "oh I want to do to good so that she can be proud of me", and then I started studying and then I became better and better and then I'm a _____.
200. **Interviewer: So would you call that a turning point in your life?**
201. Yeah definitely. That's that's THE turning point (laughter). Yeah.
202. It was the first time anyone ever had expectations from me, or thought something I did was really nice.
203. She also tried to get in touch with my mum but my mum refused to (laughter) to have any interviews. The only time she came after that time was ummm. I finished my high school. I got the highest score in the classroom and in my ummm subject module. And so I told her that and then she came to brag

Commented [ZR140]: Taking a position as to why she sister did what she did. TENSION throughout.

Commented [ZR141]: Really trying to figure out why her sister behaved in such a way. Really searching for the answer to her question – does my sister realise what she did to me?

Commented [ZR142]: Really not convinced about why her sister carried on. Still searching for the answer – why did she feel she could do this to me?

Commented [ZR143]: Desperation with the sigh. Why did she not learn? Whose voice is this?

Commented [ZR144]: Use of the word uncontrollable again. Provides an image of being out of control and scary.

Commented [ZR145]: The experience with her sister invalidating her made things worse. The power of the sibling?

Commented [ZR146]: This comment indicates to me how critical the situation was.

Commented [ZR147]: Identity position of not being loved or wanted.

Commented [ZR148]: Takes the position that no one in the family would understand because they were not intellectually able, but perhaps another position is no one would have had the time or capacity to understand her?

Commented [ZR149]: Demonstrating the power of the other sibling relationships

Commented [ZR150]: This threatened her position of feeling loved and being wanted.

Commented [ZR151]: TURNING POINT. Looked to the outside for help with her situation.

Commented [ZR152]: Identification of a turning point once introduced to by the interviewer.

- about it (*laughter*), but my teachers were not happy because they thought oh why did you not, never show every time we called you? So she actually got scolding. (*laughter*).
204. Which I was happy about. But yeah.
205. Teachers really, not only that one, because after that one, I learnt to ask for help and you know, lean on others. Soo, I always asked for help from teachers if I didn't have books cuz I couldn't afford them, sometimes they would buy them for me. Or if I didn't understand anything I wouldn't be scared of asking cuz I felt stupid, I didn't know anything, I would just ask them. And just have that one moment where I feel stupid (*laughter*), and then feel brilliant after because I know it.
206. Soo, that helped me a lot. And I was lucky, I had REALLY good teachers afterwards and yeah, I started with bad teachers and then I got the best ones (*laughter*).
207. My sister and my brother apparently they both had umm not very good teachers. My sister had quite racist ones, or at least she says they were racist.
208. And, my brother (..) he's got one that he doesn't really respect much cuz they teach how to make chains and bracelets, he's dong arts, he wants to learn how to draw, so he's quite disappointed in his teachers.
209. But yeah. Sorry, I always go into topics that have nothing to do (*laughter*).
210. **Interviewer: No, no, it's great. It's very good.**
211. And you have to bring me back.
212. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about, this turning point and then moving through adolescence and into an adult. And I guess the events that happened when you were younger, specifically with your sister, I guess if we think about having to lean on others, making relationships with others when growing up. Do you see similarities**
213. Do you mean, did I get anything positive out of it, or?
214. **Interviewer: So both, yeah (*laughter*). Basically, to keep it open, what do you think, how is it?**
215. It definitely improved my levels of patience. And (..) I think, ummm, because she's my sister, they say that blood doesn't make you family, but sometimes I guess it does. (*laughter*)
216. 'cuz just being born with her, having been with her since birth it just makes me feel attached to her no matter what.
217. So, even though I feel like I hate her because uh, at the time I was hating her because she was beating me and everything (..) ummm, I would still suffer if she suffers.
218. And, I think it teaches me to be more compassionate.
219. And also I always have this thought, it's not just because of her, but also because of my mum. I will always have this ummm philosophy that everyone can change, so (..)
220. I think I have this hard bit of waiting and you know, support people until they manage to change and that's also why I want to be a therapist (*laughter*).

Commented [ZR153]: Someone was able to fight for her. Tell her parents off for her.

Commented [ZR154]: Teachers/external shaped her identity

Commented [ZR155]: Attributing her success to luck? Taking the position that she did not change by herself?

Commented [ZR156]: Ambivalence in this statement. Is it difficult to acknowledge that people who can bring pain to you can also be labelled as family? Cannot help but love her and this is uncomfortable?

Commented [ZR157]: Taking the position that the sibling bond is so strong, this almost compels her to love her.

Commented [ZR158]: Able to acknowledge both positions and move towards resolution and unity to her story. Suffering is

Commented [ZR159]: Demonstrating story integration of her experience. Able to position herself as compassionate and understanding, despite still feeling confusion and anger at times.

Commented [ZR160]: Acknowledging a more encompassing position – wider context, there were many factors contributing to the situation. Able to look beyond the sibling bullying.

221. But it doesn't always go that way, because with my father it didn't work, some people just don't change. But my mum changed so much, and she actually changed much more than what I expected.
222. And you know, when you're an adult it's hard to change, it's not the same as when you are a teenager.
223. And, my sister I know she has ummm, I feel like she has wasted potential (laughs). She's so good at arts. She's so clever you know, she was in the best in school. And she's just very (..), she's very practical, she has many nice things (..) But her personality just covers everything. And I know that that's not her whole personality, or I like to think that it's not.
224. And so I just feel I want to wait until she changes and see what she becomes. And I think, she's changed already a bit. So, I'm just, just looking forward (laughter)
225. But I think ummm, the bullying that's that's actually just something that gave me just umm, hang in there until you know the change will come sometime.
226. And (..) not everyone agrees with me (laughter).
227. Many friends say oh you're being too nice. Or you're just wasting your time, you should think about yourself, who cares about the others. But then my experience is that when they do change, they also remember that you've been there the whole time. And if you want to show unconditional love (..) the best way is to show it when, you know, when they are being there worst. And right now I think my sister, even though she knows everything she did, she knows I didn't like it obviously (laughter). And she knows that I'm not uhhh, every time something happens to me, I'm not going to her because I don't feel like opening up to her, she knows all these things, but she also knows every time she has a problem she can just call me. And I would be happy to help her.
228. And (..) I feel proud about that (laughter).
229. Ummm, it's just because ummm she's just my sister. I can't change it.
230. And I dunno why I can, well actually I do, ummm, I can live without my dad because ummm, I don't care whether we have the same brother or not, if he doesn't love me then why do I go after him.
231. But with my sister I feel like we both are a product of the same situation. We just made different choices.
232. And I feel like (..) she's everything (..) I could be if you know I just made those choices. We just (..) we had the same parents, same situations, you know. With my mum scolding me, I could have acted like her, and just (..) bang out my rage that I had and decide to ummm, respond, talk back. And I made the choice of being quiet instead. But she's everything I could be. So it's just looking after another me (laughs). If that makes sense.
233. Ummm, same for my brother. He's just someone whom I, you know more different choices. And (..) it's just, you can't really blame anyone in the end, if you know where they come from. And I do more than anyone (laughs).
234. We both came from there, we both know what happened, how it feels. And I can't blame her for being angry, or for feeling like she couldn't handle it anymore, that she wanted to destroy everything, it's just (..) bad luck that I was

