

To What Extent Could a Literature-based Approach to Character Education Improve Pupil Understanding of Virtue

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A Research & Development Project

Submitted for the MSc Learning & Teaching 2020

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Abstract

This is the presentation of a proposed study into the role of literature as an aid to develop character for secondary school children. Building on existing research this study expects that the literature will have a positive effect in providing valuable material for research into character development.

The Background

Character education as a field within educational research became popular in the mid-twentieth century. With the rise of positive psychology at the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been renewed interest in the area. Within the United Kingdom there have been two main centres of study into character: The Jubilee Centre, at the University of Birmingham and the Narnian Project, at the University of Leeds. These two centres have recently taken to the study of fictional literature as a resource to help with the development of virtue within children. The basis of using literature has long been a rich source of inspiration within religious communities and so this study, being held within the context of a Christian school, aims to add to these studies.

Method

The innovation of this study is in three parts: biography, diversity, and measurement. The study exclusively uses biographies as the basis of the literature as this sits within the historical culture of the school. The selection of the material aims to be inclusive of gender and cultural background so as to provide approachable role models to the pupils. This study also argues that a Life History approach can provide an alternative and rich source to data collection. The proposal of Life History is not a suggestion that it is a better approach than that of previous studies. The use of self-reporting, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, have all had success. This study proposes the Life History approach as a supplementary method of understanding the success of literature-based models of character development. In this way this study is successful in developing this important field in educational research.

Findings

This study was unable to collect data due to the situation with COVID-19 and the lockdown of schools. However, using the findings of the two studies above and a wealth of literature in the field this study lays out clear hypotheses and methodology to demonstrate the value of such an approach to the existent literature.

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1. Introduction

The project looks to measure the improvement in understanding and self-reported practice of virtue following the intervention of reading and reflecting on biographies of religious figures. A range of biographies forms part of the curriculum to allow for choice by students. This too is a point of differentiation from previous studies where a more controlled curriculum was presented. The reasons for this are given below but stem from the developing understanding brought about by the Black Lives Matter campaign which once again has come to the fore following the death of George Floyd in Minnesota, America. The subsequent renewed calls for the decolonising of the curriculum as well as the reassessment of the role of statues in public places such as Cecil Rhodes on Oriel College in Oxford or the public removal of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol have required reflection upon which texts would be appropriate to offer. The project also proposes a model of testing based upon Life History which allows for a self-reflective aspect to the collection of the data. The main studies into the development of character have a common approach of quantitative data collection, some form of psychometric testing, and post intervention interview. I believe that the Life History methodology model proposed in this paper allows for an innovative and valuable approach.

Another key consideration, linked to the religious figures chosen for study, is the perceived attainability of the 'role models' chosen. From my own experience in the classroom, the presentation of a role model who is seemingly too distant from the pupils is not as persuasive as those whose virtuous life they perceive as more attainable. This experience is supported by a study from Hyemin Han (2014) who found that role models need a certain degree of relatability.

The outcome is a project which is successfully able to study the usefulness of biographies of religious figures in increasing students' understanding of character traits.

This project aims to expand further the work on character education, a concept that although ancient is in the midst of a revival. The two most influential philosophers in this revival of character and ethics are Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) and latterly Alisdair MacIntyre (2004). The role of Positive Psychology has also informed much of the developments in character education. Both of these see the quest of human purpose as human flourishing. The concept of flourishing has become a central theme within the whole character education project but more notably within virtue education.

However, character education is by no means new: indeed, in the last century a lot of foundational work was completed which has led to the philosophical, as well as practical, basis for the current trend. This has left a broad definition of character and four trends have developed over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries (Bohlin 2005): progressivism (Dewey 1944) and the moral cognitive development of Kohlberg (1985) along with their practical applications in Noddings (1992 and 2002), DeVries (1998) and Schapps (1998), the work on Values Clarification of Raths, Harmin and Simon (1978), the wide-ranging integration of 'skills building' into national curricula such as work to reduce drug and alcohol consumption by teenagers, and finally the work on Virtue Ethics by Lickona (1991), Hoff-Sommer (1984), Wayne and Ryan (1996), Ryan and Bohlin (1999) and Arthur (2003).

The rise in such divergent aims under the umbrella of character education has caused a major difficulty with developing a consistent taxonomy within the field. Character education projects range from drug and alcohol prevention to an attempt to build 'goodness' which, although arguably related, are possibly too broad for a single title. It is therefore vital that at the start of this project I am clear that this study begins from an understanding that virtue can be taught and that the understanding of virtue follows the Aristotelian and virtue ethics which attempts to form the human character as opposed to an ethical system based on rules.

This work is an account of a proposed research and development project. Due to the COVID-19 closure of schools and the impact on time and availability of pupils it has not been possible to collect data. With reduced teaching time, focus had to be on the teaching of the curriculum. My role within the school has also changed during this time, from Head of Department to Head of Year, and when the school had to move its teaching online I was appointed as Assistant Head to manage the quick transition, training, and support for staff and students. The project itself remains of utmost importance and will proceed from January 2021.

1.1. School Context

The school in which the intervention takes place is an independent boarding school in the North West of England. The school has a diverse pupil body with SEND at 32% (the highest being dyslexia and dyspraxia), 26 countries represented and 32 languages spoken. The school has intake in each year group and teaches from year 9 to year 13. Unlike many schools of this type it orders itself around year groups boarding together rather than in houses.

The school was founded as a Catholic school within the Jesuit Order. The Jesuits were founded by St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th Century with the express intention of the 'improvement in living and learning for the greater glory of God and the common good'. (St Ignatius Loyola, cf. Constitutions n440). The balance therefore of academic rigor and the general improvement of the pupils' 'living' are the core aspects of the college's aims. In 2013 the Jesuit schools in the UK identified a series of virtues to help with this aim of 'improvement in living' called 'The Jesuit Pupil Profile' (hereafter JPP). This is a series of 16 'virtues' that are seen as the core to the mission of the college, 'a simple but challenging statement of the qualities we seek to develop in pupils' (Jesuit Institute, 2019).

There has been a lot of time and energy given to the endeavor. Staff have had a number of frequent INSET sessions to explore the meaning of the terms and some have started to divide their curriculum into sections based on the profile's virtues. All classrooms have a poster of the virtues on the wall, indeed our languages departments have translated the virtues to display in their rooms. Each half term the Monday Assembly Prayers have a focus on a pair of the virtues and they become the focus for the chaplaincy also.

In my year two work I focused on a review of the Jesuit Pupil Profile and how well it was being understood by the pupils. The research was successful at identifying that although a lot of energy had been expended on the JPP it was not having the desired effect from simply being present in the school. The data suggest that the pupils found the JPP neither helpful nor unhelpful in the development of their own practice of the virtues. There was, however, a strong link between an understanding of the terminology used in the JPP and the perceived usefulness. The work used a quantitative method to collect data, using responses to scales within a survey. I ended my year two work by suggesting that it may be helpful to investigate how best to improve understanding of virtue using explicit pedagogical approaches rather than it being a presence around the building. It seemed to me that the key to improvement of the effectiveness of the JPP was in improving the transition from theory to method to practice. The method for doing this should fit within the context of the school as well as the within that of the Jesuit order.

As well as this, it is a common practice within the Roman Catholic Church to declare individuals as Saints. The process of canonization is outlined in *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* (John Paul II, 1983): 'Faithful to the serious duty entrusted to her of teaching, sanctifying and governing the People of God, she proposes to the faithful for their imitation, veneration and invocation, men and women who are outstanding in the splendor of charity and other evangelical virtues and, after due investigations, she declares them, in the solemn act of canonization, to be Saints'. Therefore, the investigation

into whether these stories do, in fact, work as a beneficial aid to virtue development fits well within the context of the school.

The way forward for the project was to look to bring together both current research and the context of the school. In September 2019 as Head of Religious Studies I observed all five members of staff within the department teach and what struck me was that in each lesson concepts such as justice, forgiveness, and environmental ethics were always explained within the context of an illustrative story: a story was told to help give a practical example of how someone (sometimes the teacher) has to practise them. This is not a new concept, but it struck me that in order to help bridge the gap between method and practice teachers were naturally using stories. They always took the form of some sort of biography.

The work of the Jubilee Centre in Birmingham as well as that of Mark Pike at the University of Leeds focuses on the role that literature can play within the development of character. The Jubilee Centre's work on 'Knightly Virtues' (Arthur et al., 2014) and Mark Pike on 'Narnian Virtues' (Francis et al., 2018) both present, in their own way, a practice of reading and reflecting upon stories to enhance the understanding and practice of character strengths. Both of these programmes have reported success in the advancement of understanding of virtue through the reading of the stories presented. This offers an opportunity to develop further this work within the context of our school.

Learning through stories is also fundamental to the work of the Jesuit order. Indeed, St Ignatius himself highlights the central importance of reading two books, the *Lives of the Saints* and the *The Life of Christ*, to his own conversion.

While recuperating from having his leg re-set after the Battle of Pamplona Ignatius was left without his own library and had only two books to keep him entertained. It was by reading these two books and reflecting upon the characters within them that he decided

to change his own life's course. Within my own subject also, teachers of Religious Education are accustomed to utilising the example of others to help explain how pupils could live out certain virtues or put belief into practice. In the AQA GCSE, the lives of figures such as Pope Francis, Martin Luther King, Mary Magdalene, Nicky Cruz, and testimony from a range of other figures are given in textbooks to help illustrate how what is being studied has been lived out by others. For example, when studying 'Christian Attitudes to Forgiveness', in the AQA Religious Studies A: Christianity textbook by Oxford University press, students are presented with the story of Maureen Greaves whose husband died after being attacked by two men (Bartlett, ed., 2016). The short explanation, given in the textbook, demonstrates how and why she forgave the attackers. Two questions for reflection then follow that ask pupils to reflect on Maureen's words and on how they would react. It is presented to allow the pupils to reflect on how forgiveness is lived out by others so that they have a greater understanding and appreciation of the concept.

