VOLUME ONE

EXPLORING THE 'POSSIBLE SELVES' OF GIRLS ATTENDING A PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT AS AN INSIGHT INTO THEIR HOPES AND FEARS FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The future oriented component of the self-concept has been termed as 'Possible Selves' (PSs) and was first coined by Markus and Nurius (1986). PSs refers to the selves that one hopes to become (hoped-for selves), fears to become (feared-for selves) and expects to become (expected selves) in the future (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The theoretical framework of PSs suggests that PSs are a manifestation of individual's aspirations, goals and fears that provide a conceptual link between self-concept and motivation and provide incentives for future behaviour (Markus and Nurius, 1986).

Children and young people (CYP) attending a PRU are perceived as having fragile and pessimistic views of their future (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser and Bedward (2003) emphasised the heightened effects of school exclusion on exclusion from society for girls. Concerns have also been highlighted by Ofsted regarding poor educational standards, future outcomes and low expectations for pupils in PRUs (Ofsted, 2016).

Using a case study approach, this research explores the PSs of seven girls (aged 14 to 16) who attend a PRU in the West Midlands, using the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) (Shepard and Marshall, 1999; Shepard and Quressette, 2010). Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was carried out on the data where themes were looked at across cases to construct synthesised overall themes. The

analysis indicated that participants generated four overarching themes for hoped-for and feared-for PSs, including family, employment, finance, health, education and lifestyle with themes and subthemes generated across cases within each overarching theme.

Thematic analysis was also conducted to identify facilitating and hindering factors identified by participants to the achievement of hoped-for selves. This included school related factors such as emotional support provided by PRU staff (facilitating factor) and limited opportunities provided at the PRU (hindering factor), community factors such as the support of outside agencies (facilitating factor) and individual personal factors such as low motivation and academic attainment (hindering factors). Finally, the data was considered against theoretical assumptions within the PSs literature to discuss how likely it was that that the PSs generated by girls in a PRU will influence future actions. Findings were discussed against literature on the PSs framework and its associated concepts. Implications for PRU staff, educational professionals, government and Educational Psychologists (EPs) were provided, as a means to further support the commitment to future planning and outcomes for girls in a PRU. This included a focus on how the PSMI can be further utilised to maximise future focus and action-setting, highlighting the wider societal, political and economic constraints to be aware of. Strengths and limitations of this research were proposed, alongside potential directions for future research.

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I would first like to express my appreciation to the young people involved in this research, as if it was not for them, this thesis would not exist. The honest and genuine views they shared with me have inspired me even more in my hopes to helping them achieve the future goals they shared with me, as I move on to my career as an EP. I would also like to thank the professionals within the PRU who helped support the research process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Alternative Provision
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
CYP	Children and young people
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
CR	Critical Realism
EHC	Education, health and care
EHCP	Education, health and care assessment plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSs	Possible Selves
PSM	Possible Selves Map
PSMI	Possible Selves Mapping Interview
PSQ	Possible Selves Questionnaire
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Need (s)
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SES	Socio-economic status
SIT	Social Identity Theory
TA	Thematic Analysis
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The research presented in this thesis represents the perceptions girls attending a pupil referral unit (PRU) hold of their futures, using a conceptual framework known as Possible Selves (PSs) (Markus and Nurius, 1986). This chapter provides the background and context to how this research originated and why it is important to the researcher. An overview of the structure of the thesis is also presented.

1.2 Background and personal interest of researcher

I decided to complete this research because I noted that girls with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) are less represented in educational research. Further, much of the existing research explores their past or present experiences (Nind, Boorman and Clarke, 2012; Sheffield and Morgan, 2017).

In a previous role, I worked in a large mainstream secondary school as part of a student support team. I witnessed the SEMH needs of young people on a daily basis but often felt as though the focus was wrongly placed on their behaviour. Listening to comments made about them, many had their futures *mapped* out for them already. Their views seemed to become increasingly more lost as they became more and more disengaged with education, perhaps losing grasp of *future* altogether. The importance of listening to the views of vulnerable young people stayed with me and was reinforced in my later role as a graduate psychologist, where my role centred upon capturing the views of

CYP, including their future aspirations. During my doctoral training to become an Educational Psychologist (EP), it became apparent when visiting alternative provisions (APs), that girls were less prevalent and presented differently to male pupils. I became particularly interested in the beliefs girls with SEMH held of their futures, particularly those who have become disengaged with mainstream education. In completing this research, I hoped that the young people taking part would feel valued, empowered, listened to and hopeful of their futures.

1.3 Overview of Thesis

The remainder of this thesis will be presented in six chapters:

Chapter 2: Background and National Context

This chapter comments on contextual and national background of SEMH difficulties within the United Kingdom (UK), discussing conceptualisations of needs and their prevalence rates. This is followed by outcomes including exclusion and subsequent attendance at a PRU. It concludes with a discussion of the future outcomes faced by pupils attending a PRU.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This section introduces the concept of pupil views before discussing the views of young people with SEMH difficulties, then the small amount of research into the views of girls with SEMH difficulties. It introduces the concept of identity development, self-concept and motivation before moving onto the self in the future. This section ends with the aims and rationale for the research.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the epistemology and ontology underpinning the research, the research design and methodology. The data collection measures are discussed as are the procedures and the ethical issues addressed.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

The qualitative findings are presented in this chapter in response to each research question stated, derived from qualitative data analysis, including visual representation and supporting quotes. Findings are discussed alongside existing literature presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

Key findings from each research question are summarised. Findings are discussed relating to implications for educational practice in PRUs, government and educational psychology (EP) practice. The section discusses how this research has contributed to what is already available on this topic area. The strengths and limitations of the present research are discussed and potential for future research is considered.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter briefly outlines national context relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties. The chapter begins by briefly outlining past and current conceptualisations of SEMH needs. It outlines the prevalence of SEMH needs in young people across the UK, then discusses the issue of exclusion, placement in alternative provision (AP) such as PRUs and the outcomes that often follow.

2.2 Definitions, policy and legislation related SEMH Difficulties of Children and Young People (CYP)

2.2.1 Changing definitions and conceptualisations

Originally, emotional and behavioural difficulties were described as Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESDs) (Department for Education [DfE], 1994; Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001), reflecting a medical form of disability.

Frederickson and Cline (2002) argue that the concept of BESD has shifted, as constructions began to be shaped by societal factors rather than within-person factors. This change in terminology began to reflect a shifting focus from behaviour towards mental health and emotional well-being; and was reflected in the change from BESD

to SEMH in the revised Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE/Department of Health [DoH], 2015).

The revised definition of SEMH, as described in the current SEND Code of Practice refers to "*a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways…these may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties…or disorders… [or] disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder." (Department for Education and Department for Health [DoH], 2015, p. 98).*

The change of terminology included in this revised definition aims to prioritise an approach that considers a child's behaviour as a response to a situation occurring within their environment (Cooper, Smith and Upton, 1994; Cole and Knowles, 2011; Evans, Harden, Thomas and Benefield, 2004; Weare, 2010). In contrast, Norwich and Eaton (2015) raised concerns about the reliability of the revised definition. They argued that the revised definition is ambiguous, and despite the removal the term *behaviour* in the title, this does not totally eradicate the focus on challenging behaviour. Moreover, they argue that the introduction of psychiatric language can pose problems.

Further debates on the reliability of the definition of SEMH centre on the notion that not all CYP identified with the broad category of SEMH may have a mental health problem and not all CYP who experience a mental health problem have a special educational need (SEN). Indeed, findings from an NHS survey indicated that 12.8% of excluded

children who were surveyed had an identified mental health difficulty (Sadler *et al*, 2017). Moreover, Ford *et al* (2018) found that school exclusion in itself was likely to exacerbate mental health problems among pupils excluded. However, children identified as having SEN difficulties and disabilities are considered to be one of the groups who are most at risk of displaying behaviour difficulties (Murray and Greenberg, 2006). This may suggest that externalising behaviour may disguise other possible special educational needs (SEN). A review of alternative provision (AP) by Taylor (2012) suggested that 79% of pupils attending PRUs have a special educational need which is often a behavioural difficulty but often masks other issues, such as speech, language and communication needs or cognition and learning needs. A wealth of research in particular has suggested higher levels of externalising difficulties in children with specific language impairment (e.g. Tomblin, Zhang, Buckwalter and Catts, 2000). Moreover, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties show lower levels of consistency across environments than language and cognitive abilities (Lindsay, Dockrell and Strand, 2007) therefore they may be more complex to accurately define and assess. A lack of training, knowledge and skills in identifying and assessing SEMH needs from an early outset was found by the House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018).

It appears that despite evolving definitions of SEMH difficulties, it is still a disuputed concept which continues to develop (Hackett, Theodosiou, Bond, Blackburn, Spice and Lever 2010). The research seems to indicate that the processes surrounding young people, their mental health and the relationship with school exclusion is extremely complex and difficult to define.

The differing views as to how SEMH/BESD is perceived add to the concerns of its reliability as a label. For example, Macnab, Visser and Daniels (2008) consider the term in merely education terms, referring to pupils' behaviours and emotions which disrupt their learning and personal development. Alternatively, Cooper (2010) and Mowat (2015) view it as a term rooted in social welfare, mental health and criminal justice. Mowat (2015) reinforced that the social and political context of a child's environment is essential to understanding their SEMH difficulties rather than merely looking within the child and his or her parents.

Such different conceptualisations and the change of terminology of BESD to SEMH are consistent with features of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model, a model valued and utilised in education which aims to depict the many systems within the world of a child or young person and that is the interactions between them that shape their development.

There are five systems in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model; these are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which all interact with one another as shown in Figure 1. The microsystem acts as the immediate environment of the developing person and has the most direct impact on them e.g. peers, family, school, local community. Next, the mesosystem includes the interrelations between the systems within the microsystem that comprise the developing individual e.g. connections between families and schools. The exosystem extends on the mesosystem but encompasses wider social structures

and systems that may not exactly directly impinge on the person but influence their immediate setting indirectly, e.g. a child may experience a difficult home life as a result of their parent losing their job which can lead to increased stress in the family and as a result disrupt parent-child interactions. The macrosystem encompasses overarching structures and forces e.g. economic, social, historical, cultural, educational, political and legal structures, which all encompass and interact with all the other systems mentioned. This therefore includes socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, media and law. Finally, the chronosystem reflects upon the changing context of the individual and interaction between these systems over time.

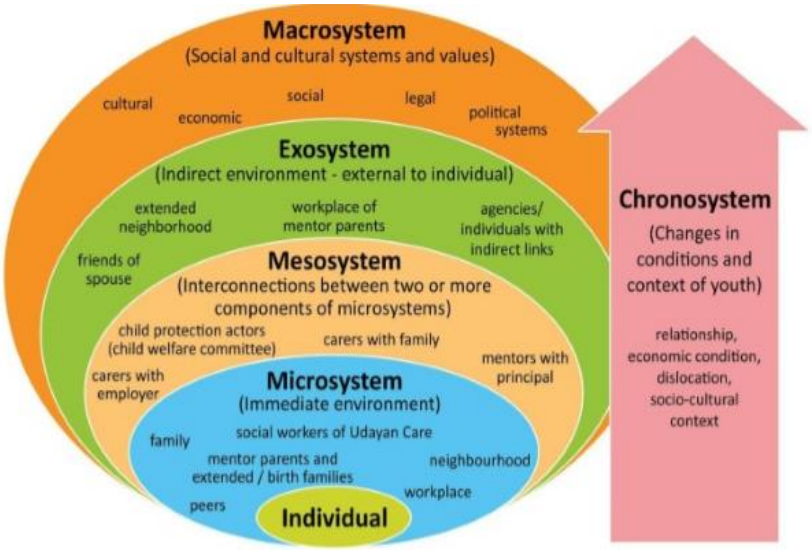

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1979)

Ecological systems theory is therefore useful to draw upon when considering the complex systems operating in the life of a child or young person with SEMH needs, particularly girls who are less represented in the exclusions literature. The model highlights that it is essential to consider the wider systemic and contextual factors that

come from multiple outlets for pupils with SEMH, particularly those at risk of exclusion or have been excluded from school. It emphasises the need to consider their values, beliefs, characteristics, social networks, cultural values and how these have shaped their interactions within educational settings, their peer groups and their schooling experiences. It is also important to remember these systems interact around the young person constantly and over time. The model highlights that educational experiences and namely exclusion, often results from multi-dimensional influences of a complex combination of factors at a number of levels, both in and out of school, which may not always be considered by school staff. This is reflected in the views of Jull (2008) who highlighted that SEMH is the only SEN category where punitive approaches such as exclusion are deemed to be acceptable. This seems to contradict the sole purpose intended by the change of BESD to SEMH, that is to consider a young person's behaviours as reflecting underlying difficulties with mental health and as a result of complex interacting factors in their environment. Bronfenbrenner's model emphasises the need for a holistic approach to be taken in order to promote early intervention for those at risk of exclusion in order to alter the educational trajectories they face. This is particularly important given the links between school exclusion and later long-term social exclusion, which is described as a complex process which leads to disadvantage in access to resources, quality of life and participation in society (Levitas *et al* 2007); and has been reflected in educational and policy guidance (e.g. Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). Most importantly, disengagement with education and later social exclusion from society has been reported to be more pronounced for girls (Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser and Bedward, 2003).

2.3 Prevalence of SEMH difficulties

Most recent statistics reveal that 17.5% of students in primary, secondary and specialist schooling in the UK identify with a primary need of SEMH and receive special educational needs (SEN) support as a result (DfE, 2018a). More specifically, it was found that in England in 2017, 12.8% of five to 19-year olds have a diagnosable mental health disorder where mental health disorders were grouped into four broad categories which included emotional, behavioural and hyperactivity. It is likely there are more CYP who have not been formally identified with a label of SEMH and cases have been missed or misdiagnosed (Visser, Daniels and Macnab, 2005).

2.4 Exclusion of pupils and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

There are well documented risk factors associated with SEMH difficulties including low educational attainment, poorer future prospects and later mental health difficulties in life (Cefai and Cooper, 2009). Due to the externalising nature of their difficulties, they are the most likely group to be excluded from school (Visser *et al*, 2005).

A review commisioned by the DfE which took place in May 2019, highlighted higher exclusion rates of pupils with SEMH and other SEND related difficulties and reflected challenges faced by schools to identify and meet these needs, coupled with funding difficulties and provision of specialist support. (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter and Street, 2019). The most common reason for permanent and fixed-term exclusions for 2017/18 was persistent disruptive behaviour (DfE, 2019).

Statistics by the DfE showed that the rate of permanent exclusion for boys (0.15 per cent) was over three times higher than that for girls (0.04 per cent) in 2016/2017(DfE, 2018a). This would appear to explain the disproportionate numbers of girls attending AP and PRUs as Taylor (2012) reported that two-thirds of pupils in AP and PRUs are boys. However, less evidence has been found to explain such differences. Factors of gender stereotyping or discrimination may take place in schools and impact upon teacher-child relationships and expectations of behaviour. For example, Carlile (2009) found that there seemed to be a lower threshold of what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour from girls in comparison to boys and where girls were excluded it was for aggressive behaviours considered to be inappropriate for young women. Overall, there is a lack of research focussing solely on girls and exclusion.

Concerns for the educational outcomes of excluded CYP arose from the Elton Committee report which emphasised the responsibility of local authorities to provide good quality alternative provision (AP) for pupils (Elton, 1989). As a result, in the 1990s, a range of APs were introduced to accommodate pupils whose needs professionals found challenging to meet within mainstream schooling; referred to as pupil referral units (PRUs). The design and systems within PRUs vary across the country but they all share the feature of catering to a variety of students, including those who are permanently excluded, those who avoid or refuse to attend school, and those who may need a short-term placement before reintegrating into mainstream education (Reid, 2007). The ultimate aim of a PRU is to equip pupils with effective coping mechanisms to enable reintegration back into a mainstream setting (Ofsted, 2007).

Providing more flexible and individualised education, it has been argued that PRUs are more equipped to meet the needs of vulnerable CYP (DeJong and Griffiths, 2008). However, Ofsted (1995) raised concerns regarding the quality of education provided. The inspection stated that attainment of pupils in PRUs was variable but generally too low, even when pupils' educational history was accounted for. Concerns were repeated in 2008 with regards to PRUs failing to provide adequate educational standards (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008). Moreover, the Taylor report (Taylor, 2012), concluded that APs were not providing sufficient individualised support to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH. More recent concerns were highlighted by Ofsted, relating to behaviour management in PRUs, poor educational standards, low expectations and a lack of strategies to support reintegration, whilst noting much varience across the country (Ofsted, 2016).

2.4.1 Outcomes for Pupils in PRUs

Longer-term outcomes for students within PRUs are often less positive than their peers (Pirrie and Macleod, 2009). This is supported by research demonstrating pupils arriving at PRUs often have unidentified educational needs and are frequently failing academically resulting in low motivation and self-belief (Pirrie, Macleod, Cullen, McCluskey, 2011). For example, only 1.4% of pupils in AP achieve five or more GCSEs graded A* to C compared to 53.4% of young people in mainstream education. Further, only around half of pupils (56%) from AP were in sustained education, training or employment after key stage 4, compared to 94% from mainstream schools (DfE, 2018b). Negative social outcomes included poor mental health and involvement with youth crime (Parker, Paget, Ford and Gwernan-Jones, 2016).

Minimal national data has been collected on pupils in PRUs compared to those in mainstream education. A review published by the House of Commons Education committee suggested that PRU pupils' outcomes fail to consider the extenuating circumstances that have resulted in a need for AP and the ongoing external challenges they face (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). Putwain, Nicholson and Edwards (2016) argue that direct comparisons between this group and mainstream peers may not be appropriate; instead, they suggest that personal, relevant outcomes which are important to these pupils should be measured, such as staying safe and social skills. The government response to the report published by the House of Commons Education committee, also published in 2018, stated that there is more to be done to ensure children in APs receive high quality education and they achieve positive educational outcomes, regardless of their circumstances (DfE, 2018c). It listed funding efforts in the form of the AP innovation fund to help support transitions from AP to education, employment or training.

Research has also taken place seeking the views of young people on how to improve PRU outcomes (e.g. Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Whilst some see the PRU as a positive turning point where their social and emotional needs are better accounted for compared to their mainstreajm experience, Daniels and Cole (2010) reported that 50% of their participants perceived their exclusion to be damaging to their future opportunities.

Evans, Meyer, Pinney and Robinson (2009) surveyed young people not in education, employment or training (known as NEET) where they shared that if lessons had been more relevant to their future work prospects and if they had received more support and encouragement, their future outcomes could have been better. In addition, fixed term exclusions particularly for girls, are associated with reduced engagement with education and training opportunies (Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser and Bedward, 2003). More recent research is lacking on the impact of social exclusion on future but Daniels *et al* (2003) concluded that the literature supported the view that permanent exclusion from school was associated with exclusion from society and more so for girls.

Previous Ofsted reports have suggested that successful PRUs focus on preparing young people for alternative future plans that are relevant to their aspirations, interests and desires (Ofsted, 2007). Russell and Thomson (2011) suggest that this may not always be the case for girls attending AP. They found that girls tended to be offered vocational courses based on stereotypical gender-themed assumptions such as childcare and hair and beauty. Instead, where girls wanted more academically focussed options, this was not offered to them. Further, Kilpatrick, McCartan and McKeown (2007) found that requests for alternative qualifications to be offered in AP were refused. The researchers also reported that outcomes for male pupils two years after leaving AP were better than those for girls.

In 2017, the DfE commissioned a literature review to explore avaible evidence for effective strategies that support KS4 pupils attending AP to increase attainment and

pursue a successful transition to post-16 provision (Tate and Greatbatch, 2017). The review highlighted that AP can only be effective if young people have access to a personalised programme that reflect their aspirations. Key observations were that for all students attending a PRU, it was crucial to maintain high aspirations and expectations that they would be entered for GCSEs, move on to college or university, or gain an apprenticeship so that students feel valued, hopeful and motivated to succeed. In addition, the review emphasised that students need to be provided with careers advice which helps them when making choices about their future.

2.4.2 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined contextual information regarding definitions and the nature of SEMH difficulties and their prevalence rates. It has outlined relevant policy and legislation that has informed the conceptualisation of SEMH needs over time within the context of education. The chapter has discussed outcomes of pupils with SEMH and their placements in APs such as PRUs. It has also highlighted serious implications for failing to address the needs of vulnerable CYP with SEMH, demonstrating that without the right support, many may not develop socially appropriate ways of behaving that enable them to contribute positively to schools, communities, society and their futures (Botha and Wolhuter, 2015).

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter begins with an overview of children's participation followed by research exploring the views of pupils with SEMH difficulties, many of which attend PRUs. It also presents research exploring the views of girls with SEMH difficulties. The chapter then discusses identity development, introducing concepts of identity, self-concept and their relationship to concepts of motivation and future outcomes. The future aspect of identity is then presented in the form of the Possible Selves (PSs) framework, commenting on its assumptions and influence on behaviour. PSs of PRU pupils and factors of socio-cultural context which are heavily attached to PSs are then presented. The chapter discusses findings from a small systematic literature review exploring UK research into the PSs of young people before ending with a final overview of the aims and rationale of the study.

3.2 Children's participation

The importance of giving CYP the opportunity to express their views is presented in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989) which was ratified by the UK in 1991. 'Article 12' of the UNCRC states that all children have the right to express their thoughts, feelings and viewpoints and should play an active role in making decisions about their own lives. A key principle in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015) is that the views of CYP should be at the heart of working with them and they should be actively involved in any decisions regarding their education and futures.

The emphasis on listening to the views of CYP is also reflected in research as there has been a shift from CYP being passive agents who research is done 'to' or 'about' to becoming more active participants in the research process (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). For example, seeking their views on their educational experiences has been argued to be powerful in increasing motivation and agency (Fielding and Bragg, 2003) and listening to their views has also been used as a way of developing policy and school practice (Sellman, 2009). This is reflected in the aims of the present research, as data collection aimed to move beyond the research process and to inform planning of next steps to inform future goal achievement.

One of the most common criticisms aimed at Article 12 is that adults can appear to be consulting young people but ultimately ignore their views. In this research, I wanted to maximise meaningful participation by adopting an approach of data gathering similar to the model proposed by Lundy (2007). Lundy's model discusses factors of space, voice, audience and influence where children must not only be given the opportunity to express a view (space), but they must be facilitated in doing so (voice), listened to when they do so (audience) and helped in acting on it (influence). The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) offered a way to meet all four aspects of this model. In the current research, I viewed my role as a researcher as prominent in enacting the 'space' and 'voice' elements of the model by Lundy; I then viewed the role of PRU staff as instrumental to endorsing the 'audience' and 'influence' elements of the model.

3.2.1 Participatory methods with vulnerable CYP

Consistent with Lundy's (2007) model, participatory research is research that actively involves participants beyond just providing data using a level of creativity whilst adhering to ethical standards (O'Kane, 2000; Bishop, 2014). The current research aimed to empower and enable young people to express views that they would be supported in acting upon thereafter the research.

Aldridge (2012) warned of the dangers of excluding vulnerable young people from research and advocates for the adaptation of methods so they can authentically participate. As a result, it is important to create opportunities to collect data in innovative ways to elicit these views (O'Connor, Hopkinson, Burton, and Torstenson, 2011; Nind, Boorman and Clarke, 2012). As researchers, it is also vital to consider the implications of those CYP who choose not to participate or whose participation is limited (Lewis 2010). In my research, I attempted to provide participants the opportunity to elicit their views creatively, whilst expecting some participants to provide less elaborated perceptions of their future.

3.3 The views of CYP with SEMH and those attending PRUs

Cooper (1993, 2010) emphasised the importance of gaining the views of pupils with SEMH as they are the "least empowered and liked group of all" (Cefai and Cooper, 2009 p. 39). Flynn (2014) highlighted that having an insight into these pupils' own perspectives provides useful information to inform understanding of their learning experiences.

Several researchers have stressed the importance of ensuring that CYP feel as though their viewpoints matter and that educators spend time to find out about what is important to them (Flynn, 2014; Meehan, 2016). Nevertheless, young people with SEMH continue to be a group less represented within research compared to other groups. CYP with SEMH difficulties may have language and communication difficulties, making it harder for them to articulate their views (Benner, Nelson and Epstein, 2002). An additional perspective is that CYP with SEMH may be more difficult to engage given their less conventional methods of communication (Corbett 1998; Sellman, 2009). However, research conducted with this group has demonstrated that when asked, they can provide insightful messages about their lives (Wise, 2000; Sellman, 2009; Cefai and Cooper, 2010; O'Connor *et al,* 2011; Hamill and Boyd, 2002).

Research completed with pupils with SEMH has highlighted negative experiences of mainstream education, including negative staff relationships, feelings of injustice and academic difficulties (Lloyd and O'Regan, 1999; O'Connor, Hodkinson, Burton and Torstensson, 2011; Nind, Boorman and Clarke, 2012; Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Sheffield and Morgan, 2017). Such research has also identified enabling factors and barriers within a PRU (Hart, 2013; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Nevertheless, there seems to be inconsitency between the positive outcomes identified by young people and government agendas. For example, Harris, Barlow and Moli (2008) conducted qualitative research with primary aged children attending a specialist residential SEMH school, primary caregivers and staff members. The positive outcomes for attending the provision were reported to be improvements in pupil's

social, emotional and behavioural functioning, behaviour at home, self-esteem, and improved relationships. This is inconsistent when weighed against the government's focus on academic achievement and employment as the benchmark for achieving positive outcomes rather than social and emotional goals (DfE, 2016). This has implications for the exploration of PSs relating to various areas of a young person's life deemed important to them and their future, some which may focus on employment and academia but other goals which may be prioritised ahead of this. The current research aimed to explore what is important in the futures of girls attending the PRU and the motives underpinning this, in the hopes that relevant, clear and meaningful goals would emerge.

3.3.1 The views of girls with SEMH difficulties

The views of girls with SEMH as a sole focus is particularly limited in education research. Girls with SEMH needs are often characterised as "known, yet not known, difficult and also in difficulty, dangerous, and also being in danger" (McLeod and Allard, 2001 p.1). Further, their feelings of anger or upset may be more easily dismissed and instead, attributed to changes in hormones or puberty (Cruddas and Haddock, 2005). Consequently, Corbett (1998) considered that girls identified with SEMH difficulties may be more likely to be 'silenced'.

Nevertheless, research with girls with SEMH difficulties does exist. Key researchers in this area such as Clarke, Boorman and Nind (2011) have been instrumental in research with this group, focussing on capturing their views about their disengagement with education.

In their research, they reported that girls were more willing to reflect upon their mainstream educational experiences rather than their current specialist provision as they were keen to make suggestions on improvements to improve mainstream access for them. All girls emphasised the value of feeling listened to by staff and that it is essential for staff to have an understanding and consideration of the situational factors outside of school that may impact upon their academic engagement. However, participants also reported feeling ignored and associated this with their disengagement from staff and learning activities in the classroom. As a result, the researchers also emphasised the need for meaningful, innovative participatory research methods for the girls to construct and understand their own experiences better.

In a later study, Nind, Boorman and Clarke (2012) extended their research and explored the views girls attending specialist BESD provision held of their educational experiences, using creative methods such as digital photography and video diaries. The girls in the study historically communicated through verbal and physical behaviours leading to exclusion from mainstream education. However, the digital and narrative methods available to them in the research allowed them a chance to explore new ways of communicating and chances of social inclusion, something missing from their previous educational experiences.

Both pieces of research reinforced the significance of not only listening but responding to the complexities expressed in the views of girls with SEMH needs, that is, in a way that not only collects data but acts on it (Lundy, 2007). Nind *et al* (2012) concluded,

that by creating spaces to share their views with creative and culturally meaningful tools, they were able to communicate and problem-solve in a way that was empowering. This was because the research process allowed them to position themselves in an alternative way to what they had been used to, which not only increased their perception of their own capabilities, but it provided school staff with something to recognise and act on. Similarly, in the current research, I aimed to use the PSs framework as a creative and meaningful lens for girls in a PRU to consider their futures, empowering them to set their own goals and actions.

3.3.2 The views those with SEMH difficulties hold of their futures

Most research with pupils with SEMH difficulties has been found to encourage them to reflect back on their past experiences (Spiteri, 2009, Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Thacker, 2017; Jalali and Morgan, 2018). When research has touched upon future, perceiving negative future outcomes has been highlighted within research of CYP who have experienced permanent exclusion, with many sharing little or no future aspirations (Daniels and Cole, 2010).

Solomon and Rogers (2001) conducted research with young people aged 13-16 attending a PRU in the northwest region of the UK, exploring their perceptions of their circumstances. Despite the minimal future-focus aspect of the research, the researchers noted that young people's views of their future were quite unrealistic and they lacked feelings of agency and choice. They were unable to suggest ideas of how they could have avoided their current position despite acnowledging that they would have preferred a different circumstance.

Cole and Knowles (2011) commented that SEMH needs develop in those who are subject to heightened risk factors and that they essentially lack resilience, that is the ability to recover from adverisities experienced. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) felt as though the literature on those with SEMH needs presents a bleak image of their circumstances when growing up and suggests that they lack the resources to overcome this. They felt that very little research has explored protective factors that help promote resiliency amongst those with SEMH. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) therefore used principles of positivist psychology to demonstrate that the lives of CYP with SEMH can be conceptualised more positively by building on strengths in their experiences. In their research, young people highlighted a number of factors that helped them overcome their SEMH difficulties, including positive relationships with teachers, learning opportunities relevant to their futures, positive role models, strengths in their self as a person, and feeling a sense of agency within their learning. The researchers explored themes within their stories that revealed their hopes and aspirations for the future as a result of their personal growth. The opportunity to conceptualise their lives positively allowed them to focus on their future direction rather than their past one. The findings highlighted protective factors at both the school level and the individual level, demonstrating that Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model (1979) is also consistent with the notion of resilience.

Gilligan (2000) also outlined further psychosocial protective factors for young people including good levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy that promote resiliency. Further, future-focus and resilience has received growing attention in literature and is described

as enhancing resilience (Sulimani-Aidan (2017a), with positive future focus associated with better social adjustment (Dubrow, Arnett, Smith, and Ippolito, 2001). However, little research has focussed on this with pupils with SEMH difficulties.

It is worth noting also that despite the consideration of various protective factors, levels of resilience are essentially thought to be determined by the complex interaction between a young person and multifaceted factors within their environment (Stewart, McWhirter and Knight, 2007).

3.4 Identity Development

Erikson (1968) is most commonly known for using the term identity when discussing adolescent identity development. He argued that it is CYP's identities which reflect what they perceive to be possible for themselves in a particular cultural and sociological time period. For this reason, I feel it appropriate to focus first on identity in more detail and its associated concepts.