Commented [ZR161]: Again acknowledging and accepting that she may never get the answers. True acceptance? Changing her position of how she views her experience.

Commented [ZR162]: Holding on to the idealisation – or is it hope and compassion for someone?

Commented [ZR163]: Hopeful position. Sense of not giving up hope yet.

Commented [ZR164]: Resilience position, able to attribute post traumatic growth.

Commented [ZR165]: Noting the alternative voices/positions that she has had to consider.

Commented [ZR166]: Speaking about her experience with her mother? Has she been shown this unconditional love though?

Commented [ZR167]: Proud of herself for being able to resist the positions that other people have told her to have.

Commented [ZR168]: Acceptance and conviction that this is how the situation is.

Commented [ZR169]: Initially questions herself about why she is so accepting of her sister and why she will still "wait for her"

Commented [ZR170]: But quickly knows why she takes her position so strongly.

Commented [ZR171]: They are a product of something that no one else is privy to.

Commented [ZR172]: So powerful. As she identifies herself with her sister.

Commented [ZR173]: Sense of agency in taking responsibility for responding to the family context. Making your choice.

Commented [ZR174]: Real connection to her siblings – the sense that you are all products of the same situation and this is something so strong between you. You cannot hold resentment or judge that person because you understand their mind almost.

Commented [ZR175]: So important. Don't need words to understand one another's experience.

in the way when she was feeling like that. And I guess it's good luck for my brother that I was in the way when she was feeling like that. I was just not lucky enough to have someone else to look after me. So it was just all bad luck. For, for all of us (laughter).

235. **Interviewer: And it sounds like you have really changed your luck around and**
236. Yeah, you make your life. When you're a child you can't though. That's sad (..) Children don't have any (..) They say, oh children are so lucky cuz they're so free, it's not true. They depend on others. So, it's all about luck.
237. **Interviewer: And so when do you think you decided that you wanted to maybe do things differently? So maybe, to kind of try and make your own luck?**
238. I think with that teacher. It just started with my other teachers from elementary school because they gave some resumes to the, yeah. They told her I'm such a bad student, I never do my homework, I'm stupid, I couldn't do maths which was true, I still couldn't count properly. And (.) so many bad things. So she wasn't expecting much from me. But she was keeping an eye like, you know, a teacher is supposed to do. So we wrote essays and because I liked to write uh read, I became also very good at writing at this time. In Italian. Unfortunately not as good in English.
239. But anyway, she was really impressed.
240. She said, I don't know what happens here, because they tell me these things about you but then uhhh I see this. I don't know where it's coming from. And then she asked me to talk about myself and tell her a bit, what I like, what I want to do and she just gave me attention.
241. She was also very strict, it wasn't all honey it was, ummm if I didn't do my homework she would keep me in class and make me do my homework. But she wouldn't just let me do it, she would sit down with me and explain to me how to do it and then make me do it.
242. So, she would give me punishment but she would do the punishment with me.
243. And I think that meant a lot to me cuz no one ever did that for me and it just made me feel like I could do things (laughter).
244. And I even learnt, I got better in Maths, uhh that really, I still struggle, but somehow I managed to do enough to pass.
245. And every little thing just meant a big achievement and I just realised I'm not so stupid, I'm not umm, I'm not (..)
246. I'm sorry I don't know the word for that, but being nothing (laughs).
247. Uhhh, so it just, it just gives me hope.
248. So I just thought, and also, knowing about my childhood and knowing how hard it is to be a child, so I want to be, grow up and be uhh counsellor or psychotherapist and help children who need it.
249. Although I know that not many parents could do (laughter). So I mean if that kind of family they won't think oh I'm beating my child, I will bring him to therapy, no. But it's something.

Commented [ZR176]: whose voice is this? She acknowledged that she was able to protect someone else, but there was no one to protect her. Uses the idea of luck as if the circumstances were out of her control.

Commented [ZR177]: It's all about luck – perhaps this is the story that she has integrated to make sense of her experience. To attribute it externally. There were so many factors that it would be difficult to pin point why she was bullied. She acknowledges that now as an adult she has taken responsibility for her life and now has control over her luck.

Commented [ZR178]: Negotiating different identities and coming to a resolution/unity. Integration. There is no word to describe how she felt?

Commented [ZR179]: Compassion for the child part of herself.

