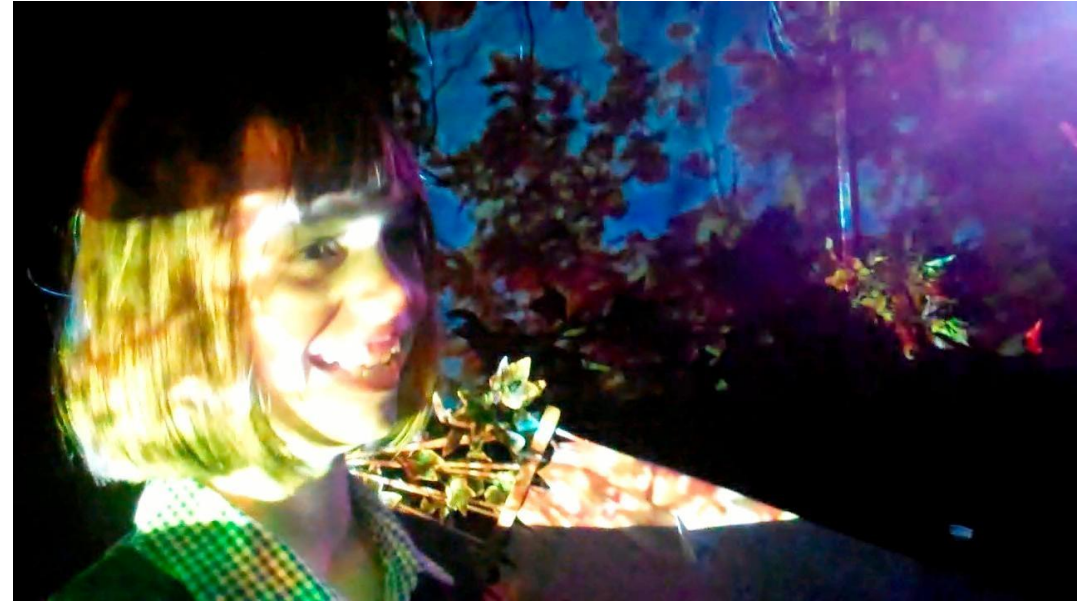


Playing A/Part

- **Leading Roles (in order of presenters):**
- Nicola Shaughnessy (Arts)
- Emma Williams (Psychology)
- George Watts (Steering Group)



Imagining Autism and gender: changing faces....



Playing A/Part: Autism, girls and women

- Invisibility of autistic females: the minors in relation to major males
- Late or misdiagnosis
- Diagnostic tools: 'without accompanying intellectual disability or language delays [autistic females] may go unrecognized, perhaps because of subtler manifestation of social and communicative difficulties' (Will Mandy).

Invisibility

'extreme male brain theory' encourages the popular view that it is a male 'disorder', reducing the likelihood of diagnosis in females.

Current diagnostic tools, developed using predominantly male samples, lack sensitivity to autistic traits in girls

Use of performative strategies to conceal difference ("masking")... evidence that autistic girls and women

(a) internalize problems

(b) use coping strategies and 'camouflaging' mechanisms to mask them

Consequences....

- Qualitative studies of autistic pupils' school experiences suggest that hiding difficulties and difference forces them to compromise their identities by **focusing on others' views rather than their own**, resulting in considerable psychological and emotional cost. Hence, evidence that autistic females engage in more masking than males means the impact on their sense of self and psychological well-being is likely to be particularly acute. In keeping with this, autism in females is linked to an **increased risk of internalizing disorders, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders and self-harm**, compared to both typical individuals and autistic males (Emma Williams).

Participatory arts as tools....

- As autistic females use performative strategies in everyday life, these resources can be redeployed, exploring autistic ways of being in the world (languages, desires, practices).
- Practice as research: iterative, in process, “not knowing” ...
- Feminist tradition of performance art: theatres of identity...
- Post dramatic, “not acting” being “in the moment” and now/here
- In tune with new ways of conceptualising identity and community as a relational approach, agency as distributed, **intersubjectivity**, multiple autisms.

Playing A/Part

- Even when we give voice to those silenced, even when we speak in the name of the multitude, even when we talk about the “agency” of an artistic process, even when we try to give agency to an oppressed people, **we assume a mediation between an act and its unfolding, most often attributing the push to action to ourselves as a species, whilst still retaining a strong sense that the world is ultimately led and enhanced by the neurotypical few. This is the problem with agency: it makes the subject the subject of the action. What if the act did not fully belong to us?**

Playing A/Part: autism, gender & performance

- <https://vimeo.com/277429399>



Research design

- Mixed-methods approach to evaluation and analysis of the workshops and video documentation, enabling **triangulation of multiple data** sources to understand change and the **integration of first and third person perspectives**.
 - Quantitative measures
 - Qualitative measures

Research design

Group	Time 1 (pre)	Workshops (10 weeks; 2 hrs/wk)	Time 2 (post)	Time 3 (1 month)	Workshops (10 weeks; 2 hrs /wk)
School in Trial (n=4)	X		X	X	—
Waitlist control school (n=4)	X	Activities as usual	X	X	