3.4.1 Theories of identity and Self-Concept

The system of the self is what we use to make sense of our experiences and represents the place we construct, maintain and defend our knowledge of the self (Markus, 1986). Deci and Ryan (1991) discussed one of the main features of the self; they described cognitive self-schemas as cognitive representations about our own selves in the present which originate from our past experiences and from our interactions with

others. They include our self-concept, this being our perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings about oneself (Marshall, 1989).

Self-concepts are cognitive structures which organise information and provide a lens by which information can then be interpreted (Markus and Cross, 1990; Oyserman and Markus, 1998). In experimental research, the working self-concept is what is most commonly referred to and represents the aspect of the self-concept that is relevant in a particular situation (Oyserman, 2001). Over time, the working self-concept translates into more permanent knowledge of the self which shapes our identity (Harrison, 2018). Though self-concept has been studied across various branches of psychology, there is variability regarding its flexibility. Whilst clinical field researchers suggest that it is hard to change one's self-concept, experimental researchers have reported that the self can be easily changed (Markus and Kunda, 1986). A key aspect of theories of change and self-development positions the self as a stable yet flexible construct. However, still, there is some ambiguity of the precise mechanisms involved.

Identities are embedded within self-concepts and can relate to the past, which means that self-concept influences which identities are accessed by the individual and what these identities then infer (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry and Hart-Johnson, 2004). Identities can either be personal (e.g. traits such as intelligent) or social (e.g. social roles such as mother or membership of a social group e.g. British (Oyserman and Markus, 2014).

When discussing the self, two main identity theories are proposed, identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Weatherell,1987) and social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner,1986). In identity theory, categorization involves categorising the self as someone who occupies a role and then incorporating the expectations and attached meanings of that role into the self (Stryker,1980). These expectations and meanings then form the set of standards that guide behaviours (Burke,1991). In SIT, an identity or an indivdual's sense of self is based upon their perceived membership of a particular social group who share commonalities in their social identification, and view themselves as members of the same group (Abrams and Hogg,1988). Where attention has been directed to SIT, limitations have been proposed; for example, researchers argue SIT theory makes uncertain explanations of behaviour that are difficult to use to predict future behaviour (Hogg and McGarty,1990). Further, SIT can also not explain why or how other environmental factors (e.g. poverty and socio-economic status (SES)) other than social identity could play a bigger role in influencing behaviour.

3.4.2 Self-concept and motivation

Central to our understanding of how identity and self-concept work, are concepts of discovery, self-improvement, contentment and feeling shame of oneself (Markus and Cross, 1990). Throughout adolescence, individuals begin to develop a self-concept that reflects their personal values, beliefs, interests and experiences (Elmore and Oyserman, 2012). This formed identity can guide actions and behaviours as suggested in the Identity-based Motivation model (Oyserman and Destin, 2010). This model suggests that an individual's sense of self will motivate them towards acting in certain

ways (Oyserman, Lewis, Yan and Fisher, 2017). Regulating what one feels, attends to and acts on is an important task for the self and this ability differs across situations and individuals. Ineffective regulation can lead to increased likelihood of disengaging with goals and feeling worthless and incompetent (Oyserman *et al*, 2017). Identity-based motivation theory proposes that working self-concept is not stable but created in the moment, suggesting it can be altered. This means that individuals invest in future goals if they feel relevant to their identity at a given time.

Ideas of self-concept and motivation have been applied to career choices, underpinned by Gottfredson's (1981) 'career model of circumscription and compromise'. The model suggests that we eliminate unacceptable options if they do not fit with our perceived self-concept (circumscription). In the next stage (compromise), individuals may sacrifice a role they perceive as compatible with their self-concept with one that they perceive as more accessible or realistic to achieve. This model may help explain how young people reject occupations or roles that they perceive as incompatible with their self-concept and the perceived social identity that they have formed as a result. A second theory which provides a theoretical framework to aid understanding of adolescent career development is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994). SCCT discusses the capacity of individuals to influence their own development, hypothesising that an individual's career interests are more likely to translate into goals that they will act on when they perceive their environment as best equipped to facilitate these goals and when barriers are perceived to be low (Lent and Brown, 1996).

3.5 The Self in the Future

The developing self-concept features collections of self-representations but the activation of these representations depends on the individual's differing social circumstances and their fluctuating motivational state. For example, whilst some representations may be automatically activated, others are activated in direct response to the motives an individual seeks to fulfil. For example, Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) suggest that focussing on future identity can allow for personal growth and development towards self-actualisation. This important motive originates from the ideas of Maslow (1954) who described self-actualization as the desire to change, develop, grow or improve the self and essentially fulfill one's potential. In Maslow's view, it is the various self-motives an individual possesses together with their social circumstances that determines the contents of their working self-concept and can influence their actions.

3.5.1 Theoretical framework of Possible Selves (PSs)

It has been suggested that young people lack the motivation to achieve their goals if they cannot perceive what they will be like in the future, lacking the desire for self-actualisation (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). This then impacts upon their ability to make a connection between their current behaviours and their future. In identity theory terms, PSs represent different identities an individual imagines for their future.

Possible Selves (PSs) contribute to the dynamic process of forming part of one's working self-concept (how we view ourselves in a particular moment in time). There

are various interpretations of the overall components that form the self-concept, but Figure 3 presents one of these views.

It is suggested that young people form cognitive representations of what they hope to achieve or become, expect to achieve or become and what they want to avoid in the future (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006). Markus and Nurius (1986, p.954) suggested that this process entails forming Possible Selves (PSs) which originate from SIT and are self-conceptions of the future. PSs are defined as "*cognitive manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats which provide the essential link between the self-concept and motivation and regulate behaviour".*

There are three main elements to PSs; hoped-for selves, feared-for selves and expected selves; Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the concept. The framework assumes that that the hopes and fears individuals generate for their future become the standards by which they judge their current behaviour. However, the precise mechanism by which this balance affects change remains arguable (Clarke, 2016). Expected selves are the selves that one expects or regards as most likely to happen, but they may not be the most desired. Expected selves were not a focus within the present research but were commented upon.

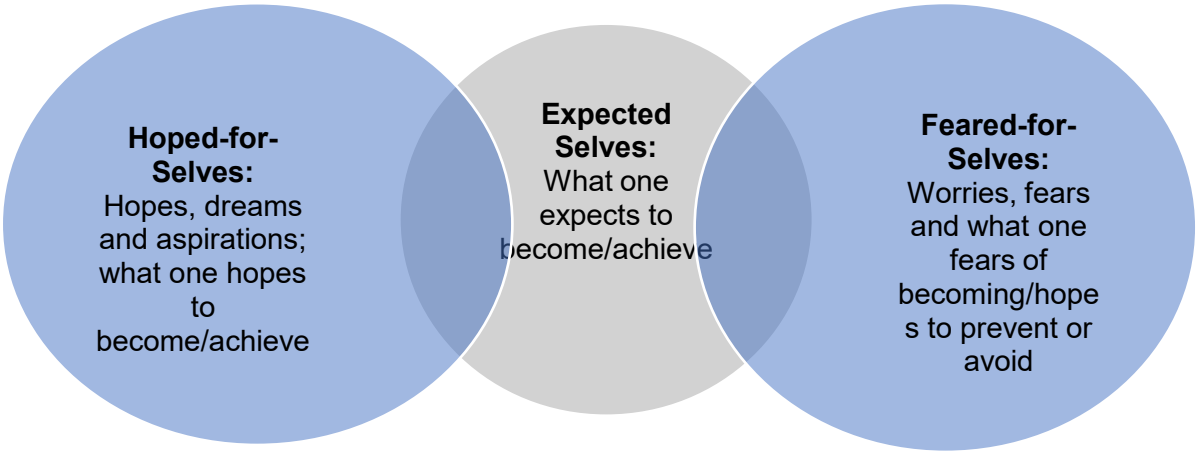

Figure 2: Graphical representation of Possible Selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986), adapted from Harrison (2018, p.5).

Strauss, Griffin and Parker (2012) suggest that thinking about the future using PSs activates the self-concept in a much more detailed way. In this way, someone who develops a more elaborate schema of their future self is more likely to attend to the information attached to it and to connect and process on information and actions relevant to it . Conversely, without such a well developed concept of future, the individual is less likely to attend to information linked to this schema, to process it and to therefore remember it (Plimmer and Schmidt, 2007). Whilst in part, PSs develop via the same mechanisms as the self-concept, PSs are more flexible than our self-concept because they do not need to be realistic and are continually mediated by our experiences of the world (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) suggested that during identity exploration, individuals develop and adjust hypotheses about their 'self' and these act as PSs. Dunkel (2000) reported that developing and generating new and alternative PSs can be an important part of identity development and identity exploration in order for them to become a part of the self-concept. This

also means that PSs are vulnerable to changes in the environment so will be influenced by situations that communicate consistent versus inconsistent information to the existing knowledge held by the individual.

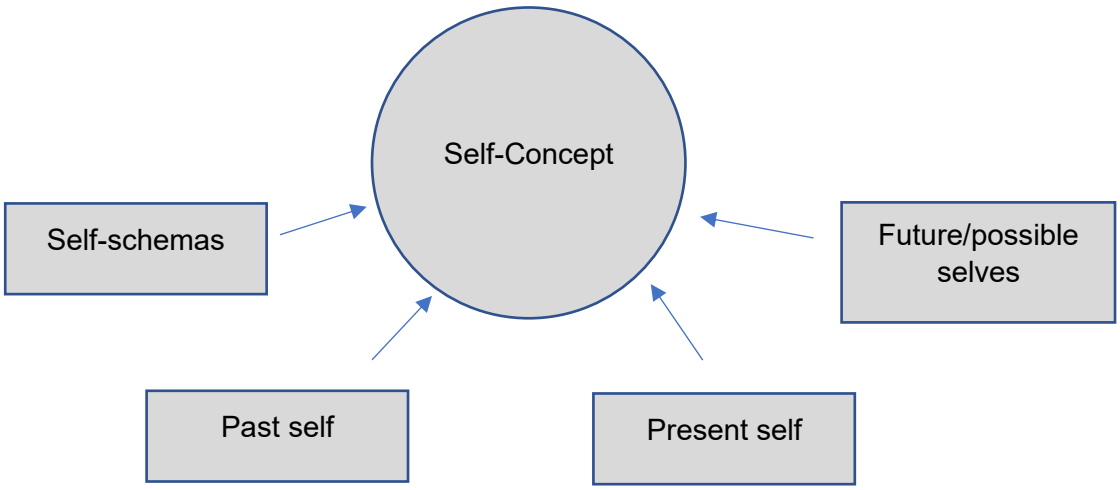

Figure 3: Components of the self-concept (Myers, 2009).

Closely linked to the concept of PSs is that of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a, 1997b). Bandura (1997a, p.391) defined self-efficacy as "*people's judgements of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances".* Beliefs about self-efficacy impact upon motivation as people need to believe that their actions can produce desired outcomes in order to be motivated to achieve them (Huitt, 2004). In sum, a child or young person's level of self-efficacy will impact upon the past, present and future PSs they develop and choose to identify with (Ruvolo and Markus, 1986).

Also closely linked to the concept of PSs, is self-esteem. Franken (1994) suggests that those who have good levels of self-esteem have a clearer defined sense of self. In this

way, self-esteem is perceived to be critical to the development of PSs as it acts as the standpoint a young person draws upon when considering what is possible for them in the future (Shaffer, 2002). For example, if an individual has high self-esteem, they are more likely to produce successful mental scenarios and thereby more positive hoped-for PSs whereas if they have low self-esteem, they may envision unsuccessful scenarios and generate greater feared-for PSs.

Despite increasing interest and research conducted into PSs, there are few reviews of the literature that exist. Reviews that do exist were conducted in the USA and are briefly presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of existing reviews into PSs

Date of review on PSs	Key findings
Nurmi (1991)	Highlighted that the content of adolescent future perceptions is influenced by factors of family, socio-economic status, age, sex and culture.
Hoyle and Sherrill (2006)	Evaluated the construct of PSs in 73 published articles and concluded that much is known about what PSs are but much less about what they do. In their view, PSs themselves are not regulators of an individual's behaviour as first proposed by Markus and Nurius; rather, PSs are a key component within the process by which behaviour is regulated.
Massey, Gebhardt and Garnefski (2008)	Perceptions of the future are related to personal, social and environmental factors within the individual's context linked to their risk behaviours and general well-being.

The reviews concluded that the PSs approach is considered useful for:

- Assessing self-concept during adolescence, the time of development when self-concept is most salient.

- Not limiting young people in the number of PSs they can generate in mutiple domains.
- Acting as a predictor of performance (Oyserman and Markus, 1990).

3.5.2 Possible Selves and Future Outcomes

3.5.2.1 Aspirations vs Possible Selves

Aspirations are defined as achievement related goals that one hopes to fulfil; as these goals become more developed, students reportedly engage in more activities related to achieving them (Pizzolato, 2006). Evidence has been found for the role of aspirations as a predictor of later achievement. For example, Ashby and Schoon (2010) found that educational aspirations shared by adolescents predicted their income and educational and occupational status later in adult life.

There are key elements of PSs theory which distinguish it from how future aspirations are most commonly conceptualised, and which make it an advantageous approach in comparison. These differences will be explored more in the next section. Firstly, PSs draw upon expectation about what might happen rather what someone merely hopes to happen and this is heavily related to sociocultral context (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Secondly, whilst aspirations may merely be stated, PSs require greater elaboration with comment of strategies and pathways for short and long term goals to be reached (Oyserman *et al*, 2004, Oyserman and James, 2011). Thirdly, there is empirical evidence demonstrating PSs as impacting upon motivation and thereby educational decision making (Oyserman, Terry and Bybee, 2002, 2006; Oyserman, Brickman and

Rhodes, 2007). Finally, PSs are broader than other behavioural standards as they allow both positive and negative self-knowledge by balancing hoped-for selves with feared-for selves. Nevertheless, the literature on PSs has the main weakness of prioritising future orientation and defining it generally, ignoring other temporalities (Stevenson and Clegg, 2011). This may act as a limitation as considering the more distal time point of future is quite abstract.

3.5.2.2 Possible Selves and Future Behaviour

PSs have been shown to have an impact on behaviour in several ways. They impact upon how we see our current selves by measuring our current self against a possible self (Strahan and Wilson, 2006). They help identify steps needed to realise the goals by organising thoughts and focussing relevant activities needed (Robinson, Davis and Meara, 2003). Finally, they increase motivation by using feared-for selves to ensure that the activity is sustained until the goal is met (Lee and Oyserman, 2009).

There are key requirements proposed within the PSs literature in order for PSs to have a motivational impact as presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Requirements for motivational influence of PSs upon behaviour

Key requirement	Explanation	Source
Seeking evidence to validate PSs.	As PSs are flexible rather than fixed, it is important that they are validated by evidence of probability or possibility of success; otherwise individuals may have to revise and amend their PSs according to feedback they receive within their environment.	Markus and Nurius (1986)

Key requirement	Explanation	Source
PSs being active in the working self-concept.	When an individual uses information within their cognitive self-schemas to construct an image of themselves, this activates it in the working self-concept. It is argued that structures activated within an individual's working self-concept at a given time are more likely to influence behaviour than those that are not accessible in the working self-concept at that time.	Oyserman and Destin (2010)
Generating PSs that are clear, possible and elaborated.	PSs that are more elaborated are more motivating. For example, an occupational hoped-for self of being a teacher may be elaborated on by further concepts of envisaging teaching a particular subject, in a particular educational environment etc. Further, people need to generate concrete representations of PSs in order to identify actions needed to achieve their goals and PSs need to be plausible. Finally, PSs can predict future outcomes because they include ideas about what is possible for an individual and this can clarify opportunities people perceive to be available to them. To influence behaviour, they need to be perceived to be within one's reach.	Markus and Nurius (1986) Markus and Ruvolo (1989) Oyserman *et al* (2004) Oettingen and Thorpe (2006).
Generating PSs that feel 'psychologically close'.	Within temporal self-appraisal (TSA) theory, it is suggested that the psychological distance that individuals perceive their future selves varies and this can influence motivation and thereby behaviours and action. For example, people will feel more motivated towards PSs that seem to be approaching faster than those which seem more distant.	Wilson and Ross (2000)
Counterbalancing PSs with feared-for selves.	The motivational effect of PSs can only be maximised when they are counter balanced with a possible self in the same domain. That is, when specific hoped-for selves are somehow directly associated with feared-for selves then the emphasis on what could happen if the hope or desire is not fulfilled is emphasised. In this way, the feared-for selves could act as a powerful incentive.	Oyserman and Markus (1990)
Having a gap or discrepancy between current selves and PSs.	If PSs are to influence behaviour, its argued that there should be a discrepancy between current PSs and future PSs; this is so that comparisons between the two can help encourage future action.	VanDellen and Hoyle, 2008).

Further examination of the mechanisms by which PSs lead to behaviour change is needed amongst research. It has been suggested that PSs represent a standard of behaviour which current selves are compared to and it is the discrepancy between these that motivates behaviour through self-regulatory strategies (Cross and Markus, 1991). Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) tested this hypothesis and found that participants with activated feared-for PSs showed greater evidence of self-regulation than those in the hoped-for selves and and control groups. These findings therefore provide support for the activation of feared-for selves alongside hoped-for selves in order to produce behaviour change. However, not all research studies have found an effect for activating feared-for selves alongside hoped-for selves (Clarke, 2016). For example, Van Casten, Lens, and Nuttin (1987) suggested that enhancing a student's perception of the future would only increase their motivation to apply themselves more academically if they had a more positive outlook of their future. Conversely, a negative outlook would reduce this motivation. This seems to go against the necessity of balanced feared-for-selves with hoped-for selves. This variation in findings may due to an ambiguous definition of 'balance'; whilst some have defined it as matched hopes and fears, others have defined it as matched positive expectations and fears (Clarke, 2016; Oyserman and Markus, 1990).

Moreover, in contrast to findings of Ashby and Schoon (2010), reviews by Cummings, Laing and Law (2012) and Gorard, See and Davies (2012), have suggested that there does not appear be a strong link between raised aspirations and outcomes such as increased attainment. Such reviews concluded that any existing correlation was most

likely a result of improved attainment which in turn drives higher aspirations rather than vice versa. However, some research into PSs *has* demonstrated a link between positive PSs and improved educational attainment (Destin and Oyserman, 2009; Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006), and greater employment options (Lee and Oyserman, 2009). Oyserman *et al* (2006) asked young people to construct PSs and found improved academic outcomes two years later. However, Leondari and Gonida (2008) did not find any association between academic PSs and participants' final grades. They did find however, that those participants who reported an academic PSs as their first choice, reported higher levels of persistance than those who reported PSs in other domains such as social or material domains. Further, Strauss *et al* (2012) highlight a strong link between PSs and career decisions. Ultimately, PSs have been shown to be useful for making career decisions as they help individuals identify both proximal and more distant goals and to understand and generate the steps needed to get there (Robinson, Davis and Meara, 2003).

On the contrary, Oyserman *et al* (2004) suggested that merely generating and articulating long-term PSs is not enough to produce consistent behavioural change on a long term basis unless they are linked to specific behavioural strategies. Oyserman *et al* (2004) found that for disadvantaged students whose academic themed PSs were accompanied with detailed strategies, greater levels of self-efficacy and improved grades were were reported compared to those with less detailed and strategic PSs. However, though researchers considered several operationalisations for 'self-regulation', this is still subjective and does not represent a single globally measurable construct when it comes to PSs.

Oyserman *et al* (2006) conducted a follow up study where they hypothesised that academic PSs alone are not enough to bring about change and sustain self-regulation unless they are linked with plausible strategies, but they went a step further and suggested that:

a) strategies needed to be linked to an individual's social identity and;

b) recognition of difficulty needed to be understood as a normal part of the process of attaining PSs. Focussing on low income and minority youth, they developed an intervention used to help young people construct academic PSs and link strategies to achieve these, by changing their interpretation of failure and consequently, their working self-concept. The intervention was reported to have produced lasting impact upon the PSs that were formed and maintained which consequently improved both academic and behaviour outcomes. However, this research tried to operationalise the concept of social identity using a Likert type scale which can pose issues.

3.5.3 Possible Selves of Pupils attending PRUs

Much of the previous research on aspirations and educational outcomes has been conducted in mainstream schools and universities. This means little is known about those who attend AP and understanding the factors influencing young people's educational aspirations has been dominated by experiences of those in mainstream education.

It is well known that attending a PRU is often associated with less positive outcomes both academically and socially and this could impact upon how these young people

perceive their futures (Spiteri, 2009). A focus on future goals is particularly important for pupils attending PRUs in order to transition successfully into the wider community (Ofsted, 2007). In addition, the SEND Code of Practice (DoH/DfE, 2015) emphasises the importance of a focus on 'preparing for adulthood', focussing on future goals and actions needed to reach such.

Pupils attending PRUs are more likely to have experienced some sort of failure or perceived failure during their lives, therefore their self-concept is more likely to have been steered towards negative future outcomes (Markus and Ruvolo, 1989). Adolescents who have SEN may feel that their difficulties limit what they can become in the future and so may have a limited range of positive PSs (Seymour, 1998).
Those attending PRUs often display poor attendance levels and find it difficut to self-regulate their behaviour and their beliefs in order to perservere and achieve (Sheppard, 2009); further they may lack positive role models where motivational characteristics are modelled to them (Daniels and Cole, 2011). Their self-concept is also most fragile which will impact significantly upon their motivation and ambitions (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). Despite evidence of PSs influencing the outcomes of young people, little is known about this in those attending PRUs. Moreover, in order for young people to be successfully motivated to pursue long-term goals, these goals need to be internalised to form part of their working self-concept (Dweck, 1999), which could be through forming PSs. It is questionnable as to how successful PRUs are in providing opportunities for their pupils to do this by engaging them in future-focussed activities continually (Ofsted, 2016).

3.5.4 Possible Selves and socio-cultural context

Erikson (1968) argued that children's identities reflect what they perceive as possible in the societal, historical and cultural context they find themselves in at a given time.

Further, Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that PSs are based on our perceptions of our past selves, social comparisons and cultural and historical contexts. These views are also consistent with ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As the immediate ecological environment, the microsystem includes biological, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial experiences all of which have been found to interact with individual's possible selves (PSs). PSs are somewhat considered to be co-constructed through interactions with others (in the mesosystem) and are influenced and shaped by social norms and social expectations within their social networks e.g. neighbourhood/community, which draws upon the factors within the exosystem and is consistent with SIT (Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006). As identity is thought to be heavily shaped by social forces, the PSs articulated are likely influenced by global historical and cultural structures that individuals are exposed to in the context of a particular time and culture (the macrosystem). The impact of the environment and the interactions with professionals around them are likely to impact individuals' views of themselves, that is their self-concept. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In addition, CYP's behaviours are based on previous beliefs and experiences which will impact upon their views of what they can achieve in the future.

Consistent with SIT, many researchers in the field of PSs support that people form PSs by internalising the stereotypes attached to the social identities that they hold

(Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry, 2006; Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006). This suggests that they are less likely to hold PSs that they feel are negatively perceived by others that they identify with (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006). Acknowledgement of their aspirations may therefore be affected by environmental factors that are causing disrepancies between their hoped-for selves and their expected selves. In their SCCT theory, Lent and Brown (1996) suggest that these PSs may then lead them to distancing themselves from certain activities and career options. Realisation of this is important when considering those from low-income backgrounds, as it may help explain the discrepany reported between aspirations and achievement.

For example, Oyserman and colleagues proposed that young people who experience social deprivation often have high aspirations but lack the knowledge necessary to reach them (Oyserman *et al*, 2004). This can be likened to other research that has explored socio-economically disadvantaged young people where their aspirations have been found to be higher than their expectations (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzo, Savoy and Mercado, 2011).

As theorised by Bourdieu (1986), choices and behaviours are determined by an individual's social class and their attached levels of social capital. Social capital refers to the resources available to an individual through the social network around them. In this way, young people growing up in circumstances of low SES, often including those attending PRUs, may be exposed to several adult models who have unelaborated PSs and have failed to achieve hoped-for PSs and prevent feared for PSs.

Oyserman *et al* (2006) propose that witnessing this is likely to result in young people failing to recognise adversity as a part of life and instead, perceiving their experience of adversity as automatic failure. It is considered by Oyserman and colleagues that it is this misperception that underpins such young people's inability to persist with pursuing goals. Bourdieu (1986) acknowledges the social context behind individual's decision making for aspects of their life such as employment; suggesting that such choices are largely determined by issues of class, SES and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Moreover, the research by Oyserman *et al* (2006) proposed that PSs can only influence behaviour once they are congruent with contextually consistent strategies and important social identities, therefore it supported that the effectiveness of sustained self-regulation in achieving PSs is heavily impacted by social context and factors of culture, class, SES, and family environment (Carey and Martin, 2007). On the other hand, Howard *et al* (2011) found that SES alone was a weak predictor of occupational aspirations.

More recently, Murphy (2017) conducted doctoral research exploring the occupational PSs of pupils with dyslexia. Through narrative inquiry, Murphy (2017) demonstrated that students had not always experienced appropriate opportunities to reach their occupational potential and experienced barriers. Occupational marginalisation was the term used to define the norms and expectations within social and cultural structures which restrict participation within those structures. In her research, injustices concerning occupational marginalisation were found amongst participants' narratives and acted as barriers to reaching desired PSs.

Perry, Przybysz, and Al-Sheikh (2009) speculated that social class would influence expected achievement of levels of education. To explore this, Perry and Raeburn (2017) proposed that as young people increase their awareness of educational and economical inequalities, they internalize this in a way that discourages them from believing they will achieve certain educational ambitions, such as attending university. If this is the case, the researchers suggest that this might explain the aspirations-expectations gap that has been found within education (Perry and Raeburn, 2017).

This section has suggested, although PSs represent individuals' ability to freely engage in processes such as planning, reflecting and deciding, most evidence suggests that PSs are somewhat determined by socio-cultural context.

3.6. Systematic literature review process

In February 2019, a systematic literature search was completed in order to identify research that had explored the PSs of young people within the UK. The databases ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts), Web of Science, and PsycINFO (1967-present) were searched, seeking peer reviewed journal articles and unpublished thesis that had been conducted within the UK. Further, the search aimed to identify research completed between 1990 to 2019. A complete overview of the process completed within the systematic literature review including search terms, search process and exclusion and inclusion criteria can be found in Appendix 1. The process identified eight studies which are each described in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of studies for Systematic Literature Review					
Authors/date	**Rsearch Aims/Questions**	**Participants**	**Methods**	**Key findings**	**Conclusions/implications**
Mainwaring and Hallam (2010)	Used the psychological construct of PSs to explore the self-concept and driving motivation of pupils in an inner city PRU versus those in a mainstream secondary school. Aimed to explore differences between PSs of both groups of pupils and how realistic PSs generated were from those from the PRU.	16 Year 11 pupils from a PRU in inner London 9 students attended state-funded secondary school in outer London	Semi-structured interviews	All mainstream students generated positive PSs but only 69% of PRU pupils did so. Mainstream pupils were better able to generate strategies and actions to achieve PSs whilst PRU students found this harder. PRU pupils generated far more negative PSs and also generated more feared-for selves.	The research highlighted that CYP who have experienced school exclusion have more fragile PSs and perceive their future prospects more negatively compared to those who have not undergone such experiences in their education.
Kloep, Henry, Gardner, and Seage (2010)	To explore the perceptions young people hold of their present and future selves, who come from deprived mining backgrounds in South Wales, with particular focus on potential risk and protective factors.	11 teenage volunteered aged 16 to 18 from two socially deprived communities	Semi-structured Interviews	Findings indicated diversity in the views young people had of their future selves. Despite experiencing adversity in their lives, some were able to construct positive future selves whereas others were unable to do so as they perceived a lack of resources to be able to do so.	Risk and protective factors are unique to each individual e.g. deprivation, often regarded as a risk factor was viewed as a motivator for some young people in this sample. But risk and protective factors alone do not determine young people's life trajectories. Interpretation of failure or of situations in ones life different across individuals which impacts upon PSs formed.

Authors/date	Research Aims/Questions	Participants	Methods	Key findings	Conclusions/implications
Callwood (2013) (doctoral thesis)	Explored the PSs constructed through the narratives of young people excluded from school and the resources they draw upon to facilitate their PSs constructions.	3 male participants excluded from mainstream education and attending alternative provision.	Narrative interviews	Participants generated future selves linked to desired occupations and desires for money, expresing great determination to do so. However, the steps and plans to achieve these goal were vague and uncertain. Participants found it more difficult to generate feared-for selves.	Young people are able to generate positive PSs however the actions necessary to achieve these are less established.
Wainwright, Nee and Vrij (2016)	To explore the relationship between delinquency and future selves.	126 school children, all male, aged 11-13 years in South East England. The boys were considered at risk of deliquency/at early stages of anti-social behaviour.	Self-report measure for delinquency Possible Selves Questionnnaire (PSQ)	At an early stage of adolescence, participants with higher rates of delinquency or who were identified as at higher criminal risk, expressed similar levels of hoped-for selves to those with low criminal risk and rates of delinquency. Researchers failed to find any association between delinquency and future PSs however those at higher risk expressed fewer strategies at reaching hoped-for selves.	Positivity reported across the sample suggests that there was not enough developed reflective judgement to enable those displaying delinquent behaviour to appreciate how it may impact their futures. The ressearchers concluded that targetting delinquency from a PSs angle provides another resource for practitioners but further research is necessary.

Authors/date	Rsearch Aims/Questions	Participants	Methods	Key findings	Conclusions/implications
Meek (2011)	Using PSs, researchers explored the future sef-concept of young fathers in prison looking particularly at whether PSs relating to parenting emerged despite being seperated from their children.	34 young fathers, aged 18-21. Recruited through education department of a Young offender institute.	Adapted version of the Possible Selves Questionnaire	Fatherhood was reported to be a dominant theme in self-reported PSs, with 'father' being an alternative identity to 'prisoner'. Employment was also a dominant theme. Parenthood was found to be a key element of the present and future identities of young male prisoners.	Researchers concluded that findings supported the notion proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986) that identifying with a positive self and holding positive aspirations can foster a sense of hope that the present self is not fixed and can be challenged and changed despite current negative circumstances.
Stevenson and Clegg (2011)	Explored PSs of pupils in relation to their participation in extracurricular activity. Interest in how participants imagined these activities as contributing to their future PSs (did they view them broadly or in terms of employability opportunities?).	61 students (higher education)	Case study approach: in-depth interviews	Students orientation towards their futures differed, only some displayed future PSs relating to employability and career. Others were more orientated towards the present and found it difficult to elaborate on future images because of the consequences of their present circumstances.	The authors concluded that the concept of future PSs may need to be refined in order to include the different temporal relationships and conceptualisations of the self that may be imagined at different time points.