250. At least for the ones who grow up and need some counselling (*laughter*). I can definitely help those. So, I felt like I just wanted to give back what I got because it was so precious, so I think that was a huge, huge turning point.
251. **Interviewer: Was it difficult at first where you hadn't always known one way, with your sister and your mother, was it difficult at first to accept that there was another way, like a positive. Was it difficult to trust that?**
252. Yes. It's like this, ummm (..) for many years when I was in counselling I couldn't afford it, there was no place to go, so you know, so to cope with things I would keep everything inside and I had these really high defences. So it was really hard in counselling to bring out anything.
253. And (..) ummm, sorry I got lost. (laughter).
254. Oh yeah I remember now. Ummm, I had all this anger and stuff that had happened from the past, and sadness. But then, no, no place to put it onto because it was everything in the past and I can't go back to the past and do things differently, or tell people what they did, if I told my mum now, you did these things, I would make her suffer and also she had already apologised to me, so I wasn't feeling much anger towards her, although I still had you know, some feelings of I wish she was different. And, it's just misplaced anger and it's really frustrating, because you don't have anywhere, nowhere to put it.
255. So, with my sister, I tried as I said, you know, to say you did these things and it really hurt me. But she would just say "oh I don't remember". Ummm, "you just, everyone just says I'm evil and do evil things". And then she would start crying and I would end up consoling her.
256. And I would be okay with consoling but also I would think, I wanted to be consoled (laughter).
257. So yeah, it didn't work out in the right way, but (.) ummm, it's like this. Every time she's in need, I forget about what she did because she's my sister and I feel like, I feel sorry for her and empathetic and so right now, because she's in the middle of this divorce and everything, I can forget everything, what she did, because now I feel I just want her to be happy.
258. But then the moment when things go back to normal, I know that I will feel like when she talks to me about normal things, like "oh how did you do today?" or things like that, I wouldn't feel like replying because I would feel like "why do you want to know" (laughter).
259. I still have that. I just can't get over it. Because I think if she were to recognise what she did and say "I'm really sorry and you know it was like this and that, and I really do feel bad about doing these things and I wish I had done differently" that would change a lot. But I didn't have that yet. So, I think until I get it, it will be like this (laughs). Friends when she needs me and then I won't care when she doesn't I just
260. **Interviewer: So do you know where that anger goes or has gone or?**
261. It just stays there. I can't really put it anywhere, and it only comes up when she talks to me. So, when she talks about problems, as I say, it's fine because I'm so focussed on what's happening and all, but if she wants to know

Commented [ZR180]: Post traumatic growth. Be able to reach some integration and help others to achieve this feeling.

Commented [ZR181]: Acknowledgement of how she coped/ strategies

Commented [ZR182]: Theme of "getting lost" or forgetting what she was talking about when we refer to counselling or she experiences a flashback? Is it emotionally laden? Unprocessed?

Commented [ZR183]: No one to project into who can contain?

Commented [ZR184]: In some ways she is still endorsing the consoling position that her sister has put her in from the beginning.

Commented [ZR185]: Sibling bond

Commented [ZR186]: Strong connection allows her to forget the "bad" when her sister needs her.

Commented [ZR187]: She is aware of her pattern and how she will feel towards her sister. It is a well-rehearsed position

Commented [ZR188]: She is able to sit with the resentment and love for her sister..

Commented [ZR189]: Evidence that the experience still lingers. Perhaps more than her family context does? The lack of apology and acknowledgement is what still upsets her.

Commented [ZR190]: The lack of apology is getting in the way.

Commented [ZR191]: Still hopeful

Commented [ZR192]: Repetition of this idea above – emphasising its' importance.

- things about me I feel like almost (.) attacked. Uhh why do you want to know about me? I don't want to tell you anything. We don't have this kind of relationship (laughs).
262. I feel like she's assuming things. Even though maybe she, she's probably not thinking all this stuff but I am. So, I still don't feel like telling her anything uhh, I think I only told her I have exams, maybe. Just because I told her I had exams so I won't be able to talk to you these days.
263. Even simple things, I can't, it's just, it feels like I'm giving her a present. I don't know (.) how to describe it. It's just, something she doesn't deserve. Yet. (laughter).
264. So I'm still waiting. Yeah. I think, personally, I think, it feels silly to be honest, because it feels like ummm, that's something other people would say "it's not silly because you suffered so much", that's what the counsellor says, you know it was terrible.
265. But I think when you grow up in that kind of situation you learn to, undermine everything that happens. So you think, okay, she bashed my head in the wall, but uhh, you know people have it worse (laughter). You always feel like that, so when you feel bad about it, you feel guilty and stupid like ummm (..) like someone, someone who is spoiled just complaining about things, you know. So when I feel like that towards my sister I also feel like I'm being stupid and spoilt why am I being like this, I should be mature and grown up (laughter). And just leave everything behind, because I'm superior, but I can't.
266. **Interviewer: So, it sounds like what you're saying is actually you still DO have that kind of some feelings, and actually sometimes you try and kind of say oh I shouldn't feel like that or I feel bad for that.**
267. Yeah, I can't even say I'm trying, because I'm not (laughter).
268. I mean I have these, but I act on more on "she doesn't deserve it".
Except when she needs my help, but all the other times and she doesn't need it and it's just normal days, then I feel like I don't need to have a relationship with her. So I don't really act on the mature side. Be mature, responsible.
269. **Interviewer: I was just thinking about other relationships with people. You said about that teacher at the beginning and then maybe meeting people, friends and relationships with boyfriend/girlfriend along the way. Do you think what happened with you and your sister means that it has been more difficult to have these sort of trusting relationships?**
270. Ummm, I think it's been easier (.) because I needed people, I needed people to listen to me, and because she was making it hard, it was easier for me to open up to other people who weren't part of the family or you know, no one that she knows that can tell her (laughs).
271. All secret. And also people would say, "oh my god" "yeah she's a terrible person" and that would make me feel really good (laughter)
272. **Interviewer: Ahhh, okay, so it was a useful thing to do**
273. Yes because someone recognises that this, it is a bad situation, but in my family it's sort of normal.

Commented [ZR193]: The feelings and reactions from the past are not forgotten. Evidence that she still experiences strong affect response when her sister tries to reach out to her.

Commented [ZR194]: Unable to give her sister something so precious – her own feelings and vulnerability. Is she talking about TRUST? She loves her sister, almost unwillingly, and desperately wants her love back, but cannot trust her. The word 'yet' again signifies hope.

Commented [ZR195]: Battling with two voices – her own and the counsellors. She is trying to resist her position of feeling silly and take up others' position of accepting her suffering.

Commented [ZR196]: Battling with her inner voice. Does not feel she should be acting in such a way.

