

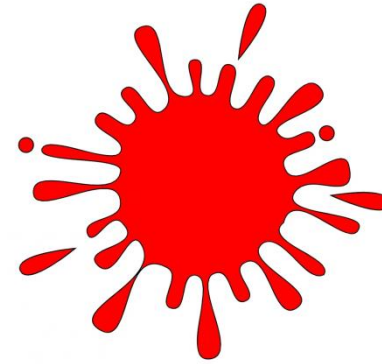
Lifespan Development in Autism

A grounded theory study of the life experiences since leaving school in a cohort of adults in middle life

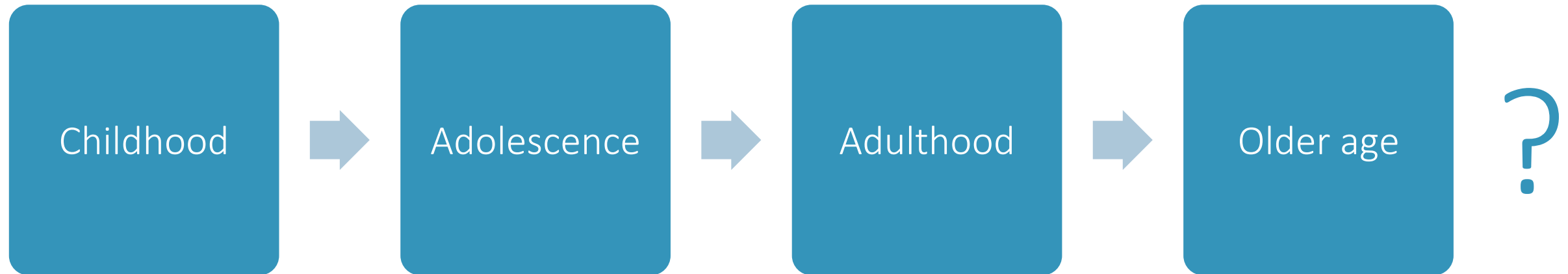
Anna Gilleard

Supervisor: Dr David Simmons

Understanding Felix



What happens to people with autism in middle age and beyond?