Authors/date	Rsearch Aims/Questions	Participants	Methods	Key findings	Conclusions/implications
Hart, Fregley and Brengleman (1993)	Asked participants about both their past and future selves. Study 1: Participants asked to describe how they think of themselves in future, in five years. Study 2: Participants were asked to describe themselves two and four years in the past, as they are now in the present and as they would be two and four years in the future.	Study 1:82 children and adolescents aged 4-15. Study 2: 88 children and adolescents aged 9-18.	Study 1: Interviews Study 2: Questionnaires	Study 1: At all ages, participants were more likely to perceive their current selves in terms of regular activities, personality traits and interests rather than their future selves. They were more likely to describe their future self in terms of social relationships. Study 2: More similarities reported between participant's present and future selves than their past and present selves. Perceptions of their changing 'self' between past to present and present to future were very positive as young people seemed to view adolescence as a period of time where desired change occurs which is beneficial.	Findings demonstrated that young people can maintain high levels of positive self-regard by acknowledging and almost criticising their past selves and seeing how they have improved. Adolescents perceive their recent life course trajectory as characterized by change that is both beneficial and desirable.
Thacker (2017) (doctoral thesis)	Aimed to explore the stories shared by young girls who had experienced permanent school exclusion. Views shared related to their school experience and their future PSs. .	Three girls attending a PRU	Narrative interviews	Participants continued to value education. They hoped for a successful future which seemed to be defined by academic achievement and 'good' grades. Hoped-for selves relating to employment varied greatly.	Prior experiences and their levels of self-esteem impacted upon the PSs they generated. The negative expectations of them held by others appeared to act as a motivator to try and prove them wrong.

3.6.1 Key findings from systematic literature review and implications for current research

Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) was the only study found specifically exploring the PSs of pupils in a PRU and using a qualitative interview. They found that students in the PRU were less likely than those in mainstream to generate positive PSs, generated fewer strategies to attain their positive PSs, had limited alternative options and showed limited awareness of challenges they may encounter. They also generated more negative and impossible PSs. A limitation to their research was that the design of the study and their method of data analysis was not clearly specified. Consequently, in my research, I aimed to make this more transparent.

The research by Kloep *et al* (2010) demonstrated the diversity in young peoples' perceptions of their future selves. Despite experiencing adversity and socio-economic deprivation in their lives, some constructed positive future images whilst others perceived limited resources to hold a positive future image. The findings may be explained by the views of Oyserman *et al* (2004, 2006) who suggested that witnessing adult role models fail to generate and achieve PSs is likely to lead to young people perceiving their experience of adveristy as automatic failure which is unlikely to change.

The research by Callwood (2013) explored the PSs of male pupils whereas the current research explores the views of girls. Similar to the present research, Callwood was interested in the social and cultural resources that participants identified as helping to

facilitate achieving their PSs. One of her participants seemed to display a lack of connectedness to school and instead drew heavily on resources outside of the school setting when imagining his PSs. The other participant lacked known resources that could help him and was uncertain about others who could help him with his desired PSs. In another doctoral thesis, Thacker (2017) explored the narratives of excluded girls attending a PRU of their past educational experiences as well as exploring their views of future. The current research aimed to focus whole-heartedly on future in order to distance participants in the PRU from their past, develop their working self-concept and be more likely to influence future action.

Wainwright *et al* (2016) found no association between delinquency and future selves in a young sample of adolescent boys at risk of criminal behaviour; however some differences were revealed in the nature of future selves depending on the level of exposure to risk. Those with higher rates of delinquency and classified as higher criminogenic risk had fewer strategies for reaching future goals. There were several limitations to the design of their study. The researchers questioned whether the 'Possible Selves Questionnaire' (PSQ) was most appropriate for the age group they tested, mainly because they acknowledged that the PSQ is a tool has been mostly used with adults rather than adolescents. Similarly, the research by Meek (2011), which also utilised a version of the PSQ, was also subject to methodological concerns. The researchers noted that it would be useful to develop and use a measure exploring the importance of particular PSs generated by participants rather than the frequency.

I considered the limitations of the research identified within the literature review. Consequently, in a supplementary search, outside of the UK, I found one peer-reviewed study using an adaptation of of the PSQ adult measure of PSs, by Shepard and Marshall (1999) who devised the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) for use in North America. The authors considered the PSMI as a more appropriate tool to engage a young adolescent group and explore their self-views. I therefore chose to use and adapt this version of the PSMI for my research to explore the PSs of girls in the PRU in a qualitative manner.

3.7 Aims and Rationale of the Study

In completing this research, I had two main aims; to explore the perceptions girls at a PRU have of their futures and to provide a way of recording this in a way that helps them actively identify goals. If young people have negative expectations for themselves and thereby of their futures, this will impact upon decisions they make. Positive psychology literature highlights the importance of focussing on the future, empowering young people through their strengths and positive qualities (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016).

Despite positive findings, most published research in PSs is based in North America and has been based on methodological measures using large scale, randomised control experiments of a quantitative nature that aim to quantify PSs (e.g. Oyserman, Terry and Bybee, 2002; Oyserman and Markus, 1990). Moreover, there is very limited research in the UK exploring PSs with young people in PRUs or from disadvantaged

backgrounds (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010, Kloep *et al*, 2001). Further, as the application of PSs to education is limited, this research aims to help fill this gap.

It is well documented that research into school exclusion has predominantly focussed upon males, often overlooking girls (Osler, Street, Vincent and Lall, 2002). Further, research reports lower levels of self-esteem amongst girls (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006). PSs theory assumes that girls should be less confident that they will achieve their hopes for the future. As PSs reportedly act as a mediator between an individual's core values, beliefs and their actions, exploring this can help us better understand the beliefs and values that are unique to girls with SEMH difficulties.

3.8 Chapter Summary

The literature presented has demonstrated that PSs are mental formulations of the self in a future state. These constructions are influenced by beliefs linked to self-concept, social capital and sociocultural context. The systematic literature review suggests that young people considered most at risk of negative outcomes, do have existing aspirations but need to be given opportunities to explore them. The research presented demonstrates that there is not one standardised measure of PSs, where most research has utilised the traditional method of the PSQ. These factors make it more difficult to synthesize PSs research and draw accurate comparisons. The current research aimed to use an adapted version of the PSQ in a qualitative interview format which has not been used in UK research so far.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses upon the methodology used in the research. Firstly, research aims are outlined, underpinned by the epistemological position of the study. Methodological choices are presented relating to design frame, methods of data collection and recruitment procedures. Ethical issues are also considered. Finally, methods of data analysis are presented with discussion of the quality and methodological rigour of the data.

4.2 Philosophical position

Philosophical beliefs relating to knowledge and the existence of reality have important implications for real-world research. Ontological and epistemological beliefs impact upon the research questions asked, the methods used to collect information and the conclusions drawn (Thomas, 2015). Ontology is concerned with the nature of existence and of our reality; conversely, epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge, including what knowledge is based on, what it is formed of, how it is obtained and how it is shared with others (Thomas, 2015).

This research adopts a critical realist position. Ontologically, whilst critical realism (CR) acknowledges the existence of a ‘real world’ that is independent of our knowledge of it, it also acknowledges that this real world cannot be objectively accessed (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, Maxwell, 2012). From an epistemological standpoint, CR

considers that our knowledge of the world may be socially constructed but it recognises an intrinsic element that is the same for us all but understood differently across individuals.

PSs are reported to be the cognitive representations we hold of ourselves in a future state, originating from a social-cognitive perspective. CR acknowledges that our understanding of reality is mediated by cognitive processes, a view consistent with PSs as an inherent theoretical framework that exists for us all but is constructed differently by each individual. In this research, I asked participants about their views of their future selves with the belief that these exist whether I ask about them or not. It is also likely that these PSs, if asked in the same way, would remain the same a week later, consistent with a CR stance. Finally, a CR position recognises the subjectivity of a researcher, which I felt was most appropriate in this research (Bryman, 2008).

4.3 Research Aims

In this research, I aimed to explore the PSs of young girls attending a PRU. By exploring their PSs articulated, I aimed to contribute to the understanding of their beliefs and motivations whilst allowing them opportunity to explore and shape their future goals.

The research has three main research questions:

1) How do girls in the PRU perceive their future selves and what hoped-for and feared-for PSs do they generate?

2) What facilitating or hindering factors were identified by participants to the achievement of their hoped-for PSs?
3) How likely is it that the PSs generated by girls in a PRU will influence future actions based on existing criteria within literature?

4.4 Research Design

4.4.1 Case Study

Most of the work in PSs has been underpinned by an objectivist paradigm using quantitative measures focussing on patterns found in large scale data sets (Ravitch and Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). However, as time has progressed, there has been growing use of qualitative measures used to explore PSs.

The CR position of this research is consistent with a range of research designs and research methods. Marshall and Rossman (2011) argued that qualitative research is grounded in lived experience, is humanistic and used in natural settings. The research aims to elicit the future selves that this group of young people:

a) express in the context of their natural school environment

b) articulate, elaborate on and;

c) could change during the research process.

Consequently, I considered that a flexible qualitative design frame was the most appropriate to produce in-depth accounts. Adopting a qualitative approach allowed flexibility to capture meaningful data whilst giving participants power and agency.

One of the most commonly used methods within qualitative research is case study. Yin (2009) advocates the use of case study research when asking 'how' and 'why' questions, therefore it was considered an appropriate design frame to use given that I intended to explore how girls attending the PRU perceive their future selves. This could not have been achieved using experimental or evaluative research designs which involve the manipulation of variables (Stangor, 2011). Moreover, Yin (2003) advocated the use of case study research when considering contextual factors that one believes contribute to the phenomena under exploration. I felt that this was appropriate for the present research given the sociocultural contextual influence that has been attached to PSs.

Thomas (2015, p.23) defined case study design as the *"analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will illuminate and explicate some analytical theme, or object".*

Thomas' definition is consistent with the present research which used one main method of analyses for a group of cases (each case a subject) that were studied holistically as a whole as girls attending a PRU. Their individual circumstances within the PRU and the nature of their SEMH needs acted as a point of comparison when using the lens of the PSs framework (the analytical theme or object).

Nevertheless, there are limitations attached to case study research. Its common use

has been criticised as being the 'go to' design that researchers gravitate toward with less careful consideration of whether it is the most appropriate (Robson, 2011; Gorard, 2013). Further, amongst researchers, are inconsistencies due to the difficulty creating a single and universally accepted definition of a case study design (Gerring, 2007). The role of the researcher per se has also been subject to criticism given the critical role they play in interpreting phenomena, making the research vulnerable to bias (Thomas, 2015). Countering this, is the fact that a key aspect of qualitative data is the co-interpretative element between the researcher and participant that helps to make sense of a phenomena or a particular issue (Bell, 2013).

4.4.2. Case study design frame in current research

Thomas (2015) highlighted key considerations and decisions a researcher needs to make when implementing case study design, relating to factors of purpose, subject, approach and process. He proposes several options for each of these areas. The choices that have been made in the current research are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Case Study Design Choices, adapted from Thomas (2015)

Subject	Purpose	Approach	Process
Key cases: Those chosen because the researcher has an interest in a particular area: girls attending a PRU with SEMH difficulties and their perception of their future.	**Exploratory:** Exploring the perceptions girls with SEMH needs attending a PRU have of their future PSs. **Instrumental:** Provide opportunity for participants to actively express, elaborate on their future selves and set goals to achieve them using a tool.	**Descriptive:** Describing each of the cases' PSs in detail. **Building a theory:** Theoretical framework of PSs underpinned each case. Case study design used to build on this framework as a way of exploring the future selves expressed by the girls in the PRU.	**Multiple:** Seven cases **Parallel:** Collecting data from multiple cases at the same time and no aim to explore PSs over time.

Yin (2003) explained that using a multiple case study design allows the researcher to analyse data within each situation or individual as well across different individuals or contexts, in contrast to when a single case study design is used. In the present research, I employed a multiple case study design to understand the future selves of several cases jointly through the theoretical lens of PSs, looking at the individual cases distinctly whilst highlighting the varied circumstances across them (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). Yin (2003, 2009) suggests that if under varied circumstances similar conclusions can be drawn, generalisability of findings can be expanded and related to theory. This form of across-case analysis thus enabled me to understand what factors were generalisable across girls in a PRU.

The concept of generalisability has been highlighted as a limitation to case study research. However, Yin (2009) asserts that case study research does not intend to generalise to wider populations beyond the immediate sample but to build on theory instead. This mirrored my aims of the current research; to conduct research in one context-specific setting (a PRU), using a context specific theoretical framework (that is PSs), reflect upon those findings and what insights they offer, to then use this to apply to and understand across similar contexts that may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena (Easton, 2010).

4.5 Participants

4.5.1 Identifying the setting

This research was conducted in a large English shire county. Discussions were held

with senior leaders within the local authority to identify potential PRU provision for this research to take place. As a result, two potential settings were identified within the authority. One setting was favoured over the other due a higher number of girls attending. In order to maximise opportunities for recruitment should challenges occur, both settings were approached and informed of the research aims. However, the second setting suggested that accommodating research would be difficult at a time of significant re-structure. As a result, participants who took part all attended the same single PRU.

4.5.2 Context

The provision the research was conducted in is a PRU that serves the town it is situated in and surrounding areas within the local authority it is a part of. It caters to 32 pupils aged 11-16 (boys and girls) and is described as a short-stay school which provides: a) short-stay support programmes for pupils at risk of exclusion from local secondary mainstream schools;

b) sixth day provision for pupils who have fixed-term exclusions and;

c) placements for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school.

Most pupils have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools and all pupils who attend the PRU are reported on the latest Ofsted report published in 2017 to experience SEMH difficulties. The majority are in Years 9 to 11 but there are also pupils in Years 7 and 8. The vast majority are White British. Overall, a small number of pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), listing SEMH as a primary need. At the time of this research, no participants within the present study had an EHCP, but I was informed that a request for assessment would be in place for several

participants in the near future. The proportion of pupils at the PRU disadvantaged is reported to be well above the national average. It is reported on a government website that 37.5% of the pupils attending are eligible for free school meals. Due to the frequently changing nature and turnover of the population at the PRU, all figures and data are not static and so it is difficult to provide most accurate and up to date information.

4.5.3 Participants in current research

The number of participants was based on the time and resources available given the difficulties attached to recruitment of a vulnerable population. Participants in this research were a purposive sample of girls, all identified as having SEMH difficulties alongside other difficulties. All of them had been excluded from mainstream education for 'persistent disruptive behaviour' with some displaying physical and verbal aggression towards staff and peers. As a result, they had been placed in a PRU within the local authority I was a trainee EP. The inclusion criteria for participation in this study required participants who:

- Were aged between 14 and 16 and were girls.
- Attend a PRU and were unlikely to change placement for the duration of the research.
- Were able to give informed consent to be take part.
- Were not experiencing stressful experiences in their life i.e. bereavement/family separation at time of data collection.
- Were not known to social care at child protection level at time of research.

- Were unlikely to experience distress when speaking about their future hopes, fears and expectations (e.g. are diagnosed with mental health conditions, have long-term involvement from specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Secondary-aged pupils aged 14 to 16 (all in Years 9-11) were sought because it was decided that this age-group would be able to consider their futures most meaningfully as they were nearing departure from the PRU within the next few years or less. Out of a possible eleven girls who attended the PRU at the time of data collection, seven pupils and their parents consented to taking part in this research. An overview of the final cases will be presented in Chapter five (section 5.3).

4.6 Ethical considerations

In order for this research to be carried out, ethical approval had to be gained from the Ethical Committee at the University of Birmingham (see Appendix 2). This research adheres to the ethical principles that are listed in the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018), and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). The Code of Ethics and Conduct is based on four ethical principles that I as a researcher was responsible for, including (i) Respect; (ii) Competence; (iii) Responsibility; (iv) Integrity. Table 5 outlines key ethical issues considered in the research and steps taken in order to manage these.

Table 5: Ethical concerns identified, and actions taken to manage them	
Ethical Consideration (BPS, 2018; BERA, 2018)	**Action Taken**
Participants should be fully informed before consenting to taking part in the research, such that all aspects of the research need to be made transparent.	A gatekeeper at the PRU was identified once ethical approval was gained and they were given an information sheet (see Appendix 3). Participants were initially approached by the gatekeeper and given information sheets (see Appendix 4). Participants' parents were also sent an information sheet (see Appendix 5). They were also given a follow up phone call by staff at the PRU giving them opportunity to ask any questions. Following their verbal interest, participants and parents were provided with written consent forms to sign (see Appendix 6 and 7 respectively) which included information about data protection, confidentiality and right to withdraw up to a week after the interview without penalty. Consent forms were collected by hand by the gatekeeper at the PRU. To ensure that participants in the current research understood the aims of the research, this was explained by me, the researcher and members of the PRU.
Researchers must make it explicitly clear to all participants of their right to withdraw from the research without giving reason and without receiving any penalty.	Participants' and parents' right to withdraw was explicitly stated in the information sheets and consent forms distributed (see Appendices 4,5,6 and 7). Participants were informed by me, the researcher and gatekeeper at the PRU, before, during and after the interview process, that they were able to withdraw from the research up to a week after the interview without any penalty.
Information provided by participants should remain confidential (BPS, 2018).	Participants were informed that only I, the researcher would have access to their original audio recordings. They were informed that data would be stored confidentially on password protected and encrypted devices temporarily before being transferred to a secure university-based storage centre where it would be kept for 10 years. After 10 years, it would be destroyed. They were informed that the research would be available to the public and so was not totally confidential however were assured that all information would be anonymised. They were informed that the only exception to confidentiality would be in the case of a safeguarding concern. In this case, participants were informed that the school's designated safeguarding lead would need to be notified.

Ethical Consideration (BPS, 2018; BERA, 2018)	Action Taken
Participants should not be at risk of harm (BPS, 2018)	It was not expected that participants would be exposed to any harm during the research process however great care was taken to ensure participants were aware that they could stop the interview at any time should they wish to do so and say as little or as much as they wish. To reduce the potential for emotional discomfort, a designated member of staff was made available during and after the interviews should any participant require follow-up support or sign-posting and participants were able to request a member of staff to sit with them during the interview if they wanted them to.
Researchers must consider the potential for power imbalance the impact upon participants (BPS, 2018)	Participants were informed that my research was purely for research purposes as a university student training to be an educational psychologist. Power imbalances were reduced by allowing participants choice e.g. having someone in interview with them, saying as much or as little as they wish, stopping the interview at any time, their level of participation in terms of speaking and writing or only one or the other, their choice of methods used and format of tools. They were also able to select their own pseudonym.

4.7 Data Collection Procedures

4.7.1 Semi-structured interview

This research used semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. Interviews are a commonly used method when employing case study research as they are considered most appropriate to gathering rich and in-depth information (Yin, 2014). Robson (2002) suggested that "*face to face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives"* (p. 272-273). In contrast to structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews adopt elements of both method; by utilising pre-determined questions which are used to structure the interview whilst still allowing for flexibility

should other areas of interest arise (Robson, 2002). For this reason, this was considered the most appropriate method of data collection in this research.

4.7.2 The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI)

Packard and Conway (2006) reviewed research that was conducted exploring PSs and reported four main categories in relation to the methodology that is used. The most common approach used, (64%), involves a structured survey known as the Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ) and is the traditional method, originating from Markus and Nurius (1986). The PSQ uses a Likert type scale for respondents to indicate PSs and to score them. Less commonly used methods included narrative approaches (27%), visual methods (4%) and drama themed methods (5%).

As there had been no developed approach for using PSs with adolescents, Shephard and Marshall (1999) felt that an age appropriate measure was needed, consistent with methodological limitations identified by Wainright *et al* (2017) and Meek (2011). They adapted the PSQ and introduced the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) as a way of utilising the PSs into a visual tool that is more engaging for young adolescents. Shepard and Marshall (1999) argue that the PSMI is not simply another way of ascertaining young people's aspirations but provides a unique structure which can provide information about the many aspects of a young person's personal life. It has also been suggested that pupils in PRUs express goals that are less clear or coherent, perhaps of the methods used to help them to do so. Shepard and Marshall's (1999) PSMI enables PSs to be elaborated on and was used to gather data in the present research for this reason. Further, the PMSI, though a structured tool with pre-

determined questions, offers individuals opportunity to engage in open and meaningful inquiry to self-reflect and to identify goals of importance. The format of the PSMI is therefore consistent with the semi-structured interview format adopted in this study.

The PSMI is composed of three main sections, including an introduction phase, exercise, and debriefing. Firstly, the concept of PSs was introduced and explained to participants giving examples relevant to their age group. Through a series of activities participants were then asked to consider what they hope to happen in their future and what they fear might happen. Meara, Day, Chalk, and Phelps (1995) suggested that PSs represent meaningful goals when they are made more vivid, specific and concrete. As a result, here, they were asked to elaborate on these and to discuss their importance. To do so, I used several visual aids in combination with oral questioning to facilitate elaboration of PSs. They were also asked which out of these they expect to happen and how likely they feel they can achieve or prevent these things from happening in order to assess their perceived self-efficacy, though this was not analysed during data analysis (Appendix 8 provides a full outline of the interview schedule used and Appendix 9 provides a blank version of tools I adapted to use for elaboration of PSs). Following completion of all activities, responses were summarised and recorded on the Possible Selves Map (PSM) which was adapted by Shepard and Quressette (2010) and utilised for the current study (see Appendix 10). The final step of the PSMI, is to secure short-and long-term goals that can be achieved, by asking participants to reflect on the steps that they may be able to take to move towards achieving their hoped-for selves and preventing their feared-for selves. In the debriefing phase, participants were asked to summarise their PSM as if they are talking

to someone who knows nothing about them. I, the interviewer then re-summarised the participants' responses verbally in order to check for accuracy. Figures 3 to 7 present an example of the complete PSMI procedure for one participant.

Each interview took place on an individual basis with the participant in an informal and comfortable area within the PRU. In the case of one interview, the young person preferred a trusted adult from the PRU to remain in the room. A trusted adult was in close proximity at all times for all participants. Each interview lasted between 20 and 60 minutes and was audio recorded.

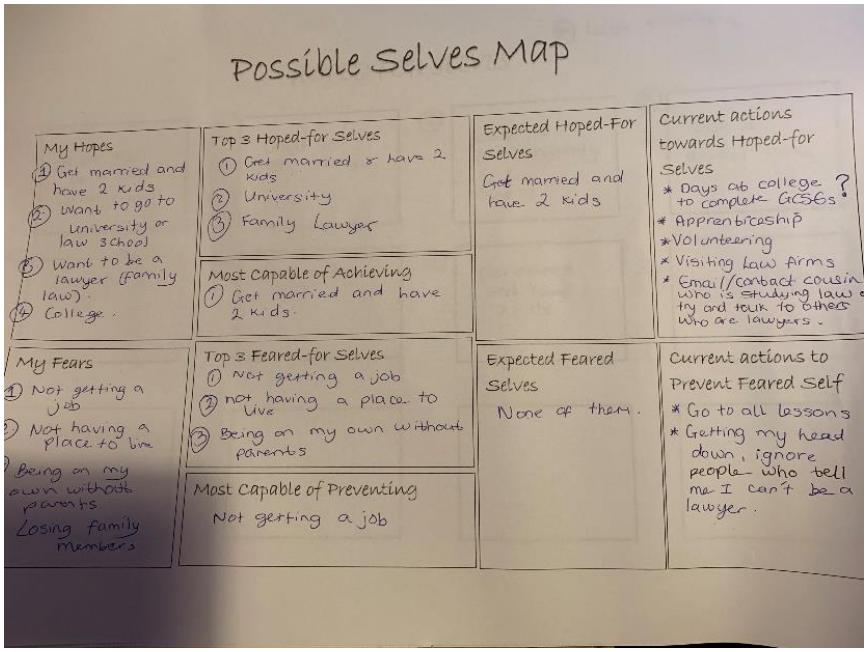

Figure 4: Final Possible Selves Map produced during interview

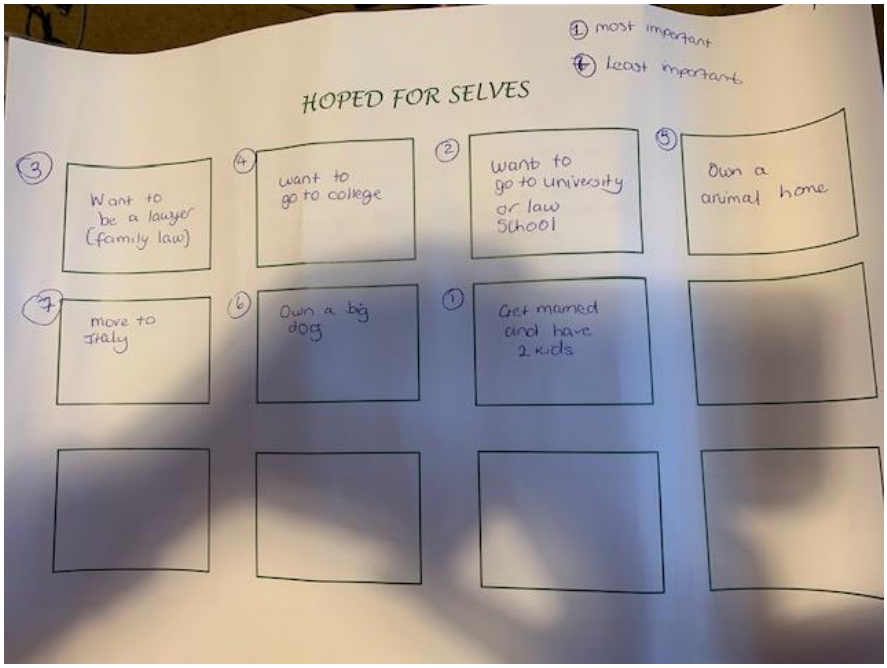

Figure 5: Hoped-for selves generated by participant

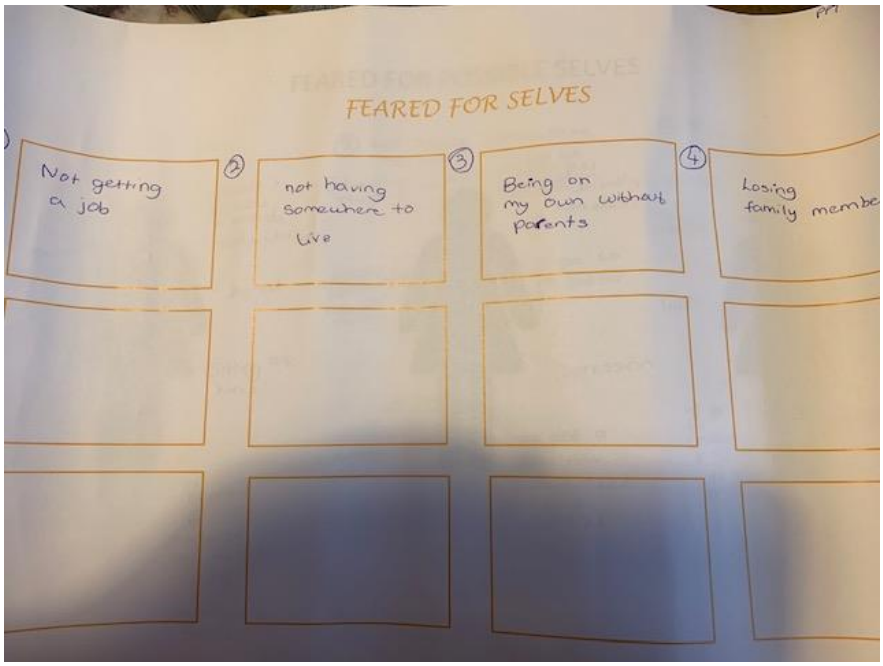

Figure 6: Feared-for-Selves generated by participant

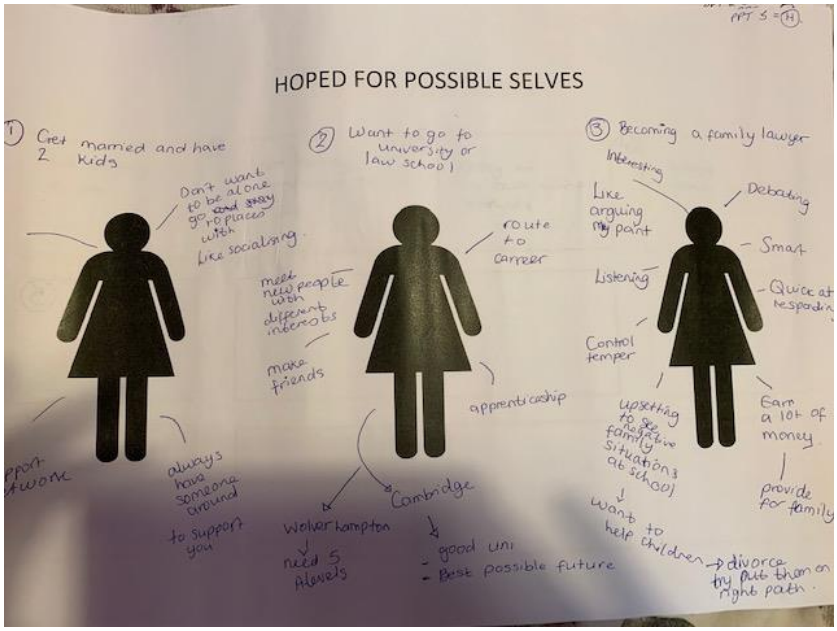

Figure 7: Elaborated Hoped-for selves

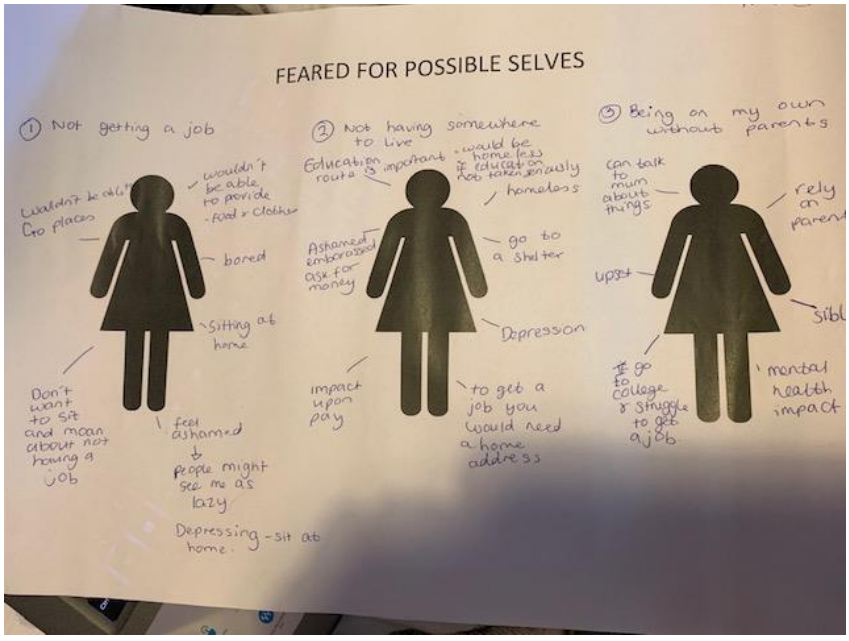

Figure 8: Elaborated Feared-for-Selves

4.8 Data Analysis

4.8.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Details of the qualitative data collected to answer each research question are summarised in Table 6 and will be expanded on in this section. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Table 6: Summary of qualitative data collected

Research Question	Data gathered
1. How do girls in the PRU perceive their future selves and what hoped-for and feared-for PSs do they generate?	Data gathered during the first part of the PSMI where data collection focusses on generation and exploration of hoped-for and feared-for selves. These were recorded on the PSM during interview. Data is interviews which have been recorded and transcribed verbatim and transcripts used together with annotated PSM.
2. What facilitating or hindering factors were identified by participants to the achievement of hoped-for PSs?	Data gathered during the second part of the PSMI where participant is asked to generate actions to move towards achieving hoped-for selves and preventing feared-for selves. Data is interviews which have been recorded and transcribed verbatim and transcripts used together with annotated PSM.
3. How likely is it that the PSs generated by girls in a PRU will influence future actions based on existing criteria within literature?	Data gathered during the entire PSMI process, both when generating PSs and setting actions. Theoretical and conceptual criteria used from past literature (see section 4.8.3) to discuss how likely PSs are to influence future action. This was not followed up longitudinally or directly measured in the research. Data is based on recorded interviews transcribed verbatim, used together with annotated PSM.