Commented [ZR197]: There is a sense of guilt that she should be trying to be mature and she should just be able to forget and move on. Whose voice is this? It seems to be her own, adopted from her childhood and family norms.

Commented [ZR198]: Clear example of battling with feelings and positions she is putting herself in. Negotiating how she feels about her relationship with her sister.

Commented [ZR199]: validation

Commented [ZR200]: allowing another perspective into her story to help her integrate.

274. Ummm (...) yeah. And also, uhh I think I always have this, ummm, kind of, unconscious uhh hope. For my sister to change.
275. And, there was some bullying in high school, she wasn't a violent bullying she was more of a verbal bully (*laughs*), so she was one of those sassy girls who was like "oh your dress is so ugly", that kind of stuff.
276. So, she used to ummm, I knew where she was coming from. I knew she had a really bad family situation, and was a bit similar to mine, minus the violence, but she also had you know father and her father, stepfather, didn't love her.
277. This guy even used to buy his own water and tell her not to touch it because it's HIS water, I mean (*laughs*), yeah, it was really bad.
278. But anyway, she had this situation. And then I thought if she's like this in school I feel like, you know, like I said with my sister, we're just making different choices. And, she has all the reasons to act like that, and she's just making a different choice than me.
279. So I felt close to her somehow.
280. But she didn't know my situation. I knew because I was eavesdropping (*laughter*). I do that all the time.
281. Ummm, so I was nice to her. She had difficulties studying, so I used to help her. And, I knew that uhh, she used to talk bad about me when I wasn't around. But I didn't care because I just felt like she deserved my help, just because of the situation she had.
282. And also, I always had like, I'm being nice to her, and so one day she will recognise that I'm being nice and we can be friends. And then people were saying oh, see, she said these things about you and you shouldn't help her anymore, and all these things and (...) she knew that I knew that and I was still helping her (*laughs*).
283. So at some point, she just became a really good friend of mine. And we actually came to this country together, we've been friends for many years now. Yeah.
284. And, SHE CHANGED! and I wish my sister would change too. (*laughs*).
285. But I think what pushed me to, to help her and keep hold of her, was just that desire that I had that people would change and my sister would change and also I think helping others in a similar situation, it feels like helping myself when I was a child.
286. And my sister, Cuz that's something I can't do anymore. I still have memories and I wish I could protect myself (.) but I can't, it's a memory (laughs).
287. I can't do it. But when I have people in the same situation I feel like I'm helping in my old self. So, kind of feels like healing.
288. **Interviewer: Yeah, makes sense. So you said about when you were younger, there was a lot of stress, your strategy was to keep it inside and be the kind of diligent person.**
289. Yeah. I would swear loud in my mind (laughter).

Commented [ZR201]: Again a reference to hope and creating an alternative story.

Commented [ZR202]: Indicating that people have choice. Not a victim forever of your circumstances

Commented [ZR203]: Another example of her contesting the other positions

Commented [ZR204]: Helping others to heal inner child.

Commented [ZR205]: A desire to be able to go back and take more control over her situation/take a different position.

Commented [ZR206]: Tries to do this through others.

290. **Interviewer: Yes, yeah. You would keep it all in, don't let it out. And now, as you're an adult, do you think, do you still use the same coping strategy or?**
291. Uhh, I had a bit of a mess coming out of it because I was so used to keeping everything inside, that I became kind of numb, I think I realised that around when I was umm 17, 18 (.)
292. umm whether I was happy or sad I couldn't feel it, it was just all, you know, like there was a massive wall that wouldn't let me feel anything, just to you know, be protected. It was soo efficient, that I couldn't even break it down myself.
293. I knew there was an issue and I couldn't do anything about it and while I was at home, I still couldn't because I was always ummm, I still had that of not giving more problems, so I wouldn't tell my mum or you know I would just try to you know keep going and (.)
294. and then, I decided I need to start counselling because this is the problem and I thought coming here was the perfect moment because no family are around me, it's just me, I can look after myself.
295. And I think it's the first time I did something for myself, finally (laughs) after years of just closing myself somewhere. So it was REALLY hard.
296. Ummm (..) I still have the habit of laughing when I talk about sad things. But it was actually a lot worse at the time, it's a bit better now (laugh) but I still laugh.
297. But it was a lot better at the time. I couldn't cry at all even though I felt sad, it just doesn't, it wouldn't come out (.) And (..) ummm (.) how did it change? I think it just, sorry I'm starting to get lost (laughs) (..) umm.
298. **Interviewer: Whatever comes to your mind is fine**
299. Yeah. Well in counselling I would just talk and talk you know and, but I think the counsellor could tell that I was very separated from what I was saying. I wasn't really feeling, I was just re-telling, re-counting things.
300. So (.) she told me and you know I tried to think, I tried to feel things when they came to me and not hide them away. And I knew there was going to a be a big mess, and it was.
301. It was very (..) counterproductive let's say for University and you know all the things I had to do, but it was really good for me for the healing, so I would, umm,
302. I was so depressed as I've never been, since when I was six or seven probably (laughing) and, it was a very critical situation, but I had this, because I knew it was necessary (.) you know, I would just let it come out, work on it,
303. and and then I met my boyfriend, I actually didn't even want to be with him at first because I thought, I am in this situation now, I don't want someone else to be involved.
304. And then, he didn't mind so (.) and I'm really grateful now that he didn't mind (laughing). Cuz it helped me I thought. I mean, I'm sure I would have managed to do it even on my own, but it would have taken a lot longer, whilst with him it took me a lot less because I realised that umm, after my teacher,

Commented [ZR207]: Acknowledging her defences and protection mechanisms.

Commented [ZR208]: Are these feelings still raw? Was there a sudden flashback of how sad or angry she felt? Recognising the emotion attached to her experience?

Commented [ZR209]: Reverted back to being a child. All those feelings and states.

Commented [ZR210]: Was able to let someone else in to help her heal and work through her situation.