Further to this, such books as the Faith in Action Series that 'tell stories of people who have lived and acted according to their faith, but ...have included alongside the main story questions which encourages pupils to think about the reasons for the behaviour of our main characters'. (Gearon 2003) For example, in the life of the Jesuit Archbishop Oscar Romero pupils are asked, 'Is making a personal sacrifice (giving something up) for others an idea that people can understand today?' (Gearon 1998, p4), or 'Romero was clearly a brave person to speak out so openly when he knew that to do so was to risk his own life. What do you think gave him such courage?' (p.15).

This work focuses on the role of biography to improve appreciation of virtue. This practice stands firmly within both modern research on character as well as within the context of the school.

1.2. National and International Context

Although this project was conceived before most of us had considered concepts such as 'social distancing' or 'the new normal' and the disruption COVID-19 would have upon schooling world-wide, the importance of such a project has only grown in relevance to the national dialogue. With the ascribing of 'heroic' status upon members of the community becoming a daily occurrence, NHS staff, shop workers, refuse collectors, and Captain Sir Tom Moore have become the focus of national pride and tributes have flowed. The identification of character has taken centre stage.

A series of recent Secretaries of State for Education have also emphasised the need for schools to focus on character (Gove, 2014, Morgan 2017, Hinds, 2019). A Populus poll (2013) showed that a significant proportion of parents believed that the development of character was one of the roles they would expect a school to fulfil.

The Pisa test in 2018 began to measure 'Global Competence': 'Global competence enables individuals to examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being. Beyond numeracy, literacy and science, new methods of educating are needed to help students develop the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that make up global competence... Such global competency is about building curiosity – opening minds, it's about compassion – opening hearts, and it's about courage, mobilising our cognitive, social and emotional resources to build a more human world' (Schleicher, 2020). The measurement of Global Competencies concern openness, empathy, respect, desire to enact change, and appreciation of difference. The measurement of these values in global education systems also signals a shift from Pisa's usual measurement and therefore suggests an international shift to include character / values at the level of core subjects

within schools. There is a recognition of a student's time in school as a period to 'form habits of mind, beliefs and principles that will stay with them throughout their lives. This is why it is so crucial to reflect on the type of education that best cultivates the development of the human person. An education that encourages valuing dignity, human rights and diversity emphasises shared commonalities that unite people around the world' (Pisa 2018, p.18),

1.3. Innovation of this project

The innovation of this project lies within the adoption of the Life History methodology as a tool to measure the impact of the character education programme. We will see below that the role of literature as a pedagogical approach has the support of a number of much larger studies and I would expect, with the adjustments I have suggested, that the results of this project should produce similar findings to add to this growing body of evidence. The use of Life Histories has not been used to measure the impact of character education programmes and there are a number of reasons for this, most notably the time and resources that it would take to manage a sizable research project. This piece of practitioner research within my school does provide an opportunity to investigate its uses.

At its core, a Life History methodology is a lengthy conversation between the participant and the researcher and in this case between a teacher and a pupil. Although, as I note below in the ethics section, this provides challenges to the researcher, it is fundamentally an approach taken by a number of teachers each day even if normally for a much shorter period of time. The diversity of the stories presented set this apart from both the Narnian Virtues and Knightly Virtues programmes.

1.4. Overview of the Literature Review

The Literature review follows four fundamental questions:

1.4.1. What is meant by character development?

To be able to focus the work within the wide-ranging sphere of character education it is first important to discover where, in particular, this study sits. This is an essential refining question that allows us to put its aims alongside similar studies.

1.4.2. What is the role of literature in character education?

A number of studies have taken place recently that use literature as a means of building knowledge of virtues and character. The range of literary texts spans fiction and non-fiction, each suggesting success within their areas. This project seeks to refine some elements from each of these studies to allow a study of these in relation to the school's specific context. In this way the project is not only be of relevance to this particular school but also more widely within faith schools.

1.4.3. What is the importance of the attainability of the example offered as a virtuous life?

This is a key psychological consideration within this project for, as well as the pedagogical considerations of the texts used such as appropriate reading level, appropriate language, length of the text etc., the characters presented also have to be figures of achievable aspiration. A figure too removed from their context could leave the pupils enjoying the story but with limited belief that they can move this knowledge into action. Without addressing this we could encounter the same difficulty from my year two study of not being able to put their knowledge into practice.

1.4.4. What are the issues concerning measurability of character?

In preparation for the project I attended two meetings, one with the chaplains of Jesuit schools in the UK and later with the Head Teachers of the Jesuit schools. The most contentious element over the discussion centred on the concept of measuring the practice of virtue. Similarly within the literature, belief in the measurability of virtue practice is as divided. The review of the literature also takes into account the concept of life history / life story as a way of measuring in some way the practice of virtue in the life of the participants. Although elements of the life history approach have been part of previous studies I suggest that this could provide a useful model for our project.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is meant by Character Development?

2.1.1. Historical Overview

Within the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle it is clear that moral character focused on the person rather than the actions of the person, although Plato retained the discernment of good action for the elite who then had to set right action for those who were unable to discern it for themselves. Aristotle understood the development of moral character as the development of good habits which would allow the individual to begin to recognise virtue and live a good life.

Aquinas played the most significant role in bringing together Christian thinking and the work of Aristotle, which in turn developed towards a modern theory of virtue through Anscombe and McIntyre.

In all of these the common thread is the development of habitualised practice. The teacher's role is the uncovering of the virtues to aid the development of character.

During the mid-twentieth century the development of theories of child development from Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Eric Erickson moved character development from its more religious or philosophical perspective and placed the study within psychology. Along with the rise of moral relativism, however, the study of character as a substantial topic subsided.

With the concern over 'moral decline' in the West (see Lickona, 2004), the topic of character has once again come to the fore. In the UK successive Education Ministers have extolled the need for schools to be engaged in the teaching of character. The development of the PSHE and Citizenship curricula and British Values have been attempts to build the character of the pupils in schools. Demos, a leading cross-party think tank, published a report in 2015 calling for the development of a curriculum as a requirement for all schools to replace the requirement to encourage British Values (Birdwell, 2015). They called for character education to play a role within a new English-Baccalaureate system along with a host of other initiatives to help place a system of character development within schools. In 2019 the government issued the 'Character Education Framework' setting out benchmarks against which a school, in its own context, is expected to evaluate their own provision. The framework acknowledges that although the development is not exclusively the responsibility of schools, they do play a significant role and therefore must begin to reflect upon and develop their own practice. A Populus poll in 2013 also demonstrated that parents believed that, 'part of a teacher's role [is] to encourage good morals and values in a student' (Populus and Jubilee, 2013).

This project is therefore part of the new wave of interest in the best ways in which to develop character within schools. There are some challenges that we first have to manage in order to place this study within the current landscape of character research.

2.1.2. Character Dilemma

A challenge within the study of character education is the variety of ways in which the term has been used. An important starting point is to place this study within a more tightly defined area of this topic. Karen Bohlin suggests four theoretical perspectives within character education: Progressivism (Dewey, 1944) or Moral Cognitivism (Kohlberg, 1985), Values Clarification (Raths, Harman, and Simon, 1978), Skills Building, and Virtue Ethics. This study places itself firmly within the context of Virtue Ethics. This approach fits within the context of the school both in terms of its existent understanding of character, but also because of this study's inclusion within the RE department's curriculum. The work within this theoretical perspective has as its starting points the Aristotelian concept that virtue is the 'state of moral character in which various forms of natural human affect, appetite, and desire are ruled, shaped or ordered under the guidance of an appropriately developed capacity for rational reflection [*Phronesis*]' (Carr & Harrison, 2015, p.19). From a philosophical standpoint the approach of this study (as of the school) follows the development of Aristotle's work through the naturalistic line of Geach (1977), Dent (1984) and Nussbaum (1988) and although this level of philosophical detail is not knowingly projected onto this study it informs the approach of the school to the development of character.

Although it is true that 'Everything a school does teaches value' (Lickona, 1991, p.20), from the way staff treat each other and pupils through to the sanctions systems, the focus of this study is on the proactive, intentional teaching of values. This approach is not without critics who argue that this necessitates a paternalistic approach to education, a process of indoctrination inappropriate for a liberal society. The responses to these claims are robust, usually countering such positions as equally indoctrinating. Mark Pike (2013) points out that children are open to numerous influences that, whether directly or not, proselytise them into certain habits, be it self-worth, sexual behaviour, or diet. He

notes that 'a 'doctrine' is a 'teaching' and an 'occupational hazard' of school teaching is that one leads learners into particular 'teachings' or 'doctrines'. (Pike, 2013). James Arthur (2005) notes that the fear of indoctrination leads teachers to 'commit themselves to nothing in particular – or to a sort of undefined humanism where the only question is one of personal feeling' (p.249). However, both parents and children do seem happy that character and virtue are being taught in schools (Arthur 2010, Seligman 2009).