4.8.1.1 Thematic Analysis (TA) for RQ1 and RQ2

Several authors have suggested approaches to use when analysing case study

research however it has been argued that these are underdeveloped and are heavily influenced by the researcher's philosophical position (Yin, 2014; Simons, 2009). Although there are no set rules when analysing case studies, the following approach to analysis is recommended:

> "*a formal inductive process of breaking down data into segments or data sets which can then be categorised, ordered and examined for connections, patterns and propositions that seek to understand the data* (Simons, 2009, p. 117).

I considered analytical approaches that would allow me to answer my research questions and address the main aims of the research; I selected Thematic Analysis (TA). TA is described as being used for "*identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79), where a theme is "*a patterned response or meaning within the dataset"* (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.82). TA however can go much further than this, to interpreting aspects of the topic being researched (Boyatzis, 1998).

A theoretical conceptual framework to help shape participants' future selves already existed through the PSs lens and therefore creating a theory of future self-development from the data was not the aim of the current research. For this reason, grounded theory methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1997, 1998) was not considered appropriate. Instead, the goal was to explore a representation of the future self in the views of each participant attending the PRU. Further, I reflected upon the commonalities between TA and content analysis as there is significant overlap. The points outlined in Table 7 led

me to cementing my decision to use TA.

Moreover, TA was felt the most appropriate method to use for this research due to its ability to be flexible and independent to theoretical frameworks, philosophical underpinnings, design frames and data collection methods; unlike other qualitative research approaches (Clarke and Braun, 2013). Its flexible approach to qualitative analysis is consistent with the CR position employed in the research and the use of semi-structure interview (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Table 7: Considerations made to inform decision for data analysis

Content Analysis	**Thematic Analysis**
Features a heavier emphasis on quantifying data and describing content such as who says what, to whom and with what effect (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Determines patterns and trends of words used, frequency, and discourses of communication.	Features a heavier emphasis on describing data qualitatively in a more narrative manner. Able to pick up frequency of a theme as well as stand-alone themes of interest. More interested in content of the data and what it offers rather than mechanics of the text.
Most commonly used to analyse qualitative or textual data gathered in a quantitative manner e.g. using questionnaires and surveys.	Most commonly used to analyse qualitative data gathered during an interview.
Reduced focus on influence of context.	Values consideration of context.
Division of semantic and latent content of data.	Allows for integration of semantic and latent contents of data.
Less dependent upon interpretation of researcher and focusses on categories only rather than themes.	Theme can be dependent upon the interpretation of the researcher during the coding process (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, Snelgrove, 2016), supporting the critical realist element.

Nevertheless, TA has been criticised for lacking clear guidelines and analytical rigour (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter, 2003). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) have addressed this through generating a six-stage guide for conducting TA. Using TA, data

analysis consisted of analysing the transcribed audio of the PSMI completed with each participant, using the coinciding completed PSM to triangulate data for consistency. Analysis involved coding and identifying themes within and across each case. The process of analysis used is summarised in Table 8, based on the stages created by Braun and Clarke (2006). In their 2019 paper, Braun and Clarke revisited TA and revised some of their original conceptualisations, now preferring to refer to TA as reflexive TA. Before, themes were merely themes, whereas since, there has been more a distinction made between 'domain summaries' and 'patterns of shared meaning which are underpinned by a core concept' (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 593). Braun and Clarke (2019) emphasise that their approach of TA is more consistent with the latter, as domain summary themes capture views relating to a shared topic rather than shared meaning. In domain summaries, there is no underlying concept that organises the description of what participants said about the topic. In the current research, themes are conceptualised as patterns underpinned by a central conceptual category, which represent shared meaning across participants, consistent with their interpretation. Further, I was not only interested in themes but sub-themes where a subtheme shares the same organising concept as the theme it is part of but focusses on an elaborated or interesting element which may be common across cases or of interest as a stand-alone piece of information.

Table 8: Stages of analysis used in the research, based on Braun and Clarke (2006)		
Stage within Braun and Clarke's TA	**Description**	**Process completed in current research**
1. Familiarisation with data	Repeated reading of transcribed scripts so that researcher familiarises themselves with data. Researcher begins to identify patterns.	Creating a summary of each interview case in terms of background information provided by the PRU. Listening to audio recorded interviews and forming initial impressions.
2. Generating initial codes	Researcher looks at each transcript individually, identifying important and interesting features within segments of the text using codes as labels for these features and coding as many aspects as possible that could act as final themes.	Transcribing audio recorded interventions as close to verbatim as possible and annotating these with initial codes, using coding strategies to identify and highlight information relevant to the research questions as well anything else of interest; each code served the purpose to capture the meaning of a particular part of the data as constructed by the participant (see Appendix 11 for example excerpt from coded transcript).
3. Searching for themes	Researcher looks for patterns amongst codes and they are sorted into potential themes (i.e. may be a theme if mentioned by 2 or more participants or if particularly interesting to researcher) and all relevant data for each theme is gathered. Similar codes are organised into themes and subthemes. Contrasting views also noted between participants.	Looking at duplicate codes. Exploring and refining connections between codes and grouping codes into overarching themes, themes and sub-themes, within each case, reporting on these in detail with supporting participant quotes (see appendix 12 for example theme development for RQ1 and appendix 13 for example theme development for RQ2). Initial contrasting views noted between cases that will be considered for across-case analysis.

Stage within Braun and Clarke's TA	Description	Process completed in current research
4. Reviewing themes	Researcher reviews and refines themes to ensure that they effectively represent important patterns within the original data set and the coded extracts.	Thematic map created for each individual case (see Appendix 14 and appendices 14.1 to 14.7). Across-case thematic map created for overarching themes for RQ1 (see figure 8). For RQ1, across-case thematic table completed for themes and subthemes to formulate overall synthesised themes for hoped-for selves (see Table 11) and feared-for selves (Table 12) as well as similarities and differences identified across the cases. Across-case thematic map created for RQ2 (see Figure 9).
5. Defining and naming themes	Themes are defined and named so that they are able to reflect to others the core meaning of the theme in the best way possible.	Each final synthesised theme discussed with supporting extracts from transcript as evidence.
6. Producing the final report	Data extracts representing the key themes are shared relating to the literature and research questions. The data is shared with others in this way.	Integrating and linking findings to literature.

To strengthen rigour, Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that before data analysis, the researcher must consider several decisions. Table 9 presents the decisions that I made for the present research under these criteria.

Table 9: Decisions made as part of Thematic Analysis		
Conceptualisation of a theme	**Inductive vs Deductive**	**Latent vs semantic themes**
A theme can either represent the most commonly used codes or the codes that are most interesting to the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this research, I used a combination of both methods; that is, codes would become themes if they were 1) frequently assigned amongst the data and 2) if they offered a unique or interesting view or concept.	Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss the difference between themes that are identified in a deductive manner using predetermined criteria (theoretical) or an inductive manner where coding originates wholly from the data itself. This research used an element of both. In contrast to traditional measures of PSs adopted by Markus and Nurius (1986), I did not use an existing coding scheme in this research. Instead, raw data was used inductively with the purpose to observe naturally emerging descriptions of the PSs within the data. However, data was framed by the pre-existing PSs framework of hoped-for selves and feared-for selves; this element of the analysis therefore uses a deductive approach to analysis. In this sense, TA was somewhat conceptual/theoretical.	This concerns the level of meaning at which themes are identified, a semantic level or a latent level. Semantic analysis is concerned with identifying patterns in the semantic information shared by participants and nothing else. On the other hand, a latent theme relates to exploring underlying assumptions beyond merely semantic information of the codes and may incorporate reflections of language and socio-cultural context (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this research, both were used. I used a semantic approach to answer research questions one and two where initial themes were identified at an explicit level based on what participants said. Latent analysis was necessary when considering the broader implications and meanings behind themes generated at the semantic level and essentially when considering findings against the PSs framework which have shaped the semantic content of the data.

4.8.1.2 Analysis of findings for RQ3:

In Markus and Nurius' (1986) original conceptualisation of PSs, researchers provided the following criteria for PSs to have a motivational effect upon behaviour which are described in further detail in Table 2:

- PSs must be validated by seeking evidence of probability
- PSs must be kept active in the working self-concept
- PSs must be psychologically close
- PSs must be elaborated, clear and possible
- PSs must be paired with strategies
- PSs must be counterbalanced with feared-for selves
- There must be a discrepancy between PSs and current selves

Guided by this, Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) established their own criteria in their research, when judging how likely PSs generated were to influence future action. In their research, these criteria were considered integral to the self-concept and therefore more likely to influence motivation. In their research, PSs were considered more likely to motivate behaviour if there was evidence of the below criteria:

- Participants demonstrated an awareness of the sub-goals needed to achieve future goals.
- Participants envisaged the difficulties they may encounter trying to achieve their goals.

- Participants were aware of the effort needed to achieve their aims.
- Participants generated alternative plans to achieve their goals if their original ideas were perceived as less attainable (e.g. alternative career plans).
- Participants were aware of the qualifications needed to achieve goals where appropriate.

4.9 Rigour and quality

It is well known that meanings of rigour and quality differ across quantitative and qualitative research and that qualitative researchers stand in a different position to positivist researchers, both epistemologically and ontologically (Maxwell, 1992). Within qualitative research, it is the meaning that participants attach to the data and involvement of the researcher that is of primary aim. With this in mind, I have sought to ensure rigour and quality in other ways, ultimately by enhancing the trustworthiness of research findings.

4.9.1 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first to address the concept of rigour relating to trustworthiness within qualitative research. Trustworthiness is described differently across researchers, referring to authenticity and the truthfulness of findings, that is, the degree to which the reader has confidence in the findings. I aimed to make findings and the process of analysis clear and transparent, as demonstrated in Appendices 12, 13 and 14. Further, I focussed on factors of triangulation and positionality to implement trustworthiness. Additional detail on enhancing trustworthiness of findings can be

found in Appendix 15.

4.9.2 Triangulation

Prior to data collection, I completed a pilot interview. The pilot interview was completed with a boy in a mainstream placement as part of a piece of casework during my placement as a trainee EP. Despite this participant not being representative of my target sample, the purpose of the pilot was to gain experience of using the PSMI and strengthen methodological rigour as a result. The pilot did not lead to changes for the final version of the PSMI used in the present study however it did lead to the use of supplementary tools. For further details of the pilot study, see Appendix 16. No data from the pilot study is included in the findings of the current study.

In Thomas' (2015) view, it is the process of triangulation that can produce rigour in qualitative research. He describes triangulation as examination of information from various source and finding evidence to support themes. In this research, this was achieved through the multiple case study design, by collecting data from multiple cases using methods of interview as well as visual tools; I drew on interview transcripts, notes and PSMs. I also asked participants to check the accuracy of their PSMs to add to the credibility of the data, this is known as 'member checking' (Creswell, 2009).

When striving for achievement of triangulation, Braun and Clarke (2019) report that reflexive TA "*is not about following procedures 'correctly' (or about 'accurate' and 'reliable' coding, or achieving consensus between coders), but about the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful*

engagement with the analytic process" (Braun and Clarke 2019, p. 594). Consequently, in the present research, I decided not to use another research during the coding analysis process. Further, I looked at themes within each case which may be of interest before synthesising common themes across cases (see Appendices 12, 13 and 14).

4.9.3 Positionality

Thomas (2015) suggests a second criteria for ensuring rigour, relating to the concept of positionality or reflexivity, that is, consideration of the researcher's own viewpoints. The most prominent criticism of qualitative research is that of bias, that it is biased by the researcher's views, values and experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Since it is not possible to totally prevent this, the level of subjectivity has to be managed instead. One way of doing so is by adopting reflexivity, that is, a process where the researcher acknowledges how their own assumptions, values and beliefs may impact upon the research process (Ahern, 1999). Etherington (2007, p. 611) highlighted the importance of reflexivity in research with young people, explaining it as "*the researcher's willingness to emerge from behind the secure barrier of anonymity and own up to their involvement".*

To engage in reflexivity, in this research, I noted my values and interests at the start of the process in relation to the topic of interest. At the end of each interview, I made brief general notes on my interactions with participants, my general thoughts of the interview process and my views on what they had shared; I also asked participants themselves how they found the PSMI process. Engaging in such self-awareness allowed

opportunity to explore how such factors may influence decisions and interpretations of the data (Willig, 2013). I acknowledged that the interview process could be an interactive process between the researcher and the participant where one individual could influence upon the other. That is, being aware that during the PSs process, the participants PSs may change. The PSMI may therefore consist of co-constructions in part, between me and them.

It was also important to acknowledge the potential for power imbalances during interviews with the pupils where I tried to limit the effect of this as much as possible so that they felt comfortable sharing their viewpoints. I explained to participants that my role as a researcher was different to that of school staff and at the start of each interview. I highlighted the purpose was for them to share their own perceptions of the future which is of high value to supporting them in the PRU as well as to the field of wider research. I was able to reflect back participants responses not only in verbal format but also in written format through the PSM. Participants were also asked if they felt that the information recorded was an accurate reflection of the responses that they shared in order to ensure that my own interpretations were not imposed on them. To enforce the elements of Lundy's (2007) model, I also asked participants if they were happy for their PSM's to be shared with staff at the PRU.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an outline of the methodological choices made in this research study. It introduced the research design adopted alongside relevant choices

necessary for case study design. Details of the participant sample, recruitment procedures and data collection methods were addressed, following consideration of ethical issues. Methods of data analysis were discussed before discussing issues relating to data credibility and rigour.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the findings generated by thematic analysis (TA) of the participant interviews, to answer the following research questions:

1) How do girls in the PRU perceive their future selves and what hoped-for and feared-for PSs do they generate?
2) What facilitating or hindering factors were identified by participants to the achievement of hoped-for PSs?
3) How likely is it that the PSs generated by girls in a PRU will influence future actions based on existing criteria within literature?

Individual findings are outlined, followed by visual representation of themes and descriptions of themes and subthemes alongside quotations from participants. The chapter also discusses theoretical considerations that arise from the findings relating to existing literature discussed in Chapter three, including how the present research fits alongside existing research.

5.2 Presentation of findings

This section presents findings from the across-case analysis of the data, achieved using TA. Several sources of data were used including interview transcripts, PSMs and annotated worksheets which were utilised when exploring participants PSs as shown

in Figures 3 to 7. To begin with, I provide a table providing a brief overview of each case in order to contextualise the across-case analysis (see table 10).

An across-case thematic map of the main overarching themes for hoped-for selves and feared-for-selves generated by participants is presented to answer research question (RQ) one (see figure 8). An individual thematic map for each case can be found in appendices 14.1 to 14.7.

Across-case analysis was then performed for themes and subthemes which were collated, analysed looking at similarities and differences, and synthesised across cases to demonstrate overall key themes; see Tables 11 and 12 (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Integrating the data involved expanding and merging categories to reach an overall representation of the initial meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These themes are supported by verbatim extracts from the original interviews.

To answer RQ2, Figure 9 presents a thematic map from the TA conducted on data to identify facilitating and hindering factors to the achievement of hoped-for selves across cases. Finally, for RQ3, existing criteria from the PSs literature is used to predict how likely participants PSs are to influence their future actions. Figures 10 to 13 demonstrate participants who did and did not meet criteria identified within literature to judge how likely it is that participants PSs will influence and motivation action. This was not directly measured in the research and is based on theoretical assumptions alone. I reflect on the findings for each research question against theoretical considerations

of the PSs framework seeking to draw comparisons between literature and the present findings.

5.3. Overview of Cases and Participant Information

Table 10: Overview of cases and participant details				
Name, age and year group	**Reason for attending PRU**	**Main areas of need (as reported by PRU staff)**	**Concerns/vulnerabilities (reported by PRU staff)**	**Background/context (as reported by PRU staff)**
Demi Age 14 Year 9	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o Finds it difficult to handle her anxiety and feelings of distress, leading to outbursts of anger o Needs support relating to healthy and safe relationships, particularly with the opposite sex to increase her awareness of risk. o Working below age related expectations	Lives at home with parents and siblings
Michelle Age 14 Year 9	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o Child Protection Plan in place; lacks stability at home which impacts upon engagement in routines within school o Vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation o Verbal aggression o Low self-esteem o Heavy smoker o Working below age related expectations	Lives between home with mother and living with grandmother; visits father too.
Sally Age 16 Year 11 (school leaver)	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o Low self-esteem and difficulties with self-image. o Vulnerable with peers; social media concerns. o Suspected cannabis use. o Feelings of anxiety, anger and distrust of others. o Working below age related expectations	Lives at home with parents and siblings. Siblings have SEN.

Name, age and year group	Reason for attending PRU	Main areas of need (as reported by PRU staff)	Concerns/vulnerabilities (reported by PRU staff)	Background/context (as reported by PRU staff)
Emily Year 10 Age 15	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o Difficulties interacting with peers o Low self-esteem and difficulties with self-image o Working below age related expectations	Lives at home with parents and siblings, one of five children. Has an older sister with a serious medical condition within the home.
Hope Year 10 Age 14	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH	o Finds it difficult to manage emotions and maintain relationships, leading to escalation of confrontational behaviours. o Working below age related expectations	Parents separated, lives with mother but spends time with father and has stepsiblings.
Tara Year 10 Age 14	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o Low self-esteem o Shy and withdrawn o Working below age related expectations	Lives at home with both parents and older brother and twin sister who has a physical condition.
Pippa Year 10 Age 14 (new pupil)	Permanent exclusion from mainstream school	SEMH Cognition and Learning	o High levels of anxiety relating to family and their health. o Experienced several bereavements in the family recently which has impacted upon her outlook on life. o Struggles to interact socially, prefers own company. o Working below age related expectations	Lives at home with both parents but mother is unwell.

5.4 RQ1: How do girls in the PRU perceive their future PSs and what themes emerge amongst the hoped-for selves and feared-for selves generated by girls in the PRU?

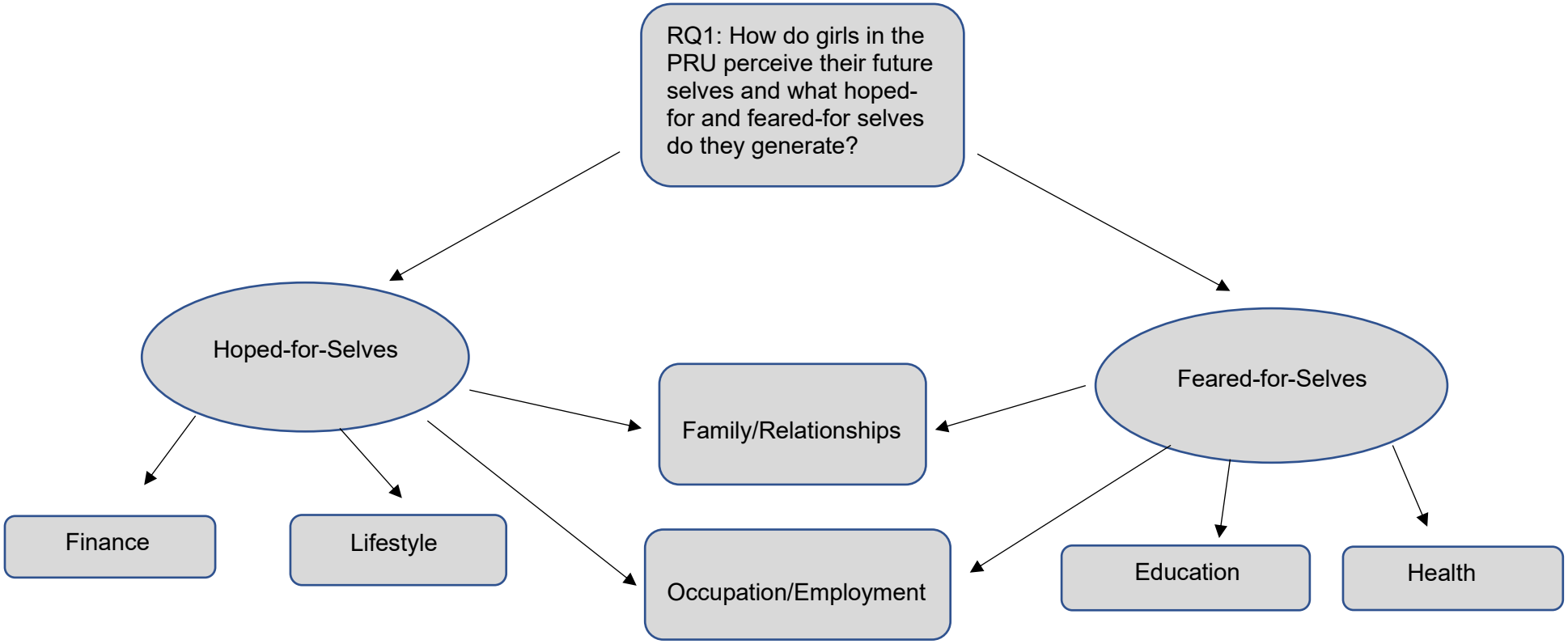

Figure 9: Thematic map of overarching themes for Hoped-for Selves and Feared-for Selves generated by participants for RQ1

5.4.1 RQ1: Across-case thematic analysis of themes and subthemes for Hoped-for Selves

Table 11: Themes and subthemes to form across-case analysis for Hoped-for selves					
Overarching Theme	**Original Themes**	**Original Subthemes**	**Similarities across cases**	**Differences across cases**	**Synthesised overall theme**
Occupation/ Employment	Pursuing main career interest *(Demi, Michelle, Hope, Tara).* Having variety of employment interests *(Demi).* Having a job even if it is any/being open-minded (*Emily, Tara, Sally).* Helping others *(Pippa).*	Helping vulnerable adults/children *(Demi, Pippa, Hope)* Balance career & family *(Demi)* Balance career & travel (Michelle,Demi). Self-improvement (Emily) Showcase personal strengths (Hope) Job security (*Emily)* Practical/active job *(Sally)* Making an impact *(Hope)* Having business interest (*Sally)* Earning money *(Sally)* Gaining practical work experience *(Tara, Pippa)*	Being employed Being open to several jobs Wanting to help those who are vulnerable	Having a clear and specific career in mind Level of elaboration in career interest Wanting a balance between having a family and a career Employment type Academic vs more practical career interest Hope for self-development	**1.Achieving desired job role within a particular area of employment**

Overarching Theme	Original Themes	Original Subthemes	Similarities across cases	Differences across cases	Synthesised overall theme
Family/ relationships	Having children *(Demi, Michelle, Hope, Pippa).* Marriage/long-term relationship *(Demi, Michelle, Hope, Tara, Pippa).*	Tradition to have children (*Demi*) Having children provides purpose and motivation for life (*Demi*) Having children is a priority over anything else (*Michelle*) Caring for a parent alongside having own family (*Pippa*) Children provide company (*Hope*) Independence/non-reliance on a partner *(Demi)* Faithfulness in a relationship *(Tara)*	Wanting children Wanting a romantic partner to share life with	Having children is motivation in life Having children is a priority over material wishes Children provide company Caring for a parent and having own family Having children to serve traditional societal patterns Husband or long-term partner Independence/reliance on partner Qualities in a partner	**2.Traditional or idealised family unit consisting of romantic partner and children**

Overarching Theme	Original Themes	Original Subthemes	Similarities across cases	Differences across cases	Synthesised overall theme
Lifestyle	Residence/ having own home *(Demi, Emily, Hope, Tara)* Travel/holidays (*Demi, Emily)*	Emigrating to another country *(Hope)* Moving out of current town *(Tara)* Balance between having a family and travel (*Demi)* *Balance between career and travel (Demi, Michelle)* Having own home for independence *(Tara)*	Wanting to live in own space and own property	Ownership of home Place of residence Wanting a balance between having own family and having opportunities to travel the world	**3. Living independently from family and having own living space**
Finance	Earning money/salary *(Demi, Michelle)*	Having financial stability and security (*Demi*) Sufficient wage to care for family (*Demi*) Affording material possessions (*Michelle*) Being successful (*Michelle)*	Earning enough money to provide for family Earning enough money to fund material wishes	Making money equates to success	**4**. **Financial security for daily living and material needs**

5.4.1.1 Theme 1: Achieving desired job role within a particular area of employment

In all seven cases, having a job was a generated hoped-for self; this finding is consistent with Shepard and Marshall (1999)'s finding where occupational hoped-for selves were the most frequently mentioned amongst participants. Being employed was therefore important to all girls. However, what differed was the type of job role desired and how explicit interests were. Demi, Hope and Pippa spoke of wanting a job that aimed to help those who are vulnerable; for example, Demi wants to become a counsellor and help those with mental health difficulties. Reasons for this appeared to stem from a personal connection of some sort.

> *' When people have been through stuff, 'cause I know people who've been through stuff and I wanna help people feel better about themselves' (Demi).*

Hope is most interested in family law; she feels she possesses some of the qualities needed to become a lawyer and like Demi there also seemed to be a more personal element to her career goal.

> '*cause obviously like with a family who've had a divorce and that if there's children involved then that's what makes them become naughty then they play up and I wouldn't want that to happen to anybody (Hope).*

Demi, Michelle and Hope all discussed specific professions, including a counsellor, an

airhostess and a family lawyer, respectively. On the other hand, Tara and Emily were more open minded. Michelle also discussed an alternative career goal of being a ‘holiday rep’ but because she perceived this as more realistic than becoming an airhostess.

Demi, Hope and Michelle all spoke of wanting their own children in their future, but also spoke of wanting careers. For Demi in particular, she saw one dependent on the other, i.e. being successful in her career as a means to providing adequately for her family and children. This is supported by research suggesting that girls who steer towards particular career selves seem to be linked to interests and beliefs relating to PSs in other areas such as family and relationships (Curry, Trew, Turner, and Hunter, 1994). This can also be explained moreover by Brower and Nurius (1993) who propose that PSs are used to make career decisions. They suggest that individuals place job opportunities against their vision of their desired PS and then make career decisions based on the discrepancies between the two. In this case, Demi is likely to make career decisions based on the discrepancy between job opportunities and her desired self of having her own children. This is supported by literature stating that girls are more likely to believe that they have to sacrifice higher ambitions in order to achieve other PSs (Lips, 2002). This reinforces the role of sociocultural context in the PSs generated by participants which are constructed through ‘social communities’ which are heavily influenced by factors of class, gender, and ethnicity (Harrison, 2018). As a result, it is important to consider the aspirations and expectations of young girls on a broader sense amongst the other PSs they generate.

Sally only generated one main hoped-for self, and this surrounded her future employment. Sally and Emily were open minded as to what job they may want to do in the future and suggested they would be satisfied with any job they got as long as they had one. For Emily, this seemed as a result of uncertainties to what she may view herself as being able to achieve in her future whereas Sally did not wish to consider her future and she felt more comfortable in the present.

In sum, I found that there seemed to be a variety of job professions shared by participants which may be separated into those which require a greater demand on academic qualifications and those that may demand less. Further, some girls named specific careers they were interested in and some were less certain and were more concerned about being employed at all; indicating there may be differences in their self-concept and levels of self-efficacy. It may be that there is a cognitive conflict occurring in such situations, that is, participants are more likely to generate PSs that they feel are more realistically achievable rather than the most desirable, referred to by Bryant and Yarnold (2014) as disconnection between hope and reality.

5.4.1.2 Theme 2: Traditional or idealised family unit consisting of romantic partner and children

In four of the seven cases, that is, Demi, Michelle, Hope and Pippa, having children was a generated hoped-for self. This seems to contrast findings in Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) where one of the girls in the PRU shared having children and being a ‘housewife’ would be what she least hoped would happen. In the present research, there were some differences in the reasons for wanting children and the underlying

motives. Demi wanted children because she seems to view it as *tradition* to have children, indicating that this possible self may be influenced by societal and cultural factors.

> *'I'm like a family person and I want a big family; it's just tradition. I want kids and I want them to have kids…if I didn't have kids'…cause I wanna do well for the kids' (Demi).*

For Demi, not only did having children serve a traditional purpose, but it also served a motivational purpose for her where her more aspirational PSs were associated with whether she had children to care for or not. Demi suggested that she would be satisfied with a lower quality lifestyle if it was just herself to think about. Hope's reasons for wanting her own family differed to those provided by Demi and Michelle. Hope would like to have children so that she has the company of others around her as this is what she is used to and feels most secure with.