- she's the only who ummm gave me attention unconditionally, you know, his own time and everything, so it felt like having that kind of (.) caring figure there that I missed since my middle school times. So that helped a lot.
305. But (..) ummm, I had umm, while I was still in counselling, uhhh I just started to talk about these things to everyone (*laughing*). Yeah, that happens unfortunately. Because you're just trying to keep everything inside, and then all of a sudden you open the door, the box, and everything comes out.
306. But, I don't even know you! (laughing) and I would realise it only after I said it "oh my god why am I telling this to this person" Maybe she was just be talking about the day and I would be like "yeah I remember a day like this which this happened"
307. I don't know. So I had to control myself, and learn to ummm (..) not to close my (..) emotions anymore, but you know just deal with them (..)
308. And I do, I um, I open up now more easily to people. And (.) my boyfriend first of all, I still can't open up to my family, just because (.) I think we all, all my siblings, we all feel like we would make big problems and we don't want to make anyone worried you know in the family really. But with friends, and with my boyfriend, I am always very open. Annd (.) it's just so (.) easily now (laughs). I am not in counselling anymore because yeah, I've done it.
309. And, yeah. I think (.) my sister has always been used to saying everything that comes to her mind right away. Which is what gave her issues with my parents. And she would say exactly what it is comes to her mind. There is no filter. Any way, any sort. And no limit.
310. So ummm now that she's married, we don't argue with her anymore, we don't have reasons, but she still argues a lot with her husband. And these arguments, I tell you (*laughs*), they can go on for five or six hours and I'm not kidding. And it's just her talking and she doesn't like it if you don't respond. So you have to stay there and listen to, like she used to do with me, look at her, don't do anything, just listen to her, nod. (*laughs*). Just follow, say sorry, about 20, 30 times.
311. Sooo, she still has that, she doesn't have any filter and it's still like that. And I'm not sure if she realises it or not. Because every time you try to tell her something, she always feels attacked. "Oh you all tell me I'm evil and I'm the bad one." But no, we are just telling you because, you know, it's a problem (*laughs*) for her.
312. I feel like she could be so happy. But it's so wasted, all the time she has the beautiful baby and the life she has. She just can't appreciate it. She always judges everything she has based on what other people have. So ummm (..)
313. she wanted to study psychology or therapy so she actually didn't finish school at first because instead of going to school she used to go around with her boyfriend and friends. And so my mum said you're not going to school anymore. So she left school and then (.) she decided to work to do like an online course. You still do exams in the school but study online (..) and she decided to do psychology. All of a sudden (laughter). It is not even subtle you know!

Commented [ZR211]: Awareness of wanting to tell her story when she had the opportunity.

Commented [ZR212]: She has managed to contest, reflect and integrate her identity positions from childhood into adulthood.

314. Cuz she always wanted to do Art, she's really good at Arts. Very talented. And also very good at languages. So those two were the two things that she was mostly interested in. But, she decided because she heard that I did very well in my high school and everyone was proud of me, she decided I'm going to do psychology (*laughter*).
315. And I went to University and now she says I'm going to go to University. And she sends messages saying "ahh now I have the baby I can't do it, you're so lucky, uhh (..) I wish I could do it. But you know, because of our parents I couldn't".
316. She always blames this on my parents (..) ahhh, that also annoys me. It's true that we didn't have good family, but you know, we make our choices. There were many instances where she could have chosen differently and she didn't so she can't really blame other people now. And, she still could do all the things she wants, but she doesn't do them. And then when I do them, she complains, "oh you're so lucky, I can't do them". (*laughs*).
317. Yeah. It's not easy to live with her.
318. **Interviewer: You've answered all of my questions and I didn't even realise, which is great. (laughs)**
319. What mark do I get?
320. **Interviewer: Haha, yeah. I was just going to check if there was anything we haven't covered. Um I guess the last thing then was more about how you found this experience and the interview itself?**
321. Interesting (*laughs*). Do you mean how I felt or
322. **Interviewer: Both I guess. How it felt for you to talk about all these things? And I know it's not the first time you've talked about it.**
323. Yeah, talking about it I think you feel something every single time, it just feels okay. It feels nice.
324. And (.) I don't go home and curl up and cry so don't worry. (laughter).
325. It actually makes me feel good, because I feel like I've let out some more of, you know, of the stuff and that's nice.
326. And I think it's interesting because I've learnt uhh about interviews in sociology, but I've never done one, so this was interesting (laugh). And I would like to use them for my dissertation. Partly. Part of my masters. So, so this was really really useful for me.
327. **Interviewer: Are there any comments about the interview**
328. I was worried I wasn't answering the questions properly, but you always told me when I was going off.
329. **Interviewer: Yeah. And I just wanted to ask you about this word, sibling bullying, and the idea of sibling bullying, and do you think that we talk about it in society?**
330. I don't think so, I think it's because sibling bullying always becomes "ahh it becomes sibling rivalry, you know, it's useful, it's healthy, it's boys, or it's just girls, they're jealous.
331. It's always you know under the carpet. But all things about families I think they are, you know, violence inside the family is, the breaking family is,

Commented [ZR213]: Acknowledges that her sister must accept responsibility for herself now and make her choices as a result of and in spite of her past.

Commented [ZR214]: A need to reassure me that she is okay. Indication of power differences?

Commented [ZR215]: Indication of power difference and perception of me as a researcher.

- and even though, you know, most bad things happen in the families, most people don't really talk about it.
332. Maybe it's just too intrusive to research about it, I don't know, but it's just not. You don't see it around. Even with movies, or tv series, you don't see much. I mean (.) maybe you see a bit of verbal bullying, they're smoking, playing around, it's just in a very funny way. It doesn't look as if the person is being humiliated or hurting in any way.
333. So (..) and I think also because of that, people who are being bullied, they feel like they're just exaggerating. It's nothing. It's just, you know, I shouldn't be like this. Yeah.
334. **Interviewer: So it makes your experience not feel**
335. Yeah, it undermines it. So, you, you never feel like you're suffering until someone tells you, you know that's that's not really (.) how it's supposed to be (laugh).
336. You're suffering, you should do something about it. And you're like, but he's my brother, it's just you know, he's like that. Yeah. It's family (laughs).
337. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, so it sounds like society, media, everybody, tries to normalise bullying.**
338. Yeah, rather than that, they don't see any issue with it.
339. It's an issue only if it's a stranger because it seems like the stranger does it without any reason. Because they don't know you, they don't have any right to judge you so if I stranger does it it's really bad.
340. If the same is done with a family member, it's somehow justified because they love you (laughs). Yeah, it's all covered by love. Expected love. Yeah.
341. So, even though (.) you can't choose your family members, you get what you get, so I think it's more common in families.
342. You can't go anywhere. At school at least you can avoid the bullying (laughs).
343. Or you know, in your work place. You can just avoid it.
344. But at home you, you're forced to live with them, help them, live with them, care about them (sigh) and (.) sometimes like me you can't even help it, you feel affectionate, like affection towards them anyway, even though you feel like you wish you wouldn't cuz you know you suffer when you help someone who doesn't love you much, or doesn't seem like they love you much.
345. So (..) yeah. I'm glad you're researching in families (laughing).