Nonetheless, throughout the arguments presented on behalf of character education there does seem to be a remaining question of freedom for the pupil and choice within virtue education programmes. Kristjansson (2013) argues that 'the claim "it is better to be compassionate than cold-hearted" does not imply "Be compassionate!", any more than the claim that "This is a good knife" implies the order "Cut!"' (p.276). Although I can appreciate the argument in moral language, nonetheless under the influence of a teacher presenting a prescribed list of values within the context of a school day one would be forgiven for not noticing the philosophical distinction. The presentation of set characteristics, whether they be the Knightly Virtues, Narnian Virtues, or the Jesuit Pupil Profile sets before the pupils a group of virtues that the school believes are important and, I would suggest, a credible inference that those not on the list are of lesser importance. So too with the literature that is chosen to demonstrate these virtues. This is where I believe that there is a need for further development: the selection of material is of crucial importance.

In the original Knightly Virtues programme four stories were selected: *Don Quixote*, *El Cid*, *Gareth and Lynette* (Arthurian Legend), and *The Merchant of Venice*. The stories were selected for their portrayal of virtues but the stories do not reflect, in their characters, those who were to read them. The focus is predominantly upper class white European men. Although this may not impact to a sizable degree upon the findings of the programme it does leave some questions as to the approachability of the text or the ability

to emulate characters. Carr and Harrison noted the conflict in their desire to hold to their original aim of bringing back to the classroom the Arthurian legends while remaining relevant. It was at this point that the decision was made to introduce *The Merchant of Venice* which allowed for the inclusion of a female heroine and kept close to the idea of using classic texts (Carr & Harrison, 2015, p. 94). There was acknowledgement that the programme held a masculine focus but justified this by prioritising its focus as being the Knightly virtues. In the subsequent re-drafting of the programme, after the initial pilot, the stories of three women, Anne Frank, Joan of Arc, and Rosa Parks were added. The Narnian Virtues Project was slightly more constrained by its characters to the four children and so, although there is a gender balance, the racial and cultural aspects are more limited. So, the decision to focus on Knightly virtues and Narnian virtues limits the characters according to the focus of the desired texts, *The Chronicles of Narnia* or Knightly stories.

Work in the field of musicology similarly finds that gender, age, social class, and ethnicity all influence the reception of music by the listener (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Musical preference can be said to be influenced by all of these. McCrary (1993) found that 'black listeners showed statistically significant differences in their music preferences for White and Black performers. These listeners gave stronger preference ratings when they identified the performer's race as Black. While White listeners' preference ratings, however, were virtually equal for Black and White performers' (p. 200).

The Knightly Virtues research team state that they were confident that 'the issues of moral virtue and character raised by aspects of each of these stories would be of interest to pupils, irrespective of gender and background' (Knightly Virtues, p.8). In the evaluation of the study in 2014 the research team found that there was no difference in results between male and female pupils; however, it is noted that teachers reported that male pupils were more enthusiastic about the programme than female pupils.

The need for literature or characters that are relatable is also very important. Hyemin Han (2014) found that, 'attainable and relevant exemplars ... showed significantly greater effectiveness' in promoting moral motivation. It was found that people were more likely to moderate their behaviour to emulate a role model if the role model presented did a little bit more community service than those compared to if the role models did vastly more. The implication being that role models who are perceived of as being less extreme in their virtue are likely to provide a better source of moral inspiration.

What is the Role of Literature in Character Education?

2.1.3. The Role of Stories

'And you shall tell your son on that day, "It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt..." It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets [phylacteries] between your eyes' (Exodus, 13:8, 13:16).

The word usually rendered as *phylacteries* can also be translated as *immovable* (King, 2010, p.114) and highlights a fundamental truth within human society that the telling of stories, whether historical or fictional is an important aspect of character and moral formation. Biblical literacy is fundamental to an understanding of modern western and particularly British education. 'Without the King James Bible, there would have been no *Paradise Lost*, no *Pilgrim's Progress*, no Handel's *Messiah* ... and no Gettysburg address' (McGrath, 2001, p.2). Literary texts present a society's fundamental moral, spiritual and political concerns. Fairy stories and fables are an intrinsic part of a child's bedtime routine but they too hold cultural truths.

However, I argue that the characters can themselves present difficulties to the effective transmission of the stories they are attempting to portray. I believe this to be the case when concerning race, age, gender, and extent to which their lives are thought to be able to be replicated.

Carr and Harrison (2015) claim of characters that 'they play a symbolic or allegorical role in such larger and philosophical dramas. To this extent they are human cyphers or variables, those "every-persons" with whom we can all identify but who have no very particular face' (Carr & Harrison, 2015, p59). However, within them we can still recognise virtuous behaviour, or lack thereof, and so can be useful for the construction of our own virtue. Indeed, as Aristotle notes in *Poetics*, these stories can help to portray universal concerns for humanity and that the value of poetry is the development of the emotions and in turn the human character.

The ability to develop empathy and understanding of the 'other' seems a necessary trait of a social being. In their research on theory of mind, David Kidd and Emanuele Castano (2013) demonstrate that reading of literature may lead to improvements in these skills.

The use of literature may not be new but the research into its effectiveness certainly is. The work of Kohlberg (1963) focused on the presentation of moral dilemmas as an assessment of character. Moral dilemma focus on the presentation of a complex series of choices and the assessment of the moral reasoning behind each of the decisions made by the participant. The difficulty with moral dilemmas is that they present the bare bones of a situation and ask for the moral decision to be extrapolated or decided upon with minimal information and context. Grace Robinson calls this approach rather skeletal, and argues that for the proper measure of character and therefore for deeper teaching of character there is a greater need for what she terms 'flesh and blood narratives' (Robinson, 2014). This flesh and blood requires narrative, the 'primary mechanism by which human beings experience, understand, and communicate sequences of events and their relations to particular people and places' (Robinson, 2014). Narrative, according to Robinson, is co-constructed, where the reader fills the gaps with inference, empathy and speculation. Therefore, narrative is the presentation, by the author, of certain contexts, structures and possibly their judgements, and yet the receiver of that narrative also plays their part. The

receiver brings with them their own background, beliefs, knowledge and understanding, and therefore the narrative now belongs in its original form to the giver and in a new form with the receiver. Narrative 'is a source, and a method of ethical knowledge' (Robinson 2014). Our reception of narratives from others as well as our own constructed narrative allows for ethical insights and the development of our character. So, whereas the ethical dilemmas used by Kohlberg present intentionally rigid and containing ethical situations so as to measure the rationality involved more closely between participants, narrative allows for a greater contribution from the participant, bringing with them their own life history.

2.1.4. Relevance of the Character in Literature

In the production of the Knightly Virtues programme the research team held in tension their desire to re-present the knightly virtues of the stories they had chosen and yet acknowledged the desire to offer diversity to the programme in terms of age, gender, and social class. Indeed, in later developments of the programme characters of different ages, genders, and cultures were added. In a school with children from over 30 countries it is important for the texts I choose that there is greater diversity than in either the Knightly Virtues project or the Narnian Virtues project. In this way I would hope that the characters do not stand in the way of the accessibility of the projects. Following the research from Hyemin Han (2014) I also have concerns about the initial plan to use texts based on the lives of saints. By their very nature, most saints appear extreme versions of the Christian life. Even if one removes the fight against dragons of St George or St Bienheure, or the miraculous resuscitation of a roast chicken by St Dominic, it could be held that their lives are unreplicable and therefore not as helpful for the development of character as other, seemingly more 'normal', characters. However, Han's study does not have a large enough sample size, nor does it study the longitudinal effects of such stories, to limit the study of 'aspirational' characters.

It is just not possible to study characters who are identical to oneself in every aspect, and by their very nature if the time is taken to write a history of a person they usually have lived an extraordinary life. In many ways this is why studies such as the Narnian project are of interest. The use of fiction allows the reader the ability to read more into the characters than may be possible with an historical figure. The virtue of the character can be seen as more subjective in a fictional figure and therefore more approachable. 'Readers of literary fiction must draw on more flexible interpretive resources to infer the feelings and thoughts of characters', (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p.378). The Kidd & Castano study suffers in much the same way as a lot of the literature in that the study was conducted over a short period of time. Studies which measure the long-term effect of literature and virtue is a little way off. Rather than waiting for long-term impact reports from Knightly Virtues and Narnian Virtues the study at Gourdonston School by the University of Edinburgh may provide another suitable model. By surveying alumni on the impact of the school's 'Out-of-Classroom Learning Experiences' Simon Beames (2016) presents a way in which research can look at impact of programmes long after the participants have left school. With the relative youth of the programmes currently in progress this may prove difficult, but should be a consideration for further study.

2.1.5. Gender

Judith Fetterley (1978) argues that due to the bias of the 'classics' of American literature the female reader 'is required to identify against herself', as 'the experience of being American is equated with the experience of being male' (p.xii). Arguably a similar, if not identical, parallel is found within specifically Catholic Christianity by women.

'Power is the issue in the politics of literature, as it is in the politics of everything else. To be excluded from a literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a particular form of powerlessness – not simply the powerlessness

which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified, and legitimized in art, but more significantly the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self from self, the consequence of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male – to be universal, to be American – is to be *not female*.' (Fetterley, 1978, pxiii)

It would seem, therefore, that the selection of texts is of the utmost importance to engage the readers. Kidd and Castano, however, found in their study that gender, education, age did not make a significant difference to the reading of the texts in their study of non-fiction. As noted above, there are potential problems with using this project as a definitive study on the matter. However, the Knightly Virtues team also found that although there was greater engagement over the course from boys, there was 'no significant difference between the impact of the programme on males and females' (Arthur, 2014, p6).