> *'So, I have my own family I'll always have someone there, I've got a big family so that's important' (Hope).*

In all these cases, alongside children, participants hoped for a romantic relationship to build a family with. For three of them, (Hope, Pippa and Michelle), this consisted of marriage. However, Demi spoke of a having a boyfriend rather than naming a potential partner as her *husband*. Though Demi would like a romantic partner, she also spoke of not wanting to rely on a partner to provide for her and so she placed a greater

importance on children rather than having a lasting and sustainable romantic relationship. Tara did not generate a hoped-for self of wanting her own children but did hope to have a romantic partner in the future who is faithful to her. Overall, a traditional family unit consisting of a partner and children was popular amongst these four cases.

Interestingly, Curry *et al* (1994) found that girls who were considered to be high achieving academically were significantly less likely to generate career-focussed PSs in comparison to boys. Rather, girls were more likely to generate future selves relating to having children. Despite their low academic attainment, participants such as Demi, Michelle and Hope generated ambitious career focussed aspirations alongside having a family. However, still, in three of the cases, having children was the hoped-for self they were felt they more most capable of achieving. They viewed having children as 'easier' to achieve. It seems that the sociocultural value attached to the possible self of having children is most powerful, regardless of whether girls are high achieving or not.

5.4.1.3 Theme 3: Living independently and having own living space

Four of the seven cases (Demi, Emily, Hope and Tara) generated a hoped-for self of wanting their own living space or property to live in. Whilst three of the girls spoke of having their own house, they did not go into detail about what this meant. Emily hopes to move out on her own in future and have her own 'place' but struggled to elaborate as to why this is important to her. Demi, however, spoke in greater detail of not necessarily owning a house as long as she is able to have her own living space of some sort, suggesting she had a greater awareness of what she perceives possible.

For Demi, again, this hoped-for self was underpinned by her hoped-for self for wanting children (*'Yeah, well you've gotta own a house to have kids, haven't you, really. I can't move in with my mum').*

Hope also discussed residence and housing but more so with regards to moving countries. Tara however, discussed residence away from her current town and stated that she does not like living in her current town because she thinks it is dangerous.

Sally did not generate a hoped-for-self surrounding residence and housing. When prompted as to whether she might like to purchase her own house in the future, Sally stated '*No I ain't got there yet',* reinforcing her difficulties to imagine her future. Michelle did not generate a hoped-for-self specifically relating to housing and residence, but she did discuss a desire to be able to afford a 'nice house' when generating hoped-for-selves in other areas. Pippa also did not generate a hoped-for-self relating to housing and residence; rather, her hoped-for selves centred around her family rather than lifestyle.

5.4.1.4 Theme 4: Financial security for daily living and material needs

Across two of the cases (Michelle and Demi), finance and having money was a hoped-for-self that was generated. Phrases such as a '*decent wage'* were raised by Michelle, but she was not able to state a specific sum or salary of money that equated to this. Demi and Michelle shared the common desire to achieve financial security which was often linked to job stability. They provided reasons for why this is important to them, linked to other hoped-for selves they had generated. For example, the main motivator

for Demi's hopes for financial security was so that she was able to provide for the children she hoped to have (*'I don't wanna be loaded, I just wanna… if I do have kids, I wanna be able to look after them').*

Demi was the only participant to speak about wanting to financially fund herself without reliance on a partner. For Michelle, financial security is important to her because she appears to equate it to success. Michelle considers success as central to being able to afford such material possessions and being able to achieve this by getting to where she wants to be in her career. Emily, Hope, Tara, Pippa and Sally did not generate hoped-for-selves relating to finance and money, but Sally mentioned her desire to earn money as part of her hoped-for-self for employment.

5.4.2 RQ1: Across-case thematic analysis of themes and subthemes for Feared-for-Selves

Table 12: Themes and subthemes to form across-case analysis for Feared-for Selves

Overarching Theme	Original Themes	Original Subthemes	Similarities across cases	Differences across cases	Synthesised overall theme
Occupation/ Employment	Dissatisfied with job/not getting desired job role *(Sally, Michelle)* Not getting a job *(Hope)* Losing job *(Demi, Emily)* Not receiving adequate salary *(Emily)*	Unable to provide for family members (*Demi, Hope)* Losing possessions/unable to pay bills and afford property (Demi, *Emily*) Negative effects of the PRU (*Emily, Michelle)* Feeling shameful and judged by others (*Hope)* Feeling bored (no job) (*Hope)*	Not being able to pay bills and impact this could have on family and lifestyle Getting a job that is not the most desired Negative impact of PRU on employment opportunities	Personal feelings of embarrassment and shame	**1. Not achieving and maintaining desired occupational role**
Family/ Relationships	Not having children *(Demi, Michelle)* Children's future (Michelle, Demi) Not able to care for ill parent *(Pippa)* Fall outs with others *(Tara)*	Safety of children (*Demi)* Children not being treated fairly by others (*Demi)* Children's educational future (Michelle)	Fear or worry of having no children at all Fear or worry of the future and safety of own children	Fear of children being treated unfairly	**2.Not being able to have children**

Overarching Theme	Original Themes	Original Subthemes	Similarities across cases	Differences across cases	Synthesised overall theme
Health	Losing family members and/or seeing them in distress and ill health *(Michelle, Hope, Tara)* Dying young/not being around for children *(Demi, Michelle)*	Over-reliance on parents *(Hope)* Feelings of helplessness or being unable to help family (*Tara)* Engaging in risk-taking behaviours (*Demi, Michelle)* Children's future behaviours *(Demi)* Impact on education (*Tara)*	Illness and death of family members	Specific family member named of key importance Self-death; health issues that are self-inflicted by risk taking behaviours Reliance on parents	**3.Loss and death of family members**
Education	Exclusion from school *(Michelle)* Failure to achieve GCSEs *(Tara, Pippa)*	Impact of school exclusion on other areas such as employment (*Michelle)* Impact of grade failure on employment options (Tara, Pippa). Feeling angry at self *(Tara)*	Impact of educational placement upon employment options	Being excluded from school rather than merely doing badly there	**4.Poor educational achievement**

5.4.2.1 Theme 1: Not achieving and maintaining desired occupational role

Across five of the seven cases (Demi, Michelle, Hope, Emily and Sally), participants generated a feared-for-self relating to employment however there were some differences in the content. For each of these participants, a hoped-for-self related to employment/occupation was also generated.

Though Emily expected to get a job, she was fearful of losing her job in the future and not receiving adequate pay. Her expectation of getting a job may be consistent with her hoped-for self of wanting a job no matter what it is. Being at a PRU was also linked to her fears of not being able to get a job that pays enough money. Like Emily, Demi appeared confident of getting a job, even if it is not the job she aspires most to; but was fearful of losing it. Demi discussed the impact that this would have on other areas of her life. Demi's views reinforce the recurring theme throughout her views that having children would motivate her in other areas of her life.

> *'I think it's mainly just about kids really, losing a job, I couldn't provide for my kids, my kids could get taken off me. If I was living on my own, I wouldn't care but if I had kids then I don't want it to happen' (Demi).*

Hope feared not getting a job at all, despite her aspirations being one of the most prestigious. Like Demi, Hope fears not having a job as she would not be able to provide for her family. Hope also discussed how she may be negatively perceived if she did not have a job and expressed her own views of when she sees other girls without work.

‘*So I wouldn’t be able to provide for the kids and family, and I’d feel like a bit embarrassed or ashamed of myself, I see like a lot of mums on the street that haven’t got like jobs and that and like I want my family to be looked after’ (Hope).*

Sally only listed one feared-for self, relating to future employment, consistent with her hoped-for self within the same overarching theme. It is argued that for young adolescents, occupation is a meaningful representation of the self, as it can describe what one does, how much money one makes, where one lives and it can provide a tangible vision of ones future self (Shepard and Marshall, 1999). Like Emily, Sally expects herself to get a job, perhaps because she is open-minded with what job she gets. For that reason, Sally did not fear not getting a job but was fearful of getting a job that she was dissatisfied with. Sally found it difficult to elaborate further on her feared-for self and why this was a worry for her. Michelle was also fearful of not achieving the job she desires most, to be an airhostess.

Though Tara and Pippa generated a hoped-for-self relating to employment, they did not generate a feared-for-self relating to employment. This may be because their hoped-for self was less elaborated and may hold less regulatory power on behaviour (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). However, their feared-for self of failing at their education was discussed in relation to the impact this would likely have upon the likelihood of them getting a job.

Expected PSs amongst cases seemed to be dominated by a belief that a high level of individual effort would be needed to achieve ideal selves relating to employment (Demi,

Hope and Michelle) but for others, expected PSs were dominated by a fear of failing grades (Pippa and Tara).

5.4.2.2 Theme 2: Not being able to have children

Of the four cases who generated a hoped-for-self of wanting children (Demi, Michelle, Hope and Pippa), only two of them, (Demi and Michelle) generated a feared-for-self of not having any children. Michelle and Demi both spoke of their fear of not being able to have children and this was consistent with the fact that they were the participants who placed the heavier emphasis on the importance of having children.

Though both Demi and Michelle spoke passionately of wanting children, they still shared their concerns for the future of any children they had. For example, Demi worried that her future children may associate with negative role models and become involved with criminal activity. However, these fears did not seem strong enough to make her not want to have children at all. Like Demi, Michelle also fears for the future of her children.

> *'I went through loads trying to get help, for months, from school and some people, it took me absolutely ages…I wouldn't want my kids going through that' (Michelle).*

5.4.2.3 Theme 3: Loss/death of family members

Losing family members was common within feared-for selves across the cases of Michelle, Hope and Tara. This is supported by previous findings using the PSMI (e.g.

Shephard and Marshall, 1999). As family appeared to be a significant theme for Hope and Michelle throughout their hoped-for selves, it is not surprising that losing family members emerged as a feared of self. Michelle fears losing her grandma most as she is a very important person in her life.

Like Michelle, Hope and Tara also generated a feared-for self of losing family members. Hope specifically discussed her fear of losing her parents as she seems to view her parents as a secure and stable support network.

> *'Being on my own without my mum or dad, 'cause I rely on my mum and dad for everything. Like I do worry but in like a couple of years' time when I do go off to college or university, like if I can't get a job and I've got nowhere to live and they might not be there' (Hope).*

There appears to be a fear of independence in this sense. This seems linked to her hoped-for-self of wanting her own family to act as her own stable network of support when her parents are absent in the future.

Tara also fears losing her family members due to ill health and spoke of a negative experience recently she and her family had gone through; she discussed the impact ill health of her family could have upon herself personally.

'Just don't like seeing people in pain and that, makes me feel upset if I'm not doing anything about it…I won't speak to anyone to be honest and I just won't come into school…just try not to think about it too much' (Tara).

Interestingly, Demi and Michelle were fearful of their own health and dying young; this was linked to risk taking behaviours, consistent with past research exploring PSs with adolescents living in urban communities (Klaw, 2008). In Demi's case, again, she discussed this heavily against the impact this would have upon the children that she may have in the future. She used a hypothetical situation of engaging in substance misuse and fearing not being present for her children. This seems to relate to her previously generated hoped-for-self of having children as motivation for her to do better for herself. It seems having children may act as motivation for Demi to prevent herself entering vulnerable situations. Michelle also feared dying young and this linked to risk-tasking behaviour of smoking. Though she recognises the dangers of smoking, she discussed the impact it could have upon her hopes of being an airhostess as well as upon her health rather than on her future children. Despite this feared-for self, Michelle insisted that she is not yet able to stop smoking at this point in time, suggesting she is not motivated enough.

5.4.2.4 Theme 4: Poor educational achievement

Across three of the cases (Michelle, Tara and Pippa), participants generated a feared-for-self relating to educational achievement. Michelle fears getting excluded from the PRU.

Michelle sees exclusion from school as detrimental to achieving her hoped-for-selves, and most specifically to the achievement of her desire to become an airhostess (*'If I got kicked out of school I definitely ain't having none of this').*

Tara and Pippa did not fear being excluded from the PRU but discussed being fearful of failing at their education and receiving poor grades on their GCSEs. They both discussed the impact this could have upon their employment options. Tara also spoke of the personal impact such failure would have on herself and that she would feel angry at herself. Though Demi, Hope, Sally and Emily all generated feared-for-selves relating to employment, they did not generate a feared-for-self relating to education. This may be surprising given that their educational achievement is linked in some way to their employment opportunities.

5.5 RQ2: What factors emerge as facilitators or hinderances to the achievement of hoped-for possible selves?

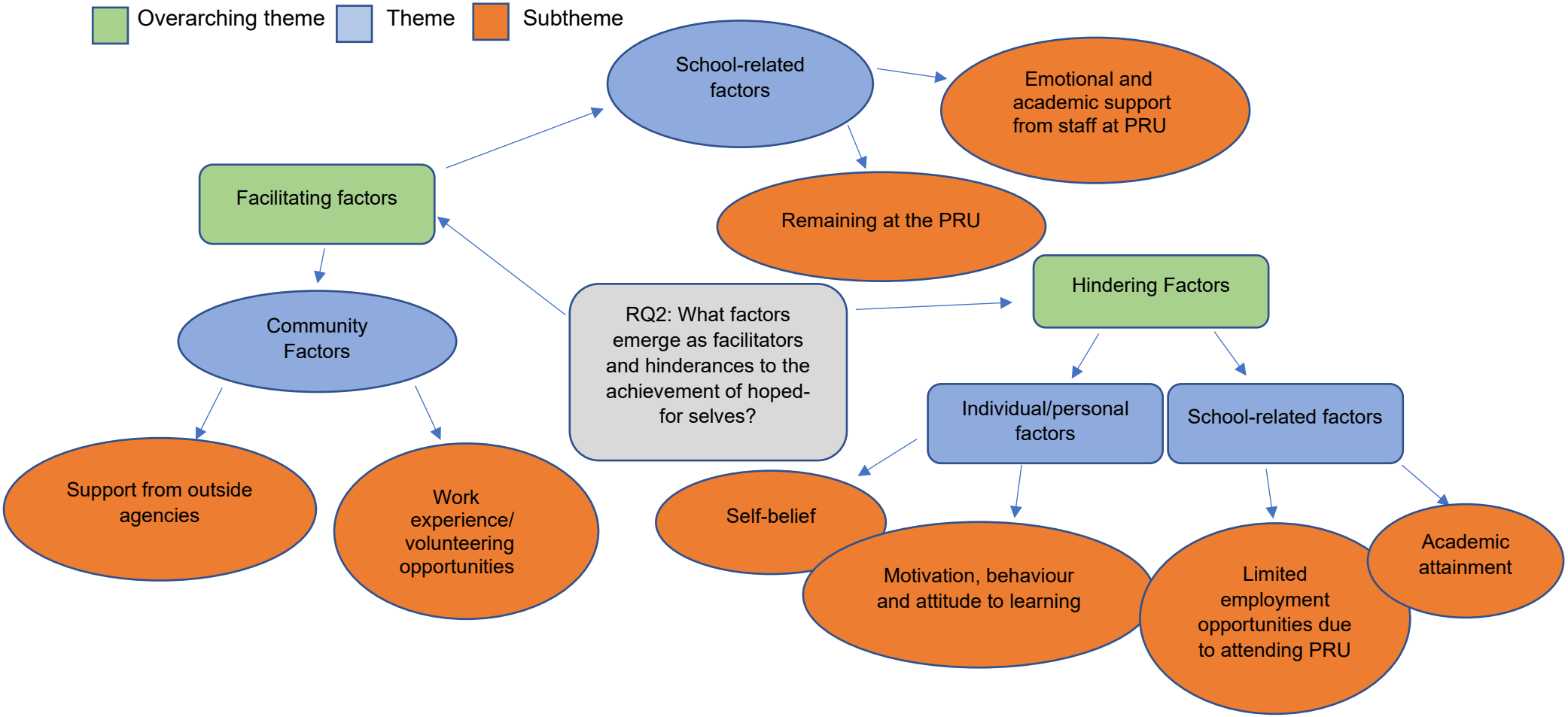

Figure 10: Thematic map of facilitating and hindering factors in achievement of hoped-for selves across cases.

5.5.1 Facilitating factors to the achievement of Hoped-for Selves

Facilitating factors to the achievement of hoped-for selves across the seven cases were analysed using responses recorded on the PSM using TA and were grouped into school related factors and community related factors. In this part of the PSMI, participants had to set actions that could help them move towards their hoped-for selves and prevent their feared-for selves. In this TA, I only focus on the achievement of hoped-for selves rather than the prevention of feared-for selves.

5.5.1.2 School-related factors- Theme 1: Emotional and academic support provided by PRU staff.

A common facilitating factor that two of the girls identified (Michelle and Demi) as helping them move towards their hoped-for selves was the emotional and academic support provided by staff at the PRU. Michelle and Demi both discussed their negative experience of being at a mainstream school and that at the PRU they received a greater level of understanding of their difficulties. They perceived the continued support from key adults at the PRU as critical to helping them achieve their hoped-for selves.

> *'It was vile at that school, absolutely vile. I went through loads trying to get help, for months, from school, it took me absolutely ages, and then I come to the PRU and saw Miss X and then that was it, I think with her I can get there (Michelle).*

Michelle discussed an important member of staff at the PRU who has helped her greatly, providing her with the support she wished she received at her mainstream

school. The research by Kloep *et al* (2010) demonstrated the important role of adult mentors in the lives of young people in order to provide encouragement, a finding replicated in the present research in the views of Michelle in particular. However, this research has highlighted that the support of others is not enough as several barriers were identified by participants, some concerning the PRU itself and some concerning the individual.

5.5.1.3 School-related factors-Theme 2: Remaining at the PRU

For Michelle and Demi, remaining at the PRU acted as a facilitating factor to the achievement of their hoped-for selves, in this way, not returning to mainstream education was in their view important to achieving their future hopes.

'I love it here, I wouldn't move. If they move me, I wouldn't go to school' (Michelle).

The views of Demi and Michelle seem consistent with findings reported by the literature review completed by Graham *et al* (2019) of disproportionate exclusions and alternative provision (AP). Many of the studies within the review highlighted that pupils were mostly positive about AP, reported feeling safer, happier and more engaged than in their previous mainstream school, even if academic outcomes were low.

5.5.1.4 Community Factors-Theme 1: Volunteering and work experience opportunities

A second theme identified as a facilitating factor towards achieving hoped-for selves was the opportunity for volunteering and work experience opportunities. Two of the

girls (Hope, Pippa) discussed their future career hopes and felt that work experience related to their aspirations in some way would help them move towards the hoped-for selves they generated. This was included in their actions towards hoped-for selves. This is consistent with the review by Tate and Greatbatch (2017) on effective practice in AP and post-16 transition reported that the most successful APs offer pupils a mixture of academic learning, vocational qualifications, work experience and opportunities for personal and social development.

5.5.1.5 Community Factors- Theme 2: Support from outside agencies

A final facilitating factor was the support of outside agencies. Hope spoke about how accessing a career support advisor at the PRU was very helpful in developing her awareness of the educational route she would need to take to become a family lawyer. Demi also discussed her desires to access counselling services and she considered this critical to her overcoming personal challenges that would then help her move towards achieving her hoped-for selves.

> *'The thing is everything is steering me to getting counselling 'cause if I can start concentrating once I get that' (Demi).*

This can be considered alongside findings reported by Blustein (1997) who found that adolescents need to firstly resolve issues relating to their self-concept before exploring and committing to occupational goals and actions. This may also explain why Sally was reluctant to explore her future hopes and fears and was less able to commit to set goals. Alternatively, like participants in Callwood's (2013) and Kloep *et al's* (2012)

research, Sally seemed to lack knowledge of resources that could help her. These findings also highlight the importance of having a range of professional agencies who can help foster greater levels of self-efficacy in young people, thereby influencing their ability to access opportunities.

The desire for opportunities and the struggle to access them, identified in theme 1 (volunteering and work experience) and theme 2 (support from outside agencies) may be explained by Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) emphasised that two important factors are the size of the social network available to individuals and the quality of the resources provided by this network. For example, research (e.g. Stanton-Salazar and Spina, 2005; Lareau, 2002) exists which suggests that the parents of young people who are considered 'disadvantaged', are less likely to take an active role in their child's educational and occupational goal setting and that other adults in their social network who they are surrounded by may also share this culture. In this way, the social capital available to some (though not all) of these young people becomes limited as they experience greater difficulty in accessing educational and occupational opportunities or guidance from those who can provide this. The support of professionals outside their home and school setting may provide opportunity for social capital, consistent with findings by Callwood (2013) where one of her participants valued resources outside of the school.

5.5.2 Hindering factors/barriers to the achievement of Hoped-for selves

Hindering factors to the achievement of hoped-for selves across the seven cases were also analysed using responses on the PSM using TA. Hindering factors were grouped

into factors relating to school and factors relating to the individual.

5.5.2.1 School-related factors- Theme 1: Limited employment opportunities

In contrast to Demi and Michelle, for Emily and Hope, attending the PRU acted as a hindering factor to the achievement of their hoped-for selves as they viewed the PRU as negatively impacting upon their future prospects, consistent with findings of Daniels and Cole (2010). This finding can also be considered alongside findings reported by Murphy (2017) who explored the occupational PSs of young people with dyslexia and reported that young people experienced injustices and occupational marginalisation; 'occupational marginalisation' referred to restrictions to participate in society due to expectations formed within the social-cultural structures they are a part of. In the present research, 'occupational marginalisation' seemed to occur when Emily, Michelle and Hope discussed barriers associated with attending the PRU. They suggested that attending the PRU can restrict the opportunities available to them in terms of education and employment.

> *'cause I've been to PRU and I don't think I'm gonna get a good job…not really got any future. Being at PRU is not really good, you don't really get taught anything. I have a 35-minute lesson to do English or maths, it's not really long enough to do anything and you come in at nine and you finish at five-past-two' (Emily).*

Emily's actions and goals towards achieving PSs centred around leaving the PRU. These findings can be considered within Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which originated from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and suggests that individuals are

more motivated to act on their career hopes if they perceive their environment as able to facilitate achievement of these goals and when barriers are perceived to be low (Lent and Brown, 1996).

Though Michelle viewed remaining at the PRU as a facilitating factor to the achievement of her hoped-for-selves, she also suggested that her attendance at the PRU may be a barrier to her future prospects.

> *'Like I probably won't become an airhostess 'cause I've been here, people always say you have to be in a normal school to get the good jobs' (Michelle).*

The DfE review by Tate and Greatbach (2017) highlighted that AP can only be effective if young people have access to personalised programmes that reflect their aspirations. The findings of Russell and Thomson (2011) highlighted that girls were offered courses based on stereotypes, expectations from others and courses available rather than their own interests and skills. This mirrors views shared by Hope and Emily from the present research, who viewed attending the PRU as limiting their future opportunities and limiting the subjects they were able to study. Further, the findings of Evans *et al* (2009) supports that young people feel their future outcomes would be maximised if subjects were more relevant to their future goals.

5.5.2.2 School-related factors-Theme 2: Low academic attainment

Four of the girls (Pippa, Tara, Emily, Michelle) identified their academic attainment as a hindering factor to the achievement of hoped-for selves. They all discussed that they

would need to achieve certain grades to reach their occupational hoped-for-selves but felt as though they would not be successful in doing so. Tara felt as though she may pass some of her GCSEs but was less likely to pass English and Maths which she considered the most important. All of these girls discussed academic attainment with regards to the impact this would have on their employment hopes. This reinforces that employment acts as an important and dominant hoped-for-self in the future visions of girls in the PRU.

5.5.2.3 Individual/personal factors-Theme 1: Motivation, behaviour and attitude to learning

Michelle, Demi and Hope spoke of their behaviours often being challenging and that this made them vulnerable to exclusion. Attached to this, Demi, Michelle and Hope spoke of their low motivation, negative attitude to learning and '*messing around'* rather than valuing education and '*getting their heads down'*. This was reinforced by their expected selves. For example, Demi viewed herself as more likely to achieve having children than becoming a counsellor.

> '*cause the thing is I'm really lazy and I don't like school, I ain't had a good experience with it and I wanna be out of it as soon as possible' (Demi).*

> *'Sometimes I haven't been gone to lesson… I always used to come in like, with that can't be bothered attitude' (Michelle).*

These views may be explained by Bandura's (1997a) self-efficacy theory, as participants may have low self-efficacy which will impact upon their motivation. That is, they may lack belief that their actions can produce desired outcomes, enough to be genuinely motivated to work towards them. Further, consistent with Oyserman's *et al* (2017) views on self-concept, their development of a positive self-concept and the ability to regulate what they attend to, is vulnerable and can lead to disengagement with goals and feeling incompetent.

5.5.2.4 Individual/personal factors-Theme 2: Low self-belief

The disengagement and attitude to learning presented by participants seemed to stem from their past negative experiences before they came to the PRU which led to feeling quite negative about education generally. Michelle and Demi also appeared to lack self-belief, perhaps due to being told by others that they may not achieve their goals. This then impacted upon their developing self-concept and their expected selves.

> '*To do well for myself really because everyone says that I can't do it but you know like when you prove people wrong so I wanna do that' (Demi).*

There is evidence that individuals who focus on who and what they want to be more than what they think they should be, focus more on positive information rather than negative and seem more resilient to negative thinking (Carver, Reynolds, and Scheier, 1994). The generation of positive PSs is therefore important to counter negative self-beliefs. The lack of self-belief may also indicate a lack of a clearly defined sense of self from Demi and Michelle, that has been vulnerable to outside influences that have

threatened their developing self-concept (Oyserman *et al*, 2017). This may have been a result of low self-esteem as suggested by Franken (1994) who suggested that those with low self-esteem have a poorer defined sense of self.

5.6 RQ3: How likely are the PSs generated by girls in a PRU to influence their future behaviours and actions?

PSs reportedly provide a theoretical basis for understanding how future oriented views can influence behaviour. Hopes and fears an individual generates can form the basis by which an individual perceives current information and PSs can motivate perseverance to achieve or avoid PSs (Locke and Latham, 1990). Similar to Mainwaring and Hallam (2010), data in this research was considered in relation to how likely it was that the PSs generated by participants would influence future behaviours or actions, although this was not checked in the same way as longitudinal research would.

In this research, I combined elements of criteria proposed by Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) together with aspects identified within PSs literature (see section 3.5.3.2). Using data gathered during the final part of the PSMI, PSs were considered as likely to impact on the individual's future behaviour if they met criteria outlined in Table 13. Findings presented in this section are based on theoretical assumptions only as participants were not followed up at a later time to explore whether they had acted upon their actions.

Table 13: Possible Selves criteria to influence action/behaviour	
Possible Selves Criteria	**Reason criteria was chosen**
1.PSs were elaborated and paired with strategies and actions necessary to achieve future aims.	PSs research supports this criteria well, that is, that well elaborated and salient PSs are that are paired with strategies, action plans and end goals are more motivating (e.g. Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Ruvolo, 1989; Oyserman *et al*, 2004).
2.Participants recognised the challenges or difficulties they may encounter to achieve PSs.	Research by Oyserman *et al* (2006) supported that for strategies linked to PSs to impact on behaviour, an individual also needs to recognise difficulty as a normal part of the process of attaining PSs.
3.Participants held alternative aspirations if their initial plan was perceived as less achievable in their view.	In order for future self-images to have motivational power, it is argued they need to be plausible, possible and within one's reach (Oettingen and Thorpe, 2006).
4.Possible hoped-for selves were counterbalanced with possible feared-for selves.	PSs literature supports this criteria well, that is, when hoped-for PSs are associated with corresponding feared-for PSs, it is more motivating to engage in actions to help prevent the feared-for PSs and ensure the hoped-for PSs (Oyserman and Markus, 1990).

1) **PSs were elaborated and paired with strategies and actions necessary to achieve future aims**

It has been suggested that Individuals are more likely to achieve goals that are personalised, elaborated and have clear plans attached to them for where, when and how they can be implemented (Ruvolo and Markus, 1992; Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006). Consistent with past literature (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010; Klaw, 2008), in the present research, clearly focussed, articulated and elaborated plans including sub-goals for the future were limited across the seven cases.

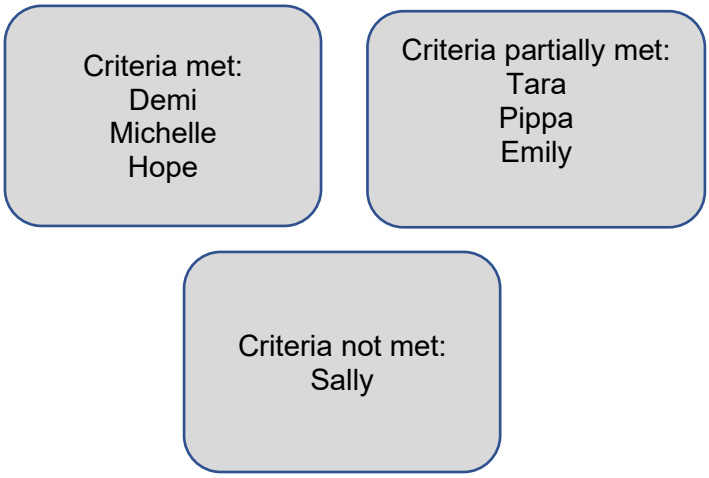

Figure 11: Extent to which participants met criteria 1 to explore likelihood of PSs influencing behaviour.

Criteria met:

Where sub-goals were more specific, were in the cases of Demi, Michelle and Hope, who linked actions to their future career aspirations. For example, Demi recognised specific actions she needed to take to move forward (*Before I try and help others, I need to get help myself and speak to Miss about the counselling support').* Michelle recognised that she needed to find out more about the route to become an airhostess and Hope spoke about visiting law firms, speaking to professional family lawyers and enquiring about attending a college.

Criteria partially met:

Across some cases (Pippa, Tara, Emily), though participants generated sub-goals and actions that they felt they needed to complete in order to achieve/prevent PSs, these were often more generic statements such as '*working hard in school'* and '*getting my*

head down' rather than practical and elaborated actions of how this was going to happen. Pippa found it difficult to generate many hoped and feared-for selves; she also found it difficult to elaborate and set goals for those she did generate. Tara generated PSs but found it harder to elaborate on them and set many clear goals. Emily found it difficult to generate hoped-for selves and seemed quite negative about her current schooling experience. Her negativity towards the PRU may be a reason for her difficulties generating positive views of her future. This would appear consistent with findings of Daniels and Cole (2010) who demonstrated that perceiving negative future outcomes for oneself is likely for those who have experienced exclusion from school.

