

Dr Jane Park

Educational Psychologist

Telford and Wrekin EPS

Jane.Park@telford.gov.uk

BPS DECP TEP
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*'Another door into a new world
waiting to be explored'*

*A psycho-social investigation into the
transition experiences of young
adults with autism using the Grid
Elaboration Method.*

Session Outline

- Why this? Why now?
- Statistics
- Research question and why this piece of research matters
- Grid Elaboration Method (Joffe & Elsey , 2014)
- Summary of findings
- Implications for EPs/TEPs

Why this? Why now?

'While nonautistic [sic] parents and professionals might claim that they are best placed to speak for autistic individuals, especially those who find it difficult to speak for themselves, this cannot be accepted on face value. We believe that human dignity requires us to make every effort to access the views and perspectives of autistic people.'

(Milton, Mills and Pellicano, 2012, p.2650)

Statistics

- NHS (2012) recent estimates suggest there are approximately 700,000 people in England with an ASC, of whom around 100,000 are children and young people.
- Prevalence rate in the UK of 1% with around 82% of those with a diagnosis of ASC being male (Office of National Statistics, 2013).
- There are over 43,000 children with autism in UK mainstream schools, compared with just 10,440 learners with autism in mainstream further education. (Department for Education, 2011)
- Just 15% of adults with autism are currently in full time paid employment (Ambitious about Autism, 2015).

Research Question

What are the transition experiences of young people on the autism spectrum?

What did I do?

- 4 participants
- Interviewed using free association Grid Elaboration Method (Joffe and Elsey, 2014)
- Data analysis using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Participant feedback incorporated into 'audit trail'
- Dissemination
 - FE college staff
 - EP colleagues
 - Trainee clinical psychologists at King's College
 - EPASIG Study Day (poster presentation)
 - Here today
 - Journal article... (TBC)

Free Association Grid Elaboration Method

(Joffe & Elsey, 2014)

- Visually-oriented method of data collection
- Based in principles of free association

"It was good to show people's, like, feelings, if you get them to draw stuff instead of just asking them." (Samantha)

- Use of reflective field notes:

'Being different' and 'difference' felt like pervasive themes... 'perseverance' and 'overcoming challenges' and adversity. Challenges of adolescence. Learning to love to socialise? Participant spoke freely about difficult experiences and equally was clear about what had been helpful. Actually felt quite draining to attend to everything. [Participant] spoke with determination; I felt a little intimidated when listening to [their] difficult experiences.

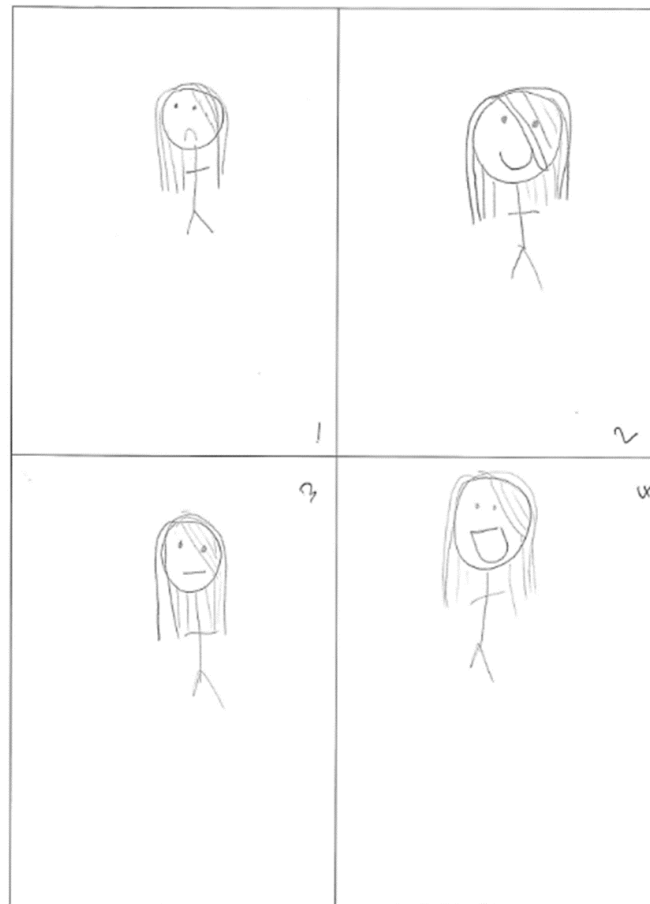
Example GEM grids (1)

I am interested in what you associate with experiences of transition. Please express what you associate by using images and/or words. Please put one image/word/phrase in each box. Sometimes a really simple drawing or word can be a good way of portraying your thoughts and feelings.