Commented [ZR216]: Maybe it is so personal, so difficult to provide words for, so difficult to acknowledge and understand in our society.

Commented [ZR217]: The very nature of the experience means that you need someone else to validate it.

Commented [ZR218]: Beautiful ending, summarising the ambivalence within the relationship and the pain that this ambivalence causes.

Appendix L

Memo: Questions to keep in mind for analysis

Dear Peter,

In light of our supervision meeting on 20/10/15, and your follow up email, I have been thinking about the third and new step in my pilot analysis.

In order to determine what this was going to look like, I found it helpful to come back to the original aims and questions of my study and also to think about Willig's three questions related to epistemology – namely, the question of “What kind of knowledge do I wish to create?”

I wanted to carry out this study because I was originally interested in the idea of identity and how events, culture, gender, race, class etc shape our identity(ies). I was curious about how people incorporate their multitude of experiences into their identity and narrate this to other people in a coherent and integrated way. Specifically, I was interested in how people make sense of experiences in their lives that have been difficult or different or unspoken about.

Murray (2003) speaks about stories restoring a sense of order following a disruption and Bruner (1990) argued that narrative is the natural mode through which human beings make sense of their lives through time. This takes us back to this concept of identity and there are various theories on how identity is developed over time. I am looking at McAdams' theory of narrative identity, which is the idea that people create identity through constructing stories about their lives. It is through these stories that people reflect and integrate the reconstructed past and the imagined future, providing them with some sense of unity and purpose, creating identity.

Therefore, taking the topic of sibling, I am interested in how people reflect on and integrate (or not) their experiences of sibling bullying into their narrative identity. How do they perceive what happened to them and integrate their experience through the *re-telling*? Within McAdams' model, identity reflects the person's efforts to integrate the various tellings of self, both public and private.

So how can we examine and methodologically analyse how people make sense of events in their lives? Hiles et al propose looking at the subtleties of narrative discourse. They explain that we should separate fabula and sujet and then specifically focus on the sujet in regards to understanding the way in which individuals create personal meaning and integrate their experiences, creating their narrative identity. It is argued that people create, compromise, celebrate and configure who they are.

To this end, I think the next steps for the analysis should be to examine closely the sujet to look at *how* the individual is re-telling their story.

Questions to keep in mind throughout the analysis are:

How is the teller positioning themselves towards what is being told? We are looking for evidence of loss and confusion of identity and then small and subtle, but significant ways in which identity is retained and integrated. How does the participant speak about the contradictions and paradoxes in their lives?

Therefore, the analysis of the *sjuzet* should focus on:

- How does the teller demonstrate agency and imagination in telling their story? (e.g. examine use of metaphor, imagery and reflection) What are the individual's favourite metaphors or symbols?
- The tension between concord and discord of stories - How does the teller resist and contest the identities or positions that they may have been given by others? Look at the *sjuzet* for examples of concord and discord and then unity.
- Are there multiple voices and/or multiple perspectives within the story? How are these positioned/talked about using *sjuzet*?
- Are there disruptions in syntax? Eg indications of hesitation, uncertainty and transition in tenses? Passive and active verbs may indicate speaker's perception of agency and identification with the event.
- How does the participant try and persuade me of their authenticity in their storytelling through the *sjuzet*?
- How are gender, class, culture and issues of race integrated and reflected?
- Are there indications of issues of power between the narrator and the listener? Does the narrator make reference to these in their speech?

These are the ideas that I have considered in regards to the literature, epistemology and ontology. Narrative identity work would argue that the task of an individual is to condense and unite their life stories, resolve ambiguity and negotiate different identities within this process. Through meaning making, people go beyond plots and event details of their personal stories – they move towards reflection, metaphor and imagery. The story teller draws a *semantic* conclusion about the self, from the episodic information that the story conveys.

After this, I wonder if some of Bell's work can also be thought about here in regards to her methodology. That is, she recommends examining two specific narratives in detail from each participant, rather than providing cross-case comparisons. This decision is linked to epistemology, as Bell tries to move away from the thematic, 'compare and contrast' methods.

I am not sure about the above just yet?

I also wondered to what you thought about carrying out the above pilot process of the entire interview or should we implement it with just stories related to sibling bullying? For example, in 'Interview 2 working transcript v2' I have put all the stories of sibling bullying together and I have done the same for the theme of Defining Sibling Bullying. I have attached this transcript v2 again in case.

Lastly, I sent you the paper by McAdams (1996) (Personality, modernity and the storied self: a contemporary framework for studying persons) and I appreciate you probably have not had a chance to read it yet, but I just wondered what you thought to his proposition of how stories could be understood and he details it in pages 308-309. I thought his ideas were good and they have influenced my thinking of the above questions and points, and wondered if I should use this as a structure/model from which to work as well?

Zara R

Appendix M

Pilot Analysis Memo to Zara R

30th October 2015

The beginning of the interview

This is of course in one sense another aspect of context (in relation to text) i.e. what does the participant choose to tell / find herself telling you very early on, to frame the discourse? (Obviously this has massive parallels and resonances with clinical interviewing).

It seems to me that your participant offers quite strong sjuzet (!!!) from early on, in several ways.