Criteria not met:

Sally found it difficult to generate both PSs and actions to help achieve/prevent PSs. Sally's discomfort at thinking of the future mirrored findings from Shepherd and Marshall (1999). Mirroring research by Stevenson and Clegg (2011), participants like Sally were more focussed on the present. Like participants in their research, Sally may have found it difficult to envisage the future due to consequences associated with her current circumstances. As suggested by Stevenson and Clegg, the concept of future PSs may need to be refined more finely so that self-representations can be imagined at specific time points. There are several explanations as to why Sally preferred not to discuss her future. Previous experience of success or failure has been proposed to influence beliefs about achievement of PSs which may lead to difficulties articulating what strategies may be effective (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006).

2) **Participants recognised possible challenges or difficulties in achieving their hoped-for selves.**

It is reported that when individuals make their PSs a consequence of their awareness of difficulties and their personal efforts to overcome these, this makes their goals more achievable (Ruvolo and Markus, 1992). The meta-cognitive process of whether a possible self is perceived as easy or difficult provides the basis for whether it is considered worthy of pursuing. Further, Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) suggested that anticipating barriers can help to normalize challenges when trying to achieve hoped-for-selves.

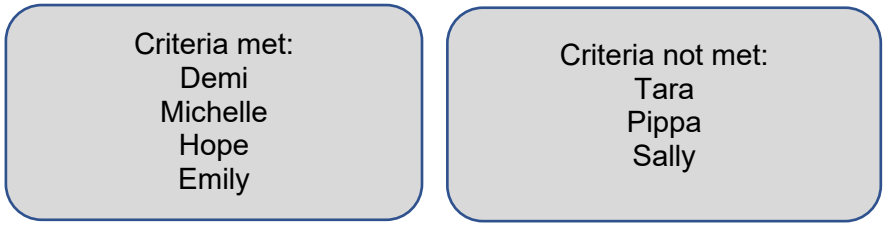

Figure 12: Extent to which participants met criteria 2 to explore likelihood of PSs influencing behaviour.

Criteria met:

This criteria was met in the cases of Demi, Michelle and Hope, where the most aspirational hoped-for selves were generated and participants recognised the difficulties associated with reaching these goals. It appeared that with more elaborated and more clear PSs generated, a greater awareness of difficulties was demonstrated. In the cases of Demi and Michelle, whose most desired career aspiration was to become a counsellor and an airhostess respectively, they had 'back up' options which

they seemed to perceive as more likely to achieve. Demi seemed to generate a more elaborated action plan for how the difficulties she envisaged could be overcome. For example, Demi spoke of the difficulties balancing her hopes for a family and a career and her personal difficulties that she need to overcome first. Demi, Michelle and Hope all mentioned the hard work that would be needed to reach their goals recognising their own drawbacks. For Emily, she seemed to be satisfied with achieving any job. This seemed to be due to the difficulties she perceived and recognised in achieving her hoped-for-self for a job that pays well due to her placement at the PRU and the barriers this can present.

Criteria not met:

Sally, Tara and Pippa, all generated less PSs, were less certain of their future goals and did not discuss difficulties they envisaged. Oyserman *et al* (2006) suggested that misinterpretation of difficulty provides young people with evidence that a possible self is not plausible, and it is then abandoned. Supporting Oyserman's *et al* (2006) hypothesis, as Sally, Pippa and Tara were unable to generate a greater number of PSs that were linked to clear strategies and difficulties to overcome, it may be that their interpretation of failure is linked to a low working self-concept which needs to be altered.

3) **Participants held alternative aspirations if their initial plan was perceived as less achievable in their view.**

In order for PSs to motivate behaviour, it is argued they need to be plausible (Oettingen and Thorpe, 2006). If initial PSs are deemed less achievable by participants, then

participants should generate alternative plans to fall back on. This criteria is discussed relating to career/employment PSs.

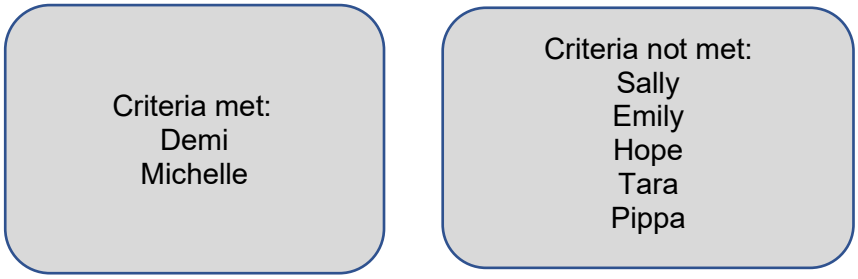

Figure 13: Extent to which participants met criteria 3 to explore likelihood of PSs influencing behaviour.

Criteria met:

Across the seven cases who all discussed employment, the participants who spoke of alternative career aspirations were those who discussed their hopes for a particular career in the first instance, namely Demi and Michelle. Hope on the other hand, did not speak of an alternative career to becoming a family lawyer and seems to be quite fixed on that career.

Occupational PSs were often compromised for ones that appeared to be more tangible in the views of the participants. For example, Demi suggested several alternative career interests alongside her passion for becoming a counsellor, but this may indicate a lack of belief of becoming a counsellor. Towards the end of her PSMI process, she stated that the process had made her realise how much she did want to become a counsellor. Michelle discussed her passion and longing to become an airhostess but

perceived it to be less realistic and generated an alternative hoped-for self of becoming a holiday rep. Such findings appear to be consistent with Gottfredson's (1981) 'career model of circumscription and compromise' and SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). This model would suggest that alternative career options discussed by the girls may not be their true aspirational PSs but ones that they have deemed as more compatible with their self-concept and the social group they see themselves a part of.

Criteria not met:

Emily, Sally, Pippa and Tara discussed job interests however they were open-minded as long as they had a job and were not elaborated; there was not a clear plan of alternatives. The findings here may be consistent with suggestions made by Shepard (2003) who explored the PSs of those in rural communities and reported that participants who generated ambiguous occupational hoped-for selves may experience a lack of exposure and knowledge of employment opportunities.

As many participants came from backgrounds of low SES, some may experience restricted PSs because of limited role models for academic and occupational outcomes, supported by Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital. Demi referred to this during interview; '*cause most of my family, none of 'em have ever been to college'.* Demi seems more likely to have come across adults who have been unsuccessful in attaining their PSs. The findings suggest that this group of young girls are likely to benefit from increased and consistent exposure to positive role models in the field of work combining varied lifestyles and discussing alternatives. In the present research, Demi, Michelle and Hope all seemed to share high aspirations despite experiencing

socio-economic disadvantage, consistent with Howard *et al* (2011). This may be explained by suggestions of MacLeod (1987), who has suggested that young people who are disadvantaged may rely on education as a form of social mobility so that they can develop higher educational and occupational hoped-for selves.

4) **Possible hoped-for selves were counterbalanced with possible feared-for selves.**

Ruvolo and Markus (1992) argued that visualising success together with failure leads to developing plans, actions and strategies to achieve such goals and prevent feared ones. Hoyle and Sherril's (2006) research provided evidence for activated feared-for PSs having a regulatory effect on behaviour. Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) concluded in their research that without a positive self in the same domain, a negative self will dominate the self-concept and outcomes will more likely be negative if young people mainly imagine negative futures.

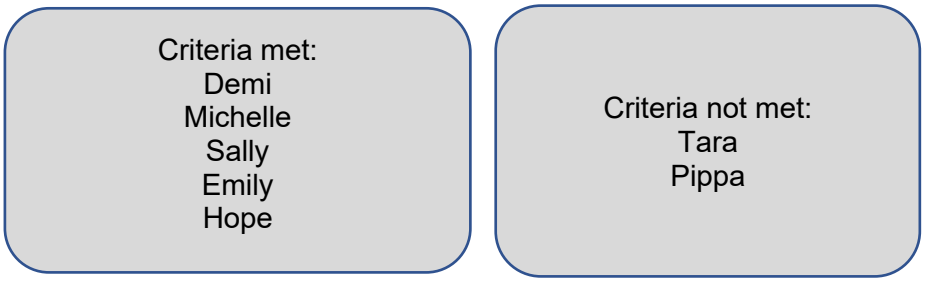

Figure 14: Extent to which participants met criteria 4 to explore likelihood of PSs influencing behaviour.

Criteria met:

In the present research, across five cases, at least one of the generated hoped-for selves was counterbalanced with a feared-for self in the same domain. For example, where participants (Emily, Sally, Michelle, Demi, Hope) generated a hoped-for self of getting a job, they generated a feared-for self of not getting a job, not achieving the job they want or losing their job. Sally struggled to generate both hoped-for and feared-for selves but generated an equal number of both. Overall, for these participants, there was a balance between the number of hoped-for and feared-for selves generated across cases; there were no significant differences and there was always some link between participants hoped-for and feared-for selves in at least one domain. This contrasts the findings of Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) where PRU students seemed to generate far more feared-for selves than hoped-for selves.

Criteria not met:

For each hoped-for-self they generated, Tara and Pippa did not generate a feared- for self in the same domain consistently. Pippa generated few hoped-for and feared-for selves generally. For example, in the case of Tara, she generated hoped-for-selves relating to family, employment and lifestyle/residence. Her feared-for-selves fell in the domains of education, health and relationships. Though they were not directly counterbalanced within the same domains, the feared-for-selves did seem to relate in some way to hoped-for-selves. For example, Tara and Pippa were both fearful of failing their education which would impact upon their hoped-for self for employment.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has summarised and presented findings in response to each research question outlined. Findings presented have highlighted a number of pertinent themes in relation to the perceptions' girls attending the PRU have of their future selves, providing an insight into their hopes, fears and expectations across various aspects of their life including family, employment, lifestyle, health, education and finance. The chapter has also highlighted the factors that the girls perceive as being able to help them achieve their hopes and the factors that may interfere with achieving their hoped-for PSs. The chapter has discussed how likely the PSs generated by the girls are to influence future action, based on theoretical assumptions within literature. The findings have been compared and considered alongside existing literature into PSs in order to explore the ways in which the present study is consistent or contrasting to existing research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Chapter overview

The overarching aims of the study were to explore the PSs of girls attending the PRU. In this chapter, I will make concluding remarks for the research, providing a summary of research findings for each research question. I explore implications of findings for educational providers, government and educational psychology (EP) practice. I consider the strengths and limitations of the present research and areas for future research.

6.2 Summary of findings by research question

RQ1: How do girls in the PRU perceive their future selves and what hoped-for and feared-for PSs do they generate?

All seven participants generated PSs, however, there were differences in the number of PSs generated. Emily, Tara and Pippa generated a reduced number and less elaborated PSs than Demi, Michelle and Hope. Sally generated the least number of PSs, as she found it difficult to consider her future, seeming to resist this. This contrasts findings reported by Shepard and Marshall (1999) using the PSMI, who reported young adolescents (without SEMH needs) had no difficulty imagining themselves in the future. This reinforces the finding that those with SEMH difficulties may have more fragile perceptions of future (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010).

Contrasting previous findings where participants produced more hopeful visions of the future than feared ones (Shepard and Marshall, 1999; Cross and Markus, 1991), in the present research, participants produced an equal number of hoped-for and feared-for selves. Nevertheless, the themes for hoped-for and feared-for selves which emerged from Shepard and Marshall (1999) and Cross and Markus (1991) were similar to those that have emerged in the current research.

All participants hoped for a successful future which seemed to be defined by gaining employment, however they did not always elaborate on the pathways necessary. All participants hoped for a job in the future, but Demi, Michelle, Hope, Tara and Pippa spoke of specific career professions whereas Sally and Emily were less fixed. Demi, Hope and Michelle spoke of careers that would demand a high level of effort and educational commitment which they demonstrated acknowledgement of. This impacted their expected selves as they viewed themselves as more capable of achieving and expecting themselves to have children than to reach their career goals. Out of all seven participants who generated a hoped- for self of wanting a job, five (Demi, Michelle, Sally, Emily and Hope) generated a feared-for self of some sort relating to employment. Whilst some feared not getting a job at all, some feared losing their job and some feared being dissatisfied with their job. Health related feared-for PSs were generated amongst four cases; a fear of losing family members emerged amongst three (Michelle, Hope and Tara) and so did a fear of dying themselves (Michelle and Demi).

Consistent with past research (e.g. Klaw, 2008), participants hoped-for-selves reflected achieving traditional avenues within education and employment as well as a seemingly outwardly happy nuclear family. For example, Michelle, Demi, Hope and Pippa all hope to have their own children in the future and discussed wanting professional careers. However, their underlying motives and values for wanting children differed. It seems that by participants presenting positive images of married, professional women, they seemed to choose to represent themselves with middle-class culture somewhat. Based on the realities of the participant's lives as reported by PRU staff, as a researcher, I interpreted aspects of their hoped-for-selves as somewhat detached from their lived experiences.

RQ2: What facilitating or hindering factors were identified by participants to the achievement of their hoped-for PSs?

In the present research, participants identified factors that they perceived could help them achieve their hoped-for PSs. Consistent with previous literature (e.g. Klaw, 2008), the current findings suggest that although participants were aware of existing barriers to achieving their aspirations, they did not appear to compromise their high aspirations (for example, Demi, Hope and Michelle). However, the findings demonstrated that the girls are aware of barriers to achieving their hopes for the future, supporting Lee and Oyserman's (2007) assumption that it can be difficult to turn PSs into reality due to barriers that emerge.

Many young people who have been excluded have been found to value schooling despite their own negative experiences (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). All participants in the

present research did seem to value schooling even if it was not directly referred to. Their expected selves revealed that they perceived family related hoped-for-selves as more achievable than educational and occupational PSs. Some girls valued being at the PRU and felt this was important to enabling them to work towards their hoped-for-selves. Alternatively, other girls viewed the PRU as a hinderance to achieving their PSs and felt their future successes were limited as a result. However, this seems to be underpinned by a wider lack of opportunity and marginalisation they face within the education and societal system they are a part of.

Although feared-for selves were generated, there was a perception that desired outcomes could be obtained. However, findings highlighted the importance girls placed on the support provided within and outside of the PRU. Within the PRU, this was a key member of staff who could provide emotional support (e.g. for Michelle this was perceived by her as detrimental to achieving her PSs); outside of the PRU, it was access to professional services and work experience opportunities that could help participants move towards their hoped-for-selves and overcome barriers (e.g. Demi discussed counselling services). This supports findings from the review by Tate and Greatbatch (2017) which highlighted that good PRUs make effective use of external support as well as internal support. This was mainly highlighted in the views of Demi and Hope who commented on the support of outside mental health agencies and careers advisors as facilitating achievement of their hoped-for-selves. Aside from school related barriers, barriers to the achievement of hoped-for-selves emerged amongst participants views' relating to the individual themselves. For example, Demi, Michelle and Hope recognised that their own motivation levels, their attitude to

learning, their behaviour and low self-belief was a barrier to achieving their PSs.

RQ3: How likely is it that the PSs generated by girls in a PRU will influence future actions based on existing criteria within literature?

It has been suggested that with less elaborated and developed concepts of the future, an individual is less likely to attend to relevant information and PSs will have less motivational and regulatory effect (Plimmer and Schmidt, 2007). Based on PSs theory and its conceptual framework, in the cases where PSs were linked with strategies, were more focussed, elaborated, demonstrated an awareness of difficulties and alternative plans, and were paired with feared-for selves (Demi, Michelle, Hope), PSs generated are more likely to influence future action, compared to cases where these criteria were not consistently met (Pippa, Sally, Tara, Emily).

In cases where PSs were more elaborated (e.g. Demi, Hope and Michelle), there were a greater number of actions and sub-goals set which related directly to the PSs generated. It was in these cases where it was also most likely for participants to recognise efforts needed and difficulties that may be encountered. Where plans were articulated to a greater level, alternative plans were present relating to employment but often not in elaborated form of the actions needed to achieve those alternative plans. In addition, alternative plans seemed to be a result of some uncertainty and lack of belief. For some cases (e.g. Tara, Pippa, Emily) they were much less focussed and elaborated and for one case (Sally) there was a difficulty in generating PSs and corresponding actions at all. Moreover, PSs theory would suggest that a hoped-for-self

that is paired with a feared-for self is most powerful to influence action. This was most prominent amongst the theme of employment where all five cases who generated a hoped-for self of wanting a job produced a feared-for self within the same domain.

6.3 Implications of Findings

Implications of findings from this research were identified that may contribute to the practice of PRUs, secondary schools and other AP providers who cater for the needs of CYP with SEMH difficulties. I highlight what I believe this research has suggested is important for PRU staff to be aware of and how they can use PSs in their practice to support exploration of future. Implications were identified which could also contribute to the development of government guidelines which impact the practice of local authorities. Finally, implications were identified which could contribute to the practice of other professionals working within these settings such as EPs.

6.3.1 Implications for PRU staff and provisions with pupils with SEMH difficulties

Using PSs to modify self-concept and identity development

The PSs generated and the views shared by participants leads to questions as to how much being a member of the PRU may reinforce stereotypes, how expectations are managed and how much it impacts upon pupils' perceptions of their future possibilities.

Consistent with Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), for pupils in the PRU, identity may largely be group-based where identities are formed by expectations attached to in-group members. These expectations may consist of unhelpful images of

PRU pupils which can then be internalised by the pupils themselves into poor self-image (Thomas, Townsend, and Belgrave, 2003). It may be more difficult for them to access positive images due to the conflict experienced by in-group members engaging in behaviours more compatible with negative images. Attending a PRU is likely to have led pupils to forming an identity that they then have to 'reinvent' which may be conflicting to expectations of them within wider society. Generating PSs may be a helpful way of forming alternative identities for PRU pupils, consistent with findings reported by Dunkel (2000).

Using PSs to explore aspirations and set goals

Ofsted reviews (e.g. 2016) and government reviews (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018) have highlighted concerns about AP and PRUs relating to low expectations and educational standards of pupils in these settings. The PSMI exercise used in the present research offers a strengths based approach to help PRU staff emphasise goals rather than problems.

Moreover, Cefai and Cooper (2009) commented that an emphasised focus on academic performance amongst vulnerable CYP creates anxiety in facing life's adversities and does not prepare them effectively for the real world. They said that young people need to be equipped with skills that allow them to adapt and be flexible when faced with changes and challenges such that they are able to problem-solve, make decisions, build positive relationships and work with others collaboratively. The present research highlighted the importance of the girls at the PRU having access to learning opportunities that are relevant to their future hopes and fears.

The PSMI covers the complexity of matters which are important to young people, tapping into their motivations and self-views, covering areas such as lifestyle, famiy, and employment. By doing so, concrete goals and actions can be set that are relevant to the hopes that are unique and personal to each individual.

The review by Tate and Greatbatch (2017) also highlighted the importance of reviewing aspirations regularly. The research by Hart *et al* (1993) highlighted that young people benefit from seeing their improvements over time. This research provides one example of how adults in the PRU can support CYP in future-focussed planning using the PSMI to structure the process. The PSMI has the advantage of acting as a visual and tangible representation of students' hopes, fears and expectations for the future which could be stored in personalised learning plans and reviewed throughout the academic year.

Using PSs to increase social capital and impact on future outcomes

In contexts that are under-resourced and where individuals experience low levels of social capital, PSs and strategies to attain them are unlikely to be automatically activated. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, environments and contexts outside of the home can shape an individual's perception of what is possible. When considering PSs, adolescents rely on their family and peer group for indications of whether their PSs are acceptable and so the lack of social capital available may constrain the nature of PSs they generate. As young people attending the PRU may have limited models of overcoming barriers outside of the PRU, educational staff can provide access to the resources needed to achieve educational and occupational goals. This highlights the important role of educators and

professionals to provide and set educational and occupational standards, in line with shortfalls reported by Ofsted (2016) and ultimately, to develop a more positive culture towards future amongst pupils (Oyserman, Gant, and Ager, 1995). Their intervention could focus on fostering social contexts where pupil's aspirations feel achievable regardless of SES in order to build social capital. This may come in the form of encouragement and guidance related to occupation and education from adults who are knowledgeable and relevant. For example, Destin and Oyserman (2009) demonstrated that low-income children were more likely to work harder on their homework when they were encouraged to consider that higher education was an option for them, by discussing qualifications and finances.

6.3.2 Implications for Government

Supporting pupils in PRUs to reach increased social capital needs to be reflected in government policy, as young people's capacity to cope with adversity depends not only on the resources available at home but in the societal, political and economic systems that they are apart of (Saewyc and Edinburgh, 2010). Government policy for education and aspirations seem to focus on ability and potential of young people with little regards to the complex ways in which class impacts upon unlocking 'potential', resources and opportunities available, particularly for those young people who may have limited access to this, such as participants in this research. The report published by the House of Commons Education Committee (2018) commented that the government's emphasis on school attainment has resulted in the disproportionate exclusions of disadvantaged children which includes a curriculum that is less focussed on developing pupils' social and economic capital. The report concluded that schools

seem to display limited moral accountability for such pupils. This is consistent with the research by Harris *et al* (2008) who reported an imbalance between government agenda and positive PRU outcomes in the views provided by pupils and caregivers which focussed less on academic attainment and on positive social and emotional development.

Further, in England, local authority schools and PRUs have a statutory duty to ensure that pupils in Year 8 to Year 11 are given access to careers guidance (Robinson, Moore and Hooley, 2018). However, Pennacchia and Thomson (2016) found in their research that there are situations where young people attending AP are not given access to a broad and balanced curriculum that would improve their future prospects for training, education and employment. This mirrors views shared by participants in the current research who spoke of the limited opportunities available at the PRU for subjects and study. It is the role of governments to maximise opportunities for all young people including those attending AP. The report published by the House of Commons Education committee (2018) highlighted the problem that APs do not have a statutory duty to provide post-16 AP and that these pupils are denied access to post-16 education as the system is not set up or funded to meet their additional needs. The published government response in 2018 stated that they remain committed to ensuring CYP can achieve successful outcomes in adult life. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model, this highlights the need for schools to reduce the barriers for reintegrating into society for girls in the PRU at all levels and systems they find themselves in (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, this needs inclusion to be implemented within wider policy and practice. Findings therefore suggest failures at

the macrosystem level where cultural and contextual policy may be overlooking longer-term and high-quality care for pupils in the PRU.

6.3.3 Implications for Educational Psychology (EP) Practice

EPs have a role to play in supporting CYP to explore their futures and are well placed to demonstrate and model the use of PSs and to explain its theoretical background. It is likely that pupils attending the PRU will have an identified SEMH need which may warrant assessment of their SEN to explore whether an EHCP is appropriate to meet these needs, if one has not taken place already. Consequently, the importance of future is of significant value given the requirements of the SEND code of practice (DoH/DfE, 2015 para 9.62) which states that education, health and care (EHC) assessments must consider the interests and aspirations of the child including future employment plans and outlook for the future, with a focus on preparation for adulthood. EPs themselves play an important part in EHC assessments for pupils in PRUs; the PSMI would be a valuable contribution to their toolkit when gathering the views of CYP as part of their EHC assessment.

It has been reported that secondary school staff and further education staff often feel as though there is disparity between the aspirations of young people and what they can achieve which makes it difficult when making future decisions. This mismatch has often been associated with young people, particularly those from low SES backgrounds, becoming NEET (Yates, Sabates and Staff, 2011). In a doctoral thesis, Parry (2016) explored supporting transitions into further education for young people with learning difficulties, secondary staff felt as though they did not have the right space

or time to converse with pupils about attainable goals. The SEND code of practice highlights that for teenagers in particular, preparation for adult life needs to be more explicit and that discussions about their future should focus on what they want to achieve and how to do so. The SEND code of practice discussed the use of person-centred planning (DfE and DoH, 2015) and on the need of schools to implement this for all CYP, particularly for looking at education, training and employment opportunities. EPs often help schools in implementing person centred approaches and planning for individual educational plans. In this way, EPs can help support educational staff in ensuring that targets and goals are realistic yet achievable and aspirational through collaborative target setting between the young person, the educational setting, other professionals and any alternative providers, during person-centred reviews and meetings tailored to each individual pupil. Exploring 'future possible selves' and using the PSMI can therefore form part of their person centred plan by specifically encouraging generation of strategies to work towards shorter and longer term goals relevant to each individual, reinforcing the views of Oyserman *et al* (2004) that generating aspirations alone is not enough to influence action. As young people with SEMH are likely to require personalised and adapted materials and resources, EPs are able to support school staff in creating and tailoring tools that maximise participation and elicit authentic views of future in a person centred way. The PSMI can be tailored and developed further between EPs and school staff.

EPs are also well placed to support schools in their understanding of SEMH, mental health and wellbeing and how these may manifest, through their core five functions including consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training; this can be at

the individual, group or organisational level (Fallon, Woods and Rooney, 2010). The role of the EP in supporting SEMH needs for CYP in schools has received growing interest, as there is the misconception that EPs only work with those who already have a difficulty rather than providing preventative support to staff and school systems through supervision, training and supporting development of school policy. It may be that EPs need to do this by increasing staff's knowledge and awareness of SEMH at an earlier stage rather than at 'crisis' point where a resilience centred approach such as the Possible Selves can be used to focus on their 'future self', conceptualise CYP's strengths and goals and ultimately help motivate towards positive outcomes. Further, it may be that the EP has to have a role in creating systemic change in school culture, i.e. if a 'future-selves' theoretical focus exists within settings across the whole school and for all pupils, staff are more able to help CYP achieve positive outlooks. The EP also has the advantage of being able to apply skills and knowledge from several areas of psychology, such as personal construct psychology and solution focussed therapy. Applying psychological theories such as person-centred ideas, and proposing a hypothesis about underlying causes, can help staff further understand a CYP's circumstances, potentially resulting in more flexible, person-centred responses. It is the role of EPs to use their psychological knowledge to help ensure students generate a well-developed concept of future self as with this, they are more likely to attend to information linked to these schema.

6.4 Strengths and limitations of current research

Data collection method

The PSMI has the strength of being a more practical, flexible and visual way of exploring PSs as opposed to its traditional method of a fixed questionnaire that a young person completes independently by selecting various ratings. However, the PSMI is subject to limitations. The PSMI can take between one and two hours to fully cover several life domains and record on to the map. For some participants, this was not the case as they found it difficult to elaborate on their responses. This may be a limitation of using one main method of data collection for a group who is likely to find expressing their ideas more difficult. Importantly, O'Connor *et al* (2011) highlighted that young people themselves are very rarely asked which methods they actually feel would be most appropriate to gather their views and in their research, after asking their own participants, they used multiple methods such as 'activity sessions' alongside interviews. Similarly, the research by Nind *et al* (2012) highlighted using digital methods that were more relevant to the lives of girls with SEMH and reduced the dependence on verbal and written literacy skills. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) also emphasise that adopting multiple methods of data gathering can better reflect the diversity of young people's experiences. In this way, for the present research, it may been valuable spending more time with participants and members of the PRU prior to the research interviews myself to find out which methods may work best when gathering their possible selves. Moreover, it is unfortunate that I did not have enough time to fully explore the maps with participants and follow up on the actions generated due to time constraints. In future, I would recommend two interviews taking place to allow for follow up.

Sample and design

As the aim of the present study was to explore the future selves of girls attending the PRU, participant recruitment was limited due to less girls attending. Further, participants attended the same one setting in one local authority. A larger sample size would have provided a greater diversity of experiences or a larger representativeness of views across the group.

Future-focus

A further limitation to the present research concerns the future-focus aspect to it that was less defined for participants, i.e. future was left open and did not relate to a specific point in time. For example, more distal PSs may serve less self-regulatory power for young people's behaviour. Oyserman *et al* (2004) suggested that it is less likely that young people from low income backgrounds are going to spontaneously make connections between their current behaviours and their future selves visions. They argue that it is more useful to focus on short-term PSs so young people can gain clear and immediate feedbackback and work towards shorter term goals.

6.5 Future research considerations

This study has identified what is important across the lives of young girls attending the PRU and factors they perceive as enablers and hinderances to positive future outcomes. The research has identified several areas which would benefit from further exploration, such as:

- Longitudinal research into PSs across childhood, adolescence and adulthood so that PSs could be explored and compared at various temporal points to examine changes over time, consistent with recommendations made by Stevenson and Clegg (2011) and limitations made about focus on future.
- Like research by Mainwaring and Hallam (2010), more recent and updated research comparing the PSs of those attending a PRU with those in mainstream education.
- Research exploring gender differences between PSs of girls and boys attending a PRU due to the fact that gender differences in the area of PSs has received minimal attention (Knox, 2006).
- Research extending the opportunity for participatory methods using Possible Selves as I recognise the limitations of using one method with pupils who may struggle to articulate their views given a novel concept such as PSs. This may include a more visually engaging and creative tool, for example, Hock, Deshler and Schumaker (2003) used a Possible Selves Tree as a metaphor to visually depict depict and represent the different parts of a young person's views of their future and their goals which they can see visually envisage as 'growing'.

6.6 Final Comment

This research has met its aims to explore the PSs of girls attending a PRU, as an insight in to their hopes and fears for the future. Using the theoretical lens of PSs, it has provided insight into understanding their future views, their underlying motivations, facilitating factors and bariers that can influence their pursuit of the PSs they generated. The consistency of themes amongst participants' PSs suggests a

consensus on what is important to the future hopes of this group of young people. However, the research also demonstrated that individual differences existed in the motivations and beliefs underpinning their hopes and fears. The use of the PSMI has highlighted availability of a tool that professionals and educators working with vulnerable CYP can utilise to: a) collect information about their interests, b) value as part of an individualised package of support for each person in the PRU which is reviewed regularly and c) maintains a future focus and emphasises goal-setting and identification of challenges. The research has suggested that aspirations are the result of a complex network where the shaping of aspirations becomes a process that is driven by addressing contextual inequalities in the systems the young person is a part of as well as the personal characteristics and challenges that are unique to each young person.