<p>The next another door just waiting</p>	<p>^{in life} stage is into a new world to be explored.</p>
<p>Never judge a person by their looks + their needs, we need to find out what they're good at + their minds will produce something unexpected. Never waste a human mind</p>	<p>When people say they can't do anything Never say never. Perseverance Give these people extra time, a little boost of confidence + reassurance.</p>

Example GEM grids (2)

I am interested in what you associate with experiences of transition. Please express what you associate by using images and/or words. Please put one image/word/phrase in each box. Sometimes a really simple drawing or word can be a good way of portraying your thoughts and feelings.



All about my participants...

- Stephen
 - Ben
- Samantha
 - Jamie

Findings: Thematic Map

Themes	Sub-Themes
Resilience	Positive attitudes
	Overcoming challenges
Growth and Development	Learning from experience
	Making a positive contribution
Relationships	
Mental Wellbeing	
Agency	External constraints on agency
	Knowing yourself
Understanding Difference	

Resilience

'And there are some people who said that I couldn't do this...but I've proved them wrong.' (Stephen)

- Positive attitude
- Overcoming challenges

Growth and development

'It's exciting...kind of exciting, you know, working with new people, a new classroom, and like learning your way around... it's a bit scary to start off with but you tend to get used to it and you get less and less scared.' (Ben)

- Learning from experience
- Making a positive contribution

Relationships

'Excited! at college, like, meeting new people, teachers understanding you, if you need help you go to them, not to be scared to ask for help.'
(Samantha)

Agency

'I like the fact that college is very good at preparing their students for the next stage, and for the outside world.' (Stephen)

- External constraints on agency
- Knowing yourself

Understanding difference

'When I was younger everybody didn't understand, I was a stupid retard who didn't understand anything, even people in my family said "oh Stephen, he's autistic, he'll never be able to do that."' (Stephen)

Mental wellbeing

'Because at the start of enrolment when everyone starts a new course there may be some certain changes to the timetable and things like that, but when I first started here I got really anxious about those changes and I used to get really strange panic attacks and things like that.' (Jamie)

'This college is very good at supporting people with those different needs. And loads of people who need extra time, they offer very good support services.' (Stephen)

Limitations and future research

- Based on retrospective accounts
 - Only one interview per participant
 - Parental anxieties and impact on findings
 - No psychoanalytic concepts in the data analysis?
 - Socio-economic status?
-
- Further research which explores lived experiences of YP with autism
 - Longitudinal research using GEM
 - Explore transition experiences of YP with autism at university

Implications for EPs/TEPs

- **Peer relationships may be a protective factor in facilitating a positive transition.** This is particularly salient when placed in the context of previous research that has highlighted that young people with autism tend to have access to limited social networks, fewer friends and lower levels of social support.
- **EPs may take up an advocacy role** when working with young adults on the autism spectrum and ensure that their voices are heard in relation to decisions which impact on their future and on their well-being.
- The use of the free association GEM with its integrated visual element shows how using **'light-touch' visual support can be helpful** in enabling the views and voices of young people with autism to be expressed.
- **Empowers EPs to draw upon existing skills** in order to develop the EP role and engage with young people with autism in the 18-25 age range, particularly in relation to gaining insight into their experiences and their views.
- **Importance of flexible and individualised transition planning** for young people with autism and of having key stakeholders at the heart of decision making and planning.
- **EPs are well positioned to have a key role in facilitating and representing the views of young people at the heart of decision making about their futures.** In line with the government agenda of person-centred planning it remains vital to hear from these young people's perspectives and to establish the kinds of support that is most useful to them and the type and extent of support desired.

Top Tips...

- Aim high...
- Try to hold in mind what drew you to your research area and find the love you have for what you're doing...dig deep
- Peer support
- Positively reframe the viva experience
 - Get on with amendments and get them done 😊
- Take heart...there is Life After Thesis

Acknowledgements

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Questions?



Thank you 😊

You're more than welcome to contact me at
Jane.Park@telford.gov.uk

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