Again, the study of musical preference may cast light. Here, some work shows a more complex analysis of gender. Whereas the responsivity to music is seen as equal in boys and girls (Sopchack, 1955), the preference for styles of music shows more divergence. 'The general pattern of results here suggests that women prefer 'softer' musical styles...whereas males tend to prefer 'harder' styles such as rock' (North and Hargreaves, 2008, p. 114). The implication is that gender and other background traits are complex and while people may still be able to respond to a text in a classroom setting, that does not mean they will necessarily choose to engage independently, enjoy the experience, feel motivated to action, or internalise it long term to the same extent.

2.2. Measurement

A consistent concern among those involved in character education as well as their critics is the validity of any measurement. The unease with measurement was expressed by the Chaplains and Heads of Jesuit schools as detailed in the Methodology section. The current

models of character measurement focus on virtue literacy, knowledge of the virtues, and the ability to notice virtues in practice. This move to separate virtue cognition from virtue practice addresses the difficulty to assess the invisible development of the slow growth in virtue of individuals: the character development is ineffable. Nancy Snow argues that any measurement of virtue should be focused on an assessment of development of virtue intelligence (Snow, 2014). Virtue intelligence places the study of virtue within the context of social or emotional intelligence and the links to the Aristotelean concept of *Phronesis*. Snow's notion of virtue intelligence is an attempt to emphasise the belief that virtuous action proceeds from an agent's mental state. However, Snow notes that there are two more elements to the process of living virtuously: 'dispositionality' and behaviour. Therefore, her stance is that the study of virtue intelligence is a helpful tool for psychologists to study the 'inner state' of the subjects. Jennifer Wright follows a similar path with the suggestion that the measurement of virtue would take place by treating virtues as traits (Wright, 2014). By this she means the response given to a relevant stimulus, such as the recognition that seeing a person in pain should elicit the response of compassion. Wright herself notes that one difficulty with this approach is that it suggests that there must first be a decision from the researcher as to what the response should be. This presents a number of difficulties as there is the danger of too much being read into the situation by the researcher at this point; there may be suitable responses given by the participants which would not have been considered so by the researcher. The role of culture, race and gender in character practice are in danger of being overlooked. Wright does propose a useful set of three variables that should be measured: sensitivity to the presence of virtue-relevant stimuli, recognition and generation of virtue-appropriate responses, and the measurement of consistency as a sign of it being habitualised. The two major UK studies on virtue in literature have focused on the first two of these: both the Narnian Virtue project and the Knightly Virtues curriculum present

texts to help identify the occurrence of virtues and call for a certain response from the pupils. An alternative approach to having the researcher define the appropriate response might be to notice consistent responses across the period of the programme; however, in neither study was this an explicit aim.

Kevin Ryan (2012) argues that there is no valuable method of measuring the development of character in existence and that the connotations of an empirical method do not fit within the context of schools, as testing and measurement within a school setting generally focuses on assessment of progress where the impact of the teaching can be measured through the ability to recall facts. Ryan argues that this style of measurement will never work for character where the learning may lay dormant for years and the effects of the teaching may not be seen until much later.

A third grade girl may read the story of the courageous exploits of Harriet Tubman, the 19th Century, run-away slave, and experience a profound change in mind and heart. She may even forget the story, but maintain the understanding of what personal nobility consists, an understanding that may not be actualized until she is an adult and confronted with an opportunity for heroic action... The point being labored here is that human character is not mathematics or reading. It rarely can be attributed to a particular program or measurement by a test. (Ryan 2012, p. 2).

Ryan is correct to be wary of the claims of testing to prove the efficacy, or otherwise, of particular programmes. I also believe it a wise warning against the judgements of virtue acquisition by children. It is for this reason that I believe that the value of quantitative research methods when dealing with value practice are remarkably limited. This should also give us pause when a programme claims to have had the same impact on boys and girls as there has been no assessment of internalisation and long-term effect.

Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer makes clear that quantitative research has value when the researcher is aware of all of the possible answers (Dijk-Groeneboer 2017, p135). As the questions we are dealing with here are open-ended and I wish to avoid the concerns expressed by Wright above that the researcher has too much control over suitable virtue practice, a qualitative approach is needed. However, it must also be noted that with a qualitative approach the evaluation can never be value-free and this is a concern discussed more fully within the methodology section.

2.2.1. Justification of Life History in measuring development in Character

In the two main UK projects concerning virtue and character the methodology concerns semi-structured interviews along with quantitative measures. This project aims to use, as its qualitative approach the methodology offered by Life History to investigate the impact of the literature on providing moral exemplars on the life of the participants.

I believe this the best approach for this research due to the fundamentally personal and subjective impact that studies of character have upon individuals. It allows for stories to be listened to in their own right and only subsequently are commonalities between stories identified. The reason for a more structured approach in other projects is because they are looking to see whether their particular project has had a particular effect. For this research the focus is on the individual's reception and reaction to the stories and is less reliant on the particular virtue literacy presented in Knightly Virtues and Narnian Virtues. This is based upon the Reader Response Theory (Thompkins 1980 & Pike 2012) where each reader reads the same text in a multitude of different ways. Whereas Narnian Virtues and Knightly Virtues were interested in the knowledge of the terms pre-selected by the research teams, a Life History methodology allows for greater insight into the way in which the individual understands virtue. The approach is more akin to the 'transactional' theory (Rosenblatt 1985) by allowing students to find their own meaning

within the simple religious literacy. Although The Narnian Virtue Project does attempt this, this project allows greater flexibility by not measuring against predetermined terminology and traits.

I also believe that this allows pupils to try to distance themselves from the concept of there being a 'right answer' that I, as the researcher, am looking for. My work in year one noted that pupils had already changed the vocabulary of the JPP and so it may be that holding too fast to specified terminology could suggest pupils (especially with SEND and EAL) are unable to reply in a way that is helpful to the research.

A difficulty with this approach is that it is commonly held that in order for a child to develop the practice of virtue it is a prerequisite that they first acquire a language of virtue (Kristjansson, 2013). This comes from noting a correlation between decline in virtue terms in US books and in virtue language within the population (Arthur, in Kristjansson 2013). However, the school does have the Jesuit Pupil Profile and there is work within the school to help provide a language. This study is distancing itself from the work carried out in RE lessons by not including it in the texts chosen or the journal, so that the pupils have freedom to respond as they see fit to the texts, whilst being supported by the language of the JPP.

3. Existing Data

This section looks at three similar studies on virtue through literature to highlight principles, methodology, and analysis of data. The two main studies are: Knightly Virtues from the Jubilee Centre in Birmingham who reported results in 2014 and The Narnian Virtues programme by Mark Pike at the University of Leeds.

3.1. Knightly Virtues

3.1.1. Objectives

The Knightly Virtues Programme held three evaluative goals detailed in their research report (Arthur, 2014): How might a literature-based intervention designed to develop character and virtue be embedded and sustained in a school curriculum? How might the partnership between teachers and parents on matters of character education be developed? Can the impact of character education interventions feasibly be measured?

3.1.2. Methodology

The methods used by the programme were an experimental trial (taking the form of a before and after controlled trial), group interviews, and analysis of pupil journals. The mixed method intended to satisfy the need for a collection of robust data from which conclusions can be said to offer a high level of validity.

Pupils were provided with short versions of the key stories to read and reflect upon.

A trial was conducted using twenty-six schools and 1329 pupils from both urban and rural areas. The results from this trial helped to inform the experimental trial.

3.1.3. Experimental Trial

The experimental trial used the data collected from 19 schools (eight of which were faith schools), totaling 1089 pupils, 49% girls and 51% boys, 41% attending faith school with 38% at non-faith schools, 48% of the pupils were aged 9 and 45% were aged 10. A control group consisted of 43% of the pupils. The control group was taken from those who did not take part in the programme before the post-test but were from the same school.

The pre- and post-testing was checked and marked by 'expert practitioners' with deep knowledge of the primary sector. The groups of pupils were not set by ability in any of the schools.

3.1.4. Interviews

Six schools took part in the interviews with a total of seventy-eight (7%) pupils, ten teachers, and seven parents (from three schools) taking part. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for areas of interest to be examined as they emerged.

3.1.5. Journals

The journals were given to all pupils and 124 (11%) were sampled. Within the journal there were opportunities for parents to comment on their reflections on the programme. Of the journals sampled, 30% had comments from parents in them.

3.1.6. Analysis

3.1.6.1. Experimental test

The assessors of the scripts completed an original moderation in order to develop an accurate mark scheme. A sample of scripts was marked by two assessors and the inter-rater reliability was sufficiently high to have surety over the results. Partway through the marking a second set of duplicate scripts was sent with the IRR range between 0.48 and 0.86 and so the team were happy that there was enough confidence 'for a test of this type' (Arthur, 2014, p.13). A range of statistical tests were applied to the data. One concern highlighted by the team was that these tests assumed that the pupils 'act independently', which of course is unlikely as pupils learn from one another within the same class.

3.1.6.2. Interviews

The interviews were carried out by members of the research team and totaled six hours of recorded material. The average length of the interviews was thirty minutes. The recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy.

A thematic analysis was then conducted and a 'theoretical saturation' approach was adopted. The transcripts were studied and coded using NVIVO. A similar approach to this was used in the analysis of the pupil journals.

3.1.6.3. Noted Limitations

The team noted the following limitations:

- Experimental and control groups were not randomly assigned
- Group contamination through both the control and trial group being in the same school
- The amount of time, setting, conduct of test, inclusion in wider school life (such as wall displays and assemblies) was within the control of the school rather than the research team
- Possible bias by the schools having chosen to take part in the research: it could be that the schools, and teachers, were already well-disposed to the value of character education
- The schools chose the classes to be part of the trial and the control groups as well as those to take part in the interviews, therefore allowing schools to choose pupils to reflect positively on the institution
- Self-reporting allowed for possible exaggeration of the benefits of aspects of the programme

The data analysis also showed that control was disproportionately in year 5.