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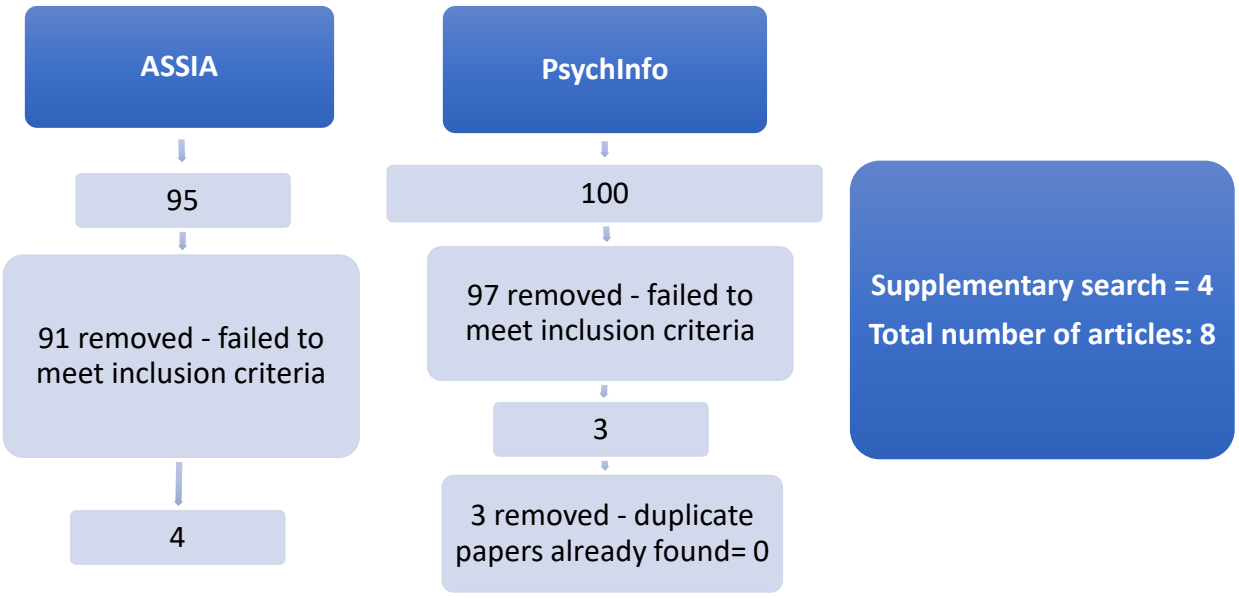
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Systematic Literature Review details

The same search terms were used across all three databases; these included 'Young People' OR Pupil OR Adolescent OR Student OR youth OR Teenager* AND Future OR 'Future selves' OR 'Possible Selves' OR 'Future aspirations' OR Hopes. Along with the specified criteria outlined in section 3.6. This search yielded a total of 276 articles. Papers were initially selected and filtered by their title and abstracts, followed by the reading of the full texts. The process resulted in the rejection of 272 papers with four papers considered to meet the inclusion criteria in full. A supplementary search using Google Scholar resulted in four more relevant papers, two being doctoral theses, bringing the total to eight papers.



Appendix 2: Ethical approval email

Dear Dr Soni and Mrs Morris

Re: "Exploring the 'possible selves' of girls attending a Pupil Referral Unit as an insight into their hopes and fears for the future"
Application for Ethical Review ERN_18-1761

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

Kind regards

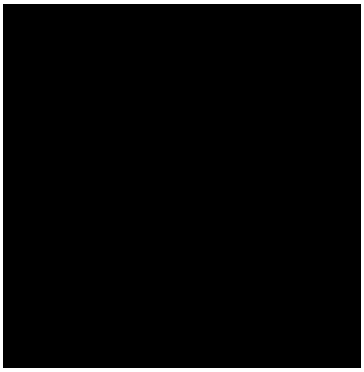
Susan Cottam
Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group
C Block Dome
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 8825
Email: [redacted]
Web: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/index.aspx

Appendix 3: Recruitment sheet for PRUs

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Information sheet

This recruitment sheet has been given to you in the hope that you may be able to identify girls as prospective participants in a research project undertaken by Litsa Cosma, a full-time post graduate research student at the University of Birmingham. The research project fulfils a core component of Litsa's training as an educational psychologist.



A brief description of the project
The project aims to explore the 'possible selves' of girls attending a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to gain an insight into their perceptions of their hopes and fears for the future.

The purpose of the project
Within the existing research in relation to PRUs, there tends to be a focus on areas such as improving outcomes, reintegration of pupils back into mainstream education and teacher perceptions. There is limited research focussed on seeking the views of the pupils in relation to their future aspirations. More specifically, there appears to be no focus in existing literature on the way girls in a PRU perceive their future selves. This projects therefore aims to contribute to filling this gap in the literature. Furthermore, it is important that pupils in pupil referral units, who are considered to be a group of increased vulnerability and are associated with lower future prospects, have the opportunity to explore how they see themselves in the future and are supported in identifying factors and actions that could facilitate change, viewing their futures as more positively. It is hoped that the insight provided may highlight barriers and supportive factors that may have implications for how staff in a PRU can support girls in accessing education and achieving positive long-term goals.

Details of the project
The project will first involve the pupil spending time with Litsa, either alone or in a group, so that Litsa feels familiar to them and gains their trust. Litsa will then

interview the pupil for approximately an hour to explore their hopes and fears for the future, using an exercise called 'possible selves'. The interviewer has DBS clearance. With your permission, it is anticipated that the interviews would take place within a private, comfortable room within the PRU setting. A trusted adult will be asked to occasionally check that the young person remained comfortable during the interview whilst also being asked to remain nearby in order for your child to be able to access them if needed. If the participant prefers this adult to remain in the room during the interview itself, then this will be asked of. The interviews will be voice-recorded, stored securely and transcribed so that Litsa can analyse them afterwards. During the interview, the students will be asked to outline their hopes, expectations and worries for the future. The strengths and resources they hold to support them in achieving future goals will be explored alongside any barriers they identify. Participant's responses will be recorded on a template called a 'possible selves map'. Within four weeks, Litsa will meet with the young person again to give them their own version of their 'possible selves map' to check they are happy with it and it will be theirs to keep.

Participant requirements

A list of full criteria will be provided to support you in the identification of suitable pupils and will be discussed in more thoughtful detail. The main criteria is as follows:

- Aged between 14 and 16.
- Female.
- Currently attend a Pupil Referral Unit and are unlikely to change placement for the duration of the research.
- Be able to give informed consent to be take part.
- Pupils who are not currently experiencing stressful experiences in their life i.e. bereavement/family separation.
- Pupils who are not currently known to social care at child protection level.
- Pupils who you consider to be unlikely to experience distress whilst speaking about their future hopes, fears and expectations (e.g. are diagnosed with mental health diagnoses, have long-term involvement from specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Pupils with no identified speech and language difficulties which may prevent the expression of views (e.g. involvement of Speech and Language therapy).

Recruitment and consent procedures

An information letter will be provided for you to pass on to the pupils selected. An information letter will also be provided for you to distribute to the parents of these pupils, with a stamped addressed envelope. The sheets will inform parents and pupils that if they would like to take part, they are to notify the specified link staff member at the PRU and a meeting will then be arranged with the researcher (either at home or in the PRU) where pupils and parents will be able to ask questions and gain further information. They will be provided with information as to the purpose of the research and their potential role before being asked to provide voluntary consent if they would like to take part. At this meeting, written consent will then be gained if parents and pupils are happy to take part. It must be made

clear that the participants are invited to share as much information as desired without feeling pressured. If a young person did appear anxious during an interview the option to stop would be discussed. The participants will have the right to withdraw before the interview or during interview at any time without giving a reason, and this includes withdrawing their data. However, once data is collected, they will have 7 days to notify the researcher of their wish to withdraw data.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Participant names and school data will be anonymised and all identifiable factors within the recordings will be excluded from the transcription. Students will be assigned a pseudonym. All voice recordings will be immediately transferred to a password protected and encrypted laptop and any paper-based transcription data or written exercises will be stored in a lockable filling cabinet. Afterwards the university will store the information for 10 years in their secure data archive. The only exception to the confidentiality rule would be if during the interview a participant indicated potential danger to themselves or another person.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Susan Cottam (Research Ethics Officer) at s.l.cottam@bham.ac.uk.

I will follow up this letter with a phone call within the next week to discuss the possibility of your involvement. In the meantime, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

I look forward to discussing the research with you further.

Yours Sincerely

Litsa Cosma

Trainee Educational Psychologist University of Birmingham

Contact details

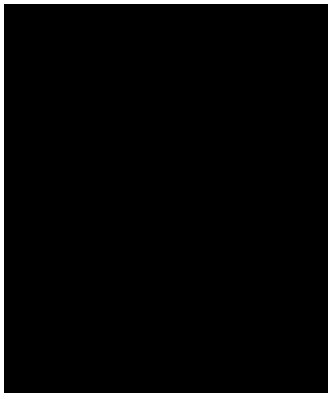
Litsa Cosma (researcher) [redacted]

Anita Soni (University of Birmingham (supervisor) [redacted]

Appendix 4: Information sheet for young people

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Hi, my name is Litsa. I am training to be an educational psychologist and I would like to ask you to be involved in a project I am running. I want to help adults to understand more about girls who attend Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and how they feel about their futures. I hope that it will give you the opportunity to think and speak about what you do and don't want in your future and to see what the adults around you can do to help.



What will happen if I choose to be involved?

- We will have a discussion, up to about an hour long, where I will ask you some questions about what your hopes and worries may be for the future. It can be longer or shorter depending on how it goes and how you feel.
- You don't have to answer anything that you don't want to and can say as much or as little as you want.
- Our discussions will be voice recorded so I can listen to them afterwards. During interview, I will add what you say to a 'map' which I will later give to you to keep.

Afterwards, I will look at the information you shared about how you feel about your future and I will write this up in a big research report for the University of Birmingham. I hope that adults will learn a lot from it on how to support you better. You are welcome to read the full report, but I will also write a much shorter summary. I can also meet with you if you would prefer this.

Don't worry about people knowing who you are, that will be kept private throughout the project and in the report and I won't share the information with your parents/carers. The only time I would need to tell someone about your information was if I was worried about your safety. Then I would tell a staff member at your PRU called the 'Safeguarding Lead.' Your parents/carers would then maybe need to be notified too. All your information will be stored securely on a laptop whilst I am using it. Afterwards, the university will store the information for 10 years in their secure data archive.

If you think that you may want to be involved in the project then please have a chat with your parents/carers, as they will also be given a similar information sheet. If you are interested, you should first tell Ms Harrison. I will then arrange to speak to you and your parents/carers in more detail and if you decide you want to be involved, you and your parents/carers will sign consent forms.

If you decided that you didn't want to be part of the project anymore before the first discussion then that is fine. After our discussion you will have 7 days to tell me if you don't want to be involved and I can delete your information. After 7 days you can say you don't want to meet with me again but I wouldn't be able to stop using the information I already have from you.

I will follow up this letter with a phone call in a couple of weeks to discuss if you are interested in taking part. In the meantime, if you have any questions and want to contact me directly, you can use the below contact details.

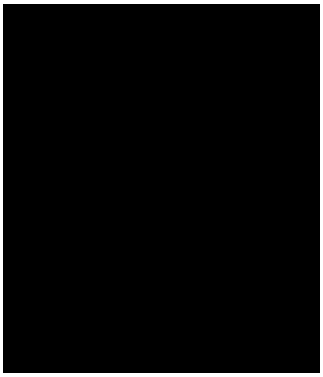
Contact details

Litsa Cosma (researcher) [redacted]

Anita Soni (University of Birmingham supervisor) [redacted]

Appendix 5: Information sheet for parents

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



Information Sheet

(please retain this sheet for your information)

My name is Litsa Cosma and I am training to be an educational psychologist. I would like to ask for your child to be involved in a project I am running.

As part of my training I have chosen to run a project that listens to views of young girls in Pupils Referral Units (PRUs) to understand how they view and feel about their futures. This will aim to help those working with them support them better.

Quite a few projects have been done before about PRUs but it is rare that the young people themselves are spoken to about their futures, particularly girls alone.

What will happen if my child wants to be involved?

- Myself and your child will have a discussion, up to about an hour long, where I will ask you some questions about how they're getting on in school, what they might hope for in their future and what they may be worried about. It might be longer or shorter depending on how it goes and how they feel.
- Your child does not need to answer anything that they don't want to answer and they can say as much or as little as they want.
- Myself and your child's discussions will be voice recorded so that I can listen to them afterwards.

If your child would like to take part and you agree, I would like to meet with you both to give you the opportunity to ask any questions. After this you will both be asked to sign a consent form. If after this point you or your child decides that they don't want to be involved anymore then it is possible to withdraw from the project. However, this can only take place up until 7 days after the first recorded discussion with your child as after this point I will have analysed the data.

After I have met your child, I will use the recordings to make notes on your child's experience in the PRU and their views of their futures. I will do this for all the young people I interview. I will think about how we could support these young people more effectively. This will then go into a 25,000-word report which I will submit to the University of Birmingham to be marked as part of my training. You are welcome to read the full report however I will also write a much shorter summary. I can also meet with you both to tell you about the research findings if you would prefer this.

Keeping things private

In the report that I write and, in any notes, that I make nobody will know who your child is. I will write about what they have told me however I won't use their real name and they can choose a different one! I won't include anything that is personal and that they don't want me to include.

Only I will have access to the recordings of our discussions and my supervisor at university. We have a responsibility to keep the recording secure and we have special IT software to enable us to do this. I won't share your child's recording with you as I want them to feel able to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and themselves without the worry of knowing it will be heard by parents/carers.

As a professional who works with young people I have a responsibility to ensure that they are safe. If your child shares information during our discussion that I believe means they are not safe I will inform the PRU 'Safeguarding Lead' and they will follow this up in line with their Safeguarding Policy, consistent with daily safeguarding responsibilities that take place.

Benefits of taking part

- Your child can share their views and be listened to which can feel powerful and improve emotional wellbeing.
- Your child can help education professionals to understand how girls in a PRU feel about their futures and how these views can impact their education. This way we can look to improve their schooling and future outcomes.
- Educational psychologists can learn more about how to support young girls in PRUs in exploring future aspirations.

I will follow up this letter with a phone call in a couple of weeks to discuss if you are interested in taking part.

In the meantime, if you have any questions and want to contact me directly, you can use the below contact details.

Contact details

Litsa Cosma (researcher) [redacted]

Anita Soni (University of Birmingham supervisor) [redacted]

Appendix 6: Consent form for young people

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Consent form for young people participating in research project

Project Title: Exploring the 'possible selves' of girls attending a Pupil Referral Unit as an insight into their hopes and fears for the future.

Name of Investigator: Litsa Cosma
Name of Supervisor: Anita Soni

1. I have read the information sheet provided, I understand the nature of the project and I give my consent to participate in the above project.

2. I understand that the views I provide will be recorded on tape and on paper, for purposes of analysis. Both tape and paper recordings will be held securely and deleted once the project is complete.

1. I acknowledge that:

(a) I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have had them answered fully.

(b) The possible effects of the procedures have been explained to me to my satisfaction.

(c) The project is voluntary, and I do not have to answer any questions that I don't want to.

(d) I can withdraw from this project at any point before or within 7 days of the first recorded discussion.

(e) This project forms part of the University of Birmingham postgraduate doctoral research towards Litsa's professional qualification as an educational psychologist and the information I provide will be used in a research report submitted to the university.

(f) Litsa will know who I am however data I provide will remain confidential and other people who see the data will not know who I am.

(g) The data I provide will be stored on a password-protected and encrypted laptop, whilst Litsa is using the data. After this, the data will be securely stored for 10 years within the University of Birmingham's BEAR Data Archive.

Name of Child (Participant) ……..
Signed …… **Date**……

Appendix 7: Consent form for parents

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Consent form for parents/carers of persons participating in research project

Project Title: Exploring the 'possible selves' of girls attending a Pupil Referral Unit as an insight into their hopes and fears for the future.

Name of Investigator: Litsa Cosma
Name of Supervisor: Anita Soni

1. I have read the information sheet provided, I understand the nature of the project and I give consent for my child to participate in the above project.

2. I understand that the views of my child will be recorded on tape and paper, for purposes of analysis. These tape and paper recordings will be held securely and deleted once the project is complete.

2. I acknowledge that:

(h) My child and I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and we have had them answered fully.

(i) The possible effects of the procedures have been explained to me to my satisfaction.

(j) The project is voluntary, and my child does not have to answer any questions that they don't want to.

(k) My child can withdraw from this project at any point before or within 7 days of the first recorded discussion.

(l) This project forms part of the University of Birmingham postgraduate doctoral research towards Litsa's professional qualification as an educational psychologist and my child's data will be used in a research report submitted to the university.

(m) Litsa will know who my child is however my child's data will remain confidential and other people who see the data will not know who my child is.

(n) My child's data will be stored on a password-protected and encrypted laptop, whilst Litsa is using the data. After this, the data will be securely stored for 10 years within the University of Birmingham's BEAR Data Archive.

Name of Child (Participant) ……..

Name of Parent/Carer ……
Signed ……
Date……

Appendix 8: Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) Exercise

Introductory section of interview:

Introductions and wellbeing check

- Clarification of each other's names, purpose of the research and procedure.
- I will check that the participant still consents to take part in the research and remind them they can withdraw at any point and thank them for coming to meet me today
- I will ask the participant how they are feeling, how there day has been and if there is anything upsetting them currently.
- I will give the participant the opportunity to ask any questions
- I will ask participants an introductory question of what school is like at the moment for them.

Possible Selves Exercise Outline

The PSMI is divided into three sections: Introduction, Exercise, and Debriefing. The Introduction serves two purposes. Firstly, the concept of possible selves is explained, and participants are given examples relevant to this age group. Secondly, participants are encouraged to relax and let "their thoughts flow into the future. The below exercise is then conducted. The final stage is debriefing where participants are asked to summarize their Possible Selves Map "as if they were talking to someone who knew nothing about them. In return, the interviewer then re-summarizes the participant's PSMI and checks for accuracy.

- I am going to ask you to think about your future and how you would like that to be. I may write during you talking and put your responses onto a 'positive selves map'. If you would prefer to write yourself, you are able to do so.
- We're going to do this using an exercise called 'Possible Selves'.
- One kind of possible self is **positive** – these are selves we hope to become in the future. Some of these would be quite likely to happen; for example, being a worker at a particular job, or being a car owner.
- Others may seem quite unlikely, but still possible; for instance, being a world-famous athlete or a lottery winner. We call these "**hoped-for selves".**
- Besides having dreams that we hope for, we also have selves that we fear or don't want to have happen, or we are afraid of happening, like being unemployed or becoming very sick. We call these **"feared selves". (Pause for questions)**

- **HOPED-FOR SELVES**: I'd like you to take some time and think about your future wishes or hoped-for selves for the future regarding things like work, this could be jobs you would really like to have, courses you might like to take, places you would like to work, and so on.
    - Write your hoped-for work selves in the green boxes on this map, one

hoped-for self per box. **(give time for this; see appendix 9 for template).** Don't worry if they might not happen, just brainstorm all the things you would like to see yourself doing now and, in the future, as many as you can think of…. **(more time for writing).** Anything else you would like to add?

- Can you rank order these hoped-for selves now, with #1 being the one you want most, #2 being the next, and so on. Just put the number in the box. Number them all. (give time for this).

- **FEARED SELVES:** Now I'd like you to take some time and think about what you don't want for yourself – your feared future selves. This could be a job you really don't want, or a workplace you don't want to be in, or not having a job, or anything else related to the future that you don't want to have happen.
  - Write these in the yellow boxes on this other map-one feared self per box.
  - Write as many as you can think of. **(Give time for this; see appendix 9 for template).**
  - Anything else?
  - Can you rank order these feared work selves now, with #1 being the one you fear most – the one you really don't want to have happen, #2 being the next feared one, and so on. Just put the number in the box. Number them all. **(give time for this).**
  - Can you tell me a bit about these feared selves and why you don't want these to happen?
- Now we have ranked these from most to least important to you, can you pick the three most important hoped-for selves and the three most important feared self to you from them all?

Pick 3 Hoped for Selves (Provide a detailed description of the hoped-for self: use words, visuals, drawing etc; see appendix 9 for template).

- Why are these hoped-for selves important to you?
- Which do you feel most capable of achieving? Why?
- Which do you feel least capable of achieving? Why?
- Which hoped-for self do you feel is the most likely (expected) to happen? Why?
- Which hoped-for self do you feel is least likely to happen? Why?

Finally:

- What actions can you take today to move in the direction of these hoped-for selves?
- What other things could you do to help bring about (or keep away) your most important hoped-for selves?
- What support do you think that you might need in order to achieve your most important hoped-for selves?
- Are you experiencing any challenges or obstacles to achieve these hoped-for selves?

Pick 3 Feared for Selves: Provide a detailed description of the feared for self: use words, visuals, drawing etc; see Appendix 9 for template).

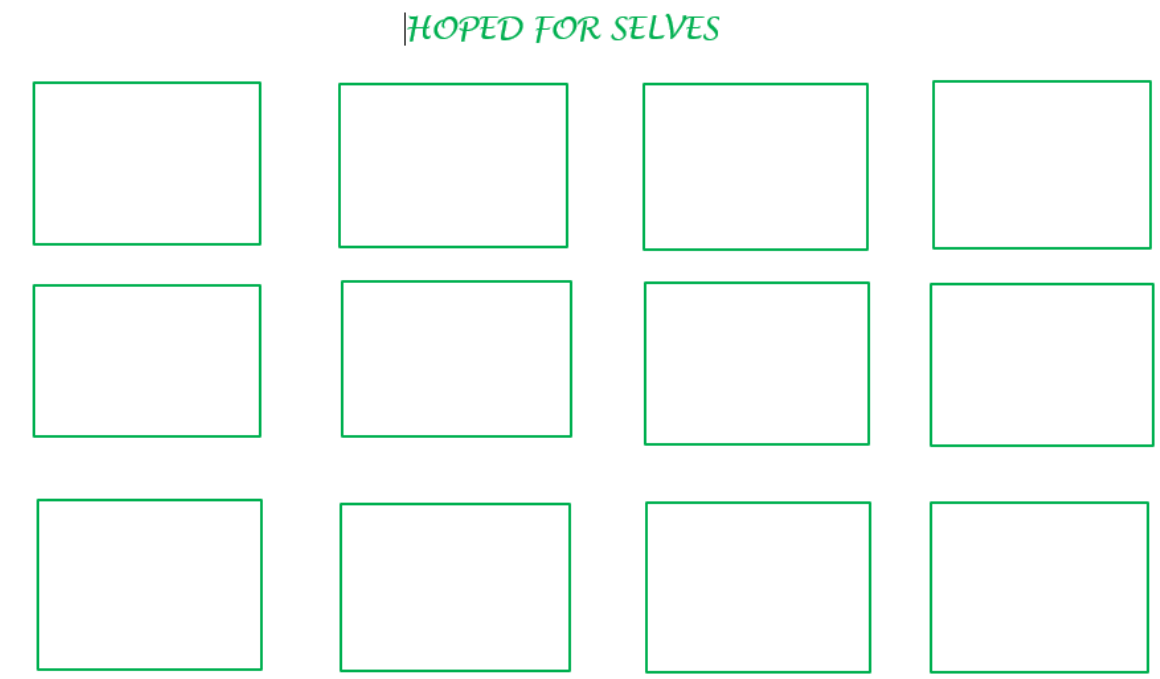
- Why are these feared-for selves important to you?
- Which do you feel most capable of preventing? Why?
- Which do you feel least capable of preventing? Why?
- Which feared-for self do you feel is the most likely (expected) to happen? Why?
- Which feared-for self you feel is least likely to happen? Why?

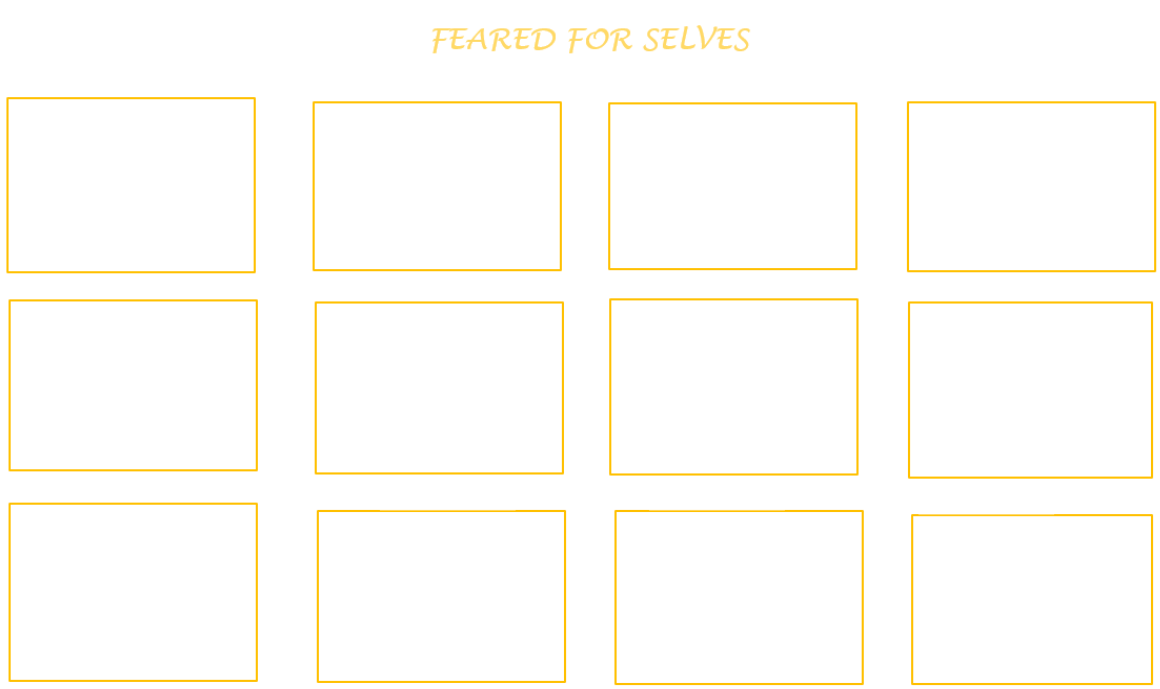
Finally:

- What action can you take today to move away from that feared self?
- What other things could you do to keep away your most important feared-for-selves?
- What support do you think that you might need in order to prevent your most important feared-for selves?
- Are you experiencing any challenges or obstacles to prevent your feared-for selves?

Participants responses will be put onto a 'Possible Selves Map' (see appendix 10) that I will later provide for them to keep once recordings have been listened to and details that may have been missed during interview have been added.

Appendix 9: Templates/tools used during PSMI for exploring Hoped-for Selves and Feared-for Selves





HOPED FOR POSSIBLE SELVES

FEARED FOR POSSIBLE SELVES

Appendix 10: Adapted Possible Selves Map

(template adapted from Shepard and Quressette (2010); available at: https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/vistas/2010-v-online/Article_51.pdf

Appendix 11: Example excerpt from coded transcript (from Case one: Demi)

I: = Interviewer

P: = Participant

… = interruption in sentence, trailing off or short pause

Transcript		Codes
P:	I'm like a family person and I want quite a few kids, but obviously I wanna look after my kids but I do wanna travel to places too.	Family important to her Having own children/family Wanting to have other opportunities aswell having own family, such as to travel
I:	OK, can you have both?	
P:	Yeah but it's hard.	
I:	OK what else?	
P:	Obviously I want a boyfriend, like who I can trust, but if a boyfriend ain't there then like… I could still manage, if you know what I mean?	Difficulties of both having own family and doing other things such as travel
I:	Yeah.	Wants a romantic partner but not essential
P:	So I don't wanna rely on a man.	
P:	I would like a boyfriend but I wouldn't wanna rely on him, I wouldn't wanna stay with him just 'cause he has money, if you know what I mean?	Doesn't want to rely on a partner
I:	OK, yeah.	Wants to be financially independent
P:	I wanna look after myself if anything ever did go wrong, do you know what I mean?	
I:	Yeah, OK. Anything else?	
P:	I would kind of like to be like my own manager but when you've got that many kids you've kind of gotta work from home. Do you know what I mean?	Wants to be independent
P:	You can work and have a family, but yeah, it's difficult 'cause you need to get childcare and things like that. I could have a few days at home and a few days in an office or something.	Would like to be able to support herself and her children independently Be financially stable alone
I:	So would you like to work for yourself though or would you prefer to work for someone else?	Work for herself due to flexibility with having own children
P:	I don't know, I don't think I'm really bothered about which one it is to be fair. I don't really know the difference.	Difficulty of working and having own family Discussion of part-time hours
I:	OK. Well, being your own manager would be it's your own business and working for yourself, so for example,	Unsure of difference between self-employment and working for others

	some hairdressers who do mobile, they work for themselves, whereas those who work in a salon for someone else, they're –	
P:	I think I wanna work with someone else so it's secure, if you know what I mean? since it's your own manager you can have time off really whenever you want, but then say if there is something to do then you've gotta do it, but when you work with a company obviously you have hours, don't ya? So when it's a company at least you know you definitely have free time without having to do anything.	Preference for working for others More security/stability working for others Working for others means more time for yourself rather than when self-employed
I:	Yeah, I get you. So let's say work for a company. Do you have any idea of what kind of job?	
P:	Well, basically before I wanted to be a vet but then I wanted to be a hairdresser, like work, I wanted to own my own salon at once, but I was thinking about it, like it's not worth it because in [TOWN] there's like 15 salons, do you know what I mean? There's so many salons. But then I like animals but I was gonna think about being a counsellor 'cause I do like talking.	Variety of employment interests Main career interest of counselling Personal qualities/strengths consistent with career interest
P:	And I can give good advice, I just can't take it myself.	
I:	OK, What does being a counsellor mean to you apart from talking?	
P:	I think it's 'cause you're helping people, 'cause when people have been through stuff, 'cause I know people who've been through stuff and I wanna help people feel better about themselves. 'cause like, obviously say if a kid's got raped or something they might not be able to talk to someone but you could talk to and then try and see who that person is and get them punished. I don't know what kind of counsellor I wanna be yet, 'cause first I wanted to be a drama therapist but then I wanted to talk to people who are like suicidal and everything and I wanted to be… you know what I mean ?	Helping vulnerable people who have been through negative/traumatic experiences Personal experience of meeting people who have been through difficult situations Helping others in some way
I:	Yeah, so you know you wanna help people then?	
P:	Yeah.	

I:	Anything else that's a Hoped for Self?	Prove people wrong
P:	To do well for myself really because everyone says that I can't do it but you know like when you prove people wrong so I wanna do that.	Prove parent wrong
I:	Who says you can't do it?	
P:	Mainly my dad 'cause he's a ****, it's stuff like just 'cause you go to a PRU, but you can still get good qualifications in the PRU, if you know what I mean?	Positive impact of PRU Can still achieve qualifications
I:	Yeah, yeah of course.	
P:	And even if you didn't get good qualifications, if you go to college you've just gotta do extra time, because obviously I know people who are doing good for themselves but they didn't get good GCSEs but they worked hard in college.	
I:	OK, so what does doing well for yourself mean to you?	
P:	I don't wanna be loaded, I just wanna… if I do have kids, I wanna be able to look after them, I wanna be financial stable by myself, I don't wanna ask people to lend me money or anything. It's not like I want a lot of money, I just want everything to be paid for and have some money extra so you can do stuff with the kids and everything.	Financially secure/stable Not reliant on others Be able to provide for family/children and basic needs as well as social/leisure needs Owning a house in order to have a family
I:	OK, we've got four boxes left but you don't have to fill them. Is there anything else that we haven't –	
P:	Well you've gotta own a house to have kids, haven't you, really. I can't move in with my mum.	May not own house but wants own living space Socio-cultural context/SES influence
I:	OK, own a house.	
P:	I don't wanna like own a house, like actually buy my own house, I wanna like just pay out for something, I just do want a house. I don't even care if it's on a council estate; 'cause it's gotta have quite a few rooms in it really I want like 6 kids 'cause I like big families 'cause obviously like everyone dies and when I have kids and I die I want everyone to stick together.	Wants a big family, generations can continue Tradition to have a big family
I:	So you want a big family, yeah.	
P:	Yeah, 'cause my dad's got a big family, everyone's got loads of kids and it's just tradition really.	Wants to mirror own personal experience Wants many children so they can support each other
I:	Tradition in your family to have a big family?	