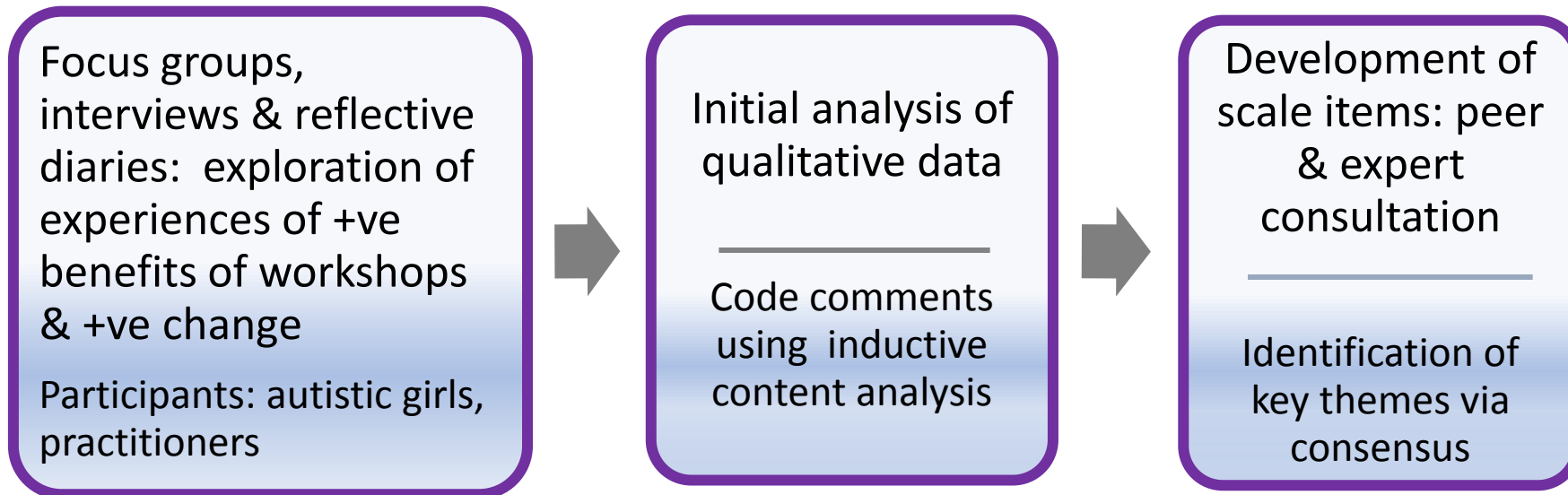
- Quality of Life Autism (QoLA);
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES); Rosenberg, 1965);
- Self-Perception Scale for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1982)/
Self-Perception Scale for Adolescents (SPPA; Harter, 2002);
- Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS measure of self-awareness and social anxiety; Scheier and Carver, 1985).

Research Design

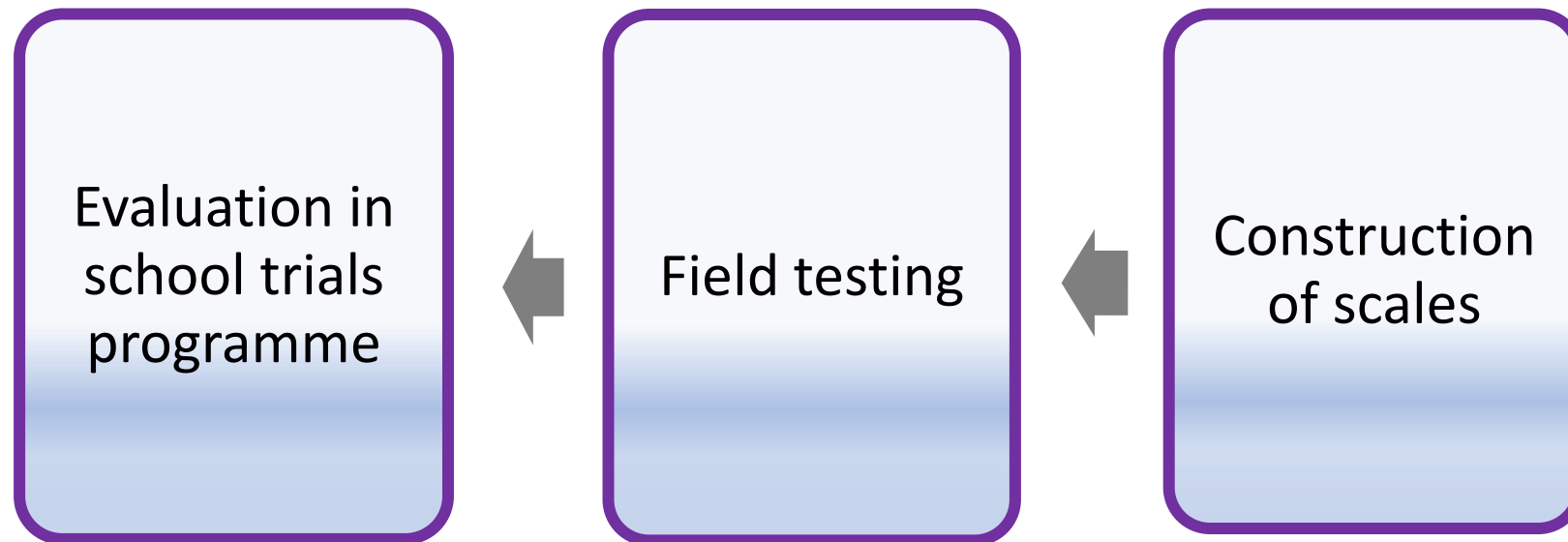
- **Qualitative research measures**
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Reflective diaries

Inductive outcome measure

- Develop, field test & refine a participatory arts inductive outcome measure (P/ARTS/OM) to be used alongside standardised assessments.
- Identify specific aspects of workshops
 - autistic girls *themselves* find beneficial
 - what may be clinically and/or educationally meaningful to assess in terms of positive change
- Responds to feedback from autistic Steering Group that existing outcome measures often fail to consider the perspectives of autistic individuals.



Development of outcome measure



Participatory research: perspectives on participation: George Watts