None of these limitations invalidate the study and a number will be unavoidably replicated in my own study. However, my work is able to address a number of them. The experimental and control groups will be randomly assigned and that the teachers have not chosen to take part in the study. These two adjustments allow the study to be more controlled. During the course of the trial it is also agreed that, where possible, wall-

displays and assemblies explicitly mentioning virtues will be limited. It is worth noting that the school needs to continue its wider obligations to the human and spiritual formation of all pupils and so the study also makes notes of when virtues are evident in the wider school life.

3.1.7. Findings

3.1.7.1. Experimental Trial

The experimental group showed a highly significant improvement in the application of virtue to personal, social, and cultural contexts ($P < 0.001$) and so the team investigated potential individual or school effects.

Although faith-schools scored higher in both pre- and post-test in the same area as compared to non-faith schools, over the course of the programme the gap was reduced in post-testing from 21% to 5%. The experimental group within faith schools also made statistically significant progress over the control group over the course of the programme ($P < 0.001$). In Pre-test CofE schools scored a lower score than Catholic schools; however, over the course of the programme the gap closed completely from 0.31 pre-test to 0 post-test.

The team found that there was no significant difference between progress by gender, SEND or EAL. The location of the school was highly significant to progress in the experimental group with pupils in semi-rural schools making significantly more progress than those in urban areas. This would suggest that some aspects of personal and social background do have an impact as I have suggested.

3.1.7.2. Interviews

Parents, teachers, and pupils reported their understanding of virtue language as well as their ability to reflect on the historical stories and the application to their lives.

Teachers noted that they appreciated the introduction of virtue language and that they began to use it outside of the programme. The teachers also reported that the language was being used by the children outside of lessons and had been of particular benefit to the boys. Parents also noted that the language of the programme had helped them in conversation with their children to use more particular terminology moving from good / bad to a more nuanced approach using the language of the programme which was understood on both sides.

Although the team noted that the application of the knowledge and understanding of the virtues is hard to assess, they did believe that the interviews reflected positively on the programme's ability to do this. The content of the pupil journal helped in this as it asked the pupils to reflect upon the virtues demonstrated in the historical stories in their own lives. This self-reporting by pupils was not so evident in the responses made by the parents suggesting that there is some uncertainty about this claim.

Because the interviews were spread over a sixth month period the research team were also able to note that there was notable loss of virtue knowledge and understanding by the observation that in the later interview pupils were not able to reflect with the complexity of those in the earlier interviews. However, there was no change in their ability to define, apply, or use the virtues. Although the team noted that they had received no additional tuition it may be that the impact on the language of the teacher had kept this 'alive' in the classroom.

One note from the parent interviews of interest was that the virtues presented by the programme were talked about by parents as being 'universal', 'necessary', and that they crossed over any religious or cultural differences. However, the parent interviews are arguably too small in number and also rather self-selecting towards those parents more involved in school life and maybe well-disposed towards the programme.

Teachers did note that the engagement from boys was particularly noticeable; the team note that the effect on lower ability boys in particular was marked (p18). The traditionally male content of knightly stories does seem to have had a positive effect on the engagement of male pupils.

3.2. Narnian Virtue Project

The Narnian Virtue Project builds on the work of Lickona (1991, 2004) by focusing on the use of literature, particularly the Narnia novels by C.S. Lewis. The aim of the project is to help children ‘understand and cultivate a range of virtues underpinning good character’ (Francis, 2018, p233). The work builds on that of the Knightly Virtues programme by using the Narnia stories. The project does this by three adaptations: the use of novels in which the children are around the same age of the intended reader, extending the curriculum to 14 year olds, and proposing a new model for measurement. The team believed that the novels chosen, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Lewis [1950] 1989), *Prince Caspian* (Lewis [1951] 1989), and *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’* (Lewis [1955] 1989), ‘has considerable potential for eliciting a personal ethical response from young people’. (Francis, 2018, p.234). From these novels 12 virtues were chosen: courage, curiosity, forgiveness, fortitude, gratitude, hard work, humility, integrity, justice, love, self-control and wisdom.

The project has completed its six-week pilot phase to test the materials but it is a three-year programme (with one novel taken each year). During the pilot the team did not expect there to be a significant effect upon the behaviour of the pupils but did believe that there would be a benefit to the virtue literacy.

86 participants took part in the project (37 male, 49 female). 33 participants identified as Christian, 6 as Muslim, 1 as Buddhist and 46 as holding no religious affiliation.

3.2.1. Methodology

3.2.1.1. Pedagogy

The pupils were directed to reflect on these particular 12 virtues when reading the book. The pupils first learn the meaning of the virtues to increase virtue literacy. Next the pupils read short extracts and identify, by use of two coloured highlighters, the virtues and vices within the extract. Next, they were asked to explain how the characters had displayed the virtues. Finally, they were asked to recall a time when they had demonstrated this virtue or vice in their own lives.

The pupils also took part in 'hot seating' of different characters as well as short written tasks, such as newspaper writing. A journal was also used to help the pupils record their thoughts and take any notes that they may wish to.

3.2.1.2. Quantitative measurement

The project adjusted the Narnian Character Virtue Scales (Francis et al. 2018) into the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues (KINCV). This Index presented three items that had been attributed to one of the 12 identified virtues and three attributed to any of the others. The pupils were asked to identify the three that were related to that virtue. The maximum score on the index test was therefore 36.

The questionnaire (completed twice) used:

- Narnian Character Virtue Scale, used to check the internalisation of the virtue knowledge
- Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtue, used to measure the increase in the pupil's knowledge of the Narnian Virtues
- Personality profile, an abbreviated form of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised

- Empathy assessment, adapted from the Eysenck Impulsive Questionnaire
- Self-Esteem assessment, adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Attitude assessment, adapted from the Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith (Astley, 2012)
- Happiness assessment, adapted from the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills, 2002)

The breadth of this questionnaire allows for numerous aspects of the effects of the programme to be measured. Although I note the depth and complexity of the questionnaire used in this study and acknowledge the value that this brings I maintain that the Life History approach taken in my study allows for another view of the effects of literature on a pupil's understanding of virtue. Indeed, having the results of a study using a questionnaire to compare with the results of a Life History approach allows greater understanding within this field of research.

3.2.2. Results

There is a statistically significant increase in the scores pre- and post-pilot on the KINCV and yet not on the NCVS (although within this measure there was a small but significant decrease on the Gratitude scale ($p < .05$)). This supported the project's hypothesis that the programme would help to increase the pupils' knowledge of the virtues. The lack of change in the NCVS was expected due to the length of the study.

On the other five measures there was no significant increase pre- and post-pilot. The largest change was in the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (mean increase of 0.3) but still of no significance. These measures were not expected to show significant change, for the same reason given above for the NCVS, but were included as control measures.

The hypotheses of the pilot were therefore supported by the data gathered.

3.2.3. Limitations of the Pilot

- The size of the cohort (N=86) may not give enough data on which to draw significant conclusions
- The study took place at the end of the school year which means that there were distractions for both teachers and pupils
- Two of the new assessment tools (NCVS & KINCV) were still under development and so need further refinement and so results may change as the assessment tools are refined

The pilot my study will not be able to be the size of that for the Narnian Virtues and so I am aware that some of the same issues may arise. Despite attempts to counter this it has not been possible at this time to find a solution for this. This is one of the challenges of practitioner research. I am placing my study in the heart of the school year in order to avoid the end-of-year fatigue mentioned in the Narnian Project. In this way I have countered elements of the limitations of the Narnian project in my own study.

This literature review has placed this research within the context of other current research. The two main UK studies will inform the proposed methodology.

4. Methodology

Following the literature review and an examination of the two main UK studies on character education this section proposes the methodology for this project. The methodology is the expression of the proposed new model for measurement of virtue, namely Life History. Life History “inhabits the very heartland of subjectivity and explore[s] the multiple ways in which our subjective perceptions and representations relate to our understandings and actions” (Goodson, 2017, p.3). This subjectivity is what I believe balances the desire for measurement within the field of character education. Life

History will provide a different voice to the assessment tools used by other studies. It fits within the limitations of practitioner research and a study of this size. I have adopted a qualitative approach to this study as we are looking at human action. Because Life History is spontaneous it also does not allow for the refinement 'to match [the] perceived audience' (Fancourt, 2020) in the same way that other data collection can. It also follows an inductive analysis which allows the participants to talk with minimal direction. The role of the researcher then is to discover the trends, codes and categories, after the interview (mindful of the potential bias involved).

4.1. The need for collaboration

Collaboration in preparing for this study has been key, as is the case with much practitioner research. Five areas for collaborations have been key in the formulation of this work. After initial reading I met with the chaplains before the start of their annual retreat during the Easter term. The 10 Jesuit schools in the UK (England and Scotland) were represented as well as some representation from the Loretto schools (Independent Catholic girls' schools). Of the Jesuits schools, eight out of the 10 are independent schools with two London state schools. With the group split into smaller groups I posed a series of questions for them to consider: How does your school teach virtue? What works best? and how do you know that it works?