P:	Yeah.	
I:	And that's important to you?	
P:	Yeah.	
I:	What's important about it?	
P:	I dunno I've always grown up with loads of people around me. Be a bit weird if I was in a house with just one kid. That's why I'd want another kid, do you know what I mean? And they could stick up for each other and everything. And I'd want 'em to look cute.	Wants big family Large support network

Appendix 12: Example of Thematic Development for RQ1 across cases (Hoped-for Selves)

Excerpts from interview transcripts	Initial Codes	Subthemes	Themes	Overarching Theme
Help babies, help babies that have got disabilities. *I think it's 'cause you're helping people, 'cause when people have been through stuff, 'cause I know people who've been through stuff and I wanna help people feel better about themselves* *And when I'm a bit older I think I wanna open my own art and craft shop.* *I wanna be an air hostess and if I can't be one of them, I wanna be a holiday rep.* *Getting a job, doesn't matter where it is as long as I've got one.* *'cause obviously like with a family who've had a divorce and that if there's children involved then I've seen that can make them become naughty then they play up and I wouldn't want that to happen to anybody*	Helping vulnerable adults or children Employment type e.g. self-employed/working for others Balance of career and other hopes such as having own family Varied or uncertain career interests/open-minded Fixed career interest Personal experiences led to particular career interest Job security Having any job as long as have one Personal strengths and skills matched to career Self-improvement	Helping vulnerable adults or children Pursuing own business interest Self-improvement Showcase personal strengths Job security Achieving a balance of working and having a family Achieving balance of working and travelling Pursuing a practical/active job Making an impact Earning money	Having a job Pursuing a main career interest Having a variety of employment options Helping others	Occupation/Employment

Just when you watch them on the tele they've always got to argue and stuff and I find that interesting to look at – I like arguing a lot and I'm good at it *Basically you have to approach customers and you get better at talking in retail and I don't talk much so it would be good for me* *I wouldn't like to sit in an office all day* *I want a job so I can earn money*	Practical job rather than academic job Earn money	Gaining practical work experience		

Stage 2 of TA: Sorting of codes

Stage 3 of TA: Identification of themes and subthemes

Appendix 13: Example of Thematic Development for RQ2 across cases (Hindering factors)

Excerpts from interview transcripts	Initial Codes	Subthemes	Themes	Overarching Theme
Yeah, like I don't listen at the moment. I don't listen to… I don't mean I don't listen to people when they talk, I don't listen like learning-wise. I lose interest. That's what I mean, I need to sort a few things out so I can do them things.	Poor attitude to learning Disengagement with learning Not listening to staff	Limited employment opportunities due to attending PRU Academic attainment Motivation, behaviour and attitude to learning	Factors involving school Individual/personal factors	Barriers/hindering factors to achieving possible selves
cause it's me that's gotta stop myself from being an idiot.	Poor behaviour	Self-belief		
I don't know, I just get… other people get me like really angry and then my behaviour, I don't wanna go to the lessons.	Poor behaviour Angered by peers Regulating emotions			
My attitude at the moment 'cause I'm really lazy and I just don't care about anything at the moment. 'cause I've got things going on and that's why I need to sort things out.	Poor attitude to learning Careless attitude Personal barriers to overcome			
'cause I've been to a PRU and I				

don't think I'm gonna get a good job. I'm at the PRU so not really got any future. *People always say you 'ave to be in a normal school, to get the good jobs.* '*cause being at PRU is not really good, you don't really get taught anything. I have a 35-minute lesson to do English or maths, it's not really long enough to do anything and you come in at nine and you finish at five-past-two.* *You gotta be dead clever to be an airhostess and I'm not that clever* *Yeah, I ain't got the GCSEs and all the stuff that you need, you need a lot of 'em, 'cause I'll end up giving up. give up really easily* *There is a lot of effort in it and it's a lot of time to become a lawyer, a lot of like revising and studying.*	Negative impact of PRU on future and on employment opportunities Lack of teaching at PRU Reduced timetable Reduced lessons Limited time to learn Low academic ability Low self-belief/self-image/self-esteem Lack of motivation and perseverance Academic attainment/grades Level of effort and motivation required			

Stage 2 of TA: Sorting of codes

Stage 3 of TA: Identification of themes and subthemes

Appendix 14: Individual thematic maps for participants for RQ1

Key:

Hoped-for Selves:

 Overarching theme

 Theme

 Subtheme

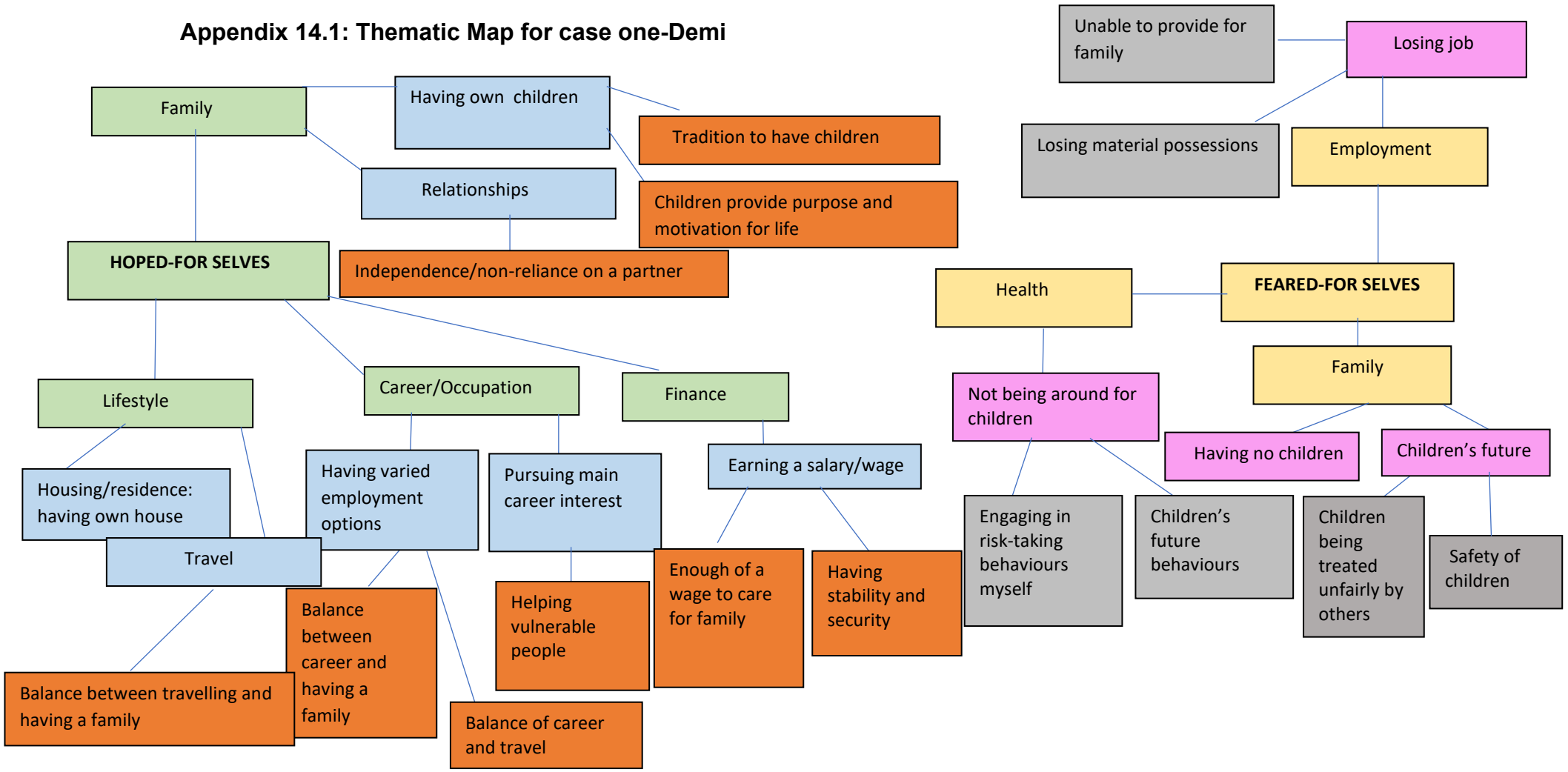
Feared-for Selves:

 Overarching theme

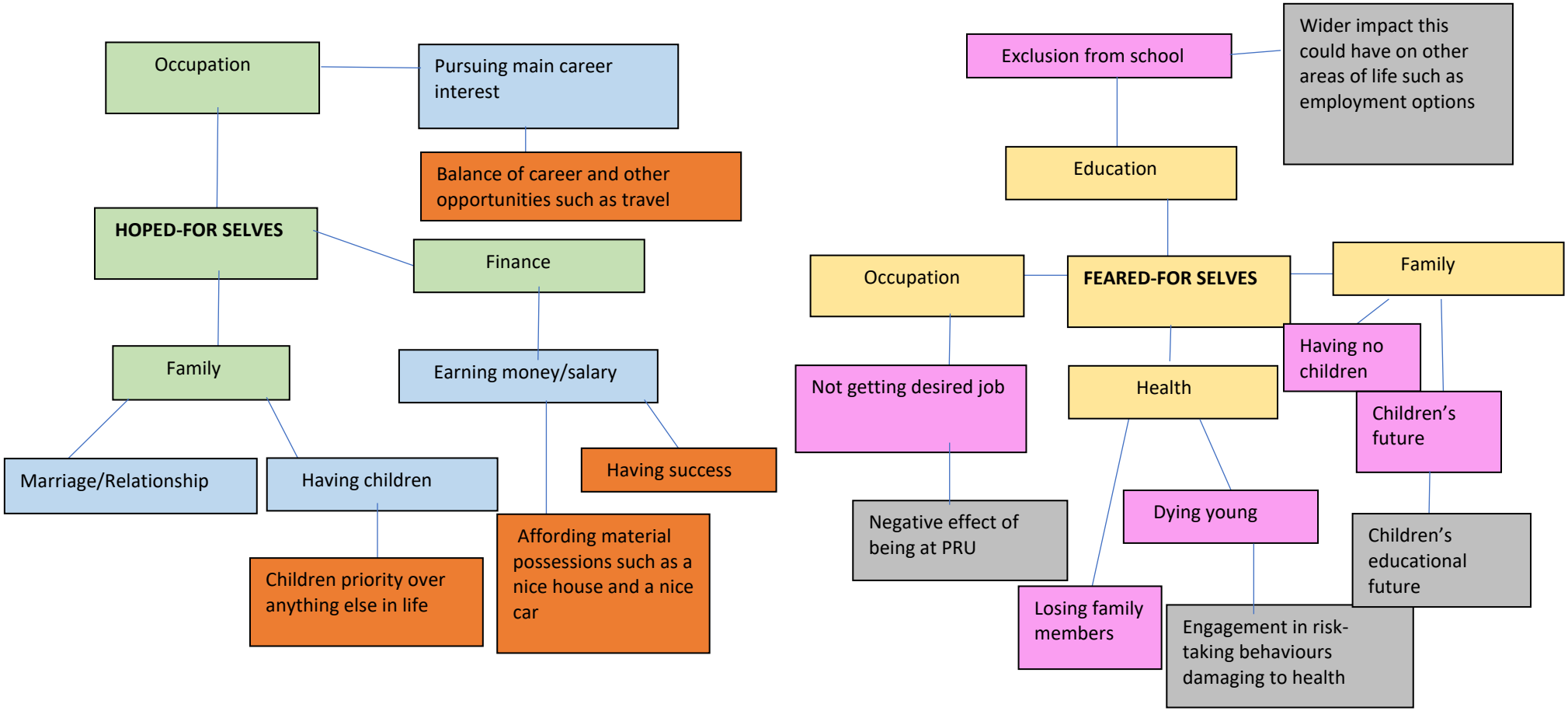
 Theme

 Subtheme

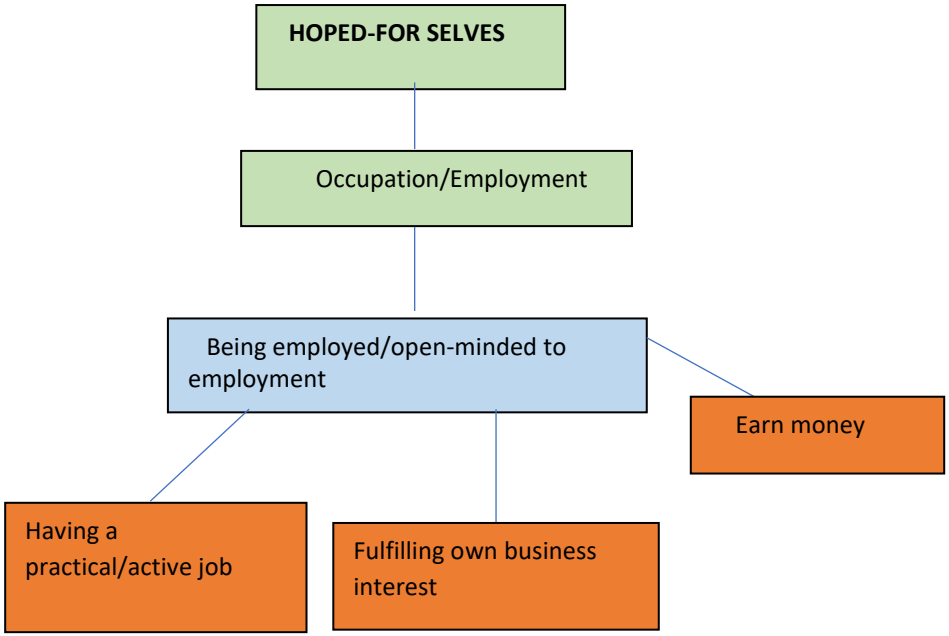
Appendix 14.1: Thematic Map for case one-Demi

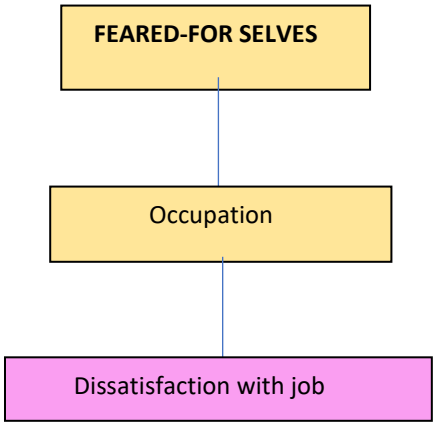


Appendix 14.2: Thematic map for case two- Michelle

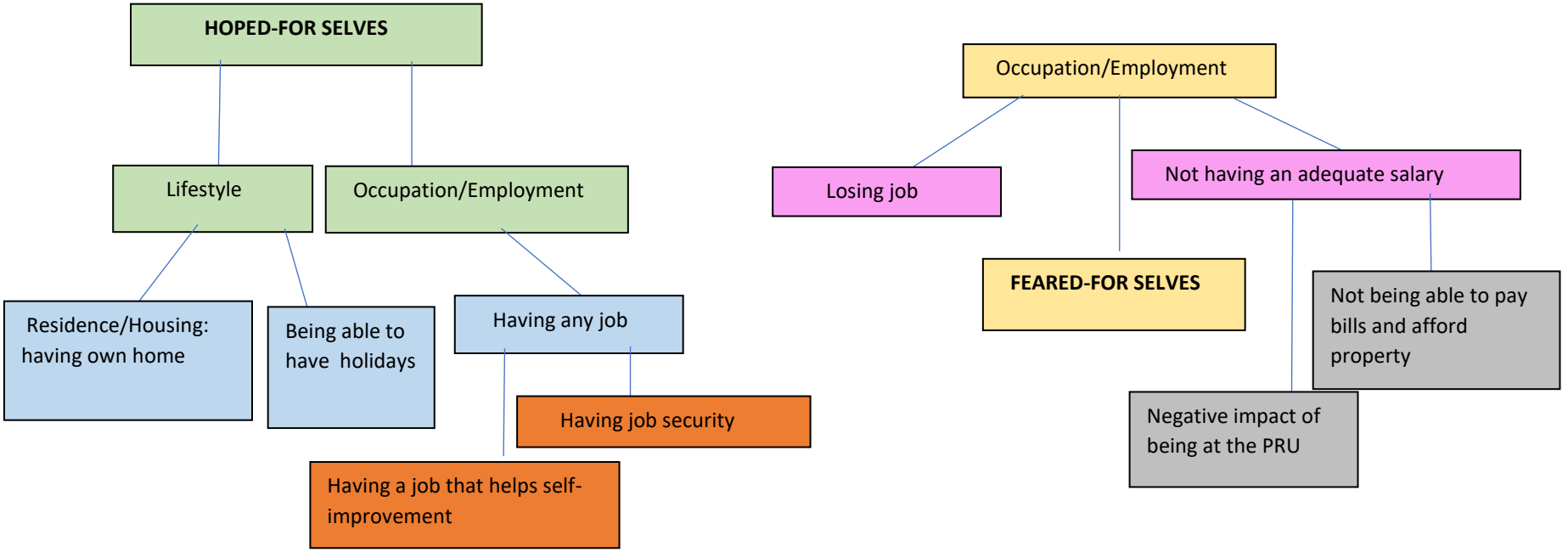


Appendix 14.3: Thematic map for case three- Sally

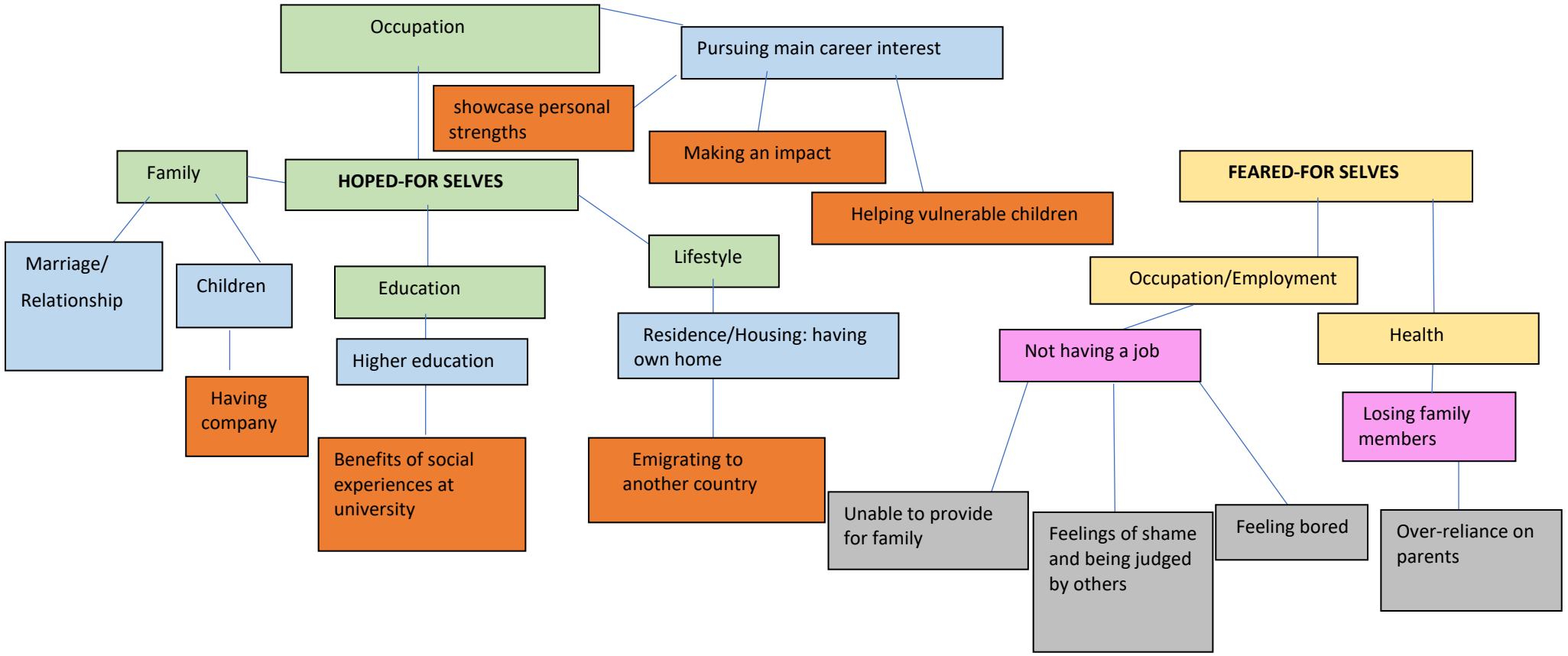




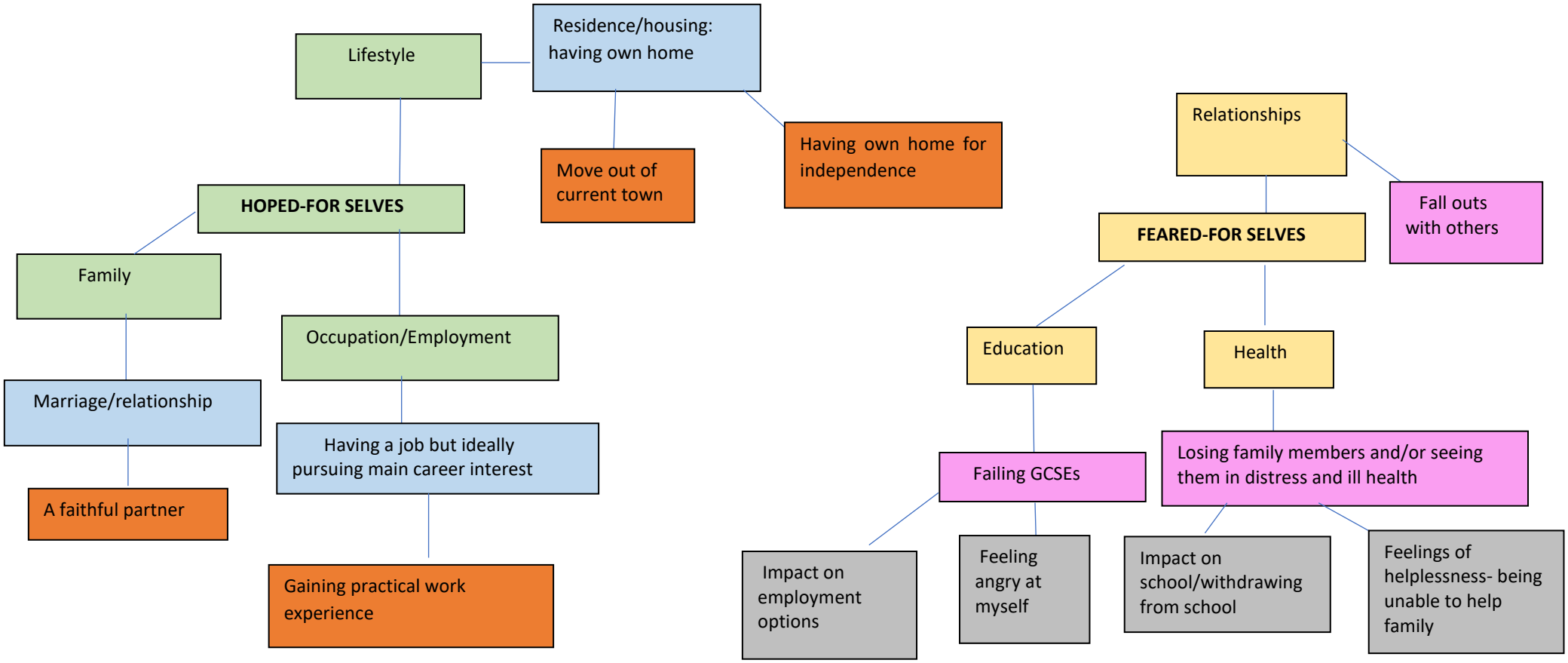
Appendix 14.4: Thematic map for case four- Emily



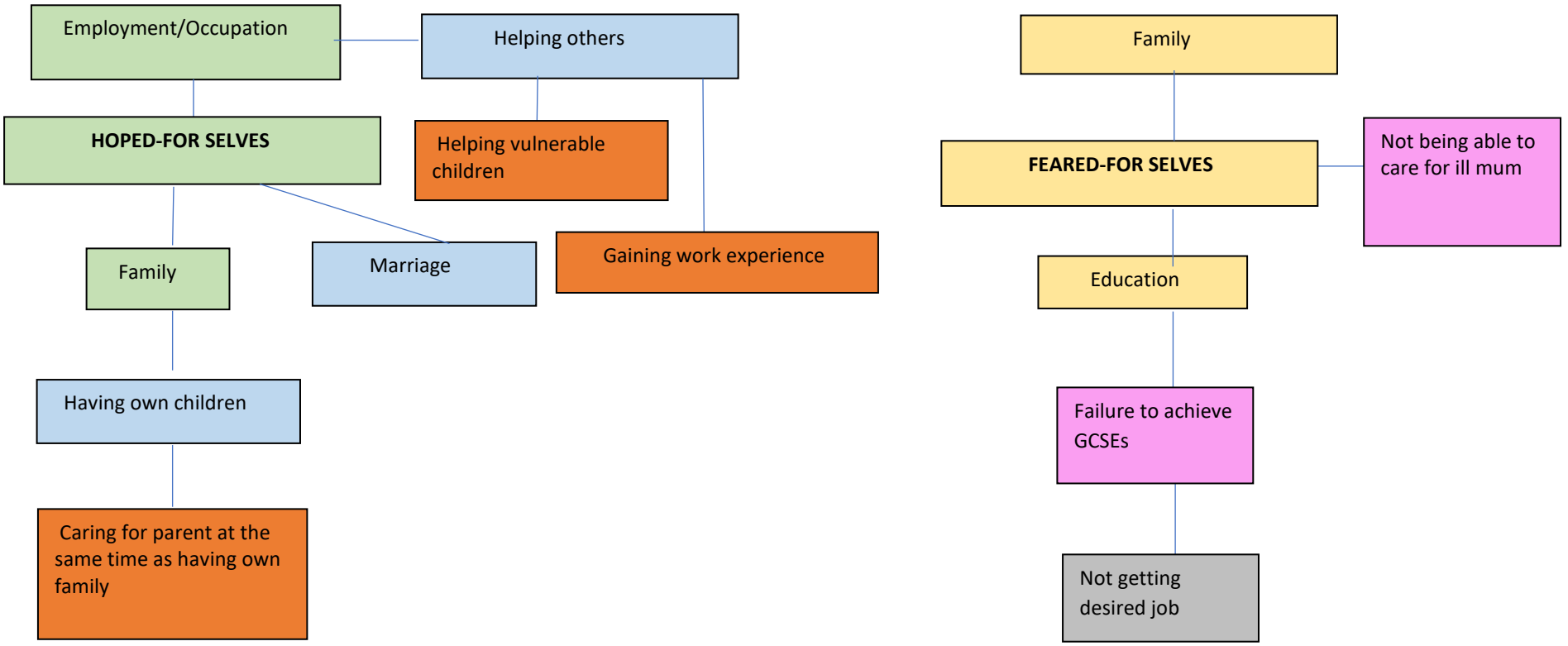
Appendix 14.5: Thematic map for case five- Hope



Appendix 14.6: Thematic map for case six- Tara



Appendix 14.7: Thematic map for case seven- Pippa



Appendix 15: Actions taken to ensure quality and robustness of findings

Threat to rigour/quality	Actions taken
Research methods failing to elicit participants perceptions of their future selves	Interview questions followed a pre-determined possible selves exercise published in literature and adapted into an interview based on Shepard and Marshall's (1999) PSMI. This was piloted before the research to check PSMI procedure was understood. PSMI schedule consistent alongside research questions.
Researcher influencing data collection procedures	Interview questions based on existing Possible Selves framework and PSMI which I, the researcher have not influenced. During PSMI, I only asked used probes that reflected, asked or clarified what participants had shared. Rationale for decisions made throughout the research process are explicit. Reinforcing findings using visual tools and recording findings in written form so that it counts as another source of evidence alongside verbatim transcription. Summarising and reflecting back to participants to ensure its accurate representation of their views during and after interviews. Semantic theme analysis in data analysis for RQ1 and RQ2 where themes generated from what participants have said and not from researcher interpretation.
Response bias influencing participants' responses	Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were reinforced to participants as well as research aims. It was emphasised that participants should be honest during interviews and they were made to feel at ease so that this was achieved and they felt they could express views freely.
Being unable to generalise beyond findings	Mass generalisation of findings was not the aim of the research. Instead, findings can be generalised alongside theoretical prepositions derived from the literature and be applied to other PRU pupils.
Poor recording of data collection and analysis procedures	Procedures completed during data collection and analysis have been documented for transparency alongside justification for why design frame of case study was used and accompanying decisions within case study design. Tools and methods within the PSMI have been demonstrated as well as any other supplementary materials used.

Appendix 16: Details of Pilot Study

Prior to data collection for the main research study, I completed a pilot exercise to trial the use of the PSMI. This was with a Year 8 make pupil in a mainstream secondary environment who I was already completing casework with. Due to the concerns raised by school, though only in Year 8, I felt the Possible Selves framework and the PSMI tool would be an appropriate method of gathering his views of his future hopes as his motivation and engagement within school at that time was minimal. I realised that this was not the target sample I would be using within my research however it was the practice use of the PSMI which was important. Consent was already gained from parents for my involvement and consent was also gained from the young person themselves. No data from the pilot study was included in the main study.

The pilot study enabled me to gain experience and insight into the practical use of the PSMI with a young person and to see how they respond to it. It enabled me to become more fluent with it and to explore any issues it presented with. The pilot study did not lead to any changes to the original PSMI exercise used but it did introduce the need to consider additional and supplementary tools to complete during the PSMI exercise that I made myself in order to make the exercise more visually engaging and accessible to participants (these can be found in Appendix 9). For example, as the possible selves map requires the recording of three main hoped-for and feared-for selves, I introduced a tool to record an elaborated version of these PSs.