First, she offers a reflexive account of the ‘fighty’, ‘really bad’ story, framing it as “But I don’t know” and then a point about whether she herself was “really annoying” and “annoyingly younger” (the latter an amazing phrase?). Reflexively, her own role is then acutely and strongly foregrounded immediately when you ask about parental involvement – “I would get really loud”, which she then follows with an analysis, on reflection, of the ‘effectiveness’ of this.

Second, she continues, within the first 7 or 8 minutes (in response to careful interviewing by you) to tell an ‘importance story’ (or ‘evaluation’, following Labov & Waletzky, 1967?) about her relationship with her mum (both for itself, in her life, and also as a contextualising matter in relation to the bullying), with strongly felt reflections on the nature of this relationship.

Third, before 10 minutes is up, she discusses the geographic and family / domestic and cultural context of growing up in her particular part of the world.

The beginning of the discussions about bullying

After about 10 minutes of contextual framing there is an interesting sjuzetish? response to your question about her relationship with her brother, in respect of early bullying. She says she doesn’t remember specific events (this seems quite a strong framing –perhaps – I want to discuss first how it felt?), but also mentions that she’s been thinking hard about this, and what has stayed with her is him getting ‘mean’. She immediately offers a reflexive clause – I don’t know if it was just him growing up – but also wants you to know that it really did feel quite bad – she felt rejected – “this is what I thought”. A few lines later she talks about ‘specifics’, like name-calling, but the above framing seemed important?

(I also should say/declare that I have been blown away also and equally by the beginnings (i.e. first 5 – 10 minutes) of the interviews conducted by Sara Wraighte with LGBT young women, recalling school bullying, and where the beginning of the interview carries enormous and concentrated power of participant discourse and positional direction, almost sidelining fabula, and putting sjuzet right in front of us as

researchers, doing some of the work of distinguishing fabula and sjuzet for us – thank you).

“Kind of --- I guess”

For me, another aspect of sjuzet arose around 39-40 minutes in, with a very interesting discussion between the participant and you about her views on whether the bullying was ‘normal’. She had been discussing parallel stories that she remembers peers telling about their sibs, many of whom didn’t have such age differences; and her mum saying she and he would get along eventually, and her sense that the bullying was perhaps normal. And then she reflects that perhaps it was normal because “I can justify it” (there is a particular meaning of ‘justify’ here?), and she lists the ‘reasons why’, and then you rightly press her a little on this, and she says (I think) about her own regarding it as normal – “kind of --- I guess”, as if she wants you to know that she remains quite uncertain about interpretation of these family episodes? She later says that she thinks it is “weird” that she hangs out with him now, and that she “tags along”. And she gives a very detailed account of “shadows of him that I recognise”. So, on sjuzet, I wondered whether, throughout the interview, there is a strong message from her that she remains very uncertain about her own interpretation of the episodes with her brother, but how important it has been for her to come along and actively discuss this with you?

Conclusion

I’ve concentrated a lot on contexts, and hope that this will work OK in relation to what you have done with the same material, and hope our work will be complementary!

Peter Appleton

30th October 2015

Appendix N

Application for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Participants

This application form should be completed for any research involving human participants conducted in or by the University. 'Human participants' are defined as including living human beings, human beings who have recently died (cadavers, human remains and body parts), embryos and fetuses, human tissue and bodily fluids, and human data and records (such as, but not restricted to medical, genetic, financial, personnel, criminal or administrative records and test results including scholastic achievements). Research should not commence until written approval has been received (from Departmental Research Director, Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC) or the University's Ethics Committee). This should be borne in mind when setting a start date for the project.

Applications should be made on this form, and submitted electronically, to your Departmental Research Director. A signed copy of the form should also be submitted. Applications will be assessed by the Research Director in the first instance, and may then be passed to the FEC, and then to the University's Ethics Committee. A copy of your research proposal and any necessary supporting documentation (e.g. consent form, recruiting materials, etc) should also be attached to this form.

A full copy of the signed application will be retained by the department/school for 6 years following completion of the project. The signed application form cover sheet (two pages) will be sent to the Research Governance and Planning Manager in the REO as Secretary of the University's Ethics Committee.

1.

Title of project: Bringing forth the silenced stories: A narrative study of adults' retrospective accounts of childhood sibling bullying experiences.

2. The title of your project will be published in the minutes of the University Ethics Committee. If you object, then a reference number will be used in place of the title. Do you object to the title of your project being published? Yes / No

3. This Project is: Staff Research Project Student Project

4. Principal Investigator(s) (students should also include the name of their supervisor):

Name:	Department:
Zara Rahemtulla	Health and Human Sciences
Peter Appleton	Health and Human Sciences (Honorary Staff Member)

5. **Proposed start date:** Jan 2015
6. **Probable duration:** July 2016

7. Will this project be externally funded? Yes / No

If Yes,

8. What is the source of the funding?

Appendix N

9. If external approval for this research has been given, then only this cover sheet needs to be submitted
External ethics approval obtained (attach evidence of approval) Yes / No

Declaration of Principal Investigator:

The information contained in this application, including any accompanying information, is, to the best of my knowledge, complete and correct. I/we have read the University's Guidelines for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Participants and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in this application in accordance with the guidelines, the University's Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice and any other conditions laid down by the University's Ethics Committee. I/we have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my/our obligations and the rights of the participants.

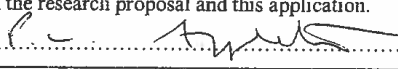
Signature(s): 

Name(s) in block capitals: ZARA RAHEMTULLA

Date: 15/12/14

Supervisor's recommendation (Student Projects only):

I have read and approved both the research proposal and this application.

Supervisor's signature:  Dr. P. C. APPLETON

Outcome:

The Departmental Director of Research (DoR) has reviewed this project and considers the methodological/technical aspects of the proposal to be appropriate to the tasks proposed. The DoR considers that the investigator(s) has/have the necessary qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in this application, and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies that may arise.

- This application falls under Annex B and is approved on behalf of the FEC
- This application is referred to the FEC because it does not fall under Annex B
- This application is referred to the FEC because it requires independent scrutiny

Signature(s): 

Name(s) in block capitals: W. A. J. E. WILSON

Department: S.H.A.S.