From this I was most interested in ascertaining how they could claim that there was success in teaching virtue. The results were as I predicted: all believed that the virtues on the JPP were being 'lived out' in their schools and that by talking to the pupils about them through assemblies, prayers and academic Religious Education lessons they could provide anecdotal evidence that they were seeing them lived out. Once it came to the suggestion that there should be some measurement of this anecdotal evidence the mood shifted. The responses against measurement came into two categories: 'you cannot

measure what is going on within a person' and 'these things can take years to bear fruit'. When I asked how they evaluated their resources the discussion moved towards the idea of how 'the pupils responded'. Looking further into this it came to light that in six out of the 10 Jesuit schools this was done by gauging the number of follow-up conversations that came from the pupils after the 'event', be it an assembly, classwork etc. One of the chaplains referred to this as 'the buzz it creates'. The chaplains, with two exceptions, remained wary of any proposed measurement of virtue practice. Of the exceptions, one proposed that you would expect the behaviour of the pupils to improve over the course of the year due to them becoming more aware of the virtues and that, in theory, there could be some measurement of the improvement in virtue through a similar 'virtue recording' system. One chaplain held that there should be measurement in order to make 'informed improvements', but was unsure how she thought this could happen.

The chaplains agreed that the use of stories in helping to teach virtue was helpful. All of the schools, rather expectedly, said that Bible stories and stories from the life of St Ignatius were helpful in illustrating how people lived out virtues: 'Jesus feeding the three-thousand [sic] is a good example of being loving', 'I used the story of St Ignatius as a good example of someone who lived an intentional life'. Some used examples from people in the news or the lives of the saints.

The collaboration with the chaplains suggested two key principles: that there is an uneasiness about measuring a development in virtue practice (or even in virtue) and secondly that it is normal for the chaplains (at least) to use literature in some form in their work.

At a later meeting with the Heads of eight of the 10 Jesuit schools (as well as a Head from a Jesuit school in Denmark) there was more of a desire to find a solution to measurement of virtue. All Heads said that their school was, in the words of one headmaster, 'good at

improving our pupils' way of being virtuous', and that they too could give anecdotal evidence but wanted more certainty that what they were doing was effective. Various models were suggested that I have put under the headings of self-reporting, observed behaviour in school, and behaviour out of school (parent / guardian reporting, surveying the school community). The approach from all of the Heads was notably similar to their approach to academic departments. One Head said, 'we review our academic departments and pastoral staff with the aim of improving their practice and it shouldn't be any different to this area too. I think that the issue might be to do with some people feeling as though they are being judged rather than it really being about how to help them improve what they are providing for our young people.' The advice from the Heads was that there should be some form of measurement but that there was no agreement on what this should be.

The meeting with the Heads gave one important point for reflections. Firstly, that the Heads would like to see some measurement of how effective the teaching of virtue (the JPP) is in their schools as a means of developing their resources and approach further. It was also noted that virtue develops, often in unseen ways, years after pupils have left school and so the measurement should be of the resources and systems rather than of the pupils. In further discussion with one of the Heads later in the day it was clarified that what was meant was that the pupils shouldn't feel as though they are being judged in their progress because 'measurement in progress in maths isn't the same as measurement in progress in virtue'.

Reflecting on this second point I think that this is where the key philosophical difference is in measurement within a school. Academic subjects have an expected terminus, exams. The measurement of progress in academic subjects is to help provide an indicator of future achievement at a set date and to provide evidence to help construct interventions to aid improvement. However, this is not so in virtue in the same way. The lack of a

terminus impacts on the method deemed as appropriate in two ways. Firstly, there is no urgency to change behaviour in the same manner, unless it is impacting on others. Secondly, progress beyond the school is expected in a way different to that of mathematics.

Two further areas of collaboration will also be used to help with this study. I have asked a colleague from another school to act as a critical friend and have explained the reasons below. I have also asked another Jesuit school to trial the texts chosen to check that they are appropriate so that any difficulty with language and the level of the text does not affect the study. This school has a suitably similar ability, ethic and gender profile to their year 9 pupils as our school which is the reason it was asked to do this.

4.2. Participants

There were three factors that led to the choosing of year 9 participants, all of which were practicalities within the school and department at the time of the planned intervention. None of these change with the move for the intervention to take place in the academic year 2020-2021.

4.2.1. Curriculum time

Year 9 is the first year taught at the school. The examination pressures in other year groups means that there was no available time to give over to the intervention. In the coming academic year this is the same and so year 9 were chosen as the year group. Religious Education teaching groups are set to be the same as in English due to timetabling design. Therefore, to be able to look at a range of reading abilities I had to use a number of Religious Educations sets. After discussion with the Head of Religious Studies it was decided that it would be best to include all pupils within the intervention curriculum and that I will then choose five pupils from each class to take part in interviews, with the option of follow-up interviews with participants who present

material in their journal which might make a second interview helpful. There are four sets in year 9 and so one class was selected as a control group while the other three are delivered a curriculum based on the reading of literature. I do not teach Year 9 and so am able to reduce some of the disadvantages of research in my own school. To help to reduce this further I have asked a colleague in a different school, who completed the MLT last year, to act as a critical friend to 'provide a watching brief acting as a crosscheck for possible subjectivity, bias or vested interest' (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p50). I am still aware of the issues of positionality (Davis, 1998) but believe that these two measures reduce the impact sufficiently for this study.

The difficulty presented by the inclusion of a range of participants is that this increases the range of texts needed in order to address the ability levels of the pupils. However, this could also be a strength of the study as it is more transferable into a school setting. The issue of reading ability was also not evident in the results from the work of the Jubilee Centre's Knightly Virtues programme nor that of the Narnian Virtues programme at the University of Leeds. It is, however, an important factor to consider and therefore will be considered in analysing the results. Benchmarking data provided for each pupil by the CEM Centre at Durham will help us to assess a potential issue with the chosen texts. Alongside this I have worked with our SENDCO to add an additional check using the data held by her on reading ages for pupils on her register.

The names of participants will be removed in order to protect the identities of the students and numerical identifiers will be used in their place. However, I am aware that due to the nature of the potential responses to any interview technique chosen I can only achieve non-traceability rather than complete anonymity (Punch and Oancea, 2014, p69).

All parents and pupils will receive a letter explaining the study and that it fits within the normal teaching of the curriculum (there is a full discussion in the Ethics section of this

paper). Those participants selected for interview will be asked to consent to their involvement, as will their parents or guardians.

4.2.2. Selection of Participants for interview

Five participants from each class make up the core group of interview participants. Making the first selection of the same number from each set should give an academic width to the study. Within each class the group be made up of the pupil who would be at the top of their set from their assessment scores, the pupil who would be at the bottom of their set from their assessment scores, the pupil with the highest MidYis Score from their CEM data, the pupils with the lowest MidYis score from the CEM data, and finally the pupil selected at random using a random number generator. The pupils chosen will not be disclosed to their classroom teacher in an attempt to avoid bias. A discussion will then take place with the Head of Year, school counsellor, and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) to make sure that there are no reasons why a pupil should not take part in the interviews.

I have chosen this sample size of 20 as it is an achievable number of people with whom to use the Life History method. The number represents around 25% of the cohort. I will also examine all of the completed journals from the entire cohort and follow up with interviews where their responses could help bring new insights to light. The Life History method does not require a larger number of participants to be interviewed because, as noted in the Literature Review, during this study I am placing high value on the subjective and idiographic rather than the objective and nomothetic. Due to the nature of the study I am not able to fulfil the criteria set by Janice Morse that 'the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained' (1994, p 230). However, 20 participants is a legitimately sufficient number as other studies have suggested, (Sikes, 1997 – 25 participants, Rakhit, 1999 - 20). It will be in the repetition of common themes during the

second set of interviews that would suggest a 'strong body of evidence' (Bertraux, 1982, p. 187).

4.3. Intervention

To introduce the study to the participants I will address the year group in an assembly. Those participants who are part of the interview group will be spoken to on a separate occasions so that they understand their role and any questions can be answered. This first meeting is important to ascertain what Goodson and Sikes (Goodson, 2017) call the 'research bargain' (p.77), developing an understanding of the relationship between researcher and the participant (explained fully in the Ethics section). Life History interviews can also take a considerable amount of time but due to the rictions on time this is likely to be limited to one hour to fit into the school day. Following this meeting, replacement participants may be required or the number of participants reduced; this will be decided at the time.

Following the introductory meetings a first interview with each participant follows to establish their understanding of the role of how they live their lives, the basis upon which they make decisions, how they adjust their behaviour, influences upon their past decisions.

The first interview is a one-to-one interview. During the interview a voice recording will be taken to enable a conversation to take place and notes will not be taken. This is to help provide the least intrusive setting for the interview. After the interview notes will be made from the recording and time-markers made for each of the significant areas. As there will be around 40 hours of interview I will not transcribe the whole interview as this is not practical. I will transcribe those sections that are important to the analysis of the data. I am aware that this method presents potential data issues as it is itself 'data interpretation and selection, and, as such, can reflect on the researcher as much as the

data' (Cohen et. al. 2018). To help minimize the effect of this, two recordings will be selected by the Head of Religious Studies for moderation.

The interview will not have a rigid structure but three general principles will form part of the conversation: what is the participant's understanding of virtue / character / a good life?, how 'good' do they consider themselves to be?, what role models do they have for 'good' behaviour? This approach will also help create a more personal environment in which the discussion can be most productive. As the interviewer is not aware of what is not known there is a reliance upon the pupil to freely offer the information. In this way it seems best to have a less structured interview, and in the Life History model, very little structure at all (Lincoln and Guba 1985, in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, p.509). Having principles or purpose rather than pre-determined questions is an attempt to avoid interference with 'emergent understandings' of the participants (see Goodson, 2017, p. 79). It is important to have some structure in case certain participants find that more helpful in eliciting their responses.