Literature review

(1) Need for research on age-related **change** not age-related **difference**

Importance of retrospective detail

(2) Need for experiential research

Importance of hearing individual's voices

Methodology

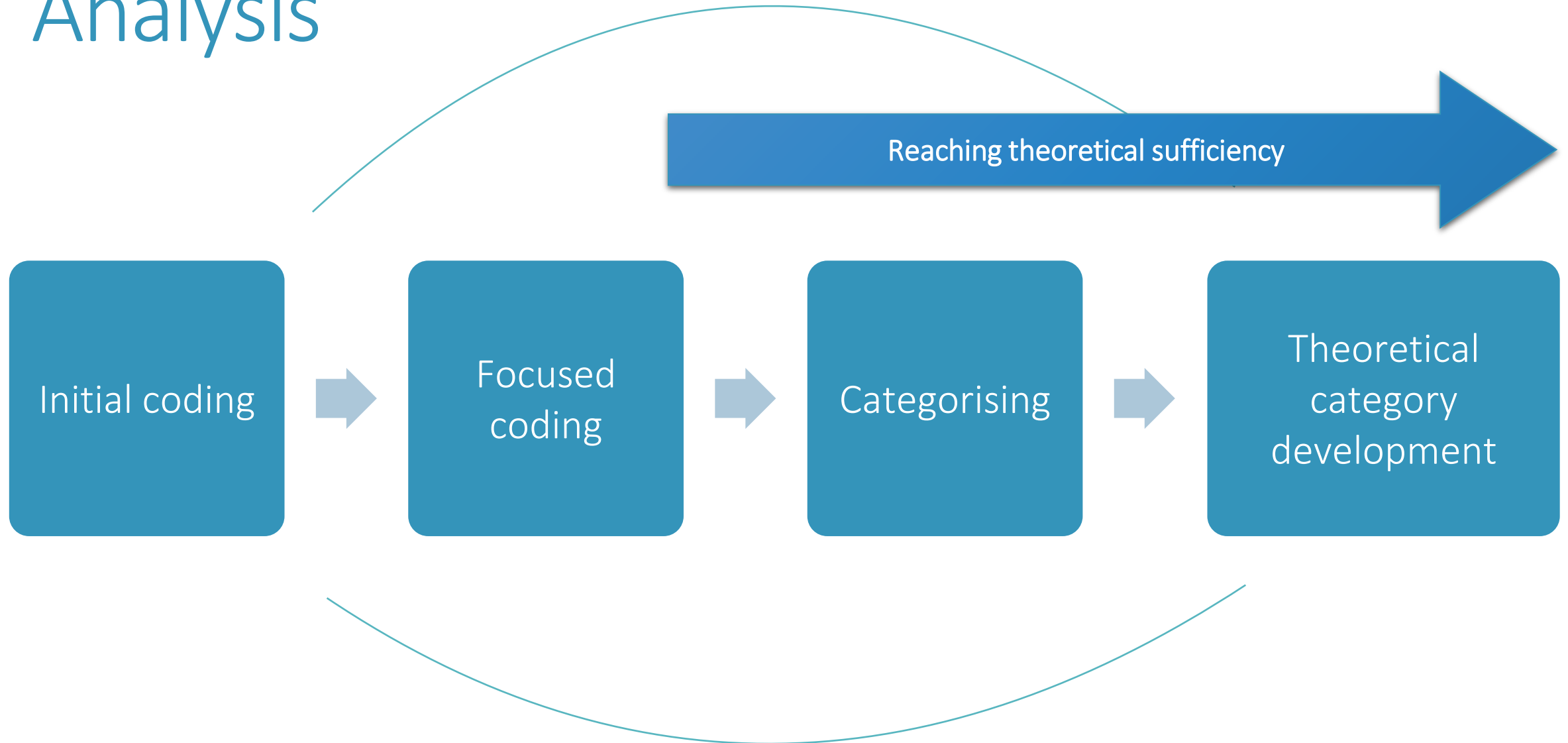
Sample: Families and caregivers of 7 former students

Retrospective study

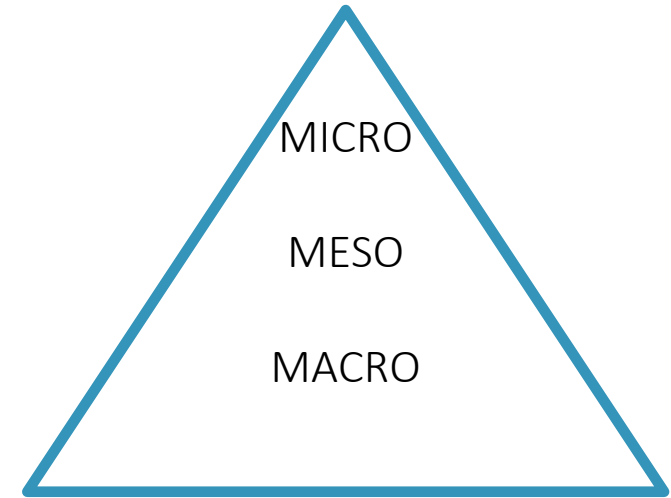
Grounded theory – no pre-existing assumptions

7 Semi-structured interviews

Analysis



Parents as Champions



“every single thing that he has done, every change of direction, every kind of service has been initiated by ourselves”

- Participant 2

Father of 26 yr old former student

Continuing Development

“she is continuing to surprise us with her abilities”
“still able to develop new skills”

- Participant 3

Father of 41 yr old former student

“I am proud of her ability to cope with complex situations”

- Participant 1

Mother of 31 yr old former student

“Now he’s older, he’s just a big gentleman”

- Participant 10

Mother of 44 yr old former student

Individualised development

Adults with autism fixed their own markers of change

Recognising a valued self

Realising one's own individual goals and needs

Artist
31 yrs

Baker
26 yrs

Choir singer
41 yrs

Enjoys walks
43 yrs

Artist
31 yrs

Music-lover
50 yrs

Gardener
44 yrs



“Will I still go to my Garden centre* when Mum is not here?”

- Former student 7

*Name has been changed

What does the future look like?



References

*All identifying information and names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants

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[Summary of Quality of Life Research Findings](#)

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