Date: 19/12/2014

- The application has been approved by the FEC
- The application has not been approved by the FEC
- The application is referred to the University Ethics Committee

Signature(s):

Name(s) in block capitals:

Faculty:

Date:

Appendix O

Consent form

Participant Reference No:

If you agree to participate in this study please read and tick the first five boxes;

If you do not wish to participate please tick only the last box.

- I have read and understood the project information above.
I have been given the opportunity to consider the information,
ask questions (face to face, via telephone and e-mail), and have
had the questions addressed satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation in the research is voluntary
and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without
giving a reason.
- I understand that all of the non-anonymous information I provide
will be kept confidential **UNLESS** there is risk of harm to myself
and/or I reveal that a serious criminal offence has been committed
which the authorities are not aware of.
- I consent to the interview being audio-recorded. These tape
recordings will be kept in a secure cabinet and destroyed after
use. Any transfer of data will be password protected.
- I agree to extracts of my interview transcripts to be published
anonymously and with identifying details removed.
- I agree to take part in the study. Taking part in the study will involve
Participating in a 90 minute interview talking about your childhood
sibling bullying experiences and the impact of this on your adult
development, including your coping strategies.
- I do not agree to take part in this study

-

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix P

Contact Details Form

Email Details of Researcher: Zara Rahemtulla, Trainee Clinical Psychologist
zkrahe@essex.ac.uk

Email Details of Research Academic Supervisor: Peter Appleton, PHD, Honorary Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Human Sciences, University of Essex.
papple@essex.ac.uk

Email Details of Second Research Academic Supervisor: Dr Susan McPherson, Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Human Sciences, University of Essex.

University Student Support Centre Details:

The University's Student Support Centre allows students to drop in, without an appointment, and speak to an advisor about what is on their mind. No referral is needed.

Student Support, Colchester Campus

[Room 4N.6.2](#)

Telephone 01206 872365

Email sso@essex.ac.uk

- Advice Service, 01206 872366, email sso@essex.ac.uk
- Wellbeing Service, 01206 873133, email wellbeing@essex.ac.uk

Opening hours

- **Term time:** Monday to Friday, 10.30am to 4.00pm

Outside of Above Hours:

Essex Nightline (advice service run by students, for students, anonymous and confidential listening and information service) from 10pm – 8am.

Contact: 01206 87 2020/2022

Other, confidential organisations:


MIND Information Line: 01206 764600

The Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90

SANE line: 0845 767 8000

Relate (Relationship Counselling): 01245 258 680

Appendix Q – Support Services



University of Essex
Your Guide to
**Personal Tutoring
and Support Services**
Colchester Campus 2014-15

All information correct at time of print. Please see www.essex.ac.uk/learning/colchester/campus for the most up to date version of this guide.

Your Personal Tutor

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students will be provided with a Personal Tutor. If you are a postgraduate research student your research supervisor will take on this role. Personal Tutors are members of staff within your department who can provide personalised advice about academic and non-academic issues in order to guide you through your time at University, helping you to achieve your full potential.

Your Personal Tutor can:

- Answer your queries, where possible, or direct you to the most appropriate source of advice.
- Support you with any difficulties you may experience which affect your studies or recommend other University support services that can help.
- Help you to make the most of the opportunities available at the University.
- Help you to understand your feedback from assignments and discuss your academic progress.
- Provide guidance and advice about choosing modules.
- Provide guidance on what you can do with your degree after graduating.
- Provide a reference for you for further academic study or employment.

How to contact them?

You will have the opportunity to meet your Personal Tutor at the beginning of the year and they will explain how you can contact them.

Meetings are either scheduled by your Personal Tutor or at your request.

Your Personal Tutor can't:

- Provide specialist advice regarding: disability, funding, accommodation or immigration.
- Provide ongoing emotional support, counselling or wellbeing/health advice.

However your Personal Tutor can recommend other University support services that can help you.

Who? Where? When?

Who? Student Support

Where? JN6.2
Drop in
Term-time: Mon - Fri, 10.30am - 4.00pm
Vacations: Mon - Fri, 10.30am - 12.30pm
T: 01206 8724165, E: essex@essex.ac.uk

Who? Students' Union Advice Centre

Where? Drop in
Term-time: Mon-Fri, 10am - 4pm
Vacations: Tuesday and Thursdays, 10am - 4pm

Who? Accommodation Essex

Main Office
Mon - Thurs, 9am - 5pm
Fridays, 9am - 4.45pm

Who? Information Centre (Security)

Square 3
Available all year round, 24 hours a day

Emergency T 01206 872222
Non-Emergency T 01206 87 2125/3148
E: pa@essex.ac.uk
or www.essex.ac.uk/accommodation/safety
Oxley and Meadows

Who? Peer Mentor (another more senior student usually from your department)

Peer Mentors can be contacted directly by email to meet up and to ask questions.

Who? Residence Life (contacting your Residents' Assistant)

Where? In student accommodation (contact information provided on kitchen noticeboards)
Mon - Fri, 5pm - 9am
Weekends and Bank Holidays (all hours)

Who? Registry
Where? 6.116
Where? North Campus
Term-time: Mon - Fri, 10am - 4pm, Vacations: Mon - Fri, 11am - 3pm

Who? Health Centre

Where? North Campus
Mon - Fri, 9am - 12.30pm and 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Who? Nightline

Flat 1, Keynes Tower, North Campus

Term-time: 10pm - 8am

T: 01206 87 2020, 2022, T: 0800 376 5454 (Freephone)

Who? Harassment Advisory Network

Where? Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm

Who? Income and Payments Office

4.401, Square 2
Term-time: Mon - Fri, 10am - 4pm, Vacations: Mon - Fri, 10am - 1pm and 2pm - 4pm

Who? Student Lets (private housing)

Square 3
Where? Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm

Who? Employability and Careers Centre

4.402, Square 2
Term-time: Weekdays, 10am - 4pm, Vacations: Weekdays, 10am - 1pm and 2pm - 4pm (except Wednesdays, 2pm - 4pm)

Who? Talent Development Centre (TDC)

Main Office: 4SB.5.4
TDC Learning Resource Centre: 4.204