Two weeks after the conclusions of the first round of interviews the literary texts will be presented. The choice of biographies to be offered is discussed below. A short synopsis of the story and the characters involved is given to all pupils in the year group during the first of the RE lessons. From there they will chose two texts and this is given to them for the next lesson. A set of four RE 'reading lessons' will then be given over for the pupils to read the stories in the library. The library has comfortable seating and areas for the pupils to be in a less formal setting. A journal is given to the pupils. It will contain pages for the pupils to write a brief reflection on their reading. At the end of each lesson the pupils is given 15 minutes to write in their journals, although they may not wish to do this. A separate part of the journal will give space for writing down other reflections that they may have from their own lives. This section will take the form of a daily diary where pupils can write down their observations from that day. This section is voluntary and

pupils is told that they are not expected to write something every day. The reasons for the participants writing or not writing in the diary is discussed at the follow-up interview to ascertain the basis for writing in that section (see Wood 1986 in Goodson 2017, p81). I am aware that similar problems may arise as found by Bullough (1991) that pupils may write the diary for me rather than for themselves, but I believe that it allows some the means of remembering their thoughts, which is an important aspect in 'making sense of their experience and faithfully maintaining them' (Bullough et. al. 1991, p15). Indeed, although rare, Life History research has included one participant such as (Bullough 1989, Sparkes 1994, and Wolcott, 1983).

At the conclusion of the reading lessons, one lesson is given to the writing of a letter. This piece of work will serve two purposes. It allows the pupils to bring together their thoughts on what they have read and hope to synthesise their thoughts into one piece of prose. The second aim is to allow the pupils to respond to the characters. In their work on the Narnian Virtues, Mark Pike et. al. used a similar task for qualitative data collection in their 'Letter to Lewis'.

The second round of interview will take place after a significant amount of time has passed since the reading of the texts. I expect to have some data gathered from the journals that will provide immediate reactions and developments in their understanding and thoughts on the virtues. One element commented upon by in Hart (2019) is that there may be 'a heightened sensitivity in students after studying virtues...whereby they are more aware when they are not being virtuous than they were before', (p.9) and that this could lead to the pupils a rather more modest appraisal of their virtuousness. Therefore, I will leave the second interview until one whole half term after the conclusion of the intervention. If the aim is to allow for the virtue learning and understanding to become virtue practice and habitualised then this distance should allow for this. I am aware that it may be seen as beneficial in most research that this second interview should, in some

way, use the data collected so far to inform this interview (Glaser & Staruss, 1967). However, to retain the elements of the Life History approach I allows the participant to guide their own story. The way in which it may reflect this round of data collection is more in my analysis of the material rather than in the questioning or prompts.

Using this approach we will triangulate the life story along with the data from the curriculum (the pupils' reflections), noting any change in the behavioural record of the pupil (Goodson 2017, p. 8). I have considered interviews with their Head of Year or with the class teacher but the time restrictions of the project would not allow for this. It should also give a broader insight into the whole-school life of the pupil. If time would allow interviews with the Head of Year, teacher or parent / guardian I believe that this would be beneficial as it would help to gather another perspective on the virtue being lived out or becoming habitualised.

4.4. Mitigating bias

Plummer (1983) gives three 'principle sources of bias' as being the informant, the interviewer, and the interaction. For each of these I will attempt to limit this bias whilst recognizing that as a member of staff at the school I will not be able to remove all aspects of them.

4.4.1. The Pupil

There is first the conscious altering of the life story to promote a 'better' version of the self by the pupil to the interviewer. One of the ways I have attempted to limit this is to triangulate with the school behavioural record; in this way I would hope that a difference between behaviour and the presentation of the life story may be possible to pick up. By delivering this intervention to a group that I do not have a connection to I would hope that there is some limitation to the presentation of a 'front' or that the pupil would want to please me and may feel that their answers are being judged (Josselson, 2006). I am not

unaware that there could still be some element of this but as this would be similarly applicable if the interviewer was unknown to them then I believe that this is in part unavoidable, but could cause the data to be unreliable to some degree. Having created a distance between the intervention and the second interview could mean that the pupil forgets some of what is taught or that they become less sensitive to noting virtue practice. Although this is a source of bias in Plummer's work I believe this to be, within this study, an important factor as if this did occur then it would suggest that the intervention did not have the intended effect.

4.4.2. The Researcher

Of Plummer's notes on the researcher as a source of bias three are primarily applicable to this study: Attitudes, Demeanor, and Personality of the researcher. As a researcher of young pupils I am aware that I am interacting with pupils who have their own world view and so I must be acutely aware that although I may be looking for the virtues to be presented in certain ways, the pupils' interpretations may be different based upon their gender, class, race, religion and politics. This is compounded somewhat by the context of the school. There is added complexity with the fact that this is taking place within an Independent Catholic school, and being an RE teacher within the school I must be aware of the potential bias that I may carry into the interview. I have considered the comments made on the demeanor of the researcher too, particularly dress, speech and body language. The need for a life story to be as open, informal and relaxed as possible means that this is an area due consideration but that any arrangements should also be practical. For example, it could be better if the pupil and interviewer were dressed more casually but the constraints of the school day mean that the interviews will take place during study periods when pupils are free and therefore it is not practical for the pupil, or interviewer, to get changed into casual clothes to carry out the interview. It is intended that the adaptations to the environment presented below may be able to help with this. The role

of language within the interview is of importance as well as body language. Being aware of this is helpful, but so too will the Life History model, whereby the interviewer doesn't move the candidate in certain directions and has a more open approach to where the pupil would like to take the story.

As the researcher I must be aware, as Gadamer (2013) asserts, that I come from a particular background, with my own beliefs, values and cultural heritage. The conversation between me and the participant will no doubt be affected by this and care must be taken. To take Gadamer's hermeneutic further, I will need to understand that a *Horizontverschmelzung* will occur during these conversations, which is both positive and a challenge. It is positive because it allows me to gain a greater understanding of the Life History, a challenge as this understanding will have as its basis the life history that I bring to the research.

4.4.3. The Interaction

The physical setting of the interview is important as it sets a tone to the interview. The Life History model attempts to equalise the relationship between the interviewer and the participant. To this end, the setting is important. Although in this study we cannot change the dress of either party we can help with the equalising by meeting in a relaxed and neutral environment. The school has what it calls a 'family room' with sofas, soft furnishings and refreshments. This is a space which does not belong to either party and is not a usual space of which the pupils would have any positive or negative connotations. By using this space it is hoped to make the situation less formal and more comfortable. Simple other elements such as waiting outside before we both arrive, the way in which the interviewer first meets the pupil and the greeting used, also gives the understanding that this is a common space and attempts to minimize bias caused by the asymmetries of

power. Also being aware of the deliberate actions suggested by Morrison (2013) allows the interview to be an easier process for the pupil.

The observations and adaptations above are intended to help the interviewer to be able to 'present the informant's subjective reality, that is to say, his or her definition of the situation' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017, p. 284) to gain validity for this study.

4.5. The Curriculum

In selecting a range of biographies on religious figures I have used a number of factors. In order for the text to be able to be delivered within the framework needed for incorporation into the school year and the RE curriculum the length of the text, as it must be able to be completed within the two lessons. In some cases this will require the text to be abridged or for sections of a text to be used, rather than the complete text.

With a diverse cohort of pupils at the school it has been important to take into consideration the diversity of the characters that each text provides. In this way the text is more engaging and also, it is hoped, will prove easier for parallels to be drawn between the character's life and that of the pupil.

I have also been mindful to ensure that the style of language in the texts is at an appropriate reading level for the pupils. Within the cohort there is a wide range of reading ages. It is important that an inability to read the language in the text does not get in the way of pupils understanding the virtue being exhibited in the text.

As all pupils are at different stages in their reading ability they are also at different stages of their readiness to be inspired by characters. To help cater to this difference the texts will portray a range of characters from the 'down to earth' to the highly aspirational.

Finally, if a text suitable text is not published in a suitable format then the resource will have to be created.

4.5.1. 'Religious Figures'

During the formation of the curriculum it became important to define what is meant by a religious figure. During conversations with colleagues there emerged a divergence of understanding of the term. Some understood it to be figures who are religious themselves and act in a certain way because of their adherence to a particular religion, some that they are / were church or religious leaders such as bishops, nuns, Rabbis or Imams, others confined the definition to recognized saints. Each of these understandings proved problematic for the study as the number of relevant examples, especially of BAME women, became under-represented in the material. This in itself highlights an issue, especially within the Catholic Church, but there is no time to address this here. For the study to be able to present figures who could be accessible to the cohort there needed to be a wider definition of 'Religious Figures'. This study therefore extends the term to mean those people whose actions and example reflect virtues that have a significant link to a religious group. So, Greta Thunberg is an example of someone who would reflect the Judeo-Christian principle of care for creation and would therefore be an appropriate subject. Rosa Parks too would be another example, as would Malala Yousafzai.

4.5.2. Selection of Texts

The 'Faith in Action Series' produced by Religious and Moral Education Press give a series of books based on the lives of religious or 'moral' figures. As these books are well tested for reading age and the school has a set of several of the stories these will provide a very good starting point. The series alone will not suffice, however, as the characters would not cover the breadth that I would require. The series is supplemented with Joan of Arc, Pier Giorgio Frassati, Malala Yousafzai, Rosa Parks, and Greta Thunberg. Two of these, Frassati and Yousafzai, would have texts prepared specially for use while the others would be delivered through existing texts.

- *Oscar Romero* (Gearon, 1998)
- *Martin Luther King* (Owen, 1998)
- *Nicky Cruz* (Owen, 2000)
- *Catherine Sneed* (Gray, 2002)
- *Chad Varah* (Constant, 2002)
- Pier Giorgio Frassati [self-created resource]
- Malala Yousafzai '*I am Malala*': *How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* (Yousafzai 2015) [excerpts]
- *Rosa Parks: My Story* (Parks, 1999) [this text is abridged]
- Greta Thunberg, *No one is too small to make a difference* (Thunberg, 2019)

This selection of texts gives a range of ages of the characters, as well as gender, race, and social class and religious adherence. The texts also represent a range of reading levels. However, following a review with our SENDCO it was suggested that, to help with the reading of each text, a short synopsis giving any required background as well as a glossary of vocabulary will also be provided.

4.5.3. The Curriculum Outside of the Texts

The two significant studies of virtues through literature in the UK, Knightly Virtues and Narnian Virtues provide a substantial curriculum outside of the reading of the literature. In this study I wish to remove a significant proportion of the 'extra' to attempt to gain insight into the role that the reading of the literature itself plays. Both the Knightly Virtues and Narnian Virtues programmes are designed to allow the curriculum to provide for a range of Key Stage 3 year groups. However, in this programme, aiming the work at year 9 allows me to dispense with some of the scaffolding, although not all. Both programmes also have a clearly stated set of virtues that they are aiming to transmit to the pupils. Although this study is taking place within a school where there are a set series of

overarching stated virtues, the aim of this curriculum is not to specify these as the virtues that the pupils have to discover or accept. The scaffolding is given through the journal reflections. The aim of the scaffolding is to allow the pupil to have control over their own learning and only provide support to maintain the students' pursuit of the learning intention, help organize and justify, support pupils who are unable to fulfil all elements of the task on their own, hold the focused interest of the child, and to minimise frustration by keeping the pupil motivated (Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen, 2010).

5. Ethics

There are several ethical issues in this study: asking pupils to evaluate how they live their lives, removal from study time, anonymity, asymmetry of power, and emotional impact on participant and interviewer.

5.1. Evaluation of their way of life

In the study the pupils are being asked to reflect upon how they are living their life, to note where they do this well as well as how they may fall short. By doing this there is the need to tread carefully as it has the potential to bring to the surface events or thoughts that may be upsetting. It is therefore the case that before pupils are approached to take part in the study the Deputy Head (Pastoral), school counsellor, and the Head of Year is asked to verify the appropriateness of those selected by the Head of Religious Education. These three people will hold Safeguarding and wellbeing information that may be unknown to me and to the Head of RE. Once the list of participants has been agreed the parents or guardians and the pupils is approached. For a boarding pupil the consent of the Boarding master is sufficient but a letter is sent to the parent or guardian. The letter sent includes information to help the parents and students understand what is involved in the study, why their participation is necessary, what they are asked to do, what will

happen with the information provided, how that information will be used and how and to whom it will be reported. They will also be informed about the retention of the information (BERA, 2018, p.9 and CUREC, 2020, p.2).

5.2. Informed consent

Due to the nature of life story research it is disputed as to whether a one-off consent is sufficient protection for the participant and so as well as the written consent at the start of the interviews verbal consent will be asked for before the second interview (Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This approach is disputed by Josselson (2007) and Smythe & Murry (2000) who limit the participants' role post-interview, but I believe, especially with the participants' age and the power asymmetry, this is important. This also follows BERA guidance that participants have the right to withdraw at any stage and for any reason (BERA 2018, p.18). As well as this, for this study, although the interpretations of each interview will not be given to the participant, if the participant requests that their data is removed from the report it will be removed. This is at odds with Chase (1996) who believes that, 'After the meeting(s)... the text belongs to the researcher' (p.45).

During this study I will enact Teirney and Clemens' five considerations (2012, p.275) to: 'Explain clearly and exactly the purposes of and time commitment necessary for the research project and include all information in a consent form... Recognize the power dynamics that exist between researcher and subject ... Prioritize the subject's wellbeing above the research project... Protect the subject's identity and privacy... Present the data accurately'. However, for practical reasons I will not obtain feedback from the subject throughout the writing of the text. I will make it clear in the letter and consent form that 'their personal narrative will be re-narrated by the researcher in the course of the analysis' (Smythe and Murray 2000, p. 330).

5.3. Storage of Data

The recordings will be held on the recording device in a locked draw in my office and any downloads will only be held on a password protected computer under a password protected folder. Any transcription will remove identifying data and will be replaced with a numerical value. The list of participants' numerical indicators will be held on a password protected computer in a password protected folder. During and after the study I will be the only person who is able to access the data and it will be shared (where necessary) with the Deputy Head (Pastoral). At all times College safeguarding practices will be upheld and disclosures will be made where necessary and the data shared with relevant authorities (BERA, 2018, p. 25 and CUREC, 2020, p. 3).

5.4. Retention of Data

Consent letters will be held in a locked draw for three years, audio files will be deleted once the transcript (summary) is made. Anonymised transcripts will be deleted three years after the completion of the research.

5.5. Removal from study sessions

For the interviews to fit within the school day pupils are removed from a total of two private study sessions at least a term apart. There is likely to be little effect, if any, on the ability of the pupil to complete their homework or extra study but, if the Head of Year does have a concern with the pupil missing these sessions then a separate and convenient time will be found (BERA, 2018, p. 20).

5.6. Emotional impact on the Interviewer

I have been a Head of Year, have Designated Safeguarding training, and 13 years of pastoral experience but remain aware that the interview process has the potential to have an emotional impact upon me. Using my critical friend I will discuss, without giving detail,

the impact. It is also likely that this will have to be shared with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and advice will be taken (BERA, 2018, p.25). Breaks between interviews will be important to maintain my own wellbeing.

5.7. The ability of the interviewer in Life History

It is well understood that the personality of the interviewer, including approachability and their ability to listen are of utmost importance in this method (Goodson, 2017, p73). They note that 'The act and art of listening, really listening, is perhaps the most important requirement of the life history researcher'. I am aware that the role needed as a Life History researcher is different to that of an academic teacher. My experience as an RE teacher will not be sufficient preparation for this new way of listening. To help develop these skills further I sought help from those more used to this way of approaching this new role, such as from a previous chaplain at the school who has become a spiritual director at a Jesuit retreat centre. I have also taken four one-hour sessions in developing listening techniques which are un-intrusive. This has allowed me to not only develop my own abilities but to experience being a participant in a similar, although not identical, situation.

In this section I have laid out the methodology I intend to use in the research project in 2020-21 by making explicit the reasons for the method as well as the limitations. The methodology is informed by the literature and potential issues with ethical challenges have been addressed.

6. Professional Development

I believe that the adoption of Life Histories as a way of monitoring the development of character can also be used within other areas of the school. The methodology embraces

a long conversation with the pupil to gain an understanding of them and for them to begin to synthesise their education within the wider context of their life. Within Religious Education Michael Grimmet (2000) spoke of the encounter with new material (such as life stories) as the development, and subsequent restructuring, of schemas within the life of the child (p.19). In most schools, conversations are short and rather functional due to the busyness which is a characteristic of school life. However, allowing pupils the time to reflect upon their education allows the classroom to become more relevant within the life of the pupil and may, I propose, allow schools to reflect upon the impact of not only character education but the whole of the pastoral approach of that school.

In this way my understanding of the relationship between research and practice has also developed. Before the MLT I understood that, as a teacher, my practice should be informed by research. I now take the view that there is much more of an interaction between the two. Although I still hold that evidence-based practice is important and that current research should inform the practice in the classroom I am now more aware of the role of teacher experience in helping to frame the research and synthesise the two areas to help me become a better practitioner.

This study, so far, has allowed me to reflect upon a number of factors I would now develop within my classroom, within my pastoral role in school, as well as my leadership role within school.

Within the classroom the study has allowed me to reflect on the content of the courses and the examples I would use with a greater evidence-based approach. Being more mindful of the role that factors such as gender, race, culture, or sexuality, play in engaging pupils should allow me to offer a greater depth of education to all of the pupils in my class. Religious Education deals with numerous cultures, but the context of my school requires greater opportunity for pupils to share their own stories of their encounters with the

topics we cover. When it comes to understanding and appreciating the global nature of Christianity or other religions, different political policies or the feelings of women within the life of the Catholic Church, the individual stories become important. Managed well this can bring together both a phenomenological and human development approach to Religious Education. This is not to place Religious Education firmly within either of these two pedagogical positions but simply to use a range of approaches to engage pupils with the subject.

Within the pastoral life of the school, especially in a boarding school, the Life History approach has also allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the role of conversations with pupils to understand their own academic, human, and spiritual development. Again, although this does happen, the study of Life History prompts longer conversations and an appropriate equaling of roles to allow the teacher to place great importance upon the experience of the pupil. This could have significant impact on pupils' engagement with their role in their education.

7. Conclusion

This project proposes to study the effectiveness of using literature in order to increase virtuous practice in 14- and 15-year olds. The study also proposes a new model for measuring this development using Life History 'interviews'. The modern study of character education, with a focus on virtue, is in its infancy and numerous studies will be needed until the generally perceived beliefs of the role of literature can produce reliable and replicable data. There has been an attempt to mitigate some of the limitations of the study, most notably through collaboration with a number of colleagues, and the usual factors of sample size, timing in the year, and power imbalance, have been addressed as well as possible.

The proposal of Life History is not a suggestion that it is a better approach than that of previous studies. The use of self-reporting, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, have all had success. This study proposes the Life History approach as a supplementary method of understanding the success of literature-based models of character development. In this way this study is successful in developing this important field in educational research.

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